

Elsinore

Hamlet (Jr), Prince of Denmark:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him man.
 - Gender is largely irrelevant to the character - players may choose to do something with this or ignore it as they see fit.
- **Status/class** - Royal (Prince of Denmark).
 - Only outranked by King Claudius and Queen Gertrude (as well as by the late King Hamlet Sr). Outranks all other Danes.
- **Character traits:**
 - Thoughtful, philosophical, contemplative and hesitant. Hamlet is prone to questioning everything; particularly drawn to questions that cannot be answered with any certainty, and skeptical even when presented with compelling evidence/testimony of his father's murder by his uncle, King Claudius.
 - Conversely, he is also impulsive and rash - the times that Hamlet does act are when he hasn't had the opportunity to obsess over the finer details or premeditate his actions.
 - Hamlet's paranoid, erratic behaviour can be dangerous; if he is startled by an unexpected noise behind a curtain, his reflex reaction could prove fatal to whoever is hiding from him. This contradictory pull between overthinking or procrastination and his hot-blooded temper may need some unexpected influence from events unfolding on the island, as if he cannot strike the balance of moderation, his actions (and inaction) may prove catastrophic.
 - Self-involved, to a level bordering on narcissism. Even though Fortinbras, King of Norway, is imminently approaching, the prince does not seem to pay any heed to this incoming threat to Denmark's national security - his melancholy and angst are entirely rooted in his own relationships - with his mother, his friends, his paramour, his dead father, his uncle the King, with death and with himself. Even his Freudian obsession over his mother's remarriage appears to be about *his* feelings, not about others, causing considerable strain on his relationships.
- **You may wish to play Hamlet if** you want to play a brooding, analytical character with the "Mystic Knowledge" archetype, if you want to explore themes of familial relationships, or if you want to be a loose cannon, exhibiting "mad" behaviour (feigned or otherwise).
- **You may not wish to play Hamlet if** you want to avoid themes of madness, familial and/or romantic relationships, if you are not especially interested in the more contemplative Alchemy mechanic, or if you want to play a particularly empathetic character.
- **Key Quote:** *"but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived [...] I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw."*

Queen Gertrude:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
 - The character's relationship with gender is often a key theme for the role; whilst it would be possible to do something different with it or de-emphasise it, this role is probably not suited for anyone who is uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender and gender roles, even if adapted.
- **Status/class** - Royal - Queen of Denmark.
 - Could be played as equal to King Claudius, or could be played as outranked by him (as Queen Consort instead of Queen Regent).
- **Character traits:**
 - Regal and composed in grand social situations. Whether the player chooses to interpret Gertrude as fully unaware of her late husband's murder, or as complicit in the act with her new husband (or somewhere between the two), Gertrude's grace and decorum is only shaken when she is isolated from the King and her attendants, alone with her seemingly-unstable son.
 - Co-dependent, with an instinct for self-preservation. Upon her husband's death, she immediately remarried his brother, retaining her rank and station that she was accustomed to as Queen of Denmark. On the occasion that she is rattled - if Hamlet were to confront her about his uncle's part in his father's death - she is likely to run right into the King's murderous arms for comfort, rather than tolerate any conflict.
 - Unexpected events on the island may push Gertrude towards more action than she is typically comfortable with. If she is unable to rely on Claudius, Polonius or Ophelia for support, or to outsource problems to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, then she may have to get her hands dirty in a way that she appears to have always avoided until now...
 - Keen to de-escalate situations wherever possible. Whether it is entreating her husband and son to reconcile, trying to calm Laertes' fury, counselling Ophelia, or sending Hamlet's friends to reason with him, Gertrude tries to be the voice of harmony, compromise, and non-violence, surrounded by passion and rage.
- **You may wish to play Queen Gertrude if** you want to play a stately, calm and composed character, with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you want to play a particularly high-status character, or if you want to explore themes of familial and interpersonal relationships.
- **You may not wish to play Queen Gertrude if** you want to play an especially strong-willed character that is not easily led by others, if you want to play an aggressive, combative or strongly assertive character, or if you are uncomfortable discussing themes of madness, murder and quasi-incestuous marriage.
- **Key Quote:** *"Do not for ever with thy veiled lids seek for thy noble father in the dust: Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity."*

