

Hamlet Short Questions and Answers

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1. Where does the play take place?

Denmark

2. What is the name of the castle?

Elsinore

3. What are the first words spoken in the play?

"Who's there?"

4. How has Ophelia died?

She has supposedly drowned (ambiguity surrounds her death).

5. Where did Shakespeare live?

Stratford-upon-Avon, England

6. When was Hamlet written?

1600-1601

7. What does Bernardo mean by calling Horatio and Marcellus "the *rivals* of my watch"?

He means partners.

8. What do Claudius and Gertrude want Hamlet to do?

They want him to stop mourning about his father's death.

9. According to Marcellus and Barnardo, who does the ghost resemble?

They think the ghost resembles the late King Hamlet in his battle armor.

10. What happened between the late king of Norway and the late king of Denmark?

Many years ago, King Fortinbras of Norway challenged King Hamlet of Denmark to a one-on-one duel for some land. King Hamlet killed King Fortinbras during the duel and won the land.

11. Who is young Fortinbras and what is he doing?

Young Fortinbras is the son of the late King Fortinbras of Norway. Unbeknownst to his uncle (the current King of Norway), young Fortinbras is assembling men to attack Denmark and reclaim the land that his father lost in a duel.

12. How do Claudius and Gertrude treat Hamlet's grief?

They think he needs to just get over it.

13. What does Hamlet contemplate doing when he is so upset?

He wants to commit suicide.

14. How does Hamlet decide to test the ghost's story?

By having the actors perform a play called the mousetrap.

15. Who says the following: "A little more than kin, and less than kind"?

Hamlet

16. Who is Horatio?

Horatio is Hamlet's friend from school.

17. Who is Claudius?

Claudius is the current king of Denmark and the brother of the late King Hamlet. He is now married to his brother's wife, Queen Gertrude.

18. Who is Gertrude?

Gertrude is Prince Hamlet's mother and the wife of the late King Hamlet. Soon after King Hamlet's death, she married his brother, Claudius.

19. Who is Prince Hamlet?

Prince Hamlet is the son of Queen Gertrude and the late King Hamlet. He is grief-stricken by his father's recent death and upset over his mother's hasty remarriage to his uncle.

20. Who are Polonius and Laertes?

Polonius is one of the king's favorite courtiers and the father of Laertes and Ophelia. Laertes is a young nobleman who wishes to return to France.

21. Who is Ophelia?

The daughter of Polonius and the sister of Laertes, Ophelia is a beautiful young noblewoman. Prince Hamlet has been romantically pursuing her, but Laertes and Polonius urge her to break off the relationship and remain chaste.

22. According to the ghost, how did Hamlet's father die?

The ghost reveals that Claudius poured poison into King Hamlet's ear while he slept. Therefore, King Hamlet's death was a murder and not an accident.

23. What does Hamlet think of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

He does not trust them. He thinks they're too weak to see that the king is using them to spy on him.

24. When the king asks where Polonius is, what is Hamlet's answer?

He says Polonius is "not where he eats but where he is eaten." He tells the King to look for him in Heaven and if he can't find him he should go to "the other place" (Hell).

25. What is the content of the letter that the King sends with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to England with Hamlet?

The king wants Hamlet to be killed as soon as he reaches England.

26. Why does Hamlet agree to stay in Elsinore and not return to Wittenburg?

His mother wants him to stay because he is still mourning and is depressed. It will make his mother happy.

27. What, according to Hamlet, keeps a person from escaping the troubles of this life?

There is a fear of something dreadful happening after death.

28. What prompts Hamlet to say, "My thoughts be bloody or nothing worth!"?

He learns that Fortinbras is fighting full force over a little plot of land that means nothing and he has not done anything about his father's death.

29. Why does Claudius decide to send Hamlet to England?

He believes that Hamlet is dangerous.

30. What, according to Hamlet, is "the purpose of playing," or acting?

To represent reality.

