

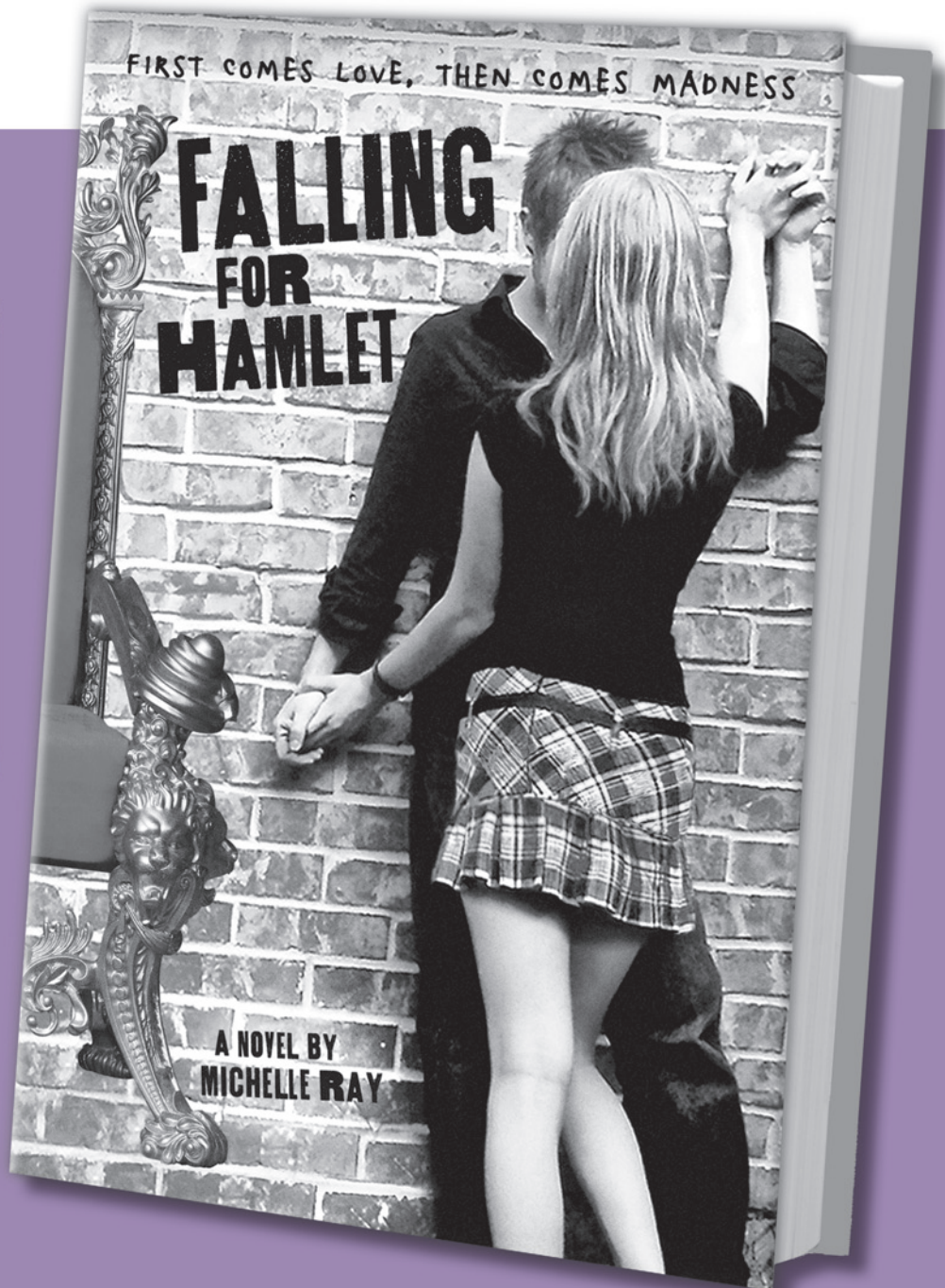
FALLING FOR HAMLET

curriculum connections

- ❖ Literature
- ❖ Psychology
- ❖ Family

Ages: 12 & up

by
Michelle Ray



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Old-fashioned castles have turrets and sometimes moats, but that's not the way that Hamlet and Ophelia live. Describe their palace. Why does Ophelia live in it? What are the advantages of living in a palace? What are the drawbacks?
 2. One of the hallmarks of Shakespeare's plays is their infinite adaptability. How does Michelle Ray transport *Hamlet* into the 21st century? Discuss the many modern details she brings to this classic. Does the essence of the story remain the same? Why or why not?
 3. The glare of the media is almost always fixed on Ophelia. What makes her such a fascinating subject? How does the media use her? How does she, in turn, use the media? Does she enjoy being center of attention? Would you?
 4. Queen Gertrude sometimes dotes on Ophelia, buying her beautiful clothes, inviting her to elegant meals. Why is she so attentive to her son's girlfriend? In what ways are Gertrude and Ophelia rivals? How are they also allies?
 5. "I'm telling you, Ophelia," Laertes warns his sister (page 19), "this thing with Hamlet can only end in disaster." Why does he disapprove of his sister's relationship with the prince? What are his worries about Hamlet? What are his concerns about Ophelia? Why doesn't she pay attention to him?
 6. Hamlet can't understand why his mother rushed into marriage with Claudius. What do you think were her reasons?
 7. What is Ophelia's relationship with her father, Polonius? How do they communicate with each other? What does he know about her life? What does she know about his?
 8. Ophelia is interviewed by inspectors from the Denmark Department of Investigation (DDI) and by talk show hostess Zara. Compare and contrast their styles. Which interviewing method is more effective at getting at the truth? Which method would you employ with someone like Ophelia? Why?
 9. How does Ophelia treat her female friends? What do they think of her relationship with Hamlet? What would you say to Ophelia if she asked you for romantic advice?
 10. *Falling for Hamlet* is a tragic love story, but is it also a ghost story? Whose spirit haunts Hamlet? What does it want from the prince? Is the ghost benevolent, malevolent, or somewhere in between? Hamlet believes the ghost is real. Do you?
