

Hamlet notes

Act II, Scene I

1. What does Polonius want Reynaldo to do? Why?

2. What does this scene with Reynaldo tell you about Polonius?

3. What does Ophelia reveal about her interview with Hamlet?

4. What does Polonius surmise from this information? Why?

5. What other possible interpretations can you think of for Hamlet's behavior (based on the play so far)?

Act II, Scene II

1. Why are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at court? How are they treated? How do they act?

2. How does Gertrude account for Hamlet's transformation? Does the King seem to agree?

3. What is the news from Norway? How does Claudius react to it?

4. How do the king and queen take Polonius's theory about Hamlet? Who wants to test it? What will the test be? What associations does the word "loose" have?

5. What theme appears early in Hamlet's "insane" chat with Polonius? In light of this, how might the timing of his entrance be important to interpreting this scene and his madness?

6. What does Hamlet seem to think of Polonius?

7. What do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern suggest might be Hamlet's problem? How do they seem to get along with Hamlet in this scene? Evidence?

8. What does Hamlet tell R & G about how he's feeling? How honest is he with them? What does this indicate?

9. Who has come to the castle? Why? How does this scene help to indicate the date of Hamlet?

10. What parallel does Hamlet see in the theatrical wars? What general issue is there here upon which he is brooding?

11. What might Hamlet's final words to R & G mean?

12. What is the significance of Hamlet referring to Polonius as Jephthah?

13. What does Hamlet's greeting and request to the players indicate about him?

14. What is the significance of the speech Hamlet chooses to hear?

15. What happens to the player as he recites it?

16. What does Hamlet tell Polonius about actors?

17. What does Hamlet ask the players to do for the next night?

18. What effect did the player's speech have on Hamlet? Why?

19. What test is Hamlet planning? Why is it necessary?

