



## ***Hamlet* on Film and in Performance**

### ***Hamlet* 1.5.1–18**

*Enter Ghost and Hamlet.*

**HAMLET:** Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak. I'll go no further.

**GHOST:** Mark me.

**HAMLET:** I will.

**GHOST:** My hour is almost come,  
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames  
Must render up myself.

**HAMLET:** Alas, poor ghost!

**GHOST:** Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing  
To what I shall unfold.

**HAMLET:** Speak. I am bound to hear.

**GHOST:** So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

**HAMLET:** What?

**GHOST:** I am thy father's spirit,  
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night  
And for the day confined to fast in fires  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away.

This scene is pivotal to the plot of the play, and it is open to a variety of interpretations.

Divide into pairs and work on your performance of this scene. (You may perform a longer version of the scene if you wish.) Consider these questions as you prepare:

- How will you block the scene (that is, how will the actors move around the stage)?
- What is the Ghost's appearance and demeanor?
- What is Hamlet's reaction?
- How do the choices you make in this scene influence your interpretation of the rest of the play?

Perform your scene for the class. As you watch your classmates' performances, think about the different choices each pair made, and the implications of those choices.

Now, watch some film versions of this famous scene. You might watch the films directed by Kenneth Branagh (1996), Franco Zeffirelli (starring Mel Gibson (1990)), or Tony Richardson (starring Nicol Williamson (1969)). How is the Ghost portrayed? Is he frightening? Subdued? What does he look like? Does he appear on camera at all? How does Hamlet react to the Ghost?

Discuss the different choices that you, your classmates, and the film directors made. Do all of the choices work equally well? How do these choices affect the interpretation of the rest of the play?