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About The EMC Masterpiece Series Access Editions

The EMC Masterpiece Series Access Editions have been designed to make great works of literature accessible to all levels of students. Each Access Edition contains a complete literary masterpiece as well as a unique integrated study apparatus crafted to guide the student page by page through the entire work. This feature does away with the inconvenience of switching between a literary work and a study guide, since both are included in each Access Edition.

Each EMC Masterpiece Series Access Edition contains the following materials:

- The complete literary work
- A historical introduction including an explanation of literary or philosophical trends relevant to the work
- A biographical introduction with a time line of the author’s life
- Art, including explanatory illustrations, maps, genealogies, and plot diagrams, as appropriate to the text
- Study apparatus for each chapter or section, including Guided Reading Questions; Words for Everyday Use entries for point-of-use vocabulary development; footnotes; Responding to the Selection questions; Reviewing the Selection questions (including Recalling, Interpreting, and Synthesizing questions to ensure that your students conduct a close and accessible reading of the text); and Understanding Literature questions
- Source materials used by the author of the work (where appropriate)
- A list of topics for creative writing, critical writing, and research projects
- A glossary of Words for Everyday Use
- A handbook of literary terms

Footnotes explain obscure references, unusual usages, and terms meant to enter students' passive vocabularies

Guided Reading Questions guide students through the work by raising important issues in key passages

Words for Everyday Use entries define and give pronunciations for difficult terms meant to enter students' active vocabularies
How the Assessment Manual Is Organized

This Assessment Manual is divided into five parts: the Access Edition answer key, which provides answers to the Reviewing the Selection and Understanding Literature questions in the text; a selection of activities that allow students to use graphic organizers to further their comprehension of the work; a vocabulary and literary terms review, which tests students' knowledge of the Words for Everyday Use and literary terms defined in the work; the exam masters, which contain three full exams that test students’ overall comprehension of the work through both objective and essay questions; and evaluation forms for self-, peer, and teacher assessment of creative writing, critical writing, and research projects.

How to Use the Access Edition Answer Key

The Access Edition answer key contains answers to the Reviewing the Selection and Understanding Literature questions included in the Access Edition. In some cases, where no specific answer is required, possible responses are given. You will notice that no answers are provided for the Guided Reading Questions found throughout the Access Edition. This is because the answers to the Guided Reading Questions can be easily found in the text in the passages marked by gray bars.
Notes to the Teacher

How to Use the Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers enable students to represent in a visual way information about the plot or characters in a book. The activities in the second section of this manual ask students to use graphic organizers, such as gradient scales, cluster charts, Venn diagrams, sequence charts, story maps, and Freytag’s Pyramid, to examine certain aspects of the literary work.

You can use the graphic organizers in this book in a variety of ways to supplement your lesson plan. For your convenience, they are designed as blackline masters. They can be assigned for students to complete as they read the work as a way to promote active reading, after students have read the book as a way to explore the book in more depth, or as a study aid before the test as a way to review ideas presented in the book. These activities can also be incorporated into a midterm or final exam.

Vocabulary and Literary Terms Review

The vocabulary review tests students’ comprehension of the Words for Everyday Use defined in the Access Edition. Because active vocabulary is learned most effectively in context, the vocabulary review is conducted contextually; the review exercises involve sentence completion that draws from the Words for Everyday Use. The vocabulary assessment includes vocabulary handouts, pre-tests, and separate vocabulary tests. A vocabulary section is included in each of the exams in the exam masters section. The literary terms review tests students’ comprehension of the literary terms defined in the Understanding Literature section of the Access Edition. Students’ understanding of these terms is also tested in each of the exams in the exam masters section.

How to Use the Exam Masters

The exam masters section contains three exams: one which tests students’ recall and interpretation of acts I and II of the play, one which tests them on act III, and one which tests them on acts IV and V. These tests can be used separately, or they can be combined in any fashion you choose. You may decide to use multiple choice and/or matching as check tests in conjunction with discussion, for example. Or you may decide to incorporate graphic organizers into the exams.

Each test is worth 100 points and consists of objective questions in the form of multiple choice and matching, as well as quote identification, short essay, and long essay questions. Answers, or possible responses, are given for all exam questions. Note: You can use ScanTron answer sheets to correct the objective part of the test.

How to Use the Evaluation Forms

The Assessment Manual contains evaluation forms to help you assess student performance across the entire range of language arts skills. The forms include writing evaluation forms, a project evaluation form, and a revision and proofreading checklist that can be used for writing instruction.
Recalling and Interpreting

1. R: They have seen the ghost of the late King Hamlet.
2. I: Marcellus has asked Horatio to join in the watch to confirm what they have seen. Marcellus also hopes that, because Horatio is a learned man, he will know how to speak to the ghost to find out what it wants.
3. R: Fortinbras has raised a band of “lawless resolutes” with the purpose of invading Denmark to recapture land lost by his father to the late King Hamlet.
4. I: The people of Denmark are preparing for war because of the threat posed by Fortinbras.
5. R: Horatio says that prior to the assassination of Julius Caesar, there were many disturbances in the natural order. The dead “Did squeak and gibber” in the streets. There were comets, dews of blood, “Disasters in the sun,” and an eclipse of the moon.
6. I: Barnardo says that the appearance of the late king’s ghost might have something to do with Fortinbras’s planned invasion of Denmark, because the late king was involved in wars between Norway and Denmark.
7. R: Hamlet, the king of Denmark, has recently died. His widow, Gertrude, has married King Hamlet’s brother, Claudius. Claudius and Gertrude now rule as king and queen.
8. I: Hamlet is extremely unhappy about these events. When Claudius refers to Hamlet as his son, Hamlet responds bitterly that Claudius is “A little more than kin, and less than kind” and says that he is “too much i’ the sun,” meaning that being Claudius’s “son” is what upsets him. Hamlet still dresses in mourning black and has shown so much grief that Claudius and Gertrude feel it necessary to speak to him about his overzealous sorrow.
9. R: They ask Hamlet to stop grieving so inconsolably for the loss of his father and ask him to return to Wittenberg, where he has been a student.
10. I: In response to his mother’s request that he not return to Wittenberg, Hamlet says, “I shall in all my best obey you, madam,” but the soliloquy that follows (“O that this too too solid flesh would melt”) makes plain that Hamlet has no intention of casting off his grief or his rage at the hasty marriage of his mother to Claudius.
11. R: Laertes tells his sister to think of “the trifling” of Hamlet’s “favor” as no more than “a fashion” or “a toy in blood.” He explains that Hamlet, being heir to the throne, cannot choose for his mate whomever he wishes, for the fate of Denmark depends on his choice. In short, he tells her to be wary of Hamlet and not to compromise her reputation.
12. I: Laertes’s advice implies that young men in general, and Hamlet in particular, are driven by their passions and cannot be depended on.
13. R: Polonius detains his son in order to give him extensive advice on proper behavior.
14. **I:** Polonius is a long-winded, meddlesome fool whose good advice is undercut by his lack of self-awareness. His foolishness is evident when he first chides Laertes for not already being aboard the ship, and then detains him further.

15. **R:** Polonius tells his daughter that she must stop seeing Hamlet. He says that Hamlet’s “tenders of affection” are “unholy suits” whose purpose is to “beguile” Ophelia. He is afraid that his daughter’s actions might compromise both her honor and his own.

16. **I:** Responses will vary. Students may criticize Polonius’s autocratic way of dealing with his daughter, but you may wish to point out to them that in Shakespeare’s day, absolute obedience to a father’s command was considered proper. Furthermore, given the intrigues of Renaissance courts (and Elsinore in this play is much more a Renaissance court than the medieval one of the old Amleth story), Polonius does have reason to be cautious.

17. **R:** The ghost reveals to Hamlet that he was murdered by Claudius before he had a chance to confess his sins and must suffer the fires of purgatory as a result. It further reveals—and this fact is important for understanding the extreme anger Hamlet displays later in the play—that Claudius has “With witchcraft of his wits” seduced and “won to his shameful lust / The will of my most seeming virtuous queen.” The ghost’s comments, and Hamlet’s subsequent reactions, indicate that Claudius and Gertrude had an adulterous relationship before the death of the king.

18. **I:** Responses will vary. This is a much debated question. Most critics agree that Hamlet pretends madness in order to confuse the king and deflect attention away from his intent to commit murder. In the original story on which Shakespeare based his play, Amleth’s motivation is clearer. He is a child, and there is a real threat that the usurper king might kill him. Shakespeare, however, made Hamlet older than Amleth and also made Hamlet so beloved by the queen and the common people that Claudius was afraid to act against him. This caused critics to debate the reason for Hamlet’s feigned madness for centuries. Some scholars—T. S. Eliot, for example—have claimed that there simply is no sufficient explanation for this pretense in the play. Others have argued that Hamlet does not just feign madness but that he is, in fact, mad and under the influence of an evil spirit. This last view is not widely accepted.

**Synthesizing**

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

19. The unnatural events are fratricide, regicide, adultery, and incest. (According to the laws of the church during Elizabethan times, marrying one’s brother- or sister-in-law was considered incest.) Hamlet vows to set these right by taking revenge on Claudius and ascending the throne himself. Hamlet’s duty to and love for his father, his passionate disposition, and his understanding that he was “born to set it right” all contribute to his decision.

20. Responses will vary. Students might argue that the ghost is diabolical, or at least not heavenly, as his call for revenge urges Hamlet to commit a terrible act. They may
also point out that the ghost shows little concern for Hamlet’s welfare, but only insists that Hamlet must take revenge. Others might say that the ghost is probably not a diabolical spirit, since it speaks in an authoritative, kingly manner and explicitly requests that Hamlet not exact revenge on Gertrude.

Answers for Understanding Literature, page 51

1. **Central Conflict and Inciting Incident.** On a literal level, the central conflict is between Hamlet and Claudius. Another conflict, however, rages within Hamlet—the conflict between his tendency to brood and deliberate and the demand that he take immediate action. The central conflict is introduced when the ghost appears to Hamlet and reveals Claudius’s treachery.

2. **Mood.** The mood of the opening is ominous. It is bitterly cold. The sentries are nervous, having twice before seen a ghost, and the whole country is tense and preparing for war. When the ghost appears, it is a sight that makes “night hideous,” and it tells of horrific deeds. This feeling of foreboding is intensified when Horatio speaks of the unnatural portents that preceded the murder of Caesar in Rome.

3. **Irony.** In act I, scene ii, Claudius presents himself as an able king dealing adroitly with a crisis of state. He also presents himself as a caring husband and a concerned and loving stepfather. This presentation of himself is ironic, given that the audience and Hamlet have just been told that Claudius has committed fratricide, regicide, and adultery.

4. **Foil.** Both are the sons and namesakes of Scandinavian kings who are now dead. In both cases, an uncle now rules in the dead king’s place. Both sons wish to take revenge for an outrage committed against their fathers.

5. **Theme.** The ghost of King Hamlet is condemned to walk the earth during the night and to spend its days in flames because the king was killed without having had the chance to confess and receive absolution for his sins. Hamlet is asked to take revenge on Claudius because Claudius has murdered Hamlet’s father and seduced his mother. Whether it is morally right for Hamlet to undertake this revenge is debatable. Some students might argue that Hamlet has every right to take revenge given the extremity of the crimes committed against his father. Others will say that Hamlet should leave such exacting of justice to the law or to God.
Answers for Reviewing the Selection, page 90

Recalling and Interpreting

1. **R:** Polonius sends Reynaldo to spy on his son. He tells Reynaldo to falsely claim that Laertes has committed immoral acts in order to hear what people who know Laertes will say about his conduct.

2. **I:** Polonius is a deceitful, underhanded man. He distrusts everyone, and thinks his son capable of all kinds of vices. Polonius may distrust his son because he, himself, committed many misdeeds as a youth.

3. **R:** Ophelia comes to see her father because Hamlet has burst into her chamber with his clothes awry and with a “piteous” expression on his face. Her description of Hamlet’s appearance and actions lead both Polonius and Ophelia to conclude that Hamlet has been driven mad over his unrequited love for Ophelia.

4. **I:** Responses will vary. Some students will see Hamlet’s actions toward Ophelia in this act as a sign of his distress that Ophelia seems to be ending their relationship. Others will see his actions as an attempt to pretend madness in order to carry out his plan for revenge.

5. **R:** Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were childhood companions of Hamlet who also studied with him at Wittenberg. Claudius and Gertrude bring them to court so that they can get close to Hamlet and find out what is troubling him.

6. **I:** In both cases, parents send people to spy on their sons.

7. **R:** Norway has stopped Fortinbras’s planned invasion of Denmark and has sent Fortinbras’s forces to battle Poland instead. The king of Norway requests that Claudius grant Fortinbras safe passage through Denmark on his way to Poland.

8. **I:** Claudius does behave in a wise and kingly manner. By sending the ambassadors he averts the danger of war, and his desire to consider the king of Norway’s request before acting on it shows judiciousness.

9. **R:** Polonius says that Hamlet has gone insane because of unrequited love for Ophelia. Polonius suggests that he and Claudius hide and eavesdrop on a conversation between Ophelia and Hamlet to test this theory.

10. **I:** Students may disagree as to whether spying on Hamlet is morally correct. Such deceitfulness would ordinarily be considered wrong, but governments frequently engage in spying and, in this play, Claudius and Polonius are the highest officials of the government of Denmark. Given that Hamlet is the likely successor to the throne, his state of mind is a legitimate concern of the government. Despite these arguments, most students will conclude that Polonius’s suggestion is immoral, citing the fact that neither Claudius nor Polonius has Hamlet’s best interests in mind.

11. **R:** Hamlet calls Polonius “Jephthah, judge of Israel.” He then tells Polonius what a treasure he had.

12. **I:** As a footnote in the text points out, Jephthah inadvertently sacrificed his only daughter in exchange for victory at war. Hamlet may perceive Polonius as sacrificing Ophelia’s happiness for his own reasons. In this way, both Polonius and Jephthah
restrict their daughters from living normal lives. Hamlet, by calling Polonius “Jephthah,” advises Polonius that he is aware of the way Polonius is meddling in their relationship.

13. **R:** Hamlet says that Denmark is a prison. He then says that the world has many prisons and that Denmark is the worst of these. Hamlet demands that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern be truthful about why they have come to Denmark.

14. **I:** Hamlet’s mood in act II is depressed and despondent. At least, this is the appearance that Hamlet projects. He does not treat his old companions with genuine warmth and welcome because he realizes that Gertrude and Claudius intend to use these two men to spy on him.

15. **R:** Hamlet calls the air “a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.” He calls the earth “a sterile promontory.” He says that humans are a “quintessence of dust” and that neither men nor women delight him.

16. **I:** Responses will vary. Some students may think that Hamlet says these things merely to confuse Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and to keep up his pretense of extreme melancholy, or depression. If Hamlet genuinely has such opinions, then he is indeed melancholy, most likely because he is disturbed by the murder of his father, the adulterous relationship between his mother and uncle, and Ophelia’s apparent rejection of him.

17. **R:** Hamlet asks the player to recite a scene in which Aeneas tells Dido about Hecuba’s response to seeing her husband murdered by Pyrrhus. Hamlet is embarrassed by the fact that the player, to whom Hecuba is only a mythic character, shouts with passion and even weeps aloud at the plight of Hecuba, whereas he, Hamlet, having real cause to feel pain and outrage, says and does nothing. Hamlet concludes that he is a coward and lacks the “gall” to be motivated to action. He resolves to find out whether Claudius is guilty, and devises a plan to test the king.

18. **I:** The speech recounts the bloody revenge taken by Pyrrhus for the death of his father, Achilles. Hamlet probably wants to hear this speech because the situation of Pyrrhus parallels his own. He might hope to become inspired by the story to act as Pyrrhus does. Hamlet reacts as he does because he is ashamed that he has not yet avenged his father.

