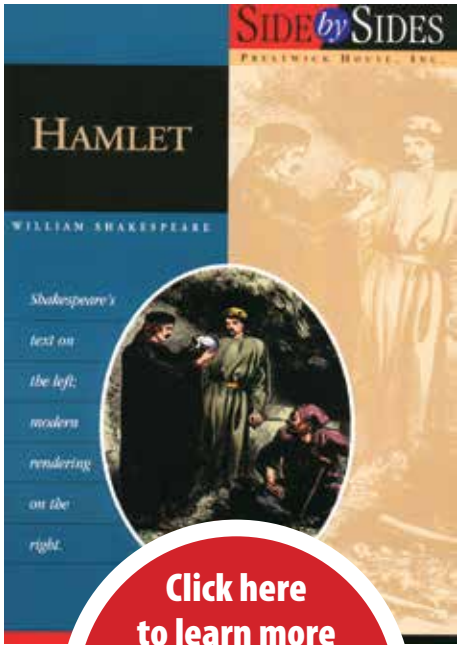




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60 MARCELLUS: It is offended.

BERNARDO: See, it stalks away!

HORATIO: Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!  
[Exit Ghost.]

MARCELLUS: 'Tis gone, and will not answer.

BERNARDO: How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale.  
65 Is not this something more than fantasy?  
What think you on't?

HORATIO: Before my God, I might not this believe  
Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes.

70 MARCELLUS: Is it not like the King?

HORATIO: As thou art to thyself.  
Such was the very armour he had on  
When he the ambitious Norway combated.  
So frown'd he once when, in an angry parle,  
75 He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.  
'Tis strange.

MARCELLUS: Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,  
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

HORATIO: In what particular thought to work I know not;  
80 But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,  
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

MARCELLUS: Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,  
Why this same strict and most observant watch  
So nightly toils the subject of the land,  
85 And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,  
And foreign mart for implements of war,

MARCELLUS: It is offended.

BERNARDO: Look, it's walking away!

HORATIO: Stay! Speak, speak! I demand that you speak!  
[Ghost exits]

MARCELLUS: It is gone and will not answer.

BERNARDO: Well, Horatio, you're trembling and look pale. Isn't this more  
than a fantasy? What do you think now?

HORATIO: By God, I would not believe this had I not seen it with my own  
eyes.

MARCELLUS: Doesn't it look like the King?

HORATIO: Just as you look like yourself. This was the armor he wore when  
he fought against the ambitious King of Norway. One time, he  
frowned exactly like that, when he defeated the Polish army cross-  
ing the icy lake on their sleds. It is strange.

MARCELLUS: Twice before, and exactly at this dark, nightly hour, has he  
walked past our watch like a soldier.

HORATIO: I am not sure what to make of this. But, based on what I know,  
I believe that this predicts disorder within our country.

MARCELLUS: Sit down now and tell me, whoever knows, why this strict  
nightly watch has been set, which troubles the subjects within the  
kingdom? Why are cannons manufactured daily and why do we  
trade with foreign markets for war machinery? Why are shipmak-  
ers forced to work every single day of the week, including Sunday?

HAMLET: For God's love let me hear!

HORATIO: Two nights together had these gentlemen  
 Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch  
 205 In the dead vast and middle of the night,  
 Been thus encountered. A figure like your father,  
 Armed at point exactly, cap-à-pie,  
 Appears before them, and with solemn march  
 Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walk'd  
 210 By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,  
 Within his truncheon's length; whilst they distill'd  
 Almost to jelly with the act of fear,  
 Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me  
 In dreadful secrecy impart they did,  
 215 And I with them the third night kept the watch;  
 Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,  
 Form of the thing, each word made true and good,  
 The apparition comes. I knew your father.  
 These hands are not more like.

220 HAMLET: But where was this?

MARCELLUS: My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.

HAMLET: Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO: My lord, I did;  
 But answer made it none. Yet once methought  
 225 It lifted up his head and did address  
 Itself to motion, like as it would speak;  
 But, even then, the morning cock crew loud,  
 And at the sound it shrunk in haste away  
 And vanish'd from our sight.

230 HAMLET: 'Tis very strange.

HORATIO: As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true;  
 And we did think it writ down in our duty  
 To let you know of it.

