Problem No. 3:
Classics...
To Be or Not To Be
Introduction

In William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, the title character ponders one of the most famous questions throughout history: “To be or not to be?” Shakespeare is considered among the greatest playwrights of all time, and his plays have been adapted into many modern works over the years. Some examples are: *The Taming of the Shrew*, which was made into the popular musical, *Kiss me Kate*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, which inspired the award-winning musical *West Side Story*. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is considered a tragedy in classic literature, but the challenge for Odyssey of the Mind teams is to take a similar theme and have it play out in a musical comedy.

A. The Problem

The problem is to create and present an original humorous performance based on Shakespeare’s famous question, “To be or not to be.” An original “Hamlet” character will face a team-created dilemma: “To ___ or not to ___.” In his play, Shakespeare’s Hamlet thinks through the options to find that the apparent “easy way out” is actually the more difficult choice. In this problem the team’s Hamlet character takes the apparent “easy way out” only to discover that it was not easy at all. The team’s performance will also include a character that portrays Hamlet’s conscience, a creative scene change, a creative costume change, and use of a “trapdoor.” The performance will incorporate a theatrical comedic style and elements of musical theatre.

The creative emphases of the problem are on the performance, the dilemma, the portrayal of Hamlet’s conscience, the scene change, and the costume change.

The Spirit of the Problem is for the team to create and present a humorous performance that includes a dilemma that poses the question, “To ___ or not to ___." The performance will include a “Hamlet” character and a character that portrays its conscience. It will also include a scene change, a costume change, and the use of a trapdoor. Part of the performance will be presented in the form of musical theatre and will incorporate a comedic theatrical style.

B. Limitations (Italicized words/terms are defined on Page 5 in the Problem Glossary or in the 2011-2012 Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide.)

1. General Rules: Read the 2011-2012 Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide. This manual is updated each year and includes basic limitations for solving Odyssey of the Mind problems and the forms required for competition. This problem cannot be solved without referring to the Program Rules section of the guide.

2. Problem Clarifications: The Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide explains the types of questions about the rules that will be clarified and the ways to submit those questions. General problem clarifications can be accessed at www.odysseyofthemind.com/clarifications/. Problem clarifications improperly submitted, or sent after February 15, 2012, will not be answered. CCI may find it necessary to issue clarifications after that date, so continue to check for them after February 15 and until your last competition.

3. The time limit for this problem is 8 minutes. Time starts when the Timekeeper says, “Team begin” and includes setup, Style, and the presentation of the problem solution.

4. The cost limit for this problem is $125 (U.S.). The combined value of the materials used during the demonstration of the team’s solution, including Style, cannot exceed this amount. The Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide explains the cost limit and lists items that are exempt from cost.

5. The team will create an original humorous performance that includes:
a. a team-created Hamlet character.
b. a character that represents the Hamlet character’s conscience.
c. a dilemma.
d. a creative scene change.
e. a creative costume change.
f. a “trapdoor.”
g. elements of musical theatre.
h. theatric comedic style.

6. The Hamlet character:
a. may be anything, and can be portrayed as living anywhere and in any time period.
b. may be portrayed in any way.
c. does not have to be named Hamlet.
d. will face a dilemma that causes the character to ponder the question, “To ___ or not to ___.”
e. must state the question “To ___ or not to ___” so that it is audible to the judges.

7. The character that portrays Hamlet’s conscience:
a. can be anything and may be portrayed in any way.
b. will present the “easy” choice and at least one other possible choice.
c. will persuade or try to persuade the Hamlet character to decide how to solve the dilemma. The conscience is allowed to, but does not have to try to, persuade Hamlet to make the “right” choice.

8. The dilemma:
a. can be any type of situation that forces the Hamlet character to make a choice.
b. will be addressed by the Hamlet character when pondering the question, “To ___ or not to ___.” The blanks must be filled in with anything the team wishes.
c. will result in the Hamlet character making the “easy choice,” which appears to be the easy way out of the situation.

9. The scene change:
a. must appear to be one setting and then change to depict a different setting.
b. will be scored for creativity of how the scene is changed.

