

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Meet William Shakespeare



*As I declare our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim.
A thousand poets pried at life
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare.*

—Robert Browning, nineteenth-century English poet

For more than 400 years, the work of poet, playwright, and actor William Shakespeare has fascinated people from all walks of life, all over the world. In fact, many people consider him to be the greatest dramatist ever.

Altogether, Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays, including comedies, tragedies, and histories. He also wrote more than 150 sonnets, establishing himself as one of the greatest lyric poets of his era. Shakespeare's many plays and poems reveal his talents as a writer and his keen understanding of human nature. The personalities of his main characters are often complex, revealing the ambiguities and personal conflicts found in all of us.

Little is known, however, about Shakespeare's own personal life, because he left no diaries or letters. Records indicate that Shakespeare spent his youth in Stratford-upon-Avon, a small English village. His father, John Shakespeare, was a glove maker and local political figure. His mother, Mary Arden, came from a family of wealthy land owners. It is believed that

young Shakespeare attended the local grammar school, where he probably studied literature and Latin. Unlike many other writers of his time, he did not receive a formal education at a university.

In 1582 Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. In a poem expressing her love for Shakespeare, Hathaway wrote:

*For queens themselves might envy me,
Who scarce in palaces can find
My Willie's form, with Willie's mind.*

Hathaway and Shakespeare had three children, Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith. Scholars believe that Shakespeare might have worked as a school teacher during the early years of his marriage.

In the late 1580s, Shakespeare moved to London and quickly became prominent in the theater. He joined Lord Chamberlain's Men, the most popular troupe of actors in London. With this troupe, he acted in productions throughout the 1590s and gave two special performances for Queen Elizabeth I. While acting, Shakespeare was also writing plays and earning recognition as one of the greatest playwrights in England. He wrote in the language of ordinary people during his time, and the characters and situations in his plays appealed to a variety of people in English society—from kings and queens to peasants who could not read or write.

In the late 1590s and early 1600s, Shakespeare devoted more time to writing and produced many of his greatest tragedies, including *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*. In 1610 he retired and returned to Stratford, where his family had lived throughout his career. Despite the popularity of his work, Shakespeare never created a collection of his own plays for publication.

Shakespeare died in 1616 at the age of fifty-two and was buried under the floor of Stratford Church. Knowing that burial space in the church was limited and that graves were often moved after someone died, Shakespeare used his epitaph as a warning:

*Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And curst be he that moves my bones.*

Introducing the Play

Hamlet has onstage action in . . . plenty. A ghost walks the stage; people are killed by stabbing and poisoning; a young woman runs mad, is drowned offstage, and is buried on stage; two skeletons are dug up and scattered over the stage; armies march, and there is a fencing match that ends up in a general slaughter.

—Edward Hubler, “Introduction to *Hamlet*”

As Hubler indicates, *Hamlet* is filled with action. It has long been one of Shakespeare’s most popular and frequently performed dramas, and part of its appeal undoubtedly lies in the dramatic action that takes place on stage. Yet Hubler also points out that one can hardly think of *Hamlet* as an action play. At the heart of *Hamlet* are profound questions about the nature of good and evil, and the play contains some of Shakespeare’s most psychologically complex characters. They are people driven to dramatic action by anger, grief, love, and despair.

Hamlet is a tragedy, a type of drama that presents a heroic or noble character with conflicts that are difficult or impossible to resolve. Maurice Charney, in *How to Read Shakespeare*, comments that in a tragedy

The characters involve themselves inextricably in that web of circumstances that will constitute their doom. Things change in tragedy, usually for the worse, and there is a sense that no one can resist the tragic momentum.

The greatness of Shakespeare’s technique lies in the way he constructs this momentum through intense action, rich language, and layer upon layer of metaphor and symbols. Like many of Shakespeare’s tragic characters, Hamlet has an intensity that is revealed in his complex range of emotions. The climax occurs not only in the outward events on stage, but also, and perhaps more importantly, within the character of Hamlet himself.

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* corresponds to a legendary figure in Denmark’s history called Amleth.

The saga of Amleth was pieced together in the twelfth century by Saxo Grammaticus. He tells the story of young Prince Amleth, whose father is murdered by a brother. The story was retold in the sixteenth century in a collection of tragic tales by French writer Francois de Belleforest. Some scholars say that Belleforest’s version of the story, which was translated into English, was very likely the inspiration for Shakespeare’s tragedy.

What causes Shakespeare’s play to stand out from the other stories about Hamlet, or Amleth, is his in-depth characterization of the troubled prince and those around him. In the original legend, Amleth is clearly out for revenge. What distracts him from his purpose are external circumstances, not feelings of doubt or reluctance, or reflections on right and wrong.

In Shakespeare’s play, indecision is a major theme. Hamlet is haunted—literally—by his father’s murder and a desperate need to avenge the crime. But something holds him back from acting on this desire for revenge. What that “something” is has been debated for centuries. Scholars at the University of Liège in Belgium have commented that, “For Hamlet nothing is simple, everything raises questions.”

Despite the debate—or perhaps because of it—*Hamlet* remains popular to this day. Since the advent of film, more than twenty-five movies have been made based on Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Laurence Olivier, a famous British actor who performed the role of Hamlet in a 1948 film, declared

You can play it and play it as many times as the opportunity occurs and still not get to the bottom of its box of wonders. It can trick you round false corners and into cul-de-sacs, or take you by the seat of your pants and hurl you across the stars. It can give you moments of unknown joy, or cast you into the depths of despair. Once you have played it, it will devour you and obsess you for the rest of your life.

Not everyone thought of *Hamlet* as a raving success. Writer T. S. Eliot proclaimed it “most

certainly an artistic failure,” saying that the emotion found in the character of Hamlet is too intense for the amount of action that actually occurs. Conflicting opinions about the play abound, and controversy will, no doubt, continue. The key is to read the play and form one’s own opinion.