HAMLET: *For the love of God, let me hear!*

HORATIO: *For two nights in a row, these gentlemen, Marcellus and Bernardo, have encountered the following during their watch in the middle of the night: A figure resembling your father, armed correctly from head to toe, appeared before them and marched solemnly past them. He walked past their amazed and fear-stricken eyes three times, at staff-length, while they, numbed by fear, stood and dared not speak to him. They shared their story with me in frightful secrecy, and I joined their watch on the third night. Exactly as they had told me, the apparition appeared—at the same time and looking word-for-word as they had described it. I knew your father. My hands are as similar to one another as the apparition is to your father.*

HAMLET: *But where was this?*

MARCELLUS: *On the platform where we stood guard, my lord.*

HAMLET: *Didn't you speak to it?*

HORATIO: *I did, my lord, but it did not answer. At one point, I thought that it lifted its head and began to make a gesture, as if it were going to speak. But just at that moment, the morning cock crowed loudly, and when it heard that sound, it stole away quickly and vanished from our sight.*

HAMLET: *This is very strange.*

HORATIO: *I swear by my life, my lord, that it's true. And we considered it our duty to let you know about it.*

A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark  
 Is by a forged process of my death  
 Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth,  
 The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
 45 Now wears his crown.

HAMLET: O my prophetic soul! My uncle!

GHOST: Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
 With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts—  
 O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power  
 50 So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust  
 The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.  
 O Hamlet, what a falling off was there!  
 From me, whose love was of that dignity  
 That it went hand in hand even with the vow  
 55 I made to her in marriage, and to decline  
 Upon a wretch, whose natural gifts were poor  
 To those of mine.  
 But virtue, as it never will be moved,  
 Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,  
 60 So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,  
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed  
 And prey on garbage.  
 But soft! methinks I scent the morning air.  
 Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,  
 65 My custom always of the afternoon,  
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
 With juice of cursed hebona in a vial,  
 And in the porches of my ears did pour  
 The leperous distilment, whose effect  
 70 Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
 That, swift as quicksilver, it courses through  
 The natural gates and alleys of the body,  
 And, with a sudden vigour, it doth posset  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 75 The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine;  
 And a most instant tetter bark'd about,

*understand, noble youth, that the snake that took your father's life,  
 now wears his crown.*

HAMLET: Oh, I knew it in my heart! My uncle?

GHOST: *Yes, that incestuous, that adulterous beast, with witchcraft and  
 the skills of a traitor—oh, evil wits and skills have the power to  
 seduce!—won over my seemingly virtuous queen for the fulfillment  
 of his shameful lust. Oh, Hamlet, what a fall from grace to forget  
 me, whose love was full of dignity and had never diminished since  
 I made my marital vows—to stoop to this wretched man whose  
 qualities are poor compared to mine! But just as virtue cannot be  
 tempted—even when desire assumes an angelic form—so lust—  
 even if it appears as a radiant angel—will seek satisfaction in a  
 holy bed and devour garbage. But quiet! I think I smell the morning  
 air. Let me be brief. While sleeping in my orchard, as was my habit  
 in the afternoon, your uncle invaded my carefree hour carrying a  
 container filled with a cursed poison. He poured the diseased liq-  
 uid into my ears. The effects are so detrimental to human blood,  
 that it spreads fast as mercury through the veins and suddenly  
 and actively curdles the thin and healthy blood like drops of acid  
 into milk. This is what happened to me. Instantly, a skin disease  
 erupted, like leprosy, and covered my smooth body with a vile and  
 disgusting crust. Thus, while I was sleeping, I was, in an instant,  
 deprived of my life, my crown, and my queen by my brother, killed  
 as a sinner, without a chance to receive a holy blessing, spiritual  
 preparations, or my last rites, without reckoning, sent to my final  
 judgment with all my sins upon my head.*

## Scene 2

## Elsinore. A room in the Castle.

*Flourish. [Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and attendants.]*

KING: Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.  
 Moreover that we much did long to see you,  
 The need we have to use you did provoke  
 Our hasty sending. Something have you heard  
 5 Of Hamlet's transformation—so call it,  
 Sith nor the exterior nor the inward man  
 Resembles that it was. What it should be,  
 More than his father's death, that thus hath put him  
 So much from the understanding of himself,  
 10 I cannot dream of. I entreat you both  
 That, being of so young days brought up with him,  
 And sith so neighbour'd to his youth and haviour,  
 That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court  
 Some little time; so by your companies  
 15 To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather  
 So much as from occasion you may glean,  
 Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus  
 That open'd lies within our remedy.

QUEEN: Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you,  
 20 And sure I am two men there are not living  
 To whom he more adheres. If it will please you  
 To show us so much gentry and good will  
 As to expend your time with us awhile  
 For the supply and profit of our hope,  
 25 Your visitation shall receive such thanks  
 As fits a king's remembrance.

