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# ❧ ACT 1 ❧

## PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

*Prepare to think about the novel and its Central One Idea by drawing upon your prior knowledge, experience, or interests.*

1. Imagine seeing the ghost of a deceased family member or loved one. How would you respond? Would you believe it is real? Would you be able to trust it?

## GRAMMAR | Presentation

*Discover essential facts, elements, and features of the play through the Reading Notes, Words to Be Defined, and Comprehension Questions.*

### READING NOTES

#### Scene 1

1. **cross it** (1.1.127) – Horatio crosses the path of the Ghost, and/or makes a cross with his arms to protect against an evil spirit.
2. **Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated** (1.1.158-159) – just before Christmas
3. **This bird of dawning singeth all night long** (1.1.160) – The rooster crows throughout the night.
4. **But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.** (1.1.166-167) – Early dawn appears from behind a tall hill, personified by wearing a reddish-brown cloak. Dawn typically represents rebirth, but here it foreshadows pending trouble. The color russet is often associated with sorrow or grave seriousness. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, expecting a lifetime of remorse, the character Biron laments, "Henceforth my wooing mind shall be express'd/In russet yeas and honest kersey noes." The breaking dawn mantles or cloaks the Earth with its doleful color.
5. **dumb** (1.1.171) – mute; speechless

6. **mood** – The general emotional feeling that prevails in a piece of literature. If **tone** means the author's attitude toward a subject in a work of literature, then **mood** is the emotional feeling aroused in the reader by the work.
7. **setting** – the time and place of a literary work
8. **symbol/symbolism** – A word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself.<sup>1</sup>

## Scene 2

1. **mirth** (1.2.12) – merriment; joy
2. **dirge** (1.2.12) – a lament for the dead; a funeral song
3. **filial** (1.2.91) – of or relating to a son or daughter
4. **peevish** (1.2.100) – fractious; spiteful; petty
5. **Fie!** (1.2.101) – a somewhat humorous expression of disgust
6. **Wittenberg** (1.2.113) – The University of Wittenberg in Wittenberg, Germany – which was the great center in the West for classical studies, theology, and philosophy. Wittenberg was also the city of Martin Luther, the theologian who initiated the Protestant Reformation by nailing his *Ninety-Five Theses* on the Church door in Wittenberg in 1517. This reference would surely have resonated with Shakespeare's audiences. The University of Wittenberg is also the university of Dr. Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's 1592 play.
7. **A truant disposition** (1.2.169) – a tendency to be lazy
8. **pun** – A play on words by using different meanings of the same word, or different words with the same sound. Example from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: "A mender of bad soles" (souls)<sup>2</sup>
9. **adiaoeta** – an expression that, in addition to an obvious meaning, carries a second, subtle meaning (often at variance with the ostensible meaning)<sup>3</sup>

[1] M. H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, Seventh Edition (Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999), 311.

[2] Austin M. Fox, *A Glossary of Terms for the Understanding and Enjoyment of Literature*. (Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, 1955), 34.

[3] "Adiaoeta." <http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Figures/A/adiaoeta.htm>.

13. What does the Ghost reveal about the manner of his death? Does it confirm Hamlet's suspicion? Include a quotation.
14. What does the Ghost ask Hamlet to do? Does he put any parameters on his request? Include a quotation.
15. What does Hamlet conclude about the Ghost when talking with Horatio and Marcellus? What does Hamlet demand of his friends?

## LOGIC | Dialectic

*Reason with the facts, elements, and features of the play;  
sort, arrange, compare, and connect ideas – and begin  
to uncover and determine the Central One Idea.*

### SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**May be verbally discussed or answered in written form in your Literature Notebook.**

1. Consider the various elements in the opening **setting**. What **mood** does Shakespeare establish? Do you think this mood will pervade the play as a whole?
2. "Bernardo. *Who's there?*  
*Francisco. Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.*  
*Bernardo. Long live the King!*" (1.1.1-3)  
Consider the opening question, "*Who's there?*" Is anything suggestive or **symbolic** in that question? What about the changing of the (sentinel) guard?
3. "Horatio. *What art thou that usurp'st this time of night  
Together with that fair and warlike form  
In which the majesty of buried Denmark  
Did sometimes march? By heaven I charge thee, speak!*" (1.1.46-49)  
Is **adiaoeta** present anywhere in these lines?
4. Refer to the information on Ghost-lore in Elizabethan England in the Basic Features and Background section. What were some of the theories on ghosts? Are any of these theories expressed in Act 1? If so, in what instances?
5. What Christian references do you notice at the close of scene 1?

12. Read 1.4.23-38, starting at "Hamlet. *So, oft it chances in particular men/ That, for some vicious mole of nature in them, ....*"  
Analyze Hamlet's speech. What is significant? Some questions to consider: How does this speech reveal his propensity for deep thought? How does it reveal his keen ability to move from the particular to the general? How does he explore the problem of evil in man and Aristotle's notion of **hamartia**? What answers does he provide for the problem of evil? Could this relate to Hamlet himself? Does it **foreshadow** anything?
13. Does Act 1 feature any important **contrasts** between scenes? If so, which ones? What might this suggest?

## RHETORIC | Expression

*Express in your own words the Central  
One Idea with supporting points.*

### RHETORICAL EXPRESSION:

To be answered in your Literature Notebook in preparation for your essay.

1. In 1-2 paragraphs, **summarize** the events of Act 1.
  2. Write the **Central One Idea** of Act 1 in a precise, eloquent sentence.
  3. List three or four points that **support** your determination of the Central One Idea.
  4. Write a **lead** (1-2 sentences) that grabs the reader's attention—such as a *quote, question, startling fact or statistic, scenario, piece of dialogue*, etc.
  5. Write an **amplification/importance** (1-2 sentences) that explains why your thesis is important in a larger or more universal sense.
- ◆ **Central Quote:** Choose a quote from anywhere in Act 1 that you think best embodies the Central One Idea and copy it down.
- ❶ Write the Central One Idea as expressed by the teacher.