

**William Shakespeare's**  
***Macbeth:***  
**A Discussion Guide**

**By David Bruce**

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Josephine Saturday Bruce**

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**William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: A Discussion Guide**

**by David Bruce**

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## Preface

The purpose of this book is educational. I have read, studied and taught William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and I wish to pass on what I have learned to other people who are interested in studying William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In particular, I think that the readers of this short introduction to William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* will be bright high school seniors and college first-year students, as well as intelligent adults who simply wish to study *Macbeth* despite not being literature majors.

This book uses a question-and-answer format. This book goes through the play scene by scene. I recommend that you read the relevant section of *Macbeth*, then read my comments, then go back and re-read the relevant section of *Macbeth*.

Teachers may find this book useful as a discussion guide for the tragedy. Teachers can have students read a section of the play, then teachers can ask students selected questions from this study guide.

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Very Important Note: The page numbers refer to the Signet Classic edition of *Macbeth*. However, the text of the long quotations is that of an online edition of *Macbeth* available at <<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html>>. This means that mostly minor variations in the text will occur. The short quotations (quotations not in block format) are from the Signet Classic edition. The long quotations (quotations in block format) are from the online edition.

### Introduction to *Macbeth*

- *Macbeth* was first performed in 1606.
- James I, who was Scottish, was on the throne, having become King of England three years previously after Queen Elizabeth I had died. James I of England was already James VI of Scotland, so he was the King of two countries.
- James I wrote *Demonology*. Because of his Scottish background and interest in the supernatural, he would have been especially interested in *Macbeth*.
- James I claimed to be descended from Banquo, a good character in *Macbeth*.
- Shakespeare was a commercial playwright; he wanted to make money and to find favor with the nobility.
- Shakespeare's company, called the Chamberlain's Men, was renamed the King's Men during the reign of King James I, showing that the company was the best of all the acting companies in England.
- Shakespeare's four greatest tragedies are *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. *Macbeth* was the last of the four to be written. Shakespeare wrote it when he was in his 40s.
- *Macbeth* is one of the shortest and the bloodiest of Shakespeare's plays.
- *Macbeth* is the story of a good man who goes bad.
- The theme of *Macbeth* is ambition that is unrestrained by morality.

## *Macbeth*

### Act 1

#### Act 1, Scene 1

- If you have read this play before, explain briefly what its theme is.

The theme is ambition that is unrestrained by morality.

Macbeth is a good person who becomes evil because he is unable to control his ambition. He ignores morality to feed his ambition, and his ambition destroys him.

#### Act 1, Scene 1

- What do the witches mean when they say, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (1.1.10)?

What does “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (p. 3) mean?

1. We are going to find it difficult to distinguish between appearance and reality.

A human being who appears to be fair (good) will be foul (evil).

An apparition that appears to be fair (good) will be foul (evil).

A human being who appears to be foul (evil) will be fair (good).

An apparition that appears to be foul (evil) will be fair (good).

Distinguishing between the appearance of good and the reality of evil will be difficult.

Distinguishing between the appearance of evil and the reality of good will be difficult.

#### Act 1, Scene 1

- How does this scene set the mood of the play?

The characters are witches, and the weather is thunder and lightning. Obviously (I think), this is going to be a dark and somber play. After all, it is a tragedy.

On p. 3, we read:

**ALL**

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

*Exeunt*

## Act 1, Scene 2

### • What news does King Duncan get of the battle from the Captain and from Ross?

We find out that Scotland is in turmoil. There have been traitors and invasions. King Duncan is too old to fight; therefore, he has sent Macbeth and Banquo to fight for him. Macbeth and Banquo—and especially Macbeth—have fought well.

At the beginning of this scene, King Duncan does not know how the battle is going. He wants news of the battle.

#### *The Captain*

The Captain is bleeding. He has fought well. He has fought successfully to keep Malcolm, King Duncan's son, from being captured by the invaders.

Macdonwald, a traitorous Scot, has been fighting against King Duncan's army. The battle seemed to be going in Macdonwald's favor, but Macbeth fought his way through the battle and killed Macdonwald in a very bloody way.

Basically, Macbeth slit Macdonwald open, then he cut off his head (p. 5):

Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,  
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

However, seeing that the battle had just been completed, the King of Norway thought that he saw an advantage. He could fight tired soldiers and win. Therefore, the Norwegian King launched an invasion against Scotland.

However, Macbeth and Banquo fought the Norwegian King valiantly.

Obviously, Scotland at this time is a country of violence.

#### *Ross*

Ross is the Thane of Ross.

“Thane is a Scottish title of nobility.”—the Signet edition of *Macbeth*.

Ross brings the news that Macbeth and Banquo have won the battle. They are heroes.

Sweno, the King of Norway, is suing for peace. He has also paid \$10,000 in Spanish and Dutch currency in order to bury his dead.

Ross also brings news that the Thane of Cawdor is a traitor—he fought on the side of the King of Norway against his real King, King Duncan of Scotland.

On p. 6, we read:

**ROSS**

From Fife, great king;  
 Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky  
 And fan our people cold. Norway himself,  
 With terrible numbers,  
 Assisted by that most disloyal traitor  
 The thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict;  
 Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,  
 Confronted him with self-comparisons,  
 Point against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm.  
 Curbing his lavish spirit: and, to conclude,  
 The victory fell on us.

**DUNCAN**

Great happiness!

**ROSS**

That now  
 Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition:  
 Nor would we deign him burial of his men  
 Till he disbursed at Saint Colme's inch  
 Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

Note: Bellona is a female warrior, a Roman goddess of war who went with Mars into battle.

**Act 1, Scene 2**

- **Why does King Duncan decide to make Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor?**

Macbeth is a hero. He has fought valiantly to defend King Duncan and Scotland against their enemies.

The original Thane of Cawdor is a traitor; therefore, King Duncan orders that the Thane of Cawdor be executed and that Macbeth be given the title Thane of Cawdor as a reward for his courage and prowess in battle.

On p. 6, we read:

**DUNCAN**

No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive  
 Our bosom interest: go pronounce his present death,  
 And with his former title greet Macbeth.

**ROSS**

I'll see it done.

**DUNCAN**

What he hath lost noble Macbeth hath won.

## Act 1, Scene 2

• **Macbeth will become the Thane of Cawdor by order of King Duncan. If you have read this play before, why is that ironic? (Also: Define “irony.”)**

The previous Thane of Cawdor became a traitor to King Duncan. Macbeth, who is the next Thane of Cawdor, will also become a traitor to King Duncan.

Some irony results because we would think that a person who has been rewarded would be grateful. Ironically, Macbeth becomes more ambitious and decides to murder King Duncan so that he can become King of Scotland in his place.

Here is a definition of “irony” (emphasis and paragraph divisions added):

**IRONY:** Irony comes in many forms.

**Verbal irony** (also called **sarcasm**) is a trope in which a speaker makes a statement in which its actual meaning differs sharply from the meaning that the words ostensibly express. Often this sort of irony is plainly sarcastic in the eyes of the reader, but the characters listening in the story may not realize the speaker's sarcasm as quickly as the readers do.

**Dramatic irony** (the most important type for literature) involves a situation in a narrative in which the reader knows something about present or future circumstances that the character does not know. In that situation, the character acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or the character expects the opposite of what the reader knows that fate holds in store, or when the character anticipates a particular outcome that unfolds itself in an unintentional way.

**Situational irony** (also called **cosmic irony**) is a trope in which accidental events occur that seem oddly appropriate, such as the poetic justice of a pickpocket getting his own pocket picked.

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## Act 1, Scene 3

• **What do we learn about the witches before Macbeth and Banquo arrive?**

We learn that they are evil.

The Second Witch has been killing swine. Since swine are eaten in a Christian country such as Scotland, the Second Witch has been killing food.

The First Witch is seeking revenge. A wife was eating chestnuts, and the First Witch ordered the wife to give her the chestnuts. The wife said, “Aroint thee, witch!” This means, “Get lost, witch!” Therefore, the First Witch will seek revenge against the wife’s husband.

Basically, the First Witch will take revenge against the wife’s husband, who is a sailor, by sending storms against the sailor’s ship. (The other witches give her winds to assail the sailor.) The First

Witch will tempest toss the ship, and the husband will “dwindle, peak, and pine.” (To “peak” means to waste away.)

The Witches’ powers are limited. They cannot sink the ship, although they can make the husband ill.

We see also that the Witches collect disgusting things. The First Witch has a pilot’s thumb. The pilot of the ship was shipwrecked as he headed home.

On pp. 7-8, we read:

**First Witch**

I myself have all the other,  
 And the very ports they blow,  
 All the quarters that they know  
 I’ the shipman’s card.  
 I will drain him dry as hay:  
 Sleep shall neither night nor day  
 Hang upon his pent-house lid;  
 He shall live a man forbid:  
 Weary se’nnights nine times nine  
 Shall he dwindle, peak and pine:  
 Though his bark cannot be lost,  
 Yet it shall be tempest-tost.  
 Look what I have.

