

Hamlet Act 4 & 5 Discussion Questions

Act 4

- 1) After Hamlet kills Polonius in Act 3, what does Claudius plan to do with him? Does his plan work? What happens instead that foils the plan Claudius creates?
- 2) Last big speech of the play. Read and annotate the speech on the next page. What is Hamlet saying? He is beating himself up again, explain the faults he finds in his actions, or lack thereof.
- 3) How does the death of her father impact Ophelia? How does Laertes react to the death of his father? What does he do? What do we find out happens to Ophelia at the end of the act? Be specific.
- 4) Explain, IN DETAIL, exactly how Claudius and Laertes plan to kill Hamlet.

Act 5

- 5) Act 5 starts out with the famous “gravedigger” scene. What is the purpose of this scene? There is no right or wrong answer here, but I expect you to put some thought into your answer. (Annotate Attached)
- 6) So clearly there are many people who die at the end of the play. I want to focus on everything that Hamlet has lost because of his inability to act. Please outline all of the things that Hamlet has lost by the end of this play.

HAMLET

How all occasions do inform against me
And spur my dull revenge. What is a man
If his chief good and market of his time
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
Sure, He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unused. Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th' event
(A thought which, quartered, hath but one part
wisdom
And ever three parts coward), I do not know
Why yet I live to say "This thing's to do,"
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
To do 't. Examples gross as Earth exhort me:
Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honor's at the stake. How stand I, then,
That have a father killed, a mother stained,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That for a fantasy and trick of fame
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!

SCENE I. A churchyard.

Enter two gravediggers, with spades

First Gravedigger

Is she to be buried in Christian burial that willfully seeks her own salvation?

Second Gravedigger

I tell thee she is: and therefore, make her grave straight: the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

First Gravedigger

How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

Second Gravedigger

Why, 'tis found so.

First Gravedigger

It must be 'se offendendo;' it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches: it is, to act, to do, to perform: argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

Second Gravedigger

Nay, but hear you, goodman delver,--

First Gravedigger

Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good; if the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes,--mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself: argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

Second Gravedigger

But is this law?

First Gravedigger

Ay, marry, is't; crowner's quest law.

Second Gravedigger

Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

First Gravedigger

Why, there thou say'st: and the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentleman but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers: they hold up Adam's profession.