

## Masterprose Study Questions for *Hamlet*

### Act I

1. What mood is stressed at the outset of the play?
2. Why does Marcellus tell Horatio to speak to the ghost?
3. What current events are discussed as the men await the ghost?
4. What possible reasons for the ghost's appearance are discussed?
5. What unnatural happenings does Horatio equate with the ghost's appearance?
6. What is the atmosphere of the court routine that begins scene ii?
7. What attitude dominates Hamlet's personality in scene ii?
8. How does Hamlet's soliloquy betray his melancholy?
9. What historical event might Shakespeare be using as reference?
10. What is Hamlet's personality when he is with Horatio?
11. What is the effect of Horatio's news of the ghost?
12. What is the effect of Laertes's talk with Ophelia in scene iii?
13. What is the significance of Polonius's advice to Laertes?
14. In scene iv, what fact emerges from Hamlet's conversation with Horatio?
15. How does Hamlet approach the ghost?
16. In scene v, why is the ghost's reminder about his descent to Hell significant?
17. What is the unknowing irony in Hamlet's reply to the ghost?
18. Hamlet seems genuinely horrified at the ghost's revelation. Has he had no hint of evil?
19. What does Hamlet realize after talking with the ghost?

### Act II

1. What change of mood occurs with scene I?
2. What news does Ophelia bring Polonius?
3. What is the significance of the meeting between the royal couple and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
4. Why is Fortinbras mentioned again?
5. What is Hamlet's reception of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
6. Why is Hamlet excited about the players?
7. What is the importance of the reference to Jephthah?
8. What is the importance of Hamlet's speech to the players?
9. What emotion dominates the soliloquy that follows when Hamlet is alone?

### Act III

1. What feeling permeates the first part of scene I?
2. What meaning is given to Claudius's aside as they plan Ophelia's actions?
3. What major philosophical points dominate Hamlet's soliloquy in scene I?
4. Why is Hamlet so brutal to Ophelia?
5. Is Ophelia, as far as the text reveals, guilty of any of the "womanly" sins of which Hamlet accuses her?
6. What is the purpose of Ophelia's remembrance of the former Hamlet?
7. How do Claudius and Polonius view the meeting?
8. What incidents occur in the scene with the players?
9. How does Hamlet behave before the play begins?
10. What is the purpose of the scene with Horatio?
11. What is Hamlet hoping to accomplish in the speech of the Player Queen to the Player King?
12. How does the performance temporarily shift circumstances?
13. What stress is laid on Hamlet's confrontation with Gertrude?
14. What extended simile does Hamlet employ with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
15. What is the irony of Hamlet's concluding remarks in scene ii?
16. What action does Claudius take against Hamlet after the play?
17. What is the effect of Claudius's soliloquy?
18. What is the irony of Hamlet's decision while Claudius is at prayer?
19. What facts emerge from Hamlet's talk with his mother in scene iv?
20. What is the importance of Polonius's death?

### Act IV

1. What explanation does Gertrude offer for Polonius's murder?
2. In what mood does Hamlet speak with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
3. What is Claudius's attitude in scene iii?
4. How does Fortinbras compare with Hamlet?
5. What new insight does Ophelia's grief evoke?
6. How is Ophelia's madness portrayed?
7. What does Laertes's anger show?
8. What is the function of scene vi with Horatio?
9. What final plans are arranged in scene vii?

### Act V

1. What is the effect of the "clowns'" conversation?
2. How is Hamlet changed?
3. What new philosophy motivates Hamlet?
4. How is a final solution achieved?