

Hamlet: Act II Notes & Quotes

NAME: _____

Note that some of the notes/quotes end with underlined questions. Answer them in class on Tuesday!

Scene 1

- **Polonius** is the pivot point of this short scene. He has two important conversations that set thing up for future action in the play: one with **Reynaldo**, and one with **Ophelia**.
- **Polonius** arranges for **Reynaldo** to go to France and keep an eye on **Laertes**. Explain the method he tells **Reynaldo** to use:
- Important quotation from **Polonius** to **Reynaldo**: “Your bait of falsehood take this carp of truth; and thus do we of wisdom and of reach, with windlasses and assays of bias, by indirections find directions out.” What is the bait, and what is the carp?
- Next, **Polonius** talks to his daughter **Ophelia**. How does she describe **Hamlet’s** appearance and strange behavior?
- Important quotation from **Polonius** to **Ophelia** about **Hamlet**: “This is the very ecstasy of love, whose violent property fordoes itself and leads the will to desperate undertakings as oft as any passions under heaven that does afflict our natures.” As evidenced by this quote, what does Polonius think is Hamlet’s reason for acting so strangely? Do you agree, or do you think it’s something else?

Scene 2

- **Rosencrantz** and **Guiltenstern** are introduced at the beginning of the scene. Who are they, and what do the king and queen request of them?

- Remember **Cornelius** and **Voltemand** being sent to Norway on an important mission in Act 1? They're back. What news does **Voltemand** bring? How does this relate to or effect **Hamlet's** situation?
- **Polonius** reports to **Gertrude** and **Claudius** that he thinks **Hamlet** has gone crazy. He recounts Ophelia's encounter with him in the previous scene.
- The three of them devise a plot to observe **Hamlet**. What is the plan?
- **Hamlet** has some interesting conversations – one with **Polonius**, and one with **Rosencrantz & Guildenstern**. *(Oh, these are fun. We'll discuss them when I get back on Wednesday – be sure to read them closely and see if you have a sense of what's going on. Got down some notes on your impressions for now).*
- A group of traveling actors ("**players**") arrive to entertain the king and queen. **Hamlet** observes them practicing, and is very moved. What requests does he make of them?
- **Hamlet's** second soliloquy of the play begins at line 576. What frustrations does he reveal?
- Important quotation from **Hamlet**: "The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."