

Hamlet Act I Vocab

In order to prepare yourself for the vocabulary present in the play, take a moment to study the following words before you read a scene on your own (or in class). Italicized words are archaic and no longer in modern usage; they are worth understanding for their usage during your reading of the play. Words in regular print are still very much a part of contemporary English and may very well already be familiar to you; their meanings are worth your study due to Shakespeare's inventive use of language in general.

I.i

entreat	v	try very hard to persuade someone to do something
apparition	N	a ghost
assail	v	attack or criticize someone strongly
fortify	v	protect or defend against outside influence
usurp	v	take someone else's job or power when you should not
martial	adj	having to do with an army or military life
brazen	adj	not feeling at all ashamed about your bad behavior
valiant	adj	very brave
mettle	N	ability and determination when competing or doing something difficult
resolute	N	people who are determined not to change their actions or beliefs
compulsory	adj	required because of a rule or law
portentous	adj	showing that something unpleasant is very likely to happen
mote	N	a bit of dust, so small it is almost impossible to see
precursor	N	something which existed before another thing, an earlier version
harbinger	N	someone/thing that shows that something bad is going to happen soon
privy	adj	knowing information that is not known by many people
malicious	adj	intended to harm or upset someone
wholesome	adj	morally good or pure
hallowed	adj	holy or sacred, respected
acquaint	v	to make someone familiar with something
<i>liege</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>lord or king</i>
<i>Dane</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>a person of Danish descent, from Denmark</i>
<i>harrow</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>tear up, break apart or torture</i>
<i>ere</i>	<i>prep</i>	<i>before</i>
<i>partisan</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>long-handled spear</i>
<i>err</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>make an error, mistake</i>
<i>hie</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>hurry</i>

I.ii

woe	N	sadness
auspicious	adj	promising happiness or success in the future
impotent	adj	powerless to change a situation, or sexually powerless
noble	adj	honest, brave, or kind
dejected	adj	unhappy and disappointed
visage	N	face, countenance
commendable	adj	deserving praise

filial	adj	of or relating to a son/daughter
obstinate	adj	not willing to change your ideas/behavior although you are wrong
condolence	N	sympathy/sadness for the family/friends of a recently dead person
impious	adj	showing no respect, especially for God or religion; unholy
peevish	adj	easily annoyed; irritable
retrograde	adj	returning to older and worse conditions, methods, or ideas; opposite
jocund	adj	cheerful, glad, lighthearted
frailty	N	physically or moral weakness
discourse	N	formal communication about a particular subject
dexterity	N	skill at doing something, especially in using the hands
incestuous	adj	involving sex between people who are closely related
disposition	N	the type of character someone has
thrift	N	the careful use of money such that one does not spend too much
tenable	adj	defended or held successfully, kept secret
requite	v	to give or do in return for something given or done for you; reward
<i>green</i>	<i>adj</i>	<i>having little experience or understanding; young, fresh</i>
<i>dole</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>sadness</i>
<i>canon</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>the books of the Bible officially accepted as Holy Scripture</i>
<i>truncheon</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>military baton</i>
<i>warrant</i>	<i>V</i>	<i>promise or guarantee</i>

I.iii

chaste	adj	not having had sex, or without sexual thoughts or intentions
libertine	N	a person who lives in a way that is not moral, usually sexually promiscuous
dalliance	N	involvement in a short sexual relationship which is not lasting or serious
adultery	N	sex between a married person and one who is not their husband or wife
lewdness	N	sexual in an obvious and rude way
calumnious	adj	damaging a person's good name
besmirch	v	to say bad things about someone to influence others' opinion of them
prodigal	adj	wasteful with money; often over-spending without thinking of the future
beguile	v	to attract someone very much, sometimes in order to deceive them
<i>cautel</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>deceit</i>
<i>credent</i>	<i>adj</i>	<i>credible</i>
<i>chary</i>	<i>adj</i>	<i>cautious</i>

I.iv-v

shrewdly	adv	good at judging situations and making decisions which give you an advantage
pernicious	adj	very harmful
antic	adj	cartoonishly odd, fantastic; wacky
disposition	N	personality
perturbed	adj	worried
circumscribe	v	to limit something
behoove	v	to be helpful or right to do
importune	v	to make repeated forceful requests for something
rouse	v	to cause a feeling or emotion in someone, to wake someone
bray	v	to make a loud, unpleasant noise like a donkey

revel	v	to enjoy a situation or activity very much
censure	N	strong criticism or disapproval
canonize	v	officially recognize that a dead person is a saint
waft	v	to gradually move through the air
render	v	to cause something or someone to be in a particular state or condition
convoy	N	a group of vehicles or ships that travel together
pith	N	the white substance between the skin and the flesh of citrus fruits
marrow	N	the soft substance inside bones
parley	N	a discussion between two groups of people
gaudy	adj	unpleasantly bright in color or decoration
ponderous	adj	slow because of being very heavy or large; boring or too serious
forged	adj	to make an illegal copy of something in order to deceive people
sate	v	to fill to capacity; to satisfy
leaven	v	to make something less boring
encumbered	adj	weighed down
ambiguous	adj	having more than one possible meaning
<i>mark</i>	v	<i>listen</i>
<i>list</i>	v	<i>listen</i>
<i>soft</i>	int	<i>quiet</i>
<i>wherefore</i>	adv	<i>why</i>
<i>hebenon</i>	N	<i>a type of poison</i>
<i>perchance</i>	adv	<i>possibly</i>
<i>quicksilver</i>	N	<i>mercury</i>
<i>matin</i>	N	<i>early morning</i>
<i>fie</i>	int	<i>used to express disgust or disapproval</i>
<i>sinews</i>	N	<i>a tendon</i>
<i>fond</i>	adj	<i>foolish, silly</i>
<i>arrant</i>	adj	<i>total, extreme, without moderation</i>
<i>knave</i>	N	<i>a dishonest man</i>
<i>lazar</i>	N	<i>leprosy, a skin disease</i>
<i>truepenny</i>	N	<i>an honest or trusty person</i>
<i>unaneled</i>	adj	<i>when a person has not received the sacrament in which a priest anoints and prays for the recovery and salvation of a critically ill or injured person</i>