

Hamlet, Act I, scene i

1. What important background information about Denmark do you learn in this scene?
2. What possible reasons for the ghost's appearance do the men discuss? Which seems most likely to you?
3. Why do you think Horatio decides to tell Hamlet rather than the King about the ghost? Would you have done the same under similar circumstances?
4. Find four references to or images of disease in this scene. How does this contribute to the overall mood of the scene?

Act I, scene ii

1. How would you sum up Hamlet's behaviour with Claudius and Gertrude? Do you think that he is being childish or are they being too cavalier?
2. Do you think that Claudius genuinely cares about Hamlet or is he merely appearing to do so that he can control a potentially dangerous rival?
3. The First Soliloquy:
 - a) Outline Hamlet's frame of mind and the reasons for it.
 - b) What patterns of imagery are used?
 - c) Why does Hamlet feel that he must "hold his tongue"? Would you do the same?
4. What is the effect of Horatio's news about the ghost on Hamlet?

Act I, scene iii

1. Describe the family dynamic in this scene. Who has the power? Who loves who? Etc.
2. Find evidence in his advice to Laertes that Polonius is more concerned with public appearance and advancement than true character.

Act I, scene iv

2. What is ironic about Horatio's warning to Hamlet about the ghost? (Consider his previous soliloquy)

Act I, scene v

1. What does the ghost tell Hamlet about life beyond the grave? His own death?
2. Find images of disease and decay in this scene.
3. What four commands does the ghost give to Hamlet?
4. What is the significance of the line "One may smile, and smile and be a villain"?
5. If you were Hamlet, how would you feel about the ghost's revelations? What would you do next?