



Hamlet: (b) 'I am sick at heart'

 refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

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- ❖ **Lesson focus:** The play is full of images of disease and corruption. Why does Shakespeare do this? What uses does he make of this image? (This is intended to come when students have read the play, though some of it could be used earlier).
 - Divide the five acts among the students. Each will produce a mind-map type of diagram to show the references to this image in their act.
 - These can be discussed and shared.
- ❖ **Opening exercise:** Write the following words at random on the board:
 - bitter, rank, weeds, gross, ulcer, leperous, maggots, sweat, pestilent, blister, compost, worm, canker, stale, unwholesome, poison, impotent, disjoint, carrion, blister, muddied. These are all words from the play.
 - Students should organise the words into at least three different groups.
- ❖ **Discussion ideas:** As a class, discuss the suggestions and students' reasoning for the above exercise.
- ❖ **Textual examination:** Following, and based on, the above discussion, decide upon 3 or 4 central aspects of the disease and corruption imagery. (E.g.: disease coming from within; corruption of society: See  Texts in detail > *Hamlet* > Imagery and Symbolism > Corruption and Disease).
 - ❖ **Textual examination:** Draw a scale of corruption (from completely corrupt to pure):
 - Place the play's significant characters on the scale, following discussion and based on evidence from the play.
 - ❖ **Recreative task:** Students write a letter, as Horatio, to a mutual university friend, following Hamlet's meeting with the Ghost, expressing concern about Hamlet's health in body and mind.
 - ❖ **Critical task:** 'Polonius is the most obviously corrupt character in the play.'
 - Either support this statement, or make a case for another character being the most corrupt.
 - ❖ **Extension idea:** The mind-map could be colour-coded to show which characters use which specific images.