31. What does Claudius conclude about Hamlet after overhearing the conversation with Ophelia?

He concludes that Hamlet isn't crazy, his sadness, not love, is making something else.

32. Why can't Claudius simply punish or banish Hamlet openly?

Hamlet is very popular with the people of Denmark, which makes it difficult for Claudius to openly act against him.

33. How has Polonius' death affected Ophelia?

Ophelia has gone mad in the wake of Polonius' death.

34. How did Hamlet escape the ship bound for England?

Hamlet's ship was attacked by pirates, and Hamlet boarded the pirate ship and returned to Denmark.

35. What has happened to Ophelia?

She's gone nuts. She is drowned. Many think it's suicide.

36. What is the content of Hamlet's letter to Horatio?

It explains he escaped Rosencrantz and Guildenstern onto a Pirate ship. They are treating him well because pirates want favors from him. He wants Horatio to give letters to King and Queen and come to see him.

37. What plan do the King and Laertes discuss to kill Hamlet?

Put poison in a cup and offer Hamlet a drink.

38. Laertes thinks that Ophelia should have a better funeral service. What is the priest's answer?

Ophelia is lucky to be getting a nice a funeral considering the "nature of her death" (means she killed herself which is a sin)

39. Why does Hamlet jump into Ophelia's grave?

Because he wants to show that his sorrow is as great as Laertes' sorrow.

40. What does the King say to Laertes to console him after Laertes and Hamlet are separated?

He tells him not to worry; he will soon have the appropriate time to kill Hamlet. One way or another, Hamlet will die.

41. What news does Osric bring Hamlet?

Osric is the courtier sent by Claudius to invite Hamlet to participate in the duel with Laertes. He tells the wager (a bet) the king made on his behalf in a contest between Hamlet and Laertes.

42. What happens to the King, Hamlet, Laertes, and the Queen?

1. The King was killed by Hamlet.
2. Hamlet was killed by Laertes' sword.
3. Laertes was killed by poison on his sword when Hamlet picked the wrong sword in the fight.
4. The Queen drinks out of the cup meant for Hamlet and she died.

43. Who does Hamlet recommend to the throne?

Fortinbras

44. Who are the members of the King's guard?

Bernardo, Francisco and Marcellus

45. Who is King Hamlet?

He is Hamlet's father and the King of Denmark until he dies. He appears as a ghost at night.

46. What had Bernardo seen at a prior watch?

Bernardo had seen the ghost of King Hamlet.

47. Why does Marcellus think Horatio should speak to the ghost?

Marcellus thinks Horatio should speak to the ghost because he will know what to say to him. He is a "scholar" and is educated. He's also Hamlet's close friend.

48. What does young Fortinbras want to do?

His father was killed by King Hamlet. He wants to reclaim the land that his father lost to King Hamlet. He wants to fight the King of Denmark and go to war to get the land back. He has gathered men from different areas of Norway to help him.

49. Who do the soldiers/guards want to tell about the ghost?

They want to tell young Hamlet that they have seen the ghost of his father. They think the ghost will speak to his son.

50. Where does Claudius send Cornelius and Voltimand?

He has written a letter to the King of Norway which he wants Cornelius and Voltimand to deliver. The King of Norway is Fortinbras' uncle. He is an old man who doesn't know what Fortinbras is planning. The King of Norway has the power to stop Fortinbras from going to war.

51. What information does Voltemand reveal?

Fortinbras will not wage war on Denmark, but pass through to battle the Poles.

52. What information does Polonius tell Claudius and Gertrude?

The reason for Hamlet's madness is that he is in love with Ophelia.

53. What does the King tell Hamlet before he meets the ghost?

The King tells Hamlet that he should not be so sad that his father died. Life must continue to go on. He also tells him that he does not want him to return to Wittenburg University to study. He wants him to stay in Denmark and to think of him as Hamlet's father.

54. At the beginning of the play, Hamlet is upset for two reasons. What are they?

1. Hamlet is upset because his father died.
2. Hamlet is also upset because his mother married his Uncle very quickly after his father's death.

