***Hamlet* Act 2 study guide and questions:**

**Act 2, Scenes, here in rough order—**

In the text of *Hamlet*, find and read aloud the passages which answer the following questions and prompts. Annotate the important passages in your text. Write the Act, Scene and Line numbers in your notes, or on this page. Use this format: (*Hamlet* 1.1.1) the first time, then (1.2.2) thereafter. Be Sable to recount the importance of events, the metaphors and devices used to relate them, and the order of events so they stick in your mind. **Since I have used different texts, the LINE NUMBERS ARE APPROXIMATE—READ BEFORE AND AFTER TO CAPTURE ENOUGH TEXT TO PROVIDE CONTEXT AND TO MAKE SURE YOU SEE WHAT I AM TRYING TO DRAW YOUR ATTENTION TO.**

**Act 2, scene1**

1. Make sure you understand the content, purpose and devices used in the conversation between Polonius and Reynaldo. (2.1.1)
2. What does it mean to put forgeries on Laertes”? (*Hamlet* 2.1.20)
3. Know examples of these “forgeries.” Maybe know all the types of things one may say to impugn another’s reputation—what might a young man be up to while in Paris?
4. What is Polonius’s purpose in having Reynaldo malign his son—what does Polonius hope to gain?
5. Ophelia makes a report to Polonius. Understand it. Know many of the details she uses pertaining to Hamlet. (2.1.84)
6. Also, consider reviewing what Hamlet has done for Ophelia previously—what did she tell her father and brother were signs of Hamlet’s love (Act One). Compare and consider the various things Hamlet has done, and how he is changing.
7. What does Polonius conclude from Ophelia’s report and why might he conclude this?
8. Polonius makes a rather enlightened observation about the difference between the young and old. Make sure you understand it.
9. What does he do with the information Ophelia brings him regarding Hamlet?
10. How does the King react to hearing this report? What evidence suggests whether or not he believes Polonius’s interpretation of the evidence?

**Act 2, scene2**

1. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern arrive. Why have the King and Queen summoned them? Make sure you understand the content, purpose and devices used in their introduction and conversation. (2.2.1)
2. Observe the **tone** of this interaction between the King and Queen, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
3. What do the King and Queen wish of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, how do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern respond, and why do they respond that way—there is a hint of more than they are being motivated by fear or loyalty to the King, though that is a big part of it.
4. It may not be clear until later, but Gertrude either misreads or misrepresents the relationship between Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and Hamlet. Find text to support this (in more than one place).
5. What is Voltemand’s news from Norway? (2.2.64) Understand it in detail. Know the details (know the parts) of Voltimand’s report from “Brother Norway.” This is our third mention of Fortinbras. (2.2.59)
6. What was Fortinbras actually doing “in the skirts of Norway” and what is he doing now (by the time Voltemand reports to Claudius)?
7. How do things turn out for Fortinbras (at this point)—is there any benefit to Fortinbras, what is it, if so, any detriment, what, if so?
8. How does Poland figure in this report, and what is Denmark’s interest, if any, or what is required of Denmark?
9. Polonius brings to the King and Queen a theory of why Hamlet is going mad. In addition to understanding the news, how is Polonius and the King portrayed in this scene? Details. What is going on in the King’s mind? Evidence? (2.2.93)
10. A much quoted line from *Hamlet* is “Brevity is the soul of wit…” Note the whole phrase, and understand why it is funny the way it is used here by Polonius. (2.2.85) The Queen’s response is also much quoted: “More matter, with less art.” This exchange works in many ways. Polonius discusses Hamlet, we get insight into Polonius and his motivations and abilities, we gain insight into Ophelia, and especially, we gain insight into Claudius and Gertrude.
11. What does Polonius say about how he has raised his daughter (what kind of a man he is)?
12. In another example of a character speaking without a stage direction so we know what his gesture might be, Polonius makes the reference that the King can take “this from this.” Is he talking about his head? What does he mean? Why does he say this? How do we know what is intended and what gesture would go with this statement? (2.2.155)
13. Polonius and the King have a plan by the end of their meeting; what is it? Who’s involved in the plan, etc.?
14. **Hamlet’s speech: “What a piece of work is man.”** This is the more common name given to this speech, which I also sometimes refer to as the “I have of late, wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth” speech. (2.2.316) This is one of the speeches you should know well, be able to translate, keeping the poetry and rhythm and “weight.”
15. There are parts to this speech: An interaction between Hamlet, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; Hamlet’s reflection of the human experience; and a parallel allusion to Shakespeare’s theater. (I see this as three parts—be aware of them, know them, consider comments made in class by Mr. Bah.)
16. Compare Hamlet’s interactions with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, with earlier interactions he has had with Horatio.
17. Consider this speech in the context of other speeches in which Hamlet expresses disappointment in humankind and life. Know the parts/qualities of humans (Man), and try to identify Hamlet’s disappointment, though, in this one, his final word is short, and maybe less examined than in other speeches (he seems lost in thought, then maybe interrupted).
18. The introduction of the players is quite wordy. I am not likely to ask much about this (maybe one question) but do note that there is quite a bit of commentary on drama, the audiences, the types of plays being desired and done (no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question). It is interesting that “players (actors)” arrive in Elsinore right after Hamlet breaks the “fourth wall” with is audience. We will soon have a play within a play, in which actors playing actors with perform an abbreviated version of *Hamlet.*
19. Thematically important is the First Player’s speech introduced by Hamlet. (2.2.470) Why does he recite this passage? What is it about, and how does it parallel a theme or idea already established, or a theme or idea with which we suspect Hamlet to be obsessed? How does this speech by the player advance the play or its themes?
20. Another moment of wisdom, this time brought to you by Hamlet: When the introduction of the players is over and the First Player has given his speech, Hamlet directs Polonius to treat the players well (probably give them comfortable lodging, good food and see to their needs). Understand this interaction between Hamlet and Polonius. What is Hamlet’s warning about the revenge of actors, and more importantly, what might be considered wise life advice?
21. Also at the end of this moment (2.2.560) Hamlet seems to have a plan, what might it be—the details will come later, but this is the beginning of it. (In this, and in the following Act, make sure you can find specific lines to explain Hamlet’s plan to use the play within the play to further his aims.)
22. **Hamlet’s speech: “Oh what a rogue and peasant’s slave am I.”** This is in response to the First Player’s speech. What is Hamlet saying and how is he saying it? What prompts Hamlet to give this speech (have this reflection). What are his inspirations, concerns, and feelings. What are the rhetorical devices he uses, and what insight do they add? Understand the relationship between this speech of Hamlet’s and the recital given by the First Player. This might be the best speck of the play, and you should know it well, and be able to translate it, keeping the poetry, rhythm and “weight.” (2.2.577)

