

ACT V, SCENE I

1. **she . . . salvation?** She committed suicide. The First Clown questions the idea that Ophelia is to be buried in hallowed ground, with a full Christian ceremony, given that she killed herself.
2. **straight.** Right away, with a pun on straight in the sense of not crooked, implying that the job should be well done.
3. **crowner . . . her.** The coroner has held a hearing regarding her.
4. **se offendendo.** The First Clown is pretending to a knowledge of Latin, the language of learned discourse. *Se offendendo* is a malapropism for *se defendendo*, Latin for “in self defense.”
5. **an act . . . to perform.** Again, the Clown is pretending to knowledge that he does not have, in this case knowledge of legal precedent. The law in Britain had long recognized that in order to be held responsible for an action, one had to be in one’s right mind and thus capable of understanding what one was doing. An action performed in such a “witting” state involved three parts, a prior imagining of the act, a resolution to commit the act, and the act itself. The Clown’s confusion is much to the point because Ophelia was not in a state of mind that would allow for premeditation. The Clown completely misses this point when he substitutes for the first two conditions what are merely synonyms for the third.
6. **argal.** A corruption of the Latin *ergo*, meaning “therefore.”
7. **deliver.** One who digs.
8. **will he, mill he.** Willy nilly, whether he wishes to or not.
9. **Here lies . . . his own life.** The Clown argues that if a man goes to the water intending to drown himself, he is guilty of committing suicide. If the water overtakes him and he drowns, he has not committed suicide.
10. **crowner’s quest.** Coroner’s inquest.
11. **If this had . . . burial.** The Second Clown says that the truth is that this woman would not have been given a Christian burial if she had not been of the noble class.
12. **even-Christen.** Fellow Christians who are not nobles.
13. **ancient gentlemen.** People with real ancestral claims to being gentlemen (A rallying cry among common people revolting against their masters during the fourteenth century was “When Adam delv’d and Eve span (spun),/Who was then the gentleman?”)
14. **ditchers.** Ditch diggers.
15. **hold up.** Continue, carry on.
16. **bore arms.** A pun expressing the idea that Adam both had arms in the sense of limbs and arms in the sense of a coat of arms belonging to a noble family.

Act V

SCENE I

Enter two CLOWNS with spades and mattocks.

FIRST CLOWN. Is she to be buried in Christian burial when she willfully seeks her own salvation?¹

SECOND CLOWN. I tell thee she is, therefore make her grave straight.² The crowner hath sate on her,³ and finds it Christian burial.

FIRST CLOWN. How can that be, unless she drown’d herself in her own defense?

SECOND CLOWN. Why, ’tis found so.

FIRST CLOWN. It must be *se offendendo*,⁴ it cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act, and an act hath three branches—it is to act, to do, to perform;⁵ argal,⁶ she drown’d herself wittingly.

SECOND CLOWN. Nay, but hear you, Goodman deliver⁷—

FIRST CLOWN. Give me leave. Here lies the water; good. Here stands the man, good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he, mill he,⁸ he goes, mark you that. But if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself; argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.⁹

SECOND CLOWN. But is this law?

FIRST CLOWN. Ay marry, is’t—crowner’s quest!¹⁰ law.

SECOND CLOWN. Will you ha’ the truth an’t? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out a’ Christian burial.¹¹

FIRST CLOWN. Why, there thou say’st, and the more pity that great folk should have count’nance in this world to drown or hang themselves, more than their even-Christen.¹² Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen¹³ but gard’ners, ditchers,¹⁴ and grave-makers; they hold up¹⁵ Adam’s profession.

SECOND CLOWN. Was he a gentleman?

FIRST CLOWN. ’A was the first that ever bore arms.¹⁶

SECOND CLOWN. Why, he had none.

FIRST CLOWN. What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digg’d;

◀ Why is the first gravedigger surprised that Ophelia is going to be given a Christian burial?

◀ According to the gravedigger, what is a pity?

◀ What two senses of “arms” are being confused by the gravedigger?

17. **confess thyself.** From the saying “Confess thyself and be hanged”
 18. **unyokey.** Finish (with this job or with your thinking), from the unyoking of
 cattle at the end of a day’s plowing
 19. **Marry.** By Mary, an oath
 20. **Mass.** By the Mass, an oath
 21. **Cudgel.** Beat
 22. **your dull . . . beating.** Your jackass will not move faster because you beat
 him
 23. **sup.** Drink
 24. **contract . . . behove.** Shorten the time, for my desire
 25. **meet.** Proper. The Clown sings a mixed up version of a popular song called
 “The Aged Lover Renounceth Love.”
 26. **Custom.** Habit
 27. **a property of easiness.** Something that he feels comfortable about doing
 28. **shipped me into the land.** Sent me into the earth
 29. **As . . . such.** As if I had never been such a thing as a young man in love

ma • son (mā sən) *n.*, person who builds with stone
ten • ant (ten ənt) *n.*, person who pays rent on a house
 or land

could he dig without arms? I’ll put another question to
 thee. If thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess
 thyself—17

40 **SECOND CLOWN.** Go to.

FIRST CLOWN. What is he that builds stronger than
 either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

SECOND CLOWN. The gallows-maker, for that outlives a
 thousand tenants.

45 **FIRST CLOWN.** I like thy wit well, in good faith. The
 gallows does well; but how does it well? It does well to
 those that do ill. Now thou dost ill to say the gallows is
 built stronger than the church; argal, the gallows may
 do well to thee. To’t again, come.

50 **SECOND CLOWN.** Who builds stronger than a mason, a
 shipwright, or a carpenter?

FIRST CLOWN. Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.¹⁸

SECOND CLOWN. Marry,¹⁹ now I can tell.

FIRST CLOWN. To’t.

55 **SECOND CLOWN.** Mass,²⁰ I cannot tell.

Enter HAMLET and HORATIO afar off.

FIRST CLOWN. Cudgel²¹ thy brains no more about it,
 for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating,²²
 and when you are ask’d this question next, say “a
 gravemaker”: the houses he makes lasts till doomsday.
 Go get thee in, and fetch me a sup²³ of liquor.

*Exit SECOND CLOWN. FIRST CLOWN digs.
 Song.*

“In youth when I did love, did love,
 Methought it was very sweet,
 To contract—O—the time for—a—my behove,²⁴
 O, methought there—a—was nothing—a—meet.”²⁵

65 **HAMLET.** Has this fellow no feeling of his business? ‘a
 sings in grave-making.

HORATIO. Custom²⁶ hath made it in him a property of
 easiness.²⁷

70 **HAMLET.** ‘Tis e’en so, the hand of little employment
 hath the daintier sense.

FIRST CLOWN. “But age with his stealing steps *Song.*
 Hath clawed me in his clutch,
 And hath shipped me into the land,²⁸
 As if I had never been such.”²⁹

Throws up a shovelful of earth with a skull in it.

◀ What answer
 does the second
 gravedigger give to
 the first’s riddle?

◀ What answer to
 the riddle did the
 gravedigger have in
 mind?

◀ Why isn’t the
 gravedigger more
 solemn, given the
 nature of his work?

◀ According to
 Hamlet, who has
 daintier senses?