55. What news does Horatio bring Hamlet in Act one?

Horatio tells Hamlet that he saw the ghost of his father. He was dressed for battle and looked very sad.

56. What is Laertes' advice to Ophelia?

He tells her to stay away from Hamlet. Hamlet will take advantage of her. She should not believe him when he says he loves her. Hamlet will be King of Denmark, he is royalty and she is not.

57. What is Polonius' advice to Laertes?

He tells Laertes not to say what he is thinking and to think before he acts. He should hold onto his friends and not be quick to make new friends. Don't pick fights, but if you are in one, fight well. Listen to many people, but talk to a few. Don't borrow or lend money. Don't have too much fun.

58. What does the ghost tell Hamlet?

The ghost tells Hamlet that Claudius killed him. He poured poison into his ear when he was in the garden and he died. He also stole his wife Gertrude. He asks Hamlet to seek revenge and kill Claudius, but not to hurt Gertrude. God and her guilt will punish her.

59. Hamlet swears Horatio and the other guards to two things. What are they?

1. He makes them swear not to tell anyone about what they saw (that Hamlet talked to the ghost of his father.)
2. He tells them that he will pretend to be crazy and that they should not say it is because he saw the ghost and talked to him.

60. What does Horatio think the ghost is a sign of?

It's a bad sign for the country. Something bad is going to happen.

61. What's contradictory about Claudius in Act one?

Claudius is sad that his brother died but he's happy about marrying Queen Gertrude.

62. "Frailty thy name is woman" What does that mean?

Women are weak. Hamlet says that because Gertrude married Claudius within a month of his father's death.

63. What does Hamlet mean by "With such dexterity to incestuous sheets"?

Gertrude married into an incestuous relationship, therefore, nothing good can come out of it and Hamlet can't say anything about it.

64. What does Hamlet think when he first finds out about his father's ghost?

Something bad happened to his father.

65. Where is King Hamlet?

He's a ghost at night and he is trapped in the fires of purgatory until he's done penance.

66. Why is King Hamlet in purgatory?

He has not asked God for forgiveness for his sins because his brother killed him before he could repent.

67. Who says the following: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be"?

Polonius

68. Where does Polonius send Reynaldo? Why?

Polonius sends Reynaldo to Paris. He wants to learn what he is doing there (he wants him to spy on his son).

69. Why does Polonius think Hamlet is "mad"?

Polonius thinks that Hamlet is mad because he's in love with Ophelia and she is ignoring him.

70. Why have Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come to the castle?

Claudius has asked them to come to the castle to find out what's bothering Hamlet. Then, they can try to help him.

71. What is Polonius' plan for testing his theory that Hamlet is love-crazy?

He wants Hamlet and Ophelia to meet. Polonius is going to spy on them.

72. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern finally meet with Hamlet and Hamlet discovers they were sent for by the King. How does Hamlet describe his problems to them? What does he tell them?

He thinks that the world is wonderful but life is terrible. People don't interest him.

73. What arrangement does Hamlet make with one of the players?

He is going to have him change some of the play. Reenact how his father is murdered to see how Claudius reacts.

74. What message do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern carry to the King? What is the King's response?

Hamlet is confused but he doesn't say why and won't talk about how he feels. He doesn't give them straight answers. King Claudius tells them to encourage Hamlet's interest in the play. They also told him that Hamlet is interested in the theater troupe.

75. What do the King and Polonius decide about Hamlet's condition after eavesdropping on Hamlet and Ophelia?

Claudius doesn't think that Hamlet is love-crazy. He doesn't even think he's crazy. He thinks he's sad. Polonius still thinks that his madness was caused by unrequited love for Ophelia. King Claudius decides to send him to England to get back the money that the King of England owes to the King of Denmark.

Polonius wants Hamlet to talk to his mother to find out his secret and Polonius will hide and listen to their conversation.