**Act 1, Scene 3**

• **Why does Macbeth say, “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (1.3.38)? In what way is the day foul? In what way is the day fair?**

The day is foul in that it is horrible weather.

The day is fair in that Macbeth and Banquo have fought well and won important victories on this day.

We can add that the day is fair because Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor on this day, but that the day is foul because he will meet the three witches on this day.

**Act 1, Scene 3**

• **Which prophecies do the witches make to Macbeth and Banquo?**

The witches hail Macbeth three times:

1. The witches hail Macbeth as Thane of Glamis.
2. The witches hail Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor.
3. The witches hail Macbeth as King to Be (as a future king).

Macbeth is already Thane of Glamis, but he can't understand why they refer to him in the present tense as Thane of Cawdor; after all, the Thane of Cawdor (Macbeth supposes) lives.

The witches also prophesy to Banquo.

1. Banquo will be the begetter of Kings, although he will not be King himself.

On pp. 8-9, we read:

**MACBETH**

Speak, if you can: what are you?

**First Witch**

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

**Second Witch**

All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

**Third Witch**

All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!

On p. 9, Banquo says:

If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear  
Your favours nor your hate.

**First Witch**

Hail!

**Second Witch**

Hail!

**Third Witch**

Hail!

**First Witch**

Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

**Second Witch**

Not so happy, yet much happier.

**Third Witch**

Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:  
So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

**First Witch**

Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

### Act 1, Scene 3

#### • How do Macbeth and Banquo differ in their reactions to the three witches and their prophecies?

##### *Macbeth*

When Macbeth hears the witches refer to him as a King hereafter, he becomes rapt. That is, he becomes rapt in thought. At this moment, the possibility of his becoming King becomes real to him.

Perhaps he has thought of becoming King before, but that is unlikely. Why? Because he has been loyal to King Duncan and has fought bravely for him.

However, now he begins to think seriously of becoming King.

We should note that there is a heavy dose of fear in Macbeth's thoughts. Apparently, at this time he begins to think of murdering King Duncan.

Banquo is surprised by Macbeth's reaction. On p. 9, Banquo says:

Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show?

We note the theme of appearance versus reality. These things sound fair, yet Macbeth fears them. We who have read the play before know that he should fear them.

##### *Banquo*

Banquo is not afraid of the three witches, nor is he afraid of their prophecies. I think that we can assume that he would welcome his descendants becoming King.

On p. 8, when Macbeth and Banquo first meet the three witches, it is Banquo who does not hesitate to speak to them:

#### **BANQUO**

How far is't call'd to Forres? What are these  
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught  
That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her chappy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.

An interesting detail is that the witches have beards.

On p. 9, after the three witches prophesy to Macbeth, Banquo, who does not fear them, asks them for a prophecy:

[...] My noble partner  
 You greet with present grace and great prediction  
 Of noble having and of royal hope,  
 That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not.  
 If you can look into the seeds of time,  
 And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
 Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear  
 Your favours nor your hate.

Banquo says that he neither begs favors from the three witches nor does he fear their hate.

Banquo's reaction to the three witches differs from Macbeth's probably in that Banquo is not tempted to do evil. If his descendants do become King, fine, but he's not going to commit murder to make it happen.

### Act 1, Scene 3

#### • What is Macbeth's reaction to becoming Thane of Cawdor?

On p. 11, Macbeth says:

#### **MACBETH**

[Aside] Glamis, and thane of Cawdor!  
 The greatest is behind.

*To ROSS and ANGUS*  
 Thanks for your pains.

*To BANQUO*  
 Do you not hope your children shall be kings,  
 When those that gave the thane of Cawdor to me  
 Promised no less to them?

Macbeth is certainly intrigued. Now that one part of the witches' prophecy has been fulfilled, might not the other part come true? Now that he has become Thane of Cawdor, might not he become King of Scotland?

Macbeth is also thinking so hard about what the witches have said that he doesn't pay attention to the people around him.

Macbeth is also thinking of murder. On p. 12, we read:

#### **MACBETH**

[Aside] Two truths are told,

As happy prologues to the swelling act  
 Of the imperial theme.--I thank you, gentlemen.  
 [Aside]  
 [This supernatural soliciting]<sup>1</sup>  
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,  
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
 Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:  
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
 Against the use of nature? Present fears  
 Are less than horrible imaginings:  
 My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
 Shakes so my single state of man that function  
 Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is  
 But what is not.

Macbeth's thinking about murder shakes him.

On p. 12, we read:

**BANQUO**

Look, how our partner's rapt.

**MACBETH**

[Aside] If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,  
 Without my stir.

Macbeth thinks that if the prophecy is true, then it may come to pass even if he does nothing to make it come to pass—that if, the prophecy may come true even if he does not murder King Duncan.

Macbeth is so busy thinking about the witches that his companions have to remind him that it is time to leave (pp. 12-13):

**MACBETH**

[Aside] Come what come may,  
 Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

**BANQUO**

Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

**MACBETH**

Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought  
 With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains

---

<sup>1</sup> This line appears in the Signet Classic edition, but not in the online version of the play.

Are register'd where every day I turn  
 The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.  
 Think upon what hath chanced, and, at more time,  
 The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak  
 Our free hearts each to other.

Macbeth says to Banquo that they should talk about the witches' prophecies later, after they had had time to think about them.

#### **Act 1, Scene 4**

##### **• How does the old Thane of Cawdor die?**

The old Thane of Cawdor dies a good death. This is in contrast to the death that Macbeth, the new Thane of Cawdor, dies later.

The old Thane of Cawdor had committed evil, but he repented. He confessed his treason, and he accepted the punishment (he paid the penalty for his treason), which was death.

On p. 13, we read:

#### **SCENE IV. Forres. The palace.**

*Flourish. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, and Attendants*

#### **DUNCAN**

Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not  
 Those in commission yet return'd?

#### **MALCOLM**

My liege,  
 They are not yet come back. But I have spoke  
 With one that saw him die: who did report  
 That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,  
 Implored your highness' pardon and set forth  
 A deep repentance: nothing in his life  
 Became him like the leaving it; he died  
 As one that had been studied in his death  
 To throw away the dearest thing he owed,  
 As 'twere a careless trifle.

#### **Act 1, Scene 4**

##### **• How does King Duncan treat Macbeth?**

King Duncan treats Macbeth very well.

1. King Duncan says that he owes Macbeth more than he can pay.

2. King Duncan says, “I have begun to plant thee, and will labor / To make thee full of growing” (1.4.28-29). This means that King Duncan has started to favor Macbeth, and he will favor Macbeth more in the future.

3. King Duncan also says kind words to Banquo.

On p. 14, King Duncan addresses Macbeth:

*Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS*

O worthiest cousin!  
The sin of my ingratitude even now  
Was heavy on me: thou art so far before  
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow  
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,  
That the proportion both of thanks and payment  
Might have been mine! only I have left to say,  
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

**MACBETH**

The service and the loyalty I owe,  
In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part  
Is to receive our duties; and our duties  
Are to your throne and state children and servants,  
Which do but what they should, by doing every thing  
Safe toward your love and honour.

**DUNCAN**

Welcome hither:  
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour  
To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,  
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known  
No less to have done so, let me enfold thee  
And hold thee to my heart.

**Act 1, Scene 4**

**• Why is Malcolm a rival to Macbeth?**

Macbeth wishes to be King of Scotland. However, King Duncan names his eldest son, Malcolm, as being next in succession. Therefore, Macbeth and Malcolm are rivals to the thrones of Scotland.

On pp. 14-15, King Duncan says:

My plenteous joys,  
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves  
In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,  
And you whose places are the nearest, know  
We will establish our estate upon

Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter  
 The Prince of Cumberland; which honour must  
 Not unaccompanied invest him only,  
 But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine  
 On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,  
 And bind us further to you.

On p. 15, Macbeth says:

[Aside] The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step  
 On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
 For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;  
 Let not light see my black and deep desires:  
 The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,  
 Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

### Act 1, Scene 5

#### • What is Lady Macbeth's reaction to the letter that her husband writes her?

Lady Macbeth's ambition is immediately fired up. She wants to become Queen of Scotland. However, she fears that her husband does not have what it takes to become King through the nearest way—that is, through assassinating King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth believes the three witches. Macbeth shall be King.

Lady Macbeth fears that her husband does not have what it takes to become King through the nearest way—that is, through assassinating King Duncan. Macbeth is too full of the milk of human kindness to assassinate King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth realizes that Macbeth is ambitious, but that he would not willingly do evil. He prefers to rise and grow great through doing good things, not bad.

Lady Macbeth thinks that ambition and the ability to do evil go together.

Lady Macbeth wants Macbeth to come to her so that she can talk to him and persuade him to do evil so that he can become King.

On p. 16, Lady Macbeth says:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be  
 What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;  
 It is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
 To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;  
 Art not without ambition, but without  
 The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,  
 That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,  
 And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou'ldst have, great Glamis,  
 That which cries "Thus thou must do, if thou have it;

And that which rather thou dost fear to do  
 Than wishest should be undone.' Hie thee hither,  
 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear;  
 And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
 All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
 Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
 To have thee crown'd withal.