30. **jowls**. Slams, with a pun on jowls in the sense of the flesh that hangs on the jawbone
31. **Cain's jawbone**. This statement represents a popular belief that the Biblical Cain killed his brother with the jawbone of an ass. The actual weapon is not mentioned in the Biblical story, although Samson is said to have used the jawbone of an ass as a weapon.
32. **pate**. Head
33. **o'erreaches**. Overrules
34. **to beg it**. To beg for it (In other words, the courtier might hope by praising the horse to receive it as a gift from his master.)
35. **Ay**. Aye, yes
36. **my Lady Worm's**. Now the courtier has as his beloved My Lady the worm
37. **chopless**. Without chops, or cheeks
38. **sexton**. Person responsible for the maintenance of church property, including the property on which people used to be buried
39. **revolution**. Change brought about by the revolving wheel of fortune
40. **bones . . . breeding**. Were these bones worth no more than the cost involved in breeding them
41. **loggats**. A country game
42. **meet**. Proper
43. **quiddities . . . quillities**. His subtle arguments, or quibbles
44. **tenures**. Rights in property
45. **sconce**. Head
46. **statutes . . . recoveries**. Various legal devices
47. **fine pate**. Subtle, discriminating head
48. **vouch**. Assure
49. **indentures**. Legal document consisting of two copies written on the same piece of paper and cut in two by means of an uneven line. This was done as a precaution against forgery.
50. **conveyances of his lands**. Deeds conveying purchased lands to him
51. **They are . . . in that**. Legal documents, written on parchment, in the end offer no assurance, and people who think that they do are but sheep and calves, who follow the common way of thinking.

Words

For
Everyday
Use

cour • ti • er (kört'ē ə r) *n.*, royal attendant

bat • ter • y (bat'ər ē) *n.*, act of beating; pounding

parch • ment (pärch'mənt) *n.*, paper-thin animal skins used instead of paper from wood

75 **HAMLET**. That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave jowls³⁰ it to the ground, as if 'twere Cain's jawbone,³¹ that did the first murder! This might be the pate³² of a politician, which this ass now o'erreaches,³³ one that would circumvent God, might it not?

80 **HORATIO**. It might, my lord.

HAMLET. Or of a courtier, which could say, "Good morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, sweet lord?" This might be my Lord Such-a-one, that prais'd my Lord Such-a-one's horse when 'a meant to beg it,³⁴ might it not?

85 **HORATIO**. Ay,³⁵ my lord.

HAMLET. Why, e'en so, and now my Lady Worm's,³⁶ chopless,³⁷ and knock'd about the mazzard with a sexton's³⁸ spade. Here's fine revolution,³⁹ and we had so the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding,⁴⁰ but to play at loggats⁴¹ with them? Mine ache to think on't.

FIRST CLOWN. "A pickaxe and a spade, a spade, *Sorig*. For and a shrouding sheet:

O, a pit of clay for to be made

For such a guest is meet."⁴²

Throws up another skull.

85 **HAMLET**. There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillities,⁴³ his cases, his tenures,⁴⁴ and his tricks? Why does he suffer this mad knave now to knock him about the sconce⁴⁵ with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in 's

time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries.⁴⁶ Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate⁴⁷ full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch⁴⁸ him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures?⁴⁹ The very conveyances of his lands⁵⁰ will scarcely lie in this box, and must th' inheritor himself have no more, ha?

85 **HORATIO**. Not a jot more, my lord.

HAMLET. Is not parchmēt made of sheepskins?

HORATIO. Ay, my lord, and of calves' skins too.

85 **HAMLET**. They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that.⁵¹ I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave's this, sirrah?

52. **quick.** Living
 53. **absolute.** Absolutist, requiring extreme accuracy of statement
 54. **by the card.** By the book, with precision
 55. **equivocation.** Double meaning, ambiguity
 56. **pick'd.** Overly refined
 57. **kibe.** Sore place on the heel

- FIRST CLOWN. Mine, sir.
 [Sings.]
 "O, a pit of clay for to be made
 For such a guest is meet."
 120 HAMLET. I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in't.
 FIRST CLOWN. You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis
 not yours; for my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.
 HAMLET. Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is
 thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick;⁵² therefore
 125 thou liest.
 FIRST CLOWN. 'Tis a quick lie, sir, 'twill away again
 from me to you.
 HAMLET. What man dost thou dig it for?
 FIRST CLOWN. For no man, sir.
 130 HAMLET. What woman then?
 FIRST CLOWN. For none neither.
 HAMLET. Who is to be buried in't?
 FIRST CLOWN. One that was a woman, sir, but, rest her
 soul, she's dead.
 135 HAMLET. How absolute⁵³ the knave is! we must speak
 by the card,⁵⁴ or equivocation⁵⁵ will undo us. By the
 Lord, Horatio, this three years I have took note of it:
 the age is grown so pick'd⁵⁶ that the toe of the peasant
 comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his
 140 kibe.⁵⁷ How long hast thou been gravemaker?
 FIRST CLOWN. Of all the days i' th' year, I came to't
 that day that our last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.
 HAMLET. How long is that since?
 145 FIRST CLOWN. Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell
 that. It was that very day that young Hamlet was born
 —he that is mad, and sent into England.
 HAMLET. Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?
 FIRST CLOWN. Why, because 'a was mad. 'A shall
 recover his wits there, or if 'a do not, 'tis no great mat-
 150 ter there.
 HAMLET. Why?
 FIRST CLOWN. 'Twill not be seen in him there, there
 the men are as mad as he.
 HAMLET. How came he mad?
 155 FIRST CLOWN. Very strangely, they say.

◀ How are the
 peasants changing,
 according to Hamlet?

◀ Is the gravedig-
 ger aware that he is
 speaking to Hamlet?

◀ What is the
 gravedigger's opinion
 of people in England?

58. with. Because of
59. ground. Cause
60. pocky corsés. Sore-covered corpses
61. hold the laying in. Last long enough to be buried
62. tanner. One who tans hides for a living
63. hath lien. Has lain
64. Rhenish. Rhine wine
65. fancy. Fanciful thinking
66. gorge. Throat or gullet
67. mock. Copy
68. chop-fall'n. Chapfallen, dejected, with the lower jaw hanging down or fallen away
69. favor. Appearance
70. Prithee. I pray thee
71. Alexander. Alexander the Great, the conqueror

Words
For
Everyday
Use

pes • ti • lence (pes'tə ləns) *n.*, dangerous infectious disease
fla • gon (flag'ən) *n.*, container for liquids
gibe (jī'b) *n.*, jeer; taunt
gam • bol (gam'bel) *n.*, skipping or frolicking about

- HAMLET. How strangely?
FIRST CLOWN. Faith, e'en with⁵⁸ losing his wits.
HAMLET. Upon what ground?⁵⁹
FIRST CLOWN. Why, here in Denmark. I have been
160 sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.
HAMLET. How long will a man lie i' th' earth ere he rot?
FIRST CLOWN. Faith, if 'a be not rotten before 'a die—
as we have many pocky corsés,⁶⁰ that will scarce hold
the laying in⁶¹—'a will last you some eight year or nine
165 year. A tanner⁶² will last you nine year.
HAMLET. Why he more than another?
FIRST CLOWN. Why, sir, his hide is so tann'd with his
trade that 'a will keep out water a great while, and your
water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body.
170 Here's a skull now hath lien⁶³ you i' th' earth three and
twenty years.
HAMLET. Whose was it?
FIRST CLOWN. A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose
do you think it was?
175 HAMLET. Nay, I know not.
FIRST CLOWN. A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'a
pour'd a flagon of Rhenish⁶⁴ on my head once. This
same skull, sir, was, sir, Yorick's skull, the King's jester.
HAMLET. This?
180 FIRST CLOWN. E'en that.
HAMLET. Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio, a fel-
low of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.⁶⁵ He hath
bore me on his back a thousand times, and now how
abhor'd in my imagination it is! my gorge⁶⁶ rises at it.
185 Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd I know not how
oft. Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs,
your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the
table on a roar? Not one now to mock⁶⁷ your own grin-
ning— quite chop-fall'n.⁶⁸ Now get you to my lady's
chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to
this favor⁶⁹ she must come; make her laugh at that.
Prithee,⁷⁰ Horatio, tell me one thing.
HORATIO. What's that, my lord?
HAMLET. Dost thou think Alexander⁷¹ look'd a' this
195 fashion i' th' earth?
HORATIO. E'en so.