76. Who says the following: "I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres..."?

The ghost

77. Who is Hamlet's best friend who survives at the end of the play?

Horatio

78. Why does Hamlet give instructions to the players?

Hamlet wants the players to perform a scene similar to what he thinks happened to his father. Hamlet and Horatio are going to watch King Claudius carefully and see if he acts guilty. If he doesn't act guilty then the ghost was a devil and wasn't telling the truth about his father's death.

79. What does Horatio demand that the ghost do?

Speak

80. What was the King's reaction to the play within the play, and what did Hamlet and Horatio decide his reaction meant?

The King stopped the play. Hamlet and Horatio decided that this means that the King was guilty of poisoning King Hamlet like the ghost said.

81. Who says the following: "...think yourself a baby, that you have taken these tenders for true pay, which are not sterling."?

Polonius

82. What message does Rosencrantz deliver from the Queen?

The Queen wants to talk to Hamlet before he goes to bed. The Queen is surprised about Hamlet's behavior.

83. The King has Rosencrantz and Guildenstern prepare to do what? Why?

The King wants Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to prepare to go to England with Hamlet on diplomatic business. The king thinks that Hamlet is getting crazier and he has to protect the country from the danger of Hamlet's craziness getting out of control.

84. How does Laertes die?

Poisoned by a stab with the poisoned sword

85. Why doesn't Hamlet kill the King when the King is kneeling?

Hamlet doesn't kill the King when the King is kneeling because he is praying to repent his sins. If he dies now he will go to heaven. King Hamlet couldn't go to heaven because he didn't repent for his sins. It's better if he waits for the king to sin before Hamlet kills him then King Claudius will go to hell.

86. How does Polonius die?

Polonius dies because he was hiding behind a tapestry. Then, Hamlet heard yelling from behind the tapestry and he stabbed his sword through the tapestry and killed Polonius.

87. Where does Laertes ask permission to return to?

France

88. Who says the following: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark"?

Marcellus

89. What tragic news does Queen Gertrude bring Laertes?

Queen Gertrude tells Laertes that Ophelia has drowned in the brook.

90. Why is Hamlet inspired by Fortinbras?

Hamlet admires Fortinbras' determination to take action and achieve his goal—no matter the cost.

91. What does Hamlet mean when he calls Rosencrantz a "sponge"?

Hamlet means that Rosencrantz wants to soak up all the King's favor and power.

92. Why has Laertes become angry with Claudius in Act four?

Laertes initially blames Claudius for Polonius' death and Ophelia's madness, though Claudius quickly redirects his anger toward Hamlet instead.

93. Why does Hamlet comment on Alexander the Great when he is looking at all the skulls in the ground?

Looking at the skulls, Hamlet realizes that all men are equal in death and speculates that the dust of Alexander the Great might now be used in the clay that stops up beer barrels.

94. How does Hamlet react when he realizes that the funeral he is watching is Ophelia's?

Hamlet is shaken when he realizes that Ophelia is dead. He also interrupts the service to quarrel with Laertes over who loved Ophelia more.

95. What excuse does Hamlet give Laertes for killing Polonius?

Hamlet tells Laertes that it was his madness that killed Polonius, not him.

96. How do both Hamlet and Laertes end up struck by the poisoned sword?

Laertes wounds Hamlet with the sword, causing a scuffle in which they accidentally switch swords. Hamlet then wounds Laertes with the poisoned sword.

97. What prompts Laertes to confess his and Claudius' plot to Hamlet?

When Queen Gertrude dies, Laertes reveals Claudius' plot to Hamlet and tells him that, having each been struck with the poisoned sword, they are both about to die.

98. What does Hamlet do once Claudius' treachery has been exposed?

Hamlet kills Claudius, running him through with the poisoned sword and then forcing him to drink the remaining poisoned wine.

99. What does Fortinbras do when he arrives and sees the bloody scene?

Fortinbras mentions his claim to the throne (which Hamlet supported) and orders that Hamlet's body be carried out like a soldier's.

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