

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

11\_\_ Per. \_\_

### *Hamlet* Studyguide

Please answer the following questions as we read *Hamlet* in class and as you read it for homework. We may not discuss each question individually, but you are still responsible for answering them to the best of your ability.

#### **Act I**

#### **Scene 1**

1. Where and what time of day or night does the first scene take place?
2. In what activity are Francisco and Bernardo engaged as the play opens? Why is Francisco glad “for his relief”?
3. Shortly after the play begins and as Francisco leaves the scene, Horatio and Marcellus enter. Why have they come?
4. What makes Horatio change his mind about the story Marcellus and Bernardo have told him?
5. Whom does the ghost resemble? What specific detail of resemblance does Horatio note?
6. With regard to the appearance of the ghost, to what similar two situations does Horatio refer?
7. At the second appearance of the ghost, what demand does Horatio make of the apparition?
8. According to Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo, why does the ghost leave a second time?
9. On the basis of the first scene alone, what is Horatio’s appraisal of the ghost?

10. What decision does Horatio and the others make as Scene 1 ends? Why do they arrive at this decision?

## **Scene 2**

11. Who is Claudius?

12. Who is Gertrude?

13. Why has there been “mirth in funeral” and “dirge in marriage”?

14. What does Claudius hope to accomplish by dispatching Cornelius and Voltemand to Norway?

15. Who is Laertes and what is his request of the King?

16. How does Hamlet describe the King in an ASIDE?

17. What does the Queen urge Hamlet to do?

18. What reasons does Claudius give to Hamlet for bringing to an end his mourning duties to his father?

19. On the basis of his appearance in this scene, what are Claudius’ main qualities of character and/or guiding principles?

20. In what terms does Hamlet describe Claudius in contrast to Hamlet’s father, the late King?

21. Hamlet greets Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo warmly in this scene. What question does Hamlet ask of Horatio?

22. Why has Horatio come to Elsinore? From where?

23. What specific point do Hamlet and Horatio make with regard to the recent funeral and marriage?
24. Why have Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo come to speak to Hamlet in this second scene?
25. In the presence of these three men, what does Hamlet decide to do as the scene ends? What request does Hamlet make of the three?

### **Scene 3**

1. Where does this scene take place?
2. Where is Laertes going?
3. Who is Ophelia?
4. Laertes warns Ophelia that she must be careful in her relationship with Hamlet. According to Laertes, why should she be wary of Hamlet?
5. What is the advice which Polonius gives Laertes?
6. In questioning Ophelia, what does Polonius want to know about the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia?
7. What advice does Polonius give Ophelia?

#### **Scene 4**

8. Where does this scene take place?
9. Who is the first to see the ghost this time?
10. Why does Hamlet have no fear in following the ghost?
11. What do Horatio and Marcellus try to do?
12. What are the conditions in Denmark, according to Marcellus?

#### **Scene 5**

13. What is the identity of the ghost?
14. What charge or command does the ghost give to Hamlet?
15. According to the ghost, who is most directly responsible for his death?
16. a. What became of Hamlet's mother after the death of King Hamlet?  
  
b. How is Hamlet to treat his mother?
17. How did King Hamlet die? (*Be specific.*)
18. After the ghost leaves, what request does Hamlet make of Horatio and Marcellus after he tells them the ghost is an honest one?
19. What words express Hamlet's feelings about carrying out the promise to avenge his father's death?

**Act 2**  
**Scene 1**

1. On what mission does Polonius send Reynaldo? Why?
2. What does Polonius' advice to Reynaldo indicate about Polonius' character?
3. Why is Ophelia so frightened when she enters this scene and speaks with her father?
4. To what does Polonius attribute the actions of Hamlet?
5. In response to her father's command, what had Ophelia done regarding her relationship with Hamlet?
6. What conclusion(s) does Polonius draw from what Ophelia tells him?
7. What action(s) does Polonius plan to take at the end of this scene?

**Scene 2**

8. What plan does the king have to attempt to learn the cause of Hamlet's state?
9. a. Who are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?  
b. What has been the relationship of these two to Hamlet?
10. What is the Queen's opinion as to the causes of her son's distempers?

11. a. What report do the ambassadors from Norway bring to the King?  
  
b. What request do they bring?
12. Of what does Polonius inform the King and Queen about Hamlet's attentions to Ophelia?
13. What plan is devised to prove conclusively that Polonius is correct in appraising Hamlet's condition?
14. a. What evidence is there that Hamlet is disillusioned with mankind and the world?  
  
b. Why is he disillusioned?
15. What group of people arrives at Elsinore?
16. What does Hamlet call upon these people to do?
17. What play does Hamlet request at court before the King and Queen?
18. What alteration in the play does Hamlet ask the players to make?
19. Why does Hamlet regard such an exposure as necessary?
20. With what specific words does this act close?

**Act 3**  
**Scene 1**

1. What report do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern give Claudius and Gertrude about their mission to Hamlet?
2. What plan(s) does the King devise to test whether or not the cause of Hamlet's conduct is love for Ophelia?
3. Look at Hamlet's "To be or not to be..." soliloquy. Briefly summarize what he is saying in the space below:
4. Why does Hamlet assume madness in his interview with Ophelia and speak so harshly to her?
5. Hamlet tells Ophelia, "Get thee to a nunnery." What reasons does he give Ophelia to support this advice?
6. After the conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia, what is Claudius' appraisal of Hamlet's so-called madness?
7. a. What plan of action does Claudius "in quick determination" decide upon with regard to Hamlet?  
  
b. Why?
8. What suggestion does Polonius make which he will act upon if the King allows him to?

