

# Hamlet Act 2 Study Guide Answers

## Hamlet Study Guide, Act II

*You do not need to write out any answers to these questions.. However, they may help you to identify information to review for the quiz.*

### II.i.

1. Why does Polonius send Reynaldo to Paris?
2. Briefly describe the how Polonius suggests that "by indirection" Reynaldo might seek "directions out." That is, how does Polonius suggest that Reynaldo gather information?
3. What has frightened Ophelia?
4. How was Hamlet dressed?
5. What did Ophelia think was wrong with Hamlet?
6. How does Polonius explain this incident?
7. Why does Polonius set off to see the King?

### II.ii.

1. Why has the King sent for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
2. Compare the beginning of the scene with the beginning of the previous scene. How are they alike?
3. What reward does the Queen suggest that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern may receive? (lines 25-6)
4. From line 43, does Claudius seem to value Polonius or to disregard him?
5. To what causes does Gertrude attribute Hamlet's "distemper" or "lunacy"?
6. Old Norway thought young Fortinbras was preparing to fight the \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Fortinbras, however, was actually preparing to fight \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What is old Norway's state of age, health and power?
9. What request does Norway make of Denmark?
10. What is Polonius' definition of madness.
11. What does Gertrude mean when she says "more matter with less art"?
12. To what does Polonius attribute Hamlet's madness?

Hamlet Act 2 Study Guide Answers provide a comprehensive analysis of this pivotal act in Shakespeare's renowned tragedy. Act 2 is crucial as it delves deeper into the psyche of Hamlet, introduces significant characters, and sets the stage for the unfolding drama. In this act, the themes of madness, observation, and deceit are explored, showcasing the intricacies of human behavior and relationships. This study guide aims to illuminate the key events, characters, themes, and questions from Act 2, offering insights to enhance understanding and appreciation of the text.

## Summary of Act 2

Act 2 of "Hamlet" is primarily concerned with the consequences of King Hamlet's death and the ensuing political and personal turmoil. The act features several key scenes that

reveal the characters' motivations and intentions while advancing the plot.

## **Key Scenes**

### **1. Scene 1: The Arrival of Reynaldo**

- Polonius sends Reynaldo to Paris to spy on Laertes.
- Polonius instructs Reynaldo to inquire about Laertes' behavior while subtly insinuating negative traits. This highlights Polonius's manipulative nature and foreshadows his later actions.

### **2. Scene 2: Hamlet's Behavior**

- King Claudius and Queen Gertrude express concern over Hamlet's dismal demeanor. They summon Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to uncover the cause of his madness.
- Polonius suggests that Hamlet's madness stems from his love for Ophelia, which prompts him to investigate further.

### **3. The Players Arrive**

- A group of actors arrives in Elsinore, which gives Hamlet an idea to confirm Claudius's guilt regarding King Hamlet's murder.
- Hamlet decides to stage a play that mimics his father's murder to observe Claudius's reaction, indicating his cleverness and cunning.

## **Character Analysis**

Act 2 introduces and further develops several key characters, each playing a vital role in the progression of the plot and themes.

### **Hamlet**

- State of Mind: Hamlet's behavior appears increasingly erratic, showcasing his internal struggle with grief, betrayal, and the desire for revenge.
- Cunning and Intelligence: His plan to use the play to gauge Claudius's guilt demonstrates his strategic thinking.

### **Polonius**

- Manipulative Tactics: Polonius's spying on Laertes and his attempts to control Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet reflect his scheming nature.
- Fatherly Concerns: Despite his manipulative tendencies, he believes he is acting in the best interest of his children.

## **Ophelia**

- Victim of Circumstances: Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet becomes a point of contention, illustrating her vulnerability.
- Conflict of Loyalties: Her loyalty to her father contrasts with her feelings for Hamlet, showcasing the broader theme of familial duty versus personal desire.

## **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern**

- Friends or Spies?: Their role as Hamlet's childhood friends who are sent to spy on him raises questions about loyalty and betrayal.
- Symbol of the Court: They represent the manipulative nature of the court and the pressures exerted on individuals within it.

## **Themes in Act 2**

Act 2 of "Hamlet" explores several significant themes that resonate throughout the play.

