**Hamlet**

Act One

*Questions for Reading, Writing, & Discussion*

**1.1 The Night Watch**

1.Explicate the meaning of the first words: “who’s there?”

2.What are the opening (given) circumstances of the play?

3. What are the distinguishing features of the ghost?

4. How is Fortinbras a mirror of Hamlet?

5. Cite several examples of foreshadowing in this scene?

**1.2 King, Queen, Hamlet**

1. What action does King Claudius take to check fortibras?

2. What does this reveal about his character and his moudus operandi?

3. How is Laertes a mirror and/or foil to Hamlet?

4. How does Hamlet use language to conceal and to wound, as a kind of vebal cloak and dagger. (Cite examples, quotes).

5. Why must he ‘hide in plain sight,’ as it were? Hide what? Why can he only wound with words, but not deeds?

6. Document examples of the suffering this causes him, here and elsewhere?

7. What does his suffering over this “bind” reveal about his character?

8. What do the King and Queen urge him to do in this scene?

9. How does the Kind urge him to it with insulting language?

10. Explicate lines 75-86 “Seems, madam? . . . . suits of woe.” First, what does Hamlet say? Second, what does it reveal about his character?

11. Explicate lns 129-155: “Oh, that this too too sullied flesh . . . hold my tongue.”

What is bothering Hamlet? What is he contemplating? What checks thus impulse? What does this speech reveal about him? What does the last line in particular reveal about him? What words evidence his violent suffering?

**1.3. Laertes, Ophelia, Polonious**

1.What reasons does Laertes give in counseling Ophelia not to marry Hamlet?

2. How is his advice mirrored by Polonious (cite lines. Words).

3. What do we learn of Ophelia’s character from these with her brother and father?

4. What feminine stereotype or stock character does she embody?

5. Explicate lns 22-38: “So, oft it chances . . . . own scandal.”

**1.5 Ghost**

6. What does the ghost reveal to Hamlet? (cite lines, words)

7. What mandate does he lay upon Hamlet? (cite lines, words)

8. What do the words “O, my prophetic soul,” tell us about Hamlet?

9. What caveats, qualifications does the Ghost place on Hamlet in seeking revenge?

10. Explicate lns 95-112” “Remember thee! . . . I have sworn’t it.”

11. Hamlet ends this encounter determined to take revenge? What happens to prevent him from taking it until Act 5 (his notorious delay)

12. Explicate the lines: “As I perchance hereafter shall think it meet to put an antic disposition on?” Why? What does this statement reveal about his character?