

Hamlet Study Guide Questions

Use each set of study guide questions to prepare you for quizzes and a greater understanding of the play. 😊

Act I

1. Identify Bernardo, Francisco, Marcellus, Horatio, and King Hamlet.
2. What had Bernardo seen at a prior watch?
3. Why does Marcellus think Horatio should speak to the ghost?
4. What does young Fortinbras want to do?
5. Who do the soldiers/guards want to tell about the ghost?
6. Identify King Claudius, Queen
7. Gertrude, Laertes, and Polonius.
8. Where does Claudius send Cornelius and Voltimand?
9. What does the King tell Hamlet?
10. Hamlet is upset for two reasons. What are they?
11. What news does Horatio bring Hamlet?
12. What does Hamlet decide to do after he hears Horatio's news?
13. What is Laertes' advice to Ophelia?
14. What is Polonius' advice to Laertes?
15. At the end of Scene III, Ophelia agrees to "obey." What will she do?
16. What does the ghost tell Hamlet?

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

Act II

17. Where does Polonius send Reynaldo? Why?

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

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

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

21. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern finally meet with Hamlet, and Hamlet discovers they were sent for by the King. How does Hamlet describe his personal problems to them? What does he tell them?

22. What arrangement does Hamlet make with Player I?

23. After Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave Hamlet, what does he basically say in his soliloquy?

Act III

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

25. Hamlet's famous "To be or not to be" soliloquy is in scene one. In a sentence or two paraphrase his main points.

26. Describe Hamlet's tone when he speaks to Ophelia.

27. What do the King and Polonius decide about Hamlet's condition after eavesdropping on Hamlet and Ophelia?

28. Why does Hamlet give instructions to the players?

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

30. What message does Rosencrantz deliver from the Queen?

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

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

33. How does Polonius die?

34. What would Hamlet have his mother do?

Act IV

35. What does Hamlet think of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

36. Why must the King "not put the strong arm on" Hamlet?

37. When the King asks Hamlet where Polonius is, what is Hamlet's answer?

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

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

40. What has happened to Ophelia?

41. Why does Laertes force his way in? What does he want?

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

43. What plan do the King and Laertes discuss to kill Hamlet?

44. What news does the Queen bring Laertes?

Act V

45. Laertes thinks that Ophelia should have a better funeral service. What is the priest's answer?

46. Why does Hamlet jump into Ophelia's grave?

47. What does the King say to Laertes to console him after Laertes and Hamlet are separated?

48. What did Hamlet do to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

49. What news does Osric bring Hamlet?

50. What happens to the King, Hamlet, Laertes, and the Queen?

51. Who does Hamlet recommend to the throne?