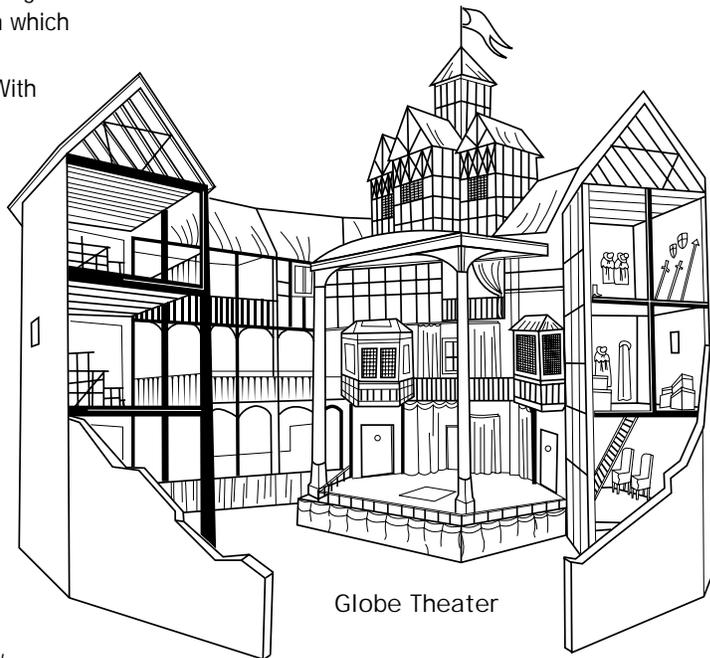
THE TIME AND PLACE

Actors in the earliest performances of *Hamlet* dressed in the elaborate clothing of Shakespeare’s England. However, the play is actually set in northern Europe several hundred years before Shakespeare was born. Most of the action takes place in and around Elsinore, Denmark’s royal castle.

Did You Know?

Shakespeare lived and wrote during the English Renaissance, a period in which many aspects of English society changed, including the theater. With the Renaissance came the first English theater building, constructed for James Burbage just outside the city of London in 1576. Other theaters soon followed. In 1598 Burbage and members of Lord Chamberlain’s Men—Shakespeare’s acting troupe—tore down the theater and used its materials to build the Globe Theater. Shakespeare was an important shareholder in this new theater.

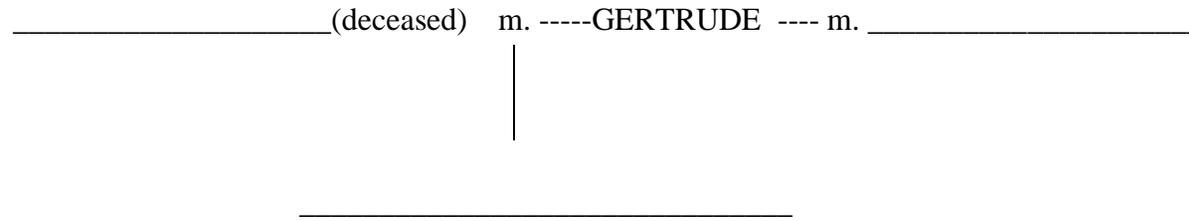
The Globe was made of wood and was octagonal. Like other theaters of the time, it was open-air with the stage at its center. Poor theater-goers paid a penny to stand around three sides of the stage, while wealthy audience members sat in one of the three stories of seats along the theater walls. Audiences of this period were diverse and included people from all levels of English society. To capture the interests of such a varied audience, plays combined many elements, including slapstick, violence, historical satire, and vulgarity.



The Globe, like Burbage’s original theater, was built outside London. Theater owners wanted to avoid city authorities, many of whom disapproved of the theater because it drew large crowds, creating the potential for crime, the spread of disease, and the introduction of controversial ideas. Luckily for Shakespeare and other actors and playwrights of his time, Queen Elizabeth and members of the nobility supported theaters.

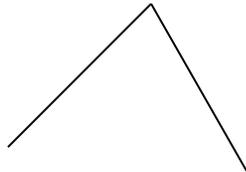
Family Trees in *Hamlet*

The Danish Royal Family



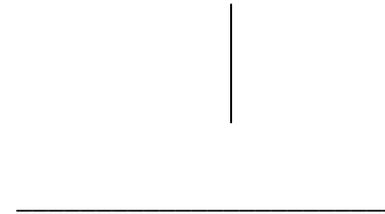
The Polonius Family

POLONIUS ---- m. ---- wife (deceased)



The Norwegian Royal Family

KING FORTINBRAS (deceased) ---- m. ---- wife (deceased)



Hamlet

Character Profiles

Hamlet: Prince of Denmark, son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet. He is believed to be mad following the death of his father. He is greatly disturbed by the hasty marriage of his mother to his uncle especially since he considers the relationship to be incestuous. The ghost of his dead father tells him that he was murdered by his brother Claudius and asks him to avenge his death.

The Ghost: The late King Hamlet, doomed to walk the earth by night. He appears to his son to ask that his murder be avenged.

Queen Gertrude: Mother of Prince Hamlet, widow of King Hamlet. She is now married to the brother of her late husband who has assumed the throne.

King Claudius: Brother of the late King Hamlet. He murdered his brother in order to gain his throne. He has also married his sister-in-law. Claudius becomes quite disturbed by Hamlet's madness and when it becomes apparent that he knows of his crime, Claudius plots repeatedly to have him killed.

Ophelia: Daughter of Polonius and love interest of Hamlet. When Hamlet rejects her and eventually kills her father, Ophelia goes mad. She drowns herself in this state. Her death is used by Claudius to enlist the help of her brother in the murder of Hamlet.

Laertes: Son of Polonius and brother of Ophelia. He is sent to France but returns seeking vengeance after the murder of his father. Following the suicide of his sister Ophelia, he challenges Hamlet to a duel. He has agreed to treat his sword with poison so as to ensure the death of the Prince. He is poisoned by his own sword and confesses Claudius' plan to Hamlet as he is dying.

Polonius: Father of Laertes and Ophelia. Advisor to King Claudius. He believes that Hamlet's madness is caused by his love for Ophelia which he has ordered her not to requite. He is accidentally murdered by Hamlet who has mistaken the eavesdropper concealed by a curtain to be Claudius.

