

Remote Learning Packet

NB: Please keep all work produced this week. Details regarding how to turn in this work will be forthcoming.

April 27 - May 1, 2020

Course: 11 Humane Letters

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Welcome to Week 5! In the hopes of providing the greatest opportunity to read *Hamlet* with the leisure and appreciation it deserves, we will be scaling back the written work of this week to primarily focus on enjoying this timeless cornerstone of the Western Tradition. Daily comments for each reading are included, kept deliberately brief to serve as signposting for major themes/moments to keep an eye out for before taking on the day's reading. For this week, there will only be two reading quizzes, on Wednesday and Friday. We will revisit *Hamlet* for a deeper essay at the start of next week.

Weekly Plan:

Monday, April 27

☐ Read William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1 (p. 3-69 of the Folger edition)

Tuesday, April 28

☐ Read *Hamlet*, Act 2 (p. 73-119)

Wednesday, April 29

☐ Complete Quiz on *Hamlet*, Acts 1&2

☐ Read *Hamlet*, Act 3 (p. 123-185)

Thursday, April 30

☐ Read *Hamlet*, Act 4 (p. 189-235)

Friday, May 1

☐ Read *Hamlet*, Act 5 (p. 239-287)

☐ Complete Quiz on *Hamlet*, Acts 3-5

Statement of Academic Honesty

I affirm that the work completed from the packet is mine and that I completed it independently.

I affirm that, to the best of my knowledge, my child completed this work independently

Student Signature

Parent Signature

Monday, April 27

Read William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1 (p. 3-69 of the Folger edition)

At long last, we come to the end of our series of tragedies! It is fitting that we should end with the greatest of all, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. If Sophocles' *Oedipus* exemplifies the perfect distillation of Aristotle's standards for tragic action, then *Hamlet* reinvigorates and elevates the movement to heights that have yet to be surpassed. In the most general sense, a tragic tale has three distinct parts:

- 1) a Fall that communicates the primary flaw, motive, or concern of the play;
- 2) a period of great stasis and suffering, or a Wandering;
- 3) a final Reconciliation, or a resolution of the play's action that leaves the hero or the cosmos of the story in a greater order than it started.

Thus far, we have seen that each play can tackle these stages to varying degrees of emphasis; in *Oresteia*, each play essentially serves as an emphasis on each respective stage, while also containing a complete movement within each individual work. In *Oedipus*, the vast majority of emphasis is in the first aspect, the Fall of the king and its causes. *Hamlet* is somewhat unusual in that it places primary emphasis on the latter two, leaving much of the action of the Fall to before the start of the drama. A key reason for this is that *Hamlet* is written as much in a Christian tradition as it is in a literary one; by this I mean that just as Homer, Aeschylus, and Sophocles innately concerned with the traditions and cosmology of their society, so too is *Hamlet* directly informed by a Christian world: it will be especially important to read the play with an eye towards the redemptive aspect of the play.

For the time being, however, simply begin! Avoid the temptation to over-analyze or to write off the sufferings and actions of the characters as merely confused or selfish; either extreme will distract you from simply opening yourself to the play's splendor.

Tuesday, April 28

Read *Hamlet*, Act 2 (p. 73-119)

"Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" says Marcellus in Act 1.4. As we continue onward into Act 2, we should hopefully begin to see that this is very much apparent. One of the prevailing themes of the play is infection, sickness of soul, and sin, the "vicious mole of nature" in men since birth (1.4.26); according to the Ghost in 1.5, the very cause of the descent of Denmark is due to his death, wherein "sleeping in my orchard, / A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark / is by a forged process of my death / rankly abused." (1.5.42-45). In this sense, the "Fall" of the drama is *the* Fall of Original Sin: Hamlet is plagued by the problem of sin and guilt, particularly as he is given the apparently impossible task of getting revenge for his father and remaining pure (much like Orestes' mandate from Apollo). Pay attention to imagery of infection and gardens.

