

Teacher Guide

Grades 9–12

Hamlet

William Shakespeare

NOVEL UNITS[®]

NEW WAYS TO TEACH READING,
WRITING, & CRITICAL THINKING



Novel Units® Single-Classroom User Agreement for Non-Replicable Material

With the purchase of electronic materials (such as ebooks and print-on-demand teaching activities) from a Novel Units, Inc. (Novel Units) Web site, or that of a Novel Units authorized dealer's Web site, the customer (the purchaser or person for whom this product was purchased) is granted a single-classroom user license, which entitles the customer to use these materials for a single classroom (or home) only.

Sharing the digital files or reproduction of any part of this publication in any way or by any means for additional classrooms (or homes), an entire school, or a school system; by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers; or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Reproduction of any part of this Teacher Guide is strictly prohibited.

Use of the materials for anything other than classroom instruction is a violation of Novel Units intellectual property rights. Novel Units retains full intellectual property rights on all proprietary products, and these rights extend to electronic editions of print books or materials, excerpts of print books or materials, and individual teaching activities offered for sale in digital format.

To obtain more information, or, if you would like to use Novel Units products for additional purposes not outlined in the single-classroom license (described above), please contact customercare@ecslarningsystems.com.

ebooks.ecslarningsystems.com

HAMLET

by
William Shakespeare

Teacher Guide

Written by
Gloria Levine, M.A.
Introduction by Maureen Kirchhoefer, M.A.
and Mary L. Dennis

Note

The text used to prepare this guide was the Penguin softcover, edited by Willard Farnham, © Penguin Books, 1957, 1970. Since references are made by act, scene and line number, most editions may be used, but line numbers may differ somewhat.

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this play for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

ISBN 978-1-56137-418-2

Copyright infringement is a violation of Federal Law.

© 2010 by Novel Units, Inc., Bulverde, Texas. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this publication is limited to the terms of the Single-Classroom User License for a maximum of 30 copies. No part of this publication may be translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted or shared in any way or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Novel Units, Inc. Reproduction of any part of this publication for multiple school terms, an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

Reproduction of any part of the Teacher Guide is strictly prohibited.

Novel Units is a registered trademark of Novel Units, Inc.

Publisher Information

For a complete catalog, contact—

Novel Units, Inc.
P.O. Box 97
Bulverde, TX 78163-0097

Web site: novelunits.com

For more digital resources, visit:
ebooks.ecslearningsystems.com

Table of Contents

Novel Units®: Rationale	3
Introduction	5
Plot Structure of the Shakespearean Tragedy.....	8
<i>Hamlet</i> Character Chart	9
Synopsis	10
Initiating Activities.....	14
Vocabulary List.....	16
Discussion Questions, Writing Suggestions, Activities	
Act I.....	20
Act II.....	25
Act III.....	26
Act IV.....	29
Act V	32
Post-reading Discussion Questions.....	34
Post-reading Extension Activities	35
Essay Topic Suggestions	39
Evaluation: Rubric for Essay-Writing	40
Dramatic Plot Map.....	41
How to Read a Play.....	42
Assessment.....	43

Prediction

Do you think Laertes will follow through on the plan to kill Hamlet? Will he ever forgive Hamlet? Will the Ghost appear again?

ACT V

Scene i

1. What does Hamlet learn from the grave diggers about the grave they are digging? About Yorick?
A woman who may have committed suicide will be buried; the skull uncovered belongs to a court jester Hamlet loved in his childhood.
2. To what shaller of her does Gertrude refer as she places flowers on the grave?
She had hoped that her son would marry Ophelia.
3. In the lines does Hamlet imply that he loved Ophelia more than Laertes did? Do you think he did?
(l. 256-258, "Forty thousand blows could not with all their quantity of love/Make up my sum...")

Scene ii

1. What message does Osric deliver? Why does Hamlet make fun of Osric?
Attentive, verbose Osric delivers the invitation from the King to Hamlet for a "friendly" duel with Laertes.
2. What is Laertes' answer when Hamlet asks his pardon, before the dueling match? Do you think Laertes should forgive Hamlet?
He will not "forgo" Hamlet's love, but still must defend his own honor.
3. How does Claudius plan for Hamlet's death, generally? That is, what events does he foresee?
Gertrude drinks the poisoned wine and both Laertes and Hamlet are injured by the poisoned foil.
4. What is Claudius' reaction when he sees Gertrude drink the poison? What else might he have done?
He begs her not to drink, then says to himself that it is too late.

5. How much do you think Gertrude figures out before she dies? Do you think she would have forgiven Claudius, if he had had time to ask her forgiveness at the end? *She realizes that the wine was poisoned.*

6. Does Laertes forgive Hamlet?

Yes, and he asks Hamlet to forgive him, so that he will not have Hamlet's death on his conscience—nor Hamlet have Laertes' or Polonius' death on his.

Why do you think Laertes doesn't mention Ophelia's death in this "let's forgive each other" speech?

7. Has Hamlet avenged his father? *He does—kill Claudius.*

What do you think would have happened to Claudius if he had survived?

8. What has happened to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? Do you feel sorry for them, or did they bring their trouble on themselves?

They were executed in England, thanks to Hamlet's communication of the orders originally intended to result in his own execution.

