

***Hamlet***  
Act III Scene ii

**Shakespeare's Manual for Actors? AKA Hamlet – the Authority on Acting**

1. What positive and negative rules for acting does Hamlet set forth?
2. Why might Hamlet's rules be considered ironic? (based on what happened last scene)

**Friendship**

1. What do you learn about Horatio as a person?
2. How does Hamlet regard him?
3. What does Hamlet ask him to do during the play?
4. Discuss how Horatio's and Hamlet's personalities are alike or unlike. For example, Horatio is not "passion's slave (trapped by his emotions) – but is Hamlet? Then discuss how you choose your friends. Is it because they have personalities and characteristics similar to yours or different from your own?
5. What quality is it that Hamlet seems to admire most in Horatio and why?

**The Grand Entrance & The Grand Show**

1. How does Hamlet play on words in his remarks to the King? What does his play on words mean?
2. Why does Hamlet refuse to sit by the Queen and choose to lie at Ophelia's feet?
3. How many parallels can you name between the "Mouse Trap" and Claudius's crime?
4. Why is there no royal reaction to the sequence where the "poisoner woos the Queen"? Is Hamlet testing Gertrude as well as Claudius?
5. Gertrude's judgment on the player queen has become a famous saying ("the lady doth protest too much methinks" : she is over the top (too rash) with her promises to everlasting love). Do you think that Gertrude recognizes herself in the play? What might that show about her?
6. Earlier Hamlet asked the player to "study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines" that he would write and insert in the play. What possible evidence of Hamlet's lines is there in the mousetrap scene?
7. Does the "mousetrap" scene prove that the Ghost is honest?
8. While berating Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet admits that he "lacks" something. What does he say he lacks and what does this show about Hamlet and his own personal future?

***Hamlet***  
Act III Scene iii

**“I Like Him Not....”**

Fearing Hamlet’s growing threat, Claudius instructs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to take Hamlet to England. Rosencrantz mouths the flattering belief that all tyrants love to her: everything and everybody depend on the kind (“That spirit”). In Tudor England, the ruling class made this the official ideology. But many Elizabethans did not believe it. Rosencrantz uses two striking images. First, the kings’ death (“cess”) would be like a whirlpool (“gulf”), draws everything into disaster. The second image is that of a huge (“massy”) wheel, the king at the center, everybody else firmly attached (“mortised and adjoined”). When the wheel breaks, every tiny part (“annexment”) suffers.

1. Briefly write how you think Claudius should react to Rosencrantz’s flattery, especially when he hears the words “the cess of majesty.” Does he recall his murder of King Hamlet? Or is he merely concerned with his own kingship now?
2. Polonius enters and says that the idea of spying on Hamlet and Gertrude was the King’s suggesting. When, in fact, Polonius himself proposed it. Do you think he is flattering the king, protecting himself, or has some other motive?

**The Conscience of the King**

Claudius hopes for divine mercy for his brother’s murder. He agonized over his dilemma. He has committed murder, yet hopes for heavenly pardon. He know that although he might escape judgment or punishment on earth, there is no escape for him in heaven, except God’s forgiveness though sincere prayer and true repentance. But he knows that pardon and forgiveness is impossible while he retains the fruits of his crime, even though evil and villainy can triumph on earth. Though he finds he is not state to pray or repent, he calls on angels to help, and kneels to pray. Notice how Claudius’s speech echoes Hamlet’s inability and indecision. Claudius want to pray, but cannot.

1. What stops him?

***Hamlet***  
Act III Scene iv

Act III Scene iv, shows the emotional intensity of the play and the reversal of the natural order in the rebut of a mother by her son.

**“How Now Mom?”**

1. What is Polonius’s brief advice to Gertrude before he hides to watch her encounter with Hamlet?
2. Why is the first line of Gertrude to her son, “thou has thy father much offended,” though it follows Polonius’s advice, the wrong thing to say?
3. Why does the queen begin to call for help?
4. When Hamlet stabs through the curtain, does he know who is behind it? What does he expect to be behind the curtain?
5. Of what does Hamlet accuse his mother? Do you think she is guilty of adultery and incest? Is she guilty of murder as well as adultery and incest?
6. Why does the Ghost intervene? Why does Gertrude not see him?
7. What appeal does Hamlet make to his mother to reform? What additional appeal does he make?
8. What does Hamlet say of his journey to England and of his school friends? How is he planning to thwart the King’s plan?
9. Now that Act II is over, decide what role you think Gertrude played in the death of the former King Hamlet. Did she help in his murder? Was she having an affair with Claudius before the King was killed? Did she even know that Claudius killed her former husband? Support your answers with specific examples from Act III

**Polonius – The 1<sup>st</sup> Death!**

1. Discuss the importance of Polonius’s death. Why does Shakespeare have Hamlet kill Polonius at this time? Does Polonius deserve his fate? Does Hamlet repent of having killed him?
2. Why is Hamlet able to kill Polonius (even though he might not realize it IS Polonius) when in the last scene he was unable to kill Claudius?