

Study Guide Questions – ACT FIVE

As you read the play, answer the following questions. Some of the questions will ask you simple questions about what is happening in the play, while others will ask you to think deeper and explore the text's meaning.

Act V-----

Character Description:

Osric	
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1. Who was Yorick?
2. What does Hamlet do with Yorick's skull?
3. For the first time we hear Hamlet speak in utter sincerity about Ophelia. What does he say?
4. Hamlet harshly berates his mother for infidelity and treason. Is Hamlet equally unfaithful in his own relationships?
5. In Act V, Scene I, Hamlet makes an allusion to Alexander the Great. In this allusion, what point does Hamlet make about human morality?
6. Laertes thinks that Ophelia should have a better funeral service. What is the priest's answer?
7. Why does Hamlet jump into Ophelia's grave?
8. What does the King say to Laertes to console him after Laertes and Hamlet are separated?
9. What did Hamlet do to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

10. What news does Osric bring Hamlet?

Character "Exeunt": Briefly tell how each of the following characters die in the final scenes of the play.

King Claudius	
Queen Gertrude	
Rosencrantz	
Guildenstern	
Hamlet	

11. What is the last thing Hamlet asks Horatio to do?

12. How does Fortinbras honor Hamlet in death?

13. Reflect upon Hamlet and Fortinbras's station in life. How were they mirror images of each other? How were they dissimilar?

Mirror Images:

Dissimilar:

Responding to the Selection

In act V, scene ii, Hamlet says, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will," and Horatio answers, "That is most certain." If you were Horatio at the end of act V, would you still believe that people's ends are shaped by divine will? Explain your answer.

Reviewing the Selection

Recalling and Interpreting

- R:** What question about Ophelia does the First Clown pose at the beginning of act V?
- I:** Are these Clowns correct in what they assume about her?
- R:** Whose skull does Hamlet pick up and speak about?
- I:** What do the observations that Hamlet makes about the skulls have in common?
- R:** Who is buried, what is unusual about her rites, and how does Laertes respond to this?
~~6. I: Do you agree with the priest or with Laertes?~~
- R:** How does Hamlet respond when Laertes jumps into the grave? What does Hamlet say about his own feelings toward Ophelia?
- I:** What motivates Hamlet to jump into the grave? Does his statement about his feelings for Ophelia make sense, given his previous actions?
- R:** What does Hamlet tell Horatio that he thought as he lay aboard the ship on his way to England?
- I:** What evidence does Hamlet give Horatio of the action of divine providence?
- R:** What happens to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and why?
~~12. I: Do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern deserve their fates? Why or why not?~~
- R:** What character is ridiculed by Hamlet for his excessive use of the popular jargon of the court?
- I:** Why does Hamlet say that Osric is "spacious in the possession of dirt," and why does he explain at length that Osric is a low, common fellow made good?
- R:** Shortly before the fencing match, Hamlet expresses a sense of foreboding to Horatio, and Horatio says that if Hamlet has any misgivings, he will go tell the people not to come and say that Hamlet is not well. What is Hamlet's response?

- I:** Does Hamlet believe that people are able to make things happen as they wish them to happen? Does Hamlet believe that people are capable of understanding life?
- R:** How do Gertrude, Claudius, Laertes, and Hamlet die?
- I:** What role does mischance, or accident, play in these deaths, and in the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? In which cases do "purposes mistook" fall "on th' inventors' heads"?

Synthesizing

- Does justice triumph at the end of this play? Why, or why not?
- Fortinbras says of Hamlet that "he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal." Do you agree with this assessment? Why, or why not?

Understanding Literature (QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION)

- Resolution.** The resolution is that part of a plot in which the central conflict is resolved. What is the resolution of *Hamlet*?
- Foil.** A foil is a character whose attributes, or characteristics, contrast with and therefore throw into relief the attributes of another character. Throughout this play, Fortinbras and Laertes are presented as foils for Hamlet. Hamlet himself jokingly refers to Laertes as his foil during the fencing match. In what ways, despite their differences in character, is Hamlet reconciled with Laertes and Fortinbras in the final scene?
- Theme.** A theme is a main idea in a literary work. One theme that recurs throughout *Hamlet* is that of salvation and the means by which it is either achieved or lost. What indications are there in the final act that Hamlet has grown spiritually and will be saved?
- Theme.** A theme is a main idea in a literary work. Another theme that recurs throughout *Hamlet* is the relative value of thought and action. Ultimately, what do you think that the play is saying in regard to this question?
- Tragedy.** A tragedy is a drama that relates the fall of a person of high status. Tragedy tends to be serious. It celebrates the courage and dignity of a tragic hero in the face of doom. Sometimes that doom is made inevitable by a tragic flaw in the hero. In what ways does *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* fit this definition of tragedy? What is Hamlet's tragic flaw?