*Hamlet* Act 5

V.i

* 1st part of the scene offers low comedy (that was popular with Elizabethan audiences)
* The clowns are gravediggers (simple, rough people)
* Scene serves as comic relief before the subsequent tense action
* They discuss O’s death - - was it suicide or accident (different Catholic funeral rights for each type of death)
* They discuss legal and theological questions in a scholarly fashion (humourous because they are confusing the terminology)
* They joke but it is to say that their profession is honourable (they cannot dwell on death as it is their job to deal with it - - if they internalized death then they couldn’t do their job right)
* Clown singing - - sparks H. He is shocked to see a gravedigger do his job with such lack of feeling
* Start line 76 – H’s final thoughts on death/life and what it means
* Says this person is just a collection of bones to toss around? This is all that becomes of a person - - able to be disrespected so easily and no one seems to care
* H asks gravedigger how long he’s held this job and clown says he’s been a gravedigger since the day when King H defeated Old Fortinbras of Norway, the same day as H was born
* H’s childhood playmate’s skull (Yorik the court jester) is thrown out of the dirt (the jester died 23 years ago)
* Yorik was a childhood favourite of H’s who played countless games with H
* H remembering back to his childhood (takes audience back to a time when the kingdom was happy – before C – and all was well with no torment and suffering
* Yorik was full of life, laughter and fun and now all that H has is a lifeless skull that shows nothing but death and decay
* O’s funeral procession arrives
* H notices something strange about the irregular rites
* L questions the priest about the modified rites given to O
* Priest replies that it is the best they can do as it is a question if she committed suicide or not (there is controversy over her death) (remember how the Catholic Church views suicide)
* Priest says the coroner ruled the death a suicide but C overruled and said that she would be buried in sacred ground
* L argues that she died chaste and deserves a respectful gesture (\*\*\*this reflects how O was treated poorly in life and now in death also this poor treatment continues\*\*\*)
* Mood changes from preoccupation with death to the reality itself that O is dead
* H is in shock – he did not know that O was mad or dead for that matter
* Gert laments on the fact that she wanted O to be H’s wife and she had hoped to spread flowers on O’s wedding bed not her grave. G realizes both P & L were lacking judgement to discourage O & H to get married/have a relationship
* L leaps into grave (grief stricken) and begs to be buried with O
* H also charges forward to confront L and leaps into the grave
* L grabs H by the throat
* They fight over who loved O more
* H says he loved O more than L ever could have loved her
* H mocks L’s pompous declaration of his sorrow
* G says H’s madness is driving him to act so crazy
* H doesn’t know why L hates him so much – demands to know why L treats him so harshly
* C & L alone together at the end of the scene – C reminds L of the plot against H’s life (reminds L of the scheme for vengeance)

\*\*\*things are not what they seem and we know the treachery C has planned with L will disprove H’s unwary remark

