

Hamlet Act IV Study Guide

Act IV, Scene i

1. How is this scene ambiguous regarding Gertrude's "conversion" from the previous scene?

Act IV, Scene ii

1. What is the apparent purpose of this brief scene?

Act IV, Scene iii

1. Why can't Claudius simply deal with Hamlet swiftly and harshly as allowed by law?
2. How does this scene advance Hamlet's developing awareness of death?
3. Do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern know the true purpose of their journey to England?

Act IV, Scene iv

1. What is the apparent purpose of this brief scene?

Act IV, Scene v

1. What important information does Claudius reveal?
2. What do they assume is the cause of Ophelia's apparent madness?
3. Why do you suppose Ophelia's madness takes on the form it does?
4. Describe Laertes' response to his father's death. How is he a foil for Hamlet?
5. How do the flowers Ophelia distributes relate to the characters and their actions?

Act IV, Scenes vi - vii

1. What news is revealed in Hamlet's letter to Horatio? What does this show about Hamlet?
2. What will happen to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
3. How does this episode illustrate the role of coincidence in Shakespearean tragedy?
4. Why does Claudius tell Laertes he will not kill Hamlet himself?
5. In Gertrude's description of Ophelia's drowning, what suggests that Ophelia committed suicide?
6. In Gertrude's description of Ophelia's drowning, what suggests that Ophelia's death was an accident?