 11. Hamlet's soliloquy "To be, or not to be" is one of the most famous speeches in literature. Take a closer look at the way Michelle Ray retells it in contemporary English. What weighty question is Hamlet asking himself? How does Ophelia respond to Hamlet? How would you?
 12. Is Hamlet capable of having a healthy relationship with a woman? He tells Ophelia: "anyone with half a brain knows that women screw up men's lives" (page 200). Does he really mean it? Why or why not? Is he speaking from personal experience?
 13. On the night of her mother's funeral, Ophelia loses her virginity to Hamlet. Why is Hamlet initially reluctant to sleep with her? Why is Ophelia so determined to be with him? How might her life have turned out differently if she had waited?
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

14. Ophelia drowns in the original *Hamlet*, but not in this version. How does she become a fugitive? What does she fear might happen to her if she stays at Elsinore? How does Queen Gertrude explain her disappearance to the media?
15. Hamlet murders both Ophelia's father and her brother. "He had ruined my life," she laments (page 325). "He had taken all the I had." Yet even though she wants to hate him, she can't? Why?
16. At the end of the novel, Ophelia makes a list of lessons learned. Do you agree with them? Which do you feel are the most important? Why? What additions, if any, would you make to her list?

about the book



Falling For Hamlet
by Michelle Ray
978-0-316-10162-2

Ophelia's life looks so perfect. She's the girlfriend of handsome Prince Hamlet and the daughter of the King's most trusted adviser. Her beautiful face and glamorous evenings have launched a thousand tabloid TV stories. But something is rotten in Denmark. After the sudden death of his father, the King, and the abrupt remarriage of his mother, Queen Gertrude, Hamlet seems to be spiraling towards madness. Maybe he is pushing Ophelia to the brink, too.

In this brilliantly written, compulsively readable debut novel, Michelle Ray re-imagines *Hamlet* for the 21st century—but this time, Ophelia doesn't die.

about the author



Michelle Ray is a middle school teacher in Silver Springs, Maryland, where she lives with her family. This is her first novel.