ELA B30

Ms. McLeod

Hamlet

**Act III Questions**

1. What is the subject of Hamlet's second soliloquy, the famous "To be or not to be" speech?
2. Why is he so cruel to Ophelia immediately thereafter?
3. What happens in the "play-within-a-play"? How do the speeches and actions reflect on events in the kingdom of Denmark? How does the king respond?
4. In what way is Hamlet's second major interaction with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern different from his first encounter with them?
5. Why does Hamlet decline to take action against Claudius in Act III, sc.iii?
6. What happens in Act III, scene iv (the closet scene)? Why is this death so important for the play, or what does the death of this figure represent?
7. Based on what you've seen in Act III, scene iv, do you think Gertrude knew about the murder?

**The Rotten State of Denmark   
a Study of Shakespeare's Hamlet**

**Collaborative Group Work**

**Claudius - Guilty or Not Guilty?**

Claudius is the source of the corruption in the play. Act 3 scene 3 is a pivotal scene in assessing whether the audience feels he is truly corrupt.

1. Why does he mistrust Hamlet?
2. How does he plan to deal with him?
3. "*Never alone / Did the King sigh but with a general groan*" - what is the meaning of this line? How might this be ironic in the light of the effect of his crime upon Elsinore?
4. Why does his crime have the "*primal eldest curse upon't*"?
5. What might he mean when he says that he stands "*in pause*"?
6. What reasons does he give for wanting to "*look up*" and pray?
7. Why is he unable to pray, however?
8. What effect does the imagery have at the end of his speech?
9. Claudius's final statement: what might Shakespeare be suggesting about the true nature of Claudius' character?