

# Individual Learning Packet

## Teaching Unit

# *Hamlet*

by William Shakespeare

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# Hamlet

## OBJECTIVES

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. identify and discuss the characteristics of this play that mark it as a Shakespearean tragedy.
2. discuss the major themes in the play:
  - A. Each person must experience evil, including his or her own contamination as a result of it.
  - B. People are not always what they seem; they often play a deceptive part.
  - C. Revenge is not always justifiable for an individual.
  - D. The psychological state of depression, or thinking too much, can prevent a person from taking practical action.
3. discuss Shakespeare's style, including the use of figurative language, symbolism, and the dramatic techniques of soliloquy, aside, dramatic foil, and allusion.
4. identify the aspects of *Hamlet* that classify it as a revenge tragedy.
5. understand Hamlet's varying state of mind and how his condition relates to his soliloquies.
6. discuss Hamlet and Ophelia's relationship, including what aspects lead to her madness and death.
7. describe the importance of the ghost as it relates to Hamlet and the themes of the play.

# Hamlet

## Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Does Hamlet believe in divine justice? Identify evidence of Hamlet's religious or supernatural beliefs.
2. Discuss the motif of sickness in terms of its literal and symbolic functions in this tragedy.
3. Compare and contrast the father/son relationships that appear in the play: those of Hamlet and his father(s), Laertes and Polonius, and Fortinbras and Old Norway.
4. Hamlet is famous for his long, agonizing moral deliberations. Is Hamlet truly concerned with doing the right thing, or is he just indecisive?
5. Identify instances of espionage in the play. Which characters act as spies, and why?
6. Analyze any one of Hamlet's soliloquies. Rephrase it and make his thoughts clear.
7. What do the characters say about words, their meanings, and how they are used? Identify passages in which characters analyze one another's speech.
8. Who is Horatio, and what purpose(s) does he serve in the play? Compare and contrast his nature with that of Hamlet.
9. Does Hamlet feel that human reason is a gift or a curse? What responsibilities accompany the human capacity for reason?
10. The motif of destiny appears throughout the play. Are the characters in *Hamlet* controlled by fate or by their own choices?
11. Describe Hamlet's behavior toward Ophelia, and his reaction to her death. Make sure to include how Ophelia believes Hamlet treats her. Why might Hamlet behave this way?
12. Why does Hamlet postpone killing Claudius? What does this incident reveal about Hamlet's character?
13. Do you think Hamlet's "antic disposition" is genuine insanity, or is it something else? Support your belief with textual evidence.

# *Hamlet*

## Study Guide Student Copy

### Act I, Scene I

#### Vocabulary

rivals-companions

sometimes-previously

mart-trade

impress-draft

moist star-moon

partisan-sword

1. What exposition is provided in this scene? Include an explanation of the quarrel with Norway.
2. What atmosphere is created by this scene? How?
3. Why has Horatio been asked to join the soldiers in the night watch? What has he decided to do?
4. How does the reader know this ghost is not a hallucination?
5. How could this ghost be explained as a foreshadowing of coming evil?
6. Describe each of the following characters: Old Hamlet, Horatio, and Fortinbras.

## Act II, Scene I

### Vocabulary

incontinency-lacking morals in sexual activity

videlicet-that is

gyved-shackled

ecstasy-lunacy

1. List what has occurred between Act I and Act II.
2. What do Ophelia and Polonius decide about Hamlet's odd behavior?
3. How do you think Ophelia treated Hamlet? Imagine you are Ophelia. How would you treat Hamlet? Or, imagine that you are Hamlet. How would you like Ophelia to treat you?
4. Do you think Polonius follows his own advice regarding his instructions to Reynaldo, considering the values he expresses to his son?

## Act III, Scene I

### Vocabulary

blench-flinch

espials-spies

bodkin-dagger

fardels-packs

inoculate-to bud

1. What is Claudius' opinion of Hamlet's madness? What action does he decide to take? Why?
2. To what idea of Hamlet's madness does Polonius cling? Why?
3. Describe and explain Hamlet's treatment of Ophelia. Is Hamlet aware that he is being watched?
4. What is your opinion of Ophelia's reactions to her father's ideas?
5. What ideas are suggested in Hamlet's speech "To be, or not to be...?"
6. What gives a universal quality to this speech?
7. What does Ophelia say about Hamlet?



## Act V, Scene I

### Vocabulary

**crowner**-coroner

**se offendendo**-blunder for in self-defense

**argal**-ergo

**quest**-in quest

**jowls**-throws

**chapless**-without jaws

**quiddities**-arguments

**indentures**-contracts

**flaw**-wind gust

**fordo**-destroy

**strewments**-strung flowers; garland

**woo't**-will you

**eisel**-vinegar

**quick**-alive

1. The clowns (gravediggers) discuss where and how Ophelia is to be buried. How does the issue of suicide affect the burial?
2. Who was Yorick? How has Hamlet's attitude toward death changed?
3. What dramatic function do the gravediggers have, and what theme do they express?
4. Explain Hamlet's reaction to Laertes' behavior at Ophelia's funeral.