

Your Turn!

How does Shakespeare’s choice to use irony at the end of Act III scene i develop theme in Hamlet?

1. Reread the text, asking yourself “What information do we have as a reader that a character may not know?”
2. Ask yourself, “What is the effect of the dramatic irony on the relationships of the characters?”
3. Ask yourself, “How do the effects of dramatic irony develop a theme in the text?”

FOCUS PASSAGE: III.i.189-202

1. Reread the text, asking yourself “What information do we have as a reader that a character may not know?”

Highlight where there is information that we have as a reader that may not be understood by another character

LORD POLONIUS		190
It shall do well: but yet do I believe		
The origin and commencement of his grief	190	
Sprung from neglected love. How now, Ophelia!		
You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;		
We heard it all. My lord, do as you please;		
But, if you hold it fit, after the play		
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him	195	195
To show his grief: let her be round with him;		
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear		
Of all their conference. If she find him not,		
To England send him, or confine him where		
Your wisdom best shall think.	200	200
KING CLAUDIUS		
It shall be so:		
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.		
Exeunt	III.i.189-202	

2. Ask yourself, “What is the effect of the dramatic irony on the relationships of the characters?
Review your highlights from step 1 and complete the chart below.

Dramatic Irony	Effect

3. Ask yourself, “How do the effects of dramatic irony develop a theme in the text?”
Review your completed chart for step 2. Write your answer to this question on the lines below.