◀ How long has the skull been in the earth?

◀ To whom did the skull belong?

◀ How close were Hamlet and Yorick?

◀ In what sense is Yorick now "grinning"?

◀ To what end must all people come?

72. **bunghole**. A hole in a keg of liquor
 73. **too curiously**. With too much ingenuity
 74. **loam**. Plaster made of clay
 75. **flaw**. Fierce wind
 76. **foredo**. Do before, destroy before its time
 77. **of some estate**. Of some importance
 78. **couch we**. Crouch, lie down
 79. **mark**. Watch
 80. **ceremony else**. Additional ceremony (Laertes asks what additional rites will be performed at his sister's grave.)
 81. **obsequies**. Religious rites, ceremonies
 82. **warranty**. Authorization
 83. **doubtful**. Questionable (because she may have committed suicide)
 84. **that great command**. Claudius's command
 85. **in ground . . . lodg'd**. Been buried in unsanctified ground (that which is reserved for sinners who died without blessing)
 86. **for**. Instead of
 87. **virgin crants**. Garlands made for dead maidens
 88. **strewments**. Flowers strewn on a coffin
 89. **the bringing . . . burial**. The bringing of her to her final home with ringing of funeral bells and proper burial rites

Words

For

Everyday

Use

base (bās) *adj.*, inferior; valueless
loam (lōm) *n.*, rich, fertile soil
maimed (māmd) *adj.*, imperfect; defective
rite (rī) *n.*, formal, ceremonial act

pro • fane (prō fān) *vt.*, treat with irreverence or contempt
re • qui • em (rek'wē am) *n.*, hymn for the dead

HAMLET. And smelt so? pah! *Puts down the skull.*

HORATIO. E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till 'a find it stopping a bunghole?⁷²

200

HORATIO. 'Twere to consider too curiously,⁷³ to consider so.

HAMLET. No, faith, not a jot, but to follow him thither with modesty enough and likelihood to lead it: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam,⁷⁴ and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?

205

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay, Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

210

O that that earth which kept the world in awe Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!⁷⁵ But soft, but soft awhile, here comes the King,

Enter KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, and a DOCTOR OF DIVINITY, following the corse, with LORDS attendant.

The Queen, the courtiers. Who is this they follow?

215

And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken The corse they follow did with desperate hand

Foredo⁷⁶ it own life. 'Twas of some estate.⁷⁷

Couch we⁷⁸ a while and mark.⁷⁹ *Retiring with HORATIO.*

LAERTES. What ceremony else?⁸⁰

220 HAMLET. That is Laertes, a very noble youth. Mark.

LAERTES. What ceremony else?

DOCTOR. Her obsequies⁸¹ have been as far enlarg'd As we have warranty.⁸² Her death was doubtful,⁸³

And but that great command⁸⁴ o'ersways the order, She should in ground unsanctified been lodg'd⁸⁵

225

Till the last trumpet, for⁸⁶ charitable prayers, Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her. Yet here she is allow'd her virgin crants,⁸⁷

Her maiden strewments,⁸⁸ and the bringing home Of bell and burial.⁸⁹

230

LAERTES. Must there no more be done?

DOCTOR.

No more be done:

We should profane the service of the dead

To sing a requiem and such rest to her

As to peace-parted souls.

◀ What happens to the greatest of people?

◀ What does Hamlet surmise from the nature of the rites that he observes?

◀ What does Hamlet think of Laertes?

◀ Who is the person who is being buried? Why does the priest say that no more can be done for this person?

FOOTNOTES

90. **thou liest howling.** I.e., in hell
 91. **to have deck'd.** To have covered with flowers
 92. **ingenious.** Discerning, capable
 93. **quick.** Living
 94. **Pelion.** A Greek mountain. In Greek myth, the Titans attempted to scale Mount Ossa, home of the Olympic gods, by piling Mount Pelion on top of Mount Ossa.
 95. **Conjures the wandering stars.** Puts a spell on the planets, called “wandering stars” because of the seemingly erratic nature of their movements
 96. **wonder-wounded.** Wonder struck
 97. **Hamlet the Dane.** Rightly said only by one who considers himself the rightful king
 98. **splenitive.** Full of spleen, or spitefulness
 99. **wag.** Move (i.e., until the last motion of his dying body)

Words For Everyday Use

churl • **ish** (cherl'ish) *adj.*, stingy; mean
a • **sun** • **der** (ə sun'dər) *adv.*, into parts or pieces

- 235 **LAERTES.** Lay her i' th' earth,
 And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
 May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
 A minist'ring angel shall my sister be
 When thou liest howling.⁹⁰
HAMLET. What, the fair Ophelia!
- 240 **QUEEN.** [*Scattering flowers.*] Sweets to the sweet, farewell!
 I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife.
 I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd,⁹¹ sweet maid,
 And not have strew'd thy grave.
LAERTES. O, treble woe
 Fall ten times treble on that cursed head
 Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious⁹² sense
 Depriv'd thee of! Hold off the earth a while,
 Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.
Leaps in the grave.
 Now pile your dust upon the quick⁹³ and dead,
 Till of this flat a mountain you have made
 T' o'ertop old Pelion,⁹⁴ or the skyish head
 Of blue Olympus.
- 250 **HAMLET.** [*Coming forward.*] What is he whose grief
 Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
 Conjures the wand'ring stars⁹⁵ and makes them stand
 Like wonder-wounded⁹⁶ hearers? This is I,
 Hamlet the Dane!⁹⁷ *Hamlet leaps in after Laertes.*
 255 **LAERTES.** The devil take thy soul! *Grappling with him.*
HAMLET. Thou pray'st not well.
 I prithee take thy fingers from my throat.
 For though I am not splenitive⁹⁸ and rash,
 Yet have I in me something dangerous,
 Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand!
 260 **KING.** Pluck them asunder.
QUEEN. Hamlet, Hamlet!
ALL. Gentlemen!
HORATIO. Good my lord, be quiet.
The ATTENDANTS part them, and they come out of the grave.
HAMLET. Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
 Until my eyelids will no longer wag.⁹⁹
QUEEN. O my son, what theme?
 265 **HAMLET.** I lov'd Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers
 Could not with all their quantity of love

◀ What does Laertes say to the priest?

◀ What had Gertrude hoped?

◀ How does Laertes feel toward Hamlet? Why?

◀ How does Laertes show his grief?

◀ In what way, according to Hamlet, do he and Laertes differ?

◀ What drives Hamlet to fight with Laertes?

