

Hamlet Act I Analysis Questions

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12 IBHL2 English

Act I, Scene i

1. How does Shakespeare begin the play with an immediate sense of suspense?
2. What probably important exposition is revealed in this scene?
3. Why has Horatio been asked to join the soldiers in the night watch? What has he decided to do?
4. How does the reader/audience know this ghost is not a hallucination?

Act I, Scene ii

1. What important exposition is revealed at the beginning of this scene?
2. What evidence of wrongdoing or corruption is evident in Claudius' opening speech?
3. Compare Claudius' treatment of Laertes with his treatment of Hamlet.
4. Why did Hamlet not become King when his father died?
5. How is Hamlet physically and emotionally conspicuous in the public portion of this scene?
6. What is the significance of Claudius' denying Hamlet permission to return to Wittenberg?
7. What aspect of Hamlet's concept of death / desire for death is revealed in Hamlet's first soliloquy?
8. What aspect of Hamlet's problem seems to bother him the most?
9. What important metaphor is introduced in Hamlet's soliloquy that will be developed later in the play?
10. Contrast Claudius' and Laertes' reasons for being in Denmark.

Act I, Scene iii

1. Explain the reasons that Laertes and Polonius give Ophelia to convince her not to trust Hamlet's love.
2. What is comical about Polonius?

Act I, Scenes iv

1. Other than the fact of the ghost itself, why is this Ghost thought to be an evil omen?
2. Marcellus states, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." What does he mean?

Act I, Scene v

1. In what region of the universe does the Ghost reside?
2. What possible theme is introduced by the Ghost's afterlife?
3. What does the Ghost warn Hamlet about his mother? Why?
4. What does Hamlet mean when he says, "The time is out of joint"?