



John Millais *Ophelia* (1851)



“There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death”

(Hamlet Act IV, Scene VII)



Crow-flower
Fair Maiden



Nettle
Slander/Pain



Long Purple
Lust/Promiscuity



Daisy
Innocence/Sadness

Crow-flowers are pretty but poisonous. In this scene they reflect Ophelia's dutiful allegiance to her father, but also her toxic love for Hamlet.

Nettles symbolize Ophelia's grief over the loss of her father, and the love of Hamlet.

Daisies bloom during the day, and close up at night. Interpret that as you will.

Long Purples are a type of wild orchid belonging to the vanilla family. Vanilla represents sexuality, and the presence of long purples at Ophelia's death allude to a possible lack of innocence.