100. **forbear him.** Bear with him (put up with him because he is obviously mad).
101. **'Swounds.** By God's wounds
102. **eisel.** Vinegar (i.e., bitterness)
103. **eat a crocodile.** Consume a crocodile (a beast celebrated in folklore for crying false tears)
104. **outface.** Outdo
105. **quick.** Alive
106. **pate.** Head
107. **burning zone.** The zone of the sun
108. **Ossa.** A mountain in Greece
109. **fit.** Seizure
110. **Anon.** Soon
111. **golden couplets.** Her two eggs containing young covered with gold-colored down
112. **disclosed.** Hatched
113. **Hercules.** Legendary strongman of Greek mythology
114. **wait upon.** Attend to
115. **present push.** Immediate undertaking
116. **living.** Lasting. Claudius's exact intention here is uncertain. It is likely that Gertrude has just exited, after the line "set some watch over your son," and that the "living monument" will be the death of Hamlet.
117. **Till then . . . be.** Until then, we shall be patient about carrying out our plan.

ACT V, SCENE ii

1. **so much for this.** Hamlet and Horatio are in mid-conversation as the scene opens.

Words
For
Everyday
Use

prate (prāt) *vi.*, talk idly; chatter

Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

KING. O, he is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN. For love of God, forbear him.¹⁰⁰

270 **HAMLET.** 'Swounds,¹⁰¹ show me what thou't do.
Woo't weep, woo't fight, woo't fast, woo't tear thyself?
Woo't drink up eisel,¹⁰² eat a crocodile?¹⁰³
I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?

275 To outface¹⁰⁴ me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick¹⁰⁵ with her, and so will I.
And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate¹⁰⁶ against the burning zone,¹⁰⁷
Make Ossa¹⁰⁸ like a wart! Nay, and thou'tt mouth,
280 I'll rant as well as thou.

QUEEN. This is mere madness,
And thus a while the fit¹⁰⁹ will work on him;
Anon,¹¹⁰ as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets¹¹¹ are disclosed,¹¹²
His silence will sit drooping.

HAMLET. Hear you, sir,
285 What is the reason that you use me thus?
I lov'd you ever. But it is no matter.
Let Hercules¹¹³ himself do what he may,
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

Exit HAMLET.

KING. I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon¹¹⁴ him.
Exit HORATIO.

290 [To LAERTES.] Strengthen your patience in our last night's
speech,

We'll put the matter to the present push.—¹¹⁵

Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.
This grave shall have a living¹¹⁶ monument.
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see,
295 Till then in patience our proceeding be.¹¹⁷ *Exeunt.*

SCENE ii

Enter HAMLET and HORATIO.

HAMLET. So much for this,¹ sir, now shall you see the
other—

You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO. Remember it, my lord!

HAMLET. Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting

◀ What does
Gertrude make of her
son's behavior?

◀ What reason
does Claudius give
Laertes for being
patient?

FOOTNOTES

2. **Methought.** I thought
3. **mutines in the bilboes.** Mutineers in their shackles
4. **Rashly.** Impetuously
5. **pall.** Grow pale, fail
6. **learn.** Teach
7. **sea-gown.** Sleeping garment worn by sailors
8. **them.** Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
9. **Finger'd.** Stole
10. **in fine.** In short
11. **withdrew.** Returned
12. **Larded.** Fattened
13. **Importing.** Arguing
14. **bugs.** Bug-a-boos, terrors
15. **in my life.** That would result from my continued life
16. **on the supervise.** On looking these over
17. **no leisure bated.** No time wasted
18. **to stay.** To wait for
19. **strook.** Struck
20. **make . . . brains.** Conceive of a way to start thinking about what to do
21. **fair.** In an elegant hand
22. **statists.** Politicians, statesmen
23. **yeman's service.** The office of a capable servant
24. **conjunction.** Request
25. **tributary.** Country that pays tribute
26. **wheaten garland.** A garland of wheat signified peace and prosperity.
27. **And . . . amities.** And that there might be but a small space, or comma, between their friendship, or amities
28. **of great charge.** Of great burden or import
29. **view.** Viewing

Words
For
Everyday
Use

in • dis • cre • tion (in 'di skresh' ən) *n.*, lack of good judgment

5 That would not let me sleep. Methought² I lay Worse than the mutines in the bilboes.³ Rashly⁴— And prais'd be rashness for it—let us know Our indiscretion sometime serves us well When our deep plots do pall,⁵ and that should learn⁶ us There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will—

HORATIO. That is most certain.

10 **HAMLET.** Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown⁷ scarf'd about me, in the dark
Grop'd I to find out them,⁸ had my desire,
Finger'd⁹ their packet, and in fine¹⁰ withdrew¹¹
To mine own room again, making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio—
Ah, royal knavery!—an exact command,
Larded¹² with many several sorts of reasons,
Importing¹³ Denmark's health and England's too,
With, ho, such bugs¹⁴ and goblins in my life,¹⁵
That, on the supervise,¹⁶ no leisure bated,¹⁷
No, not to stay¹⁸ the grinding of the axe,
25 My head should be strook¹⁹ off.

HORATIO. Is't possible?

HAMLET. Here's the commission, read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear now how I did proceed?

HORATIO. I beseech you.

30 **HAMLET.** Being thus benetted round with villainies,
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,²⁰
They had begun the play. I sat me down,
Devis'd a new commission, wrote it fair.²¹
I once did hold it, as our statists²² do,
A baseness to write fair, and labor'd much
How to forget that learning, but, sir, now
It did me yeman's service.²³ Wilt thou know
Th' effect of what I wrote?

HORATIO. Ay, good my lord.

40 **HAMLET.** An earnest conjunction²⁴ from the King,
As England was his faithful tributary,²⁵
As love between them like the palm might flourish,
As peace should still her wheaten garland²⁶ wear
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,²⁷
And many such-like as of great charge,²⁸
That on the view²⁹ and knowing of these contents,

◀ What does Hamlet believe about God's role in human life at this point in the play?

◀ How did Hamlet discover what Claudius intended to do to him?

30. **debatement further.** Further debate
 31. **shriving time.** Time for confession and absolution, or forgiveness of sins
 32. **was heaven ordmant.** Did heaven ordain, or decree, what would happen
 33. **Subscrib'd it.** Signed it
 34. **th' impression.** Impressed the wax with which the document was sealed with the seal of the royal throne of Denmark
 35. **changing.** Substitute. A changeling was literally one child substituted for another, especially as was done by fairies in folk tales
 36. **to this was sequent.** Followed this
 37. **did make love to.** Enjoyed
 38. **insinuation.** Winding, crooked movement, like that of a snake
 39. **the baser nature.** The person of lower rank and breeding
 40. **pass.** Sword thrust
 41. **fell.** Deadly
 42. **mighty opposites.** I.e., Claudius and Hamlet
 43. **stand me now upon.** Stand now upon me (is it not now required of me)
 44. **th' election.** The election to the kingship
 45. **angle.** Fishing line
 46. **proper.** Own
 47. **coz'nage.** Cheating
 48. **perfect conscience.** What is demanded by one's conscience, or sense of right and wrong
 49. **quit him.** Kill him
 50. **to be damn'd.** Hamlet has long worried that perhaps the ghost that he saw was a thing of the devil, and he has questioned the morality of revenge. Here he answers his own questions, saying that allowing such evil to flourish is to be damned.
 51. **canker.** Cancerous growth
 52. **of our nature.** To the Elizabethans, the word nature had a grand meaning encompassing not only what we would now refer to as human nature but also the divine order of things, including the divinely ordained place of a king as the head of a state.
 53. **issue.** Outcome
 54. **a man's . . . "one."** In the scheme of things, a man's life lasts no longer than it takes to say the word "one."
 55. **portraiture.** Depiction
 56. **sure.** Certainly
 57. **bravery.** Effrontery, extravagant show

sig • net (sig'nit) *n.*, official seal; stamp
in • ter • im (in'ter im) *n.*, period of time between

45 Without debatement further,³⁰ more or less,
He should those bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving time³¹ allow'd.

