

Hamlet Homework Questions

ACT 1

Scene 1

1. Describe the prevailing atmosphere in this scene. Explain how this atmosphere is created.
2. Horatio is introduced as a scholar. How does Shakespeare reveal this characteristic?
3. What reasons does Horatio give that might explain the appearance of the ghost?

Scene 2

1. What qualities of Hamlet's character are brought out by
 - a. his first words in the play
 - b. what he says in his soliloquy
 - c. his conversation with Horatio and the sentries?
2. Outline the Norwegian situation as presented in this scene.
3. Find any references to corruption in this scene.
4. Why is Hamlet angry at Claudius and Gertrude?

Scene 3

1. How does Laertes' advice to Ophelia resemble a) Polonius' advice to Laertes? B) Polonius' advice to Ophelia?
2. How is sympathy created in this scene for a) Ophelia, b) Hamlet?
3. What do you think of Polonius' advice to Laertes? Is it good advice or not? Explain your answer.

Scene 4

1. Why is Hamlet embarrassed by Claudius' behaviour this night?
2. What is Hamlet's theory about the flaws people are born with? Do you agree with his theory? Explain why or why not.

Scene 5

1. What does the ghost tell Hamlet about his death?
2. What does Hamlet's line, "O my prophetic soul" tell us about what Hamlet suspected?
3. Why does the ghost tell Hamlet not to punish Gertrude?
4. What does Hamlet make the men do before they leave? Why?

ACT 2

Scene 1

1. What do we learn about Polonius' character in his conversation with Reynaldo?
2. Why is Ophelia so upset?
3. What conclusion does Polonius draw from the description of Hamlet's behaviour? What does he decide to do next?

Scene 2

1. Why have Rosencrantz and Guildenstern been summoned to meet with Claudius and Gertrude?
2. What news has Claudius heard from Norway?
3. What reason does Polonius suggest is the cause of Hamlet's strange behaviour?
4. What plan is devised to prove or disprove Polonius' theory about Hamlet.

ACT 3

Scene 1

1. In his soliloquy, what reason does Hamlet give to explain why people who are suffering don't end their lives?
2. At what point in his conversation with Ophelia, does Hamlet become aware that they are being watched? Compare his behaviour before and after that moment.
3. After witnessing the scene between Hamlet and Ophelia, is Claudius convinced that Hamlet's sadness/madness is caused by his relationship with Ophelia?

4. What is Polonius' next plan to get to the root of Hamlet's problem?

Scene 2

1. Why does Hamlet want Horatio to watch Claudius during the play?
2. Considering that the ghost has told Hamlet that Gertrude committed adultery, what is ironic about her line saying that she thinks the queen in the play "doth protest too much."
3. What is Claudius' reaction when he sees his murder acted out?
4. Explain why you think Hamlet is now sure that Claudius killed his father.
5. What do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ask Hamlet to do when the play is over?

Scene 3

1. Where is Hamlet going to be sent? Why is Claudius sending him there?
2. What do we learn about Claudius while he is praying?
3. Why doesn't Hamlet kill Claudius when he is alone with him? What is ironic about his decision to not kill Claudius?

Scene 4

1. After reading this scene, do you think Gertrude knew that Claudius killed her husband? Explain your answer?
2. Describe Hamlet's reaction when he realizes he has killed Polonius.
3. What instructions does Hamlet give Gertrude at the end of the scene?
4. Gertrude tells Hamlet that he will be going to England. What plans does he have for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

ACT 4

Scene 1

1. How does Claudius react to the news that Hamlet has killed Polonius?
2. What is his first priority?

Scene 3

1. Why does Claudius worry about the decisions he needs to make about what to do with Hamlet?
2. What is he asking the king of England to do? Why is he sure that the king will do as he asks?

Scene 4

1. Why does Claudius worry about the decisions he needs to make about what to do with Hamlet?
2. What is he asking the king of England to do? Why is he sure that the king will do as he asks?

Scene 5

1. What has happened to Ophelia?
2. What is Claudius worried about?
3. How does Claudius manage to calm Laertes?
4. What is Laertes' reaction to Ophelia's madness?

Scene 6

1. What do we learn about Hamlet from the letter he has sent Horatio?
2. How do you think Hamlet's return will affect the plot?

Scene 7

1. What is Claudius' plan to have Hamlet killed? What is Laertes planning to do to make sure that Hamlet dies? How does Claudius plan to help?
2. Describe what happens to Ophelia.

ACT 5

Scene 1

1. What hints are we given that the grave is being dug is for Ophelia?
2. What do Hamlet and Laertes quarrel about at Ophelia's grave?

Scene 2

1. How has Hamlet arranged for the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? Do you think that this action is justified? Explain your answer.
2. Before the duel, how does Hamlet attempt to make peace with Laertes?

3. What happens to the wine after it is poisoned by Claudius?
4. How does Hamlet end up poisoning Laertes?
5. How does Hamlet make sure that Claudius dies?
6. What does Hamlet want Horatio to do after Hamlet's death?