

DISCUSSION GROUPS: HAMLET

12B Module 2

As you read, be sure to write down questions as they come to you. One of these questions will become your level 3 question for each discussion session.

Each session, one person will be assigned to the following roles. The roles will rotate each session.

- **LEADER:** this person is responsible for moving the conversation from question to question once the conversation has lulled.
- **PROCTOR:** this person is responsible for making sure everyone participates. If someone is not pulling their weight, the proctor will encourage that person to speak by asking direct questions
- **SCRIBE:** this person is responsible for taking notes digitally as others speak. They will both record responses (in short) as well as who made them. This will be turned in to your LF after every discussion session.
- **TIME KEEPER:** this person is responsible for making sure that no part of the discussion period goes to long. Most importantly, the time keeper will let the rest of the group know when 5 minutes are left, so the group can move to reflection.

Each discussion session will last 45 minutes. The last 5 minutes should be saved for self-reflection.

1. **For the first 10 minutes**, your group will review the scenes and make sure everyone understands the events of the scene, in particular the larger monologues.
2. Every member of your book club will write down one level-3 (a harder analysis) question to ask the group. You do NOT need to have an answer (or even know the answer). It may be something you are confused or curious about. **You will turn in this question. So save it!**
3. As a group, you will share your questions and respond/discuss. One person will lead discussions, one will help make sure everyone participates, and one will record answers. Everyone talks.
 - a. This discussion of your level 3 questions should take approximately 10 minutes.
4. After you discuss your chosen questions, your leader will present ALL OF THE pre-made discussion questions from those prepared for the session.
 - a. This discussion of ALL THE PRE-MADE discussion questions should take approximately 20 minutes. You do not have to answer all of the questions.
5. The time-keeper will let the group know when there is 5 minutes remaining. At this point, the group will silently and INDIVIDUALLY write a reflection on how conversation enhanced their comprehension of the text. The reflection should be a minimum of 5 sentences. At the bottom of your reflection, record what the level 3 question you contributed was.

WHEN ON THE WEBSITE:

Occasionally, your LF may ask you to have your discussion online instead. To do so, you will visit your book's page on lhsenglish.com → 12B module 2 → your book's blog page

Listed on the site will be discussion questions for the section that you are responding to.

- Each learner in the group will be required to respond to a specific discussion question
 - Minimum for initial response = 150 words
- Each learner in the group will be required to respond to another learner's response, in-depth, of their choice
 - Minimum for response to a response = 100 words
 - The point of the response to a response is to:
 - Elaborate and provide further evidence
 - Question / challenge / ask for clarification
 - Thoughtfully respond
 - Expand previous responses to new understandings

Your discussion sessions will occur after you finish reading each section, as outlined below:

SECTION	PAGES (CHAPTERS)	FIRST LINE	LAST LINE
Section 1	Act I, Scenes 1-5; p. 1 - 68	"Who's there?"	"let's go together"
Section 2	Act II, Scenes 1-2; p. 69 – 118	"Give him this money"	"conscience of the King"
Section 3	Act III, Scenes 1-4; p. 119 – 186	"And can you"	"Good night, mother."
Section 4	Act IV, Scenes 1-7; p. 187 – 238	"There's matter in these sighs"	"Therefore, let's follow."
Section 5	Act V, Scenes 1-2; p. 239 - 291	"Is she to be buried"	"Go, bid the soldiers shoot."

SECTION ONE QUESTION OPTIONS

Act I

You can use these to start the discussion, or you can ask your own questions or comment on other features of the play.

1. What is "rotten in the state of Denmark," as Marcellus tells us? What do we learn about the situation in Scene I? In Scene II?
2. In what ways is Scene II a contrast to Scene I? What do we learn about Gertrude, Claudius, and Hamlet in this scene?
3. What is the function of the Polonius-Ophelia-Laertes family in this play? What parallels exist between their situation and that of the ruling family?
4. What does Hamlet learn from the Ghost's speech?

SECTION TWO QUESTION OPTIONS

Act II

1. Why does this act open with Polonius and Reynaldo? What does this tell us about Polonius's character, and what theme or motif does it introduce in the play?
2. How does the interaction between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern help to explain what's wrong with Hamlet? Why are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Denmark?
3. The First Player's speech is often cut in performances of the play. Explain why it is important and why it should not be cut.
4. Hamlet's "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" is the first of his soliloquies. What is he saying, and how does this set of words help to move him to action?
5. What does he decide to do at the end of this speech?

SECTION THREE QUESTION OPTIONS

Act III

1. What is the subject of Hamlet's second soliloquy, the famous "To be or not to be" speech?
2. Why is he so cruel to Ophelia immediately thereafter?
3. What happens in the "play-within-a-play"? How do the speeches and actions reflect on events in the kingdom of Denmark? How does the king respond?
4. In what way is Hamlet's second major interaction with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (III.ii.375-415) different from his first encounter with them?
5. Why does Hamlet decline to take action against Claudius in III.iii?
6. What happens in III.iv (the closet scene)? Why is this death so important for the play, or what does the death of this figure represent?
7. Based on what you've seen in III.iv, do you think Gertrude knew about the murder?

SECTION FOUR QUESTION OPTIONS

Act IV

1. Is Hamlet really mad in this play, or is merely pretending to be mad? (Find lines that support your answer.)
2. A foil is a character who is like the protagonist in some respects but who has contrasting qualities that "reflect" or illuminate the traits of the main character. Who are Hamlet's foils, and in what ways do their characters shed light on his?
3. Do Hamlet and Fortinbras meet in IV.iv? Why is this significant?
4. Why is Ophelia mad? Does anything she say make sense? What happens to her at the end of Act IV? What does her madness and death symbolize about the kingdom?
5. Look at the scene with Laertes and Claudius (IV.vii). What plans do they have for Hamlet? How does this scene establish Laertes as a foil for Hamlet?
6. Why is Hamlet less present in this act than in the previous three?

SECTION FIVE QUESTION OPTIONS

Act V

1. Why does this scene begin with two clowns trading jokes? Do their jokes make any sense in the context of the play?
2. Where do Hamlet and Laertes fight in V.ii?
3. Who is Osric, and why is he included in the play?
4. Does Hamlet realize that he might not come out of this fight alive? See V.ii.225-238.
5. What is the outcome of the fight scene at the end?
6. When Gertrude drinks from the cup, Claudius asks her not to drink and she refuses. Has she ever disobeyed Claudius before?
7. Who is alive at the end of the play, and how do the others meet their ends?
8. Why is Fortinbras's presence important?