**Hamlet – Discussion Questions**

**Act III, Scene 1 (Nunnery Scene)**

1) What do we learn from the King and Queen’s interaction with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? What does Claudius seem to think of Hamlet’s odd behavior?

2) What does Claudius hear from Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern that delights him? What is the dramatic irony in this?

3) When Polonius is instructing Ophelia how to act towards Hamlet so that he and Claudius can spy on her interactions with Hamlet, what does Claudius reveal? Do you feel sympathy for Claudius?

4) How does Hamlet seem to be feeling in his most famous soliloquy?

5) How does Hamlet respond when Ophelia approaches him, wishing to return his tokens of love?

6) In the exchange between Hamlet and Ophelia, he bitterly tells her to go to a nunnery. How does the alternate meaning of nunnery (brothel) impact your understanding of what Hamlet could be saying? How could Hamlet be using both meanings of nunnery in this context?

7) How does Ophelia respond? What does her response reveal about her attitude towards Hamlet?

8) After spying on Hamlet, Claudius and Polonius have a discussion. What does Claudius feel is wrong with Hamlet? What plan does Claudius hatch to protect himself?

9) How does Polonius respond?

**Act III, Scene 2 (The Mousetrap)**

1) Hamlet speaks/torments Ophelia with sexual jokes and innuendos. What are some of the things that he is saying to her?

2) The actors basically reenact King Hamlet’s death on the stage. A. What is Claudius’ reaction?

B. What is Hamlet’s reaction?

C. In the actual play, the king was killed by his nephew. What does this signify?

3) At the end of the scene, Hamlet has another soliloquy. How does Hamlet indicate he is ready to kill the King?

4) What does he say he will do when he meets with his mother? Explain his conflicted feelings about his mother.

**Act III, Scene 3**

1) What does the King order Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to do? Why? How do the two respond

to his wishes?

2) After Polonius leaves, what does Claudius say while he is alone?

3) Hamlet sneaks up on the king and draws out his sword. The king is alone, so this would be the

perfect time to kill him. A. So why doesn't Hamlet kill him at this moment?

B. What does this tell us about Hamlet’s character?

C. When does he decide to kill him?

4) Does Hamlet use this as an excuse to further delay the killing of Claudius? Do you think that

his conscience will not allow him to commit premeditated murder?

**Act III, Scene 4 (The Closet Scene)**

1) How does Hamlet verbally attack his mother in lines?

2) Hamlet believed Claudius was behind the arras when he killed Polonius instead. Why do you think in this pivotal moment he acts quickly, without the hesitation that has otherwise plagued him?

3) How does Hamlet react to killing Polonius by mistake?

4) Gertrude then asks Hamlet: “What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue / In noise so rude

against me?” How does he respond?

5) How does Hamlet contrast the pictures of the late King Hamlet with his brother Claudius in

Gertrude's face?

6) Why do you think she cannot see the ghost when Horatio and the other guards

could in Act 1?

7) When Gertrude tells him that he is going mad how does Hamlet try to prove to his mother that he is not insane?

8) What does Hamlet instruct Gertrude to do and to avoid doing? Will Gertrude follow what Hamlet is asking of her?

9) Why do you think that Hamlet confronted his mother in this scene? What was his point in doing this?

10) What are your thoughts about Gertrude from this scene? Is she guilty of helping Claudius kill King Hamlet? What do we learn about her in this scene?