

Hamlet Study Guide English Ten

Name: _____

“This above all: to thine own self be true” (Hamlet Iiii)

Terms to Know

Soliloquy

Tragedy

Tragic Hero & Foil

Poetic Justice & Deus ex Machina

Epiphany

Catharsis

Irony

Thematic Questions to Discuss

1. Is it better to act quickly or to take the time to think things over?
2. What constitutes betrayal?
3. Is certainty ever really possible?
4. How are madness and responsibility for one's actions related?
5. Is revenge ever justified?

Act II

1. What is the significance of opening the play with the supernatural?

Act Iii

1. List the decisions made in this scene concerning the following characters:

The People of Denmark

Fortinbras

Laertes

Hamlet

2. Explicate Hamlet's first soliloquy (separate handout).

Act Iiii

1. Briefly summarize Polonius' advice.

Act Iiv, v

1. What do we learn about Hamlet's character in these scenes?

Act Iii

1. What do we learn about Ophelia's character in this scene?

2. Describe Hamlet's behavior when he visits Ophelia in scene 1. Do you think his actions provide evidence of his insanity or are his actions motivated by something else? Explain.

Act IIIi

1. Explicate Hamlet's second soliloquy (separate handout).
2. When Polonius tells Gertrude about Hamlet's madness (and its cause) she says, "More matter with less art" (IIIi 95). What does she mean?
3. What do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern agree to do?
4. How do the players fit into Hamlet's plan for proving that Claudius is guilty of murdering Hamlet's father?

Act IIIi

1. Explicate Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy (separate handout).
2. Claudius doubts that Hamlet's behavior is caused by his unrequited love for Ophelia – "Love? His affections do not that way tend; / Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little, / Was not like madness." What else does he doubt in this short monologue and what does he intend to do with Hamlet?

Act IIIii The Mousetrap!

1. What is proven in this scene?
2. What is Hamlet saying to Guildenstern when he says "... Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me"?

Act IIIiii

1. Explain Claudius' speech and Hamlet's reaction.

Act IIIiv The Closet!

1. Who does Hamlet kill and why?
2. Why does the Ghost reappear?
3. Why does Hamlet react so severely with Gertrude?

Act IVi

1. Compare Claudius and Hamlet.

Act IVii

1. Why does Hamlet call Rosencrantz a "sponge?"

Act IViii

1. Discuss Hamlet's "logic."
2. What is Claudius' plan?

Act IViv

1. Compare Fortinbras and Hamlet.

2. Explicate Hamlet's "How all occasions do inform against me" soliloquy (separate handout).

Act IVv

1. Discuss the following excerpt. "Of all the pivotal characters in *Hamlet*, Ophelia is the most static and one-dimensional. She has the potential to become a *tragic heroine* -- to overcome the adversities inflicted upon her -- but she instead crumbles into insanity, becoming merely *tragic*. This is because Ophelia herself is not as important as her representation of the dual nature of women in the play. Ophelia's distinct purpose is to show at once Hamlet's warped view of women as callous sexual predators, and the innocence and virtue of women."¹

Act IVvi

1. Deus ex machina:

Act IVvii

1. What is the plan?
2. Discuss Gertrude's speech.

Act Vi

1. "Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him...." (line 183).

¹ Mabillard, Amanda. *Ophelia*. *Shakespeare Online*. 22 April 2013. < <http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/hamlet/opheliacharacter.html> >.

2. Discuss the comedy (and parody?) in this scene.

Act Vii

1. Map out (or list) the action and the result.

Ophelia

Polonius

Claudius

Gertrude


Hamlet


Laertes

Fortinbras

Horatio

King Hamlet  (dead) + Queen Gertrude  = Prince Hamlet 
(our main man)

King Claudius  (King Hamlet's brother) + Queen Gertrude = one sad Hamlet (he misses his dad!)

Polonius  (Lord Chamberlain—also known as the King's bro/right-hand man/advice giver)

Laertes  (Polonius' son) Ophelia  (Polonius' daughter and Prince Hamlet's boo²)

Horatio  (Hamlet's BFF, wingman, bro) Rosencrantz and

Guiltenstern 
(Hamlet's "friends")

² babe, lady, girlfriend, beach angel....

Fortinbras (Prince —just like Hamlet, hint, hint—of Norway)