9. What does Horatio mean, "I am more an antique Roman than a Dane/Here's yet some liquor left" (V,ii: 221). What is he thinking of doing? Why doesn't he stop him?

Like the Romans who kill themselves to preserve their honor, Horatio considers killing himself, but Hamlet convinces him to live so that he can bear Hamlet's name.

10. Who will rule Denmark now?

Probably young Fortinbras

Writing Activity

You are Horatio. Give the official report that clears Hamlet's name.

- Game idea: Put the names of the main characters on a pack of cards (Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Laertes, Ophelia, ghost). On each of another set of cards, write one question—ANY question (e.g., How does your character move when he or she first comes onstage? Does your character have any physical habits? Does your character smile often?) Be imaginative! In each group, students take turns picking up a character card and a description card. The student answers the question and tells why s(he) chose that answer, based on the storyline and on stagecraft (how the play is staged).

[This is an adaptation of an idea developed by Mike Mayhoe, University of East Anglia, England—p. 58 of the *English Journal*, April, 1989, "Drama as Gaming."]

Writing (Also see *Essay Writing Activities*, page 39.)

- What do you see in your mind's eye when you think about the play for a few minutes? Choose the scene or stage from the play that makes the most vivid impression on your mind. Take ten minutes or so to describe the scene and why it is so memorable for you. Share your writing with the class.
- Here are some scenes and images from the play. Choose three and explain what is important about them.
 - the Ghost speaks to Hamlet
 - Ophelia gives away flowers
 - Claudius tries to marry Gertrude
 - Hamlet holds a skull
 - Hamlet stabs at the curtain
 - Gertrude sips wine
- Read Carl Sandburg's poem, "The People, Yes." Compare/contrast the advice Polonius gives his son with the advice given in Sandburg's poem. Then pretend that YOU are leaving home and write a dialogue revealing the advice your parents give you.
- Support or refute one of the following quotations using evidence from the play:
 - "Mothers know best." (Edna Ferber)
 - "Who would conceive/in civilized outrage/you understand the exact/and the proper intimate revenge." (Seamus Heaney)
 - "The truth is often a terrible weapon of aggression. It is possible to lie and even to murder, for the truth." (Arthur Adler)
- Suppose Laertes were an advice columnist. Write letters from three characters in the story, outlining their problems. Write his letter of response. (Try to let the writer's personality "come through" in his/her writing. e.g., Laertes' responses might be clichéd, long-winded, demonstrating concern for "appearances" and etiquette.)

Research

1. As an art/geography project, have students draw a poster-size map of Europe as it looked during Hamlet's time. This project can be assigned at the beginning of the unit so the map can be used as a visual aid.
2. Do some research on Machiavelli and find out why Claudius' behavior might be described as "Machiavellian."
3. Do some research on the flowers Ophelia distributes to various characters. Find out how the symbolism of each flower is matched to the recipient.

Essay Topic Suggestions

1. How and why does Shakespeare use humor in *Hamlet*?
2. Compare and contrast any of the following: Hamlet and Laertes, Gertrude and Ophelia, Claudius and Polonius.
3. Hamlet's indecision is evident throughout the play. Give examples.
4. Examine Hamlet's attitude toward women; compare and contrast his feelings for Gertrude with those for Ophelia.
5. Define dramatic irony and give examples from the play.
6. Give examples of coincidence that occur throughout the play.
7. What is the dominant theme of *Hamlet*? Support your opinion with details and examples.
8. Why does it take Hamlet so long to kill Claudius?
9. Defend/refute the idea that Hamlet is: motivated by ambition, a victim of circumstance, not really in love with Ophelia, a victim of the Oedipus Complex.
10. Did Gertrude know that Claudius had murdered her husband?
11. Why are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern included in the play? What functions do they serve?
12. Describe two characters who serve as Hamlet's "foils" (characters who, through strong contrast, underscore Hamlet's distinctive characteristics).

Evaluation: Rubric for Essay-Writing

The following is a suggested set of criteria by which to grade student essays (e.g., those found in parts I and II of the final exam for *Hamlet*). Feel free to alter it in any way to better suit the needs of your class. We encourage you to share the evaluation sheets with students before they write their essays, so that they will know in advance what is expected.

Criterion	Maximum # of points
	total: 100
1. <i>Focus:</i> Student writes a clear thesis and includes it in the opening paragraph.	10
2. <i>Organization:</i> The final draft reflects the assigned outline; transition words are used to link ideas.	15
3. <i>Support:</i> Sufficient details are cited to support the thesis; extraneous details are omitted.	15
4. <i>Detail:</i> Each quote or reference is explained (as if the teacher had not read the book); ideas are not redundant.	15
5. <i>Mechanics:</i> Punctuation, capitalization, usage are correct.	15
6. <i>Sentence structure:</i> The student avoids run-ons and fragments. There is an interesting variety of sentence types.	
7. <i>Verbs:</i> All verbs are in the correct tense; sections in which plot is summarized are in the present tense.	10
8. <i>Total effect of the essay:</i> clarity, coherence, overall effectiveness	10

Total Points Earned: _____

Comments:

Dramatic Plot Map (Melodrama or Tragedy)