***Hamlet* Act 3 study guide and questions:**

**Act 3, Scenes, here in rough order—**

**Act 3, Scene 1**

1. Understand the plan to use Ophelia to “sound” Hamlet. (most of the scene)
2. Who says, and what does it mean, “Ophelia, I do wish / That your good beauties be the happy cause / Of Hamlet’s wildness. So shall I hope your virtues… (finish the line—understand it.)
3. Polonius’s and the King’s remarks (2.1.52-62). Huh? “Devil” what? “Lash” to the king’s conscience?
4. **Hamlet’s** **speech: “To Be Our Not To Be.”** This is one of the speeches you should know well, be able to translate, keeping the poetry and rhythm and “weight.” (3.1.64) What afflicts Hamlet (list!)—what makes his life difficult (poor prince)? What does he mean when he says, “the native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o’er (over) with the pale cast of thought…”? This idea speaks to another theme of the play.
5. What happens between Ophelia and Hamlet? Details please. (3.1.99-204) and especially, the “Get thee to a nunnery” passage (3.1.131) and Ophelia’s “O’ what a noble mind is here o’erthrown!” passage (3.1.163)
6. And of course, what is Polonius’s and the King’s response to what is happening?
7. What is Polonius’s final plan (suggested at the end of scene 1) for additional spying on Hamlet? Also there is some talk about confining Hamlet or sending him away. And the King says, “Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.” Think about it.

**Act 3, Scene 2**

1. Make sure you continue to find specific lines to explain Hamlet’s plan to use the play within the play to further his aims.
2. Follow his commentary and description of the play as it is being performed, especially 3.2 lines 261-268.
3. Also make sure you can find specific lines to explain Hamlet’s treatment of Ophelia.

**Act 3, Scene 3**

1. **“O’ my offense is rank, it smells to heaven.” King Claudius’s speech** while he attempts to pray and **Hamlet’s response**. (3.3.40-105) This is one of the few, if more than one, of the speeches you should know well that will not be one of Hamlet’s speeches. But, again, be able to translate it, keeping the poetry and rhythm and “weight,” of it, as well as Hamlet’s response.

**Act 3, Scene 4**

1. What is the gist of the conversation between Hamlet and his mother in the Queen’s bedchamber? What does Hamlet want the Queen to do—two or three things?
2. Especially pay attention to what Hamlet tells his mother (content, poetry, device, analogy, etc.) in lines 63 through 117, and 160-218.
3. The ghost appears again in 3.4. Why? What does he want?
4. Make sure you understand the plot development at the end of Act 3. What is the plan, whose is it, and where in the play did it begin? Understand the details.
5. What happens to Polonius? How and why?