

Hamlet

Act 1.1 – Discussion/Study Questions

- A. Refer to your copy of *Hamlet*. Look at the full title—*The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*—as well as at the list of characters.

What information can you gather from the full title of this play?

What information about the play can you gather from the list of Characters in the Play?

- B. Listen to a masterful reading and read Act 1.1, lines 1–35 (from “Who’s there? / Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself” to “He may approve our eyes and speak to it. / Tush, tush, ’twill not appear”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Describe Barnardo and Francisco’s tone in the first 5 lines. What words demonstrate their tone?

What is Barnardo doing in lines 6–7?

Based on the masterful reading and the *Cast of Characters*, what is likely the “thing” that Horatio asks whether it has “appeared again tonight” (line 26)?

Reread lines 28–30. According to Marcellus, what does Horatio think of the Ghost?

How many times have Barnardo and Marcellus seen the Ghost?

Why is Horatio present in this scene?

- C. Listen to and read lines 36–46 (from “Sit down awhile, / And let us once again assail your ears” to “Marcellus and myself, / The bell then beating one”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

In lines 36–39, what does Barnardo suggest to Horatio?

What *mood* does Shakespeare create through Barnardo’s story? How does he accomplish this?

Listen to and read lines 47–61 (from “Peace, break thee off! Look where it comes again” to “Stay! speak! speak! I charge thee, speak!”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

How does each of the men react to the appearance of the Ghost?

What is the cumulative impact of the men’s reactions on the mood of the text?

Reread lines 54–58. Using the explanatory notes and context, paraphrase these lines. What does Horatio ask of the Ghost?

How does the Ghost react to Horatio’s speech?

In addition to Barnardo’s story and the men’s reactions to the Ghost, how does Shakespeare create a mood in this act?