Hamlet Chronology

1. Act 1
   1. Sc. 1
      1. Bernardo, Marcellus, and Horatio see the ghost—but it won’t talk to them
      2. Decide to go tell Hamlet
   2. Sc. 2
      1. Claudius gives speech explaining marriage to Gertrude, King Hamlet’s widow
      2. Fortinbras wrote Claudius demanding land back that King Hamlet won from Fortinbras’ father
      3. Claudius asks Hamlet why “the clouds still hang” upon him (1.2.68)
      4. Gertrude tells Hamlet to “cast thy nighted color off” (1.2.70)
      5. Tell him not to go back to Wittenberg
      6. Hamlet’s soliloquy—is life worth living?
      7. Guards tell him about the ghost
   3. Sc. 3
      1. Laertes cautions Ophelia against falling in love with Hamlet
      2. Polonius forbids Ophelia from associating with Hamlet
   4. Sc. 4
      1. Hamlet goes with guards
      2. Sees ghost🡪 goes with it
   5. Sc. 5
      1. Ghost speaks to Hamlet
         1. Claudius murdered King Hamlet
         2. To rouse Hamlet to avenge his death
         3. Condemns Claudius’ marriage to Gertrude
         4. Makes guards swear to not tell what they’ve seen—ghost’s voice
2. Act 2
   1. Sc. 1
      1. Ophelia tells Polonius that Hamlet accosted her
      2. Hamlet mad for her, since she has distanced herself from him
   2. Sc. 2
      1. Claudius and Gertrude welcome Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on Hamlet
      2. Fortinbras to be allowed to march through Denmark on the way to Poland
      3. Polonius’ plan to spy on Hamlet and Ophelia
      4. Polonius talks to Hamlet, Hamlet makes fun of him
      5. Theater troop coming to the castle
         1. Hamlet plans to watch Claudius when he watches a play that resembles the murder of King Hamlet
      6. Hamlet mad that he hasn’t taken action yet
3. Act 3
   1. Sc. 1
      1. Hamlet’s soliloquy: “To be, or not to be: that is the question” (3.1.64)
      2. Hamlet and Ophelia talk, with Polonius and Claudius spying
         1. Ophelia returns letters
         2. Hamlet denies his love
         3. Hamlet: “Get thee to a nunnery” (3.1.131)
      3. Claudius plans to send Hamlet to England
   2. Sc. 2
      1. Horatio comes back—Hamlet tells him to watch Claudius during the play
      2. Hamlet asks Polonius about his history as an actor, and he torments Ophelia with a string of erotic puns
      3. Claudius halts the play and flees
      4. Rosencrantz asks about Hamlet’s “distempter”, and Hamlet accuses the pair of trying to play him like a musical pipe
      5. Going to go speak with his mother
   3. Sc. 3
      1. Claudius asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to send Hamlet to England
      2. King confesses his guilt and prays
      3. Hamlet approaches Claudius with the intent to kill him, but won’t when he sees that Claudius will go to heaven
   4. Sc. 4
      1. Polonius plans to spy on Hamlet and Gertrude
      2. Hamlet argues with Gertrude—she says that he has offended Claudius, he says that she offended King Hamlet
      3. Polonius cries out for help
      4. Hamlet kills Polonius w/ out knowing who he was and continues arguing with his mother
      5. The ghost appears when they’re arguing—only Hamlet can see it
         1. Comes to remind Hamlet of his purpose
         2. Needs to achieve revenge
         3. Asks Hamlet to intercede with Gertrude
      6. Hamlet tries to explain that he’s not mad and urges her to forsake Claudius
4. Act 4
   1. Sc. 1
      1. Gertrude tells Claudius what happened—Hamlet is mad and killed Polonius
      2. Calls Rozencrantz and Guildenstern to find Hamlet and take him to England
   2. Sc. 2
      1. Hamlet hides body
      2. Accuses the 2 of being spies
      3. Goes with them to see Claudius
   3. Sc. 3
      1. Brought to Claudius—toys with him about Polonius
      2. Reveals location of the body
      3. Boards ship to England
   4. Sc. 4
      1. Fortinbras takes army through Denmark on the way to Poland
      2. His captain meets Hamlet and the 2
         1. Marvels that human beings can act so violently for little gain
         2. Hamlet has a great deal to gain, but fails to act🡪 dedicates himself again to revenge
   5. Sc. 5
      1. Gertrude and Horatio discuss Ophelia
      2. Ophelia’s crazy scene
      3. Laertes comes back ready to exact his revenge on Claudius, who denies involvement
   6. Sc. 6
      1. Horatio receives letter from Hamlet
      2. On his way back to Denmark via pirate ship
   7. Sc. 7
      1. King and Laertes hear that Hamlet is coming back
      2. Encourages Laertes to exact revenge w/ out the appearance of foul play
      3. Plot—duel, poison, drink
      4. Gertrude—Ophelia drowned in the river
5. Act 5
   1. Sc. 1
      1. Gravedigger scene
      2. Hamlet is philosophical
      3. Funeral procession
   2. Sc. 2
      1. Hamlet tells Horatio how he got Rosencrantz and Guildenstern executed
      2. Osric comes to ask Hamlet to duel
      3. Duel
         1. Gertrude drinks from the cup and dies
         2. Both wounded with Laertes’ blade
         3. Hamlet whacks Claudius with his sword
      4. Fortinbras entering the castle
      5. Hamlet to Horatio—Fortinbras should be king of Denmark
      6. Horatio to tell the story
      7. Hamlet to be carried away like a soldier