HORATIO. How was this seal'd?

49 **HAMLET.** Why, even in that was heaven ordmant.³²
I had my father's sig^{net} in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal;
Folded the writ up in the form of th' other,
Subscrib'd³³ it, gave't th' impression,³⁴ plac'd it safely,
The changeling³⁵ never known. Now the next day
Was our sea-fight, and what to this was sequent³⁶
Thou knowest already.

55 **HORATIO.** So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

HAMLET. Why, man, they did make love to³⁷ this
employment,
They are not near my conscience. Their defeat
Does by their own insinuation³⁸ grow.
'Tis dangerous when the baser nature³⁹ comes
Between the pass⁴⁰ and fell⁴¹ incensed points
Of mighty opposites.⁴²

HORATIO. Why, what a king is this!

60 **HAMLET.** Does it not, think thee, stand me now upon—⁴³
He that hath kill'd my king and whor'd my mother,
Popp'd in between th' election⁴⁴ and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle⁴⁵ for my proper⁴⁶ life,
And with such coz'nage⁴⁷—is't not perfect conscience⁴⁸
To quit him⁴⁹ with this arm? And is't not to be damn'd,⁵⁰
To let this canker⁵¹ of our nature⁵² come
In further evil?

HORATIO. It must be shortly known to him from
England

What is the issue⁵³ of the business there.

70 **HAMLET.** It will be short; the interim's mine,
And a man's life's no more than to say "one."⁵⁴
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself,
For by the image of my cause I see
The portraiture⁵⁵ of his. I'll court his favors.
But sure⁵⁶ the bravery⁵⁷ of his grief did put me
Into a tow'ring passion.

80 **HORATIO.** Peace, who comes here?
Enter young Osric, a courtier.

◀ With what mes-
sage did Hamlet
replace Claudius's
letter?

◀ How, according
to Hamlet, did
heaven help him to
achieve his purpose?

◀ Why does Hamlet
not have any
remorse over having
brought about the
deaths of
Rosencrantz and
Guildenstern?

◀ What reasons
does Hamlet give for
wanting to kill
Claudius?

◀ How much time
does Hamlet believe
that he has before he
can take his revenge?
◀ Why does Hamlet
regret his actions
toward Laertes?

58. **water-fly.** Creature that flits about, a derogatory term
59. **let . . . mess.** If a man who is no more than a beast is the lord of beasts (has a lot of property), then his manger, or crib, will be at the king's table, or mess.
60. **chough.** A rustic fellow or a jackdaw, a kind of bird known for its imitative abilities. This is a jibe at courtiers who are always willing to imitate and so ingratiate themselves to those who have power.
61. **spacious . . . dirt.** Hamlet here shows his contempt for worldly goods, such as the land, or dirt, owned by this common fellow who has become a prosperous landowner and so gained admittance to court.
62. **bonnet.** Cap
63. **indifferent.** Moderately, somewhat
64. **complexion.** Temperament
65. **most excellent differences.** Many superb qualities or accomplishments
66. **of very soft society.** Capable of mingling with ease in social circles
67. **great showing.** Superb appearance or presentation of himself
68. **card or calendar.** Map or guide
69. **continent . . . see.** Container of whatever parts, or refined qualities, a gentleman might wish to find (in another gentleman)
70. **his definement.** The defining of him
71. **perdition.** Loss
72. **dozy.** Make dizzy
73. **but yaw . . . of.** But go off course, at any rate, in comparison with
74. **in the verity of extolment.** To praise him truthfully
75. **of great article.** Of great worth
76. **infusion.** What he is infused, or filled, with
77. **dearth.** Dearness, value
78. **to make true diction.** To speak truly
79. **semblable.** Likeness
80. **trace him.** Follow him
81. **umbrage.** Shadow

sul • try (sul'trē) *adj.*, oppressively hot

gen • try (jen'trē) *adj.*, rank resulting from birth

in • fal • li • bly (in fal'ə blē) *adv.*, without error

OSRIC. Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

HAMLET. I humbly thank you, sir.—Dost know this water-fly?⁵⁸

HORATIO. No, my good lord.

HAMLET. Thy state is the more gracious, for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile; let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the King's mess.⁵⁹ 'Tis a chough,⁶⁰ but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.⁶¹

OSRIC. Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his Majesty.

HAMLET. I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet⁶² to his right use, 'tis for the head.

OSRIC. I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

HAMLET. No, believe me, 'tis very cold, the wind is northerly.

OSRIC. It is indifferent⁶³ cold, my lord, indeed.

HAMLET. But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.⁶⁴

OSRIC. Exceedingly, my lord, it is very sultry—as 'twere—I cannot tell how. My lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you that 'a has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter—

HAMLET. I beseech you remember.

HAMLET *moves him to put on his hat.*

OSRIC. Nay, good my lord, for my ease, in good faith.

Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes, believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences,⁶⁵ of very soft society,⁶⁶ and great showing,⁶⁷ indeed, to speak sellingly of him, he is the card or calendar⁶⁸ of gentry; for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.⁶⁹

HAMLET. Sir, his definement⁷⁰ suffers no perdition⁷¹ in you, though I know to divide him inventorially would dozy⁷² th' arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither in respect of⁷³ his quick sail; but in the verity of extolment,⁷⁴ I take him to be a soul of great article,⁷⁵ and his infusion⁷⁶ of such dearth⁷⁷ and rareness as, to make true diction⁷⁸ of him, his semblable⁷⁹ is his mirror, and who else would trace him,⁸⁰ his umbrage,⁸¹ nothing more.

OSRIC. Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

◀ What does Hamlet think of property ownership?

82. **concernancy.** Concern, matter at hand
83. **in . . . breath.** In our breath, which is so much more coarse than the refined Laertes
84. **Is't . . . tongue?** Might we not be able to understand what is being said if it were in some other language? Horatio is implying that what is being spoken is not English.
85. **imports the nomination of.** Is the purpose of naming
86. **it would . . . me.** If you held a high opinion of me, that would not be saying much for me.
87. **I dare . . . himself.** Again, Hamlet continues his exaggerated speech, imitating and mocking that of Osric. The meaning of Hamlet's statement, which is intended to be ludicrous but nonetheless has some sense to it, is that he dares not say that he knows how excellent Laertes is, for that would be to compare himself with the great Laertes; and such a comparison would be impossible because to understand another, one would have to be able, first, to understand oneself.
88. **in the imputation laid on him.** In the description given of him by others
89. **meed.** Merit
90. **unfellow'd.** Unmatched
91. **he has impawn'd.** Laertes has wagered
92. **poniards.** Daggers
93. **assigns.** Accouterments
94. **girdles, hangers.** Belts and hangers with which to attach the sheaths to the belts
95. **dear to fancy.** Pleasing to one's tastes
96. **responsive to.** Well adjusted to
97. **liberal conceit.** Creative, fanciful design
98. **edified by the margent.** Taught by an annotation in the margin

Words
For
Everyday
Use

ger • mane (jər mɑn') *adj.*, truly relevant

120 **HAMLET.** The concernancy,⁸² sir? Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?⁸³

OSRIC. Sir?

HORATIO. Is't not possible to understand in another tongue?⁸⁴ You will to't, sir, really.

125 **HAMLET.** What imports the nomination of⁸⁵ this gentleman?

OSRIC. Of Laertes?

HORATIO. His purse is empty already: all 's golden words are spent.

130 **HAMLET.** Of him, sir.