Horatio: Friend and confidant of Hamlet. Hamlet shares with Horatio all of his experiences and misgivings in the situation involving his father. Horatio is left alive at the end to tell of the events leading to the deaths of Hamlet, Laertes, Claudius, and Gertrude.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern: Childhood friends of Hamlet. They are recruited by Claudius to first discover the cause of Hamlet's madness. Eventually, their orders are changed to escort Hamlet to England where he is to be killed. They are killed instead when Hamlet discovers the death order and changes it to apply to them.

Fortinbras: Prince of Norway. His father was conquered by King Hamlet and initially seeks revenge. Ambassadors sent by Claudius are able to pacify him. Upon his death, Prince Hamlet names Fortinbras heir to the throne of Denmark.

Francisco, Marcellus, and Barnardo: Danish soldiers entrusted with the watch who first spot the ghost.

Osric: A courtier.

Reynaldo: Servant to Polonius.

Voltemand and Cornelius: Courtiers and Ambassadors who prevent an invasion by Fortinbras.



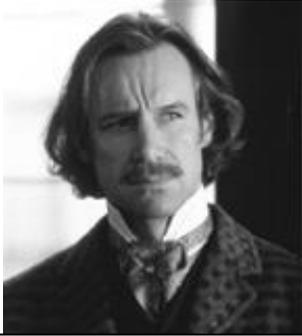
King Hamlet (Ghost)
Gertrude's first husband
Hamlet's father
Has been dead a few weeks



Queen Gertrude
Hamlet's Mother



Claudius
Present King of Denmark
Gertrude's second
Husband
Brother of King Hamlet
(Gertrude's first husband)
Hamlet's Uncle and now
also his Stepfather



Horatio, Hamlet's best friend



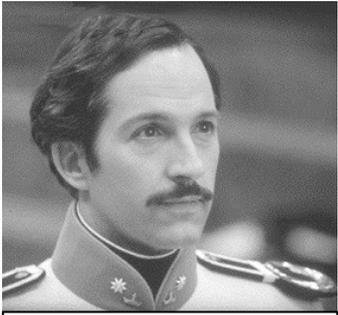
Prince **Hamlet** of Denmark



Ophelia,
Hamlet's girlfriend



Polonius, Claudius' chief advisor
Father of Ophelia and Laertes



Laertes,
Ophelia's brother



Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, school
friends of Hamlet



Fortinbras, Prince of
Norway

Study Guide: *Hamlet*

Act I

scene 1

1. Whose ghost appears in scene 1?
2. The late King Hamlet (Prince Hamlet's father) killed King Fortinbras of Norway in a battle over land, some time ago. What is young Fortinbras (the son), now planning? (see lines beginning w/ Horatio: "As thou art to thyself...")
3. Who is there to try to speak to the ghost? Does he succeed? What happens?

scene 2

4. Read carefully King Claudius' speech at the beginning of scene 2. Does he seem grieved by his brother's (King Hamlet's) death? How can you tell? What is "odd" about the line, "our sometime sister, now our queen"?

[Note: Claudius was elected King by the other Danish nobility, after King Hamlet's death. Thus, he and Gertrude would have had equal claim to the throne anyway ("jointress to this warlike state"), even without marriage.]

5. What does Hamlet mean by "A little more than kin, and less than kind"?
6. In her lines beginning, "Good Hamlet, cast off . . .," what counsel does Gertrude give to Hamlet?
7. What is his reply? ("Seems, madam? . . .")

8. In the lines beginning “Tis sweet and commendable . . .,” Claudius calls Hamlet’s show of grief “unmanly.” Do you agree with Claudius or not? Is Hamlet’s reaction improper or unreasonable because it comes from a man, or is it unreasonable for anyone to act as Hamlet is acting? Remember that his father has been dead less than two months, and think of what has happened in the family since the death.

9. How does Claudius want Hamlet to think of him?

10. In the soliloquy beginning, “Oh that this too solid flesh . . .,” Hamlet contemplates suicide. What stops him from killing himself? What does this tell us about his character?

11. In this same soliloquy, Hamlet describes his mother’s actions (“ . . . But two months dead . . .”). What does he say here about her feelings/actions towards his father when he was alive? For what reason, does he imply, did she marry Claudius?

12. What does Hamlet say here about women in general? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

13. How does Hamlet feel in the last line of this speech, before Horatio, Marcellus and Bernardo enter?

When have you felt this way yourself?

14. What do Horatio, Marcellus and Bernardo come to tell Hamlet? What is Hamlet’s reaction?

scene 3

1. With whom is Ophelia in love?

2. Laertes is off to France. Before he goes, he gives some brotherly advice to Ophelia. What does he say (in your own words)?

3. Before Polonius enters, what does Ophelia tell Laertes to be sure he doesn't do?

4. Laertes is still packing. Polonius comes in and gives him some fatherly advice ("Yet here, Laertes? . . .").
 In your own words, recap Polonius' counsel.

5. Poor Ophelia is getting it from all sides. After Laertes finally gets off to France, what advice does Polonius give to Ophelia?

What does Polonius' opinion of Hamlet seem to be? Do you think he is a good judge of character in this case? Why?

scenes 4 + 5

6. What does Hamlet think Claudius is doing to Denmark's reputation? How is he doing it?

7. What happens between the ghost and Hamlet?

8. What does the Ghost demand Hamlet do? (sc. 5, around line 30)

9. How does everyone think King Hamlet died? (Ghost: "I find thee apt. . .")

10. Who really was "the serpent that did sting thy father's life"?

11. How was the murder accomplished?

12. What issue does the Ghost have with Gertrude (it's NOT murder)? Does he want Hamlet to punish her?

13. Look at Hamlet's soliloquy after the Ghost's exit. Does Hamlet seem to have a problem with his mother's actions? Which line indicates this?

14. What is Hamlet's plan of action? ("And therefore as a stranger give it welcome . . .")
Whom does he tell about the plan? What do they have to agree not to do? Do they know about the murder?

