

English IV I.B.: Summer Assignment

Note: You may NOT submit an OOPS pass in lieu of this assignment.

Hamlet Essay Prompts



THE
READINESS
IS ALL

DIRECTIONS: Based on the **first letter of your last name**, compose a well-written essay (1,000-1,200 words) in response to the appropriate prompt. Your response should incorporate no less than TEN specific references to the play as well as cover the entirety of the play (all five acts).

DUE: Submit your response to turnitin.com by **Friday, August 4 at 11:59 p.m.** Late responses will not be accepted. You will also need to bring a printed copy to our first class.

1. INTERNAL EVENTS (A-F)

In *Hamlet*, some of the most significant events are mental or psychological: awakenings, discoveries, changes in consciousness, etc. In a well-organized essay, describe how Shakespeare manages to afford these internal events the sense of excitement, suspense, and climax usually associated with external action.

2. MINOR CHARACTER (G-L)

In some works of literature, a character who appears briefly, or does not appear at all, is nevertheless significant. Write an essay in which you explain how such a character functions in *Hamlet*. You might choose to discuss how Shakespeare uses the character to affect action, theme, or the development of other characters.

3. SOCIAL OCCASIONS (M-Q)

Some works of literature often include scenes of weddings, funerals, parties, and other social occasions. Such scenes may reveal the values of the characters and the society in which they live. Select such a scene from *Hamlet* and, in a focused essay, discuss the contribution the scene makes to the meaning of the play as a whole.

4. CONFLICTING DIRECTIONS (R-Z)

The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, "*Nobody, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguing thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time.*" From *Hamlet*, choose a character (not necessarily Hamlet) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two (or more) compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the conflicting forces and explain how this conflict within one character illuminates the meaning of the play as a whole.