OSRIC. I know you are not ignorant—

HAMLET. I would you did, sir, yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me.⁸⁶ Well, sir?

135 **OSRIC.** You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

HAMLET. I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence, but to know a man well were to know himself.⁸⁷

140 **OSRIC.** I mean, sir, for his weapon, but in the imputation laid on him⁸⁸ by them, in his meed⁸⁹ he's unfellow'd.⁹⁰

HAMLET. What's his weapon?

OSRIC. Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET. That's two of his weapons—but well.

145 **OSRIC.** The King, sir, hath wager'd with him six Barbary horses, against the which he has impawn'd,⁹¹ as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards,⁹² with their assigns,⁹³ as girdle, hangers,⁹⁴ and so. Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy,⁹⁵ very responsive to⁹⁶ the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.⁹⁷

150 **HAMLET.** What call you the carriages?

HORATIO. I knew you must be edified by the margent⁹⁸ ere you had done.

OSRIC. The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

155 **HAMLET.** The phrase would be more germane to the matter if we could carry a cannon by our sides; I would it might be hangers till then. But on: six Barb'ry horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-

◀ Of what has Hamlet been making fun, and why is Horatio impatient?

◀ In what skill does Laertes show excellence?

◀ What is being wagered by Claudius and Laertes?

99. **impawn'd.** Wagered.
 100. **The King . . . nine.** The terms of this wager are unclear. What is clear is that because Laertes is presumed to be the better fencer, Claudius has received some odds. Hamlet does not have to better Laertes overall in order for Claudius to win. He has only to better Laertes as many times as this unclear wager requires.
 101. **come to immediate trial.** The contest will be carried out immediately
 102. **vouchsafe the answer.** Condescend to grant an answer (to the challenge)
 103. **How.** What
 104. **the breathing . . . with me.** The time of day when I take my exercise
 105. **and.** if
 106. **'A . . . for 's turn.** Hamlet humorously and intentionally misconstrues the word commend as recommend and says that Osric would have to recommend himself because no one else would.
 107. **lapwing . . . head.** This newly hatched bug runs about with the shell still on his head.
 108. **dug.** Nipple
 109. **drossy.** Shabby
 110. **the tune of the time.** The argot, or speech, of the day
 111. **yesty collection.** A frothy collection of fancy words (from the use of yeast to ferment beer)
 112. **winnow'd.** Well sifted or thought out
 113. **and do but . . . are out.** If you test them by blowing on them, their bubbles burst.

foil (foil) *n.*, long, thin fencing sword

conceited carriages; that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this all impawn'd,⁹⁹ as you call it?

160 **OSRIC.** The King, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits; he hath laid on twelve for nine;¹⁰⁰ and it would come to immediate trial,¹⁰¹ if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.¹⁰²

165 **HAMLET.** How¹⁰³ if I answer no?

OSRIC. I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

170 **HAMLET.** Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please his Majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me.¹⁰⁴ Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him and¹⁰⁵ I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC. Shall I deliver you so?

175 **HAMLET.** To this effect, sir—after what flourish your nature will.

OSRIC. I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET. Yours. [*Exit OSRIC.*] 'A does well to commend it himself, there are no tongues else for 's turn.¹⁰⁶

180 **HORATIO.** This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.¹⁰⁷

185 **HAMLET.** 'A did comply, sir, with his dug¹⁰⁸ before 'a suck'd it. Thus has he, and many more of the same breed that I know the drossy¹⁰⁹ age dotes on, only got the tune of the time,¹¹⁰ and out of an habit of encounter, a kind of yesty collection,¹¹¹ which carries them through and through the most profound and winnow'd¹¹² opinions, and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.¹¹³

Enter a LORD.

190 **LORD.** My lord, his Majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him that you attend him in the hall. He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

195 **HAMLET.** I am constant to my purposes, they follow the King's pleasure. If his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

LORD. The King and Queen and all are coming down.

114. **In happy time.** Just in time
 115. **use some gentle entertainment.** Speak some kind words
 116. **gain-giving.** Gainsaying, questioning, foreboding
 117. **forestall their repair hither.** Put off their coming here
 118. **defy augury.** Reject prediction, divination, or prophecy
 119. **providence . . . sparrow.** This is a reference to Matthew 10:29: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your father," the import of which is that nothing happens that is not of God's design.
 120. **it.** Hamlet is thinking, perhaps, of his own death, but he intentionally phrases this more generally. This *it* refers to all things that happen.
 121. **Since no man . . . betimes.** Since no man knows anything about the life that he leaves behind him or what it means to leave that life early
 122. **let be.** An ambiguous phrase meaning both "let what ever will be be" and "say no more"
 123. **This presence.** Those present
 124. **needs.** Necessarily
 125. **a sore distraction.** A terrible madness
 126. **exception.** Disapproval
 127. **in this audience.** Before this audience
 128. **disclaiming from a purpos'd evil.** Disavowal of an intention to do this evil deed

HAMLET. In happy time.¹¹⁴

LORD. The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment¹¹⁵ to Laertes before you fall to play.

HAMLET. She well instructs me. *Exit* LORD.

HORATIO. You will lose, my lord.

HAMLET. I do not think so; since he went into France I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart—but it is no matter.

HORATIO. Nay, good my lord—

HAMLET. It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gain-giving,¹¹⁶ as would perhaps trouble a woman.

HORATIO. If your mind dislike any thing, obey it. I will forestall their repair hither,¹¹⁷ and say you are not fit.

HAMLET. Not a whit, we defy augury.¹¹⁸ There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow.¹¹⁹ If it¹²⁰ be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all. Since no man, of aught he leaves, knows what is't to leave betimes,¹²¹ let be.¹²²

A table prepar'd, and flagons of wine on it. Enter Trumpets, Drums, and Officers with cushions, foils, daggers; KING, QUEEN, LAERTES, OSRIC, and all the State.

KING. Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me. *The KING puts LAERTES' hand into HAMLET'S.*

HAMLET. Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong,

220 But pardon't as you are a gentleman.

This presence¹²³ knows,

And you must needs¹²⁴ have heard, how I am punish'd With a sore distraction.¹²⁵ What I have done

225 That might your nature, honor, and exception¹²⁶

Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet!

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.

230 Who does it then? His madness. If't be so

Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged,

His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, in this audience,¹²⁷

Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil¹²⁸

◀ What does the Queen want Hamlet to do before beginning the fencing match?

◀ Does Hamlet think that he has a chance of winning? Why? How is Hamlet feeling at this moment?

◀ What council does Horatio give to Hamlet? Do you think that Hamlet should take Horatio's advice?

◀ Why does Hamlet decide to go to the match even though he has a bad feeling about it?

◀ What, according to Hamlet, is the most important consideration with regard to death? Does Hamlet fear death?

◀ What excuse does Hamlet give to Laertes?

