*Hamlet* Act 4

IV. i

* This scene prompts C to rid the court of H
* Scene opens and C notices that G is upset
* “Mad as the sea and wind….” G tells how H has gone mad and killed P. G is actually mad at H’s behaviour whether she tells C of his secret or not, she speaks these lines to C
* “The unseen good old man” (ironic - - no one actually thought this)
* “O heavy deed!/ It had been so with us, had we been there” C realizes he was H’s intended victim - - he would have been killed if he was there
* “but so much was our love,/We would not understand what was most fit” but here he remains “loving” uncle by saying this
* C wonders how to tell P’s subjects and the court about his death
* G reveals that H removed the body and regrets what he’s done
* Ros & Guild are informed of P’s death and they are told to bring his body to the chapel
* Last set of lines (l.39-end) C is stressed and sad
* C & G need to call up wisest friends and tell them their plan to avoid being blamed for P’s death

IV.ii

* H refuses to tell R&G where P’s body is
* H agrees to go with R & G to see the King
* “The body is with the King, but the king is no with the body. The king is a thing – “this statement could be taken as an expression of H’s madness. As well, h could mean the P’s body is with the old King H, but King C is not (yet) dead
* H’s actions are solely prompted by his contempt for the King’s spies
* Metaphor - - another great comparison for H – H says R & G are sponges – says that the King will use them to soak up the information and squeeze out what they know (get information from them) then discard them “when he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and sponge, you shall be dry again” (H’s warning to R&G)

IV.iii

* C is clearly in charge this scene as he sends H to exile
* C indicates he has sent for H and to get P’s body
* C admits it’s difficult to confine H because he’s loved by all the people (therefore he can’t have H killed because H is too loved and it will cause problems for C with the court/country)
* R says that H won’t reveal where the body is
* Another great metaphor/analogy by H (Worm Philosophy) (l.22-34)
* Says that death is the great equalizer of man - - emperors and beggars alike are all the same it death (everyone returns to the ground and it doesn’t matter who you are the worms will feed on you)
* H tells C he can find the body near the stairs leading to the lobby
* C confirms that H must be sent to England immediately
* “So is it, if thou knew’st our purposes” Irony - - when H thinks it is a good idea to go to England, we later learn that C wants to have H killed upon arrival
* C’s orders to R & G – put H on the ship and send him off tonight (remember R&G escort H)
* C’s soliloquy (l.64-end)
* “Do it England” – Kill H immediately once he arrives
* C is desperate to keep his Queen and the throne
* C reveals that as soon as H arrives in England he is to be put to death (this is the order in the sealed letters)
* After this C feels he will have peace at last (C feels that H is like a disease in his blood)

IV.iv

* Fortinbras has mastered his own emotions over his own father’s death and his actions are now based on reason.
* F dispatches a Captain to request permission from C to cross Denmark on his way to Poland
* H learns that Norwegian soldiers led by F are going to fight Poland for land (attack Poland all in the name of honour)
* “This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace…why the man dies” war is just an excuse
* Hamlet Soliloquy
* “How all occasions do inform against me,/And spur my dull revenge!” shows H’s inability to act, only anticipates action
* H compares his won decisions with F’s positive action against Poles – sees F being a man of action and this motivates him to take action
* He claims that when honour is at stake, it is right to act
* “Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means” – sees that he has done nothing/no action taken (realizes he is a coward)
* F is prepared to sacrifice 20,000 men for this fight
* H vows he will stop wasting time and avenge his father’s death at last – Back on revenge idea (l.67-68) Foreshadowing - - will take immediate action
* H compares himself to F the whole soliloquy
* H will not dawdle, moralize or feign madness
* Foil – a character who contrasts with another character in order to reveal or emphasize significant characteristics
* Foil Characters – Fortinbras and Hamlet:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Fortinbras** | **Both** | **Hamlet** |
| * Loyal to the King
* Warrior (soldier)
* Noble
* Man of Action
 | * Princes
* Have an uncle on the throne
* Roughly the same age
* Father’s were killed
* Thoughts of Revenge
 | * No loyalty to Claudius
* Scholar
* Procrastinates/Man of inaction
 |

IV.v

* Horatio describes O’s condition:

1) gets upset over small things

2) doesn’t make sense when she talks

3) distraught with grief (P’s death and H leaving)

* talks in disjointed sentences when talking about P - - \*\*\*\*she’s going insane\*\*\*\*
* G – aside - L.18 – 21 – a person can be so afraid of revealing his guilt that he does reveal it in the same way that a person who is nervous about spilling the contents of a glass will spill them
* O is singing – sign on insanity

\*\*\*Remember O is an innocent victim of an overbearing Father foolishness (P ordered O not to see H and then ordered her to entrap H who rudely rejected her)