Ophelia:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a she/her woman.
 - The character's relationship with gender is often a key theme for the role; whilst it would be possible to do something different with it or de-emphasise it, this role is probably not suited for anyone who is uncomfortable examining the character's relationship to gender and gender roles, even if adapted.
- **Status/class** - Noble/aristocratic; only outranked by royalty.
- **Character traits:**
 - Patient, sweet, kind and good-natured. Her tolerance for others' nonsense (whether her father Polonius' prattling, Hamlet's interjections as the Players are performing their Prologue, or her brother's patronising lecturing) is almost a saintly level of endurance. Even if she does somewhat push back against the domineering men in her life, it is with courtesy and grace.
 - Under a lot of pressure; as a young lady, courting a prince, under the watchful eyes of her father and brother and the King and Queen, each giving her contradictory advice about how she should or should not comport herself. The strain of these expectations would be stressful enough without her paramour's increasingly erratic behaviour. Having put all of her eggs into the basket of being the future Queen of Denmark, if this future were snatched away from her in any way, she just might snap...
 - Of course, events on the island may offer her some new outlet to explore, relieved a little of the expectations of courtly propriety to deal with immediate, unexpected twists and turns of fate. If she can find some other future for herself, or new, more independent ways of defining herself, rather than purely in relation to her father, brother or boyfriend, then she may not resort to the desperate measures of the only escape currently available to her.
 - She has a wild heart. Although Ophelia may outwardly conduct herself in the manner that is expected of her, under the surface is a young woman longing for the freedom to let down her hair, sing and skip amongst the flowers, unburdened by worries of what others may think of her. She has a deep yearning for the breathing room to express herself more openly than is permitted, and may subvert others' expectations of her if she throws caution to the wind and finds any way to reclaim some agency.
- **You may wish to play Ophelia if** you want to play an aristocratic character with the "Noble Might" archetype, if you want to play with themes of madness and music, or if you'd like to explore her more unpredictable, dangerous undercurrent that's waiting to break free.
- **You may not wish to play Ophelia if** you are uncomfortable exploring themes of romance or family, if you want to play a working-class character, or if you are more interested in Alchemy/Masques etc.
- **Key Quote:** *"good my brother, do not, as some ungracious pastors do, show me the steep and thorny way to heaven; whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine, himself the primrose path of dalliance treads"*

Horatio:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him man.
 - Gender is largely irrelevant to the character - players may choose to do something with this or ignore it as they see fit.
- **Status/class** - upper-middle.
 - Close friends with royalty, but does not have his own title.
- **Character traits:**
 - Loyal, steady and reliable. No matter how unstable his dearest companion may seem, Horatio is always by his side to support him, completely and utterly devoted to Hamlet. As such, he is also the only person Hamlet trusts with every detail and doesn't conceal anything from. Their love - whether there is any component of this that is not solely platonic friendship - is long-lasting and steadfast, whatever the weather they face.
 - Both rational and open-minded; where others dispute being able to see a ghost, the scholarly Horatio lends legitimacy to the haunting itself occurring, yet still remains skeptical of its intent and origin, fearing for Hamlet's safety in following it.
 - Whilst he may be something of the voice of reason, this open-mindedness, compounded with his love for Hamlet, means that Horatio may be more willing than is sensible to stay by Hamlet's side, even if facing immediate threats and danger. If unforeseen events on the island force him to question this unblinking loyalty, or if he needed to stand on his own without playing lancer to Hamlet, this could be unknown territory for Horatio - skeptic and believer - to explore. For better or worse, though, who can say...
 - Cautious, hesitant and concerned - where others may be reckless, Horatio is the first to remind them of potential dangers and consequences. He is intelligent, always thinking several steps ahead, although others may not necessarily heed his wise warnings. He has a shrewd understanding and should not be underestimated, although his resolve may weaken around Hamlet.
- **You may wish to play Horatio if** you want to play a trustworthy, devoted character with the "Lover's Heart" archetype, if you want to explore different varieties of "love" (friendship, romance or otherwise), or if you want to play a sensitive/emotional character.
- **You may not wish to play Horatio if** you do not want to start the game with your personal plot intricately linked to another player's, if you are especially keen for some other Magicks such as Masques or Alchemy, or if you would prefer to play a more eccentric character.
- **Key Quote:** *"What if it tempt you [...] into madness? think of it: the very place puts toys of desperation, without more motive, into every brain"*.

