

Hamlet questions and answers

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



1. 1

1. What happens when Francisco and Bernardo meet at the beginning of 1. 1? Where are we, and when? Why is there confusion over which one is supposed to challenge the other by asking “ Who’s there”? Why is Horatio with Bernardo and Marcellus? Who is he?

They saw something strange, we are at Denmark. He is asking “ who’s there?” It is because he’s not sure what is there by judging the shadow he saw and it is at night causing the visibility becomes very low as well.

Horatio was with Bernardo and Marcellus because they have both seen the ghost of King Hamlet, and Horatio has come to help them determine the origin of the ghost.

2. What is Horatio’s initial response to the story of the apparition? What happens when the ghost appears for the first time (1. 1. 39. 1)? Notice that Horatio addresses it as “ thou.” This is the form of address used with friends or inferiors. Shakespeare’s audience would have been much more attuned to the difference than we are.

What is the effect of Horatio’s addressing the ghost as “ thou”? When Horatio was first told about the appearance of the apparition, he was skeptical, “ Horatio says ’tis but our fantasy And will not let belief take hold of him” (1. 1. 29).

When the ghost was first sighted in the play, Bernardo remarks that the ghost looks similar to the King Hamlet, and Marcellus reasons with Horatio that he should address the ghost. This usage of the word “ thou” causes the ghost to exit. Marcellus comments that the ghost was offended, meaning

that by Horatio speaking to the ghost of the King with such lack of respect and with demands the ghost left.

3. What does Horatio first assume the appearance of the ghost means (1. 1. 70)? Why are there such intense war preparations in Denmark? (Read 1. 1. 69-107 carefully to get the international background of the play.) What does Horatio suggest by his discussion of Julius Caesar's death (1. 1. 112 - 125)? Why does he choose the example of Rome? (You may research Julius Caesar if necessary.)

Horatio initially assumes that the ghost appearance must mean that there is something wrong with the current government, " this bodes some strange eruption to our state", and that the appearance is foreshadowing some ominous event that will soon occur. There are intense war preparations in Denmark, and Bernardo and Marcellus question Horatio if he knows the reason behind such actions. Horatio responds that there are rumors that the King Hamlet, who was very prideful in manner, was challenged to battle Fortinbras of Norway and did kill the King Fortinbras. King Fortinbras forfeited his land to whoever conquered him, but King Hamlet made a deal and bargained some of the given land to the son of King Fortinbras.

The young Fortinbras is uncontrollable with his rage against King Hamlet and Denmark and has been attacking the edges of the land with a spirit of adventure , and is set on his attack to regain the lost lands. Denmark is preparing aggressively for the imminent battle against young Fortinbras of Norway. Horatio is suggesting a connection of Julius Cesar's and the fall of Rome, in that he discusses that King Hamlet's death will led to the fall of the land. Horatio chooses the example of Rome to emphasize the King Hamlet's

role in destruction. Both Cesar and King Hamlet are prideful in nature, and have had their pride challenged and their subsequent actions leading to their death. Rome is also known as a grand empire of strength but after the assassination of Julius Cesar, the Roman Republic collapsed and ended.

4. What happens when the ghost appears for the second time (1. 1. 108)? Why does it leave so abruptly? The questions Horatio asks it represent, according to the thought of the time, the reasons why a ghost could appear.

When the ghost appears again, Horatio asks the ghost to speak concerning why it had come in the first place and the reason behind such appearances. When the ghost seems to begin to leave after Horatio questions it, Bernardo and Marcellus try to stop it by throwing their partisans at the ghost. Marcellus believes that the ghost left because they had angered it when they attempted to force the ghost to speak using violence, but Horatio notes that it was the rooster crowing that stopped the ghost from speaking and then leaving.

5. What is the purpose of the two discussions of the crowing of the cock, Horatio's pagan one and Marcellus' Christian one (1. 1. 130 - 164)?

Horatio tells the others that the roosters crowing awaken a god of daylight and any ghosts who are wandering on the earth are forced to hide until night comes. On the other hand Marcellus states that daytime is similar to Christ's Resurrection, and that no evil thing can roam the Earth during the sacred and hallowed time. These two different discussions regarding the rooster crowing are symbolic of the overall confusion and determination of the ghost's purpose there. Prince Hamlet later questions if the ghost is something

of evil origins there to tempt him into committing sins, or if the ghost is merely trying to help and warn him, and is a victim of the the daylight gods' reign.

1. 2

1. What is the threat from young Fortinbras? (ll. 17-41)? How is Claudius responding to the threat? (You may also want to keep in mind that the name " Claudius" appears only in the opening stage direction for 1. 2. The name is never spoken in the play. He is simply " the King.") Throughout his speech, Claudius is telling the court of the sorrow in losing Hamlet, but in joy in the court accepting the marriage of Claudius to Queen Gertrude. Claudius refers the young Fortinbras of his ignorance in believing that Denmark would be weak after the death of King Hamlet, and though Fortinbras is demanding the lands which were lost by King Fortinbras, Claudius is ignoring those demands.

King Claudius is also telling the court about the uncle of the king of Norway, who is weak and sick and unaware of young Fortinbras' actions. King Claudius responds to the threat of war from Norway, by sending a message to the uncle of the king of Fortinbras informing him of young Fortinbras' mission and in that he is using war supplies from Norway's subjects, and to stop young Fortinbras from moving further.

