Reading Guide: HAMLET Act I

1. Describe the political situation in Denmark.
2. Why is the ghost of Old Hamlet denied its eternal rest?
3. What delicate issues are at the top of Claudius/ agenda for the meeting with his court?
4. Would the king rather have Hamlet stay at Elsinore or return to Wittenberg? Why?
5. What is Ophelia’s dilemma?
6. How does Polonius tell Ophelia to behave toward Hamlet?
7. How did Old Hamlet die? What is the official account of his death?
8. What helps Hamlet to overcome his fears and follow the Ghost?
9. What task does the father, from beyond the grave, set for Hamlet?
10. Whom does the ghost admonish Hamlet not to harm?
11. Identify images of disease and decay.
12. What qualities of Hamlet’s character are revealed in Act I?

Quotes: ACT ONE: HAMLET

Interpret each quote in terms of the play and then suggest what it could be relevant in a modern situation (some will be much easier to make an application to modern day than others…think outside the box).

1. “A little more than kin, and less than kind.”
2. “…remain here in the cheer and comfort of our eye.”
3. “Frailty, thy name is woman.”
4. “O, that this too too solid flesh would melt.”
5. “Tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed.”
6. “…but no more like my father than I to Hercules.”
7. “His will is not his own, he is subject to his birth.”
8. “Best safety lies in fear.”
9. “Give every man thy ear, but none thy voice.”
10. “To thine own self be true.”
11. “Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.”
12. “Remember me.”
13. “O, villain, villain smiling, damned villain!”
14. “The time is out of joint.”