Synthesizing

**Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.**

19. Students should note that Hamlet is deeply despondent over the death of his father, over the adulterous relationship of his mother and Claudius, and possibly over Ophelia’s rejection of him. As revealed in Hamlet’s final soliloquy in act II, he is angry at himself for not having taken action yet, but has hesitated because he fears the ghost may have lied. Students will likely note that Hamlet is not insane: as Polonius senses, he has his wits about him and there is “method” in his madness. As evidence that Hamlet is sane, they may say that Hamlet’s apparently nonsensical lines have real meaning, and his thoughtful soliloquies show that he is capable of analyzing his situation. (Other students may take a more extreme view, advanced by some critics, that Hamlet truly is insane and has been tempted by a demon.)
20. Most students will say that Hamlet pretends madness in order to distract everyone while he plots revenge against Claudius. Some might suggest that Hamlet wants to spy on Claudius, and that he hopes that if Claudius considers him insane, the king will be less cautious and may accidentally reveal his guilt. Hamlet says that he plans to stage the play because the ghost may be a “dev’il” tempting him to do evil, and he wants proof that Claudius really did kill King Hamlet. The question of why Hamlet delays in taking his revenge is much debated. Reasons include Hamlet’s uncertainty about whether Claudius is truly guilty, and his fears of damnation. Hamlet himself concludes that he is a coward who lacks the “gall” to incite himself to action. Another explanation for the delay is that Hamlet simply is not a man of action like his father or Fortinbras, but rather a scholarly person who tends to reflect rather than act.

Answers for Understanding Literature, page 92
Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

1. **Foil.** Pyrrhus, like Hamlet, has had a father murdered and wants to take revenge for his father’s death. Unlike Hamlet, Pyrrhus exacts his revenge quickly. He is an archetypal hero, a man of action, whereas Hamlet is not. Hamlet compares himself to the player, saying that the player, who has no personal reason for showing emotion over what is merely a mythic tale, nonetheless speaks with great passion and weeps for Hecuba, whereas Hamlet has great personal cause for outrage, but, to his shame, he says and does nothing.

2. **Soliloquy.** Hamlet calls himself a “rogue” and “peasant slave,” asks himself whether he is a coward, suggests that he lacks “gall / To make oppression bitter,” and describes himself as one who “unpacks” his heart with words rather than actions. Hamlet curses himself because he has not yet taken revenge on Claudius. Students’ assessments of Hamlet will vary. At the end of act II, Hamlet resolves to test whether Claudius murdered his father by presenting a play that might stir the king to reveal his guilt.

3. **Psychodrama.** Hamlet has a melancholic personality. His soliloquies are often reflective and bitter. Even before he learns from the ghost about the murder of his father and about his mother’s adultery, he contemplates suicide, saying that he wishes that “the Everlasting had not fix’d / His canon ‘gainst self-slaughter.” Throughout act II, he expresses extreme despondency and a distaste for all that life has to offer—love and marriage; childrearing; the earth and air; Denmark, which he calls a “prison”; and the company of men and women.

4. **Protagonist and Antagonist.** The protagonist of this play is Hamlet. The major antagonist is Claudius. The external conflict between the two men is one of the major conflicts in the play. The other major conflict rages within Hamlet, who is torn between the need to take revenge and his own reluctance to act. In this internal conflict, Hamlet often acts as his own antagonist, cursing himself and wishing himself dead.
Act III

Answers for Reviewing the Selection, page 142

Recalling and Interpreting

1. R: Most students will agree that in the “To be, or not to be” soliloquy, Hamlet is contemplating suicide. He refers to suicide as “a consummation / Devoutly to be wished.” An alternate reading of the soliloquy is that Hamlet is considering the consequences of acting versus not acting. According to this view, “to be” means “to act,” and Hamlet’s statement that a man “might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin” refers not to killing oneself with a dagger, but to killing the person who is the cause of one’s troubles. However, this interpretation is difficult to support, and, as you might point out to students, it violates Occam’s Razor, the principle that suggests that the simplest explanation is most often the correct one.

2. I: Hamlet says that despite their suffering, people refrain from killing themselves because of their moral conscience, their “dread of something after death.” He goes on to say that conscience renders people unable to take any sort of action. In deliberating, Hamlet says, people cause “the native hue of resolution” to become “sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought.” Thinking too much, and worrying about what is morally correct, weakens people’s resolve to act.

3. R: Hamlet asks Ophelia whether she is honest, or chaste. He also asks if she is fair, meaning physically attractive. He then tells her that she should enter a nunnery, where she will not be a “breeder of sinners.”

4. I: Hamlet violently rejects women, love, romance, and marriage. He might feel this way because he is hurt by Ophelia’s rejection of him, and especially because he has witnessed his mother’s unfaithfulness to his father. Earlier, in act I, Hamlet accuses women of being morally weak, saying “Frailty, thy name is woman.” This is evidence that his disgust for Gertrude’s actions has influenced the way he regards all women, including Ophelia.

5. R: Claudius concludes that “His affections do not that way tend” (i.e., that Hamlet is not in love with Ophelia) and that he is upset about something else “O’er which his melancholy sitson brood.”

6. I: Claudius says that he fears Hamlet could be dangerous. He decides to send Hamlet to England on the pretext of “the demand of our neglected tribute.” (At the time the play is set, England owes payments to Denmark.) Claudius also tells Polonius that perhaps travel will help Hamlet “expel / This something-settled matter in his heart”—that is, that travel might stop Hamlet from brooding and bring him back to his former self.

7. R: Hamlet says that “the purpose of playing…was and is, to hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature.” In other words, actors should imitate real life.

8. I: Hamlet hopes that the play will imitate reality so successfully that the king will reveal his guilt.

9. R: Hamlet asks Horatio to watch Claudius for any sign of guilt.
10. I: Hamlet thinks highly of Horatio’s judgment, saying that Horatio’s blood (meaning passion) and judgment are well balanced. He also admires Horatio’s even temper—his ability to bear good or ill fortune “with equal thanks.”

11. R: Hamlet makes lewd comments and suggests that Ophelia has a lover.

12. I: Hamlet apparently believes Ophelia is unchaste and suspects she has a lover. He might believe this because Gertrude’s actions lead him to distrust all women, and because Ophelia has rejected him without explaining why. In any case, Hamlet is bitter and angry because Ophelia has scorned him. (Note: Some critics suggest that Hamlet and Ophelia have had sexual relations and that Hamlet, after learning of Gertrude’s adultery, becomes disgusted not only with her but also with Ophelia and himself for their immorality. Such a view can be supported, but is open to debate.)

13. R: The actual name of the play is “The Murder of Gonzago.” Hamlet calls the play “The Mouse-trap.”

14. I: Hamlet calls the play “The Mouse-trap” because he is using it to capture Claudius, who is in his eyes not a royal lion but a mere mouse. Most critics concur with Hamlet and Horatio that Claudius’s reaction reveals both his guilt and the truthfulness of the ghost.

15. R: Hamlet commands Guildenstern to play a recorder.

16. I: Hamlet demands that Guildenstern play the recorder in order to make the point that Guildenstern, who does not have the ability to play as simple an instrument as a recorder, certainly does not have the skill that it would take “to play upon” Hamlet—that is, to manipulate Hamlet and make him “speak,” or reveal his plans.

17. R: He cautions himself not to allow his anger to become monstrous, and says he must not be like Nero, who killed his mother. Before he goes to see Gertrude, he resolves to “speak daggers to her, but use none.”

18. I: Hamlet is in a black, foul, murderous mood. He says that he could “drink hot blood / And do such bitter business as the day / Would quake to look on.”

19. R: Claudius is attempting to pray. Hamlet does not kill him because he assumes that Claudius is confessing his sins to God and asking forgiveness, and that if Claudius dies at this point, he will go to heaven with his sins absolved. Hamlet wants Claudius to die in a sinful state and be sent to hell.

20. I: Hamlet’s decision is ironic because while Claudius appears to be praying, he is actually unable to pray for God’s forgiveness and be absolved of his sin. If Hamlet were to kill him at this point, he would go to hell.

21. R: Polonius hides behind an arras, or a hanging tapestry, in Gertrude’s bedchamber. He intends to eavesdrop on the conversation between Hamlet and Gertrude. He shouts for help when he hears Gertrude cry out, fearing the enraged Hamlet intends to kill her. Hamlet, thinking he is Claudius, kills him with a sword.

22. I: The underhanded Polonius often spies on people, and as Hamlet says, he learns the lesson that “to be too busy is some danger.” Some students may agree with Hamlet that Polonius gets what he deserves. Others may say that although Polonius is dishonest and meddlesome, he does not deserve such a harsh fate.
Act III (cont.)

23. **R:** Hamlet accuses his mother of behaving like a harlot and being false to her marriage vows. After he kills Polonius, and Gertrude asks him what he has done, he says he has done a deed almost as bad “As kill a king, and marry with his brother.” Hamlet asks Gertrude to compare portraits of Claudius and the late King Hamlet, Gertrude’s former husband, saying that her current husband, “like a mildewed ear,” has “blast[ed] his wholesome brother.” Gertrude is shocked when Hamlet suggests Claudius killed King Hamlet. She says that Hamlet has turned her eyes into her very soul, where she sees “such black and grained spots / As will not leave their tinct”—in other words, that she recognizes sins or blemishes so black and ingrained in herself that they will not fade. She begs Hamlet to speak no more, because his words are “like daggers,” and finally says that Hamlet has broken her heart in two.

24. **I:** Gertrude probably feels guilty because she committed adultery with her husband’s brother, Claudius, and then married him. However, her shocked reaction suggests she did not know that her first husband was murdered, and that she had nothing to do with that crime. Her statement that Hamlet has split her heart in two might refer to the fact that she loves Claudius and does not want to give him up, yet with the same heart she also loves her son and regrets her betrayal of his father. Her heart is divided because she cannot reconcile the two loves.

25. **R:** The ghost appears, saying that it has come to whet Hamlet’s “almost blunted purpose.” In this metaphor, the ghost uses imagery pertaining to a knife or dagger (the words whet and blunted) to refer to the kind of revenge he wishes Hamlet to exact upon Claudius.

26. **I:** Gertrude concludes that her son is mad and experiencing hallucinations. She exclaims in disbelief, “This is the very coinage of your brain.” Hamlet responds that it is not his madness, but her sins, that summon the ghost. At the end of the scene, Hamlet tells his mother that he is sane, and is only pretending madness. However, it is unclear whether Gertrude is convinced.

27. **R:** Hamlet says that because he has killed Polonius, he will be sent to England.

28. **I:** Hamlet regards Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as fanged snakes ordered to bring him harm. He says in regard to them that he will make “the enginer / Hoist with his own petar.” In other words, Hamlet plans to blow them up with their own bomb—he will use their own strategy against them. So far, it is unclear how Hamlet will do this.

Synthesizing

*Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.*

29. Hamlet has indeed acted as a scourge, or whip, punishing everyone for what he sees as their sins or faults. He seems to believe that his role is to serve justice not only to Claudius, but to everyone around him. Believing Ophelia has been dishonest and unchaste, he orders her to enter a nunnery. He ridicules Polonius for being nosy and foolish, and when he accidentally kills the old councilor, he suggests that Polonius has received just punishment for his spying. Hamlet castigates Gertrude, accusing her harshly of adultery and immorality. He is lenient in his punishment of her only
because his father’s ghost has instructed him to “Leave her to heaven.” He spares Claudius temporarily because he decides that Claudius deserves the ultimate punishment: damnation to hell. Although Hamlet does not say explicitly what punishment he has planned for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he implies that he will use their own strategy against them.

30. Most students will agree that Hamlet’s behavior toward Ophelia is not just or morally correct. Students’ opinions about his behavior toward other characters—Polonius, Gertrude, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and Claudius—may vary. Most will agree that the murder of Polonius is unjust, and will be shocked at Hamlet’s lack of remorse. Some students may criticize Hamlet for speaking disrespectfully to his mother, but most will argue that Hamlet is, as he says, being cruel to be kind, and that he attempts to bring her back to the path of virtue. At this point in the play, Hamlet has merely treated Rosencrantz and Guildenstern with scorn, which they deserve for being willing to spy on their old companion in order to advance themselves. He also implies that he will punish them in some way. It is unclear whether Rosencrantz and Guildenstern know that they are taking Hamlet to his death. Students who believe they are innocent may say that Hamlet is taking his punishments too far. Others will say that Hamlet’s plans are just, since the two have betrayed him.

**Answers for Understanding Literature, page 144**

*Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.*

1. **Aside.** The aside reveals that Claudius truly did kill King Hamlet, and that he feels tremendous guilt over the deed.

2. **Irony and Cliché.** Examples of pious clichés may be found in Claudius’s address to the court in act I, scene ii, lines 1–25 (“Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother’s death / The memory be green…”), in Polonius’s advice to Laertes in act I, scene iii, lines 59–81 (“Give thy thoughts no tongue…”), and in act III, scene i, lines 46–48, when Polonius tells Ophelia that “with devotion’s visage / And pious action we do sugar o’er / The devil himself.” Ironically, neither Claudius and Polonius can live up to his own pious words. Both are deceitful, immoral hypocrites. Claudius is the most hypocritical, having killed his brother, compromised his brother’s wife, stolen the crown, and then pretended to be a good and noble king. Polonius is a hypocrite as well: after entreating Laertes to lead a virtuous life, the old councilor sends someone to spy on his son. Later, he spies on Hamlet as well.

3. **Soliloquy.** The standard interpretation of the “To be, or not to be” soliloquy is that Hamlet is contemplating suicide. He characterizes killing oneself as “[taking] arms against a sea of troubles,” as though suicide were a heroic action. He says that to die, to end his pain and suffering, would be a wonderful thing, but then worries what might happen after death. Hamlet says that people would kill themselves rather than endure the many evils of this “weary life,” if it were not for “dread of something after death, / The undiscover’d country.” Hamlet concludes that this is but one example of a more general problem: the fact that analyzing too much weakens a person’s resolve to act.
Act III (cont.)

A less common interpretation maintains that Hamlet is considering not suicide but whether he should take action against Claudius. According to this view, “to be” means “to act”—to be a man of action—and “not to be” means not to act. Hamlet implies that if he does not act, he does not truly exist. On the other hand, he worries that if he commits revenge, stabbing Claudius with a “bare bodkin,” he may be punished in the afterlife for doing so.

In the second soliloquy of act II, Hamlet describes the hour as the “witching time of night” and says he is capable of drinking hot blood (as witches were said to do) and of committing acts so horrible that the day “would quake to look on [them].” Now that he knows the king is guilty, Hamlet is ready to take revenge. He is far more reckless and prepared for action than in his first soliloquy. Before going to see Gertrude, Hamlet must actually warn himself not to kill her, not to let “The soul of Nero enter [his] firm bosom.” He resolves to “speak daggers to her, but use none.”

4. Motivation. Until this point in the play, we have not seen Hamlet treat Ophelia unkindly. Various interpretations of Ophelia’s remark are possible. Perhaps Ophelia has interpreted Hamlet’s insane behavior as unkind. Or perhaps she only calls him unkind in order to provoke a declaration of love from him. Ophelia has been unkind to Hamlet by refusing to see him and not explaining why. Students may say that Hamlet responds angrily because Ophelia calls him unkind, whereas it is she who has refused to see him. Other students may suggest that Hamlet is angry because he knows Polonius and the king are spying on them, and thinks Ophelia, too, is conspiring against him. Or, he might treat her cruelly in order to mislead the spies. Hamlet accuses Ophelia of being unchaste. He goes on to say that all women make “monsters,” or cuckolds, of their husbands, and that all men are “arrant knaves” who cannot be trusted. Hamlet probably feels as he does about women and marriage because his mother has married the man who killed his father. Responses will vary as to whether Hamlet’s feelings are justified.

5. Drama. Hamlet has the Mouse-trap play performed in hopes that it will trick Claudius into revealing his guilt. The plot of the drama is similar to the events that have occurred in the court: a queen marries the man who poisons her husband. As a result of this drama within a drama, Hamlet sees evidence that Claudius is indeed guilty. The king reveals his guilt when he becomes disturbed during the poisoning scene and stands up, calling for lights to end the play.

