



Name _____ Section _____ Date _____

Assignment Title: “Hamlet” Act 3 study questions

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Hamlet Study Guide, Act III

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.

III.i

1. What do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern report to the king and queen about their success with Hamlet?
2. What plan do the king and Polonius devise to test whether or not the cause of Hamlet’s conduct is love for Ophelia?
3. Explain the contents of Polonius’ lines “We are oft to blame in this – Tis too much proved, -- that with devotion’s visage / and pious action we do sugar o’er / The devil himself.”
4. What effect does this comment have on the king?
5. In the famous “To be or not to be...” soliloquy what is it that Hamlet concludes?
6. Why does Hamlet assume madness in his interview with Ophelia and speak so harshly to her?
7. What advice does Hamlet give Ophelia?
8. Explain lines beginning “I say, we will have no more marriages...”
9. What is the tone of Ophelia’s soliloquy?
10. What does the king infer from Hamlet’s soliloquy and his words to Ophelia?
11. Why does the king fear Hamlet?
12. What suggestion does Polonius make?

III.ii

1. What does Hamlet say the mission of the drama is?
2. Why does Hamlet speak to Horatio in the manner in which he does?
3. What is the dramatic purpose of his speech?
4. What does Hamlet say to Horatio about the play and his purpose in presenting it?
5. What change is there in Hamlet after the king, queen, Polonius and Ophelia have entered?

6. What puns does Hamlet make in speaking to Polonius?
7. What is the plot of the play which is presented before the king and queen?
8. What is meant by “dumb-show”?
9. What effect does the play have upon the king?
10. What point in the ‘play within a play’ has been reached when Claudius reacts?
11. When all have left except Hamlet and Horatio, how does the former act?
12. Do Hamlet and Horatio now accept entirely without any reservations the message of the ghost?
13. What request from the queen does Rosencrantz bring?
14. What metaphorical comparison does Hamlet make between Guildenstern and a player’s pipe?
15. Of what does Hamlet charge Guildenstern?
16. What is the emphasis of Hamlet’s soliloquy at the close of this scene?
17. What has been accomplished dramatically in this scene?

III.iii

1. In his soliloquy, what does the king reveal of the murder; what of his mental, moral condition?
2. What are Hamlet’s reasons for not killing the king when he finds him alone, praying? Why is this terribly ironic?

III.iv

1. Whom does Hamlet kill? Who did he think it was at first?
2. Why does Shakespeare cause Hamlet to kill at this time?
3. How does Hamlet chide his mother?
4. What description does he give her of her first husband?
5. Why does the ghost come?
6. Why does Gertrude think Hamlet’s words and conduct indicate insanity?
7. What appeal does Hamlet make to his mother to reform?
8. What does Hamlet say to his mother concerning himself and his words to her?
9. What does Hamlet say about his journey to England?
10. What does he say about his purpose to circumvent the plot of the king?