

Hamlet Study Guide, Act IV

You do not need to write out answers to these questions, but they may help review for quizzes and discussions.

IV.i

1. Who tells the King about Polonius?
2. What promise to Hamlet does Gertrude keep in her second statement?
3. What is Claudius's first reaction to the news of Polonius's death?
4. What excuse does Claudius offer for not controlling Hamlet with a stronger hand?
5. Explain Claudius's comparison of this laxity and disease.
6. What does the Queen say Hamlet is doing while she and the King are talking?
7. On what errand does the King send Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

IV.ii

1. In the first line what is "Safely stow'd"?
2. Why does Hamlet call Rosencrantz a sponge?
3. To what else besides a sponge does Hamlet compare Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

IV.iii

1. Why must the King be careful in his treatment of Hamlet?
2. "Diseases desperate grown/ by desperate appliance are relieved/ Or not at all."
Explain the analogy.
3. When Claudius asks Hamlet where Polonius is, what is Hamlet's answer?
4. Define "progress" in line 31 and explain the progress that Hamlet describes.
5. Where has Hamlet "stow'd" the body? How might it eventually be found?
6. When Hamlet says good-bye to Claudius, line 49, what does he call him and why?
7. For what reason is Claudius certain England will instantly obey his command?
8. What command does Claudius send to England?
9. Define "hectic" and explain the comparison in lines 66-67.

IV.iv

1. For what purpose is Fortinbras in Denmark?
2. Where are Fortinbras and his army going?
3. What will they fight for in Poland?
4. What is the object of their fight worth?
5. "Sure He that made us with such large discourse,/ _____
_____/ _____/To fust in
us unused." Define "discourse" and "fust."
6. Hamlet says Fortinbras is risking his men and his own life "even for an _____."
Why does he say this?
7. How does Fortinbras serve as a spur to Hamlet's revenge?

IV.v

1. Who is with Gertrude when Ophelia arrives?
2. Why does Horatio urge Gertrude to see Ophelia?
3. Explain lines 15-20; what is Gertrude afraid of?
4. What is the subject matter of Ophelia's first song?
5. From line 44, what does Claudius assume caused Ophelia's madness?
6. What is the subject of Ophelia's second song?
7. Who is sent to follow Ophelia?
8. Why are the people of Denmark upset?
9. What is "hugger-mugger"?

10. What new information does Claudius reveal?
11. What are "Swissers"?
12. The mob that is supporting Laertes are crying for him to become _____.
13. Gertrude calls his followers _____.
14. According to Laertes, if he were calm, it would mean that he was a _____, his father a _____, and his mother a _____.
15. What will Laertes risk for revenge?
16. Who enters and interrupts the encounter between Laertes and the King?
17. To whom does Ophelia give flowers in lines 173-178?
18. What do the flowers, or herbs, given to Claudius and Gertrude signify?
19. Why is Laertes disturbed about Polonius's burial?

IV.vi

1. Why does Horatio suspect that the sailors come from Hamlet?
2. We learn from Hamlet's letter that the pirates took how many prisoners?
3. Why do the sailors need to see the King?
4. Why were the pirates good to Hamlet?
5. Where are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

IV.vii

1. In Claudius's first speech he tell Laertes that Hamlet not only killed Polonius, but also tried to kill _____.
2. What reasons does Claudius give for not acting to prevent Hamlet's violence?
3. How does Claudius feel about Gertrude?
4. What, according to Claudius, would have happened if Claudius had accused Hamlet to the people?
5. In a single sentence, sum up Hamlet's letter to Claudius.
6. In lines 61-68, Claudius tells Laertes that Hamlet's death will be arranged to look like an _____, so that not even _____ will suspect.
7. Who brought new of Laertes's "art in defense"?
8. How is Hamlet reported to feel about Laertes's skill?
9. What is "a sword unbated"?
10. What "added ingredient" does Laertes suggest to make the hit more deadly?
11. How powerful is this "added ingredient"?
12. What back-up-measure does Claudius suggest?
13. The Queen comes in to announce that _____.
14. What was Ophelia doing under the willow tree?
15. How did she get into the stream?
16. What first bore her up and then pulled her under?