

Hamlet: Act 2

Scene 1:

1. At the opening of this scene, to where is Polonius sending Reynaldo? Why does Polonius send him on this journey?
2. By what trick is Reynaldo supposed to get information about Laertes? What does this reveal about Polonius's character?
3. How does Ophelia describe Hamlet's appearance to her?
4. What is Polonius's conclusion about Hamlet?

Scene 2:

5. At the beginning of scene 2, for whom has Claudius sent? Why has he sent for them?
6. What news do Voltimand and Cornelius bring back from Norway?
7. In lines 76-80, what request does Norway make of Claudius?
8. What is humorously ironic about Polonius saying, "Brevity is the soul of wit"?
9. In lines 158-165, what plan is formed to test Polonius's hypothesis that Hamlet is mad from rejected love?
10. Hamlet calls Polonius a "fishmonger". Why?
11. In lines 210-215, what does Polonius say about the contrast between madness and sanity?

12. Why does Hamlet tell Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that "Denmark's a prison"?
13. In lines 303-320, what reason does Hamlet give to his friends for his current condition?
14. According to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, why are the players traveling?
15. Hamlet realizes that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern cannot be trusted. What does he let them know in lines 389-390?
16. Why does Hamlet call Polonius "Jephthah" in line 422?
17. In lines 462-530, Hamlet and the First Player recite lines from a play. This play tells how Pyrrhus slays the Trojan king Priam to avenge his father's murder. How is Hamlet like Pyrrhus? How is he unlike Pyrrhus?
18. In lines 550-556, what two questions does Hamlet ask the First Player?
19. What causes Hamlet to exclaim, "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"?
20. In the passage beginning with line 611, what plan does Hamlet devise?
21. In lines 615-620, why does Hamlet feel he must have evidence of Claudius's guilt?
22. In thinking about Act 2, list examples of one or more characters spying on another character.
23. Make a list of character traits Hamlet possesses, as seen in Acts 1 & 2.