

We're in the Same Boat, Brother

Directions: Read the following in preparation for discussion of the questions.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern – not to mention their friends, Hamlet and the Tragedians – end up on a boat. Many lines mention or discuss boats:

- a. GUIL: I'm very fond of boats myself. I like the way they're – contained. You don't have to worry about which way to go or whether to go at all....One is free on a boat. For a time. Relatively.....Free to move, speak, extemporize, and yet. We have not been cut loose. Our truancy is defined by one fixed star, and our drift represents merely a slight change of angle to it...but we are brought round full circle... (100-101).
- b. ROS: For those in peril on the sea...(42)
- c. ROS: Do you think death could possibly be a boat?
GUIL: No, no, no...Death is.....not.....Not being. You can't not-be on a boat.
ROS: I've frequently not-been on boats.
GUIL: No, no, no – what you've been is not on boats (108).
- d. GUIL: (*hearing music*) Out of the void, finally, a sound; while on a boat (*admittedly*) outside the action (*admittedly*) the perfect and absolute silence of the wet, lazy slap of water against water and the rolling creak of timber – breaks; giving rise at once to the speculation...that something is about to happen (112).
- e. PLAYER: Aha! All in the same boat, then! (114).
- f. GUIL: Where we went wrong was getting on a boat. We can move, of course, change direction, rattle about, but our movement is contained within a larger one that carries us along as inexorably as the wind and current...

The boat goes far beyond just being a boat. The boat motif picks up some themes and ideas discussed earlier.

- 1.) Why is the boat an effective motif?
- 2.) How does the boat suggest their fate?
- 3.) How does Guildenstern's first speech differ from his last?
- 4.) Whom does Rosencrantz's first statement ironically include?
- 5.) What universal meaning does the Player's comment have?