### Act 1, Scene 5

- **Lady Macbeth makes an important speech in part of which she says (1.5.41-44),**  
 [...] **Come, you spirits**  
**That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,**  
**And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full**  
**Of direst cruelty! [...]**

**Analyze that speech.**

In this speech, Lady Macbeth makes a conscious decision to do evil in order to satisfy her ambition.

Lady Macbeth says that King Duncan's entrance into the Macbeths' castle will be fatal. King Duncan shall die there.

Lady Macbeth asks the spirits that tend on deadly thoughts to unsex her. Lady Macbeth is a woman, and she wishes to be like a man so that the evil deed she has in mind will be accomplished. Of course, if she is a man, she will have no more monthly periods.

Lady Macbeth asks the evil spirits to fill her up the worst cruelty. She does not want to be able to feel remorse or compassion or anything that will keep her from accomplishing her purpose—to have King Duncan murdered so that she can become Queen of Scotland.

Lady Macbeth wants the milk in her breasts to be exchanged for gall—a bitter substance that will not nourish babies.

Lady Macbeth asks to be shrouded in darkest night so that no one can see what happens—not even heaven.

On p. 17, Lady Macbeth says:

The raven himself is hoarse  
 That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
 Under my battlements. Come, you spirits  
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
 And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
 Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;  
 Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
 That no compunctious visitings of nature  
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
 The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,  
 And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,

Wherever in your sightless substances  
 You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,  
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
 To cry 'Hold, hold!'

### Act 1, Scene 5

#### • What advice does Lady Macbeth give her husband?

Mainly, Lady Macbeth wants her husband to look innocent. Of course, they are both thinking about murdering King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth is set on murdering King Duncan, and she wants Macbeth to let her plan the murder—leave the management to her.

On p. 18, we read:

#### **MACBETH**

My dearest love,  
 Duncan comes here to-night.

#### **LADY MACBETH**

And when goes hence?

#### **MACBETH**

To-morrow, as he purposes.

#### **LADY MACBETH**

O, never  
 Shall sun that morrow see!  
 Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
 May read strange matters. To beguile the time,  
 Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,  
 Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,  
 But be the serpent under't. He that's coming  
 Must be provided for: and you shall put  
 This night's great business into my dispatch;  
 Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
 Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

#### **MACBETH**

We will speak further.

#### **LADY MACBETH**

Only look up clear;  
 To alter favour ever is to fear:  
 Leave all the rest to me.

**Act 1, Scene 5****• What kind of a relationship do Macbeth and Lady Macbeth seem to have?**

Their relationship seems close.

We see this in the letter that Macbeth writes to his wife. Macbeth shares what he thinks is good news with his wife.

We see that Lady Macbeth knows her husband's character. Macbeth is reluctant to kill King Duncan and to do evil.

We see that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are both thinking about murdering King Duncan although neither mentions it straight out. Lady Macbeth talks about "This night's great business" (1.5.69), and does not say "murder."

Lady Macbeth is controlling. She knows what she wants, and she can make her husband do what she wants.

**Act 1, Scene 6****• How does King Duncan treat the Macbeths?**

King Duncan treats the Macbeths well.

He favors them with a visit to their castle.

He compliments the castle (even before he sees the Macbeths).

Note that Banquo also praises the Macbeths' castle.

On p. 19, we read:

**SCENE VI. Before Macbeth's castle.**

*Hautboys and torches. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS, ANGUS, and Attendants*

**DUNCAN**

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.

**BANQUO**

This guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,  
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath  
Smells woingly here: no jutting, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird

Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,  
The air is delicate.

King Duncan speaks graciously to Lady Macbeth.

On p. 19, we read:

**DUNCAN**

See, see, our honour'd hostess!  
The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,  
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you  
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains,  
And thank us for your trouble.

and

**DUNCAN**

Where's the thane of Cawdor?  
We coursed him at the heels, and had a purpose  
To be his purveyor: but he rides well;  
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him  
To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,  
We are your guest to-night.

King Duncan says good things about Macbeth.

On p. 20, we read:

**DUNCAN**

Give me your hand;  
Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,  
And shall continue our graces towards him.  
By your leave, hostess.

**Act 1, Scene 6**

- Write an analysis of Lady Macbeth's character as she appears in this scene.

Lady Macbeth appears to be a gracious hostess.

On pp. 19-20, we read:

**LADY MACBETH**

All our service  
In every point twice done and then done double  
Were poor and single business to contend  
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith  
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,

And the late dignities heap'd up to them,  
We rest your hermits.

On p. 20, we read:

**LADY MACBETH**

Your servants ever  
Have theirs, themselves and what is theirs, in compt,  
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,  
Still to return your own.

**Act 1, Scene 7**

• **At the beginning of this scene, Macbeth makes an important speech which begins, “If it were done when ’tis done, then ’twere well / It were done quickly” (1.7.1-2). Analyze that speech.**

Macbeth is thinking about assassinating King Duncan.

Macbeth says that if the assassination were over and done with once it has been committed, then it would be good to commit the assassination quickly and get it over with.

If that were the case, he would risk his chance of eternal life in Heaven to be King of Scotland at the present time.

As we will see, however, the assassination will have long-reaching and long-lasting consequences.

However, Macbeth is aware of justice on Earth. The assassination may not go successfully, and he may not get away with it.

Macbeth then lists the reasons against assassinating King Duncan:

- Macbeth is related to King Duncan.
- Macbeth is King Duncan’s subject.
- Macbeth is King Duncan’s host and should protect him.
- King Duncan has been a very good King. He is virtuous.

To murder a guest is a horrible thing. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, the guest-host relationship or *xenia* is an important theme. Odysseus identifies knowledge of *xenia* as the identifying feature of civilization. If a kingdom treats strangers well, that kingdom is civilized. In Dante’s *Inferno*, hosts who murder guests and guests who murder hosts are placed in Circle 9, the lowest Circle in Hell.

So why does Macbeth want to murder King Duncan? Only because of Macbeth’s won ambition to be King of Scotland.

### Act 1, Scene 7

• Analyze what Macbeth and Lady Macbeth say to each other in this scene, including the important speech in which Lady Macbeth says (1.7.54-59):

[...] I have given suck, and know  
 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:  
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
 Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,  
 And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
 Have done to this.

Lady Macbeth has come looking for her husband. Macbeth is away from entertaining his guest, King Duncan. King Duncan has been asking for him. Lady Macbeth thinks that Macbeth's being away looks suspicious and so she comes looking for him to get him to return to the party.

Macbeth says that they will go no further in the assassination attempt. He is content with what he has won so far.

On p. 22, we read:

#### **MACBETH**

We will proceed no further in this business:  
 He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought  
 Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
 Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,  
 Not cast aside so soon.

Lady Macbeth urges him to do the deed. In doing so, she criticizes his manhood.

On p. 22, we read:

#### **LADY MACBETH**

Was the hope drunk  
 Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?  
 And wakes it now, to look so green and pale  
 At what it did so freely? From this time  
 Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard  
 To be the same in thine own act and valour  
 As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that  
 Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
 And live a coward in thine own esteem,  
 Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'  
 Like the poor cat i' the adage?

Macbeth is insulted.

On p. 22, we read:

**MACBETH**

Prithee, peace:  
I dare do all that may become a man;  
Who dares do more is none.

Macbeth is correct here. He has acted bravely in defending his King, and yes, he is a man. Anyone who does something more than that—such as murdering the King—is not a man. Indeed, Macbeth will be manipulated by his own wife into killing the King. Macbeth will be p\*ssy-whipped.

Lady Macbeth then makes clear that she herself would do the deed of assassinating King Duncan. She would be willing to kill her own nursing infant if she had promised to do so—Macbeth should also keep his promise of killing King Duncan.

On pp. 22-23, we read:

**LADY MACBETH**

What beast was't, then,  
That made you break this enterprise to me?  
When you durst do it, then you were a man;  
And, to be more than what you were, you would  
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place  
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:  
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now  
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this.

Basically, Lady Macbeth is saying that if Macbeth is a man, he will murder King Duncan. She also says that she is a woman, and she is willing to murder King Duncan, and so Macbeth ought to be willing to do it.

Macbeth is worried about failing in the assassination attempt, but Lady Macbeth is sure that it will succeed. She has a plan already. She has drugged King Duncan's bodyguards' evening drinks. They will fall asleep, and then Macbeth can murder King Duncan. The bodyguards will be blamed for King Duncan's death, not the Macbeths.

Macbeth says that Lady Macbeth should have only sons, not daughters. Someone as bloodthirsty as lady Macbeth should not give birth to females. What they would inherit from their mother is not what a female should inherit. (Apparently, it's OK if sons are bloodthirsty.)

On p. 23, we read:

**MACBETH**

Bring forth men-children only;

For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males.

Another part of their plan is to smear blood on the faces of the King's bodyguards.