ROSENCRANTZ: Both your Majesties  
 Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,

## Scene 2

## A room in the castle.

[A trumpet sounds. King, Queen, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Attendants enter]

KING: *Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern! Besides the fact that we really wanted to see you, we sent for you with great haste, because we need your services. You have heard a little about Hamlet's transformation. I call it that, because he does not resemble his former self, physically or mentally. I cannot begin to imagine what it is, apart from his father's death, that has changed him so much. I am asking you both, since you have been brought up with him from a young age, and since you are so close to him in age and personality, that you agree to remain here at our court for a while, so that he will pay attention to life's pleasures again in your company and so that you can find out—as much as any opportunity may allow you—if something we do not know about torments him and whether we could solve the problem.*

QUEEN: *Good gentlemen, he has talked a lot about you, and I am sure there are no two men he is more attached to than to you. If you would be so kind to show your good will and do us the favor of spending your time here with us for a while in order to support and advance our hopes, we will reward your visit in a most royal manner.*

ROSENCRANTZ: *Both your Majesties, due to your power as sovereigns, can order us to fulfill your revered wishes instead of asking for our support.*

HAMLET: Do the boys carry it away?

ROSENCRANTZ: Ay, that they do, my lord, Hercules and his load too.

355 HAMLET: It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

*[Flourish for the Players.]*

360 GUILDENSTERN: There are the players.

HAMLET: Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come! Then appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players—which, I tell you, must show fairly outwards— should  
365 more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome. But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN: In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET: I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

*[Enter Polonius.]*

370 POLONIUS: Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAMLET: Hark you, Guildenstern, and you too—at each ear a hearer! That great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ: Happily he's the second time come to them; for they  
375 say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET: *Are the children winning?*

ROSENCRANTZ: *Yes, they are, my lord—like Hercules watching over the world.*

HAMLET: *It is not very strange. My uncle is King of Denmark, and the people who made ugly faces at him while my father was still alive, now give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred coins apiece for a small painting of his picture. By God, there is something unnatural in this—if philosophy could only reveal it.*

*[A trumpet sounds inside]*

GUILDENSTERN: *There are the players.*

HAMLET: *Gentlemen, welcome to Elsinore. Shake hands with me, come! Ceremony is part of any welcoming ritual. Let me greet you in this manner, in case the courtesy I show to the actors—which, I can tell you, will be obvious—seems more like an entertainment than yours. You are welcome! But my uncle-father and my aunt-mother are mistaken.*

GUILDENSTERN: *How, my dear lord?*

HAMLET: *I am mad only when the wind blows from the north or north-west. When the wind blows from the south, I can tell a hawk from a handsaw.*

*[Polonius enters]*

POLONIUS: *Greetings, gentlemen!*

HAMLET: *Listen, Guildenstern, and you, too—give me your ear. That big baby you see there has not yet outgrown his diapers.*

ROSENCRANTZ: *Perhaps he's wearing them for the second time. As they say, an old man is a child again.*

HAMLET: Ha, ha! Are you honest?

OPHELIA: My lord?

115 HAMLET: Are you fair?

OPHELIA: What means your lordship?

HAMLET: That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

120 OPHELIA: Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

HAMLET: Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

125 OPHELIA: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET: You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not.

OPHELIA: I was the more deceived.

130 HAMLET: Get thee to a nunnery! Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me.

135 I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do, crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

OPHELIA: At home, my lord.

HAMLET: Ha, ha! Are you chaste?

OPHELIA: My lord?

HAMLET: Are you beautiful?

OPHELIA: What does your lordship mean?

HAMLET: That if you are pure and beautiful, your chastity should allow no access to your beauty.

OPHELIA: Could beauty, my lord, have a better companion than purity?

HAMLET: Yes, truly. The power of beauty can turn purity into a harlot more easily than the power of chastity can transform beauty into purity. This used to be a riddle, but our times prove that it's true. I loved you once.

OPHELIA: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET: You should not have believed me. Virtue cannot be grafted on an old plant to make it seem delicious. I did not love you.

OPHELIA: I was very much deceived.

HAMLET: Go to a convent! Do you want to breed sinners? I myself am somewhat virtuous, yet, I could accuse myself of such atrocities that it would be better if my mother had not given birth to me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more wrongs yet to be committed than I can conceive of, than I can imagine in my mind, than I have time to carry out. Why should men like me linger between heaven and earth? We are all shameless scoundrels. Don't believe any of us! Go and become a nun! Where's your father?

OPHELIA: At home, my lord.



GUILDENSTERN: My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET: I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN: Believe me, I cannot.

335 HAMLET: I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN: I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAMLET: It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumbs, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

340 GUILDENSTERN: But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.

HAMLET: Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.