2. Based on Claudius' first 63 lines in office (1. 2. 1-62), how would you rate him as a ruler? In what ways does he already differ from Old Hamlet as king? (Consider how Old Hamlet would have responded to Young Fortinbras.)

Laertes asks King Claudius if he would let him return to France with approval and permission, to which Claudius responds first by asking if Polonius, the father to Laertes, approves. Polonius states that he is reluctantly accepting of Laertes' question and Claudius formally gives him permission to return to France. So far Claudius' behavior is very different from those spoken about King Hamlet's. King Hamlet was said to have been very prideful and warlike in his actions, while Claudius is taking a more diplomatically aggressive reaction.

Claudius is avoiding physical confrontation with young Fortinbras and is instead implementing the uncle of King Fortinbras to take action to avoid war. This reaction shows the amount of research done and clear thoughts dedicated to how to react to the threat of young Fortinbras without battle that could be destructive. King Hamlet probably would've reacted pridefully by force. Young Fortinbras is basically challenging Denmark to fight, which is how King Hamlet was brought to battle in the first place.

3. What do Claudius and Gertrude want Hamlet to do that he doesn't want to do? Why won't they let him do it? How does he respond to them? How do they respond to the way he responds to them? (Research the three well-known people associated with the University of Wittenberg in Germany: Martin Luther, Doctor Faustus, and Hamlet. Can you see any connections among the three?) Claudius and Gertrude want Hamlet to stay in Elsinore instead of going back to the University in Wittenberg, and in response he said, forcibly, "i shall in all my best, obey you, madame", and only responds to his mother.

This choice in response displays the amount of anger and repressed emotions Hamlet has against Claudius, and not excluding Gertrude. Claudius responds to Hamlet's reply by pronouncing how loving and joyfully kind Hamlet is and that they should go to celebrate their marriage with a feast in celebration. Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, and created a whole new religion after he separated himself from the Catholic Church. Doctor Faustus, in the play, had discarded the Bible, in favor of books of magic, and forbidden arts. If Hamlet had gone to this University as well, it is clearly a connection to the separation from Catholicism and religion, in that Hamlet will begin to question the reason behind the ghost and the incentive of his morality, if religion is no longer needed or believed.

4. How seriously do you take Claudius' argument against Hamlet's "prolonged" mourning (1. 2. 87-109)? How long has Hamlet been mourning (1. 2. 138)? (The normal mourning period of a noble or gentle woman for a dead husband at this time [ca. 1600] was a year or more.) Claudius' argument with Hamlet regarding Hamlet's prolonged mourning seems ridiculous. Queen Gertrude has also regarded Hamlet's mourning to be too long and asks why he felt such a personal connection to the death of his father. According to the time period, the mourning period was so recent in relation to the year long usually seen, in that King Hamlet had died only months ago.

Read notes on The Wheel of Fortune. Also, consider what you have learned in ENG3U about The Great Chain of Being. Finally, consider what you have learned about archetypes of literature. Now consider #5. 5. How might the death of the King and the remarriage of the Queen to Claudius affect

Hamlet's image of the ideal mother and father archetypes? In other words, what does he come to a realization about at this stage in his journey?

It will cause him to think that the relationship between mother and father can be easily established by keeping changing of marriage, he shows that all the years of relationships between with his father and mother change and there may no true love at all from each other as well.

6. Read Hamlet's first soliloquy (1. 2. 129-59) carefully. What is it that is really bothering him about what has happened since his father's death? How would you describe the tone of his feelings detached, impassioned, rational, ironic, or what?

It seems that Hamlet is more confused than angry from his soliloquy. He has been raised in Catholicism and expects the reaction to the marriage of his uncle and mother to be as detested and disgusting throughout society, but notices how he is alone in his reaction. The double relation, uncle and father, is seen as incestuous and wrong, but he still is unable to know how to comfortably act towards the marriage. Throughout the soliloquy it is clear that Hamlet is more upset from his mother marrying his uncle, than his father's death, but uses his father death to give him reason for being so upset and betrayed. 7. Concept Consideration: New Historicism

Read the following excerpt about religious beliefs of the time from Jung's Advice to the Players: The shock of Horatio's news brings him [Hamlet], quite naturally, somewhat out of his despondency. Hope begins to rise once more that perhaps the good father is not completely lost to him. But this is hope tempered by fear and confusion from the beginning. Ghosts, for the

Elizabethans, fell into two distinct categories for Catholics and Protestants
... .

For Catholics, they were actually souls of the departed, on leave from Purgatory. Protestants, on the other hand, held more complex beliefs, thinking them spirits, usually from hell but occasionally from heaven. They were thus either devils or angels who had assumed the shape of the dead (Portfield 78). Question:

When Horatio tells Hamlet that he saw the ghost, what does Hamlet suspect the about the nature of the ghost and the reason for its appearance (1. 2. 254-57)? Which religious views does his opinion seem to favour at this point in time?

Works

Cited:

Portfield, Sally R. Jung's Advice to the Players: A Jungian Reading of Shakespeare's Problem Plays. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. 1994. Print.