On p. 23, Macbeth says:

Will it not be received,  
When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber and used their very daggers,  
That they have done't?

**LADY MACBETH**

Who dares receive it other,  
As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar  
Upon his death?

Macbeth decides to murder King Duncan. He and his wife go back to the party, where they act innocently.

On p. 23, we read:

**MACBETH**

I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show:  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

**Act 1, Scene 7**

**• How does Lady Macbeth convince her husband to assassinate King Duncan?**

The main thing she does is to challenge his masculinity. According to Lady Macbeth, a man would murder King Duncan, and if Macbeth will not murder King Duncan, then he is not a man.

Lady Macbeth says that she is more manly than her husband if he will not murder King Duncan. If she had promised to murder him, she would murder him, just like she would murder her own toothless infant if she had promised to murder it.

Lady Macbeth calms Macbeth's fears with a plan. They will put the blame for King Duncan's murder on his bodyguards.

Note that the murder of King Duncan will not end the murders. Other people will be killed. What will happen to the bodyguards if they are blamed for the murder of King Duncan? They will be killed, of course. Earlier, Macbeth said, "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly" (1.7.1-2). The murder will not be done when it is done—other people will die.

## Act 2

### Act 2, Scene 1

- What do we learn from the conversation between Banquo and his son (Fleance) and from the conversation between Banquo and Macbeth?

#### *Banquo and Fleance*

Banquo is nervous this night.

Banquo says that he is suffering from “cursed thoughts” (2.1.8). What sort of thoughts might these be?

- Banquo could be afraid that Macbeth is going to murder King Duncan in order to become King.
- Banquo may be bothered by thought of the three weird sisters.
- The night is so dark and gloomy that Banquo may be afraid in general.

When Macbeth arrives, Banquo is so nervous that he tells his son to give him his sword.

Of course, Banquo is in a friend’s castle, so he should not be nervous.

#### *Banquo and Macbeth*

We learn that King Duncan continues to be generous to the Macbeths.

He is giving Lady Macbeth a diamond.

Macbeth seems to be making an attempt to bribe Banquo; however, Banquo will not be bribed.

On p. 25, we read:

#### **MACBETH**

If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,  
It shall make honour for you.

#### **BANQUO**

So I lose none  
In seeking to augment it, but still keep  
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,  
I shall be counsell'd.

#### **MACBETH**

Good repose the while!

## Act 2, Scene 1

• Macbeth has a soliloquy at the end of this scene, and he sees a hallucination of a dagger. In a soliloquy, a character speaks to himself. In such a case, you can assume that the thoughts expressed are the character's thoughts. What is Macbeth thinking in his soliloquy?

Macbeth is able to see but not to clutch the dagger.

The dagger leads Macbeth in the direction of King Duncan's bedchamber.

The blade and wooden hilt have large drops of blood on them—the dagger is bloody.

Macbeth says that the bloody business at hand is causing him to see the hallucination.

Macbeth wants his deed to be hidden. He doesn't even want the Earth to hear his footsteps.

A bell rings. Apparently, the bell is a signal to Macbeth to murder King Duncan. Apparently, Lady Macbeth has done her part of the business—drugged the bodyguards and laid out the daggers. Now it is time for Macbeth to do what he has told his wife that he would do.

On pp. 25-26, we read:

### **MACBETH**

Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,  
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.

### *Exit Servant*

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
'The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppresed brain?  
I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
As this which now I draw.  
'Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;  
And such an instrument I was to use.  
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,  
Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,  
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:  
It is the bloody business which informs  
'Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one halfworld  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
'The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,  
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,

Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace.  
 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
 Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
 Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,  
 And take the present horror from the time,  
 Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:  
 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

*A bell rings*

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.  
 Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell  
 That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

*Exit*

## Act 2, Scene 2

• **Why didn't Lady Macbeth murder King Duncan? What is her state of mind before Macbeth arrives and tells that he has murdered King Duncan?**

In order to do her part of the plot, Lady Macbeth had to calm her nerves with alcohol.

Lady Macbeth is nervous. She hears an owl shriek, and she listens intently to its noise.

Lady Macbeth has done her part of the plot. She has drugged the bodyguards, and they are asleep.

Lady Macbeth hears Macbeth within. She is afraid that the plot has not worked.

Lady Macbeth says that she would have murdered King Duncan, but that as he slept, he looked like her own father.

On p. 27, we read:

### **LADY MACBETH**

That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold;  
 What hath quenched them hath given me fire.  
 Hark! Peace!  
 It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,  
 Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it:  
 The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms  
 Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd  
 their possets,  
 That death and nature do contend about them,  
 Whether they live or die.

### **MACBETH**

[*Within*] Who's there? what, ho!

**LADY MACBETH**

Alack, I am afraid they have awaked,  
 And 'tis not done. The attempt and not the deed  
 Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;  
 He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled  
 My father as he slept, I had done't.

**Act 2, Scene 2****• How do Macbeth and Lady Macbeth react to the murder of King Duncan?**

*Macbeth*

Macbeth has “done the deed” (2.2.14)—he has murdered King Duncan.

Macbeth says, “This is a sorry sight” (2.2.20). He is looking, apparently, at his bloody hands and the bloody daggers which he has carried away from the murder scene. He was not supposed to have done that, but he is so shocked by what he has done that he has committed this mistake.

*Lady Macbeth*

Lady Macbeth seems scornful of Macbeth’s supposed weakness after killing King Duncan. On p. 28, she says,

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

*Macbeth*

The bodyguards said their prayers, but Macbeth could not join in—he could not say “Amen” both because the bodyguards might have heard him and because he was about to commit an evil deed.

*Lady Macbeth*

Lady Macbeth recommends not thinking about the murder because it would make them mad—which is exactly what happens to her. On p. 28, Lady Macbeth says:

These deeds must not be thought  
 After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

*Macbeth*

Macbeth says that he thought that he heard a voice saying (pp. 28-29):

Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!  
 Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,  
 Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
 The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,

Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast,--

Macbeth will now find it hard to sleep. This will hurt him, because sleep is a good thing. Also, Macbeth says (p. 29):

**MACBETH**

Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house:  
'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

*Lady Macbeth*

Lady Macbeth is shocked that Macbeth has carried away the bloody daggers from King Duncan's bedchamber. She orders him to take the bloody daggers back and to smear blood on the faces of King Duncan's bodyguards.

*Macbeth*

Macbeth refuses to do so (p. 29):

**MACBETH**

I'll go no more:  
I am afraid to think what I have done;  
Look on't again I dare not.

*Lady Macbeth*

Therefore, Lady Macbeth herself returns the daggers to King Duncan's bedchamber and smears blood on the faces of King Duncan's bodyguards (p. 29)

**LADY MACBETH**

Infirm of purpose!  
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead  
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,  
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;  
For it must seem their guilt.

*Macbeth*

Macbeth looks at the blood on his hands and says that all the water in the ocean cannot wash away the blood. Instead, the blood will turn the green ocean red (pp. 29-30):

**MACBETH**

Whence is that knocking?  
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?  
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
 Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather  
 The multitudinous seas in incarnadine,  
 Making the green one red.

*Lady Macbeth*

Lady Macbeth returns with her hands covered with blood, and she scorns her husband for his weakness. She says, in contrast to Macbeth, “A little water clears us of this deed” (p. 30):

**LADY MACBETH**

My hands are of your colour; but I shame  
 To wear a heart so white.

*Knocking within*

I hear a knocking  
 At the south entry: retire we to our chamber;  
 A little water clears us of this deed:  
 How easy is it, then! Your constancy  
 Hath left you unattended.

*Knocking within*

Hark! more knocking.  
 Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us,  
 And show us to be watchers. Be not lost  
 So poorly in your thoughts.

*Macbeth*

Macbeth regrets what he has done. He wishes that the knocking at the gate could awaken King Duncan:

**MACBETH**

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

*Knocking within*

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

**Act 2, Scene 3**

• **Why do you suppose Shakespeare included the comic scene with the Porter at the beginning of this scene? What are a few of the Porter's jokes?**

We have had quite a lot of tension recently. Shakespeare's purpose may be to relieve the tension before building it up again.

However, we should expect the porter's scene to be important thematically as well.

The Porter has been partying and is asleep when the knocks occur. It takes him a while to get to the gate.

The Porter says that he is the Porter of the Gates of Hell.

That is not a bad way to refer to being the Porter of the gates of the Macbeths' castle. Certainly some bad things have happened inside the castle.

The Porter speaks of sin.

- A farmer hoarded his crops expecting to make lots of money when the crops failed the next season. However, the crops were plentiful, so the farmer hung himself.
- An equivocator is a liar. The equivocator the Porter speaks of did not make it to Heaven.
- An English tailor stole out of French tight-fitting hose. This refers to an English tailor stealing some of the cloth that was given to him to make the hose.
- All three are sinners about to be admitted to Hell.

The Porter speaks of the three things that alcohol especially produces. They are:

- Nose painting. Alcoholism can turn your nose red.
- Urine.
- Sleep.