As we continue into Act 2, remember Hamlet's plan to put on an "antic disposition": pay special attention to his different moods and behaviors, namely when performing before others, when confiding in a single person, or when alone and engaging in a soliloquy. One of the play's greatest ambiguities is to

what extent Hamlet's antic disposition is an act. Hamlet very often discusses or emphasizes knowledge and ignorance: why is he so concerned with these, and do they indicate his tragic *hamartia* in any way?

Wednesday, April 29

Complete Quiz on *Hamlet*, Acts 1&2

Read *Hamlet*, Act 3 (p. 123-185)

Hamlet's famous reflection on the nature of suffering: what is it that paralyzes him so? Act 2 revealed that he has waited two months since the Ghost's command. Notice that Hamlet does not ask whether "To live", but rather "To be": his concern is existential, pondering whether man ought to exist at all, and is not merely born out of personal depression. His conversation with Ophelia following this soliloquy is also revealing of his assessment of human nature. Why does he speak to Ophelia the way he does? Is he trying to tell her something? How could these opening scenes be related to his concern over knowledge vs. ignorance?

Pay attention to how Hamlet reacts when approaching Claudius: we see both at their lowest and most desperate here, albeit in a somewhat ironic situation. As you continue reading, remember this moment and consider the consequences of Hamlet's decision. His interaction with his mother, meanwhile, provides a stark contrast with our previous tragic heroes: Hamlet refuses to cross any "natural" boundaries when dealing with his mother, and instead seeks to help her by revealing the severity of her sin and the state of her soul to herself. Perhaps some good will come of Hamlet's antic disposition?

Thursday, April 30

Read *Hamlet*, Act 4 (p. 189-235)

Hamlet's disposition has clearly changed--what has caused this? Does he feel any remorse or regret for what he has done in Act 3? Has he become no better than Claudius himself? The state Hamlet leaves Denmark in under Claudius as he leaves for England is dire; Claudius will put the blame on Hamlet, but is this not also an indication of Claudius' own inability to rule well? Notice also the stark contrast in the ways Laertes and Ophelia react to their father's death. To what extent does Laertes' thirst for revenge serve as a foil to Hamlet's?

Friday, May 1

Read *Hamlet*, Act 5 (p. 239-287)

Complete Quiz on *Hamlet*, Acts 3-5

By the end, has Hamlet had any reconciliation, any change of heart? Like much of the play, it is ambiguous, but the most critical passage begins at line 5.2.233, where we see Hamlet answer the question posed earlier of whether or not "To be". Is this moment a despairing admission of defeat, or a surrendering himself to God's Providence? Think back to the theme of Denmark and Original Sin: has

Hamlet managed to reconcile his understanding of the problem of sin? The play leaves Denmark's fate uncertain: has the rot been purged? Has Hamlet saved his family and his kingdom by revealing their errors? Once you've read, take some time to see if you can answer some of these questions for yourself. Next week, we will begin with a short essay that will attempt to assess these developments and see how they synthesize with the traditional, Aristotelian understanding of the tragic action.

Wednesday April 29
Reading Quiz: *Hamlet*, Acts 1&2

1. What or who is it that Barnardo, Marcellus, and Horatio encounter during the night watch in scene 1?
 - A. a wild beast
 - B. a royal ghost
 - C. a celestial sign
 - D. a fleeing criminal
2. Which of the three characters is initially doubtful of their encounter?
 - A. Horatio
 - B. Barnardo
 - C. Marcellus
3. What proposal does Horatio make at the end of scene 1?
 - A. to make known to Hamlet what they encountered in the night
 - B. to make known to Hamlet Ophelia's love for him
 - C. to make known to Hamlet his uncle's misdeeds
 - D. to make known to Hamlet a plot against his life
4. Identify the speaker: "Do not forever with thy vailed lids / Seek for thy noble father in the dust. / Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity."
 - A. King Claudius
 - B. Polonius
 - C. Hamlet
 - D. Queen Gertrude
5. From where do Claudius and Gertrude try to persuade Hamlet from going?
 - A. London
 - B. Norway
 - C. Wittenburg
 - D. Paris
6. With regard to what does Laertes tell Ophelia to exercise utmost caution?
 - A. Hamlet's love toward her
 - B. Claudius's love toward her
 - C. her father's counsel
 - D. her own judgement
7. Identify the speaker: "This above all: to thine own self be true, / And it must follow, as the night the day, / Thou canst not then be false to any man."
 - A. King Claudius
 - B. Laertes
 - C. Polonius
 - D. Horatio

