

Hamlet

Study Guide Student Copy

Act I, Scene I

Vocabulary

rivals-companions

sometimes-previously

mart-trade

impress-draft

moist star-moon

partisan-sword

1. What exposition is provided in this scene? Include an explanation of the quarrel with Norway.
2. What atmosphere is created by this scene? How?
3. Why has Horatio been asked to join the soldiers in the night watch? What has he decided to do?
4. How does the reader know this ghost is not a hallucination?
5. How could this ghost be explained as a foreshadowing of coming evil?
6. Describe each of the following characters: Old Hamlet, Horatio, and Fortinbras.

Act I, Scene II

Vocabulary

rouse-to toast before drink

bruit-to state

beteem-allow

cap-a-pie-head to foot

beaver-a cover for the lower face

1. Why is Hamlet upset?
2. What is your opinion of the marriage of Gertrude and Claudius? Consider the customs of the time.
3. Why did Hamlet not become King when his father died?
4. Describe Claudius' personality and attitude.

5. How does Hamlet describe his father?

6. What are Hamlet's feelings about his mother and his new father Claudius? Consider, "Frailty, thy name is woman!"

7. Explain Hamlet's state of mind. Consider the following quote:
"O, that this too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!"

8. What does the King want Hamlet to do? Why does Hamlet give up his plan to return to Wittenburg so easily?

Act I, Scene III

Vocabulary

primy-in prime time

crescent-flourishing

thews-muscular power

temple-body

cautel-deception

buttons-flower buds

liquid-changeable

censure-belief

habit-clothing

husbandry-management of money

1. Describe the attitudes and values that Laertes gives to Ophelia and those which Polonius gives to Laertes.
2. Explain the reasons that Laertes and Polonius give Ophelia to convince her not to trust Hamlet's love.
3. Evaluate Polonius' advice to his son.
4. What is comical about Polonius?

Act I, Scene IV

Vocabulary

upspring-a German dance

clepe-call

pales-fences

o'er-leavens-perverts

impartment-conversation

Nemean lion's-Herculese strangled the lion in his twelve labors

1. What is the point of Hamlet's long speech?
2. Why do Hamlet's friends fear for him?
3. Marcellus states, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." What might this quote signify?

Act I, Scene V

Vocabulary

Lethe-in the underworld, it is the river of forgetfulness

eager-bitter

lazar-like-leprous

unaneled-without the sacrament

matin-sun rise

globe-mind

Saint Patrick-said to be the keeper of Purgatory

truepenny-honest

antic-abnormal

1. According to the ghost, what has happened? What does the ghost want Hamlet to do?
2. Describe Hamlet's reaction to the ghost.
3. Discuss the nature of the ghost; is it a devil or an angel in the form of King Hamlet who is in purgatory?
4. In your opinion, is Hamlet mad?

Act II, Scene I

Vocabulary

incontinency-lacking morals in sexual activity

videlicet-that is

gyved-shackled

ecstasy-lunacy

1. List what has occurred between Act I and Act II.
2. What do Ophelia and Polonius decide about Hamlet's odd behavior?
3. How do you think Ophelia treated Hamlet? Imagine you are Ophelia. How would you treat Hamlet? Or, imagine that you are Hamlet. How would you like Ophelia to treat you?
4. Do you think Polonius follows his own advice regarding his instructions to Reynaldo, considering the values he expresses to his son?

Act II, Scene II

Vocabulary

sith-since

Polack-King of Poland

perpend-consider

machine-heart

round-immediately

watch-inability to sleep

springes-traps

breathing-talking

privates-those not in public office

coted-passed

inhibition-prohibition

eyases-young hawks

mows-faces

garb-method

extent-welcome

Jeptha-Biblical figure who sacrificed his daughter

valanced-bearded

chopine-woman's shoe

digested-arranged

sable arms-armor

bisson rheum-blinding tears

scullion-kitchen servant

1. How does this scene prepare the reader for future scenes?

2. Compare and contrast Hamlet and Fortinbras. Why has Fortinbras changed his plan to attack Denmark?

3. Why does Claudius hire Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as spies?
4. How does Hamlet feel about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? Why?
5. What is the story of Hecuba and Priam? Explain the story's significance. What is Hamlet's reaction to the story? Explain.
6. Explain Hamlet's state of mind as revealed by his soliloquy. What do Hamlet's remarks to Polonius tell about Hamlet's thoughts? In his dialogue with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet reveals a change he has undergone. What is it?
7. What idea does Hamlet get from having the players in the court?

Act III, Scene I

Vocabulary

blench-flinch

espials-spies

bodkin-dagger

fardels-packs

inoculate-to bud

1. What is Claudius' opinion of Hamlet's madness? What action does he decide to take? Why?
2. To what idea of Hamlet's madness does Polonius cling? Why?
3. Describe and explain Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia. Is Hamlet aware that he is being watched?
4. What is your opinion of Ophelia's reactions to her father's ideas?
5. What ideas are suggested in Hamlet's speech "To be, or not to be...?"
6. What gives a universal quality to this speech?
7. What does Ophelia say about Hamlet?