Bernardo/the Player King/Clown [blended role]:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him man.
 - Gender is largely irrelevant to the character - players may choose to do something with this or ignore it as they see fit.
- **Status/class** - lower/working class.
- **Character traits:**
 - A vivid storyteller and born Entertainer, with a shrewd wit. Whilst he may be a jester of a sort, he is certainly not a Fool (in the sense of being unwise). The Sentinels are, however, highly pragmatic in their philosophies of life and death; more grounded by the graves they dig than led to existential crisis.
 - Able to deeply move others emotionally, yet also able to be glib in the face of death and the supernatural, with a morbid sense of humour. Bernardo may not have the scholarly background of some of the higher-class Danes, but he is able to sing and laugh in the face of death, inured to it through daily exposure in his work. Where others balk at the sight of corpses, he shrugs.
 - In spite of this, though, he is still deeply superstitious and troubled by the omen of the ghostly sightings. Whether experiences on the island with more spirits, faeries and witches may be taken in his stride, harnessing Magicks through his art of Masques, or if he may falter when faced with his own mortality, rather than the compartmentalised deaths of others is yet to be determined.
 - Ready for anything, prepared to improvise on a moment's notice. When approached for this most recently commissioned play, it was only on arriving at the castle that the prince detailed his requests for both what plot he wished them to perform as well as how to perform it; the Players were completely unfazed by this and prepared to perform a powerful Masque for the royals and nobles assembled - only interrupted by the Plothole opening..
- **You may wish to play the Player King if** you want to play a performing artist with the "Entertainer" archetype, if you want more of a blank slate character to make your own, or if you are especially interested in supernatural Magicks and themes of life and death.
- **You may not wish to play the Player King if** you prefer a more well-established starting point, if you aren't interested in the Masque mechanics, or if you want to play a high-status character.
- **Key Quote:** "**Sit down awhile; and let us once again assail your ears, that are so fortified against our story what we have two nights seen**"

"What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?" "The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants." "[...] when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-maker: 'the houses that he makes last till doomsday.'" ~Clowns

"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 wann'd, tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, a broken voice, and his whole function suiting with forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!" ~Hamlet, about the Players

Marcellus (or "Marcella")/the Player Queen/Clown [blended role]:

- **Traditionally gendered as** a he/him man, except when the Player Queen is in character as a she/her woman, although more modern performances often change this Player to be a she/her woman out of character too.
 - Gender is largely irrelevant to the character - players may choose to do something with this or ignore it as they see fit.
- **Status/class** - lower/working class.
 - A vivid storyteller and born Entertainer, with a shrewd wit. Whilst a jester, certainly not a Fool (in the sense of being unwise), but highly pragmatic philosophies of life/death; more grounded by the graves they dig than led to existential crisis.
 - Able to deeply move others emotionally, yet also able to be glib in the face of death and the supernatural, with a morbid sense of humour. Marcellus/"Marcella" is inured to the sight of corpses, through daily exposure, and shrugs where others balk.
 - In spite of this, still deeply superstitious and troubled by the omen of the ghostly sightings. Whether experiences on the island with more spirits, faeries and witches may be taken in their stride, harnessing Magicks through the art of Masques, or if they may falter when faced with their own mortality, rather than the compartmentalised deaths of others is yet to be determined.
 - Ready for anything, prepared to improvise on a moment's notice. When approached for this most recently commissioned play, it was only on arriving at the castle that the prince detailed his requests for both what plot he wished them to perform as well as how to perform it; the Players were completely unfazed by this and prepared to perform a powerful Masque for the royals and nobles assembled - only interrupted by the Plothole opening..
- **You may wish to play the Player Queen if** you want to play a performing artist with the "Entertainer" archetype, if you want more of a blank slate character to make your own, or if you are especially interested in supernatural Magicks and themes of life and death.
- **You may not wish to play the Player Queen if** you prefer a more well-established starting point, if you aren't interested in the Masque mechanics, or if you want to play a high-status character.
- **Key Quote:** *"And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad; the nights are wholesome; then no planets strike, no fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm, so hallow'd and so gracious is the time."*

"What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?" "The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants." "[...] when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-maker: 'the houses that he makes last till doomsday.'" ~Clowns

"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 wann'd, tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, a broken voice, and his whole function suiting with forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!" ~Hamlet, about the Players