***Hamlet*: Act 2 Journal**

**Reflect on Act 1:1.** The first line of the play, “Who’s there?” is the first of many questions, and it indicates an uncertainty that the characters carry. Consider the ways in which appearances do not match the reality of the situation. Mark examples with post-its in your book, or reflect on one and put it at the end of Act 1.

Consider the following as you read Act 2:

**Act 2:1**

a. Polonius gives Reynaldo money for Laertes and advises him on how to indirectly spy on Laertes. *Note: What do you think of Polonius as a father? Is there any justification for what he orders Reynaldo to do?*

c. Pay attention to Ophelia’s description of Hamlet. Why do you think she was frightened?

d. Consider when Polonius says “I am sorry.” to Ophelia. What do you think he means in that apology? What is he sorry for?

**Act 2:2**

a. Mark the lines where Claudius tells R and G why he brought them to court. How is Claudius similar to Polonius in this job he’s asking of them?

b. Claudius and Gertrude hold a brief private conversation after Polonius exits. Mark it and consider the content of their comments. Is there a distinction between public and private in *Hamlet*?

c. Polonius’ conversation with Gertrude and Claudius is often played for comic effect. Mark what lines could be played for laughs. What do they indicate about Polonius?

d. Polonius says he will “loose” his daughter on Hamlet, which sounds like he’s releasing a trapped animal. Look for any other examples of entrapment and release.

e. Consider the comments Hamlet makes to Polonius. They are often played for comic effect. Did Hamlet see Claudius and Gertrude talking with Polonius before they leave? How does that change the tone of the conversation?

f. Do you think Hamlet is joking or serious in claiming ‘Denmark is a prison’? Identify three possible reasons why Hamlet makes his remark.

g. Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern joke and banter—identify when Hamlet becomes suspicious.

h. Highlight the “What a piece of work is a man speech”—we will come back to this in class.

i. Polonius’ comments about the players are critical and usually played for laughs. Mark where you think Shakespeare is having fun with his critics and his audience.

j. In the closing soliloquy Hamlet is very hard on himself. Is he justified? Shakespeare uses lists to create momentum and rhythm in the speech. Mark the lists in this one soliloquy and consider what each one is about. What do they indicate about Hamlet’s changing mood?