

ACT 5

5.1

1. What are the two clowns doing while they talk? Who is the "she" of 5.1.1? Why, according to the second clown, is she really being given a Christian burial?
2. What happens in the discussion between Hamlet and the Gravedigger? What does Hamlet learn from his confrontation with Yorick's skull? How does the mood here differ from that in 4.3.17-38?
3. How old is Hamlet?
4. What do we learn from Gertrude's farewell to Ophelia (5.1.227-30)? Would Polonius have been surprised if he had heard this?
5. What happens when Hamlet appears to the others? Why is he so angry?

5.2

1. What new sort of attitude to life do you see in the Hamlet of the first 81 lines of 5.2?
2. What would have happened to him in England? How did he find out? What did he do about it? What has happened to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? Do they know what hit them? How does Hamlet feel about them?
3. What sort of person is Osric? What message does he have for Hamlet? What seems to be the problem with his hat? What is the wager (5.2.122-25)? (No one has been able to explain this speech in a way convincing to everyone.)
4. What is Hamlet's reaction to the idea of the match (5.2.148-61)? How well does Hamlet expect to do? Why does he go ahead with it? How does this reflect the new attitude we saw in Hamlet in 5.1?
5. Hamlet clearly apologizes to Laertes (5.2.163-81). How does Laertes respond? Given what we know about the plans of Laertes and Claudius, how do you take Laertes' promise (5.2.187-89)? Can we say he has any honor at all? Has he followed his father's precept in 1.3.78-80?
6. What is Laertes doing at line 202?
7. What is the "union" Claudius promises to put in the cup at line 210 and perhaps does not put into the cup until after line 225? What problem is created by Hamlet's response in line 227? What happens at line 232?
8. Look carefully at lines 245-55, noting who wounds whom and with what sword, and what happens to Gertrude.
9. Why is Hamlet so concerned that Horatio stay alive to tell his story? How much do the other people at court know at this point?
10. Do you believe Horatio in his assumption that Hamlet is saved and not damned? Why or why not?
11. Does the Hamlet Fortinbras describes (5.2.339-44) sound like the Hamlet we have known? What will happen to the kingdom under Fortinbras?