

# ***Hamlet* Study Questions**

## Act 1, Scene 1

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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: King Hamlet, Horatio, and Fortinbras.

## Act 1, Scene 2

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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's 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, "Oh women! You are so weak!"
7. Explain Hamlet's state of mind. Consider the following quote: "Ah, I wish my dirty flesh could melt away into a vapor!"
8. What does the King want Hamlet to do? Why does Hamlet give up his plan to return to Wittenburg so easily?

## Act 1, Scene 3

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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's advice to his son.
4. What is comical about Polonius?

## Act 1, Scene 4

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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 mean?

## Act 1, Scene 5

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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 good or evil in the form of King Hamlet who is in purgatory?
4. In your opinion, is Hamlet mad (as in, *crazy*)?

## Act 2, Scene 1

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. List what has occurred between Act 1 and Act 2.
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? Then, 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 2, Scene 2

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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 reveal 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 at court?

### Act 3, Scene 1

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is Claudius's 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 he aware that he is being watched?
4. What is your opinion of Ophelia's reaction to her father's ideas?
5. What ideas are suggested in Hamlet's speech "is it better to be alive or dead?"?
6. What gives a universal quality to this speech?
7. What does Ophelia say about Hamlet?

### Act 3, Scene 2

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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 3, Scene 3

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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 3, Scene 4

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How does Hamlet behave towards his mother? What changes after the ghost's 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 4, Scene 1

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How does Claudius feel about himself? What has changed? After learning of Polonius's death, what is the King's reaction? Why?
2. Is Gertrude loyal to Claudius?

## Act 4, Scene 2

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How does Hamlet react now to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
2. What figurative language does Hamlet use to describe the King?

## Act 4, Scene 3

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Act 4, Scene 4

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Act 4, Scene 5

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Act 4, Scene 6

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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 4, Scene 7

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why does the King tell Laertes he will not kill Hamlet himself?
2. Explain Laertes and Claudius's plan to kill Hamlet. How is Claudius taking advantage of Laertes?

## Act 5, Scene 1

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The two gravediggers discuss where and how Ophelia is to be buried. How does the way she died 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's behavior at Ophelia's funeral.

## Act 5, Scene 2

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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 the play 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?