The Porter also mentions lechery (getting horny), which alcohol both provokes and does not provoke. Alcohol can make a man horny, but it also can make him unable to get an erection.

Here we have something that seems to be good, but which has unintended or unwanted consequences. Alcohol seems to be good, but it turns your nose red, it makes you pee, and it makes you sleep rather than have sex.

Alcohol may be compared to ambition. Ambition that is not held in check by morality can have bad consequences. (Used wisely, alcohol and ambition can be very good.)

### **Act 2, Scene 3**

#### **• What kind of a night has it been?**

It has been a rough night.

Often, Shakespeare will show nature disturbed when morality is disturbed. That is certainly what we have here.

On p. 33, we read:

**LENNOX**

The night has been unruly: where we lay,  
 Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,  
 Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death,  
 And prophesying with accents terrible  
 Of dire combustion and confused events  
 New hatch'd to the woeful time: the obscure bird  
 Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth  
 Was feverous and did shake.

**MACBETH**

'Twas a rough night.

Macbeth's line sometimes makes the audience laugh. Certainly the night has been rough for Macbeth—he has committed murder on this night.

**Act 2, Scene 3**

- **What is the first thing that Macbeth says after he is told of the murder of King Duncan? Why is what he says appropriate?**

On p. 34, he says:

**MACBETH**

Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
 I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant,  
 There 's nothing serious in mortality:  
 All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;  
 The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
 Is left this vault to brag of.

This speech is appropriate:

*If Macbeth Were Innocent*

If Macbeth were innocent, he is saying that King Duncan's death is a tragedy, that he (Macbeth) would have lived a blessed life if he had died before hearing of King Duncan's death.

Macbeth would have died as a hero and a loved man.

*But Macbeth is Guilty*

The speech is also appropriate because Macbeth did murder King Duncan.

If Macbeth had died an hour before killing King Duncan, he would have lived a wonderful life. He would be remembered as a hero of Scotland, as a mighty warrior, and as a powerful Thane.

However, Macbeth did not die before murdering King Duncan, and King Duncan's murder leads to many more murders, and therefore Macbeth will be remembered as a hated tyrant.

### Act 2, Scene 3

• **Why does Macbeth say he killed King Duncan's chamberlains? What is his real reason for killing them?**

Basically, Macbeth says that he killed the King's bodyguards in a fit of rage. He saw them covered in blood, realized that they had killed the King, and in a fit of rage, Macbeth killed them.

Of course, the real reason that Macbeth killed them was to keep them from being questioned. If they were questioned, they might have been able to cast doubt away from themselves. If they are dead, it is easier to blame them for the murder of King Duncan because they are no longer able to defend themselves.

On p. 35, we read:

**MACBETH**

O, yet I do repent me of my fury,  
That I did kill them.

**MACDUFF**

Wherefore did you so?

**MACBETH**

Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and furious,  
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:  
The expedition my violent love  
Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,  
His silver skin laced with his golden blood;  
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature  
For ruin's wasteful entrance: there, the murderers,  
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers  
Unmannerly breech'd with gore: who could refrain,  
That had a heart to love, and in that heart  
Courage to make 's love known?

### Act 2, Scene 3

• **Why does Lady Macbeth say “Help me hence” (2.3.120) in this scene?**

The murder is discovered, and Macbeth rushes it and kills the King's bodyguard—in a moment of fury, he says.

Macduff questions why Macbeth killed the King's bodyguards—after all, wouldn't it have been better to question them about the murder?

At this time, Lady Macbeth says, “Help me hence” (2.3.120). Often, this is played as if Lady Macbeth is fainting. Possibly, she is really fainting. A better interpretation, in my opinion, is that she

is pretending to faint in order to divert attention away from Macbeth. This is a very good way of stopping the questioning of Macbeth.

### **Act 2, Scene 3**

- **Write a brief character analysis of Macduff based on what you learn in this scene.**

Macduff (who is with Lennox) is the knocker.

Macduff discovers the murder of King Duncan. He seems horrified by what he has found.

Macduff does not want Lady Macbeth to hear that King Duncan has been murdered. He is afraid that the news might kill her.

Macduff seems suspicious of Macbeth. He questions why Macbeth murdered King Duncan's bodyguards.

### **Act 2, Scene 3**

- **What happens to Malcolm and Donalbain, King Duncan's sons? Why?**

The two sons of King Duncan are able to talk briefly a couple of times after the murder.

They know that their father has been murdered, and they do not know who committed the murder.

They know that whoever committed the murder will pretend not to have committed the murder.

They know that their lives are in danger. Why would anyone kill the King? Because they want to be Kings themselves. Therefore, the murderer will be very willing to kill the next two in line for the Kingdom.

Malcolm flees to England.

Donalbain flees to Ireland.

On pp. 35-36, we read:

#### **MALCOLM**

[Aside to DONALBAIN] Why do we hold our tongues,  
That most may claim this argument for ours?

#### **DONALBAIN**

[Aside to MALCOLM] What should be spoken here,  
where our fate,  
Hid in an auger-hole, may rush, and seize us?  
Let 's away;  
Our tears are not yet brew'd.

#### **MALCOLM**

[Aside to DONALBAIN] Nor our strong sorrow

Upon the foot of motion.

On pp. 36-37, we read:

*Exeunt all but Malcolm and Donalbain.*

**MALCOLM**

What will you do? Let's not consort with them:  
To show an unfelt sorrow is an office  
Which the false man does easy. I'll to England.

**DONALBAIN**

To Ireland, I; our separated fortune  
Shall keep us both the safer: where we are,  
There's daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood,  
The nearer bloody.

**MALCOLM**

This murderous shaft that's shot  
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way  
Is to avoid the aim. Therefore, to horse;  
And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,  
But shift away: there's warrant in that theft  
Which steals itself, when there's no mercy left.

*Exeunt*

**Act 2, Scene 4**

• **Discuss the strange weather and strange natural happenings of scene 4. (For example, according to the clock, the sun should be shining, but all is dark.)**

The Old Man is able to remember 70 years, but he is unable to remember weather as rough as it is now.

According to the clock, the sun should be shining, but all is dark.

A falcon was killed last Tuesday by an owl, which normally hunts and eats mice.

King Duncan's horses became wild and became cannibals—they ate each other.

One other unnatural occurrence is that King Duncan's sons are thought to have bribed their father's bodyguards to murder their father.

In Shakespeare, problems in government are reflected by problems in the natural order.

On pp. 37-38, we read:

**Old Man**

Threescore and ten I can remember well:  
 Within the volume of which time I have seen  
 Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night  
 Hath trifled former knowings.

**ROSS**

Ah, good father,  
 Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act,  
 Threaten his bloody stage: by the clock, 'tis day,  
 And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp:  
 Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,  
 That darkness does the face of earth entomb,  
 When living light should kiss it?

**Old Man**

'Tis unnatural,  
 Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,  
 A falcon, towering in her pride of place,  
 Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

**ROSS**

And Duncan's horses--a thing most strange and certain--  
 Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
 Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,  
 Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make  
 War with mankind.

**Old Man**

'Tis said they eat each other.

and (p. 38)

**ROSS**

Is't known who did this more than bloody deed?

**MACDUFF**

Those that Macbeth hath slain.

**ROSS**

Alas, the day!  
 What good could they pretend?

**MACDUFF**

They were suborn'd:  
 Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's two sons,  
 Are stol'n away and fled; which puts upon them  
 Suspicion of the deed.

**ROSS**

'Gainst nature still!  
 Thriftless ambition, that wilt ravin up  
 Thine own life's means! Then 'tis most like  
 The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

**Act 2, Scene 4****• What is the official explanation of who murdered King Duncan?**

The official version of who murdered King Duncan is that his sons bribed the King's bodyguards to murder him so that Malcolm could be King earlier.

The bodyguards are dead, of course, so they can't be questioned—and can't defend themselves.

The King's sons have fled, so they can't be questioned—and can't defend themselves.

**Act 2, Scene 4****What is Macduff's reaction to Macbeth's becoming King of Scotland?**

Macduff doesn't seem to believe the official explanation of the murder of King Duncan.

Macbeth is going to be crowned King in Scone. Macduff, however, won't go to Scone. He's going to go to Fife instead. (Fife is where his castle is located.)

This can be seen as disrespect to the new King.

It's like a wedding. If you approve of a wedding, you will go to the wedding and celebrate. If you don't approve of the wedding, you will stay away from it.

## Act 3

### Act 3, Scene 1

#### • What do we learn from Banquo's soliloquy before Macbeth arrives?

We learn that Banquo suspects that Macbeth murdered King Duncan. He says that Macbeth has everything that the three witches promised him and that he fears that Macbeth played "most foully" (3.1.3) for it.

Banquo now is wondering whether what the witches said about his progeny will come true. Will his descendants become Kings?

On p. 40, we read:

#### **BANQUO**

Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
As the weird women promised, and, I fear,  
Thou play'dst most foully for't: yet it was said  
It should not stand in thy posterity,  
But that myself should be the root and father  
Of many kings. If there come truth from them--  
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine--  
Why, by the verities on thee made good,  
May they not be my oracles as well,  
And set me up in hope? But hush! no more.