345  
350

*[Enter Polonius.]*

God bless you, sir!

POLONIUS: My lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.

HAMLET: Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

POLONIUS: By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

355 HAMLET: Methinks it is like a weasel.

GUILDENSTERN: My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET: Please do!

GUILDENSTERN: Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET: I'm begging you.

GUILDENSTERN: I don't know how to play, my lord.

HAMLET: It is as easy as lying. Cover these holes with your fingers and thumbs, breathe into it, and it will play wonderful music. Look, here are the openings.

GUILDENSTERN: I cannot make it sound harmonious. I do not have the skill.

HAMLET: Well, look, how worthless you make me seem. You want to play me; you pretend to know where my openings are; you want to rob me of all my heart's secrets; you want to play me, like this flute, from the lowest note to the highest that I carry inside of me. There's plenty of music and excellent melodies hidden inside this little instrument, yet, you cannot make it play. By God, why do you think I am easier to play than a flute? Call me whatever instrument you want to call me, but, though you can anger me, you cannot play on me.

*[Polonius enters]*

God bless you, sir!

POLONIUS: My lord, the Queen wants to speak with you immediately.

HAMLET: Do you see that cloud shaped like a camel?

POLONIUS: Indeed, it looks like a camel.

HAMLET: I think it looks like a weasel.

The death I gave him. So again, good night.  
 I must be cruel, only to be kind;  
 Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.  
 195 One word more, good lady.

QUEEN: What shall I do?

HAMLET: Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:  
 Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed;  
 Pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his mouse;  
 200 And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,  
 Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,  
 Make you to ravel all this matter out,  
 That I essentially am not in madness,  
 But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know;  
 205 For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,  
 Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib  
 Such dear concernings hide? Who would do so?  
 No, in despite of sense and secrecy,  
 Unpeg the basket on the house's top,  
 210 Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,  
 To try conclusions, in the basket creep  
 And break your own neck down.

QUEEN: Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath,  
 And breath of life, I have no life to breathe  
 215 What thou hast said to me.

HAMLET: I must to England; you know that?

QUEEN: Alack,  
 I had forgot! 'Tis so concluded on.

HAMLET: There's letters seal'd; and my two schoolfellows,  
 220 Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,  
 They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way  
 And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;  
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer

QUEEN: *What do you want me to do?*

HAMLET: *Not by any means should you do what I'm telling to you. Let the bloated king tempt you to join him in bed again, pinch lustfully at your cheek, call you his mouse; don't let him, for a few filthy kisses, or a few caresses on your neck with his damned fingers, make you explain everything: That I am not really mad, but only pretending to be. It would be good if you told him. After all, would a queen, beautiful, level-headed, and wise, hide these matters of utmost concern from a toad, a bat, a tomcat? Who would do that? Do not ignore common sense and secrecy and let everything out. If you let birds fly loose in your home, and, like an ape, play in their house, you will fall and break your neck.*

QUEEN: *Be assured, if words are made of breath, and breath made of life, that I have no life to breathe what you have said to me.*

HAMLET: *I must go to England; do you know that?*

QUEEN: *Alas, I had forgotten! It was decided.*

HAMLET: *Letters have been sealed, and my two colleagues from school, whom I trust as if they were poisonous snakes, are in command. They must lead me into a trap. Let it be. It will be fun to see the engineer blown up with his own explosives. And it would be horrible, if I did not hide myself one yard beneath their traps and blow them to the moon. Oh, it is best when two different plots*

110 The ratifiers and props of every word—  
They cry 'Choose we! Laertes shall be king!'  
Caps, hands and tongues applaud it to the clouds,  
'Laertes shall be king! Laertes king!' [A noise within.]

QUEEN: How cheerfully on the false trail they cry.  
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!

115 KING: The doors are broke.

[Enter Laertes, armed; Danes following.]

LAERTES: Where is this King? Sirs, stand you all without.

DANES: No, let's come in!

LAERTES: I pray you give me leave.

DANES: We will, we will! [Exeunt his Followers.]

120 LAERTES: I thank you. Keep the door.  
O thou vile king,  
Give me my father!

QUEEN: Calmly, good Laertes.

125 LAERTES: That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard;  
Cries cuckold to my father; brands the harlot  
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brows  
Of my true mother.

KING: What is the cause, Laertes,  
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?  
130 Let him go, Gertrude. Do not fear our person.  
There's such divinity doth hedge a king  
That treason can but peep to what it would,  
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,  
Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.  
135 Speak, man.

choose! Laertes shall be king." caps, hands, and tongues cheer  
toward heaven, "Laertes shall be king! Laertes, king!"