**Scene 2**

9. Why does Hamlet trust Horatio?

10. What does Hamlet ask Horatio to do while the performance is in progress?
11. a. When Claudius asks Hamlet the name of the play, what is Hamlet's reply?  
b. What is the humor in this?
12. What effect does the play have on the King?
13. To what conclusion does Hamlet come as a result of Claudius' reaction?
14. What request does Rosencrantz bring Hamlet from the Queen?
15. What is said in Hamlet's final soliloquy in this scene?

### **Scenes 3 and 4**

16. What does Claudius ask Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to do regarding his plans for Hamlet?
17. What does Polonius plan to do during Hamlet's interview with Gertrude?
18. In the King's soliloquy ["Oh my offense is rank..."], what does the King reveal of:
  - a. the murder:
  - b. his mental state:
  - c. his moral condition:
19. When Hamlet sees the King praying alone, he has a chance to kill him, but does not. Why does he choose not to kill him then?
20. Hamlet takes direct action in scene 4.
  - a. Who does he kill?
  - b. Who did he hope he was killing?



21. What are Hamlet's grounds for betraying his mother after he has seen who his victim is?
22. What reason does Hamlet give for the ghost's appearance in scene 4?
23. What does Hamlet ask his mother to do?
24.
  - a. At the end of scene 4, where is Hamlet preparing to go?
  - b. What is his opinion of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at this point?
25. In Shakespearean terms, a *climax* is when the protagonist reaches the peak of his or her power and a distinct change occurs in him or her as well as in the direction of the action. Once the climax is reached, things start to go against the protagonist, who seems to be following a downward path. How does this apply to Hamlet?

**Act 4**  
**Scenes 1-7**

1. What information does Gertrude reveal to Claudius near the start of the first scene?
2. What does the King fear will be the effect upon the people of the murder of Polonius?
3. What prompt action does the King take to get rid of Hamlet and to explain the death of Polonius?
4. In scene 2, what information do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern seek from Hamlet?
5. How does Hamlet treat these two?
6. a. In scene 3, what reason(s) does Claudius give for sending Hamlet away quickly, smoothly, and decisively?  
  
b. To where is he being sent?
7. a. According to Claudius, what will happen to Hamlet once he has arrived at this destination?  
  
b. Why does he hope for these results?
8. Why send Hamlet to England to be murdered instead of having it done in Denmark?
9. a. To what army is reference made in scene 4?  
  
b. Where is the army?
10. What does Hamlet admire in Fortinbras?
11. As the scene ends, Hamlet watches the army and contemplates his motives. What is motivating him at this point?

12. What are the causes of Ophelia's insanity in scene 5?
13. Why has Laertes returned to Elsinore?
14. How does Claudius deal with Laertes?
15. What are the contents of the letter the sailors bring to Horatio in scene 6?
16. What news is revealed in the letters to Gertrude and Claudius in scene 7?
18. What does Claudius now decide to do to Hamlet?
19. Claudius hopes to capitalize on what talent of Laertes?
20. a. What is the first suggestion made to insure the accomplishment of Claudius' scheme against Hamlet?  
  
b. What is the second suggestion?
21. What are the circumstances of Ophelia's death?
22. a. What is Laertes' reaction to her death?  
  
b. What is Claudius' reaction to her death?

## **Act 5**

### **Scene 1-2**

1. Where does scene 1 take place?
2. Whose burial is about to take place?
3. What is contrary to custom?

4. What is the function of the clowns/gravediggers?
5. Who was Yorick?
6. Why does Hamlet do and say what he does in response to Laertes' action?
7. Where does Horatio go as this first scene closes?
8. What does Hamlet do to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in scene 2? Why?
9. What message does Osric bring from the King?
10. Why does Horatio urge Hamlet not to engage in the proposed sword-duel with Laertes?
11. Who is the judge of the duel?
12. What offer to Hamlet does Claudius make after the first hit?
13. What does Gertrude do after the second hit which Claudius tries to prevent?
14. What circumstances prompt and allow Hamlet to kill Claudius?
15. What charge or command does Hamlet give to Horatio?
16. Who is to be Denmark's new King?
17. What message do the English ambassadors relate?
18. Name all those who die in this last scene:
19. What honors are to be paid to Hamlet as the play ends?

## Literary Elements in *Hamlet*

### **1. Theme**

Major Themes:

A. Madness

B. Revenge

C. Mortality

D. Corruption

Lesser Themes:

E. Doubt

F. Appearance and Reality

### **2. Conflict**

External Conflict:

Internal Conflict:

### **3. Soliloquy and Aside**

Major soliloquies:

Major asides:

#### **4. Foil**

#### **5. Imagery**

Death and decay; disease

#### **6. Irony**

- All of the King's plots are thwarted and fall upon him

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#### **7. Flashback**

#### **8. Foreshadowing**

#### **9. Suspense**

#### **10. Allusion**