15. How does Hamlet feel about having to follow the Ghost's instructions?

Act II

scene 1

1. What does Polonius want Reynaldo to find out about Laertes in Paris?

How will he go about gaining this information?

2. When Ophelia enters, what does she tell her father? Describe how Hamlet has been acting. Do you think this is for real, or is it just part of his plot for revenge against Claudius?

3. What does Polonius think is the reason for Hamlet's behavior? How does his opinion of Hamlet seem to have changed by now (end of sc.1)?

scene 2

4. What does Gertrude think is the cause of Hamlet's actions? ("I doubt it is no other ...")

Act III

scene 1

1. In Hamlet's soliloquy from, "To be or not to be ...," to "to die —", (p. 63) what are the first two options that he considers? Specifically, what two courses must he himself choose between in his own life right now?

2. From "to die —" on p. 63 to the end of the soliloquy on p. 64, Hamlet considers suicide. Where before in the play has he considered this? How can we tell that he's more serious about it here? What stops Hamlet from going through with it this time (see line 86 especially)?

3. Hamlet says "conscience does make cowards of us all." In other words, we think too much and don't DO anything. Do you agree? Why or why not?

What do you think would be the most cowardly thing for Hamlet to do now? What would be the least cowardly? Explain!

4. Hamlet treats Ophelia pretty badly. What are his reasons for doing so — in terms of what Ophelia has done to him *and* how Hamlet looks at women in general because of his mother's actions?

5. In the lines beginning “Oh what a noble mind is here o’erthrown!...,” on p. 66 — which basically means, “Hamlet’s gone NUTS, NUTS, NUTS!” — how does Ophelia feel during and after witnessing Hamlet’s behavior? Is it herself or Hamlet that she is *most* concerned about? How do we know?

6. Where does Claudius want to send Hamlet? Why? What did he think of the scene between Ophelia and Hamlet?

scene 2

7. Before the play-within-a-play, Hamlet enlists Horatio’s help in watching for Claudius’ reaction for signs of guilt. In Hamlet’s lines on p. 70, beginning, “Horatio, thou art e’en as just a man ...,” and for the next twenty lines, what is Hamlet in essence telling Horatio?

Why might he have chosen this particular time to say all this? (It isn’t because he wants a favor from Horatio, which Horatio would have done anyway.) Think of what could happen to Hamlet if Claudius realizes that Hamlet suspects the truth about the murder.

How does Horatio react to Hamlet’s words?

Why do you suppose Hamlet said, “Something too much of this,” and then abruptly changed the subject?

8. How does this scene relate thematically to the earlier advice that a person should take “Those friends thou hast, and... grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel”?

How does all of this form a **contrast** with the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia?

9. What does Hamlet tell Horatio about the play? What should Horatio do? What information will Hamlet gain about Claudius? About the Ghost? About his mother?

10. Before the show begins, how does Hamlet act with Ophelia?

11. Does Claudius react to the play?

12. How does Hamlet regard Rosencrantz and Guildenstern now? Why does he feel this way?

13. What is Hamlet planning in his soliloquy at the end of scene 2?

scene 3

14. What does Claudius try to do in this scene?

15. Why doesn't Hamlet take this opportunity to kill Claudius?

scene 4

16. What subject does Hamlet take up with his mother at the beginning of the scene?

17. Who is killed? How? Why?
18. Does Gertrude admit that she knows she did wrong in marrying Claudius?
19. What does Gertrude think when Hamlet starts talking to the ghost? Why does she think this?
20. What does the ghost tell Hamlet?
21. What does Hamlet demand his mother do (or not do) from now on?
What does he make her promise not to speak of?

Act IV

scenes 1 + 2

1. What does Claudius tell Gertrude he is going to do about Hamlet's madness and murder of Polonius?

How does he pretend to feel about Hamlet here?

2. What does Hamlet say about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and the King? ("Ay, sir, that soaks up ...")

scene 3

3. According to Claudius, why can't he have Hamlet arrested?

4. What is Claudius really planning for Hamlet in England?

scene 4

5. What does seeing Fortinbras make Hamlet think about? What does he resolve at the end of the scene?

scenes 5-7

6. What has happened to Ophelia?

7. Why does Horatio want Gertrude to speak with Ophelia?

8. Look at Ophelia's song, beginning with "Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day ..."
What is she imagining happened between her and Hamlet? How does this relate back to the advice/instructions given to her earlier in the play by Laertes and Polonius? What are the two reasons for her insanity? What fact does she not know because it has been kept secret?

9. Who is to blame for Ophelia's condition? Is it Hamlet? Laertes and/or Polonius? Gertrude? Claudius? Ophelia herself? Explain.

10. What does Claudius charge Horatio to do? Why?

11. Where is Laertes now? Why? What's he trying to do? Whom does he at first think killed his father?

How does Laertes in this scene form a contrast with Hamlet?

12. How does Ophelia act in sc. 5?

13. What happened to Hamlet on his way to England?

14. What are Claudius and Laertes planning to get rid of Hamlet?
What is Laertes' motivation for participating in this?

15. Why does Laertes have even more motivation by the end of Act IV?

16. What, exactly, finally happened to Ophelia (as the Queen describes it)?

Act V

scene 1

1. What kind of burial is Ophelia being given?

Why is it not more elaborate?

Why is it not less elaborate?

(See, "Will you ha' the truth on't" and the lines later on after King, Queen & Laertes enter.)

2. Who comes upon the Clown as he is digging the grave?

Does the Clown know to whom he is speaking?

3. What is Hamlet's speech about Yorick meant to show? ("Let me see. Alas, poor Yorick...")

4. About what is Hamlet sorry? (“It will be short...”) Why was he angry with Laertes? What will Hamlet do now and how is this dangerous, considering what Laertes and Claudius are planning?

5. What is Osric’s role? What is his manner like when he and Hamlet discuss the weather?

6. Look at the conversation Hamlet and Horatio have in sc. 2, beginning with: Hamlet: “I do not think so...” and ending when the King, et.al., come in. How does Hamlet feel about the fencing match, even though he’s been practicing and feels he’ll win? Because of this, what advice does Horatio give him?

