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| Hamlet Portfolio |
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| English II |

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Act I

# Focus Activity

What kinds of events in a person’s life can cause overwhelming feelings of grief?

# Sharing Experiences

With your group, discuss different life situations that may be traumatic, such as the death of a loved one. Write brief description describing some of the characteristics of people who are grieving. Try to give reasons for their attitudes or actions.

# Personal Response

After reading this act, what questions would you like to ask Hamlet and what do you think his answers might be to your questions?

# Analyzing Literature – Recall and Interpret

Describe the mood that Shakespeare creates in the opening scene of Hamlet, when the ghost first appears. What specific words and actions create this mood?

Who is Polonius? What is his relationship to Claudius and Hamlet? Explain his feelings about Ophelia’s relationship with Hamlet and the reasons behind those feelings.

Based on Hamlet’s comments in act I, what would you say are his feelings toward his mother’s marriage? Cite specific lines to support your answer. Why do you think Hamlet keeps these feelings to himself?

# Analyzing Literature – Evaluate and Connect

Do the events of act I suggest to you that the ghost of Hamlet’s father is real or just a product of Hamlet’s imagination? Explain.

Based on Hamlet’s relationships with his mother, Claudius, and Horatio, do you think he will be successful in carrying out the wishes of his father’s spirit? Why or why not?

# Literature and Writing – Character Analysis

Does Hamlet appear to be someone who is grieving or someone who is insane? Looking back at your Focus Activity response, write a brief analysis of Hamlet’s character in act I. Include quotations from the play to support your analysis.

# Literature Groups

Recall a time when you experienced something unexpected that startled or frightened you. How did you feel? Discuss your reaction in your group. Then talk about how Shakespeare stages the ghost scene in Hamlet and answer the questions. What stage directions indicate the presence of a ghost? How do the characters react when they see it? How does Shakespeare try to blur the line between reality and the supernatural?

# Performance

Reflecting on the parts of Hamlet and his father in the ghost scene in act I, please respond to the following: What emotions do you think Hamlet feels in this scene? How should the ghost look and sound?

Act II

# Focus Activity

How would you feel if a friend betrayed you? What if the friend acted out of concern for your well-being?

# Reflect and Share

Describe on paper an occasion when you thought a friend was not totally honest with you. How did it make you feel? Was your friend’s behavior justified?

# Personal Response

If Hamlet were your friend, what advice would you give him about his relationship with Ophelia?

Using your response to the Focus Activity for act II, evaluate Hamlet’s friends and associates. Does Hamlet seem to be surrounded by people he can trust?

# Analyzing Literature – Recall and Interpret

Describe Hamlet’s behavior when he visits Ophelia in scene 1. Do you think his actions provide evidence of his insanity or are his actions motivated by something else? Explain.

Who are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? Why have they been invited to the castle? What motives do they have for carrying out the king’s request?

Why is Hamlet bothered by the fact that one of the actors is able to read about the death of King Priam with such passion? How does Hamlet think he is different from the actor?

# Analyzing Literature – Evaluate and Connect

Do you think Hamlet’s hesitation in approaching his task of revenge is a sign of cowardice, or is his thoughtfulness admirable and understandable? Explain your answer.

The level of suspense escalates in act 2. How does Shakespeare accomplish this?

# Literature and Writing – Analyzing Tone

The tone of a work of literature reflects a writer’s attitude toward his or her subject. How does the tone of act II compare to the tone of act I? Write at least two paragraphs to compare the tones. Use specific examples to support your ideas.

# Literature Groups

In scene 2, Hamlet says to Polonius, “You are a fishmonger.” Hamlet continues to ridicule Polonius, but much of what he says is hidden in double meanings or attributed to his “madness.” With your group, search for details in the dialogue that have double meanings. Then rewrite this dialogue in your own words, making Hamlet’s meaning clear.

# Sketch It

On a separate sheet of paper, make a drawing illustrating Hamlet’s visit to Ophelia. Convey the characters’ feelings in their facial expressions and body posture. Insert the sketch behind this page prior to submitting your final Portfolio.

Act III

# Focus Activity

Have you ever felt uncertain about how to act or what action to take in response to a situation? What caused your feelings of uncertainty?

# Discuss and Describe

In a small group, discuss different situations in which you or someone you know had difficulty choosing a particular course of action. Describe what the circumstances were and why it was hard to make the decision.

# Personal Response

Were you surprised when Hamlet decided not to kill Claudius while he was praying? Explain.

