

AP English Notes
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The following notes are found on GradeSaver, Classic Notes by J. N. Smith.

<http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/hamlet/act1.shtml>

Act One, Scene Five

Hamlet follows the ghost, who finally speaks and informs Hamlet that he is the spirit of Old Hamlet, Hamlet's father. The ghost indicates that he is in purgatory, "I am thy father's spirit, / Doomed for a certain term to walk the night / And for the day confined to fast in fires / Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature / Are burned and purged away" (1.5.9-13). The ghost then tells Hamlet to listen to him closely.

Old Hamlet orders his son to revenge his murder. Hamlet is confused, not understanding what the ghost is speaking about. The ghost tells him that "sleeping in mine orchard, / A serpent stung me" (1.5.35-36), alluding to the fact that he was murdered. He goes on to say that the serpent is his brother, Claudius, who entered the garden where he was sleeping and poured poison into his ear. He died without having a chance to confess his sins, and is therefore forced to suffer in Purgatory until his sins are burned away. Hamlet cries, "Oh, my prophetic soul"; this suggests that he has suspected his uncle all this time. The ghost also tells him not to approach his mother, to leave her "to heaven."

The ghost leaves Hamlet with the words, "Adieu, adieu, Hamlet. Remember me" (1.5.91). Hamlet wonders about what he has heard, and decides that he believes the ghost. He makes Marcellus and Horatio swear to never reveal what they have seen. He then makes them swear a second time, this time on his dagger which is shaped like a cross. He tells Horatio, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in our philosophy" (1.5.168-169). They all swear yet again