

# 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> |