# Analyzing Literature – Recall and Interpret

Do Claudius and Polonius have the same reason for spying on Hamlet and Ophelia? How are their goals similar? How are they different?

What do Hamlet and his mother discuss in her private chamber? What mixed feelings does Gertrude experience as she listens to her son?

Why, do you think, is Hamlet able to kill Polonius so easily, after he has been so hesitant to act in other situations? What does this reveal about Hamlet’s state of mind?

# Analyzing Literature – Evaluate and Connect

In act 3 King Claudius reveals his guilt and shows that he has a conscience. Do you feel differently about Claudius after hearing him express remorse? Why or why not?

What events in act 3 might be considered turning points?

# Relaying a Message

Hamlet uses a play to reenact circumstances surrounding his father’s death and to reveal Claudius’s guilt. Think of someone to whom you would like to convey a message. Select a movie or television show that you think would convey your message. In two or three paragraphs, describe your message, the movie or television show you would select, and the reasons for your choice.

# Literature Groups

What do you think of Hamlet’s treatment of Ophelia? How did you respond to his command, “Get thee to a nunnery”? Imagine that you are Ophelia’s best friend and that you overheard her conversation with Hamlet. Advise her on how she should respond to Hamlet in the future.

# Music Connection

In a small group, work together to design a soundtrack for act III. Discuss what songs you might play for different scenes, such as Hamlet’s encounter with Ophelia or his dialogue with his mother. Focus on conveying the mood of the scene. Explain your selections.

Act IV

# Focus Activity

Think about the word conflict and what it means. What is a conflict that you or someone you know has experienced?

# Web It

Create a word web for the word conflict. In circles attached to the word, list feelings or emotions that may be associated with conflict.

# Personal Response

What images from this act linger in your mind? Explain why these images made an impression on you.

# Analyzing Literature – Recall and Interpret

Who is Fortinbras, and why is he entering Denmark? What function might Fortinbras serve in the play?

According to Hamlet, Fortinbras is an admirable man. How does the sight of Fortinbras and his troops change Hamlet’s attitude?

Laertes responds in a variety of ways to the tragic events in his family. What do these responses reveal about his character? In what ways is he both similar to and different from Hamlet?

# Analyzing Literature – Evaluate and Connect

Do you believe that Hamlet’s attitude toward his task of revenge has changed in act IV? Why or why not?

How does the theme of deceit continue in act IV?

# Literature and Writing – Hamlet’s Soliloquies

Compare Hamlet’s soliloquy at the end of act IV, scene 4, with the one in act II, scene 2. Based on the sentiments and themes in these two passages, what assessment could you provide of Hamlet’s image of himself?

# Literature Groups

Discuss what Shakespeare could have done differently in Hamlet to evoke sympathy for Claudius. Does Claudius have redeeming values that Hamlet is ignoring? Is there some sense of honor in Claudius’s actions?

# Creative Writing

For each of the emotions you listed during the Focus Activity for Act IV, identify an external or internal conflict in the play that might generate the emotion. Then write a poem about one conflict and the emotion that conflict generates.

Act V

# Focus Activity

Do you think an act of revenge is ever justified? Why or why not?

# Make a List

Revenge is a common theme in movies today. With your group, make a list of movies that feature a revenge theme. Choose three and discuss below the motives for revenge and the conclusion of each movie.

# Personal Response

Did the end of the play surprise you? If you were the playwright, how would you end the play?

# Analyzing Literature – Recall and Interpret

For whom are the gravediggers preparing a grave? Why might Hamlet have decided to throw off his disguise at the gravesite?

When Hamlet realizes who the person being buried is, how does he react? Is his reaction what you would expect based on his earlier actions? Explain.

In what way does Hamlet’s harsh treatment of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern indicate a change in his attitude?

# Analyzing Literature – Evaluate and Connect

In act I Hamlet states, “The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right.” Do you think he succeeded in setting things right? Why or why not?

Why do you think Hamlet asks Horatio to tell his story? How does Horatio’s role in Hamlet’s life differ from that of other characters in the play?

# Literature and Writing – Obituary

Write a newspaper obituary for Hamlet. Include information about his place of birth, parents, education, employment, and hobbies, and the cause of his death. Draw upon details from the play as well as from your imagination to create the obituary.

# Literature Groups

Together, go back to the list of movies you created in the Focus Activity for Act V. Compare the conclusions of those movies with the conclusion of Hamlet. How do they differ? How are they similar?

# Reflection

When you began reading this play, you listed questions you might want to ask Hamlet. What questions would you ask him now that you have read the final act?

Has your opinion of Hamlet changed? In what way?