**AP English Lit/Mr. Kirby** Name:\_ Carly Rainey\_\_

# LITERARY ANALYSIS DATA SHEET

Significant biographical details about the author:

Tom Stoppard was born into a jewish family on July 3, 1937 in Czechoslovakia. After fleeing from the Nazis, Stoppard began reviewing plays and writing news features for papers. His interests in writing led him to begin writing plays for the radio stations and television shows. After writing two plays for radio and television and publishin a novel, Stoppard wrote *Rosentrantz and Guilderstein are Dead*. This play has become his most famous play was debuted on Broadway in 1967. He has won many Plays and Players best Play Award and Tony Award for Best Play. In 1997, Stoppard was knighted by the British Crown.

**Title: Rosencrantz and Guilderstein are Dead**

**Author: Tom Stoppard**

**Date of Publication: 1967**

**Sources:** Shmoop Editorial Team. "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead" *Shmoop University, Inc.* 11 November 2008. http://www.shmoop.com/rosencrantz-and-guildenstern-are-dead/ (accessed April 26, 2014).

Provide a brief synopsis (include exposition, main conflict(s), climax, resolution, and major plot points):

In the beginning Rosencrantz and Guilderstein are flipping coins to prove the mathematics laws of probability; it turns out that heads was the side the coin kept landing on. A messenger brings them a message that sends them on an important journey where they meet pornographer actors on the way to meet the King and Queen. The King and Queen want them to find out what is wrong with Hamlet and figure out why he is so upset. They can’t figure out what is wrong with Hamlet but eventually Hamlet seems to cheer up a little bit and asks the pornographer actors to put on a play which the middle part Hamlet himself will write. After the play that they performed, Rosencrantz and Guilderstein think that Hamlet is in love with Ophelia and that is what is wrong with him so Hamlet’s uncle decides to have him accidentally run into her somewhere so their love seemed like a spur of the moment thing. After their accidental meet up has happened, Hamlet’s uncle convinces Ophelia that Hamlet doesn’t love her and then he sends Hamlet to England. The whole time this is going on, the actors are putting on a play of what is going on and what they think will happen next, which everything that they perform is written by Hamlet himself. A turn out Hamlet is only upset because his uncle and mother are being deceived. The play ends with Rosencrantz and Guilderstein dying while taking Hamlet to England after Hamlet switched the King’s letter with a false one and the two men were killed.

Identify the genre and specify how this work fits its characteristics:

The genre is tragicomedy which meants that it is a serious story with a funny ending. In the title of this play it announces that the main characters will die and because of this people expect it to be a tragedy, but while reading it the main characters are goofing around the whole play. Everything that happens to them pretty much predetermines their death but they have fun on the way.

Information about the period (literary, historical, artistic, philosophical, etc.):

In this year of 1967, the Vietnam War was in full swing with multiple operations like Operation Cedar Falls and Operation Deckhouse Five.

The United States, United Kingdom, and Soviet Union signed the Outer Space Treaty while African Americans began rioting against slavery in the United States.

English playwright Joe Orton is battered to death by his lover, Kenneth Halliwell, after finishing after Orton finished a film script for The Beatles which went unproduced.

Identify and explain the use and effect of three literary techniques:

Wind is used to symbolize the changing in scenes or the emotions of the characters are getting out of control.

Imagery is a major part of this play. It is used to describe people, places, and things that are happening at a certain point or what happened in the past before this certain point.

Meta-theatre is the entire play. This whole play talks about a play within a play and that play is used to describe the life of someone.

Cite and quote one example of each:

“ROS: I merely suggest that the position of the sun, if it is out, would give you a rough idea of the time; alternatively, the clock, if it is going, would give you a rough idea of the position of the sun. I forget which you're trying to establish.

GUIL: I'm trying to establish the direction of the wind.

ROS: There isn't any wind. *Draught*, yes.

GUIL: In that case, the origin. Trace it to its source and it might give us a rough idea of the way we came in – which might give us a rough idea of south, for further reference

Player: "I know which way the wind is blowing”

Cite and quote three significant passages:

Guil: “A man talking sense to himself is no madder than a man talking nonsense to himself.”

Guil: “The scientific approach to the examination of phenomena is a defense against the pure emotion of fear.”

Guil: “Well, aren’t you going to change into your costume?”

Player: “I never change out of it sir.”

Explain the significance of each passage or explain how it relates to the work as a whole:

This shows that people aren’t really mad sometimes when they act like it and when they want people to think it. This is significant because this is the first passage that talks about madness and the whole book is based off of madness and people’s view on reality.

This does what the first passage does. This talks about fear and people’s view on reality.

This is also a passage based on people’s views of reality. The player has the firmest grasp on the idea and view of reality and this passage proves it.

**Significant Quotes**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Characters Record information for each significant major character in the work | | | |
| Name | Role in the story | Significance or Purpose | Adjectives |
| Guilderstein  Rosencrantz  The Player  Hamlet  Claudius | Leader of the situations the two men get into.  Follower in the situations the two men get into.  Actor that keeps reality in view of his plays and his actions.  Act insane like he is trapped in the body and make a play for the player.    To poison the king and marry his wife so he can become king. | To have a leader with a group of people that thinks he is ahead of everything and knows everything but he still dies.  To be the feeler and the voice for the settings and characters.  Keep other characters in reality when dream worlds get to be too real.  To show how some sane people can actually be as sharp as a knife.  Don’t trust everyone because even the nicest people can turn out to be misleading you. | Scientific, thoughtful, over thoughtful,  Unoriginal, dependent, nicer  realistic  insane, moody, sharp, brilliant, observant  lethal, mean, vengeful, hateful |

## Describe the setting(s) and explain its/their significance:

There are three settings in this play. The first setting is out in the middle of nowhere it seems like. There is not much is said and it is a pretty laid back unimportant kind of atmosphere. The second setting is in the court where they get caught up in the King’s business and dealing with Hamlet. This makes the play mood go from chill to caught up in the lives of others. The last setting finishes itself out on a boat where the mood turns pretty depressing and thoughtful. The idea of death is brought up and the character’s deaths are brought upon them.

## Identify and explain the theme(s) of the work:

The themes of the work are things like isolation, manipulation, fear, foolishness, and versions of reality. These are brought on by the main characters’ situations that other characters can bring among them. Fear is brought upon by Hamlet’s uncle because he has killed someone and people knows he will do it again. While putting the wrath of fear on the characters, he uses manipulation as well. Those two things kind of go hand in hand because you can manipulate someone if they are scared of you. Foolishness comes in where people believe everything the king says and doesn’t have a strong grip on their view of reality.

## Write at least three questions or topics for class discussion:

Does every play have wind as a symbol for emotions being out of control?

How did the boat connect to the conversation of death in this play?

Why do Rosencrantz and Guilderstein not have as a firm grasp on reality as the player does?

Identify and explain key metaphors, symbols, or motifs:

Wind is the symbol for things getting out of control in the play. When a character is in so deep they can’t get out, a storm starts to rage with high winds close to hurricane. Hurricane winds are a symbol for the character and their feelings are out of control and everything is lost.