6. Theme. Claudius is unable to ask for forgiveness because he realizes the hypocrisy of such an act—he cannot truly repent if he does not relinquish the kingship, end his marriage to Gertrude, and publicly admit his guilt in the murder. Ironically, Hamlet spares Claudius’s life because he sees him at prayer and assumes his uncle is receiving absolution for his sins. He reasons that if Claudius dies at this point, he might enter heaven—and Hamlet wants to send the king to hell. Many people, including the critic Samuel Johnson, have been horrified by the idea that anyone would take revenge so far as to ensure that a person would be condemned to hell. Killing Claudius is not enough for Hamlet: he wants the king to suffer for all eternity.
7. **Mimesis.** Hamlet says that a playwright should use as much modesty as cunning and that a player should not overstep “the modesty of nature.” To Hamlet, the purpose of a play is “to hold a mirror up to nature”—to portray how things really are. Drama has the value of helping us understand ourselves and our times. A bad performance involves overacting, typified by the ranting actor who “out-Herods Herod,” diverting attention from the play and toward the actor instead. According to Hamlet, the best actor knows how to “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action.”

8. **Freudian Criticism and the Oedipus Complex.** According to the Freudian theory, Claudius has carried out Hamlet’s own suppressed fantasy of killing his father and taking his father’s place with his mother. As suggested by Freud in the quote, Hamlet may be delaying because he hesitates to condemn Claudius for doing something that he himself secretly wants to do. His behavior toward Ophelia can be explained by the fact that Hamlet has a distaste for all sexuality, since he is disgusted by his own urges to be with his mother. His suicidal tendencies and his distaste for life stem from the fact that he loathes his secret desires and hates himself for having them. Freudian theory would hold that Hamlet’s behavior in the “closet scene,” and especially the way he lingers on the details of Gertrude’s sexual relationship with Claudius, reveals both jealousy and disgust about his own suppressed desires.

9. **Motivation and Irony of Situation.** This action demonstrates irony of situation in that it violates Hamlet’s own expectations. Given that Hamlet’s motivation is to avenge the wrongful death of his father, it is ironic that when he stabs at the arras, thinking he is rightfully putting Claudius to death, he kills Polonius, Laertes’s father. He thus becomes guilty of the same crime he has set out to punish.

10. **Crisis, or Turning Point.** The crisis, or turning point, of this play is Hamlet’s killing of Polonius. The subsequent action of the play is a direct result of this murder. Hamlet expects that the killing of Polonius will provoke the king to send him away from Denmark. Students may have various predictions about what will happen in acts IV and V as a result of this crisis.
Act IV

Answers for Reviewing the Selection, page 184

Recalling and Interpreting

1. **R:** Hamlet first tells Claudius that Polonius is at supper, “Not where he eats, but where ‘a is eaten.” Next he says that Polonius may be in heaven or hell, but hints that his body may be found in the lobby.

2. **I:** Hamlet does not seem to feel remorse for killing Polonius. Instead, he seems to dismiss the old councilor’s death. Perhaps he does this because he feels that Polonius brought his death on himself.

3. **R:** Claudius reveals that he is sending a letter to the king of England requesting that Hamlet be put to death immediately.

4. **I:** It is unclear whether Rosencrantz and Guildenstern know that Claudius has requested the execution of Hamlet. However, the two seem to agree with Claudius that Hamlet poses a threat. Claudius feels that since Denmark recently defeated England, the king of England will not risk failing to comply with his wishes.

5. **R:** Hamlet speaks with a captain in Fortinbras’s army and learns that Fortinbras is headed toward Poland to fight for a worthless piece of land.

6. **I:** Hamlet praises Fortinbras for finding “quarrel in a straw / When honor’s at the stake”—he marvels that the prince is able to risk so many lives without hesitation, simply for a point of honor. He says that in comparison to Fortinbras, a brave and decisive leader, he is nothing but a coward. He castigates himself for not having taken action and blames his delay on his tendency to think too much about the consequences. He resolves that from now on, all his thoughts will be “bloody.”

7. **R:** Ophelia has gone insane and is singing songs in her delirium. Her songs deal with unfaithful or lost lovers and with mourning for the dead.

8. **I:** The two main causes of Ophelia’s madness are the loss of Hamlet’s love and the death of her father at Hamlet’s hand. Ophelia is also upset at the thought that Hamlet may be executed for his crime, as suggested by her remark that she “cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i’ th’ cold ground.”

9. **R:** Laertes has returned from France, and the people are suggesting to him that Claudius is responsible for his father’s death.

10. **I:** Claudius is worried that if people believe him to be guilty of killing Polonius, they will stage an insurrection and kill him.

11. **R:** Laertes seeks to learn what happened to his father and to take revenge on his father’s murderer.

12. **I:** The reactions of the young men differ in two ways. First, Hamlet delays, whereas Laertes acts immediately. Second, Hamlet worries that taking revenge would be morally wrong, and thinks that the ghost might be a demon sent to bring about his damnation. Laertes, on the other hand, explicitly disregards damnation as a consequence of seeking revenge, saying “To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil! / Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit! / I dare damnation.”
13. R: Claudius says that he is not to blame for Polonius’s death and that others will vouch for this fact. He then tells Laertes, at the end of the act, that “where th’ offense is [that is, with Hamlet], let the great axe fall.”

14. I: Claudius has two reasons for wanting to win Laertes over. First, he needs to ensure that Laertes will not kill him, and, with the support of the people, become king himself. Second, Claudius may want to use Laertes to kill Hamlet.

15. R: While on his way to England, Hamlet was captured by pirates. He negotiated his return to Denmark in exchange for some unspecified “good turn” to be done for the pirates.

16. I: Hamlet’s return to England frightens Claudius, for he immediately sets to work planning Hamlet’s death with Laertes.

17. R: Ophelia falls into a brook and drowns.

18. I: Responses will vary. Although Ophelia’s death is often called a suicide, it is not so described by Gertrude. According to Gertrude, Ophelia fell into the brook by accident when a willow branch broke. She floated for a minute, but then sank and drowned. The fact that Ophelia sang while floating on the water, rather than struggle or cry for help, suggests that her mental disturbance made her unaware of her danger. Students may point out that since Ophelia fell in by accident and was apparently unaware of the danger, she cannot be said to have committed suicide, which is a deliberate act of self-destruction.

Synthesizing

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

19. As a result of the murder of Polonius, Claudius decides to have Hamlet put to death and sends him to England; the people blame Claudius and call for Laertes to be made king; Laertes becomes enraged and wishes to seek revenge; and Ophelia goes insane and, in her madness, drowns.

20. Some students will argue that Hamlet is responsible, because he rejects Ophelia cruelly and kills her father. Others may argue that Hamlet is not to blame, since Ophelia rejects Hamlet first (though under Polonius’s orders) and the killing of Polonius is accidental.

Answers for Understanding Literature, page 185

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

1. Symbol. Rue was a traditional symbol of sorrow and contrition. Willow trees are also associated with sorrow and especially with crying. Water is a traditional symbol both of death and of rebirth. A river, stream, or brook may be a symbol of passage—in this case, Ophelia’s passage into the afterlife.

2. Foil. Although Hamlet shares with both Fortinbras and Laertes the desire to avenge a father, he differs from them in that he is unable to take action. He deliberates over his task, while the other two men do not. Hamlet also worries about the possible
consequences that taking revenge will have on his soul, whereas Laertes does not. Laertes says that he dares damnation and would slit Hamlet’s throat in the church.

3. **Character.** Since her first appearance in the play, Ophelia has become mad. The exact nature of her former relationship with Hamlet is unclear. Students might simply say that Hamlet expressed love for Ophelia, and she may have hoped this love would someday lead to marriage. Others might believe that Ophelia is pregnant and that this is one reason for her great distress. (The evidence for this last hypothesis, put forward by a number of critics, is slight, consisting of little more than Hamlet’s cryptic comment to Polonius that his daughter might “conceive” if she spends too much time with him.)

4. **Theme.** Dishonesty leads to death for the underhanded Polonius when he is killed while spying on Hamlet. Ophelia’s deception of Hamlet leads to heartbreak. Rather than admit that her father has forbidden her to see him, she pretends Hamlet has been unkind to her. In manipulating Hamlet in this way, she arouses his distrust and scorn. Much of Hamlet’s cruelty toward Ophelia stems from his outrage at his mother’s immoral acts, so she cannot be said to have brought it all on herself; however, her deception provided the catalyst. Having deceived her husband through her adultery causes Gertrude enormous guilt, and it turns her son against her. Claudius also feels the burden of guilt for his treachery and is unable to pray and so save himself from damnation. At the end of act IV, Laertes and Claudius plan to trick Hamlet into a duel that is intended to bring about his death.

5. **Theme.** In the “To be, or not to be” soliloquy, Hamlet describes thought as something that pales the “native hue” of resolution. In other words, thinking weakens resolve and makes one incapable of acting. In the “How all occasions...” soliloquy, Hamlet says that the “craven scurb / Of thinking too precisely on th’ event” is more cowardly than wise. In both soliloquies, Hamlet worries about the possible consequences of taking his revenge, and says that worrying keeps him from acting.
Recalling and Interpreting

1. **R:** He wonders why Ophelia is going to be given a Christian burial given that she sought her own salvation (i.e., committed suicide).

2. **I:** No, they are not correct in assuming that Ophelia’s death was a suicide. Their reasoning is faulty. The First Clown, attempting to explain the legal precedent involved, says that “an act hath three branches—it is to act, to do, to perform.” The Clown’s ignorance is shown by the fact that these words—act, do, and perform—are merely synonyms of one another. The actual law states that for a person to be held morally responsible for an act, that person must have done three things: imagined the act, resolved to carry it out, and then performed the act. At the time she died, Ophelia was not mentally capable of premeditation—of imagining the act beforehand and resolving to carry it out.

3. **R:** Hamlet speaks about several skulls, but the one that he picks up is that of Yorick, the jester of King Hamlet.

4. **I:** In each case, Hamlet reflects on the vanity of human greatness, which comes to nothing in death. The landowner retains, in the end, only the small plot in which he or she is buried. The lady, no matter how much makeup she wears during her life, will eventually be a lipless skull. The dust of Alexander the Great or Caesar may be used to plug a barrel of beer or patch a hole to keep the wind away.

5. **R:** Ophelia is buried without complete funeral rites because her death may have been a suicide. The priest says that Ophelia should not have been buried in holy ground or received any rites at all. Laertes angrily responds that Ophelia will be an angel in heaven while the priest lies howling in hell. In his grief, Laertes then jumps into the grave and asks that the dirt be shoveled on both him and Ophelia.

6. **I:** Responses will vary. Most students will probably agree with Laertes, especially since Ophelia was not in her right mind when she died and there is no proof that she meant to kill herself. According to Gertrude, her death was an accident. However, if Ophelia’s death were suicide, then the priest would be acting in accordance with the law of the church, which at the time forbade Christian burial to persons who committed suicide.

7. **R:** Hamlet jumps into the grave himself and begins wrestling with Laertes. He says that his own love for Ophelia is more than that of forty thousand brothers.

8. **I:** Some students may say that Hamlet was overcome with grief over the death of Ophelia, and wanted to proclaim his love for her. Others may say that his actions are motivated by a childish jealousy, a wish not to be outdone in grief by Laertes. Hamlet’s unreasonable jealousy is shown throughout the play. In act III, he accuses Ophelia of having a lover, a charge that has little basis. Claudius mentions that Hamlet is jealous of Laertes’s reputation as a swordsman. Hamlet also envies Fortinbras’s willingness to take dramatic action when a matter of honor is involved. Students may doubt Hamlet’s claim that he loved Ophelia, given how cruelly he treated her. However, others might point out that Hamlet’s cruelty was probably a
reaction to Ophelia’s rejection of him. They may also suggest that since Hamlet was disillusioned by the world, his command that Ophelia enter a nunnery may have been, in his mind, a way of protecting her from corruption.

9. R: Hamlet tells Horatio that sometimes it is better to take rash action than to make elaborate plans, because no matter how carefully we plan, divine Providence, or God, has already decided the outcome.

10. I: It is providential that Hamlet happens to have with him the late king’s official stamp, which he is able to use to reseal the altered letter. It is also providential that Hamlet alone is captured by pirates and returned to Denmark.

11. R: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are put to death by the English king, because Hamlet has rewritten the letter from Claudius, changing it from a request to put Hamlet to death to a request that the bearers of the letter be put to death.

12. I: Responses will vary. Students may say that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern did not deserve such a harsh fate, since they may not have known that they were delivering Hamlet to his death. Others may argue that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern deserve their fate, since they have deceived Hamlet, spying on him in exchange for the king’s favors and even encouraging Claudius to take action against Hamlet.

13. R: Hamlet ridicules Osric for his excessive use of the popular jargon of the court.

14. I: Hamlet’s comment shows his contempt for things of this world, such as ownership of land. Hamlet seems to have contempt for common people like Osric who try to enter court society. Hamlet is, in this respect, truly an aristocrat “to the manner born.” (You may wish to point out to students that this contempt for the lower classes is a common theme in Shakespeare’s plays. Consider, for example, Shakespeare’s portrayal of the crowd that follows Laertes. Such a classist view would not be as offensive to an Elizabethan audience as it is by our modern democratic standards.)

15. R: Hamlet says that he defies augury, or prediction. He says that divine Providence acts in all things, even in the fall of a sparrow, and that whatever will come, will come. He goes on to say that “the readiness is all”—all he can do is be prepared for whatever comes—and that humans should not feel bad about dying early because they are ignorant of what they leave behind anyway.

16. I: In both cases, the answer is no. Hamlet seems to believe that people bungle their way through life and have no role in changing their destiny, which has already been set out for them. He thinks that people are helpless and know nothing, really, when they die, of the world they have left behind.

17. R: Gertrude drinks from the poisoned cup that Claudius has prepared for Hamlet. Hamlet kills Claudius by stabbing him with the poisoned sword and forcing him to drink from the poisoned cup. Laertes and Hamlet fatally wound each other with the poisoned sword.

18. I: Accident plays a great role in these deaths. Gertrude accidentally drinks from the poisoned cup prepared for Hamlet. Laertes accidentally drops his poisoned sword, and Hamlet picks it up and wounds him with it. This unforeseen turn of events
causes Laertes to reveal impulsively the treachery of the king, and thus accident and bad luck lead to the death of Claudius as well. In the case of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet chances to open the letter and to have on hand the seal of Denmark. Students may say that the “mistook,” or ill-intentioned, purposes of Laertes, Claudius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern cause their demise. However, others may exclude Rosencrantz and Guildenstern from that group, since they may not have known Hamlet was to be put to death.

Synthesizing

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

19. Students will likely agree that Claudius meets a fitting end. As Laertes dies, he himself says that he is justly killed by his own treachery. Students may disagree as to whether Polonius, Gertrude, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Hamlet deserve their fates. Most students will say that Ophelia does not deserve the fate that she receives.

20. Responses will vary and will depend on students’ overall assessment of Hamlet’s character. On the one hand, students may say that Hamlet is intelligent, high-minded, and clever enough to see through the schemes of others. On the other hand, students may fault Hamlet for his inability to take action and his tendency toward melancholy. Others may criticize Hamlet’s disdain for the common people, evidenced by his insensitivity toward Ophelia and his callous attitude toward the death of Polonius.

Answers for Understanding Literature, page 225

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

1. Resolution. The central conflict in Hamlet consists of two parts: the external conflict between Hamlet and Claudius, and Hamlet’s internal conflict over whether he should take revenge on Claudius. The resolution of the external conflict occurs when Hamlet kills Claudius. Students may argue that the internal conflict is resolved earlier, when Hamlet decides, prior to the fencing match, that human action is of little importance, and that “the readiness is all.”

2. Foil. Laertes and Hamlet each ask and receive the other’s forgiveness on learning that they are about to die. Hamlet in dying says he supports Fortinbras’s election to the kingship, and Fortinbras says that had Hamlet become king, he would have “prov’d most royal.”

3. Theme. Prior to the fencing match, Hamlet’s mind is occupied primarily with spiritual matters. He seems to have found peace and has left his fate in the hands of God, or “divine Providence.” Hamlet says that simply being ready for whatever will come, including death, “is all.” At the end of the last scene, Hamlet asks for Laertes’s forgiveness. After Hamlet dies, Horatio says, “And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest,” indicating that he believes Hamlet is indeed going to heaven.
Act V (cont.)

4. Theme. Most students will agree that this is a play about the terrible consequences of not taking action. As evidence, they may point to the tragedies that result from Hamlet’s long delay and the contrasting model, provided at the end, of the active Fortinbras who restores order after the tumultuous events that have occurred. Others will argue that the whole of the final act shows that human action is pointless and irrelevant. Hamlet, in his conversation with Horatio, points out that it does not matter what people do, since their destiny is already set for them by God.