What is Hamlet’s reply (“Not a whit ...”) Do you agree with him?

7. What does Hamlet tell Laertes (“Give me your pardon, sir ...”) Is he being truthful, do you think?

8. What does Laertes reply? Is he being truthful?

9. During the match, what happens to Gertrude? What is Claudius’ reaction?

10. How is Laertes beginning to feel?

11. How does Laertes end up getting poisoned?

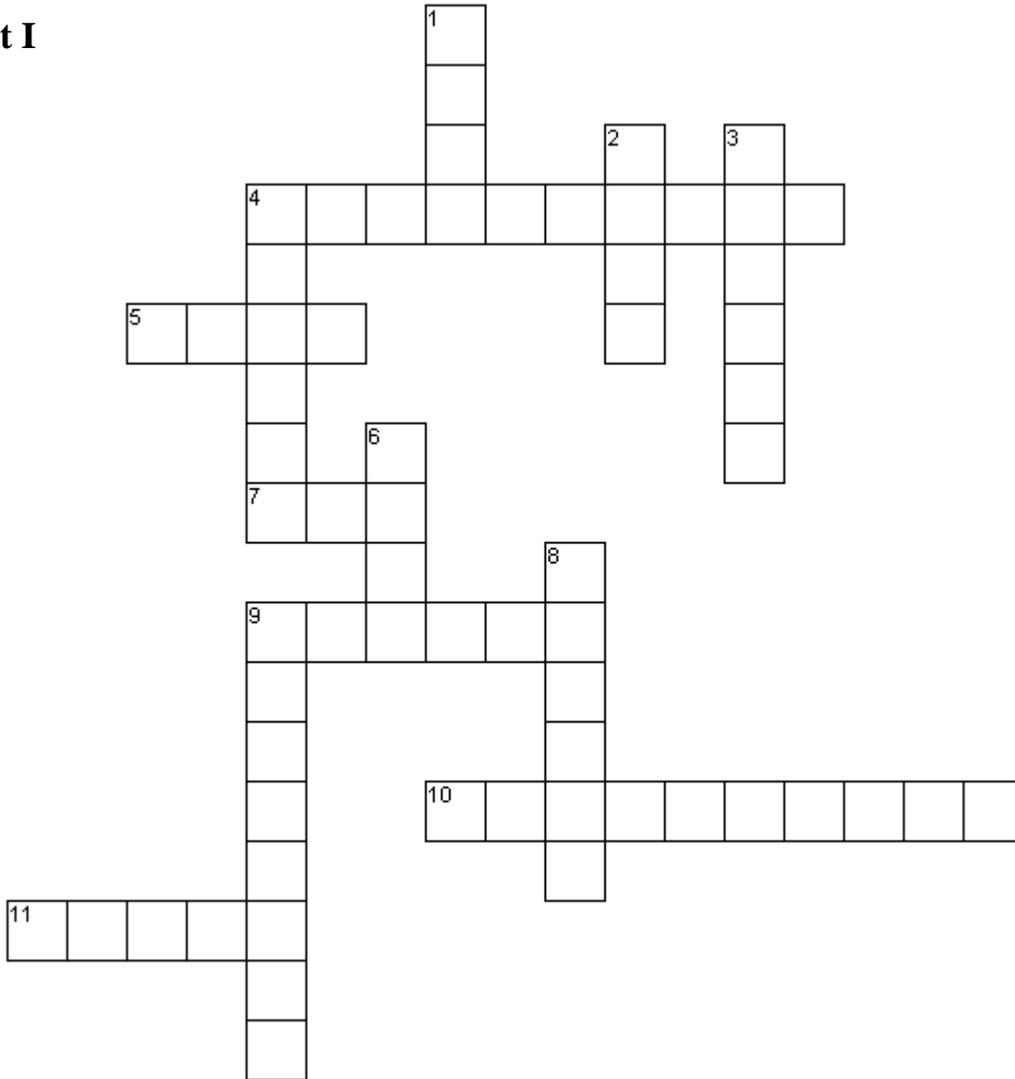
12. What happens to Claudius?

13. What does Horatio almost do as Hamlet is dying? Why?
What stops him?

14. Whom does Hamlet want to rule Denmark after his death?

15. What are Horatio’s last words addressed to Hamlet?

**Hamlet Act I
Review
Puzzle**



Across

4. Has gotten together an illegal army and wants to reclaim the lost lands from Denmark.
5. Hamlet thinks all women are ___ now.
7. Claudius used ___ poison to kill his brother.
9. The Ghost orders Hamlet to ___ his murder.
10. The Church would consider the marriage of Gertrude and Claudius to be an _____ one.
11. People believe this killed the King.

Down

1. Hamlet believes Gertrude married Claudius out of _____ .
2. Ophelia will ___ her father.
3. "Think of us as of a ___."
4. Laertes has gone to ___ .
6. "To thine own self be _____."
8. Both Laertes and Polonius think Hamlet will ___ Ophelia and then dump her.
9. It turns out that Gertrude and Claudius committed _____ before King Hamlet's death .

Hamlet Act II sc i

Paraphrase Activity

Directions: In the space opposite each blocked set of Polonius' lines, translate his words into modern English (this is called a paraphrase). A few examples are done for you.

A room in POLONIUS' house. Enter LORD POLONIUS and REYNALDO

LORD POLONIUS
Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO
I will, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS
You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behavior.

*It would be great if you'd ask about his behavior
before you go see him.*

REYNALDO
My lord, I did intend it.

LORD POLONIUS
Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense;

and finding
By this encompassment and drift of question
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it:
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him;
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,
And in part him:' do you mark this, Reynaldo?

REYNALDO
Ay, very well, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS
'And in part him; but' you may say 'not well:
But, if't be he I mean, he's very wild;
Addicted so and so:' and there put on him
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank
As may dishonour him; take heed of that;
But, sir, such wanton, wild and usual slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.