### Act 3, Scene 1

#### • Why are Banquo and Banquo's son, Fleance, threats to King Macbeth? Why does Macbeth decide to have them murdered?

King Macbeth regards Banquo as a threat because he knows about the prophecies of the three witches.

King Macbeth regards Fleance, Banquo's son, as a threat because the witches prophesied that Banquo would not be a king, but that his descendants would.

Macbeth is upset because he has given his soul to be King, but he will be unable to pass his throne down to his own children.

Note that Macbeth is very inquisitive about Banquo's plans for the afternoon. He asks:

1. Ride you this afternoon? (3.1.19)
2. Is 't far you ride? (3.1.23)
3. Goes Fleance with you? (3.1.35)

Note also that Macbeth specifically requests that Banquo not miss the banquet. In fact, Banquo—although he will be murdered before the banquet—will not miss the banquet.

Before the two murderers arrive, Macbeth says on pp. 42-43:

**MACBETH**

To be thus is nothing;  
 But to be safely thus.--Our fears in Banquo  
 Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature  
 Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;  
 And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,  
 He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
 To act in safety. There is none but he  
 Whose being I do fear: and, under him,  
 My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,  
 Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters  
 When first they put the name of king upon me,  
 And bade them speak to him: then prophet-like  
 They hail'd him father to a line of kings:  
 Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,  
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
 Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
 No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
 For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;  
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
 Only for them; and mine eternal jewel  
 Given to the common enemy of man,  
 To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!  
 Rather than so, come fate into the list.  
 And champion me to the utterance! Who's there!

**Act 3, Scene 1**

• **How does Macbeth convince the two murderers to murder Banquo and Fleance? Why doesn't Macbeth murder Banquo and Fleance himself?**

Macbeth convinces them through evidence which is undisclosed to us, the audience. In a previous meeting between Macbeth and the two murderers, Macbeth convinced them that Banquo was their enemy.

Macbeth says that men who have been so treated by Banquo would murder Banquo.

On p. 43, we read:

**First Murderer**

We are men, my liege.

**MACBETH**

Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;

The Second Murderer says that he has been so treated by the world that he cares not what he does. The same is true of the First Murderer.

On p. 44, we read:

**Second Murderer**

I am one, my liege,  
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world  
Have so incensed that I am reckless what  
I do to spite the world.

**First Murderer**

And I another  
So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,  
That I would set my lie on any chance,  
To mend it, or be rid on't.

Macbeth says that Banquo is also his enemy, but that he cannot murder Banquo because they have friends in common which he cannot make enemies.

Macbeth says that the two murderers must murder Banquo and Fleance at some distance from the castle so that Macbeth has an alibi.

Note that the two murderers have no problem with murdering Fleance. Macbeth simply says that he has reason for Fleance to be dead, and the two murderers agree to murder Fleance.

**Act 3, Scene 2****• How are Lady Macbeth and Macbeth affected by their murder of King Duncan?**

Neither are made happy by the murder.

*Lady Macbeth*

On p. 46, we read:

**LADY MACBETH**

Nought's had, all's spent,  
Where our desire is got without content:  
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy  
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

Lady Macbeth and Macbeth have given everything—their souls—to be King and Queen of Scotland. However, they have gained nothing by it. Lady Macbeth says that it is “safer to be that which we destroy / than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy” (3.2.6-7). By that, she means that it

would be better to be the murdered King Duncan than to be King and Queen of Scotland as a result of murder.

*Macbeth*

Macbeth is not happy. Lady Macbeth says that he stays alone often thinking of what he has done. It is better not to think of those things.

On p. 46, Lady Macbeth says:

*Enter MACBETH*

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,  
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
Should be without regard: what's done is done.

Macbeth believes that he has scorched (wounded) the snake, not killed it. He has killed King Duncan and become King of Scotland, but that is not enough for Macbeth. Now he wishes to be able to pass the crown on to his descendants.

Macbeth is not able to sleep because he has nightmares.

On pp. 46-47, we read:

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the  
worlds suffer,  
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep  
In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
That shake us nightly

Like Lady Macbeth, Macbeth envies King Duncan, even though he is dead. Better to be the dead King Duncan than the living Macbeth or Lady Macbeth.

On p. 47, we read:

[...] better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
Can touch him further.

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth urge the other to put on a pleasing appearance for the banquet tonight. Macbeth wants Lady Macbeth to honor Banquo.

### Act 3, Scene 2

#### • In your opinion, why doesn't Macbeth tell Lady Macbeth about his plans to murder Banquo and his son, Fleance?

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are no longer as close as they once were. At the beginning of this scene, Lady Macbeth has to ask for an audience with the King. Previously, I doubt that she had to do that.

On p. 46, Lady Macbeth says:

#### **LADY MACBETH**

Say to the king, I would attend his leisure  
For a few words.

Macbeth does not tell Lady Macbeth that he has planned to have Banquo and Fleance murdered. Why?

- He may not trust Lady Macbeth any longer. This is doubtful.
- He may think that Lady Macbeth can do a better job of appearing to be innocent of honoring Banquo if she does not know that Banquo and Fleance will be murdered that day.
- He may genuinely wish to surprise her. He may think that she will be pleased by the murders.

On pp. 47-48, we read:

#### **MACBETH**

There's comfort yet; they are assailable;  
Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown  
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons  
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums  
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.

#### **LADY MACBETH**

What's to be done?

#### **MACBETH**

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,  
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,  
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;  
And with thy bloody and invisible hand  
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond  
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens; and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood:  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;  
While night's black agents to their preys do rouse.

Thou marvell'st at my words: but hold thee still;  
 Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.  
 So, prithee, go with me.

### Act 3, Scene 3

#### • In your opinion, why does Macbeth send a Third Murderer to help kill Banquo and Fleance?

Here are three possible reasons:

1. Macbeth does not trust the two murderers.
2. Macbeth wants to make sure that the murders get committed. Three murderers may be able to do a better job than two.

Note that the two murderers are surprised that a third murderer has joined them.

On p. 48, we read:

*Enter three Murderers*

#### **First Murderer**

But who did bid thee join with us?

#### **Third Murderer**

Macbeth.

#### **Second Murderer**

He needs not our mistrust, since he delivers  
 Our offices and what we have to do  
 To the direction just.

3. The third murderer may be bringing new information to the first two murderers. The new information is that by custom people dismount from their horses and then walk the rest of the way to the castle.

On p. 49, we read:

#### **First Murderer**

His horses go about.

#### **Third Murderer**

Almost a mile: but he does usually,  
 So all men do, from hence to the palace gate  
 Make it their walk.

### Act 3, Scene 3

- In some productions, the Third Murderer is played by Macbeth or Lady Macbeth. Are such productions supported by Shakespeare's text?

No, they are not.

*Macbeth*

Macbeth needs an alibi.

Also, the next scene (Act 3, Scene 4) is difficult to understand if Macbeth is with the two murderers during the murder. (He could be in disguise, I suppose.)

*Lady Macbeth*

Macbeth has not told Lady Macbeth about the murders he has planned. (Of course, it is possible to stage the play so that Lady Macbeth eavesdrops on Macbeth's conversation with the two murderers, but Shakespeare did not write that in his stage directions.)

### Act 3, Scene 3

- Why is the murder of Fleance botched? What does that mean for Macbeth?

Banquo calls out for Fleance to flee.

On p. 49, we read:

**BANQUO**

O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!  
Thou mayst revenge. O slave!

The light is put out.

On p. 49, we read:

**Third Murderer**

Who did strike out the light?

**First Murderer**

Wast not the way?

### Act 3, Scene 4

- Describe the beginning of the banquet, before the First Murderer arrives.

Basically, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are prepared to act as proper hosts and hostesses.

At the beginning of the banquet, everything is done with proper decorum. People sit down according to their ranks. Higher-ups would sit closer to the King and Queen.

On p. 50, we read:

*A banquet prepared. Enter MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX, Lords, and Attendants*

**MACBETH**

You know your own degrees; sit down: at first  
And last the hearty welcome.

**Lords**

Thanks to your majesty.

**MACBETH**

Ourselves will mingle with society,  
And play the humble host.  
Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time  
We will require her welcome.

**LADY MACBETH**

Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends;  
For my heart speaks they are welcome.

**Act 3, Scene 4**

• **How does Macbeth take the news that Banquo is dead, but that Fleance has escaped?**

Macbeth is very happy that Banquo is dead, but very unhappy that Fleance is not dead.

Macbeth realizes that Fleance can be a threat to him in the future.

Note how bloodthirsty Macbeth is becoming. It took a lot of effort—an effort of the will—for him to kill King Duncan. It took no effort at all to kill Banquo and to want to kill Fleance.

Macbeth chose the path of evil, and he continues to tread that path. It becomes easier and easier for him to do evil.

On pp. 50-51, we read:

*First Murderer appears at the door*

**MACBETH**

See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks.  
Both sides are even: here I'll sit i' the midst:  
Be large in mirth; anon we'll drink a measure  
The table round.