5. Tragedy. Hamlet, Prince of Denmark can be considered a tragedy in that it deals with serious issues, such as salvation, revenge, deceit, the relative value of thought and action, melancholy and madness, political intrigue, the consequences of regicide and adultery, the transitory nature of life, and very value of life. The play deals with the fall of Hamlet, a person of high status. The tragic hero of the play is Hamlet. Prior to the fencing match, Hamlet has a presentiment of doom, yet he goes to face the prospect of his own death with courage and dignity. Some have argued that Hamlet’s tragic flaw is his inability to bring himself to act. Because of this flaw, Hamlet delays so long in taking his revenge on Claudius that he brings about even greater tragedy—causing not only the death of Claudius but the deaths of Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, Gertrude, and himself as well.
Graphic Organizers
Venn Diagram

In the Venn diagram below, compare and contrast the characters of Hamlet and Laertes. Where the circles overlap, write their similarities. In the outer part of each circle, write their differences. After you have completed the diagram, write a paragraph explaining how Laertes acts as a foil for Hamlet.

Name _____________________________________
Class_____________________ Date____________
Radiating Circle

Use the radiating circle below to explore the theme of deception in Hamlet. Think of the different ways that characters deceive one another in the play. Then write each example of deception in a circle radiating out from the center. One example has been done for you.

Claudius pretends to be Hamlet’s loving stepfather

Acts of Deception
Sequence Chart

Throughout the play, Hamlet struggles with conflicting feelings about taking revenge. Fill in the sequence chart below, adding more boxes as needed, to show the progression of Hamlet’s attitude toward revenge, from the time he sees his father’s ghost in act I until the duel in act V. What doubts does Hamlet have that cause him to hesitate? What events encourage him to act? If you wish, you may use quotes to illustrate Hamlet’s state of mind at each point. The first example has been done for you.

“The time is out of joint—O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!”—Hamlet knows he must take revenge but resents this.

[Sequence Chart Diagram]
Cause and Effect Chart

From the end of act I, when Marcellus says that “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark,” to the final scene of the play, Claudius’s crime spreads its disease throughout the Danish court until all of the players except Horatio and Fortinbras are destroyed. In the chart below, explore how each of the following characters is affected by the initial treachery: Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
Using the Freytag’s Pyramid plot diagram below, chart the plot of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Briefly describe in the spaces provided the following elements: the exposition, inciting incident, rising and falling action, climax, resolution, and dénouement.
The answers below are examples of what students might include in their graphic organizers. Give students credit for variations and creative insights within the bounds of the guidelines.

**Venn Diagram**

*Similarities shared by Hamlet and Laertes*—Both are young, strong, intelligent, skilled in swordsmanship, and well-educated. Each seeks to avenge the wrongful death of his father. Both declare their love for Ophelia. Each is willing to forgive the other at the end of their lives.

*Differences between Hamlet and Laertes*—Laertes is a man of action who wants to take revenge immediately on whoever is responsible for his father’s death. He is willing to risk damnation, and he is immediately ready to kill. He almost kills Claudius before confirming that Hamlet is responsible. Hamlet, on the other hand, is a man of thought and moral considerations. He contemplates the meaning of life, his purpose, and his destiny. He can be goaded into impetuous action and cruel anger, but he fears damnation. He is reluctant to kill. He wants to ensure Claudius’s guilt before acting.

**Radiating Circle**

There are numerous examples of deceit in the play. Students may cite any of the following instances, or others they may find: Claudius and Gertrude committed adultery; Claudius murdered his brother and reported that a poisonous snake had killed the king; Polonius sends Reynaldo to spy on Laertes and spread lies about him; Hamlet pretends to be mad; Polonius spies on Hamlet and Ophelia, and later on Hamlet and Gertrude; Ophelia says that Hamlet has been unkind to her; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern pretend to be Hamlet’s friends while they are really Claudius’s spies; Claudius plans to kill Hamlet by sending him to England; Hamlet deceives Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and sends them to their deaths; Ophelia says that Hamlet has been unkind to her; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern pretend to be Hamlet’s friends while they are really Claudius’s spies; Claudius stages a duel that is secretly intended to lead to Hamlet’s death; Laertes plans to poison Hamlet.

**Sequence Chart**

**Box 1:** “The time is out of joint—O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right!”—Hamlet knows he must take revenge but resents this. (act I, scene v)

**Box 2:** “O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!”—Hamlet curses himself for not having acted and says he is cowardly and pigeon-livered. (act II, scene ii)

**Box 3:** Fears the ghost “may be a devil” tempting him to do evil, and resolves to use a play to test the king’s guilt. (act II, scene ii)

**Box 4:** “To be, or not to be”—Hamlet wonders whether he can just commit suicide and escape his situation. (act III, scene i)

(Alternatives for Box 4: “Thus conscience does make cowards of us all”—Hamlet’s “dread of something after death” prevents him from either committing suicide or taking revenge; “The native hue of resolution...is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought”—thought weakens Hamlet’s resolve)

**Box 5:** “Now could I drink hot blood”—Hamlet has just confirmed the king’s guilt and is murderous. Impulsive and ready to take revenge, he accidentally kills Polonius. (act III, scenes ii and iii)

**Box 6:** “Now might I do it pat, now ‘a is a praying”—Hamlet is about to kill Claudius, but delays because he wants the king to go to hell. (act III, scene iii)

**Box 7:** Hamlet says that “thinking too precisely on th’ event” has delayed him and that he is a coward compared with Fortinbras. Resolves that from now on his thoughts will be bloody. (act IV, scene iv)

**Box 8:** Hamlet concludes that divine Providence, not human actions, determines the outcome of events and declares that “the readiness is all.” (act V, scenes i and ii)
**Graphic Organizer Answer Key**

**Cause and Effect Chart**

Claudius's initial act of treachery affects the characters in these ways:

**Hamlet:** Hamlet loses his father and witnesses his mother's marriage to Claudius, which he regards as incestuous. He is called to avenge his father's death. Weighed down by indecision, Hamlet ponders his call to avenge his father's death until he is sure Claudius is guilty. He also acts mad in a ploy to determine this, damaging his relationship with Ophelia and losing the trust of his mother. Hamlet kills Polonius, mistaking him for Claudius, and thus accidentally robs Ophelia and Laertes of their father as he has been robbed of his. Hamlet's brooding prompts Claudius to send Hamlet to England to be killed. Hamlet reverses Claudius's plot to have him killed by turning the same fate on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Finally, he kills Laertes as he himself is dying from Laertes's sword, and also kills Claudius.

**Claudius:** Claudius becomes king and marries Gertrude, but suffers guilt and cannot gain salvation. He must now kill the vengeful Hamlet to protect himself; he sends Hamlet to England. He must also defend himself from Laertes, who blames him for Polonius's death. Claudius plans to have Laertes kill Hamlet in a duel, with a poisoned cup of wine ready in case Laertes does not kill Hamlet. He watches Gertrude mistakenly drink the poisoned wine and die before he himself dies by both Hamlet's sword and the poisoned cup.

**Gertrude:** After her first husband dies, Gertrude welcomes her marriage to Claudius and clearly enjoys her relationship with him. She is upset by the effect King Hamlet's death has on her son, and she chastises Hamlet for behaving so severely to the new king. Hamlet accuses her of adultery and incest and Gertrude admits that her sins are grave. Gertrude herself is a victim, but not entirely innocent. She dies from the poisoned cup meant for Hamlet, but not before seeing the complete unravelling of the kingdom.

**Polonius:** Polonius becomes entangled when he witnesses Hamlet's melancholy and insanity, ordering Ophelia to break off all relations with him. He thinks Hamlet's behavior is caused by his love for Ophelia and offers to eavesdrop on Hamlet on behalf of both the king and queen. Because he is spying behind a tapestry in Gertrude's chambers and tries to rescue the queen when she calls for help, Polonius is mistaken for Claudius by Hamlet and killed. Polonius not only loses his own life but his death will lead to the deaths of his son and daughter.

**Ophelia:** Claudius's treachery has rendered Hamlet so distrustful of women that he is incapable of reconciling with Ophelia, treating her cruelly. Ophelia is torn between her love for Hamlet and trying to please her father and brother; she is also greatly frightened by Hamlet's appearance of madness. When Hamlet kills Polonius, Ophelia herself goes mad and dies by drowning.

**Laertes:** Laertes loses his father, and his sister goes mad and drowns. He is goaded into treachery against Hamlet; he kills him and then is killed by his own poisoned sword.

**Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:** At Claudius's urging, they spy on Hamlet and then perhaps unwittingly carry his death warrant in a letter as they take Hamlet to England. They are killed when Hamlet intercepts the message and exchanges it for one of his own that orders the immediate death of their messengers.
Plot Diagram

Act I
Exposition: Hamlet is mourning his father's death. His uncle, Claudius, has married his mother and taken the throne. Fortinbras requests passage through Denmark on his way to attack Poland. Polonius orders Ophelia to stop seeing Hamlet and she obeys. Laertes departs for France.

Inciting Incident: King Hamlet's ghost appears and tells Hamlet that he, the late king, was murdered by Claudius. This introduces the central conflict: Hamlet's struggle to take revenge.

Act II
Rising Action: Hamlet pretends madness but is actually feeling depressed, suicidal, and conflicted over whether to take revenge. Polonius thinks Hamlet is melancholy over love for Ophelia. Claudius sends for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on Hamlet for him. Polonius and Claudius spy on Hamlet and Ophelia; Hamlet is cruel to Ophelia. Hamlet expresses frustration that he has not taken revenge and resolves to test Claudius's guilt through a play.

Act III
Climax: Hamlet and Horatio agree, in observing Claudius's reaction to the play, that he is guilty of murdering King Hamlet. Hamlet has an opportunity to kill Claudius while the king is praying, but decides to wait. Hamlet confronts Gertrude with her adultery and betrayal, and kills the spying Polonius, believing he is Claudius.

Act IV
Falling Action: Claudius sends Hamlet to England to have him killed. Laertes returns from France to investigate his father's death and finds Ophelia has gone mad. He tries to kill Claudius. Hamlet escapes en route to England and returns to Denmark. Claudius and Laertes plot a deadly duel to kill him. Gertrude reports that Ophelia has drowned.

Act V
Resolution: At the graveyard, Hamlet muses that human life is ultimately worthless. He sees Ophelia's funeral and fights with Laertes over who loved Ophelia more. He reveals to Horatio how he escaped death and that he has sent Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths. He says he is prepared for whatever destiny holds and resigns everything to God's will. In the duel, Laertes stabs Hamlet with a poison-tipped sword. The queen is accidentally killed when she drinks from a poisoned cup meant for Hamlet. Hamlet stabs Laertes with the poisoned sword, then stabs the king and forces him to drink from the poisoned cup. As they die, Hamlet and Laertes forgive each other and point the blame to Claudius.

Dénoüement: Fortinbras enters to claim the kingdom, and Horatio vows to tell Hamlet's story. Fortinbras plans to give Hamlet a funeral with full honors.
Vocabulary and Literary Terms Review
## Vocabulary Review

### Acts I–II

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Exercise: Sentence Completion

Complete the sentences by filling in each blank with a word from the list below. Do not use any word more than once.

accord  discretion  imminent  malicious
assail  disposition  impart  obstinate
brevity  expend  indict  perusal
commendable  harbinger  instrumental  slander

EX. The fading sunset was a(n) ________ of the night to come.

1. After listening to several long, boring speeches at the assembly, we were pleasantly surprised by the last speaker’s ___________ and humor.

2. The choir, though exhausted from their world tour, gave a(n) ___________ final performance.

3. The graduate’s fluency in Spanish was ___________ in the decision to hire her.

4. After a careful ___________ of the sales figures, the manager found the mistake.

5. After hearing several rumors about their new boss’s grumpiness and lack of humor, the workers were surprised to discover he actually had a cheerful ___________.

6. Since the students will ___________ so much energy and time on this project, it will be a major part of their grade.

7. The newcomer to the suspicious neighborhood was the victim of gossip and ___________.

8. The police officer asked the bystander to ___________ what he had witnessed.

9. The student council reminded students to use ___________ when voting for new leaders, instead of simply voting for their friends.

10. Without his medication, the young man was in ___________ danger of collapsing.
Exercise: Sentence Completion

Complete the sentences by filling in each blank with a word from the list below. Do not use any word more than once.

awry  devoutly  insolence  temperately
beseech  disposition  judicious  turbulent
clemency  eloquent  mandate  warrant
console  entreat  resolution  whet

EX. Tori wanted the role so much that she decided to ____beseech____ the director at the end of her audition.

1. The winds were so strong and the seas so ________________ that a small craft advisory was issued.

2. Because the convicted woman showed remorse, her family hoped the judge would view her case with ________________ and give her a more lenient sentence.

3. The young boy was so disrespectful at the party that his mother brought him home, saying she would not tolerate his ________________.

4. Beryl thought her new curfew was unfair and decided to ________________ her parents to change their minds.

5. Although he had never played tennis before, Casey made a bold ________________ that he would join the varsity tennis team.

6. My teacher continues to ________________ that we run a spell-check program on our documents before we turn them in.

7. Xavier’s faith is so important to him that he ________________ attends daily Mass.

8. The advertisement was geared to ________________ the interest of jazz fans so they would switch to the new radio station.

9. Sasha is an important member of the emergency medical team because she always reacts calmly and ________________ during a crisis.

10. Tony sifted through piles of college catalogs, trying to make as ________________ a choice as possible in deciding on a college.
Exercise: Sentence Completion

Complete the sentences by filling in each blank with a word from the list below. Do not use any word more than once.

- abate
- allegiance
- arraign
- contagion
- exhort
- imminent
- interim
- palpable
- pestilent
- profane
- requisite
- requite
- sultry
- superfluous
- tenant
- tread

EX. The people paid _homage_ to their gods by offering up prayers of thanks.

1. Mabel does not own the house she lives in; she is a _______________ there.

2. Even after breaking his wrist and spraining his ankle, Mark’s enthusiasm for football did not _______________.

3. The two boys had exchanged threats and insults, and a fight seemed _______________.

4. Because of the _______________ weather, the beaches were crowded with people who needed to cool off.

5. Students used the _______________ between classes to retrieve books from their lockers.

6. The court will _______________ the defendant on the charge of committing armed robbery.

7. The government had been so successful in cutting costs that it was able to refund _______________ funds to taxpayers.

8. Because smoking cigarettes is terrible for her health, I constantly _______________ my mother to quit the habit.

9. After the baby fell from its high chair, I discovered a(n) _______________ lump on its head.

10. The children _______________ quietly down the stairs, careful not to wake their parents.
Cumulative Exam

Exercise: Sentence Completion

Complete the sentences by filling in each blank with a word from the list below. Do not use any word more than once.

allegiance  eloquent  malicious  sheen
besmirch  homage  mandate  taciturn
bier  interim  rendezvous  tedious
contagion  jocund  resolution  vengeance

EX. I felt it was incumbent upon me to tell the truth when my mother asked who had broken the lamp.

1. When I discovered that Clare had been spreading rumors about me, I confronted her and said, “How dare you ___________________ my honor?”

2. Giovanni and Sophia planned a secret ___________________ in the garden at midnight so they could discuss their elopement.

3. The scientists tried to confine the deadly ___________________ before it infected the public, but it was already too late.

4. When I have to do ___________________ chores such as dusting and washing dishes, I find it helps to play music loudly to pass the time.

5. My dog’s coat has a healthy ___________________ because I feed her a high-quality dog food.

6. The employees paid ___________________ to their CEO when she retired by throwing a huge party celebrating her many years of success.

7. I try not to spread ___________________ gossip because it can harm people.

8. Every January, I make a ___________________ to eat more healthy foods and exercise frequently.

9. When the political organization’s leader was assassinated, the group declared that they would have ___________________ on those responsible.

10. Mr. Hanson’s ___________________ personality makes him a perfect candidate for playing Santa Claus at the mall.
Literary Terms Review

Acts I–II

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Exercise: Sentence Completion

Complete the sentences by filling in each blank with a literary term from the list below. Do not use any term more than once.

antagonist          mimesis          symbol
central conflict    mood             theme
foil               psychodrama      tragedy
inciting incident   soliloquy        turning point

EX. The main struggle in the plot of a story is the _______ central conflict _______.