* L determined now for sure to seek revenge and try to redeem his family honour

V.ii

* This scene provides the final catastrophe of the action
* He first episode concerns and exchange of information between Hamlet and Horatio about Hamlet’s rescue from certain death and serves to demonstrate Hamlet’s change in behaviour
* From the start Hamlet was decisive and clever in his actions (specifically with R&G commission)
* Scene comes in as Hamlet is telling Horatio about his experiences since he left England
* L.9-11 – there is divinity/fate that plans our lives, yet we can alter that plan ever so slightly, but for the most part our lives are left to fate (Ironic - - H sent his false friends R&G to their deaths)
* Story of what happened:
* H crept from his cabin and located the R&G, where he found the sealed letters from C with instructions from the English King
* H found out he was to be beheaded once he arrived in England
* He wrote new instructions to have England King execute R & G who brought the commission (orders)
* He folded the letters just as the original and sealed then with his signet ring (family ring that was used as an official seal to leave an imprint in wax for a seal on a letter - - of course he would have this as he is Royal family/carries Hamlet name) and returns the letters back to R&G’s quarters
* Hor is astonished at C’s villainy
* L. 68-75 – Hor asks H if he thinks he has just cause to kill C now considering his treachery (l.72-75 – H will avenge his father’s death - - strong focus on C now…his only vision)
* H tells Hor that he is sorry for his angry outburst with L – shows that H is courteous
* Osric enters (before the final catastrophe there is some comic relief) He is a busybody
* H teases and mocks Osric’s mode of expression
* Osric explains the rules of fencing to H
* Osric tells H that C has arranged a friendly fencing match between L & H and it is to take place before the King and Queen and the court
* H agrees to the duel and says he will win for the King
* Osric leaves to tell the King that H will take part
* H and Hor comment on Osric’s foolishness
* Another Lord comes in and asks when H will be ready for the duel
* H says he will be ready when the king is and he is told that both the King and Queen are coming to watch the match
* Hor – l. 206 – warn H that he will lose this match (foreshadowing)
* H replies that he doesn’t think so; he has been practicing since L left for France. He does indicate that he senses danger but is ready for his destiny (willing to accept his fate)
* Hor urges H to postpone the match if he has any suspicions and adds that he will announce to the others that H is not feeling well
* To Laertes: H apologizes for his behaviour at O’s funeral (and since his father’s death) and states it was madness that caused his outbursts (l.229) here he seems to be admitting that he was mad - - and at times when he temporarily lost control of his mind
* L says he’s sure that that H meant no harm but he will not offer pardon to H until the elders/honoured court members have assured him his name and honour are unblemished
* L.249-250 – Ironic as L has different concept of honour than H and his mode to seek revenge is already set in
* L.263 – H knows that C has wagered on the weaker side
* C says he has the odds in his favour
* L picks foil
* H picks his foil and asks if they are all the same length
* C orders cannons fired. Says is H gets the first or second point he will drink a cup of wine in his honour. C will place a pearl in the cup to be drunk by the successful swordsman
* L & H fence/play
* H scores first point – C drinks to H’s first point. C says for H to drink too; H refuses and wishes to continue the duel
* G doesn’t think that H will win because he’s out of shape, out of training and is sweaty
* G grabs cup of wine and drinks it (she drinks the poisoned wine – C says “Gertrude do not drink”) (is C truly evil for not trying to stop her?)
* C – aside “It is the poisoned cup; it is too late”
* L.306 – L “I will hit him now” – L assures C that he will strike H soon/now (C replies – I doubt it)
* They play and L wounds H and, in the scuffle, they exchange foils and H wounds L
* Gertrude falls
* Hor declares that H & L are both bleeding
* H shows concerned that his mother fell
* C says she fainted from the blood
* G - l.324 – she cries out that she’s been poisoned – **death #3 (Polonius #1, Ophelia #2)**
* L falls (remember he was scratched with poisoned rapier)
* L speaks and confirms that G was poisoned and that C was to blame for it all “the king, the king’s to blame” (here L redeems himself)
* H “The point envenom’d too! (H realizes that the rapier is poisoned and H turns quickly and stabs/kills C)
* L.339 – 341 – H finally redeems himself, confronts C, lunges at C and kills him **(death #4)**
* Before L dies he asks pardon exclaiming that H is not to blame for P or O’s deaths, nor is L to be blamed for H’s death
* L dies **(death #5)**
* L. 347 – 355 – H says that he is dying and bids his mother farewell. H asks Hor to report his story and his cause after he dies (Irony - - it was poison that started the rottenness in Denmark and it is poison that has claimed so many victims)
* Hor attempts to drink the poisoned wine to honour his friend and die with him, but H stops him and says that Hor must live to tell the story and clear H’s name
* Cannon fire heard - - Osric confirms that Fortinbras was victorious over Poland
* Just before H dies he gives approval to Fortinbras to take the throne as King of Denmark
* Hamlet dies **(Death #6)**
* Hor pays tribute to H
* H is finally at peace in death
* Fort enters and is shocked at the sight of all the dead bodies
* First Ambassador – reports he is too late to tell C that R & G have been executed as C requested (remember H had changed the letters) **(deaths # 7 & 8 confirmed)** (l.392)
* Horatio asks Fort to give orders to place the bodies on view and to let him report to the unknowing world how this tragedy came to pass
* Horatio will recount to Fortinbras and others H’s tragic story of a man’s struggle with the doctrine of revenge and his conflicting perceptions of truth and reality
* It is significant that Fort, Prince of Norway, should return from his Polish conquest at this time to fill the vacant Danish throne and carry on the state of affairs
* Fortinbras calls upon four army captains to prepare H for an honourable military burial with full honours (as he deserves this treatment of honour)
* l. 421 – Elegy by Fortinbras in memory of Hamlet

THE END – YAY!!