Act III, Scene II

Vocabulary

Termagant-a Muslim deity

Herod-presented as a tyrant in medieval drama

coped-encountered

pregnant-ready

thrift-profit

Vulcan's-god of fire and metal working

miching mallecho-mischief

Phoebus' cart-chariot of the sun god

Hymen-god of marriage

Hecate's ban-the curse of the goddess of magic and the underworld

Nero-Roman emperor who put his mother to death

1. Why does Hamlet trust and admire Horatio?
2. When Hamlet speaks to Ophelia, what shows that he has lost faith in her?
3. What does the play-within-a-play reveal?
4. What is Hamlet's attitude toward Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
5. What is Hamlet's state of mind at this point in the play?

Act III, Scene III

Vocabulary

noyance-harm

cess-death

flush-lusty

physic-remedy for disease

1. How does Claudius feel about himself? What has changed?
2. How does Rosencrantz describe the role and consequences of being King?
3. Why doesn't Hamlet kill Claudius when he has the opportunity?

Act III, Scene IV

Vocabulary

braz'd-brass-coated

rhapsody-empty

grained-dyed red in grain

enseamed-sullied

conceit-idea

gambol-to skip

unction-ointment

reechy-foul smelling

paddock-toad

gib-tomcat

1. How does Hamlet behave towards his mother? What changes after the ghost visits?
2. What happens to Polonius?
3. Describe Gertrude's reactions to Hamlet. Do you think she is guilty in any way? Explain.
4. Do you believe Hamlet when he says he is only pretending to be mad?

Act IV, Scene I

Vocabulary

brainish-brainstick

divulging-becoming public

blank-target

1. After learning of Polonius' death, what is the King's reaction? Why?

2. Is Gertrude loyal to Claudius?

Act IV, Scene II

Vocabulary

scourge-punishment

1. How does Hamlet react now to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

2. What figurative language does Hamlet use to describe the King?

Act IV, Scene III

Vocabulary

England-the king of England

hectic-fever

1. How does Hamlet react to being sent to England?
2. Where does Hamlet say Polonius' body is?
3. What does the King's closing soliloquy reveal? What contradiction between his surface behavior and his real feelings is apparent?

Act IV, Scene IV

Vocabulary

imposthume-abscess

fust-to go moldy

trick-trifle

1. What effect does meeting Fortinbras have on Hamlet?
2. What does Hamlet's soliloquy reveal about his present idea of himself?

Act IV, Scene V

Vocabulary

spills-destroys

shoon-shoes

larded-adorned

dupp'd-opened

Gis-slanderous term for Jesus

Cock-slanderous term for God

arraign-accuse

wheel-burden

fennel-columbines-flowers symbolizing infidelity

rue-plant symbolizing repentance

daisy-flower symbolizing unrequited love

violets-flowers signifying faithfulness

1. Describe Ophelia's behavior. How does Claudius react to Ophelia?
2. Describe Laertes' response to his father's death. How is he a foil for Hamlet?
3. Ophelia distribute flowers to the King and Queen before she dies. How do these flowers relate to the characters and their actions?
4. What happens to Ophelia?

Act IV, Scene VI

Vocabulary

overlooked-read

1. What news is revealed in Hamlet's letter to Horatio? What does this show about Hamlet?

2. What will happen to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

Act IV, Scene VII

Vocabulary

feats-wicked actions

naked-impoveryished

abuse-deception

siege-rank

scrimers-fencers

simples-medicinal herbs

gall-wound

cold-chaste

lauds-hymns

1. Why does the King tell Laertes he will not kill Hamlet himself?

2. Explain Laertes and Claudius' plan to kill Hamlet. How is Claudius taking advantage of Laertes?

Act V, Scene I

Vocabulary

crowner-coroner

se offendendo-blunder for in self-defense

argal-ergo

quest-in quest

jowls-throws

chapless-without jaws

quiddities-arguments

indentures-contracts

flaw-wind gust

fordo-destroy

strewments-strung flowers; garland

woo't-will you

eisel-vinegar

quick-alive

1. The clowns (gravediggers) discuss where and how Ophelia is to be buried. How does the issue of suicide affect the burial?
2. Who was Yorick? How has Hamlet's attitude toward death changed?
3. What dramatic function do the gravediggers have, and what theme do they express?
4. Explain Hamlet's reaction to Laertes' behavior at Ophelia's funeral.

Act V, Scene II

Vocabulary

bilboes-restraints

statists-statesmen

pass-thrust of the sword

cozenage-deceit

crib-trough

perdition-loss

meed-service

poniards-daggers

german-appropriate

yesty-frothy

union-pearl

o'er-crows-victorious

passage-death

1. Explain Hamlet's remarks to Horatio about fate.
2. Describe Hamlet's state of mind before he fences with Laertes. How has Hamlet changed?
3. Why does Hamlet apologize to Laertes?

4. Explain how each character dies in the end.
5. Why did it end this way?
6. Who does Hamlet appoint to tell his story to the world? Why?
7. Who will be the next King of Denmark?