1. Like Fortinbras, the player who recites the speech serves as a(n) ________________ for Hamlet.

2. The type of play that deals with the state of mind of its central character is called a(n) ________________.

3. Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” speech is a(n) ________________ that explores suicide, death, and the relationship between action and inaction.

4. When Hamlet tells the players that “the purpose of playing” is to hold “the mirror up to nature,” he is exploring the idea of ________________.

5. The relationship between thought and action is a(n) ________________ of Hamlet.

6. A(n) ________________ relates the fall of a person of high status.

7. The first meeting that takes place between Hamlet and his dead father’s ghost could be called the ________________ of the play.

8. The willow tree is a(n) ________________ of sorrow or weeping.

9. The ________________ of the play occurs when Hamlet kills Polonius, who is spying on Hamlet from behind a tapestry.

10. The ___________ ___________ is a character who works against the main character.
## Answer Key

### Vocabulary and Literary Terms

#### Vocabulary Worksheet, Acts I–II
1. brevity
2. commendable
3. instrumental
4. perusal
5. disposition
6. expend
7. slander
8. impart
9. discretion
10. imminent

#### Vocabulary Worksheet, Act III
1. turbulent
2. clemency
3. insolence
4. entreat
5. resolution
6. mandate
7. devoutly
8. whet
9. temperately
10. judicious

#### Vocabulary Worksheet, Acts IV–V
1. tenant
2. abate
3. imminent
4. sultry
5. interim
6. arraign
7. superfluous
8. exhort
9. palpable
10. tread

#### Cumulative Vocabulary Exam
1. besmirch
2. rendezvous
3. contagion
4. tedious
5. sheen
6. homage
7. malicious
8. resolution
9. vengeance
10. jocund

#### Literary Terms Worksheet
1. foil
2. psychodrama
3. soliloquy
4. mimesis
5. theme
6. tragedy
7. inciting incident
8. symbol
9. turning point
10. antagonist

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Exam Masters
Hamlet, Acts I–II

Multiple Choice (20 points total)

On the line provided, write the letter of the best answer.

1. In the opening scene of the drama, Barnardo comes to take over Francisco’s watch. When Horatio arrives, they tell him that _____.
   a. the ghost of the deceased Hamlet appeared to them again
   b. Fortinbra’s army is preparing to attack Poland
   c. Prince Hamlet seems confused and distracted
   d. there are inauspicious signs in the Zodiac
   e. none of the above

2. Horatio mentions all of the following as portents of calamities, except: _____.
   a. ghosts that walk at night
   b. eclipses
   c. sun spots and eruptions
   d. a blood-red moon

3. Denmark is preparing for war because _____.
   a. the king of Poland, a longtime enemy, plans to attack
   b. the prince of Norway plots to retake land that the Danish seized from his father
   c. the people, who loved the slain King Hamlet, are threatening to rebel and overthrow Claudius
   d. Hamlet, a scholarly prince, has yet to be tested in battle and must lead the Danish army into Norway

4. Claudius sends a messenger to _____.
   a. warn Fortinbras that any attempts to take Denmark’s lands will result in swift reprisal
   b. entreat Fortinbras’s uncle to stop Fortinbras from attacking
   c. make arrangements for young Hamlet’s marriage
   d. b and c are true

5. Laertes is _____.
   a. Hamlet’s closest friend
   b. the son of Polonius
   c. the brother of Ophelia
   d. all of the above
   e. b and c are true

6. According to Claudius and Gertrude, Hamlet _____.
   a. broods too long over his father’s death
   b. is a disobedient, unappreciative youth who needs discipline
   c. is a frivolous young man who has much maturing to do before he can ever be king of Denmark
   d. is an unstable youth who suffers from mental illness
7. As Laertes goes off to France, he advises Ophelia to _____.
   a. view Hamlet’s advances as a passing fancy
   b. seduce Hamlet so that she will be his queen someday
   c. spy on Hamlet to learn what ails him
   d. disregard the advice of their father, who is more verbose than wise

8. Ophelia’s advice to Laertes is that he _____.
   a. heed his own advice in monitoring his behavior
   b. become a great soldier and ambassador of Denmark
   c. should not be a borrower or a lender
   d. not marry but be forever her brother and devoted friend

9. From King Hamlet’s ghost, Prince Hamlet learns that _____.
   a. Claudius murdered his father by pouring poison in his ear while he slept
   b. Claudius took his father’s life without giving him the opportunity to
      confess his sins
   c. Claudius and Queen Gertrude had an adulterous relationship
   d. he expects Prince Hamlet to avenge his death
   e. all of the above

10. Prince Hamlet demands that Horatio and the other observers _____.
    a. help him find out the truth about his father’s death
    b. join him in overthrowing King Claudius when the time comes
    c. swear not to tell what they have seen and heard
    d. all of the above

11. Polonius sends Reynaldo to Paris to _____.
    a. deliver information about Hamlet’s madness
    b. serve as his son’s bodyguard
    c. spy on his son
    d. all of the above

12. Ophelia is upset and frightened by _____.
    a. Hamlet’s bold advances
    b. her brother’s hasty departure
    c. Hamlet’s strange dress and behavior with her
    d. a conversation she overheard between Claudius and her father

13. Claudius has sent for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern because he wants them to _____.
    a. spy on Hamlet
    b. keep Hamlet company in his time of sorrow
    c. train Hamlet in the art of swordsmanship
    d. show Hamlet that even his friends respect Claudius
Hamlet, Acts I–II

14. Polonius tells Claudius and Gertrude that the cause of Hamlet’s prolonged grieving is that _____.
   a. Ophelia has rejected his love
   b. Hamlet is suspicious of his father’s death
   c. Hamlet feels his mother has betrayed him
   d. Hamlet has been denied the throne

15. After Polonius’s talk with Claudius and Gertrude, Hamlet appears reading a book, at which time _____.
   a. Polonius gets him to confess his love for Ophelia
   b. Polonius proves to Claudius that Hamlet is mad
   c. Hamlet toys with Polonius with puns and verbal assaults
   d. Hamlet pretends to be grieving over his father’s death

16. To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet confesses _____.
   a. his suspicion of Claudius in the death of his father
   b. his disgust with his mother’s incestuous marriage
   c. that he no longer finds joy in the earth, the heavens, or human beings
   d. that he does not trust them as friends

17. Through Rosencrantz’s explanation of the players’ presence, Shakespeare is able to _____.
   a. show the dismal state to which the theater has sunk
   b. remind his audience of the controversy of using women actors
   c. criticize theatrical companies who use only women actors
   d. all of the above

18. Hamlet calls Polonius “Jephthah” because _____.
   a. he is like an Old Testament Amorite
   b. he and Jephthah both restrict their daughters from living normal lives
   c. he is a spy and traitor, like Jephthah
   d. Ophelia’s rejection of his love has made him mad

19. Hamlet, in looking into himself, fears that _____.
   a. he may only want to kill Claudius out of a desire to become king
   b. he is being tempted by a demon to commit an unjust murder
   c. he may not have the courage to avenge his father’s death
   d. Ophelia’s rejection of his love has made him mad
   e. b and c are true

20. After hearing the player’s speech, Hamlet seems most upset with _____.
   a. Claudius
   b. his mother and uncle for marrying so quickly after his father’s death
   c. his failure to prove Claudius’s guilt
   d. his inability to take revenge
Match ing (10 points total)
On the line provided, write the letter of the best answer.

   1. Hamlet  a. Believed Hamlet’s grief was caused by Ophelia’s rejection of his love
   2. Norway b. A musing aloud by a character who believes he or she is alone
   3. soliloquy c. Hamlet must avenge his father’s death
   4. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern d. Protagonist
   5. Claudius e. Antagonist
   6. inciting incident f. A king whom King Hamlet defeated in battle
   7. Polonius g. Hamlet’s childhood friends
   8. mood h. Hamlet learns from his father’s ghost that Claudius murdered him
   9. Barnardo and Marcellus i. Reported the appearance of King Hamlet’s ghost to Horatio
   10. central conflict j. The eerie atmosphere when King Hamlet’s ghost appears at night

Vocabulary (5 points total)
Complete the sentences by filling in each blank with a word from the list below. Do not use any word more than once.

discretion imminent perturbed surmise
extort indict suppress transformation

EX. The teacher tried to look angry, but could not suppress a smile.

1. It was not raining yet, but a storm seemed ____________________.

2. The fifth-grade bully used threats to ____________________ money from the younger children.

3. The delay made the impatient passenger even more ____________________.

4. When she put on the wig, the ____________________ was complete.

5. Because of the traffic jam, I ____________________ that there is an accident ahead.
Hamlet, Acts I–II

Quote Identification (3 points each)

For each quotation below, identify the speaker and the person(s) being addressed. Then briefly explain the significance of the passage.

1. “’Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, / To give these mourning duties to your father…. But to persever / In obstinate condolement is a course / Of impious stubbornness…” (act I, scene ii)

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2. “Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice… Neither a borrower nor a lender be… This above all: to thine own self be true, / And it must follow, as the night the day, / Thou canst not then be false to any man.” (act I, scene iii)

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3. “There are more things in heaven and earth… / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” (act I, scene v)

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

4. “as you did command / I did repel his letters, and denied / His access to me.” (act II, scene i)

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

5. “the play’s the thing / Wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.” (act II, scene ii)

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Short Essay (10 points each)
On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief essay answering two of the following questions.

1. Define *protagonist* and *antagonist*. Identify the protagonist of the play, and the antagonist we meet in act I. How does Hamlet serve as his own antagonist in act II?

2. What is a soliloquy? What personality traits or characteristics of Hamlet make him a famous soliloquist?

3. Define *foil* and explain how the player who recites the speech about Pyrrhus and Hecuba serves as a foil to Hamlet. Does Hamlet recognize that the player is his foil? Support your response with evidence from the play.

Long Essay (30 points each)
On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief essay answering one of the following questions.

1. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is filled with examples of deceit. Give several examples from the play of characters who deceive others. Do these characters believe they are using deception for honorable reasons? If so, what good do they hope to accomplish? If not, what is their motivation?

2. Define *psychodrama*. What is Hamlet’s state of mind when he is first introduced? after he meets his father’s ghost? in his dealings with other characters?
**Hamlet, Acts I–II**

**Multiple Choice (20 points total)**

1. a  
2. d  
3. b  
4. b  
5. e  
6. a  
7. a  
8. a  
9. e  
10. c  
11. c  
12. c  
13. a  
14. a  
15. c  
16. c  
17. c  
18. b  
19. e  
20. d

**Matching (10 points total)**

1. d  
2. f  
3. b  
4. g  
5. e  
6. h  
7. a  
8. j  
9. i  
10. c

**Vocabulary (5 points total)**

1. imminent  
2. extort  
3. perturbed  
4. transformation  
5. surmise

**Quote Identification (3 points each)**

1. Speaker: Claudius. Person addressed: Hamlet. Claudius tells Hamlet that it is praise-worthy for him to mourn his father, but that to continue grieving for so long beyond the mourning period is a sign of stubbornness. Most likely, Claudius is bothered by the constant reminder of the murder he has committed and wants life to return to normal as soon as possible.

2. Speaker: Polonius. Person addressed: Laertes. Polonius gives his son, Laertes, this fatherly advice before Laertes departs for France: Listen well and speak little, do not borrow or lend your money, and be true to yourself so that you can be true to all others. Ironically, Polonius does not follow his own advice, as becomes evident over the following scenes of the play: he is overly talkative, does not listen well, and spies on people.

3. Speaker: Hamlet. Person addressed: Horatio. After experiencing the terrifying events of meeting a ghost, speaking with it, and being ordered to keep silent by a voice from underground, Horatio declares these happenings “wondrous strange.” Hamlet, however, is looking past this to what his father’s ghost has revealed and realizes the many terrible implications it brings.
4. Speaker: Ophelia. Person addressed: Polonius. Polonius has asked Ophelia to stop seeing Hamlet because he fears she will ruin her reputation. Although she clearly loves Hamlet, Ophelia obeys her father and rejects Hamlet. When Hamlet enters her room in a state of apparent madness, both she and her father assume the prince is mad with love for her and is broken-hearted over Ophelia’s rejection of him.

5. Speaker: Hamlet. Person addressed: himself, in a soliloquy. Hamlet has not yet taken revenge against his uncle, in part because he is not certain whether the ghost was telling the truth about Claudius’s crime. He now devises a plan to test Claudius’s guilt: he will stage a play that depicts a murder similar to the one the ghost described, and observe Claudius’s reaction.

Short Essay (10 points each)

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

1. A protagonist is the central figure in a literary work. An antagonist is a character who is working against the protagonist. Hamlet, prince of Denmark, is the protagonist of this play. Claudius, the new king of Denmark, is the antagonist. In act II, however, Hamlet begins to act as his own antagonist. After responding to his father’s ghost with fiery promises of swift revenge, he ponders his action and its implications while going no further. Not until he hears a speech about a murder does he regain some of his former passion. He chides himself for not showing as much feeling as the player performing the fictitious scene. He is angry and embarrassed that he has not yet acted, and instead has limited himself to spoken words and curses.

2. A soliloquy is a speech given by a character who is, or believes himself to be, alone. Hamlet performs several eloquent soliloquies in the play. This corresponds to his personality, which is introspective and questioning. His introspection leads him to lonely places where he can work out his feelings and thoughts through arguments and moral questions. He has a critical nature, which he often turns on himself. He is essentially a man of words, not action.

3. A foil is a character whose attributes, or characteristics, contrast with and therefore throw into relief the attributes of another character. Hamlet asks one of the players visiting the palace to recite a speech. The tale is about a son who takes revenge for his father’s death and kills Priam, the Trojan king. Priam’s wife, Hecuba, witnesses the murder. The player uses such emotion to demonstrate Hecuba’s agony that his face turns pale, his voice breaks and he weeps. Hamlet laments that here is a man who has no connection to Hecuba, yet he still shows such powerful emotion, while Hamlet, whose own father was murdered, says and does nothing. Hamlet is very aware that this player is his foil and even compares what the player would do if he were in Hamlet’s place. “He would drown the stage with tears / ...Make mad the guilty, and appall the free, / Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed / The very faculties of eyes and ears.”
Hamlet, Acts I–II

Long Essay (30 points each)

1. In the first two acts of Hamlet alone, there are numerous examples of deceit. Claudius killed his brother so he could ascend the throne and marry his sister-in-law. He then deceived the people of Denmark by reporting that a poisonous snake killed the former king. Gertrude and Claudius were both guilty of carrying on a relationship that was deceptive to former king. Polonius sends a man to spy on his son and even spread lies about him; he plans to spy on Hamlet and Ophelia. Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Gertrude, and Claudius are all involved in a plot to observe Hamlet closely without him realizing it. Finally, Hamlet himself uses deception when he pretends to be mad and when he plots to prove Claudius’s guilt in an underhanded way.

   Claudius and Gertrude carry out their deceptions purely for the sake of self-gratification. On the other hand, they outwardly seem concerned about Hamlet and what is troubling him. Claudius employs Hamlet’s childhood friends to learn the reason for his melancholy. Gertrude, who seems unaware of Claudius’s role in murdering her first husband, seems genuinely concerned with Hamlet’s welfare. She may be using this deception thinking it is for Hamlet’s own good. Claudius seems more concerned with finding out how much Hamlet knows of the murder.

   Polonius probably wants to spy on his son because he does not trust him. He wants to know everything that goes on in his son’s life, possibly to protect him and his reputation. It is natural for a father to want to protect and watch over his child, but Polonius goes further by asking his spy to spread lies about Laertes in order to find out even more information. Polonius also wants to spy on Hamlet by using his daughter as bait. In a strange way, he is trying to help Claudius and Gertrude to discover what is troubling Hamlet, but again the means he uses are poorly chosen, unnatural, and belittling to both his daughter and Hamlet.

   Hamlet tells Horatio he will feign madness to take the attention off his plotting against Claudius, but he seems unconcerned that this distresses his mother and Ophelia. Hamlet simply views his deceit as a necessary way to prove Claudius’s guilt.

