

**AP LITERATURE  
HAMLET  
STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS**

**ACT I, SCENE 1.**

1. What is the mood of the opening scene? How is it established?
2. How are we informed of the elder Hamlet's death? Why must we learn this information early?
3. Why is a strict watch being maintained outside the castle of Elsinore?
4. Why is Horatio being included in the next watch?
5. What was the outcome of the conflict between King Hamlet and King Fortinbras of Norway?

**ACT I, SCENE 2**

1. In this scene, we meet the major players. In his inaugural address to his court, what does Claudius reveal about how his fortunes have changed with the death of his brother?
2. What problems does Claudius need to address in this passage?
3. How does Claudius respond to Hamlet in this scene? Why do you think he refuses Hamlet's request to return to school in Europe?
4. What hint do we get that Claudius may be under obligation to Polonius?
5. What actual facts do we learn from Hamlet's first soliloquy?

**ACT I, SCENE 3**

1. Who is Polonius? Laertes? Ophelia?
2. What advice does Laertes give Ophelia about Hamlet? What reason does he give?
3. What order does Polonius give Ophelia?
4. In view of Hamlet's state of mind right now, how is Ophelia's obedience to her father's command likely to affect him?
5. List in your own words at least four things Polonius advises his son?

**SCENE 4**

1. Read carefully Hamlet's passage beginning "aye, marry, is 't."
  - a. What does Hamlet seem to be saying about the behavior at court?
  - b. What point does he make about men in general and how they are judged?
2. Why do you think Hamlet refers to the ghost as "it" in line 68 (maybe)?
3. Why do Hamlet's friends try to prevent him from following the ghost?
4. What does Marcellus's line (90) mean in context? What universal meaning has it taken on?

**SCENE 5**

1. What important information does this scene provide about the crime?
2. What terrible responsibility does the ghost lay on Hamlet?
3. What is his immediate response to this responsibility?
4. Why do you think Hamlet swears his friends to secrecy?
5. What do you think Hamlet means when he announces to his friends that he may "put an antic disposition on"?
6. Explain what you believe Hamlet's dilemma is at the end of Act I.
7. What conflicts do you see set up in the play? What different plot lines?