

 **Hamlet**: Prince of Denmark, son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet.  He is believed to be mad following the death of his father.  He is greatly disturbed by the hasty marriage of his mother to his uncle especially since he considers the relationship to be incestuous.  The ghost of his dead father tells him that he was murdered by his brother Claudius and asks him to avenge his death.

 **The Ghost**: The late King Hamlet, doomed to walk the earth by night.  He appears to his son to ask that his murder be avenged.

 **Queen Gertrude**: Mother of Prince Hamlet, widow of King Hamlet.  She is now married to the brother of her late husband who has assumed the throne.

 **King Claudius**: Brother of the late King Hamlet.  He murdered his brother in order to gain his throne.  He has also married his sister-in-law.  Claudius becomes quite disturbed by Hamlet's madness and when it becomes apparent that he knows of his crime, Claudius plots repeatedly to have him killed.

 **Ophelia**: Daughter of Polonius and love interest of Hamlet.  When Hamlet rejects her and eventually kills her father, Ophelia goes mad.  She drowns herself in this state.  Her death is used by Claudius to enlist the help of her brother in the murder of Hamlet.

 **Laertes**: Son of Polonius and brother of Ophelia.  He is sent to France but returns seeking vengeance after the murder of his father.  Following the suicide of his sister Ophelia, he challenges Hamlet to a duel.  He has agreed to treat his sword with poison so as to ensure the death of the Prince.  He is poisoned by his own sword and confesses Claudius' plan to Hamlet as he is dying.

 **Polonius**: Father of Laertes and Ophelia.  Advisor to King Claudius. He believes that Hamlet's madness is caused by his love for Ophelia which he has ordered her not to requite.  He is accidentally murdered by Hamlet who has mistaken the eavesdropper concealed by a curtain to be Claudius.

 **Horatio**: Friend and confidant of Hamlet.  Hamlet shares with Horatio all of his experiences and misgivings in the situation involving his father.  Horatio is left alive at the end to tell of the events leading to the deaths of Hamlet, Laertes, Claudius, and Gertrude.

 **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern**: Childhood friends of Hamlet.  They are recruited by Claudius to first discover the cause of Hamlet's madness.  Eventually, their orders are changed to escort Hamlet to England where he is to be killed.  They are killed instead when Hamlet discovers the death order and changes it to apply to them.

 **Fortinbras**: Prince of Norway.  His father was conquered by King Hamlet and initially seeks revenge.  Ambassadors sent by Claudius are able pacify him.  Upon his death, Prince Hamlet names Fortinbras heir to the throne of Denmark.