

## *Hamlet*: Reading Guide

### Act I

1. Identify Bernardo, Francisco, Marcellus, Horatio, 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 Gertrude, Laertes, Polonius.
7. Where does Claudius send Cornelius and Voltimand?
8. What does the king tell Hamlet?
9. Hamlet is upset for two reasons. What are they?
10. What news does Horatio bring Hamlet?
11. What does Hamlet decide to do after he hears Horatio's news?
12. What is Laertes' advice to Ophelia?
13. What is Polonius' advice to Laertes?
14. At the end of scene iii, Ophelia agrees to "obey." What will she do?
15. What did the ghost tell Hamlet?
16. Hamlet swears Horatio to two things. What are they?

### Act II

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?
5. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern finally meet with Hamlet, and Hamlet discovers there were sent for by the king. How does Hamlet describe his personal problems to them? What does he tell them?
6. What arrangement does Hamlet make with Player 1?
7. After Rosencrantz and Guildenstern leave Hamlet, what does he basically say in his soliloquy?

### Act III

1. What message do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern carry to the King? What is the king's response?
2. Hamlet's famous "To Be or Not To Be" soliloquy is scene i. In a sentence or two paraphrase his main points.
3. Describe Hamlet's tone when he speaks to Ophelia.
4. What do the King and Polonius decide about Hamlet's condition after eavesdropping on Hamlet and Ophelia?
5. Why does Hamlet give instruction to the players?

6. What is the king's reaction to the play, and what do Hamlet and Horatio decide his reaction means?
7. What message does Rosencrantz deliver from the Queen?
8. The king has Rosencrantz and Guildenstern prepare to do what? Why?
9. Why does Hamlet not kill the King when the King is kneeling?
10. How does Polonius die?
11. What would Hamlet have his mother do?

#### Act IV

1. What does Hamlet think of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
2. Why must the King "not put the strong arm on" Hamlet?
3. When the King asks Hamlet where Polonius is, what is Hamlet's answer?
4. What is the content of the letters the King sends with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to England with Hamlet?
5. What prompts Hamlet to say, "My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!"?
6. What has happened to Ophelia?
7. Why does Laertes force his way in? What does he want?
8. What is the content of Hamlet's letter to Horatio?
9. What are the King's two reasons to Laertes for not punishing Hamlet immediately and drastically for Polonius' murder?
10. What plan do the King and Laertes discuss to kill Hamlet?
11. What news does the Queen bring Laertes?

#### Act V

1. Laertes thinks that Ophelia should have a better funeral service. What is the priest's answer?
2. Why does Hamlet jump into Ophelia's grave?
3. What does the King say to Laertes to console him after Laertes and Hamlet are separated?
4. What has Hamlet done to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
5. What news does Osric bring Hamlet?
6. What happens to the Queen, Laertes, King, and Hamlet?
7. Whom does Hamlet recommend to the throne of Denmark?

*Hamlet*: quotations

In your copy of the play, mark the following quotations. Paraphrase each on paper and explain its significance.

Act I

1. A little more than kin and less than kind. (ii, 67)
2. Seems, madam. Nay, it is. I know not "seems". (ii, 79)
3. How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world! (ii, 137-138)
4. Frailty, thy name is woman! (ii, 150)
5. Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral baked meats / Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables. (ii, 187-188)
6. Neither a borrower not a lender be,  
For loan oft loses both itself and friend  
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  
This above all: To think own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man. (iii, 81-86)
7. Something is rotten in the state of Denmark. (iv, 100)
8. Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder. (v, 31)
9. My uncle! / Aye, that incestuous, that adulterate beast. (v, 48-49)
10. Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive  
Against thy mother aught. Leave her to Heaven  
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge  
To prick and sting her. (v, 92-95)
11. The time is out of joint. Oh, cursed spite / That ever I was born to set it right! (v, 210-211)

Act II

1. What majesty should be, what duty is,  
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,  
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.  
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit  
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes  
I will be brief. (ii, 94-99)
2. Though this be madness, yet there is method in't. (ii, 223-224)
3. Why, then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. (ii, 268-269)
4. What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me—no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so. (ii, 327-334)
5. The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King (ii, 633-634)

### Act III

1. Madness in great ones must not unwatched go. (i, 202)
2. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nation. (ii, 18-21)
3. The lady doth protest too much, methinks. (ii, 254)
4. O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pounds. Didst perceive? (ii, 212-213)
5. O heart, lose not thy nature, let not ever  
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.  
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.  
I will speak daggers to her, but use none. (ii, 426-429)
6. My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. / Words without thoughts never to  
Heaven go. (iii, 102-103)
7. Oh, shame! Where is thy blush? (iv, 91)
8. O Hamlet, speak no more.  
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,  
And there I see such black and grained spots  
As will not leave their tinct. (iv, 99-101)
9. I must be cruel only to be kind. (iv, 199)

### Act IV

1. What is a man  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more. (iv, 35-37)
2. Oh, from this time forth,  
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth. (iv, 68-69)

### Act V

1. Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio (i, 190-191)
2. Sweets to the sweet (i, 254)
3. The cat will mew, and dog will have his day. (i, 311)
4. I am justly killed with mine own treachery. (ii, 337)
5. The drink, the drink! I am poisoned. (ii, 341)
6. The King, the King's to blame. (ii, 351)
7. Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince, / And flights of angels sing thee  
to thy rest. (ii, 397-398)