10. The costume change:
a. One character will start out wearing one costume. The character can either change into another costume, or the costume can change into a different costume.
b. must be visible to both the audience and officials while taking place.

11. The trapdoor:
a. must be represented as a passageway to somewhere else.
b. must appear to be used by at least one character in the performance.

12. The elements of musical theatre:
a. can take place at any time in the performance, throughout the performance, or at different times in the performance. All instances will be considered when scoring D9b.
b. must include more than one specific element from the glossary definition. For example, using only music would not qualify for score. The team would need to add another element of musical theatre.

13. The comedic theatrical style:
   a. The team will research and incorporate one comedic theatrical style from the list below into its performance. If it includes more than one it must include the one(s) it wishes to be considered for score on the list.
   b. must be chosen from the following list:
      Theatre of the Absurd   Satire       Opposite of expectations & Irony
      Comedy of Manners      Commedia dell’Arte     Shakespearean Comedy

14. The team should present the Staging Area Judge with four copies of the Team’s Required List Form found in the forms section of the Member’s Area at www.odysseyofthemind.com/members/, or four copies of a list on one side of one or two sheets of 8 ½” x 11” or A4 paper. This list must be hand-printed or computer generated. It is for reference only. The list must include:
   a. the team’s membership name and number, the problem and division.
   b. the completed phrase describing the dilemma: “To ___ or not to ___.”
   c. a brief description of the trapdoor and when it will be used.
   d. the scene change to be scored.
   e. the costume change to be scored.
   f. a brief description of the elements of musical theatre selected and when they will appear in the performance.
   g. the comedic style the team will be scored for.
   h. the signal the team will use to indicate it has finished its performance.

C. Site, Setup and Competition

1. A stage or floor area a minimum of 7’ x 10’ (2.1 m x 3 m) will be used, but a larger area is desirable. This will not be marked. Teams must be prepared to perform in a 7’ x 10’ area. If space permits, the team may perform and/or place equipment, props, etc. outside the 7’ x 10’ area. If a drop-off exists beyond the 7’ x 10’ dimensions, a caution line may be taped 30” (76.2 cm) from the edge of the drop-off. This will serve as a warning, not a boundary.

2. A three-prong electrical outlet will be available. Teams should bring their own extension cords and adapters, if needed.

3. The team members must report to the competition site with all of their props and paperwork at least 15 minutes before they are scheduled to compete.

4. It is the team’s responsibility to complete its problem solution within the 8-minute time limit. When the team is finished, it must signal the judges. An overtime penalty will be assessed if the team takes more than 8 minutes, and the Timekeeper will stop the team after one minute of overtime.

5. Teams should bring cleaning utensils to clean up any mess. Should a team take an unreasonable amount of time to clean the site, or leave a mess, the judges will assess an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty. Others not on the team’s roster may help the team clear the site and remove the team’s props. The competition area must be left clean and dry for the next competing team.

D. Scoring

1. Creativity of the overall performance (originality, effectiveness) ........................................1 to 20 points
2. Quality of the performance (audibility, movement, stage presence) ......................................1 to 20 points
3. The Hamlet character ................................................................. 1 to 20 points
   a. States the question, “To ___ or not to ___.” ......................... 0 or 5 points
   b. Effectiveness of its role ....................................................... 1 to 15 points

4. Hamlet’s conscience character .................................................. 1 to 20 points
   a. Presents the “easy” choice and at least one other choice .......... 0 or 5 points
   b. Attempts to persuade the Hamlet character to make a decision .. 0 or 5 points
   c. Creativity of its portrayal ...................................................... 1 to 10 points

5. The dilemma ........................................................................... 2 to 30 points
   a. Originality ........................................................................... 1 to 10 points
   b. The easy option and at least one other choice are presented .... 0 or 5 points
   c. Impact of the consequences after taking the “easy way out” .... 1 to 15 points

6. The scene change ................................................................. 1 to 15 points
   a. Takes place ........................................................................... 0 or 5 points
   b. Creativity of how the scene changes
      (originality, technical aspect, use of components on stage) .... 1 to 10 points

