

Act 1, Scene 5

Sam → Summarizer

Jack → Connector

Jordan → Characterization

Ryan → Style

Summarizer with a focus on plot - Prepare a brief summary of the act. Summaries should include quotes with act, scene line references for major events that you mention in your summary. Ask yourself what details, characters, or events are so important that they would be included in an essay or on an exam.

In this scene, Hamlet is confronted with the ghost that turns out to be his dead father King Hamlet. The ghost explains to Hamlet that he is in purgatory. The ghost tells Hamlet that he needs to “revenge his foul and most unnatural murder” (Shakespeare 1.5.25). This informs Hamlet that his uncle Claudius is responsible for the death of his father, “The serpent that did sting thy father’s life, Now wears his crown” (Shakespeare 1.5.39-40). Hamlet seems to immediately become consumed with revenge, trusting every word that the ghost says. Although Hamlet is now feeling vengeful against the people around him, the ghost informs him to leave those alone, and to love his mother as he would, “Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven” (Shakespeare 1.5.87). As the ghost leaves him, Marcellus and Haratio find Hamlet. Hamlet appears to act mad, and makes them swear to never tell a soul what they saw that night, “Never to speak of this that you have seen, Swear by my sword” (1.5.154-155).

Connector:

Connect specific passages and events from the text to current or historical perspectives on identity and cultural/historical events or social and cultural movements. Consider making connections to other texts you've consumed on the basis of similar themes, plot events, literary devices, and character traits.

Remember that the course theme is ‘Identity’

Identity is a product of one's environment; it is influenced by external and internal factors, which means that it is always subject to change. Identity is both self defined and imposed by society.

Hamlet listens closely to the ghost, taking his word for everything he says and immediately planning how he will react. He responds this way because during that time, people believed that when the natural chain of being/divine right of kings was disturbed, there would be these chaotic events that would occur as a result. Now, he feels that he must remain loyal to the tradition and do his duty to restore the natural chain of being as well as avenge his father. This shows that because of the societal beliefs at the time, Hamlet’s decisions are heavily influenced by his environment, which will create judgements on his character. Similarly, queen Elizabeth at the time did not have an heir to the throne which created controversy due to the strong belief in the divine right of kings. Hamlet says: “*Yea, from the table of my memory I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records, All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past*(Shakespeare 1.5.99-101)”. This shows that Hamlet will drop everything to tend to his duty of avenging his father and demonstrate his loyalty to the divine right of kings. The fact that Hamlet will go to this extent without hesitation,

shows how dominant the idea of the natural chain of beings was at the time, and how much he conformed to it. He is willing to honour his duty to his societal status/position more than his duty to himself.

Characterization:

Identify the most important aspects of each element of characterization that address major themes or “big ideas” in the text. Consider analyzing the main character, but also focus on how his characterization is influenced or illuminated by the character development of those around him. You must have textual references to support your insights.

It can be observed through indirect characterization -- in this case, Hamlet's speech -- that Hamlet's father has a great influence on him, as he is very loyal to him. While speaking with the ghost, Hamlet says, “*Remember thee! Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat In this distracted globe*”(1.5.96-98), which demonstrates that he is openly admitting that his mind is clouded with this new information and emotions that arise from it. Once Hamlet discovered the truth of his father's death, he also stated: “*I'll wipe away all trivial fond records, All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past That youth and observation copied there, And thy all alone shall live Within the book and volume of my brain, Unmix'd with baser matter: yes, by heaven!*”(1.5.100-105) He communicates that he will forget everything he once knew -- all impressions and prior commitments -- for this filial obligation he has to avenge his father. He declares that he will make his father's commandment his priority from this moment on. This shows that Hamlet's mind is quite malleable and vulnerable to influences from the environment that surrounds him. Hamlet can be compared to a child because he absorbs the information given to him and judges his actions based upon it. Hamlet also seems to speak in an erratic manner, different from that of his normal speech. This may imply that his desire for revenge has clouded his judgement and if so, this leads us to the question of whether Hamlet has snapped or not.

Hamlet later juxtaposes himself when he says: “Here, as before, never, so help you mercy, How strange or odd so'er I bear myself, As I perchance hereafter shall think meet To put an antic disposition on”(1.5.171-173). He speaks once again with an erratic sentence structure, however, he says that he is going to act crazy thus implying that he has not legitimately gone mad. Through this, he contradicts his prior self contributing to the motif of uncertainty as to the question of whether Hamlet has really gone crazy or not remains unsolved.

Style (Ryan):

In this scene Shakespeare starts to develop one of the main **motifs** of the play: filial piety. The main quote in this scene that refers to this theme is when the ghost says “*Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive Against thy mother aught; leave her to heaven*”(Shakespear.1.5.86-87). In this quote the ghost is talking about how however Hamlet decides to take out his revenge, he should not harm his mother; instead leave her alone and let god and her guilt deal with her. Another theme that arises during this scene is revenge. Hamlet demonstrates his desire to seek revenge in the line “*That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain*”(Shakespeare.1.5.109). In this quote Shakespeare uses **repetition** to show how badly Hamlet wants to avenge his fathers death by killing claudius. It also shows how important the

theme of revenge and family honour is, since Shakespeare wants to put more of a focus and show how strong Hamlet's desire is to avenge the death of his father and the joy that will fill him after.