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Hamlet – Act I, scene i

1. Why are there guards on the castle walls?
2. Why is Horatio with the guards? What do they expect of him?
3. What does Horatio do for the guards?
4. What are the beliefs about ghosts revealed in this scene? How is this relevant?

Hamlet – Act I, scene ii

1. What items of business does Claudius take up with the Court?
2. How does Claudius get the Court to accept and approve his taking the throne and marrying Gertrude?
3. Why is Laertes permitted to return to school in Paris, but Hamlet forbidden to return to school in Wittenberg? Is the reason Claudius gives the real reason?
4. Why do Claudius and Gertrude object to Hamlet's clothing and behavior? How does Hamlet react to their objections?
5. How does Hamlet show his respect for King Claudius?
6. What does Hamlet's first soliloquy reveal about his state of mind?
7. How does Hamlet react to the news that Horatio brings him?
8. Do you think Hamlet's behavior is reasonable, or do you agree with his mother that he needs to change it?

Hamlet – Act I, scene iii

1. Do Polonius and Laertes agree about Ophelia's relationship with Hamlet? Are their reasons the same?
2. How does Ophelia respond to Laertes' advice? ... to her father's?
3. What do you think about Polonius as a father? why?
4. What specific advice does Polonius give to Laertes? Is it sound advice? Why?
5. How does Polonius' advice about clothing relate to Hamlet's speech to his mother?

Hamlet – Act I, scene iv

1. What is going on inside the castle during this scene? Why?
2. Why don't Horatio and Marcellus want Hamlet to follow the Ghost?
3. What is the point of Hamlet's comparing the State and an individual man? What motivates this comparison?
4. How does Hamlet manage to get away from the others to follow the Ghost?

Hamlet – Act I, scene v

1. What does the Ghost say about the way he died?
2. What does the Ghost tell Hamlet about his mother and Claudius?
3. What does Hamlet plan to do about the information he gets in this conversation?
4. How does Hamlet plan to get away with his plan? Who will help him? How?

Hamlet, Act I: How much time actually passes in this act?

Which of the characters are actually what they seem to be?

Which are being intentionally deceptive? Does Gertrude understand her son?

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Hamlet, Act II, scene i

1. What does Polonius expect his servant Reynaldo to do in Paris?
2. What scared Ophelia most about Hamlet's visit to her room? How does this relate to Hamlet's previous speeches?
3. Does Polonius' behavior in this scene change the opinion of him you formed earlier? Why?

Hamlet, Act II, scene ii

1. Why are Rosencrantz and Guildenstern at the Court?
2. How might the report of Voltmand and Cornelius change the atmosphere in Denmark?
3. How does Polonius plan to test Hamlet? How does this scene affect your opinion of Polonius?
4. What indications are there of the level of trust Hamlet has for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? what does he tell them his real problem is?
5. What does Shakespeare achieve by including the allusion to the fall of Troy in Hamlet's request of the Player?
6. What does Hamlet announce in the next step in his plan?

Hamlet, Act II: About how much time has passed since the beginning of the story?

What would be a good subtitle for this act? (*Hamlet: the* ?)

Hamlet, Act III

1. Why does Ophelia return Hamlet's gifts?
2. How does Claudius react to Polonius' suggestion that they use Ophelia as bait for Hamlet?
3. Does Hamlet's "To Be..." soliloquy reveal the same attitudes toward life as did his "Oh that this too, too sullied flesh..." speech in Act I did? How?
4. How do Hamlet's instructions to the Players relate to a major concern of the play?
5. How does the Play-within-the-play relate to the other concerns of the play as a whole?
6. Why does Claudius call off the remainder of the play by the players?
7. Why can't Claudius pray?
8. Why doesn't Hamlet kill Claudius?
9. Why do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern support Claudius?
10. How does Hamlet feel about killing Polonius?

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11. What are the likely consequences of Polonius' death?
12. Is Hamlet the same at the end of Act III as he was at the beginning of the play? How? Why?

Hamlet, Act IV

1. Claudius gives a reason for sending Hamlet out of the country instead of making him subject to the law. What is it?
2. Why does Hamlet call Claudius' mother?
3. What does Claudius order the king of England to do and why?
4. Why is Fortinbras' army in Denmark?
5. How does Hamlet see himself as compared to Fortinbras?
6. How does Ophelia, in Act IV Scene V, compare to the description of Hamlet in Act II Scene I?
7. What are the people's attitudes toward Laertes? Why do they feel this way?
8. How did Hamlet become separated from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
9. What reason does Claudius give Laertes for not turning Hamlet over to the law?
10. What is the plan that Claudius and Laertes have for dealing with Hamlet?
11. What happened to Ophelia and Hamlet?

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Hamlet, Act V

1. How does the dramatic irony of the opening scene of Act V emphasize the lessons that Hamlet learns in the play?
2. How does Hamlet's speculation to Horatio emphasize the lessons that Hamlet learns?
3. Did Hamlet love Ophelia, or not? What is the evidence for each position?
4. What distinction does Hamlet see between the behavior of Laertes and that of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?
5. How does Hamlet's final conclusion in agreeing to the duel relate to the major *Question* of the play?
6. How is the Duel a "win-win" situation?
7. How is the end of the play an illustration of Justice?

Play as a whole:

8. What is the effect of the Full Court scenes in acts 1, 3, & 5?
9. How is Hamlet's story a coming-of-age story?
10. What is Hamlet's "Tragic Flaw"?
11. What Ideals of human conduct are expressed in Hamlet?
12. How successful is Hamlet in fulfilling the task his father gave him?