**Ophelia's Flowers:**

**The tragic scene during which Ophelia hands out flowers exploits the symbolism of the flowers. The rosemary she gives to Laertes represents memory and was traditionally worn at weddings and funerals. She also gives her brother pansies, which represent grief — a very right gesture considering his circumstances. The fennel and columbines she gives to Claudius represent flattery, deceit and ingratitude.**

 **The regret she hands to the queen — keeping some for herself as well represents repentance and was often worn in church in order to gain God’s mercy. Violets are used to symbolize faithfulness, making it quite right that these had withered, considering the queen’s lack of faithfulness towards her late husband. She gives each person a flower that is most suited to his or her situation. The flowers become a way of emphasizing the qualities different characters are expressing at that particular moment in the play.**

 **The flowers also take on extra meaning as Ophelia drowns trying to hang her flowers on a tree and will then be the one who is ‘receiving flowers’ when they are scattered across her grave. As the queen scatters flowers on Ophelia’s grave, she observes that she had always thought she would be laying flowers on Ophelia and Hamlet’s wedding bed, rather than on Ophelia's grave.**