QUEEN: Like a pack of dogs, they gleefully follow this false trail. This is wrong,  
you traitorous Danish dogs! [A noise is heard within]

KING: The doors have been broken down.

[Laertes enters, armed; other Danes follow]

LAERTES: Where is this king? Gentlemen, wait outside!

DANES: No, let's go in!

LAERTES: Please, let me go alone!

DANES: We will, we will! [The Danish followers exit]

LAERTES: Thank you. Guard the door!  
Oh, you evil king, give me my father!

QUEEN: Calm down, good Laertes.

LAERTES: The one drop of blood that remains calm would proclaim me a  
bastard, accuse my father of adultery, and call my chaste mother  
a harlot!

KING: What is the cause of this enormous rebellion, Laertes? Let him go,  
Gertrude, Don't fear for our safety! A king receives such divine  
protection that treason barely understand its intended actions.  
Tell me, Laertes, why are you so enraged? Let him go, Gertrude.  
Speak, man!

me on his back a thousand times. And now how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chop-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

180 HORATIO: What's that, my lord?

HAMLET: Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

HORATIO: E'en so.

HAMLET: And smelt so? Pah! *[Puts down the skull.]*

185 HORATIO: E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET: To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

HORATIO: 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

190 HAMLET: No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer barrel?  
195 Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.  
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw!  
But soft! but soft awhile! Here comes the King,  
200 The Queen, the courtiers.

*He carried me on his back a thousand times. And now, how awful it is to remember it! My stomach turns over at the thought. I often kissed those lips that used to hang here. Where are your jokes now, your games, your songs, your brilliant humor that caused everyone at the table to laugh loudly? Not one left now to mock your own grinning! You have lost your jaw. Now go to my lady's chamber, and tell her that, even if she puts on make-up an inch thick, she will still end up looking like this. Make her laugh at that. Please, Horatio, tell me one thing.*

HORATIO: What's that, my lord?

HAMLET: *Do you think Alexander looked like this in the ground?*

HORATIO: *Exactly like that.*

HAMLET: *And smelled like that? Pugh! [Putting down the skull]*

HORATIO: *Just like that, my lord.*

HAMLET: *To what primitive uses we return, Horatio! Isn't it possible to imagine that the noble dust of Alexander will end up plugging the hole in a beer barrel?*

HORATIO: *You are thinking about this too intensely!*

HAMLET: *No, indeed, not a bit. You can trace his steps, keeping in mind what is possible and likely: Alexander died; Alexander was buried; Alexander returned into dust. The dust is earth; out of earth, we make mud; and why could the mud he was turned into not end up plugging the hole in a beer barrel? Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay, might fill a hole to keep the wind away. Oh, that this earthly matter, which impressed the entire world, could now possibly patch up a wall to stop the wind in winter from entering! But quiet! Here comes the King, the Queen, the courtiers.*

## STUDY GUIDE

### Act I, Scene I

1. What background information is provided in this scene? Include an explanation of the quarrel with Norway.
2. What atmosphere is created by this scene? How?
3. Why has Horatio been asked to join the soldiers on the mid-night watch? What has he decided to do?
4. How does the reader know this ghost is not a hallucination?
5. How could this ghost be explained as a warning of coming evil?
6. Describe each of the following characters and explain their relationship to one another:

Old Hamlet -

Horatio -

Fortinbras -

### Act I, Scene II

1. Why is Hamlet upset?
2. What is your opinion of the marriage of Gertrude and Claudius? Consider the customs of the time.
3. Why didn't Hamlet become king when his father died?
4. Describe Claudius' personality and attitude.
5. How does Hamlet describe his father?
6. What are Hamlet's feelings about his mother and his new father, Claudius? Consider the quotation, "frailty, thy name is woman!"

7. Explain Hamlet's state of mind. Consider the following quote: "O that this too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into a dew."
8. What does the king want Hamlet to do? Why does Hamlet give up his plan to return to Wittenburg so easily?

### Act I, Scene III

1. Describe the personalities, attitudes, and values of Laertes and Polonius.
2. Explain the reasons that Laertes and Polonius give Ophelia to convince her not to trust Hamlet's love.
3. Evaluate Polonius' advice to his son.
4. What is comical about Polonius?

### Act I, Scene IV

1. What are the points of Hamlet's long speech?
2. Why do Hamlet's friends fear for his safety?

### Act I, Scene V

1. According to the ghost, what has happened? What does the ghost want Hamlet to do?
2. Describe Hamlet's reaction to the ghost.
3. Discuss the nature of the ghost; is it a devil or an angel in the form of King Hamlet, who is in purgatory?
4. In your opinion, is Hamlet mad?