

What Makes a Ghost?

All excerpts are taken from Shakespeare's full text, not from the FSU/Asolo Conservatory's touring adaptation.

From Act I, Scene 1

BARNARDO

Looks he not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO

Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO

It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS Speak to it, Horatio.

HORATIO

What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? By heaven, I charge thee, speak.

MARCELLUS

It is offended.

BARNARDO

See, it stalks away.

HORATIO

Stay! speak! speak! I charge thee, speak!

Ghost exits.

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone and will not answer.

BARNARDO

How now, Horatio, you tremble and look pale.
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on 't?

HORATIO

Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS

Is it not like the King?

HORATIO

As thou art to thyself.
Such was the very armor he had on
When he the ambitious Norway combated.
So frowned he once when, in an angry parle,
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.
'Tis strange.

From Act I, Scene 1

HORATIO

But soft, behold! Lo, where it comes again!
I'll cross it though it blast me.—Stay, illusion!

It spreads his arms.

If thou hast any sound or use of voice,
Speak to me.
If there be any good thing to be done
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
Speak to me.
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which happily foreknowing may avoid,
O, speak!
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,
Speak of it.

The cock crows.

Stay and speak!—Stop it, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

Shall I strike it with my partisan?

HORATIO

Do, if it will not stand.

BARNARDO

'Tis here.

HORATIO

'Tis here.

Ghost exits.

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone.

We do it wrong, being so majestic,
To offer it the show of violence,
For it is as the air, invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

From Act I, Scene 2

HORATIO

Two nights together had these gentlemen,
Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch,
In the dead waste and middle of the night,
Been thus encountered: a figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-à-pie,
Appears before them and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walked
By their oppressed and fear-surprisèd eyes
Within his truncheon's length, whilst they, distilled
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did,
And I with them the third night kept the watch,
Where, as they had delivered, both in time,
Form of the thing (each word made true and good),
The apparition comes. I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.

From Act I, Scene 5

GHOST

I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
And for the day confined to fast in fires
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their
spheres,
Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand an end,
Like quills upon the fearful porpentine.
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.