

Standards Focus: Conflict

Act One

One of the most important elements of any type of literature is the development of conflict. **Conflict** is when a character or characters face a struggle or challenge. Without conflict, the reader or audience says, "Who cares?" Just as in our lives we face conflict, so do the characters in Shakespeare's plays. There are three main types of conflict that a character or characters may face within a work of literature:

man versus man- the character faces a conflict/struggle with another character in the story

man versus himself- the character faces a major decision or a physical or emotional struggle

man versus nature- a character faces the forces of nature, such as weather or environment

Directions: For each of the following situations from Act One, identify the type of conflict, then who or what is involved in the conflict. Remember, in order for there to be a conflict, there must be two or more forces that oppose each other. Be sure to identify each of those forces in Part b. There may be more than one possible answer for each.

1. Horatio tells Marcellus how old King Hamlet killed Fortinbras, and now Fortinbras's son wants his father's land back.
 - a. Type of Conflict: _____
 - b. Conflicting Forces: _____
2. Hamlet is angry that his father is dead and his uncle has married his mother so quickly.
 - a. Type of Conflict: _____
 - b. Conflicting Forces: _____
3. Hamlet considers suicide as an alternative to his grief.
 - a. Type of Conflict: _____
 - b. Conflicting Forces: _____
4. Polonius forbids Ophelia to see Hamlet.
 - a. Type of Conflict: _____
 - b. Conflicting Forces: _____
5. Polonius doesn't trust Laertes with his money and warns him not to squander what he has been given, or borrow for frivolous reasons.
 - a. Type of Conflict: _____
 - b. Conflicting Forces: _____
6. Hamlet learns that Claudius killed his father.
 - a. Type of Conflict: _____
 - b. Conflicting Forces: _____