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| **Hamlet’s Soliloquy In your own words** | Hamlet’s emotions |
| O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!  Is it not monstrous that this player here,  But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  Could force his soul so to his own conceit  That from her working all his visage wanned,  Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,  A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  With forms to his conceit-- and all for nothing!  For Hecuba!  What’s Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,  That he should weep for her? What would he do  Had he the motive and the cue for passion  That I have? He would drown the stage with tears,  And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,  Make mad the guilty and appall the free,  Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  The very faculties of eyes and ears. |  |
| Yet I,  A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak  Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  And can say nothing-- no, not for a king,  Upon whose property and most dear life  A damned defeat was made. |  |
| Am I a coward?  Who calls me “villain”? breaks my pate across?  Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face,  Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i’ th’ throat  As deep as to the lungs --- who does me this?  Ha! |  |
| ‘Swounds, I should take it! For it cannot be  But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall  To make oppression bitter, or ere this I should have fatted all the region kites With this slave’s offal. |  |
| Bloody, bawdy villain!  Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain! |  |
| Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  That I, the son of a dear father murdered,  Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words  And fall a-cursing like a very drab,  A scullion! |  |
| Fie upon’t! Foh!  About, my brains. |  |
| Hum --- I have heard  That guilty creatures sitting at a play  Have, by the very cunning of the scene,  Been struck so to the soul that presently  They have proclaimed their malefactions.  For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  With most miraculous organ. I’ll have these players  Play something like the murder of my father  Before mine uncle. I’ll observe his looks;  I’ll tent him to the quick. If he do blench,  I know my course. |  |
| The spirit that I have seen  May be a devil, and the devil hath power  T’assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,  Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  As he is very potent with such spirits,  Abuses me to damn me. |  |
| I’ll have grounds  More relative than this. The play’s the thing  Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King. |  |

## Hamlet’s Soliloquy Act 2 Scene 2 Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Hamlet’s soliloquy in Act 2 scene 2 may not be as famous as his “To be or not to be” soliloquy, but it is perhaps the favorite speech of actors who have the opportunity to play Hamlet due to its brilliant range of emotions.

The speech has been broken into 10 parts.

* First, read each section and paraphrase it into your own words. Use your book for the glossary on the bottom of the pages.
* Based on these words, what emotions/feelings would Hamlet have as he speaks the lines? What tone would he use to convey his feelings? A list of 10 tone responses is listed below.
* Highlight or underline Shakespeare’s words and your own paraphrase word clues that lead you to assign the emotion
* After you have completed the chart, read the soliloquy silently from start to finish adding in Hamlet’s changing emotional state.

**Match the following tones to the section of the speech.**

Irritation / frustration: pull yourself together.

Shock bewilderment: what’s wrong with me?

Fury / rage: bastard!

Self-deprecation / suicidal depression: I’m useless.

Resignation / acceptance: ok, I’m a wimp.

Decisive: here’s what I’ll do.

Sarcasm: oh right, brilliant!

Anger / defensive aggression: are you looking at me?

Fear / nervousness: it could all be a set-up.

Calculating / plotting / scheming: ok, let’s see...

ONCE YOU ARE FINISHED, sum up Hamlet’s speech in a “plain and simple” version that is less than 15 seconds. Your 15 second performance will be done in front of the class.

**Additional translation help:**

[***rogue*** ] Useless vagrant.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***peasant*** ] A person of little integrity.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***Hecuba*** ] Trojan queen and heroine of classical mythology. Earlier in 2.2 Hamlet asks the First Player to recite a monologue retelling Hecuba's response to the death of her husband, King Priam. The Player tells us that Hecuba's grief was profound and "Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven/And passion in the gods" (505-6). The contrast between Gertrude and Hecuba should be noted. To Hamlet, Hecuba has responded appropriately to her husband's death, while Gertrude has not.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***cue for passion*** ] The reason for strong feelings.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***Make mad the guilty*** ] "By his description of the crime he would drive those spectators mad who had any such sin on their conscience, and would horrify even the innocent" (Kittredge 68),](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***amaze*** ] Plunge into confusion.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***muddy-mettled*** ] Dull-spirited.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***peak*** ] Moping about; languishing, unable to act.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***John-a-dreams*** ] A nickname for a dreamer.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***unpregnant*** ] "Pregnant" here does not mean "with child", but rather, quick or ready. Thus to be "unpregnant" is to be unable to act quickly.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***pate*** ] Head.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***swounds*** ] God's wounds.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***pigeon-liver'd*** ] In the Renaissance, the gentle disposition of the Dove was explained by the argument that it had no gall and thus no capacity to feel resentment or to seek revenge. The liver also was seen as the body's storehouse for courage.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***region kites*** ] The birds of prey in the region, circling in the sky, waiting to feed. If Hamlet were not "pigeon-liver'd" (583) he would have long ago fed Claudius to the hawks.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***kindless*** ] Unnatural.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

***[drab](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)*** [] A whore.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

***[scullion](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)*** [] A kitchen helper, either man or woman but usually a woman. It was a term used to show contempt. One should note that in the second quarto, scullion was actually "stallyon", which means a male whore. Scholars are still undecided on the matter, but scullion is the more generally accepted of the two.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***proclaim'd their malefactions*** ] Announced their evil deeds.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

[***blench*** ] Flinch.](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm)

### Answer Key

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| **Hamlet’s Soliloquy** | **In your own words** | Hamlet’s emotions |
| O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!  Is it not monstrous that this player here, …  The very faculties of eyes and ears. |  | **Shock bewilderment: what’s wrong with me?** |
| Yet I,  A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak…  A damn’d defeat was made. |  | **Self-deprecation / suicidal depression: I’m useless.** |
| Am I a coward?  Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,…  Ha! |  | **Anger / defensive aggression: are you looking at me?** |
| ‘Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be  But I am pigeon-liver’d and lack gall…  With this slave’s offal. |  | **Resignation / acceptance: ok, I’m a wimp.** |
| Bloody, bawdy villain!  Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain! |  | Fury / rage: bastard! |
| Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  That I, the son of a dear father murder’d,…  A scullion! |  | **Sarcasm: oh right, brilliant!** |
| Fie upon’t! Foh!  About, my brains. |  | **Irritation / frustration: pull yourself together.** |
| Hum --- I have heard  That guilty creatures sitting at a play…  I know my course. |  | **Calculating / plotting / scheming: ok, let’s see...** |
| The spirit that I have seen  May be a devil, and the devil hath power…  Abuses me to damn me. |  | **Fear / nervousness: it could all be a set-up.** |
| I’ll have grounds  More relative than this. The play’s the thing  Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the King. |  | **Decisive: here’s what I’ll do.** |

***player...Hecuba*** ] This passage is often very difficult for students, and standard annotations leave them wanting. So it is best paraphrased**:**

Is it not horribly unfair that this actor, pretending to feel great passion, could, based on what he has conceived in his own mind, force his own soul to believe the part that he is playing, so much so that all the powers of his body adapt themselves to suit his acting needs, so that he grows agitated ("distraction in's aspect"), weeps, and turns pale ("wann'd")? And why does he carry on so? Why does he pretend until he truly makes himself weep? For [Hecuba](http://shakespeare.about.com/library/weekly/aa061500b.htm#hecuba)! But why? What are they to each other? Hamlet wishes he could arouse his passions so.