

- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To examine Gertrude and Ophelia, and their relationships with Hamlet.
- ❖ **Opening exercise:** Collect a range of different magazines. Students cut out pictures (and possibly words) which could be/suggest mothers, and another set for girlfriends.
 - Make a collage, and discuss the various choices.
 - In what ways are Gertrude and Ophelia typical of the pictures created?
- ❖ **Textual examination:** Look at Gertrude's three speeches in Act I, Scene ii.
 - Read them aloud in as many ways as you can (confident, pleading, lovingly, as if prompted by Claudius...).
 - Hamlet replies to each; what difference does it make to the way you might play his responses depending upon Gertrude's attitude?
 - We first see Ophelia, in a family setting, in Act I, Scene iii. Again, read her speeches aloud in a variety of ways (weakly, teasingly, sulkily, obediently...). An extension of this is to read out her speeches, followed by what you imagine she is thinking.
 - Both Polonius and Laertes say far more than Ophelia. Discuss how they speak to her (e.g.: how many different commands do they give?).
- ❖ **Textual examination:** The other two scenes to examine especially are Act III, Scene i, 89ff and Act III, Scene iv. In these scenes, Hamlet confronts the two women.
 - Why does he do this?
 - What does he seem to be hoping to gain?
 - Does either woman have a genuine opportunity to say what they think or feel?
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Write a gossip magazine article on the activities of Gertrude and/or Ophelia.
 - Try to mix ideas from the play with those from your own imagination.
- ❖ **Critical task:** What evidence does Hamlet have that 'Frailty, thy name is woman!' (Act I, Scene ii, 146)?
- ❖ **Extension task:** Is it possible, in a modern production of *Hamlet*, to play the two women as passive and firmly under male authority?