*Approaching the door*

There's blood on thy face.

**First Murderer**

'Tis Banquo's then.

**MACBETH**

'Tis better thee without than he within.  
Is he dispatch'd?

**First Murderer**

My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

**MACBETH**

Thou art the best o' the cut-throats: yet he's good  
That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it,  
Thou art the nonpareil.

**First Murderer**

Most royal sir,  
Fleance is 'scaped.

**MACBETH**

Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,  
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe?

**First Murderer**

Ay, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,  
With twenty trenched gashes on his head;  
The least a death to nature.

**MACBETH**

Thanks for that:  
There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled  
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,  
No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: to-morrow  
We'll hear, ourselves, again.

*Exit Murderer*

**Act 3, Scene 4**

- **How does Lady Macbeth react to Macbeth's words and actions?**

Lady Macbeth wants Macbeth to act as genial hoist instead of talking to the murderer.

On p. 51, we read:

**LADY MACBETH**

My royal lord,  
 You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold  
 That is not often vouch'd, while 'tis a-making,  
 'Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home;  
 From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;  
 Meeting were bare without it.

Macbeth agrees with Lady Macbeth and tries to act as hospitable host and even says that he wishes Banquo were present. But when he is bid to join the table, Macbeth answers that the table is full. The other guests see an empty chair, but for Macbeth, the chair is occupied. It turns out that the ghost of Banquo occupies the chair.

On p. 52, we read:

**LENNOX**

May't please your highness sit.

*The GHOST OF BANQUO enters, and sits in MACBETH's place*

**MACBETH**

Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,  
 Were the graced person of our Banquo present;  
 Who may I rather challenge for unkindness  
 Than pity for mischance!

**ROSS**

His absence, sir,  
 Lays blame upon his promise. Please't your highness  
 To grace us with your royal company.

**MACBETH**

The table's full.

**LENNOX**

Here is a place reserved, sir.

**MACBETH**

Where?

**LENNOX**

Here, my good lord. What is't that moves your highness?

Macbeth acts wildly, and the guests and Lady Macbeth are concerned. Ross says that Macbeth is ill, but Lady Macbeth bids the guests sit because she hopes to salvage the banquet.

On p. 52, we read:

**MACBETH**

Which of you have done this?

**Lords**

What, my good lord?

**MACBETH**

Thou canst not say I did it: never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.

**ROSS**

Gentlemen, rise: his highness is not well.

Lady Macbeth makes an excuse for Macbeth. He is having a fit. She also wants him to be a man and be a genial host. Macbeth replies that he is a man.

On pp. 52-53, we read:

**ROSS**

Gentlemen, rise: his highness is not well.

**LADY MACBETH**

Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;  
The fit is momentary; upon a thought  
He will again be well: if much you note him,  
You shall offend him and extend his passion:  
Feed, and regard him not. Are you a man?

**MACBETH**

Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
Which might appal the devil.

**LADY MACBETH**

O proper stuff!  
This is the very painting of your fear:  
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,  
Impostors to true fear, would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all's done,  
You look but on a stool.

**MACBETH**

Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo!  
how say you?  
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.

If charnel-houses and our graves must send  
 Those that we bury back, our monuments  
 Shall be the maws of kites.

*GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes*

**LADY MACBETH**

What, quite unmann'd in folly?

With the ghost gone, Macbeth recovers to an extent. He complains to Lady Macbeth that once upon a time, dead men stayed dead, but that now they walk about. However, Macbeth again begins to act the part of host as Lady Macbeth bids him to. He also says that he is ill, as Lady Macbeth has done earlier.

On pp. 53-54, we read:

**LADY MACBETH**

My worthy lord,  
 Your noble friends do lack you.

**MACBETH**

I do forget.  
 Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends,  
 I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing  
 To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;  
 Then I'll sit down. Give me some wine; fill full.  
 I drink to the general joy o' the whole table,  
 And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;  
 Would he were here! to all, and him, we thirst,  
 And all to all.

**Lords**

Our duties, and the pledge.

Note that Macbeth wants his goblet filled full. He has begun to drink way too much.

As soon as the ghost returns, Macbeth again panics. He tells the ghost to take the shape of something else. If the ghost assumes the shape of a bear or a rhinoceros or a tiger, he will fight it.

On p. 54, we read:

*Re-enter GHOST OF BANQUO*

**MACBETH**

Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!  
 Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
 Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
 Which thou dost glare with!

**LADY MACBETH**

Think of this, good peers,  
 But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;  
 Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

**MACBETH**

What man dare, I dare:  
 Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
 The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;  
 Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves  
 Shall never tremble: or be alive again,  
 And dare me to the desert with thy sword;  
 If trembling I inhabit then, protest me  
 The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!  
 Unreal mockery, hence!

*GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes*

Why, so: being gone,  
 I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

The party must break up. Macbeth speaks of the sights he has seen—sights that no one else is able to see. Lady Macbeth realizes that the banquet is ruined and dismisses the guests.

On pp. 54-55, we read:

**LADY MACBETH**

You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting,  
 With most admired disorder.

**MACBETH**

Can such things be,  
 And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
 Without our special wonder? You make me strange  
 Even to the disposition that I owe,  
 When now I think you can behold such sights,  
 And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,  
 When mine is blanched with fear.

**ROSS**

What sights, my lord?

**LADY MACBETH**

I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and worse;  
 Question enrages him. At once, good night:  
 Stand not upon the order of your going,  
 But go at once.

**LENNOX**

Good night; and better health  
Attend his majesty!

**LADY MACBETH**

A kind good night to all!

*Exeunt all but MACBETH and LADY MACBETH*

Note that in contrast to the beginning of the banquet, there is no insistence on observance of rank.

**Act 3, Scene 4**

• **What do you think the reaction of the guests at the banquet would be to Macbeth's words and actions? What would they talk about after the banquet is over?**

Everyone is mystified by Macbeth's behavior. He has seen Banquo's ghost, but they have seen nothing.

They have to wonder if Macbeth is fit to be King of Scotland. Have they made an insane person—a lunatic—their King?

**Act 3, Scene 4**

• **Why is Macbeth worried about Macduff?**

Macduff did not attend the banquet. In addition, Macduff was not present when Macbeth was crowned King. Macduff is not showing Macbeth the respect that Macbeth thinks he deserves.

We find out that Macbeth is keeping spies—servants paid to spy—in the households of all the nobles.

On pp. 55-56, we read:

**MACBETH**

How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  
At our great bidding?

**LADY MACBETH**

Did you send to him, sir?

**MACBETH**

I hear it by the way; but I will send:  
There's not a one of them but in his house  
I keep a servant fee'd. I will to-morrow,  
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:  
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,  
All causes shall give way: I am in blood

Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,  
 Returning were as tedious as go o'er:  
 Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;  
 Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

**LADY MACBETH**

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

**MACBETH**

Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse  
 Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:  
 We are yet but young in deed.

Note how bloodthirsty Macbeth is now. He says that he is determined to hear what the three witches have to say. Macbeth's own good comes first before anything else. He has shed so much blood that he might as well keep on shedding blood. This is a mistake, of course.

“No matter how far you have gone on the wrong road, turn back.”—Turkish proverb

On p. 56, Macbeth says:

[...] I am in blood  
 Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,  
 Returning were as tedious as go o'er:

**Act 3, Scene 5**

• **Write a character analysis of Hecate.**

Hecate is angry at the Three Witches. They have been tempting Macbeth without her. She wishes to help destroy Macbeth.

The Three Witches have been tempting someone who is selfish and who is not concerned about the Witches and witchcraft. The Three Witches have been using their arts to do this.

Hecate knows that Macbeth will seek information from the Three Witches tomorrow morning.

Hecate will spend the night raising apparitions for Macbeth to see tomorrow.

The apparitions will make Macbeth overconfident and draw him on to his destruction.

Note that the scene calls for singing and dancing. It can be a spectacle. The director can even have Hecate fly off stage.

On pp. 56-57, we read:

**HECATE**

Have I not reason, beldams as you are,  
 Saucy and overbold? How did you dare

To trade and traffic with Macbeth  
 In riddles and affairs of death;  
 And I, the mistress of your charms,  
 The close contriver of all harms,  
 Was never call'd to bear my part,  
 Or show the glory of our art?  
 And, which is worse, all you have done  
 Hath been but for a wayward son,  
 Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do,  
 Loves for his own ends, not for you.  
 But make amends now: get you gone,  
 And at the pit of Acheron  
 Meet me i' the morning: thither he  
 Will come to know his destiny:  
 Your vessels and your spells provide,  
 Your charms and every thing beside.  
 I am for the air; this night I'll spend  
 Unto a dismal and a fatal end:  
 Great business must be wrought ere noon:  
 Upon the corner of the moon  
 There hangs a vaporous drop profound;  
 I'll catch it ere it come to ground:  
 And that distill'd by magic sleights  
 Shall raise such artificial sprites  
 As by the strength of their illusion  
 Shall draw him on to his confusion:  
 He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear  
 He hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear:  
 And you all know, security  
 Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

*Music and a song within: 'Come away, come away,' &c*

Hark! I am call'd; my little spirit, see,  
 Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me.

