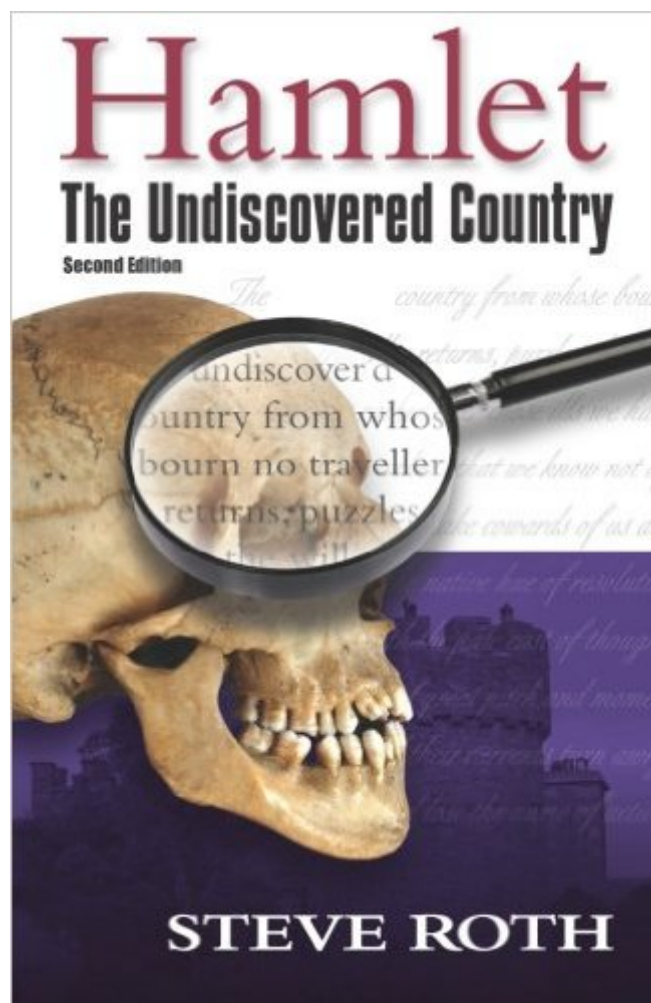


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# Hamlet: The Undiscovered Country, Second Edition



## Synopsis

"Reveals facts about the play I've never seen discussed anywhere else." "There is so much 'good stuff' in this book." "This book reads like a cross between a literary detective novel and a personal conversation with a passionate Shakespeare scholar. It unveils new realities about the play, explores troves of long-buried Hamlet lore, untangles centuries of commentary and criticism, and delivers the punch lines for a whole raft of Shakespeare's remarkably involved in-jokes. Roth tackles old arguments like Hamlet's age (he's sixteen), lays out the intricate time structure that's embedded in the play, and unravels several of the play's endless allusions that so "puzzle the will." He depicts a dense, ironic, and multivalent web of political and dramatic tension in Elsinore (plus a great deal of very dark humor), and delivers one "Aha!" moment after another for lovers of the Bard's greatest tragedy. Gotta rave about this. This book was a joy to find! It's a unique offering toward a new understanding of Hamlet... Roth has an easy writing style, not bogged down in academe-speak; I've enjoyed it a couple of times, pondering his intriguing points. Roth makes a fascinating and convincing case for Hamlet's age being half that commonly thought. This is no esoteric point--it profoundly affects the way I experience the play. -November 20, 2009 by KAH

"Reveals facts about the play I've never seen discussed anywhere else." Roth's analysis cuts deep into the text, addressing questions of character and cosmology with rare insight. Amidst the great, swirling sea of critical ink that's been spilled on behalf of Shakespeare's greatest work, this book stands out as being fresh, funny, and best of all, truly useful." -Anthony Powell. Associate Artistic Director, Denver Center Theatre Company

"There is so much 'good stuff' in this book." You've been able to cut to the chase, and avoid the muck that has accumulated around the play for 400 years." -Terri Bourus. Associate Professor, Indiana University

"This book will be enjoyed by anyone who enjoys the play Hamlet. Combining detailed historical context, impressive new critical readings, and an informal but well-informed style, it speaks as fluently to scholars as to non-specialists." -Dr. Gabriel Egan. Editor, Shakespeare: The Journal of the British Shakespeare Association