7. The costume change ............................................................... 1 to 20 points
   a. Takes place in the performance .............................................. 0 or 5 points
   b. Creativity of how the change is made .................................... 1 to 15 points

8. The trapdoor ........................................................................... 1 to 15 points
   a. Is included in the performance .............................................. 0 or 5 points
   b. Effectiveness in the performance .......................................... 1 to 10 points

9. Elements of musical theatre .................................................... 1 to 20 points
   a. Are presented ....................................................................... 0 or 5 points
   b. Overall effectiveness in the performance ............................... 1 to 15 points

10. Comedic style .......................................................................... 1 to 20 points
    a. Is presented ......................................................................... 0 or 5 points
    b. Overall effectiveness in the performance ............................. 1 to 15 points

**Maximum possible 200 points**

E. **Penalties** (Deducted from percentaged scores.)
   1. “Spirit of the Problem” violation (each offense) ...................... -1 to -100 points
   2. Unsportsmanlike conduct (each offense) ................................ -1 to -100 points
   3. Incorrect or missing membership sign .................................. -1 to -15 points
   4. Outside assistance (each offense) ......................................... -1 to -100 points
   5. Over cost limit ..................................................................... -1 to -100 points
   6. Overtime: -5 points for every 10 seconds or fraction thereof
      over time limit (example: 27 seconds over = -15 points) ........ maximum -30 points
   7. Easy choice would be considered by most to not be the easiest choice .................................................. no penalty

*Omission of scored problem requirements carries no penalty except loss of score.*
F. **Style** (Elaboration of the problem solution; use the Style Form from the *Odyssey of the Mind Program Guide.*

1. **Visual effectiveness** of Hamlet’s conscience character ........................................1 to 10 points
2. Creativity of how the required information is displayed on the membership sign ..................1 to 10 points
3. (Free choice of team) ........................................................................................................1 to 10 points
4. (Free choice of team) ........................................................................................................1 to 10 points
5. Overall effect of the four Style elements in the performance .............................................1 to 10 points

*Maximum possible: 50 points*

G. **Tournament Director Will Provide***:

1. A 7’ x 10’ (2.1m x 3m) presentation area (larger, if possible).
2. A three-prong electrical outlet.
3. A judging team and materials necessary to judge this problem.

*NOTE: Contact your Tournament Director regarding competition site specifications such as actual dimensions, registration procedures, floor surface, etc. Do not submit a clarification request for this information.*

H. **The Team Must Provide**:

1. Four copies of its Style Form, one Cost Form, one Outside Assistance Form, and all team-specific clarifications.
2. Four copies of its list as stated in B14. This list is to assist the judges. If the team fails to provide the list, there will be no penalty; however, it benefits the team to have the list because without it, the judges could miss a scored aspect of the performance.
3. Any necessary extension cords or outlet adapters.
4. Cleanup materials as needed.

I. **Problem Glossary**

**Appear to be** — looks or seems like something but really is not that thing. For example, the trapdoor does not have to be a real trapdoor, and the character does not actually have to pass through it; however, in the performance, the character must be portrayed as if it is passing through it.

**Dilemma** — a situation where the Hamlet character must choose between at least two options, each with its own set of consequences.

**Easy choice** — this should appear to be an easy solution to the dilemma but it comes with negative ramifications that are shown in the performance, proving it was not the easy choice.

**Musical theatre** — a form of theatre that includes a combination of the following: orchestrated music, singing, spoken rhythmic dialogue, and choreographed dance and/or movement.

**Visual effectiveness** — the ability to provide an impact to others when it is viewed; impressiveness.

*Creative Competitions, Inc., its licensees, and the problem authors assume no responsibility for damage or injury incurred as a result of attempting to solve this problem.*

Problem by Dr. C. Samuel Micklus and Samuel W. Micklus © Copyright 2011 — Creative Competitions, Inc.

© Odyssey of the Mind, OotM, and the Odyssey of the Mind logo, and OMER are federally registered trademarks of Creative Competitions, Inc.