129. **in nature.** In respect to my natural feelings (for my dead father)
 130. **in my . . . aloof.** With regard to my honor I am not yet satisfied
 131. **and will no reconciliation.** And will not be reconciled with you
 132. **Till by . . . ungor'd.** Until some honorable elders have, based on precedents, instructed me that I should keep the peace and that in so doing my reputation for honor will not be wounded.
 133. **frankly.** Honestly, without blame
 134. **foil.** Material used to set off a jewel or other ornament, a pun on the word foil meaning "sword"
 135. **Stick fiery off.** Stand out like sparks of fire
 136. **he is better'd.** He has improved
 137. **This . . . well.** I like this one.
 138. **have all a length?** Are all of the same length?
 139. **stoups.** Flagons, containers
 140. **Or quit . . . exchange.** Or requite himself in the third exchange for having lost the first two
 141. **union.** A priceless pearl, which would dissolve in the wine
 142. **kettle.** Kettle drum

- 235 Free me so far in your most generous thoughts
 That I have shot my arrow o'er the house
 And hurt my brother.
 LAERTES. I am satisfied in nature,¹²⁹
 Whose motive in this case should stir me most
 To my revenge, but in my terms of honor
 I stand aloof,¹³⁰ and will no reconciliation¹³¹
 Till by some elder masters of known honor
 I have a voice and president of peace
 To keep my name ungor'd.¹³² But till that time
 I do receive your offer'd love like love,
 245 And will not wrong it.
 HAMLET. I embrace it freely,
 And will this brothers' wager frankly¹³³ play.
 Give us the foils. Come on.
 LAERTES. Come, one for me.
 HAMLET. I'll be your foil,¹³⁴ Laertes, in mine ignorance
 Your skill shall like a star i' th' darkest night
 250 Stick fiery off!¹³⁵ indeed.
 LAERTES. You mock me, sir.
 HAMLET. No, by this hand.
 KING. Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,
 You know the wager?
 HAMLET. Very well, my lord.
 Your Grace has laid the odds a' th' weaker side.
 255 KING. I do not fear it, I have seen you both;
 But since he is better'd,¹³⁶ we have therefore odds.
 LAERTES. This is too heavy; let me see another.
 HAMLET. This likes me well.¹³⁷ These foils have all a
 length?¹³⁸
 OSRIC. Ay, my good lord.
 260 KING. Set me the stoups¹³⁹ of wine upon that table.
 If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
 Or quit in answer of the third exchange,¹⁴⁰
 Let all the battlements their ord'nance fire.
 The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,
 265 And in the cup an union¹⁴¹ shall he throw,
 Richer than that which four successive kings
 In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups,
 And let the kettle¹⁴² to the trumpet speak,
 The trumpet to the cannoneer without,

◀ With what name
 does Hamlet call
 Laertes?

◀ What pretense
 does Laertes make to
 Hamlet? What is
 Laertes actually plan-
 ning to do?

143. *pass*. Thrust
 144. *make . . . of me*. Play with me as though I were a mischievous child

Words
 For
 Everyday
 Use

pal • pa • ble (pal'pə bəl) *adj.*, that can be felt; solid
ca • rouse (kə rouz') *vi.*, engage in boisterous drinking and merrymaking

dal • ly (dal'ē) *vi.*, waste time; loiter

- 270 The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
 "Now the King drinks to Hamlet." Come begin;
Trumpets the while.
 And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.
HAMLET. Come on, sir.
LAERTES. Come, my lord.
They play and HAMLET scores a hit.
HAMLET. One.
LAERTES. No.
HAMLET. Judgment.
OSRIC. A hit, a very palpable hit.
LAERTES. Well, again.
 275 **KING.** Stay, give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine.
 Here's to thy health! Give him the cup.
Drum, trumpets sound flourish. A piece goes off within.
HAMLET. I'll play this bout first, set it by a while.
 Come. [*They play again.*] Another hit; what say you?
LAERTES. A touch, a touch, I do confess't.
 280 **KING.** Our son shall win.
QUEEN. He's fat, and scant of breath.
 Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.
 The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.
HAMLET. Good madam!
KING. Gertrude, do not drink.
QUEEN. I will, my lord, I pray you pardon me.
 285 **KING.** [*Aside.*] It is the pois'ned cup, it is too late.
HAMLET. I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by.
QUEEN. Come, let me wipe thy face.
LAERTES. My lord, I'll hit him now.
KING. I do not think't.
LAERTES. [*Aside.*] And yet it is almost against my
 conscience.
 290 **HAMLET.** Come, for the third, Laertes, you do but dally.
 I pray you pass¹⁴³ with your best violence;
 I am sure you make a wanton of me.¹⁴⁴
LAERTES. Say you so? Come on.
OSRIC. Nothing, neither way.
 295 **LAERTES.** Have at you now!

◀ After taking a drink himself, what does Claudius put into the cup? Why does Claudius tell the attendant to give Hamlet the cup?

◀ Why doesn't Claudius want Gertrude to drink?

◀ What has Claudius come to think that Laertes cannot do?

FOOTNOTES

145. woodcock . . . springe. A bird to my own trap
 146. swoons
 147. Unbated and envenom'd. Uncovered and poisoned
 148. temper'd. Concocted
 149. Wretched. Extremely unhappy, sorrowful
 150. chance. Fateful occurrence

- LAERTES wounds HAMLET; then, in scuffling, they change rapiers.
 KING. Part them, they are incens'd.
 HAMLET. Nay, come again.
 HAMLET wounds LAERTES. The QUEEN falls.
 OSRIC. Look to the Queen there ho!
 HORATIO. They bleed on both sides. How is it, my lord?
 OSRIC. How is't, Laertes?
 LAERTES. Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe,¹⁴⁵
 Osric.
 300 I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.
 HAMLET. How does the Queen?
 KING. She sounds¹⁴⁶ to see them bleed.
 QUEEN. No, no, the drink, the drink—O my dear
 Hamlet—
 The drink, the drink! I am pois'ned. Dies.
 HAMLET. O villainy! Ho, let the door be lock'd!
 305 Treachery! Seek it out.
 LAERTES. It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain. No
 med'cine in the world can do thee good;
 In thee there is not half an hour's life.
 The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
 Unbated and envenom'd.¹⁴⁷ The foul practice
 Hath turn'd itself on me. Lo here I lie,
 Never to rise again. Thy mother's pois'ned.
 I can no more—the King, the King's to blame.
 HAMLET. The point envenom'd too!
 315 Then, venom, to thy work. Hurts the KING.
 ALL. Treason! treason!
 KING. O, yet defend me, friends, I am but hurt.
 HAMLET. Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned
 Dane,
 Drink off this potion! Is thy union here?
 320 Follow my mother! KING dies.
 LAERTES. He is justly served,
 It is a poison temper'd¹⁴⁸ by himself.
 Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.
 Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
 Nor thine on me! Dies.
 325 HAMLET. Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.
 I am dead, Horatio. Wretched¹⁴⁹ queen, adieu!
 You that look pale, and tremble at this chance,¹⁵⁰

◀ What happens to both Hamlet and Laertes?

◀ What does Laertes reveal?

◀ Whom does Laertes blame?

◀ How does Hamlet make sure that Claudius will die?

◀ What does Laertes ask for before he dies?

151. **fell.** Terrible
 152. **aright.** Correctly
 153. **I am . . . Dane.** I am more like an ancient Roman than like a Dane. Horatio refers, here, to the preference of some ancient Romans of suicide to a dishonorable life.
 154. **ambassadors.** Ambassadors
 155. **o'er-crows.** Crows over, like a cock that has won a cock fight
 156. **th' election.** To the kingship
 157. **has my dying voice.** Has my vote for his election
 158. **occurrences.** Occurrences
 159. **solicited.** Brought about, urged on (Here Hamlet breaks off his comment because he is dying.)
 160. **ought.** Anything
 161. **quarry cries on havoc.** Game (at the end of the hunt) speaks of riotous slaughter
 162. **toward.** Being prepared

Words
For
Everyday
Use

fe • lic • i • ty (fə lɪs'ɪ tē) *n.*, happiness; bliss

That are but mutes or audience to this act,
 Had I but time—as this fell¹⁵¹ sergeant, Death,
 Is strict in his arrest—O, I could tell you—
 But let it be. Horatio, I am dead,
 Thou livest. Report me and my cause aright¹⁵²
 To the unsatisfied.

