

## Quiz: *Hamlet*, Act I – Answer Key

### 1. Why have Marcellus and Bernardo invited Horatio to join them on their watch?

*Horatio has come to see for himself if the story they told him is true. They claim that on the past two nights, at the stroke of one, a spirit has appeared in the likeness of the late King Hamlet.*

### 2. Who is Laertes, and what request does he make of the king?

*Laertes is the son of Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain and minister to the king. Laertes asks Claudius's permission to return to France. With Polonius's consent, Claudius agrees.*

### 3. How does Hamlet feel about his mother and why?

*He is disgusted by her hasty marriage to Claudius, and doesn't think she grieved long enough for his dead father. He despises Claudius, a detestable man who is no more like his admirable father than he is "to Hercules."*

### 4. Briefly describe the murder of the king, as told to Hamlet by the ghost.

*Although the "official story" was that the former king was bitten by a serpent, the ghost reveals that he was murdered by his brother, Claudius. After seducing and winning over Gertrude, Claudius poured poison in the king's ear while he slept in his orchard. The ghost complains that he was killed before he had a chance to confess his sins and be absolved.*

### 5. What are the ghost's instructions regarding the queen?

*The ghost tells Hamlet not to plot against his mother, but to "leave her to heaven" and the "thorns" of her own conscience.*

## Who said it, and what is he/she talking about?

### 6. ...Fear it, my dear sister, And keep you in the rear of your affection, Out of the shot of danger and desire.

*Laertes is giving his sister Ophelia some brotherly advice before he returns to France. He tells her to view Hamlet's advances with caution in order to stay out of danger.*

*He believes Hamlet is sincere now, but because of his social position, may not be free to choose his bride. He warns Ophelia to consider what would happen if she "lost her honor" to Hamlet and was then rejected by him.*

### 7. The serpent that did sting thy father's life Now wears his crown.

*Although it was reported that King Hamlet died after being bitten by a serpent, the ghost informs Hamlet that the current king (Claudius) is his murderer. The serpent is a Biblical symbol of evil.*

### 8. ...meet it is I set it down That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain. At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.

*Hamlet, after learning that Claudius is his father's murderer, curses him as someone who can maintain the appearance of propriety while committing evil acts.*

*Hamlet seems to be almost raving in this scene. It is a matter of discussion whether he is behaving irrationally, reacting normally to sudden grief, or already beginning to put on the "antic disposition" he announces later in the scene.*