

Name: _____

Date: _____

***Hamlet* – Reading Guide**

As you read each act in the play, respond to the following questions.

Act I

Vocabulary Words: Provide definition in own words and part of speech

Assail:

Auspicious:

Countenance:

1. What had Bernardo seen at a prior watch?

2. What does young Fortinbras want from Denmark?

3. What does the King (Claudius) think about Hamlet's grieving?

4. Hamlet is upset in Act I for two reasons. What are they?

5. What is Laertes' advice to Ophelia?

6. What is Polonius' advice to Laertes?

7. At the end of Scene III, Ophelia agrees to "obey." What will she do?

8. What did the ghost tell Hamlet?

9. Hamlet swears Horatio to two things. What are they?

Analysis

1. How do Hamlet's words reflect his desire for revenge? "The time is out of joint. Oh, cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right!"

2. Would Act I have been more or less effective had it opened with the enactment of the actual murder of the King? Explain your answer.

3. Describe the overall purpose of Act I. How does Shakespeare's choices impact the reader and begin to create significance in the play?

Act II

Vocabulary Words: Provide definition in own words and part of speech

Rogue:

Sovereign:

Paragon:

1. Where does Polonius send Reynaldo? Why?

2. Why does Polonius think Hamlet is "mad"?

3. Why have Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come to the castle?

4. What is Polonius' plan for testing his theory that Hamlet is love-crazy?

6. What is Hamlet's plan for finding out if the King (Claudius) is guilty of his father's murder?

7. Why is Hamlet upset with himself at the end of Act II?

Analysis

1. What kind of man is Polonius? Why does Hamlet have nothing but contempt for him?

2. "Denmark's a prison," Hamlet tells his boyhood friends. What is the meaning of this metaphor? What does it suggest about Hamlet?

Act III

Vocabulary Words: Provide definition in own words and part of speech

Calamity:

Abominable:

Beguile:

Mandate:

1. What message do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern carry to the King? What is the King's response?

2. What do the King (Claudius) and Polonius decide about Hamlet's condition after eavesdropping on Hamlet and Ophelia?

3. What was the King's reaction to the play, and what did Hamlet and Horatio decide his reaction meant?

4. The King has Rosencrantz and Guildenstern prepare to do what? Why?

5. Why doesn't Hamlet kill the King when the King is kneeling?

6. How does Polonius die?

Analysis

1. From the moment Claudius betrays himself during the performance of the play, Hamlet has no choice but to act swiftly. Agree or disagree with this statement using evidence from the text.

2. What character trait of Polonius brings about his death?

3. Using the action of Scene 2, explain Hamlet's remark that a play holds a "mirror up to nature."

Act IV

Vocabulary Words: Provide definition in own words and part of speech

Imminent:

Superfluous:

Obscure:

Dismay:

1. What does Hamlet think of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

2. What is the content of the letters the King sends with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to England with Hamlet?

3. What prompts Hamlet to say, "My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!"?

4. What has happened to Ophelia?

5. What does Laertes want and why?

6. What is the content of Hamlet's letter to Horatio?

7. What is the King and Laertes's plan to kill Hamlet?

8. What news does the Queen bring Laertes?

Analysis

1. Compare Laertes's response to the news of his father's murder to Hamlet's first response to the news of the murder of his father.

2. "Frailty, thy name is woman." With these words Hamlet early in the play gives his appraisal of feminine nature. Would you say that the events of Acts III and IV support or dispute Hamlet's evaluation? Why?

Act V

Vocabulary Words: Provide definition in own words and part of speech

Abhorred:

Palpable:

Treachery:

1. Laertes thinks that Ophelia should have a better funeral service. Why doesn't she deserve a better service?

2. When Hamlet jumps into Ophelia's grave, what does this show about him?

4. What did Hamlet do to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

5. What news does Osric bring Hamlet?

6. What happens to the King, Hamlet, Laertes, and the Queen at the end of Act V?

7. Who does Hamlet recommend to the throne?

Analysis

1. Consider the final scenes of the play in terms of "physic to the illness of the state." How is the social disorder in the state resolved? How does this relate to the metaphor in the above quotation?