### **Madness**

- Real vs. Feigned Madness: Hamlet's madness is central to the act. While some believe he is genuinely unwell, others suspect it is an act to conceal his deeper intentions.
- Consequences of Madness: The act underlines how madness can lead to misinterpretation of actions, affecting relationships and decisions.

### **Observation and Surveillance**

- Spying and Deception: Polonius's espionage, as well as the involvement of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, emphasizes the theme of surveillance and its moral implications.
- Truth and Illusion: The act raises questions about the nature of truth and how it can be manipulated through observation.

### **Family and Loyalty**

- Conflict of Interests: The struggles between familial loyalty and personal ambition are evident, particularly in the relationships between Polonius, Ophelia, and Laertes.
- Betrayal: The act foreshadows the betrayals that will occur as characters navigate their loyalties.

# Key Questions and Answers

Students studying Act 2 may encounter several thought-provoking questions that encourage deeper engagement with the text.

## **1. What prompts Polonius to believe that Hamlet is mad?**

- Answer: Polonius concludes that Hamlet's madness is a result of his love for Ophelia after observing Hamlet's strange behavior towards her. He interprets Hamlet's actions as a product of heartbreak, which leads him to investigate further.

## **2. How does Hamlet plan to confirm Claudius's guilt?**

- Answer: Hamlet devises a plan to stage a play that mirrors the murder of his father. He believes that by observing Claudius's reaction to the play, he can determine whether Claudius is guilty of the crime.

## **3. What role do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play in Act 2?**

- Answer: They are summoned by Claudius and Gertrude to uncover the cause of Hamlet's melancholy. Their presence signals the theme of betrayal, as they are more loyal to the king than to their friend Hamlet.

## **4. What does Polonius's behavior reveal about his character?**

- Answer: Polonius's tendencies to spy and manipulate indicate a lack of integrity and a desire for control. His actions portray him as a self-serving character who prioritizes his ambitions over genuine concern for his children.

## **5. How does the theme of observation manifest in Act 2?**

- Answer: The act is filled with characters spying on one another, such as Polonius watching Hamlet and sending Reynaldo to spy on Laertes. This theme highlights the mistrust in the court and the lengths characters will go to uncover the truth.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, Hamlet Act 2 Study Guide Answers encapsulate the essence of this act, marked by its rich character development, intricate themes, and pivotal plot

advancements. The act serves as a crucial turning point in the play, where the complexities of human emotion, familial loyalty, and the quest for truth intertwine. By exploring the themes of madness, observation, and betrayal, readers gain a deeper understanding of the characters' motivations and the moral dilemmas they face. Whether for academic purposes or personal enrichment, this study guide aims to provide clarity and insight into one of literature's most profound tragedies.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What are the main themes explored in Act 2 of Hamlet?**

In Act 2, themes of madness, deception, and the struggle for power are prominent. The act highlights Hamlet's feigned madness as a strategy to uncover the truth about his father's death and explores the idea of appearance versus reality through the actions of other characters.

### **How does Polonius attempt to understand Hamlet's behavior in Act 2?**

Polonius believes that Hamlet's madness is caused by his love for Ophelia. He devises a plan to observe Hamlet's interaction with Ophelia in order to confirm his theory, showcasing his tendency to manipulate situations and people.

### **What role do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play in Act 2?**

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are summoned by King Claudius and Queen Gertrude to spy on Hamlet. Their role serves to illustrate the theme of betrayal and provides insight into Hamlet's isolation as he recognizes their true intentions.

### **What is the significance of the play-within-a-play concept introduced in Act 2?**

The play-within-a-play, which Hamlet plans to stage, serves as a crucial plot device that allows Hamlet to gauge King Claudius's guilt regarding King Hamlet's murder. It emphasizes the theme of performance and reality, questioning what is genuine and what is merely appearance.

### **How does Hamlet's attitude towards life and death evolve in Act 2?**

In Act 2, Hamlet's existential crisis deepens as he grapples with the consequences of revenge and the nature of existence. His soliloquies reveal his despair and uncertainty about life, leading to a more pronounced contemplation of mortality.

# What is the importance of Ophelia's character in Act 2?

Ophelia's character highlights the theme of innocence and the impact of political machinations on personal lives. Her interactions with Hamlet and her father, Polonius, reflect her struggle between obedience and her feelings for Hamlet, ultimately foreshadowing her tragic fate.

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