8. What does the spirit of young Hamlet's father reveal to him in the night?
- A. that the kingdom of Denmark will be overrun by Norsemen
 - B. that Polonius was plotting to have Laertes become the next king
 - C. that Gertrude was not his real mother
 - D. that Claudius murdered him to take the throne and the queen
9. What does Hamlet demand of Horatio and Marcellus at the end of the first act?
- A. their allegiance to him in battle
 - B. a vow of silence about what they saw that night
 - C. money for him to travel to England
 - D. their help solving a riddle
10. What does Ophelia report to her father in the opening scene of the second act?
- A. Hamlet's strange behavior toward her
 - B. suspicious activity among Hamlet's friends
 - C. that she's being courted by an English prince
 - D. her ambition to become queen of Denmark
11. What does Claudius call on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to do?
- A. discover the source of treachery in the palace
 - B. find out why Hamlet has changed and try to cheer him up
 - C. assassinate the prince of Norway
 - D. spy on Laertes in France
12. Identify the speaker: "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!"
- A. Polonius
 - B. Rosencrantz
 - C. Guildenstern
 - D. Hamlet
13. In two to three complete sentences, answer the following question: Does Hamlet have an optimistic or pessimistic view of the human condition?

Friday May 1
Reading Quiz: *Hamlet*, Acts 3-5

1. Identify the speaker: “And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish / That your good beauties be the happy cause / Of Hamlet’s wildness. So shall I hope your virtues / Will bring him to his wonted way again, / To both your honors.”
 - A. Polonius
 - B. Queen Gertrude
 - C. Laertes
 - D. King Claudius
2. What does Hamlet make known to Ophelia in the first scene of Act 3?
 - A. that he was the cause of his father’s death
 - B. that she was the cause of his father’s death
 - C. that he once hated her but now loves her
 - D. that he once loved her but no longer does
3. How does Claudius respond to what he sees of the play *The Murder of Gonzago*?
 - A. he expresses remorse over his grave offense
 - B. he shows pride in the fact that he was not caught in his misdeeds
 - C. he gives a prize to the players for their skillful acting
 - D. he banishes the players from the realm for their poor acting
4. Who does Hamlet strike dead before knowing his identity?
 - A. Claudius
 - B. Polonius
 - C. Laertes
 - D. one of the players
5. Identify the speaker: “A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.”
 - A. Polonius
 - B. Claudius
 - C. Rosencrantz
 - D. Hamlet
6. To where does Claudius seek to send Hamlet?
 - A. England
 - B. Norway
 - C. Poland
 - D. France

7. Whom does the “rabble” threaten to make king?
- A. Hamlet
 - B. Horatio
 - C. Laertes
 - D. Polonius
8. Who captures Hamlet and sends him back to Denmark?
- A. Fortinbras
 - B. an unknown pirate
 - C. English soldiers
 - D. Polacks
9. What plan is hatched to ensure Hamlet is killed by “accident”?
- A. put him to sea in a ship that isn’t seaworthy
 - B. poison him in his sleep
 - C. place a candle in an unsafe place near his quarters
 - D. convince him to agree to a friendly bout of fencing with Laertes
10. Whose grave is being prepared at the beginning of Act 5?
- A. Ophelia’s
 - B. Polonius’s
 - C. Hamlet’s
 - D. Horatio’s
11. Identify the speaker: “I am justly killed with mine own treachery.”
- A. Claudius
 - B. Osric
 - C. Hamlet
 - D. Laertes
12. True or false: Hamlet and Laertes make amends in their final moments.
- A. True
 - B. False
13. In two to three sentences, answer the following question: What exactly is Hamlet asking when he poses the question, “To be or not to be” (3.1.64)?
