

02/27/2001  
Betty Gilson  
<http://www.artistrue.com>  
ENC 1102  
*Hamlet*  
William Shakespeare  
Act I Scene I-III  
Summary  
Revision

William Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet*, presents the reader with a very interesting plot—which unfolds in five acts.

In the first act, Horatio, Hamlet's friend, finds out— from Officers Bernardo and Marcellus— about the apparition of the former king. He is not able to talk to the ghost, but he obtains precious details about it—most importantly that it was the ghost of the former king, Hamlet's father.

From the discussion between Horatio and Officer Marcellus, we find out that the former king defeated Fortinbras of Norway, and—according to their agreement—won all of Fortinbras' lands. However, young Fortinbras—the former Fortinbras' son—does not want to accept their agreement. Therefore, he plans to gather an army of mercenaries, in order to attack Denmark.

In the second scene, we meet the despotic king, Cornelius, and we find out about his intention to try to stop the young Fortinbras' attack. In order to do that, Cornelius wrote a letter to young Fortinbras' uncle, asking him if he would be able to temper his nephew.

In the same scene, we meet Laertes, Polonius' son and Ophelia's brother, who asks for the king's permission to return to France. We also meet Hamlet, who sincerely mourns his dead father.

Hamlet, like so many others, condemns the fact that his mother married the new king, his uncle, after only a month of mourning. He even thinks that his mother's marriage is incestuous, because she married her brother-in-law, the former king's brother.

Hamlet finds out from Horatio that the armed ghost of his father appears at night. He decides to meet the ghost the following night.

In the third scene of Act I, Laertes advises his sister about her relationship with Hamlet. He tells her to think of the consequences of having an affair with Hamlet—especially since Hamlet is royalty and will not be allowed to marry her. He warns her about men's behavior and the fact that Hamlet is no different. Ophelia agrees with her brother's advice but also asks him to practice what he preaches. Before Laertes' departure, Polonius advises Laertes about responsible spending and appropriate behavior—while he is in France.

In the next scene, Scene IV, Hamlet will, hopefully, meet his father's ghost—but that's next week's assignment.