330
 HORATIO. Never believe it;
 I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.¹⁵³
 Here's yet some liquor left.

335
 HAMLET. As th' art a man,
 Give me the cup. Let go! By heaven, I'll ha't!
 O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
 Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind me!
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
 Absent thee from felicity a while,
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
 To tell my story. *A march afar off and a shot within.*
 What warlike noise is this?

OSRIC *goes to the door and returns.*
 OSRIC. Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from
 Poland,
 To th' ambassadors¹⁵⁴ of England gives
 345 This warlike volley.

HAMLET. O, I die, Horatio,
 The potent poison quite o'er-crows¹⁵⁵ my spirit.
 I cannot live to hear the news from England,
 But I do prophesy th' election¹⁵⁶ lights
 On Fortinbras, he has my dying voice.¹⁵⁷
 350 So tell him, with th' occurrences¹⁵⁸ more and less
 Which have solicited¹⁵⁹—the rest is silence. *Dies.*

HORATIO. Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet
 prince
 And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!
March within.
 Why does the drum come hither?

Enter FORTINBRAS with the English EMBASSADORS, with Drum, Colors, and Attendants.

355 FORTINBRAS. Where is this sight?
 HORATIO. What is it you would see?
 If aught¹⁶⁰ of woe or wonder, cease your search.
 FORTINBRAS. This quarry cries on havoc.¹⁶¹ O proud
 death,
 What feast is toward¹⁶² in thine eternal cell,

◀ What does
Hamlet ask Horatio
to do?

◀ What does
Horatio threaten to
do?

◀ What does
Hamlet ask Horatio
to do?

◀ Who has arrived?

163. **strook**. Stricken
 164. **so jump upon this bloody question**. So immediately after this bloody contest
 165. **put on**. Caused, arranged
 166. **forc'd cause**. Forced (but not natural or true) cause
 167. **of memory**. Ancient rights
 168. **my vantage**. My advantageous situation
 169. **whose voice . . . more**. Whose voice (expressed in Hamlet's dying support for Fortinbras's election) will carry weight with others
 170. **presently**. In the present, immediately
 171. **mischance/On plots and errors**. Folly, brought about by plots and erroneous suppositions
 172. **been put on**. Become king
 173. **Becomes**. Is appropriate for
 174. **the field**. The battlefield
 175. **ordnance**. Guns

360 That thou so many princes at a shot
So bloodily hast strook?¹⁶³

FIRST EMBASSADOR. The sight is dismal,
And our affairs from England come too late.
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,
To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.
Where should we have our thanks?

HORATIO. Not from his mouth,
Had it th' ability of life to thank you.

He never gave commandment for their death.
But since so jump upon this bloody question,¹⁶⁴
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
High on a stage be placed to the view,

370 And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world
How these things came about. So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on¹⁶⁵ by cunning and forc'd cause,¹⁶⁶
And in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads: all this can I
Truly deliver.

FORTINBRAS. Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.

380 For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.
I have some rights, of memory¹⁶⁷ in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage¹⁶⁸ doth invite me.

HORATIO. Of that I shall have also cause to speak,¹⁶⁹
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more.¹⁶⁹
But let this same be presently¹⁷⁰ perform'd
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance
On plots and errors¹⁷¹ happen.

FORTINBRAS. Let four captains
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,¹⁷²
For he was likely, had he been put on,¹⁷²
To have prov'd most royal; and for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rite of war
Speak loudly for him.

390 Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this
Becomes¹⁷³ the field,¹⁷⁴ but here shows much amiss.
Go bid the soldiers shoot.
Exeunt marching: after the which a peal of ordnance¹⁷⁵ are shot off.

◀ What news do the ambassadors from England bring with them?

◀ About what does Horatio intend to speak?

◀ What does Fortinbras intend to do?

◀ Why does Horatio think that he must speak right away?

◀ What does Fortinbras think of Hamlet?

Responding to the Selection

In act V, scene ii, Hamlet says, "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will," and Horatio answers, "That is most certain." If you were Horatio at the end of act V, would you still believe that people's ends are shaped by divine will? Explain your answer.

Reviewing the Selection

Recalling and Interpreting

1. **R:** What question about Ophelia does the First Clown pose at the beginning of act V?
2. **I:** Are these Clowns correct in what they assume about her?
3. **R:** Whose skull does Hamlet pick up and speak about?
4. **I:** What do the observations that Hamlet makes about the skulls have in common?
5. **R:** Who is buried, what is unusual about her rites, and how does Laertes respond to this?
6. **I:** Do you agree with the priest or with Laertes?
7. **R:** How does Hamlet respond when Laertes jumps into the grave? What does Hamlet say about his own feelings toward Ophelia?
8. **I:** What motivates Hamlet to jump into the grave? Does his statement about his feelings for Ophelia make sense, given his previous actions?
9. **R:** What does Hamlet tell Horatio that he thought as he lay aboard the ship on his way to England?
10. **I:** What evidence does Hamlet give Horatio of the action of divine providence?
11. **R:** What happens to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and why?
12. **I:** Do Rosencrantz and Guildenstern deserve their fates? Why, or why not?
13. **R:** What character is ridiculed by Hamlet for his excessive use of the popular jargon of the court?
14. **I:** Why does Hamlet say that Osric is "spacious in the possession of dirt," and why does he explain at length that Osric is a low, common fellow made good?
15. **R:** Shortly before the fencing match, Hamlet expresses a sense of foreboding to Horatio, and Horatio says that if Hamlet has any misgivings, he will go tell the people not to come and say that Hamlet is not well. What is Hamlet's response?

16. **I:** Does Hamlet believe that people are able to make things happen as they wish them to happen? Does Hamlet believe that people are capable of understanding life?

17. **R:** How do Gertrude, Claudius, Laertes, and Hamlet die?
18. **I:** What role does mischance, or accident, play in these deaths, and in the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? In which cases do "purposes mistook" fall "on th' inventors' heads"?

Synthesizing

19. Does justice triumph at the end of this play? Why, or why not?
20. Fortinbras says of Hamlet that "he was likely, had he been put on, / To have proved most royal." Do you agree with this assessment? Why, or why not?

Understanding Literature (QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION)

1. **Resolution.** The **resolution** is that part of a plot in which the central conflict is resolved. What is the resolution of *Hamlet*?
2. **Foil.** A **foil** is a character whose attributes, or characteristics, contrast with and therefore throw into relief the attributes of another character. Throughout this play, Fortinbras and Laertes are presented as foils for Hamlet. Hamlet himself jokingly refers to Laertes as his foil during the fencing match. In what ways, despite their differences in character, is Hamlet reconciled with Laertes and Fortinbras in the final scene?
3. **Theme.** A **theme** is a main idea in a literary work. One theme that recurs throughout *Hamlet* is that of salvation and the means by which it is either achieved or lost. What indications are there in the final act that Hamlet has grown spiritually and will be saved?
4. **Theme.** A **theme** is a main idea in a literary work. Another theme that recurs throughout *Hamlet* is the relative value of thought and action. Ultimately, what do you think that the play is saying in regard to this question?
5. **Tragedy.** A **tragedy** is a drama that relates the fall of a person of high status. Tragedy tends to be serious. It celebrates the courage and dignity of a tragic hero in the face of doom. Sometimes that doom is made inevitable by a tragic flaw in the hero. In what ways does *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* fit this definition of tragedy? What is Hamlet's tragic flaw?