

Hamlet: Suggestions for Revision

The Exam

In the exam you must answer **one** questions on *Hamlet* (and one on Milton).

The exam is **two hours** long. You must spend **one hour on each question** and no more. Do not make the mistake of spending longer on one question than the other – they are worth an equal amount of marks. Devote about 10 minutes to planning your work.

The exam is a **closed text exam** – you may not take your text in with you.

Preparing for the Exam

- Re-read the **text** and **all notes** that you have made on it.
- Re-read **all essays** that you have written and all of your teacher's comments on them.
- (Re-)read **all handouts** that you have been given and **all critical material** – essays by academics, introductory material, biographical material on the authors, performance histories (including contemporary performance conditions) etc etc.
- Add to your knowledge by researching the play on in the **library** or on the **internet**. You can use resources like **JSTOR** or simply google the play or characters in it to bring up a host of critical essays and opinions.
- Make notes on and/or **find quotations** for the following characters and themes (and any others you wish to include). For each character or theme, find two quotations from the text (AO3), two from critics (AO4) and one piece of relevant contextual material (AO5).

HAMLET

FORTINBRAS

CHRISTIANITY

CLAUDIUS

MORTALITY

FAMILY

GERTRUDE

CORRUPTION

IDENTITY

HORATIO

THEATRICALITY

REVENGE

POLONIUS

NATURE

OPHELIA

KINGSHIP

LAERTES

WOMEN

- **Practise writing timed essays without using the book – both passage-based and essay style questions.** This is one of the *best* things you can do to prepare yourself. If you are not used to and comfortable with writing in timed conditions, you *will* produce essays of an inferior quality. If you are experienced at writing timed essays, your marks *will* go up. *This can make the difference between grades.* Below are some titles, or you can come up with your own if none of them covers a topic you wish to explore.

Essay Questions

- 1.) How far and in what ways do you agree that *Hamlet* ‘is a play about playing, a play with theatre at its core’?
- 2.) *Hamlet* has been termed a revenge tragedy. How relevant and useful do you consider this classification?
- 3.) Explore the importance of language in *Hamlet*.
- 4.) How far and in what ways do you agree that ‘Fortinbras is crucial to the meaning and effects of the play *Hamlet*’?
- 5.) ‘Hamlet’s preoccupation with mortality is at the heart of his tragedy.’ How far and in what ways do you agree?
- 6.) How far and in what ways do you agree that Ophelia is central to the concerns of the play *Hamlet*?
- 7.) ‘Madness inhabits Elsinore and is central to the unfolding of events.’ How far and in what ways do you agree?
- 8.) ‘Laertes is the hero Hamlet fails to be.’ How far and in what ways do you agree?
- 9.) ‘Denmark is an unstable and fragmented political entity.’ How far and in what ways do you agree with this comment on the play *Hamlet*?
- 10.) How far and in what ways do you consider Gertrude’s role to be a central one in the play *Hamlet*?
- 11.) How far and in what ways does comedy have a role to play in *Hamlet*?
- 12.) ‘The tragedy of *Hamlet* concerns itself far more with the family than it does with the state.’ How far and in what ways do you agree?