

Hamlet—ACT 2

2.1

1. What is Polonius telling Reynaldo to do? What does this tell up about Polonius and his way of thinking and acting?
2. Why is Ophelia so upset when she enters at 2.1.77? What has happened to her? Does Hamlet's appearance (in her telling) as a madman (a distracted lover) come as a surprise after what we last heard him say? Why would he appear in this sort of madness to her? Is there any possibility he really *is* a distracted lover responding to Ophelia's apparent rejection of him? How well has she obeyed her father's orders in 1.3?
3. What is Polonius' response to what Ophelia tells him? Where are they going?

2.2

1. Why have Rosencrantz and Guildenstern come to court? What is their relation to Hamlet? What use does Claudius have for them? Compare with Polonius' use for Reynaldo? Are there any significant differences?
2. What results have come from Cornelius' and Voltemand's trip to Norway? Has Claudius' use of diplomacy rather than war been justified? What will Fortinbras be doing next? Can we expect to see him in Denmark after all? Why?
3. How effective is Polonius as a bearer of news? How convinced are Claudius and Gertrude that Polonius has found the answer? How do they plan to test this answer? Does Polonius' plan sound like his normal way of operating (2.2.162-67)?
4. How does Hamlet behave initially with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern (through 2.2.216-73)? Is it different from the way he just acted with Polonius? How does Hamlet change when he realizes that the two were sent for by Claudius and Gertrude?
5. What is the significance of Hamlet's referring to Polonius as Jephthah (2.2.368). Jephthah's story is interesting in this context see Judges 11:30-40.
6. What play does Hamlet want the players to play? What does he want to do to the play?
7. Read Hamlet's third soliloquy carefully (2.2.503-560). How does he use the player's response to show how different his own position is? Is the comparison justified by what we have seen happen in the play? He complains that he hasn't acted on his vengeance. Why hasn't he? Why does he need the play? What will he learn from it?