* Now the Father that she feared but respected has been violently murdered and she has no one left.
* She is in a confused sate - - unable to mature and now can’t cope with P’s death
* She has NEVER had to or been given the opportunity to think for herself
* Songs:
* About Love
* Dad dead/gone
* Hamlet (her song reveals the nature of their relationship) (romantic rejection she experienced) (hard to tell if they slept together or not…seems as if they did)(broken promises “promised me to wed” – did he just use her?)
* Daughters forbidden to grow up
* Muses over the irregular burial of her father (foreshadows that L will be taking revenge – l.69)
* C says O needs to be watched closely
* C thinks O is mad because:
	+ - Father is dead
		- H has left the kingdom
		- H killed P
		- Buried P quickly & quietly (shows no respect)
* C says that Laertes has returned in secret from France and is upset by the ugly rumours he’s heard about his Father’s death
* C hears a noise and calls the guards – Paranoid? (Switzers – Swiss guards)
* Messenger comes in and says L and some followers (who call him C’s successor) have overcome his officers of the guard and broke into the castle
* L barges in with his men and is angry (brought his men and is ready to fight) (L thinks that C was responsible for P’s death) \*\*\*Wants revenge NOW\*\*\*
* Gert tells Laertes that C did not kill P
* L is also a good foil for Hamlet
* O enters in a pathetic state/singing
* L is VERY upset by this as he has not seen the state his sister is in
* L can hardly contain his emotions
* O’s flower/herb gifts
* Each is symbolic (each flower means something and see the symbolism of who it would be given to)
* Rosemary – remembrance (given at weddings and funerals)
* Pansies – thoughts of love
* Fennel – flattery
* Columbines – infidelity in marriage & ingratitude
* Rue – repentance and sorrow
* Herb-grace – repentance
* Daisy – false promised love & infidelity
* Violets - faithfulness
* Most touching episode in the play as she distributes the flowers to the other characters
* L is absolutely devastated by O’s mental state - -shows he really loves her
* C promises L that if he discovers C was involved with P’s death that C will give L his kingdom, and if L finds nothing C will join L in finding the real reason for P’s death
* “And we shall jointly labour with your soul/To give it due content” – C is master of himself and of the crisis at hand
* L swears to avenge his father’s death to uphold honour in his family
* L is a man of action (in contrast to Hamlet)
* L shows leadership qualities of acting quickly to right a wrong (in contrast to Hamlet)

IV.vi

* A bridging scene
* Servant tells Horatio that he has some letters that some sailors want to give him
* Horatio says H is the only one to send a letter
* Sailors – probably those from the pirate ship who brought H back to Denmark
* Quick witted H has managed to elude R & G and we wonder what has happened to those two
* Horatio reads the letter
* The ship H was on was attacked by pirates
* While fighting H boarded the pirate ship and was taken prisoner
* He was treated well and returned to Denmark on the condition that he would do the pirates some good once H becomes King
* Horatio asks to be taken to the Prince (Hor is to deliver the other letters to C and then will meet with H without delay)

\*\*\*now all the major characters in conflict are back in Denmark\*\*\*

IV.vii

* This prepares the stage for the final catastrophe (Falling action - - fast gathering momentum as one tragedy follows another)
* C tells L that H killed P and tried to kill C too
* L asks why H wasn’t punished
* C replies that because H is Gert’s son (devoted to each other – might upset her) and the Danish people are fond of H
* C reassures L that H will not go unpunished
* “Break not your sleeps…And think it pastime” – Dramatic irony - - we know that H is back in Denmark
* Letters are delivered for C and Gert individually
* C reads: H has returned to Denmark and will tell the King everything when they meet
* C is highly suspicious of H’s return so he formulates a plot with L to murder H in accident so G will not suspect anything
* L wants to be the one to kill H
* C admires L’s swordsmanship skills and wants L & H to have fencing match
* C says that poison is most subtle and effective choice for killing because it was difficult to detect and didn’t make a mess (C used to poison to kill King H)
* The Plan that C and L conjure up:
* C will set up a match where L will challenge H to a fencing duel (seemingly innocent to others)
* L will fight with an untipped sword
* They will put the tip of the sword in a strong poison and upon a mere scratch it will kill H
* C will have a cup of poisoned wine as a back up plan in case L doesn’t wound H in the match
* L agrees to the plan
* Reflect on this: L is a man of action in comparison to H (as H’s procrastination took him months to kill C)
* Gert enters and announces that O has drowned
* was wearing a garland of flowers and was hanging them on the limbs of the willow trees when she fell in the brook
* Her spreading dress kept her afloat for a while, until she sank to her death because the weight of the saturated dress pulled her under the water (she sang as she floated down the river, dress billowing until it pulled her under)
* O’s death was accidental (or was it suicide? – it’s debated
* L is overcome with sorrow and leaves the room
* C tells G that he will have to sooth L’s rage once again because of O’s death
* Foil L and H:

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| **Laertes** | **Both** | **Hamlet** |
| * Sneaky
* Manipulative
* Dishonest
* No acceptable because of the way he is approaching revenge (Man of Action)
 | * Father’s murdered
* Scholars
* Similar in age
* Love Ophelia
* Seek revenge
 | * Noble Revenge
* True
* Honest
* Procrastinates getting his revenge
 |