2. A psychodrama is a play that deals with the state of mind of its central character, in this case, Hamlet. When Hamlet is introduced in act I, he is despondent and seems bitter toward his uncle’s attempts to treat him like a son. He has been mourning his father’s unnatural death for almost two months and has been wearing only black to match his mood. He makes biting comments about the marriage of his uncle and mother, hinting that it is “common,” meaning “base,” “vile,” or “low.” Hamlet is depressed and introspective. He does not share his feelings with anyone directly, but instead shows his emotion by sighing, wearing black, acting melancholy, and hinting at his feelings by using words that have double meanings.
After his father’s ghost tells Hamlet about the crimes committed against his late father, Hamlet’s state of mind is agitated. He feels a deep disgust for the way his mother and uncle are behaving, using strong words to describe them—“pernicious woman,” and “smiling, damned villain.” He seems almost manic in his desire to forget everything else and tells the ghost that “thy commandement all alone shall live / Within the book and volume of my brain.”

In dealing with other characters, Hamlet seems to be more in control, evidenced by the way he mocks Polonius and hints at Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s deceit. He continues to hide his true feelings, only revealing them through puns and ambiguous words. His state of mind is only clearly seen when he is alone and talking to himself, when he reveals his conflicting thoughts, anger at himself for not acting, and a desire to act cautiously even so.
Multiple Choice (20 points total)

On the line provided, write the letter of the best answer.

1. At the beginning of act III, Claudius and Gertrude question Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in order to _____.
   a. determine whether Hamlet should marry Ophelia
   b. assess Hamlet’s state of mind
   c. decide whether Hamlet will be a good emissary to send to England
   d. learn whether Hamlet plans to avenge his father’s death

2. Just before Hamlet delivers his famous soliloquy, Claudius reveals that ____.
   a. he plans to murder Hamlet
   b. he is afraid that Gertrude will turn from him
   c. he carries the heavy burden of wearing a false face to hide a guilty heart
   d. he plans to send Hamlet to England

3. In his “To be or not to be” soliloquy, Hamlet ____.
   a. plots his course in seeking revenge
   b. dreams of the fair Ophelia
   c. considers suicide
   d. plans his escape to England

4. Hamlet is cruel to Ophelia because ____.
   a. he wants her to think he is mad
   b. he suspects she has rejected him for another love
   c. he projects his indecision onto her
   d. she seems to favor Laertes over him

5. Hamlet reveals to Ophelia that he thinks ____.
   a. people are either good or evil but never both
   b. human beings, including himself, are sinners and rogues
   c. people are basically good but can be tempted to do evil things
   d. women make monsters out of the men they marry
   e. b and d are true

6. Ophelia returns Hamlet’s remembrances to him because ____.
   a. her father has insisted that she reject Hamlet’s love
   b. she thinks Hamlet is mad
   c. Laertes has urged her to make a better choice
   d. a and b are true

7. According to Hamlet, a play should be ____.
   a. a mere entertainment
   b. a satire on courtly manners
   c. a mirror to life
   d. a momentary delusion
Exam

Hamlet, Act III

8. When the Player Queen in the theatrical production says she would never marry the man who killed her husband, the Player King doubts her because he believes _____.
   a. that love dies when the person who is loved dies
   b. that a change in fortune changes one’s passions
   c. that when passion ebbs one’s purpose changes
   d. all of the above

9. During the play, Horatio and Hamlet both observe that _____.
   a. Polonius is watching Hamlet’s every move and examining his speech
   b. Gertrude is clinging to the arm of her husband
   c. Ophelia is reciting poems under her breath
   d. Claudius rises in response to the poisoning of the King

10. Hamlet accuses Rosencrantz and Guildenstern of _____.
    a. playing upon him as if he were a recorder
    b. only pretending to be his friends
    c. being inept musicians
    d. all of the above
    e. a and b are true

11. After the Mouse-trap play, Claudius decides _____.
    a. to forbid Hamlet from spending time with Ophelia because of his madness
    b. to send Hamlet to England since he is becoming a danger to his kingship
    c. to send Hamlet to England to pursue theatrical interests with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
    d. a and b are true
    e. all of the above

12. Hamlet decides he can’t kill Claudius while he is praying because _____.
    a. Claudius is showing remorse for what he has done
    b. such a deed would damn Hamlet’s soul
    c. Claudius would go to heaven instead of hell
    d. none of the above
    e. a and b are true

13. Polonius speaks to ____ about spying behind a tapestry.
    a. Gertrude
    b. Claudius
    c. Laertes
    d. a and c
    e. a and b
Hamlet, Act III

14. Before Hamlet meets with Gertrude, he resolves to _____.
   a. convince her to help him take revenge on Claudius
   b. be cruel but not physically harmful to her
   c. convince her not to reveal his plan
   d. convince her that he is mad over Ophelia’s rejection
   e. a and d are true

15. The crisis, or turning point, in the play takes place _____.
   a. when Claudius reveals his guilt during the theatrical presentation
   b. when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern take Hamlet to England
   c. when Hamlet kills Polonius
   d. when Hamlet decides not to kill Claudius while he is in prayer

16. Although Hamlet has forced Gertrude to see the wrongfulness of her marriage to Claudius, she thinks Hamlet mad when _____.
   a. he speaks to the air as if it were his father
   b. he rants at her
   c. he threatens her life
   d. he condemns women for making monsters of men

17. Hamlet’s act of killing Polonius is ironic because _____.
   a. although Polonius was a meddling fool, he did not deserve such a fate
   b. it is an impulsive act that would be more appropriate to avenge his father’s death
   c. he is seeking justice but kills Polonius unjustly
   d. all of the above

18. When the ghost appears to Hamlet in Gertrude’s chamber, he says that _____.
   a. his purpose is to sharpen Hamlet’s intent to carry out revenge
   b. Hamlet should strengthen his case by revealing that he is not mad
   c. Hamlet must step between his bewildered mother and her fighting soul
   d. a and c are true
   e. all of the above

19. In considering Polonius’s death, Hamlet _____.
   a. says that he repents but that he will “answer well” for murdering him
   b. says Polonius deserved his death for being so devious
   c. realizes that the murder will set him packing
   d. a and c are true

20. As Hamlet prepares to depart from England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he views them as _____.
   a. confidants and trusted friends
   b. harmless servants of the King
   c. untrustworthy as adders
   d. childhood friends
Exam

Hamlet, Act III

Matching (10 points total)

On the line provided, write the letter of the best answer.

_____ 1. aside  a. Actor’s ability to mirror nature
_____ 2. soliloquy  b. Claudius speaks only to audience, although
_____ 3. mimesis  Hamlet is still onstage
_____ 4. Polonius  c. Arranges the “Mouse-trap” play
_____ 5. irony of situation  d. Chastises Hamlet for showing the king disrespect
_____ 6. Hamlet  e. Hides behind a tapestry
_____ 7. Freudian criticism  f. Maintains that Hamlet suffers from unresolved
_____ 8. Ophelia  Oedipus complex
_____ 9. Claudius  g. Unable to pray for forgiveness
_____10. Gertrude  h. Speech in which Hamlet ponders whether “To
                           be, or not to be”
                           i. Hamlet kills Polonius, thinking he is Claudius
                           j. Returns keepsakes to a lover

Vocabulary (5 points total)

Complete the sentences by filling in each blank with a word from the list below. Do not use any word more than once.

abstinence  contagion  disposition  impart
boisterous  discretion  forestall  mandate

EX. The requirement of perfect attendance was a favorite ___________ of my gymnastics coach.

1. Keisha tried to distract the teacher, hoping to ___________ the inevitable homework assignment.

2. Josh has always shown excellent ___________ in choosing friends.

3. As much as she tried, Candace was never able to ___________ to her younger sister the importance of respecting her need for privacy.

4. The party was so ___________ that the neighbors issued a complaint about the noise.

5. Golden retrievers make excellent pets for children because of their patient ___________.

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Hamlet, Act III

Quote Identification (3 points each)

For each quotation below, identify the speaker and the person(s) being addressed. Then briefly explain the significance of the passage.

1. “To be or not to be, that is the question: / Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, / Or to take arms against a sea of troubles, / And by opposing, end them.” (act III, scene i)

2. “There’s something in his soul / O’er which his melancholy sits on brood, / And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose / Will be some danger…” (act III, scene iv)

3. “Thou turn’st my eyes into my very soul, / And there I see such black and grained spots / As will not leave their tinct.” (act III, scene iv)

4. “Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest notes to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak.” (act III, scene ii)

5. “Their perfume lost, / Take these again, for to the noble mind / Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.” (act III, scene i)
Short Essay (10 points each)

On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief essay answering two of the following questions.

1. Why do you think Hamlet used a play as the method to learn the truth about whether Claudius murdered his father? As Hamlet helps the actors prepare for this play within the play, what views about acting does Shakespeare present to his audience?

2. Define *motivation* and explain what motivates Hamlet and Ophelia to behave as they do toward each other at the beginning of act III.

3. Define *aside* and *irony*. Then explain the irony of Claudius’s aside as he ends his prayers in act III, scene iii.

Long Essay (30 points each)

On a separate sheet of paper, write an essay answering one of the following questions.

1. One of the recurring themes in his play is how a person might achieve salvation. Claudius says that one of the virtues of prayer is that it has the force to pardon those who have fallen. What sort of salvation do Claudius and Gertrude attain or fail to attain in act III? What does Hamlet seek regarding the salvation of his uncle and his mother? Cite examples from the text to support your answer.

2. At one point in the play, Hamlet speaks of himself as a scourge, or whip, whose purpose is to bring about justice. Compare the sorts of justice Hamlet provides in this act for Claudius and Polonius. Then explain whether these are fitting responses, citing evidence from the text to support your answer.
Hamlet, Act III

Multiple Choice (20 points total)

1. b  5. e  9. d  13. e  17. d
2. c  6. a  10. e  14. b  18. d
3. c  7. c  11. b  15. c  19. d
4. b  8. d  12. c  16. a  20. c

Matching (10 points total)

1. b  3. a  5. i  7. f  9. g
2. h  4. e  6. c  8. j  10. d

Vocabulary (5 points total)

1. forestall
2. discretion
3. impart
4. boisterous
5. disposition

Quote Identification (3 points each)

1. Speaker: Hamlet. Person(s) addressed: himself, in a soliloquy. Students may make the point, as the Kenneth Branagh film does, that Hamlet is aware of Claudius’s spying and indirectly speaks to Claudius here. (See Critical Writing Activity C, on page 244 of the Access Edition, for more information.) The standard reading, however, is that Hamlet believes himself to be alone and speaks to himself about his own concerns. In this reading, Hamlet wonders whether he should live or die, whether it takes more courage to suffer the circumstances that fate brings upon a person or more courage to fight against these miseries and end them, perhaps by committing suicide.

2. Speaker: Claudius. Person addressed: Polonius. Here Claudius is worried about the way Hamlet is brooding, much like a bird on her nest. He tells Polonius that whatever results from this brooding might threaten his kingship, or be some danger to him.

3. Speaker: Gertrude. Person addressed: Hamlet. After Hamlet has confronted her in her chamber, Queen Gertrude admits that she is, indeed, guilty in her marriage to Claudius. In this passage she says that Hamlet has forced her to see a transgression so deeply ingrained that it will never lose its color—that is, her guilt is so deep that she will never be free of it.

4. Speaker: Hamlet. Person addressed: Guildenstern, although students may also include Rosencrantz here, since he is in the room when Hamlet speaks and both his former school friends function mostly as one unit. Hamlet has asked Guildenstern to
play the recorder, and after Guildenstern protests that he is not skilled enough, Hamlet chastises him for assuming he can “play” him and understand his very “mystery.” Hamlet warns both Rosencrantz and Guildenstern not to overstep their boundaries with him.

5. Speaker: Ophelia. Person addressed: Hamlet. Ophelia has cut off relations with Hamlet in obedience to her father. She is returning things she has given him, and after Hamlet has slighted her, she tells him the gifts have lost their value because of his unkindness. Students might point out here that Ophelia’s statement might be seen as ironic, since she initiated the break in their relationship.

Short Essay (10 points each)

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

1. Students might point out that Hamlet is so comfortable within the theatrical world that using a play as a “Mouse-trap” is a perfect strategy for him to determine Claudius’s guilt. Hamlet intends to have the players act out “The Murder of Gonzago” to see if Claudius responds to the performance in a guilty way. This scheme allows Hamlet to observe Claudius without confronting him directly.

   Shakespeare is able to express his own ideas about theater by having Hamlet prepare the players before their performance. Hamlet tells them that the purpose of playing is to hold “the mirror up to nature.” Such a statement allows Shakespeare to express an ideal of what theater should be, while giving him license to discuss ways actors have fallen short of the mark. Hamlet says, for example, that he would have an actor whipped for excess; because it “out-Herods Herod,” he says, “pray you avoid it.” On the other hand, he instructs the players not to be too tame, but to “let your own discretion be your tutor.” Above all, Hamlet tells them, they are to “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action.” In this way, Hamlet finds through theater the perfect way to prove Claudius’s guilt, and Shakespeare finds the perfect platform by which to express his views.

2. A motivation is a force that moves a character to think, feel, or behave a certain way. At the beginning of act III, Ophelia is motivated by a desire to obey her father, who has ordered her to break off relations with Hamlet. Students might argue that despite her obedience to Polonius, she is still motivated by her love for Hamlet, as seen when she greets him (“Good my lord, / How does your honor for this many a day?”). When Hamlet denies ever having given her “remembrances,” Ophelia protests, saying that he did indeed give her gifts, which she valued even more because of what he said to her when he gave them to her. Ophelia also behaves with confusion and distress when she calls out to the heavens to restore Hamlet, and laments how Hamlet’s noble mind has been overtaken by madness. She calls herself “most deject and wretched” of ladies for succumbing to Hamlet’s vows to her, especially since he now seems “Blasted with ecstasy” or blighted with madness.

   Hamlet is motivated throughout the play by his desire to seek revenge on Claudius for killing his father. Because of this, he has decided to “put an antic disposition on” and has already displayed his madness to Ophelia so convincingly that
she fled from her chamber, greatly frightened. When Ophelia comes to him in act III to return his mementos, Hamlet again appears to be mad. He denies that he gave Ophelia the remembrances; questions Ophelia’s honesty, or loyalty, to him; and tells her to get to a nunnery to avoid becoming “a breeder of sinners.” He then asks where Polonius is, indicating that he might think Polonius is spying on him or suspect that Polonius is the force behind Ophelia’s refusal to see him. Students might point out that besides being motivated by revenge, Hamlet could behave this way out of love and concern for Ophelia. He admits that he did love Ophelia once. When he tells Ophelia to get to a nunnery, he may be motivated either by anger and a sense of betrayal, or from a desire to protect Ophelia from a world of sinners.

3. An aside is a statement made by a character in a play, intended to be heard by the audience, but not by other characters on the stage. Irony is a difference between appearance and reality. Claudius’s prayer in act III, scene iii ends in an aside, in which he says, “My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go.” Hamlet, who has planned to take revenge on him, decides he cannot kill Claudius while praying; he assumes that Claudius has obtained forgiveness and is in a state of grace. Hamlet says that he must not send to heaven the same villain who has killed his father. He decides instead to use his sword “When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage / Or in th’ incestious pleasure of his bed, / At game a-swearing, or about some act / That has no relish of salvation in’t.” Claudius’s aside is ironic because he reveals that he is not in the state of grace Hamlet assumes.

Long Essay (30 points each)

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

1. (Note: To prepare for this essay question, students should build on their response about theme in Understanding Literature, question 6, on page 145 of the text.) Neither Claudius nor Gertrude successfully obtains salvation in this act. Ironically, Hamlet seeks damnation for his uncle and salvation for his mother, but is unable to achieve either result. The fact that salvation is unreachable for both Claudius and Gertrude has nothing to do with Hamlet’s actions.

