



Name _____ Section _____ Date _____

Assignment Title: "Hamlet" Act 1 study questions

Instructor: Ms. Johnson

Hamlet Study Guide, Act I

You do not need to write out any answers to these questions. However, they may help you to identify information to review for the quiz.

Use the resources that I have introduced in class to help you understand the text: No Fear Shakespeare and the David Tennant movie version of the play—available on YouTube.com. You can also use Spark Notes to get an overview of the plot and events in each scene within this act.

I.i

1. Where and at what exact hour does this scene take place?
2. What does the Ghost look like? (1. i.47-8)
3. Why are the soldiers on guard? What military concerns do they discuss?
4. How did King Fortinbras of Norway lose his lands?
5. Why is Prince Fortinbras becoming aggressive?
6. List three signs--natural phenomena--which occurred before the murder of Caesar. Why is this relevant to this play?
7. Why and when does the Ghost disappear?

I.ii

1. How does Hamlet feel about the king and queen? (Hint: go for the mixed feelings).
2. How does Claudius deal with the threat of aggression from Fortinbras?

Who are his messengers?

3. What does Laertes want and why is the king willing to grant it?
4. Which clothes images and stage images are used in lines 77-78 and 82-84 to suggest that appearance and reality are not the same?
5. List three things Claudius asks of Hamlet.

6. What will accompany each toast drunk in Denmark that day? Hamlet thinks this is...
7. Explain the garden imagery in lines 135-136.
8. Why is Hamlet so depressed? Be specific.
9. What additional information about the appearance of the Ghost do we get at the end of this scene?

I.iii

1. What does Laertes think of Hamlet's attentions to Ophelia?
2. Why is Hamlet unlikely to marry Ophelia?
3. What advice does Polonius offer Laertes about his clothing?
4. Why is it ironic that Polonius gives Laertes lengthy advice at this particular time?
5. In Polonius' speech to Ophelia, he uses "tender" in four ways. What are these ways and what is the effect of this repetition?
6. How does Polonius instruct Ophelia to act toward Hamlet?
7. Will Ophelia obey her father?

I.iv

1. What is the season of the year and the time of night?
2. What is Hamlet's explanation of and opinion about the sound they hear while waiting for the Ghost?
3. Lines 40-41 suggest two divergent explanations of Ghosts; explain the two.
4. What does Horatio fear that the Ghost will do?
5. What provokes Marcellus to say "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark"?

I.v

1. Where is the Ghost confined when he is not wandering? Why?
2. What does the Ghost want Hamlet to do?
3. What account of King Hamlet's death had been given at the time of his death?

4. How did King Hamlet really die?
5. Did Claudius seduce Gertrude before King Hamlet died?
6. What is meant by “cut off even in the blossom of my sin”?
7. What warning does the Ghost give Hamlet about his mother?
8. What does “Leave her to heaven...” mean?
9. Why do Horatio, Hamlet, and Marcellus keep moving around the state to swear on Hamlet’s sword?
10. What does Hamlet mean by “antic disposition”?
11. Why does Hamlet say “O cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right”?