

Hamlet Study Guide Answers Act 1

Hamlet by William Shakespeare **Study Guide**

ACT I

I.i

1. Where and at what exact hour does this scene take place?
2. What does the Ghost look like? (I. i.47-8)
3. Why are the soldiers on guard? What military concerns do they discuss?
4. How did King Fortinbras of Norway lose his lands?
5. Why is Prince Fortinbras becoming aggressive?
6. List three signs--natural phenomena--which occurred before the murder of Caesar. Why is this relevant to this play?
7. Why and when does the Ghost disappear?

I.ii

1. How does Hamlet feel about the king and queen? (Hint: go for the mixed feelings).
2. How does Claudius deal with the threat of aggression from Fortinbras? Who are his messengers?
3. What does Laertes want and why is the king willing to grant it?
4. Which clothes images and stage images are used in lines 77-78 and 82-84 to suggest that appearance and reality are not the same?
5. List three things Claudius asks of Hamlet.
6. What will accompany each toast drunk in Denmark that day? Hamlet thinks this is...
7. Explain the garden imagery in lines 135-136.
8. Why is Hamlet so depressed? Be specific.
9. What additional information about the appearance of the Ghost do we get at the end of this scene?

I.iii

1. What does Laertes think of Hamlet's attentions to Ophelia?
2. Why is Hamlet unlikely to marry Ophelia?
3. What advice does Polonius offer Laertes about his clothing?
4. Why is it ironic that Polonius gives Laertes lengthy advice at this particular time?
5. In Polonius' speech to Ophelia, he uses "tender" in four ways. What are these ways and what is the effect of this repetition?

Hamlet study guide answers act 1 are essential for anyone looking to understand Shakespeare's complex play. Act 1 introduces key characters, themes, and the haunting atmosphere that permeates the entire work. This act sets the stage for Hamlet's inner turmoil and the unfolding of the tragic storyline. In this comprehensive study guide, we will explore the main characters, significant quotes, themes, and questions that arise in Act 1, providing a thorough understanding of this pivotal part of the play.

Overview of Act 1

Act 1 of Hamlet opens in the cold battlements of Elsinore Castle, where the ghost of King Hamlet has appeared to a group of sentinels. This act introduces the audience to the political and personal turmoil following the King's death, the hasty marriage of Queen Gertrude to Claudius, and the troubled mind of Prince Hamlet.

Main Characters in Act 1

Understanding the main characters is crucial for grasping the intricacies of Hamlet. Here are the key players introduced in Act 1:

- **Hamlet:** The Prince of Denmark, grieving the death of his father and troubled by his mother's swift remarriage.
- **Claudius:** The new King of Denmark and Hamlet's uncle, who married Gertrude shortly after the King's death.
- **Gertrude:** Hamlet's mother, whose quick marriage to Claudius raises Hamlet's suspicions.
- **Polonius:** The Lord Chamberlain of Claudius's court and father to Ophelia and Laertes.
- **Ophelia:** Polonius's daughter, who is in a relationship with Hamlet.
- **Laertes:** Polonius's son, who warns Ophelia about her relationship with Hamlet.
- **The Ghost:** The spirit of Hamlet's deceased father, who reveals the truth about his death.

Significant Quotes from Act 1

Act 1 is rich with lines that convey the emotional depth and complexity of the characters. Here are some significant quotes along with their meanings:

1. "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark."

This line, spoken by Marcellus, highlights the corruption and moral decay in Denmark following the King's death. It sets a tone of foreboding and suggests that not everything is as it seems.

2. "Frailty, thy name is woman!"

Hamlet's lament about his mother's marriage to Claudius reflects his deep disappointment in Gertrude and women in general. This quote encapsulates Hamlet's feelings of betrayal and his struggle with his perception of femininity.

3. "The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown."

The Ghost reveals to Hamlet that Claudius murdered his father. This quote is pivotal as it ignites Hamlet's quest for revenge and his internal conflict with morality.

Themes Introduced in Act 1

Several important themes emerge in Act 1, laying the groundwork for the rest of the play.

1. Appearance vs. Reality

Throughout Act 1, characters present false fronts. Claudius's outward demeanor as a benevolent king contrasts sharply with his treachery. This theme invites the audience to question what is authentic and what is deceitful.

2. Madness

Hamlet's behavior begins to hint at his descent into madness. The tension between sanity and insanity becomes a central concern as the play progresses, particularly in how Hamlet grapples with his grief and desire for revenge.

3. Revenge

The Ghost's revelation sets the stage for the revenge theme, compelling Hamlet to confront his father's murderer. This theme raises questions about justice, morality, and the consequences of vengeance.

Key Questions for Act 1

To further your understanding of Act 1, consider the following questions:

1. What is the significance of the Ghost's appearance, and how does it affect Hamlet's character?
2. How does Claudius's behavior reflect his guilt regarding King Hamlet's death?
3. In what ways does Polonius represent the theme of appearance vs. reality?
4. What role does Ophelia play in Hamlet's emotional state?
5. How does the setting of Elsinore Castle contribute to the atmosphere of the play?

Plot Summary of Act 1

To provide a clearer picture, here's a brief plot summary of Act 1:

1. Scene 1: The play opens with the guards witnessing the ghost of King Hamlet. They decide to inform Prince Hamlet of their sighting.
2. Scene 2: Claudius addresses the court, announces his marriage to Gertrude, and sends Laertes to

France. Hamlet is still in mourning, and Claudius urges him to move on. Hamlet expresses his disgust with the situation.

3. Scene 3: Laertes advises Ophelia to avoid Hamlet, while Polonius warns her against getting too involved with him. This scene sets up Ophelia's conflict between duty to her family and her feelings for Hamlet.

4. Scene 4: Hamlet, accompanied by Horatio and Marcellus, encounters the ghost, who beckons him to follow.

5. Scene 5: The Ghost reveals to Hamlet that he was murdered by Claudius. Hamlet is filled with rage and vows to remember this moment and seek revenge.

Conclusion

In Hamlet Act 1, Shakespeare masterfully establishes the foundation for the unfolding tragedy. From the introduction of characters to the exploration of themes like revenge and madness, this act is crucial for understanding Hamlet's internal struggle and the corrupt world around him. Utilizing this Hamlet study guide answers act 1, readers can delve deeper into the play's intricacies and prepare for the complex narrative that follows. Whether you are a student, teacher, or Shakespeare enthusiast, these insights will enhance your appreciation of one of literature's greatest works.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the significance of the Ghost's appearance in Act 1 of Hamlet?

The Ghost of King Hamlet appears to set the stage for the central conflict of the play, revealing that he was murdered by Claudius. This revelation drives Hamlet to seek revenge, which is a key theme in the play.

How does Hamlet feel about his mother's marriage to Claudius in Act 1?

Hamlet feels deeply disturbed and betrayed by his mother, Gertrude's, quick remarriage to Claudius, whom he views as morally corrupt. This contributes to his feelings of disgust and melancholy.

What role do Horatio and Marcellus play in Act 1?

Horatio and Marcellus serve as confidants to Hamlet. They witness the Ghost and support Hamlet's investigation into the truth about his father's death, highlighting themes of loyalty and friendship.

What is the main theme introduced in Act 1 of Hamlet?

The main theme introduced in Act 1 is the idea of appearance versus reality. Characters present false facades, and the truth about King Hamlet's murder is concealed, setting up the conflict between truth and deception.

How does the setting of Elsinore contribute to the mood in Act 1?

The castle of Elsinore, with its dark and foreboding atmosphere, creates a sense of unease and tension. It reflects the political instability and moral corruption that permeates the play, foreshadowing the tragic events that follow.

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