   Claudius recognizes that prayer has the ability to pardon those who have fallen and tries to obtain forgiveness by seeking God’s grace through prayer. He recognizes that the murder of his brother is a grievous sin (“O, my offense is rank”) and wants to pray, but cannot. Despite his desire for forgiveness, Claudius says prayer cannot help him because he still enjoys the fruits of his sins (“...I am still possess’d / Of those effects for which I did the murther: / My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen”). Claudius recognize that he would have to give these things up to attain salvation. Ironically, Hamlet, seeking eternal damnation for the king, believes he has found the praying king in a state of grace. He decides to wait until Claudius is in an unrepentant state and kill him then, robbing him of salvation. Hamlet does not hear Claudius reveal that he is unable to pray and receive salvation: “My words fly up,
my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go.” Thus in delaying his revenge, Hamlet misses an opportunity to send Claudius to eternal damnation.

Gertrude not only fails to seek salvation through prayer or any other means, she does not admit her sin until Hamlet confronts her with it. Instead, she calls Hamlet to her chamber to chastise him for offending Claudius. Hamlet reverses the charge, saying that Gertrude has offended his father and that he intends to show Gertrude her real self (“You go not till I set you up a glass / Where you may see the inmost part of you”). Gertrude calls out with fear, prompting Polonius to reveal that he is spying behind the arras. After Hamlet kills Polonius, Gertrude still acts self-righteously: “What have I done, that thou dar’st wag thy tongue / In noise so rude against me?” Hamlet then accuses her of making “marriage vows / As false as dicer’s oaths” and forces her to look at a portrait of each king, telling her that her current husband has “Blast[ed] his wholesome brother.” It is only then that Gertrude looks into her soul and proclaims that “there I see such black and grained spots / As will not leave their tinct.” She begs Hamlet to stop speaking to her of this (“these words like daggers enter in my ears”). Instead of seeking damnation for his mother as he did for Claudius, however, Hamlet hopes to steer his mother to salvation. Before meeting her in her chamber, he has cautioned himself not to behave like Nero, who murdered his mother. Rather, he says, “I will speak daggers to her, but use none.”

Once Gertrude admits her guilt, Hamlet begs her to “Assume a virtue, if you have it not” and to avoid his uncle’s bed. Hamlet suggests to her that avoiding sin tonight will lead to “the next abstinence, the next more easy.” Hamlet’s parting message to Gertrude is that when she has reformed enough to seek salvation, he will ask for her blessing. Gertrude seems genuine in admitting her sin and asking Hamlet what she should do, but she is dismayed to see him talking to air and behaving madly. Despite Hamlet’s assurances that his madness is only pretense, Gertrude seems to doubt this. Although Hamlet urges her to reform her ways, Gertrude gives him no assurances after witnessing his apparent madness.

2. (Note: To prepare for this essay question, students might find it helpful to review their response to Reviewing the Selection, question 29, on page 143 in the text.) Although Hamlet perceives his role as a scourge, or whip, his actions toward both Claudius and Polonius are inappropriate expressions of justice. Motivated throughout the play by his desire to avenge his father’s death, Hamlet nevertheless fails to act decisively regarding Claudius and thus fails to attain justice for the murder of his father. On the other hand, his action toward Polonius is so irrational and extreme that he fails to effect justice here as well.

When Hamlet finds Claudius alone in act III, he has the opportunity to kill Claudius. However, because Claudius is at prayer, Hamlet assumes he is in a state of grace and delays killing him. Such a delay is, in fact, ironic, as Claudius’s aside (“My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: / Words without thoughts never to heaven go”) reveals that he is in a state of sin. Because of his misperception, Hamlet decides to wait until Claudius “is drunk asleep, or in his rage, / Or in th’incestious
Hamlet, Act III

pleasure of his bed”—any action that will send his uncle to hell instead of heaven. While Hamlet believes he must delay in exacting justice from Claudius according to the ghost’s orders, the ghost appears to him again in scene iv “to whet thy almost blunted purpose.” The ghost’s words underscore the fact that Hamlet’s delay is failing to serve justice.

Hamlet’s desire for justice is also misdirected in his dealings with Polonius. When Gertrude cries out for help, Polonius, hiding behind the tapestry, tries to help her and Hamlet kills him, mistaking him for Claudius. Students might point out that because Hamlet assumes he is killing Claudius, his intent, if not the action itself, could be perceived as just. Others might argue that Hamlet, in behaving irrationally, has lost his ability to exact justice. Considering that Hamlet has previously been so careful to avenge his father’s death, this violent attack seems all the more lacking in self-control. Polonius is killed by accident because, without identifying who is actually hiding behind the arras, Hamlet simply kills him. Discovering he has killed Polonius and not Claudius, Hamlet shows no remorse. Instead, he says, “Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! / I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune; / Thou find’st to be too busy is some danger.” Hamlet blames Polonius’s meddling for leading to his own death, rather than admitting that the punishment may not fit the crime. Later in scene iv he tells his mother that he does repent, but he still perceives himself as a “scourge” who can “answer well / The death I gave him.” While Hamlet tries to be a scourge, or whip, to both Claudius and Polonius, he is, in fact, ineffective. By sparing Claudius and murdering Polonius, Hamlet fails to respond justly in both cases.
Multiple Choice (20 points total)

On the line provided, write the letter of the best answer.

1. When Claudius learns of the death of Polonius, his chief concern is that _____.
   a. Hamlet might be responsible
   b. Ophelia may go insane
   c. the blame might be placed on him
   d. Polonius receive full funeral honors

2. When Hamlet tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that the King will use them, then discard them, he compares them to _____.
   a. sponges
   b. shellfish
   c. wine casks
   d. lemmings

3. Claudius sends Hamlet to England in order to _____.
   a. protect him from punishment
   b. have him killed
   c. negotiate with Fortinbras
   d. a and c are true

4. In act IV, scene iv, Hamlet learns that Fortinbras is preparing to _____.
   a. attack Denmark and kill Claudius
   b. fight with Poland over a worthless piece of land
   c. take him to England to be killed
   d. form an alliance with Denmark

5. What does Hamlet think of the plans of Fortinbras?
   a. He hopes that Fortinbras succeeds in killing Claudius, so that he can avoid having to take action himself.
   b. He laments that humans fight over insignificant “straws.”
   c. He envies Fortinbras for being such a bold man of action.
   d. He does not trust Fortinbras and secretly plots to undermine his plans.

6. The king says that the cause of Ophelia’s madness is _____.
   a. “All from her father’s death”
   b. “Those feminine hysterics to which women fall prey”
   c. “The faithlessness of the murd’rous Hamlet”
   d. “A love-sickness, which with time must needs pass”

7. Horatio receives a letter from Hamlet that tells him _____.
   a. Hamlet has been kidnapped by pirates
   b. to come to Hamlet’s side
   c. Hamlet has much to tell Horatio about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
   d. all of the above
Hamlet, Acts IV–V

8. Whom does the mob demand be made king, and why?
   a. Hamlet, because he is the rightful heir to his father’s throne
   b. Laertes, because they blame Claudius for killing Polonius
   c. Hamlet, because they have learned that Claudius killed Hamlet’s father
   d. Fortinbras, because they know of Claudius’s crimes and fear that
      something is rotten in the state of Denmark

9. Claudius plots to _____.
   a. set up a practice duel in which Laertes will kill Hamlet with an unprotected sword
   b. anger Laertes to the point of attacking Hamlet in a surprise duel
   c. trick Laertes into fighting Hamlet, whom he knows is a better swordsman
   d. all of the above

10. Laertes adds to Claudius’s plot by planning to _____.
    a. get Hamlet drunk so that his swordsmanship is weakened
    b. poison the tip of his sword
    c. poison the cup from which Hamlet will drink
    d. all of the above

11. In case Hamlet is not killed in the duel, Claudius plans to _____.
    a. murder Hamlet in his sleep
    b. give him a poisoned drink
    c. banish him from Denmark
    d. none of the above

12. When Hamlet and Horatio come upon a gravedigger at the beginning of
    act V, Hamlet _____.
    a. finds it shocking that the gravedigger sings at his work and tosses skulls
    b. remembers the court jester who used to play with him
    c. observes that even great people come to nothing in death
    d. all of the above
    e. a and b are true

13. Why does the priest say that he will not give Ophelia the full funeral rites?
    a. Ophelia’s death may have been a suicide.
    b. He suspects that Ophelia was not a chaste maiden, given her relationship
       with Hamlet.
    c. Claudius has decreed that the funeral remain secret so that the public
       does not learn of Ophelia’s untimely death.
    d. Since Ophelia was gripped by madness, she was incapable of confessing
       her sins before death.
Exam

Hamlet, Acts IV–V

14. At Ophelia’s funeral, Hamlet _____.
   a. becomes enraged because the priest refuses to perform full rites
   b. leaps into the grave and begins grappling with Laertes
   c. declares he loved Ophelia more than Laertes did
   d. challenges Laertes to a duel
   e. b and c are true

15. In narrating to Horatio what happened on his voyage to England, Hamlet reveals that _____.
   a. Claudius had ordered Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to kill him
   b. he killed Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
   c. he intercepted the king’s letter and substituted his own message to England
   d. a and c are true

16. What is the best description of Hamlet’s attitude prior to the duel?
   a. He knows he will lose, but does not care
   b. He burns with the desire for revenge, after having delayed so long.
   c. He says that whatever will come, will come, and all he can do is be ready for it.
   d. He is ready to forgive Laertes and suspects nothing of the plot against him.
   e. He believes that destiny and divine providence are on his side.

17. During the duel between Hamlet and Laertes, all of the following happens, except: _____.
   a. Laertes makes the first hit
   b. Laertes wounds Hamlet with the poisoned tip of his sword
   c. Hamlet wounds Laertes with Laertes’s sword
   d. Laertes asks Hamlet’s pardon and blames the King

18. In her last words to Hamlet, Gertrude tells him _____.
   a. she is sorry for all she has done, and wants his forgiveness
   b. to pray for her salvation
   c. to avoid a blow from Laertes, because his sword is poisoned
   d. that the drink is poisoned

19. At the end of the play, Hamlet begs Horatio to _____.
   a. drink from the poisoned cup and die with him
   b. tell the world his story
   c. fight against Fortinbras to save the Danish throne
   d. b and c are true

20. The play ends with _____.
   a. Hamlet’s death
   b. Fortinbras honoring Hamlet and taking the throne
   c. Horatio telling the story that led to this bloody end
   d. King Hamlet’s ghost walking across the battlements to his grave
Hamlet, Acts IV–V

Matching (10 points total)
On the line provided, write the letter of the best answer.

1. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
2. resolution
3. Fortinbras
4. tragedy
5. Horatio
6. foil
7. Laertes
8. theme
9. Osric
10. symbol

a. Killed Hamlet
b. Passed through Denmark on his return from Poland
c. Carried a death sentence to England
d. A character who provides a contrast to the main character
e. The willow tree
f. A literary work in which a figure of high status falls
g. Claudius dies
h. Will tell Hamlet’s story
i. A main idea in a literary work
j. A courtier whom Hamlet mocks because of his flowery language

Vocabulary (5 points total)
Complete the sentences by filling in each blank with a word from the list below. Do not use any word more than once.

abate         exhort         interim         sultry
contagion     imminent      requite         tenant

EX. The flowers wilted in the ___sultry___ weather.

1. The landlord received many complaints about the loud, annoying ____________ who lived in apartment 101.

2. The students enjoyed a week’s vacation in the ________________ between first and second semester.

3. The coach will ________________ the players to work as a team.

4. I tried to convince the little girl that there were no monsters under the bed, but her fears did not ________________.

5. The candidate’s popularity was so high a week before the election that a landslide victory seemed ________________.
Quote Identification (3 points each)

For each quotation below, identify the speaker and the person(s) being addressed. Then briefly explain the significance of the passage.

1. "How all occasions do inform against me, / And spur my dull revenge!...whether it be / Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple / Of thinking too precisely on th’ event— / A thought which quarter’d 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.” (act IV, scene iv)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. “O hear, dry up my brains! tears seven times salt / Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye! / By heaven, they madness shall be paid with weight / Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!...O heavens, is’t possible a young maid’s wits / should be as mortal as an old man’s life?” (act IV, scene v)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. “Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him...a fellow of infinite jest.” (act V, scene i)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. “Good night, sweet prince / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!” (act V, scene ii)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. “For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune. / I have some rights, of memory in this kingdom / which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.” (act V, scene ii)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Short Essay (10 points each)

On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief essay answering two of the following questions.

1. Define tragedy and explain how Hamlet, Prince of Denmark fits this definition. How does Hamlet himself fit the definition of a tragic hero?

2. Define foil and explain how Laertes and Fortinbras serve as foils for Hamlet. Use specific examples of the actions and words of each character to support your answer.

3. Analyze the character of Ophelia. What factors lead to her madness and death? In answering this question, discuss in particular Ophelia’s relationships with Polonius and Hamlet.

Long Essay (30 points each)

On a separate sheet of paper, write a brief essay answering one of the following questions.

1. How does Hamlet regard the relationship between thought and action? What does he say about thought and action in his soliloquy “How all occasions do inform against me…”, in act IV, scene iv? In what ways do Hamlet’s thoughts delay his actions throughout the play? In your opinion, is Hamlet’s delay noble, or a sign of cowardice? Support your answer with evidence from the play.

2. A theme of Hamlet is the relationship between human action and divine Providence. What does Hamlet say about the value of human action in act V, scene i, when he comes upon the gravedigger in the churchyard? How does he perceive the role of divine Providence in his journey to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? What does he conclude about human action and divine Providence just before his duel with Laertes in act V, scene ii? Do you agree or disagree with Hamlet’s conclusion?
1. Speaker: Hamlet. Person addressed: himself, in a soliloquy. Hamlet has just learned that Fortinbras plans to attack Poland over a worthless piece of land. Seeing that Fortinbras is willing to risk the lives of twenty thousand men for “a straw,” Hamlet feels all the more ashamed at his own inability to act. He decides that either he is a sluggish beast, or, out of cowardice, he is thinking too much. He is frustrated because this excessive deliberation prevents him from carrying out his revenge.

2. Speaker: Laertes. Person addressed: Ophelia. Laertes has returned from France to find that Hamlet has killed his father and that Ophelia has consequently gone insane. He is stricken by grief and vows to avenge her madness.

3. Speaker: Hamlet. Person addressed: Horatio. At the churchyard with Horatio, Hamlet sees a gravedigger tossing up skulls as he makes a grave. One of the skulls is that of Yorick, the court jester who used to entertain Hamlet when he was a boy. Hamlet is shocked by the realization that someone who had been so lively and full of jokes during his life is reduced to a mere jawless skull, knocked about by a spade. He realizes that all humans, no matter how great, come to this end.
4. Speaker: Horatio. Person addressed: Hamlet. Hamlet has just died, and Horatio, his faithful friend, shows his confidence that he will attain salvation and go to heaven.

5. Speaker: Fortinbras. Person addressed: Horatio. Fortinbras and his soldiers have just stormed the castle, only to find the king, queen, and prince dead. He is sorry for the tragedy he has encountered, but sees his chance to seize the Danish crown. Fortinbras claims he has ancient rights to Danish soil, since as revealed in act I, scene ii, his late father, the former King of Norway, lost some land to Denmark.

Short Essay (10 points each)

Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

1. A tragedy is a drama that relates the fall of a person of high status. Tragedy tends to be serious, and it celebrates the courage and dignity of a tragic hero in the face of inevitable doom. Often this doom is made inevitable by a tragic flaw in the hero.

Hamlet can be considered a tragedy because it relates the fall of Hamlet, the son of a king. It is a very serious play, dealing with such themes as treachery, revenge, melancholia and madness, the relative value of thought and action, and the value of human life itself. Hamlet can be considered a tragic hero in that he faces the prospect of his death with courage and dignity. This is shown by his attitude just prior to the duel with Laertes, and in his bold statement that “the readiness is all.” Despite Hamlet’s sense of foreboding, he resolves to face his destiny, saying that whatever will happen, will happen, and that all that remains is to be ready for it. Many people have claimed that Hamlet’s tragic flaw is his indecision and inaction. Because he is unable, for so long, to carry out his revenge on Claudius, Hamlet brings about even greater tragedy, and makes his own death inevitable.

