

Hamlet

Act III Notes

1. What does Polonius mean when he says, "We are oft to blame in this./Tis too much proved, that with devotion's visage/And pious action we do sugar o'er/The devil himself"? How does Claudius privately respond to Polonius' words?
2. Hamlet's soliloquy in this scene contains some of the most famous Shakespearean lines. What is Hamlet contemplating here? Of what is Hamlet probably thinking when he says, "conscience does make cowards of us all"?
3. How does Ophelia engage Hamlet in conversation? How does Hamlet treat Ophelia during their encounter? What reasons can you come up with to account for his behavior?
4. Describe Ophelia's emotional state at the end of the scene.
5. How do the King and Polonius respond to the encounter they have witnessed between Hamlet and Ophelia? What does each man suggest should be the next course of action?

Scene ii

1. What acting advice does Hamlet give to the players?
2. *What favor does Hamlet ask of Horatio?*
3. In his conversation with Horatio, Hamlet reveals why he admires Horatio. What does he mean when he says, "...thou hast been/As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing..." and "...Give me that man/That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him/In my heart's core..."?
4. *In his conversation with Ophelia, how does Hamlet reveal his mother's behavior still upsets him?*
5. *How does the dialogue between the Player Queen and the Player King touch upon the subject of infidelity?*
6. *When Claudius asks Hamlet what the name of the play is, how does Hamlet respond? Why does Hamlet call the play by this title rather than its legitimate one?*
7. *At what point does Claudius stop the play? Does Hamlet believe Claudius is guilty?*
8. *What request from the Queen do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern bring to Hamlet? How does Hamlet put Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in their place in this scene?*

9. *How does Hamlet intend to behave when he is with his mother?*

Scene iii

1. *What order does Claudius give Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? How do they respond to his directive?*
2. *What will be Polonius' next course of action?*
3. *During Claudius' soliloquy, he tells us how he would like to pray to God for forgiveness, but he can't bring himself to do so. Why?*
4. *Hamlet has the perfect opportunity to kill Claudius in this scene. Why doesn't he exact his revenge?*

Scene iv

1. *Relate the sequence of events which result in Polonius' death.*
2. *How does Hamlet "speak daggers" to Gertrude in this scene?*
3. *What does Gertrude believe is the cause of her son's cruel words? How does Hamlet respond to her belief?*
4. *What requests does Hamlet make of Gertrude before he leaves?*
5. *What comment does Hamlet make about Claudius' intention to send him to England?*