REYNALDO

As gaming, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS

Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,
Drabbing: you may go so far.

REYNALDO

My lord, that would dishonour him.

LORD POLONIUS

'Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge
You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That's not my meaning:

but breathe his faults so quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty,
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.

REYNALDO

But, my good lord,--

LORD POLONIUS

Wherefore should you do this?

REYNALDO

Ay, my lord,
I would know that.

LORD POLONIUS

Marry, sir, here's my drift;
And I believe, it is a fetch of wit:
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' the working,

Such as gambling, My Lord?

Empty rectangular box for notes.

Empty rectangular box for notes.

Empty rectangular box for notes.

LORD POLONIUS
Why should you do this?
REYNALDO
Yes, I would like to know that

Empty rectangular box for notes.

LORD POLONIUS

Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
He closes with you in this consequence;
'Good sir,' or so, or 'friend,' or 'gentleman,'
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.

REYNALDO

Very good, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS

And then, sir, does he this--he does--what was I
about to say? By the mass, I was about to say
something: where did I leave?

REYNALDO

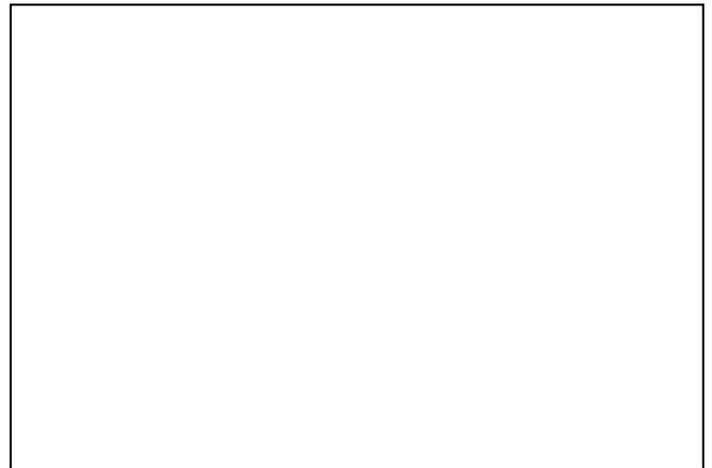
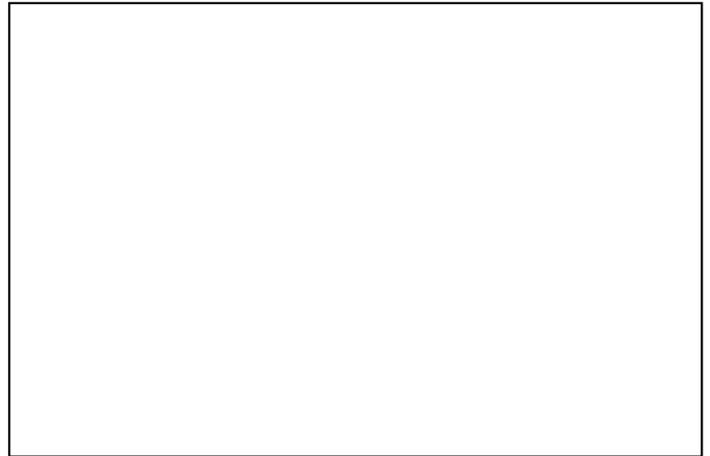
At 'closes in the consequence,' at 'friend or so,'
and 'gentleman.'

LORD POLONIUS

At 'closes in the consequence,' ay, marry;
He closes thus: 'I know the gentleman;
I saw him yesterday, or t' other day,
Or then, or then; with such, or such; and, as you say,
There was a' gaming; there o'ertook in's rouse;
There falling out at tennis:' or perchance,
'I saw him enter such a house of sale,'
Videlicet, a brothel, or so forth.

See you now;

Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth:
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlasses and with assays of bias,
By indirections find directions out:
So by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?



The Many Troubles of Hamlet & His Buddies

Use your book, notes and study guide to answer the following questions pertaining to characters' thoughts and feelings and relationships in Acts II and III.

1. In Hamlet's soliloquy from, "To be or not to be ...," to "to die —", (p. 63) what are the first two options that he considers? Specifically, what two courses must he himself choose between in his own life right now?

2. From "to die —" on p. 63 to the end of the soliloquy on p. 64, Hamlet considers suicide. Where before in the play has he considered this? How can we tell that he's more serious about it here? What stops Hamlet from going through with it this time (see line 86 especially)?

3. Hamlet says "conscience does make cowards of us all." In other words, we think too much and don't DO anything. Do you agree? Why or why not?

What do you think would be the most cowardly thing for Hamlet to do now? What would be the least cowardly? Explain!

4. Hamlet treats Ophelia pretty badly. What are his reasons for doing so — in terms of what Ophelia has done to him *and* how Hamlet looks at women in general because of his mother's actions?

5. In the lines beginning “Oh what a noble mind is here o’erthrown!...,” on p. 66 — which basically means, “Hamlet’s gone NUTS, NUTS, NUTS!” — how does Ophelia feel during and after witnessing Hamlet’s behavior? Is it herself or Hamlet that she is *most* concerned about? How do we know?

6. Before the play-within-a-play, Hamlet enlists Horatio’s help in watching for Claudius’ reaction for signs of guilt. In Hamlet’s lines on p. 80, beginning, “Horatio, thou art e’en as just a man ...,” and for the next twenty lines, what is Hamlet in essence telling Horatio?

Why might he have chosen this particular time to say all this? (It isn’t because he wants a favor from Horatio, which Horatio would have done anyway.) Think of what could happen to Hamlet if Claudius realizes that Hamlet suspects the truth about the murder.

How does Horatio react to Hamlet’s words?

Why do you suppose Hamlet said, “Something too much of this,” and then abruptly changed the subject?

7. How does this scene relate thematically to the earlier advice that a person should take “Those friends thou hast, and... grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel”?

How does all of this form a **contrast** with the relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia?