2. A foil is a character whose attributes, or characteristics, contrast with and therefore throw into relief the attributes of another character. Both Laertes and Fortinbras serve as foils for Hamlet throughout the play. Like Hamlet, they seek to avenge a father. In Fortinbras’s case, his father, the former King of Norway, lost land to Denmark and Poland. Fortinbras gathers an army together to attack Denmark, but when he is prevented from this, he goes to Poland, and, as Hamlet observes, is prepared to sacrifice twenty thousand men over a “straw,” a worthless piece of land, simply because honor is at stake. Hamlet, by contrast, hesitates to take only one life, that of Claudius, in avenging his own father for a far worse crime—a treacherous murder and usurping of his throne. After waging his battle in Poland, Fortinbras returns to Denmark and storms the Danish castle. His actions show that unlike Hamlet, Fortinbras is a man of action—capable of taking great risks and confronting mortal danger without hesitation.

Laertes seeks to avenge the murder of his father. Once he learns of Polonius’s death, Laertes, believing Claudius responsible, charges into the castle and is prepared to kill the king where he stands. In contrast to Hamlet, who worries that taking revenge will cause him to be damned, Laertes shouts, “To hell, allegiance!...Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit! / I dare damnation.” Unlike
Hamlet, who wants to make sure that Claudius is truly guilty before taking his revenge, Laertes behaves rashly, intending to kill the king before learning the truth. The king and queen have to hold Laertes back and convince him that he is mistaken.

3. Ophelia is loving, concerned, obedient, and innocent. She clearly loves Hamlet, and is disturbed by his apparent madness. Her first conversation with Polonius about Hamlet, which appears in act I, scene iii, reveals that Ophelia believed Hamlet’s love was sincere, as he had proved it “with almost all the holy vows of heaven.” In act II, scene i, Ophelia reveals her fear that Hamlet is mad with love for her. Despite her love for Hamlet, Ophelia’s sense of duty and obedience to her father take priority. For this reason, Ophelia does not dare protest when her father orders her to stop seeing Hamlet. She also agrees to speak with Hamlet while Polonius and the king spy on them. Ophelia does not mean to hurt or deceive Hamlet; she is innocent and guileless and believes that Hamlet’s madness is genuine and is caused by his love for her. When Hamlet treats her cruelly, Ophelia weeps because she believes he has truly gone insane. That she loves Hamlet is clear from her words, “What a noble mind is here o’erthrown!”

Ophelia herself goes insane because she loses Hamlet—who has now apparently gone insane and treats her with cruelty—and then loses her father when Hamlet murders him. These losses must be all the more difficult for Ophelia to bear because she has no explanation for them. She knows nothing of Hamlet’s plan for revenge, and thinks the formerly noble, levelheaded Hamlet has gone insane simply because of frustrated love. Students may suggest that in addition, Ophelia may feel responsible for the losses; she believes she caused Hamlet’s insanity by refusing to see him, so by extension, she may feel responsible for driving Hamlet to kill Polonius. Her excessive guilt, added to her confusion and grief, may have led to Ophelia’s madness.

Students may disagree as to whether or not Ophelia’s death was a suicide. If the death was accidental, as Gertrude reports, it was certainly caused by her madness, which prevented Ophelia from trying to save herself. Students may question the queen’s version of the story, however, since it seems unlikely that she would watch Ophelia drown without attempting to save her. The queen may have fabricated the story in order to ensure that Ophelia would receive proper funeral rites and in order to spare Laertes from further grief. Or she may have witnessed the drowning and simply was unable to reach Ophelia in time.

Long Essay (30 points each)
Responses will vary. Possible responses are given.

1. In his soliloquy in act IV, scene iv, Hamlet says that his “craven scruple / Of thinking too precisely on th’ event” has prevented him from taking action against Claudius. He declares that he is a shameful coward in comparison with Fortinbras, a strong and decisive man of action who is willing to “find quarrel in a straw / When honor’s at the stake.”
Hamlet, Acts IV–V

Hamlet’s thoughts do delay his actions throughout the play. In acts I and II, he delays because he fears the ghost “may be a dev’l” tempting him to commit an unjust murder, and wants to prove Claudius’s guilt for himself. In act III, scene i, in Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” soliloquy, the prince muses that “conscience does make cowards of us all,” revealing that he delays in part out of his “dread of something after death”—his fear of damnation. Later, in act III, scene iii, once Hamlet has confirmed that the king is indeed guilty, he holds off murdering the praying Claudius because he wants to wait until he is sure to send the king to hell. Finally, in act V, Hamlet muses over whether human action or human life ultimately has any value.

Most students will say this delay is necessary, since it would be foolish to kill Claudius without proof of his guilt. They may also say that Hamlet’s delay is noble since unlike Laertes and Fortinbras, Hamlet does not act rashly in taking his revenge, and is engrossed in thoughts about his conscience, damnation, the value of human action and human life, and whether revenge is justified.

Students may point out that Hamlet’s delay is not a long one; he only waits to “prove” Claudius’s guilt before he strikes. When he sees evidence that the king is guilty, he kills Polonius thinking that it is Claudius. This accidental murder shows that Hamlet is certainly prepared to act, and that he does not deserve the ghost’s accusation that his purpose has gone dull.

Other students will say that Hamlet is cowardly and is looking for any excuse to delay taking his revenge. As evidence of this they could point to Hamlet’s own words in his soliloquy “O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!” (act II, scene ii), in which he admits he is a coward and pigeon-livered. They may point out that, had Hamlet acted immediately, he could have avoided the tragedies that followed: the deaths of Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, his mother, Laertes, and himself.

2. Some argue that the primary message of Hamlet is that all action is futile because no one can see very deeply into life and because, at any rate, divine providence, not human actions, determines the outcome of events. Hamlet himself adopts this point of view in act V. In previous acts, Hamlet chastises himself for not acting against Claudius, and resolves to be more like Fortinbras, whom he admires as a great and decisive man of action. In act V, he begins to perceive the ultimate worthlessness of human actions. In the churchyard, watching the gravedigger toss up skulls, he muses that human greatness really comes to nothing in death. He realizes that in the end, all humans are nothing more than bones to be “knock’d about the mazzard with a sexton’s spade,” and that even the most awesome and powerful of people, like Alexander the Great or Caesar, end up nothing but clay that could be used to plug a beer barrel.

Later, Hamlet explains to Horatio how his narrow escape from a death sentence has changed his outlook. On his way to England in the hands of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet, on an impulse, opened and read the commission Claudius had given his two friends. He chanced to have his father’s Danish seal on hand—a stroke of luck he says was ordained by heaven—and so was able to forge another
commission and seal it. The next day, he made a smooth exit when pirates captured him and agreed to return him safely to Denmark. Hamlet’s escape was so improbable that he attributes it to nothing less than the will of God. He no longer puts faith in human action and concludes that people’s foolish, reckless blundering sometimes works just as well if not better than careful planning, since God ultimately determines what will happen anyway. As he tells Horatio, “there’s a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will.”

This new attitude seems to free Hamlet from his deliberation and his fears. Just before the duel with Laertes, Hamlet has a presentiment of doom, but he is able to face the prospect of his own death with courage and dignity. He reasons that, just as there is “special providence in the fall of a sparrow,” if God has determined that it is time for him to die, it will happen no matter what he does. Hamlet concludes that all he can do is be prepared, saying that “the readiness is all.” He further implies that people should not fear death, since they do not know much about the world anyway and are ignorant of what they will leave behind.

Students may agree or disagree with Hamlet’s point of view. Some will state that the events of act V are too horrible to be shaped by divine providence. Others may argue that accident, not divine will, seems to be governing events. Others will say that the conclusion, for all its tragedy, does show the mark of God’s will, since despite the mess Hamlet has made of things, in the end everyone is punished for his or her misdeeds and peace is restored in the person of Fortinbras, who shows every indication of becoming a good and noble king. Hamlet’s attempts to act have been “rough-hewn,” or botched, but in the end, all is set right in Denmark. Students might also note that even if Hamlet had completely failed to exact revenge on Claudius, the king still would have been ousted from power and likely killed upon the arrival of Fortinbras. From that standpoint, every action Hamlet has taken throughout the play has been unnecessary.
Evaluation Forms
## Evaluation Form

### Writing Process

**PREWRITING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In prewriting I used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ freewriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ imagining or role playing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ interviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ graphic devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ observing and recalling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ other (explain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(comments)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The prewriting technique that was most successful for me was ____________________________

Other prewriting techniques that I would like to try are ________________________________

The prewriting technique that I would like to improve is ________________________________

**PLANNING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In planning I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ made an outline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ decided on a specific audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ decided on a specific purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ decided on a specific topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ revised my initial writing plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ decided on a mode of writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(comments)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The planning technique that was most successful for me was ______________________________

Other planning techniques that I would like to try are ________________________________

**DRAFTING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In drafting I worked on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ writing topic sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ writing a thesis statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ achieving unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ writing a conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ writing transitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ other (explain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ writing an introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ using supporting details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(comments)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The drafting skill that was most successful for me was ________________________________

Other drafting skills that I would like to try are ________________________________

The drafting skill that I would like to improve is ________________________________

**EDITING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In editing my draft I worked on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ writing or revising an introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ proofreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ using vivid words and details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ revising for clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ other (explain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ revising for unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ revising for coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(comments)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The editing skill that was most successful for me was ________________________________

Other editing skills that I would like to try are ________________________________

The editing skill that I would like to improve is ________________________________
# Evaluation Form

## Writing Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Circle One</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The topic is clear and can be treated well in the available space.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments: --------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\times 5 = )</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Circle One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writer’s purpose is clear, and the writer achieves his or her purpose.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments: --------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\times 5 = )</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Circle One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The language used and the complexity of the treatment of the subject are appropriate to the audience and occasion for which the writing was done.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments: --------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\times 5 = )</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Circle One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The form chosen is appropriate, and the writer has observed the conventions of the form chosen.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments: --------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\times 5 = )</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Mode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Circle One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writing makes use of appropriate modes (narration, dialogue, description, and various kinds of exposition such as analysis or comparison and contrast), and the writer has handled these modes well.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments: --------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(\times 5 = )</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Total

**Key:** 1 = needs substantial improvement  2 = needs improvement  3 = good  4 = outstanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Student’s Signature</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peer Evaluator’s Signature</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher’s Signature</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Writing Summary

| Title __________________________________________________________ |
| Purpose or aim of writing ____________________________________________ |
| I chose this topic because ____________________________________________ |
| The form of the writing is ____________________________________________ |
| I chose this form because ____________________________________________ |
| My thesis or theme is ____________________________________________ |
| My intended audience is ____________________________________________ |
| The principle of organization that I used is ____________________________________________ |
| The type of support or evidence that I used is ____________________________________________ |
| The type of introduction that I used is ____________________________________________ |
| The type of conclusion that I used is ____________________________________________ |
# Compositions/Reports

Assign a score from 1 to 10, 1 being the worst and 10 being the best.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION CRITERIA</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. The paper contains an introduction that grabs the attention of the reader.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The paper contains an introduction that presents the main idea or thesis of the paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The body of the paper contains paragraphs that support and develop the main idea.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Each paragraph develops a single main idea or serves a single main function.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. The writer has used transitions effectively to connect the paragraphs of the paper.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. The writer has used transitions effectively to connect ideas within paragraphs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. The paragraphs in the body of the paper are organized in a logical manner.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. The paper contains a conclusion that gives the reader a satisfactory sense of an ending by summarizing the main points of the paper or by some other means.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Source materials used in the paper have been clearly documented to avoid plagiarism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. The writer has prepared the paper using proper manuscript form.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**
## Evaluation Form

### Analytic Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT/UNITY</th>
<th>CIRCLE ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Develops a single main idea or creates a single dominant effect</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 x 4 = 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Contains only necessary or relevant ideas or information</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 x 4 = 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Is organized in a logical or sensible manner</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 x 4 = 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Uses transitions effectively to connect ideas</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 x 4 = 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION/COHERENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. Is organized in a logical or sensible manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Uses transitions effectively to connect ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LANGUAGE/STYLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E. Uses language appropriate to the audience and occasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Uses vivid, precise nouns, verbs, and modifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G. Avoids spelling errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Avoids grammar errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Avoids usage errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Avoids punctuation and capitalization errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Avoids errors in manuscript form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMENTS:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL**

**CONVERGENCE**

**LANGUAGE/STYLE**

**ORGANIZATION/COHERENCE**

**CONVENTIONS**

**CONTENT/UNITY**

**Key:** 1 = needs substantial improvement  2 = needs improvement  3 = good  4 = outstanding

STUDENT’S SIGNATURE

PEER EVALUATOR’S SIGNATURE

TEACHER’S SIGNATURE

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# Holistic Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT AND COHERENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• does not develop a single main idea or create a single dominant effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• contains irrelevant ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• is not organized logically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• does not use transitions effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• uses language inappropriate for the audience and occasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• does not use vivid, precise nouns, verbs, and modifiers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Circle one.) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 $\times 7 =$ _____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONVENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• makes errors in spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• makes errors in grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• makes errors in usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• makes errors in punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• does not follow proper manuscript form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Circle one.) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 $\times 3 =$ _____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| CONTENT AND COHERENCE + CONVENTIONS = TOTAL |

What I like most about this work is

__________________________________________

What I like least about this work is

__________________________________________

What I would do to improve this work is

__________________________________________

STUDENT’S SIGNATURE _______________________
PEER EVALUATOR’S SIGNATURE _______________________
TEACHER’S SIGNATURE _______________________

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Evaluation Form

Writing: Revising and Proofreading Checklists

**REVISION CHECKLIST: CONTENT AND UNITY**

1. Does the writing achieve its purpose?
2. Are the main ideas related to the thesis statement?
3. Are the main ideas clearly stated and supported by details?

**REVISION CHECKLIST: ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE**

1. Are the ideas arranged in a logical order?
2. Do transitions connect ideas to one another both within and between paragraphs?

**REVISION CHECKLIST: VOICE AND STYLE**

1. Is the voice—the tone, word choice, and perspective of the writing—authentic? Is it consistent?
2. Is the level of language appropriate to the audience and purpose?
3. Is the mood appropriate to the purpose and form of the writing?

**PROOFREADING CHECKLIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>• Are all words, including names, spelled correctly?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Grammar | • Does each verb agree in number with its subject?  
           • Are verb tenses consistent and correct?  
           • Are irregular verbs formed correctly?  
           • Is the referent of each pronoun clear?  
           • Does every pronoun agree with its antecedent?  
           • Are subject and object forms of pronouns used correctly?  
           • Are there any sentence fragments or run-ons?  
           • Have double negatives been avoided? |
| Usage | • Have frequently confused words, such as affect and effect, been used correctly? |
| Mechanics | • Does every sentence end with an end mark?  
           • Are commas, semicolons, hyphens, and dashes used correctly?  
           • Do all proper nouns and proper adjectives begin with capital letters?  
           • Has proper manuscript form been used? |
## Discussion

### Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Nearly Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shares personal experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributes relevant ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports statements with evidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responds to others respectfully</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tries to understand others’ views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows willingness to change views when appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows willingness to clarify and defend views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allows others to speak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains focus on discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student’s participation has been valuable to the group in the following ways:

________________________________________________________________________

The student’s participation could be more valuable if she or he would

________________________________________________________________________

### Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Nearly Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps the group keep on track</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps the group reach closure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student’s leadership has been valuable to the group in the following ways:

________________________________________________________________________

The student’s leadership could be more valuable if she or he would

________________________________________________________________________

### Record Keeping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Nearly Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeps accurate records of the discussion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Comments)
Evaluation Form

1. Describe the goal of the project. ______________________________________________________

Was the goal met satisfactorily? (Rate the overall success of the project on a scale from 1 to 5.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>not met satisfactorily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>met satisfactorily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Was the project an individual or a group effort? ______ individual _____ group

(If the project was a group effort, rate the effectiveness of the group in each of the following areas on a scale from 1 to 5.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Cooperation among group members</td>
<td>not at all cooperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Leadership</td>
<td>not effective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Division of tasks</td>
<td>unfair</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Project organization</td>
<td>unorganized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(If the project was an individual effort, rate the effectiveness of the effort in each of the following areas on a scale from 1 to 5.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Effort</td>
<td>very little effort shown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Creativity</td>
<td>very little creativity shown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Attention to goals</td>
<td>little attention to goals</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Rate the overall group or individual performance on a scale of 1 to 5 with regard to the criteria given above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very poor performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>outstanding performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(comments) ________________________________________________________________