

Mood in *Hamlet*

The mood of a piece of writing is established through the feelings experienced by the individual reader; it is possible to have two, three or more people read or listen to the same composition and feel/experience a different mood.

Some additional thoughts on mood:

- Every piece of writing evokes a mood—whether it's a masterwork of literature or a short story written by an amateur writer
- Mood is usually established gradually over the course of an entire work, so it's often difficult to pinpoint the elements contributing to a work's mood at the level of the sentence or paragraph
- Mood is often (and understandably) confused with tone, which is related but different in that tone refers to the *writer's* attitude of a piece of writing reflected through their diction (while mood is the emotional response in the reader/listener (you))

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is a play about death, grief, and madness (among other things). Shakespeare helps to establish the fantastical and ominous mood of the play early on by making use of setting, imagery, tone, and diction: the first scene takes place at night (setting), when three guards spot the ghost of Old Hamlet walking the castle grounds (imagery). But since it's a play, the mood depends almost entirely upon the dialogue of the characters. The guards say to one another, "It harrows me with fear and wonder," and "How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale. Is not this something more than fantasy? What think you on't?" (diction). To the ghost, the guards speak animatedly and urgently, shouting "Stay! Speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!" (tone). Shakespeare continues to build on and develop the mood of the play throughout, but he opens strongly with a scene establishing the mood of the entire play as one of excitement, trepidation and suspense mixed with dread and foreboding.

The Mood Activity

1. Listen to eight songs from the *Hamlet* Soundtrack. These songs were selected for both their song titles, lyrics and musical progressions, i.e. they all somehow connect to the various moods (and themes) of *Hamlet*. After listening to each song write one or two "mood words" in the space provided below.

Some potential mood words are:

Positive	Negative
Amused, blissful, calm, cheerful, content, dreamy, ecstatic, energetic, excited, flirty, giddy, good, happy, joyful, loving, mellow, optimistic, peaceful, silly, and sympathetic.	Angry, annoyed, apathetic, bad, cranky, depressed, envious, frustrated, gloomy, grumpy, guilty, indifferent, irritated, melancholy, pessimistic, rejected, restless, sad, stressed and weird.

Song 1: Take It Back (Pink Floyd)

Mood Word(s): _____

Song 2: Heat of the Night (Bryan Adams)

Mood Word(s): _____

Song 3: Secret World (Peter Gabriel)

Mood Word(s): _____

Song 4: Dear Life (Chantal Keviazuk)

Mood Word(s): _____

Song 5: Where Is This Love (The Payloias)

Mood Word(s): _____

Song 6: Innocent (Our Lady Peace)

Mood Word(s): _____

Song 7: Possession (Sarah McLachlan)

Mood Word(s): _____

Song 1: Learning to Fly (Pink Floyd)

Mood Word(s): _____

2. After writing a mood word for all eight songs, select *one* of the songs and write a paragraph connecting the song (and your mood word) to a character (or characters), events (plot), or a theme from *Hamlet*. For example you might:

- Make a connection between a lyric in one of the songs and the motivation of one of the play's characters
- Make a connection between one of the song titles and a line from the play
- Make a connection between the mood of one of the songs with the mood (and one of the themes) from the play

Note: watch a lyric video for the song you plan to use using *YouTube*. Your paragraph must be a minimum of 120 words in length, free of grammatical and stylistic errors, and demonstrate your ability to make connections between the song and the play.

Share the completed paragraph with the classroom teacher (rdelaine@lcbi.sk.ca) using *Google Docs*. Ensure you give the teacher full-editing privileges.