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Directions: Below, Hamlet's Soliloquy in Act III scene I has been broken down into six sections. For each section, put Hamlet's words into modern English. This is called a paraphrase. Use the **facing pages in your book for word definitions/explanations**. Also use a dictionary if necessary. The first part of each paraphrase is done for you. **PRINT NEATLY.**

<p>1. To be, or not to be: that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing end them?</p>	<p>Modern English paraphrase: To live, or not to live: that is the issue.</p> <hr/>
<p>2. To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish'd.</p>	<p>Modern English paraphrase: Dying is just like sleeping</p> <hr/>
<p>3. To die, to sleep; To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub; For in that sleep of death what dreams may come When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause: there's the respect That makes calamity of so long life;</p>	<p>Modern English paraphrase: Dying is sleeping, but sleeping is also dreaming.</p> <hr/>

4. For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?

Modern English paraphrase:
Because otherwise, why would anyone want to stay alive

5. Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?

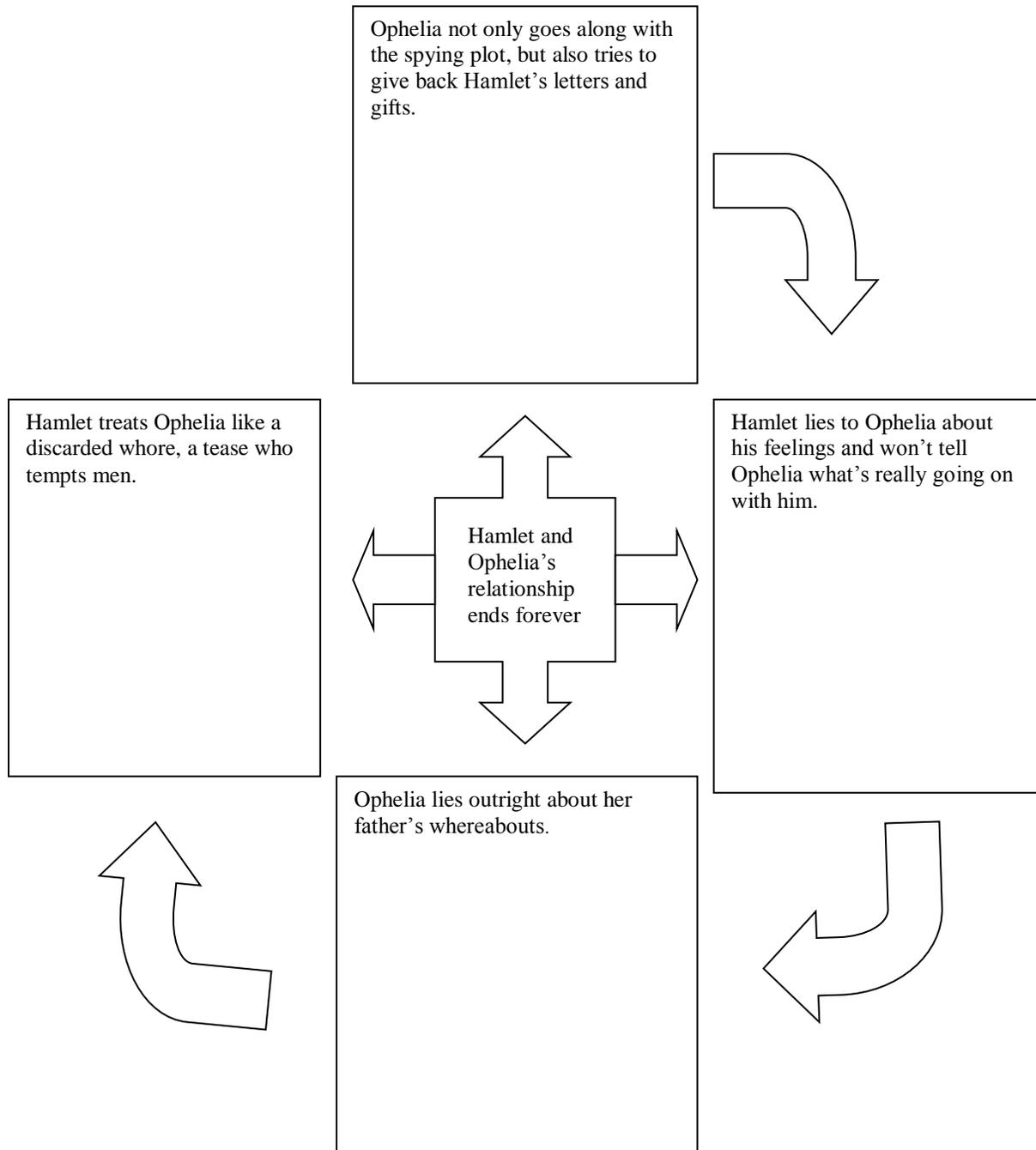
Modern English paraphrase:
Who would endure the burdens of life

6. Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.—

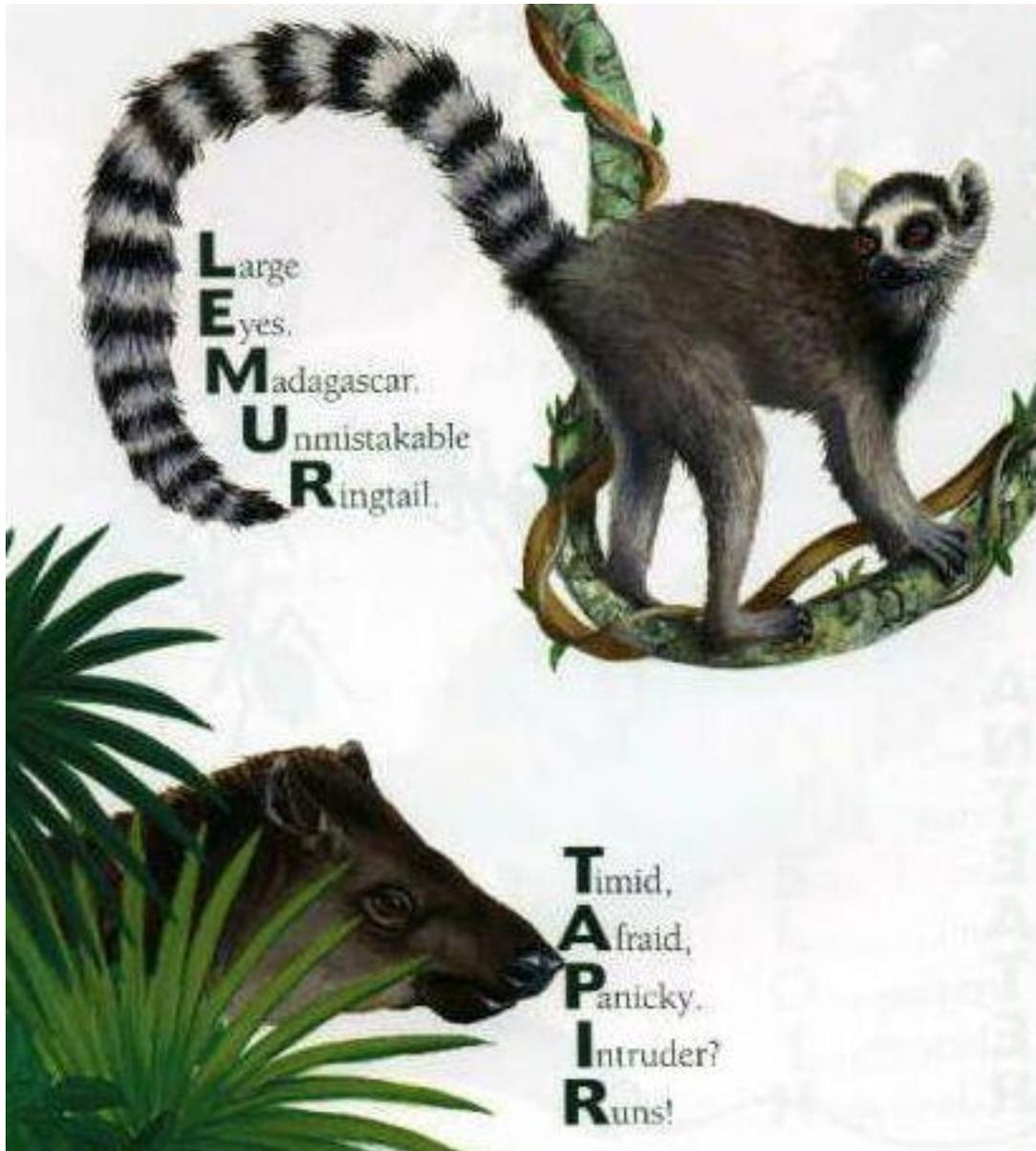
Modern English paraphrase:
That's how thinking makes us all cowards,

Hamlet and Ophelia in Act III

Directions: For each event, find an appropriate quotation from the play and put it in the box.



Example of an Acrostic



DRAFT (You will get another sheet on which to do a final version to hand in.)

Hamlet Act III Friendship Acrostic

Using each letter of “friendship” as the first letter of a descriptive word or short phrase, write an acrostic expressing your thoughts on friends and friendship.

Here are some ideas to get you started: your idea of what a friend should be, qualities you most admire in a friend, your closest friends, what attracts you to form friendships with these people, activities do you share with your friends, confiding in friends, your best friend, anything else you would like to say about friendship.

F _____

R _____

I _____

E _____

N _____

D _____

S _____

H _____

I _____

P _____

Hamlet Act III sc. ii Paraphrase Exercise

Directions: Below are the sentences of a modern-language paraphrase of Hamlet's speech to Horatio in Act III sc. ii. The sentences are partially out-of-order. Take each section and match it to the original lines of Shakespeare by writing its letter on the line to the left of the original words of which it is a paraphrase.

- A. A man who tolerates both good luck and bad: and blessed are they whose temper and self-control are so well balanced that they aren't at Fortune's mercy, doing her bidding.
- B. Give me the man who isn't a slave to his emotions, and I'll take him to my heart, the very center of it, as I do you. That's enough of that.
- C. Listen: ever since I could tell one man's qualities from another's, I've singled you out for friendship. You've been the sort of man who has accustomed himself to suffering, having suffered so much.
- D. No, don't think I'm flattering you; what advantage can I hope for from you, whose only asset is your good spirits? Why should anyone flatter the poor?
- E. No, let flatterers keep their sweet talk for the vanity of the great, and bow their ever-willing knees where there's advantage to be gained from fawning.
- F. There's a play being performed tonight in the presence of the King. One scene in it resembles the circumstances of my father's death, which I've told you about. When you see that part performed, please to watch my uncle closely. If his hidden guilt doesn't come out into the open during one particular speech, then it's a damned ghost that we have seen, and my suspicions are as foul as hell. Take careful note of him. My eyes will be riveted on his face. Later we'll compare notes and judge his reaction.

_____ 1. Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee,
That no revenue hast, but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?

_____ 2. No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp;
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning.

_____. 3 Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself: for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing;

_____ 4. A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and bles'd are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled

_____ 5. That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please.

_____ 6. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.—Something too much of this.—

_____ 7. There is a play to-night before the king;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance,
Which I have told thee, of my father's death:
I pr'ythee, when thou see'st that act a-foot,
Observe mine uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen;
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face;
And, after, we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.

Hamlet: Causes and Effects in Acts III - V

For each CAUSE at the left, fill in its RESULT on the right. Similarly, if a RESULT is given, fill in its CAUSE.

CAUSE

RESULT

Claudius appears to Hamlet to be praying	
Hamlet thinks it is Claudius who's spying on him and Gertrude	
	Claudius hatches a plan to get rid of Hamlet
	Ophelia goes insane and kills herself (?).
The ship Hamlet is on is attacked by pirates on the way to England.	
	Laertes returns to Denmark from France.
Claudius gains Laertes's trust.	
Gertrude knows nothing of the plot against her son.	
Hamlet is feeling sorry for Laertes's losses.	