"This is an unusual and appealing book. Academic criticism has often been criticized for having become an arcane pursuit only worth reading by the initiated. This book succeeds in bridging the gap between the professional academic and the general reader." -Dr. Matthew Steggle. Editor, Early Modern Literary Studies

"Travelers into Roth's uniquely researched 'Undiscovered Country' will find new pathways towards an understanding of Hamlet, prince and play. An exciting and informative experience for all readers of Shakespeare." -Jan Kinrade. Lecturer in English, Epping Forest College

A fun and, hard to believe, innovative approach to Hamlet. More has probably been written about Hamlet, both play and character, than any other topic in the English language. And yet, here

is something new. There's a persuasive, textually justified take on Hamlet's age, casting him as the teenager we all kind of know he is; but more, there's a comprehensive and fascinating approach both to the actual timeline of the play, and how that matches up against known events in Shakespeare's life. And that's not all--there are a wealth of links to other resources on the web, making it just the starting point for a thorough exploration. This is not a huge volume, but that's not a bad thing. The author avoids scholar-speak and impenetrable academic convolutions in favor of clear, conversational presentation of his ideas. There's more than enough here to merit inclusion in a syllabus for a class on Hamlet. A real find. -March 29, 2011 by WriteStuff

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

When the subject is Shakespeare, who is the most famous author who ever wrote, the scholarship is enormous. Jan Kott said in 1967 that the list of books and articles written about Hamlet alone is as long as the Warsaw telephone directory. I've taught Hamlet for over fifty years and read a lot about the play. Gee, it would be great if all the answers were simple, but they're not. I've tried all my life to understand the play and to try to wade through the morass of commentary on it. Most of it doesn't matter. If you want to enjoy Hamlet, you will read it, think about it, and perhaps try to find books or take courses that will help you understand it. This book is not the place. It's so easy to come up with interesting answers if you really don't know what you are talking about. Rather than pulling rank on the potential reader by traipsing out my credentials, let me just talk a bit about one of this book's most outrageous notions. "Hamlet is sixteen!" That's so clear because, of course, we

shouldn't pay any attention to all those terrible bores who really know something about Shakespeare and how to produce a reliable text. Roth's assertion is based on a text that is simply not reliable, and reading the word "sexteene" as an age (instead of a spelling variant of "sexton") just doesn't fit into the context of the passage. If you don't believe me, just read the text of Q1. "To be or not to be, aye there's the point!" If you really wanted to know why that text is unreliable, I could convince you by discussing the subject of printing and proofreading in those days at great length. But, if you're even tempted to buy this book, you probably don't want to hear any of that. For brevity's sake, let's just look at the assertion itself.

Well I've just spent, no, wasted 20 minutes trying to post a review here, originally posted in my own blog, and before that sent as an email to the author. seems unwilling to allow any excerpt at all. Won't allow a url, which is fine, but throw a dog a bone, huh? The entire review of Steve Roth's book can be found dated Feb 7, 15, at "forgottenprophets", hosted by "blogspot." Most annoying. Here at least is a beginning, addressed to the author:...If Hamlet is sixteen or so, Horatio is also, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and maybe Laertes; you assert that Fortinbras is. So it's all teens, then? Elsinore 90210? Seems literally incredible. Teenagers, yea, eleventh graders ... high school juniors. Not reliable. Judgment questionable. Foremost on a teen's mind is not the law's delay or the insolence of office, but whether that pimple on his nose will be gone in time for the hop, mash, mosh or whatever the kids are grooving to nowadays. Over the decades I have dealt with very many 16 year old boys; never once met one who was a man. Kings do not habitually (or safely) use schoolboys as emissaries, agents and envoys (John Q Adams, and Alexander, and other teen prodigies notwithstanding). There is much more to say, but words words words. (If Romeo was a teen it may support your argument, but Bandello, the apparent source, has him as 20 or 21.) You cite Young Fortinbras, his unimproved mettle, his delicate tenderness, the (disputed) time of his father's death, as corroborative proof of Hamlet's most extreme youth. It's not young Hal [Henry V] (age 16 in 1Henry IV) or Essex [sometime favorite of Eliz I] or Edward IV, it's accomplished Hotspur [in Henry IV] who would be Fortinbras to Hamlet's Hal. Is that clear? Hamlet is to Hal as Fortinbras is to Hotspur.

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