### Act 3, Scene 6

#### • What does Lennox think about King Macbeth?

Lennox speaks with a lot of irony or sarcasm:

- Macbeth pitied King Duncan, and King Duncan died.
- Banquo walked late at night, and Banquo died.
- Fleance must have killed Banquo, because Fleance fled.
- Malcolm and Donalbain must have killed King Duncan.

- Macbeth killed the King's bodyguards in righteous indignation.

All of the above is spoken with sarcasm. Lennox is saying, You can believe this if you want, but I certainly don't.

We know that the above is spoken with sarcasm because of what Lennox says next:

- If Macbeth had custody of Malcolm and Donalbain, they would soon be dead.
- If Macbeth had custody of Fleance, he would soon be dead.

On p. 58, we read:

How it did grieve Macbeth! did he not straight  
 In pious rage the two delinquents tear,  
 That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?  
 Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too;  
 For 'twould have anger'd any heart alive  
 To hear the men deny't. So that, I say,  
 He has borne all things well: and I do think  
 That had he Duncan's sons under his key--  
 As, an't please heaven, he shall not--they  
 should find  
 What 'twere to kill a father; so should Fleance.

### **Act 3, Scene 6**

#### **• What has happened to Macduff?**

Macduff is in disgrace (Macbeth is angry at him) because he did not attend the Macbeths' feast.

Malcolm is now at the English court, where King Edward the Confessor has received him graciously. Macduff has gone to England to ask the English King to raise an army to free Scotland from the tyrant Macbeth.

We see that Scotland is in a bad way now. Macbeth is a bad King.

On p. 59, a Lord tells Lennox:

That, by the help of these--with Him above  
 To ratify the work--we may again  
 Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,  
 Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,  
 Do faithful homage and receive free honours:  
 All which we pine for now: and this report  
 Hath so exasperate the king that he  
 Prepares for some attempt of war.

Macbeth is aware of what Macduff is doing, and so he is preparing for war.

Macbeth sent a messenger to Macduff, but Macduff spurned the messenger.

Lennox and the other lords are on the side of Macduff, not Macbeth.

On p. 59, we read:

**LENNOX**

And that well might  
Advise him to a caution, to hold what distance  
His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel  
Fly to the court of England and unfold  
His message ere he come, that a swift blessing  
May soon return to this our suffering country  
Under a hand accursed!

## Act 4

### Act 4, Scene 1

• **What do we learn about the three witches from their potion-making?**

We learn that the witches are very evil. The ingredients that they add to the potion are disgusting.

The first witch says this (p. 62):

Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten  
Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten  
From the murderer's gibbet throw  
Into the flame.

The Pathology Guy (Ed Friedlander) explains:

I'm an autopsy pathologist. I am very familiar with how human bodies decompose. To show Macbeth his future, the witches add to the brew "grease that's sweaten / From the murderer's gibbet." Would you like to know what that means? The bodies of murderers were left hanging on the gallows (gibbet) until they were skeletonized, which takes weeks. At about ten days in suitable weather, there are enough weak points in the skin that the bodyfat, which has liquified, can start dripping through. There will be a puddle of oil underneath the body. This is for real.

Source: <http://www.pathguy.com/macbeth.htm>

These are the ingredients of the potion:

poisoned entrails  
toad  
slice of a snake from a swamp  
eye of newt  
toe of frog  
wool of bat  
tongue of dog  
forked tongue of an adder  
sting of a legless lizard  
leg of a lizard  
wing of a young owl  
etc.

### Act 4, Scene 1

• **The second witch says about Macbeth, "By the pricking of my thumbs / Something wicked this way comes" (4.1.44-45). Is this true of Macbeth? Would have been true if the witch had said it at the beginning of the play?**

It's definitely true now.

How many people has Macbeth killed so far?

King Duncan  
The Two Bodyguards (Chamberlains)  
Banquo

How many other people would he like to have killed so far?

Malcolm  
Donalbain  
Fleance

In addition to that, he will kill many other people, including Lady Macduff and her children.

Plus, he has made Scotland a Hellhole.

But at the beginning of the play, Macbeth was a hero. Everyone looked up to him. King Duncan made him a favorite.

In Orson Welles' movie of *Macbeth*, he has the Witches say the lines "By the pricking of my thumbs / Something wicked this way comes" (4.1.44-45) at the beginning of the movie, even before the Witches meet Macbeth the first time. In Mr. Welles' interpretation, Macbeth is evil from the very beginning of the play. This is a mistake, in my opinion. I regard Macbeth as a good man who becomes evil during the course of the play.

#### **Act 4, Scene 1**

**• Is Macbeth responsible for his actions? Or are the three witches responsible for his actions?**

I must say that Macbeth is responsible for his actions.

Macbeth murdered King Duncan. The three witches did not murder King Duncan.

The three witches have limits on their powers. They cannot do everything.

The three witches tempted Macbeth, but Macbeth committed the murders.

Macbeth chose to become evil, hoping that he could be evil once, then reap the gains without doing anything further evil. But it didn't work out that way. He continues to do evil.

Note that Banquo has not done evil, although the three witches also prophesied to him.

We have free will, but we are free in a certain situation.

We are born—most likely—in the United States, so we learn English. But we can choose to major in French.

We are surrounded by people who can tempt us, but it's up to us whether we give in to the temptation.

If we do give in to the temptation, it's easier to give in to temptation a second time.

Think of a person tempting you to steal candy when you are a young teenager.

If you are caught and blame the person who tempted you, the person who tempted you can say: "Are you crazy? I didn't steal any candy. My parents raised me up to be moral!"

Your parents can say, "If he or she told you to jump off a cliff, would you do it?"

If you get away with stealing candy, it's a bad thing. You're likely to keep on stealing.

Some people really do enjoy tempting other people to make mistakes. And if you do the wrong thing, they will call you a sucker.

The person who tempted you can tell your friends: "I told him or her to steal candy and he or she did. What a sucker!"

"Go ahead. Steal that candy. I'd do it. Are you chicken?"

#### **Act 4, Scene 1**

##### **• Is Macbeth becoming more evil as the play progresses?**

Definitely.

He started with one murder, which led to more.

Now he is starting to kill women and children. Now he is starting to kill people who are no threat to him.

At this point, Macbeth is totally selfish. He wants answers from the three witches, and he does not care what happens as a result. Even the entire universe can be destroyed so long as he hears the answers to his questions.

On p. 62, we read:

#### **MACBETH**

I conjure you, by that which you profess,  
 Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:  
 Though you untie the winds and let them fight  
 Against the churches; though the yesty waves  
 Confound and swallow navigation up;  
 Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down;  
 Though castles topple on their warders' heads;  
 Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
 Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure

Of nature's germens tumble all together,  
 Even till destruction sicken; answer me  
 To what I ask you.

In the above passage, Macbeth is saying that he doesn't care whether mass destruction would result—all he cares about is getting the answers to his questions.

It's interesting that when the witches ask him if he wants to hear the answers to his questions from their masters, Macbeth says that he does. The three witches would be enough to frighten me. I would not wish to see their masters.

On p. 62, we read:

**First Witch**

Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths,  
 Or from our masters?

**MACBETH**

Call 'em; let me see 'em.

**Act 4, Scene 1**

• **What do the apparitions summoned by the three witches tell Macbeth? How does he interpret that information?**

The Three Apparitions are interesting:

- Macbeth does not need to speak to the apparition. They can read his thoughts.
- The Three Apparitions do not take commands from Macbeth. Apparently, they are superior to him.

*First Apparition*

The First Apparition—an armed head, that is, a head wearing armor (a helmet)—says (p. 63):

**First Apparition**

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff;  
 Beware the thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.

The Thane of Fife is Macduff.

Macbeth's response (p. 63):

**MACBETH**

Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks;  
 Thou hast harp'd my fear aright: but one  
 word more,--

**First Witch**

He will not be commanded: here's another,  
More potent than the first.

Macbeth has no power over evil; he cannot command the apparitions. Instead, Macbeth is a puppet who is being manipulated (through temptation) by evil. Macbeth uses his free will to commit evil, and thus he loses power over evil. The way to have power over evil is to decline to commit evil. By doing evil, Macbeth finds it easier and easier to commit more and more evil. Eventually, because he used his free will to decide to commit evil at the beginning, he can lose his free will and find himself so weak that he cannot decide not to commit evil at the end of his life. Free will is like other things in life: Use it or lose it.

*Second Apparition*

The Second Apparition—a bloody child—says (p. 63):

**Second Apparition**

Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn  
The power of man, for none of woman born  
Shall harm Macbeth.

This apparition seems to contradict the first. Macbeth is supposed to fear Macduff, yet no man born of woman can harm him.

We will see later that there is no contradiction.

Macbeth's response is (p. 63):

**MACBETH**

Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?  
But yet I'll make assurance double sure,  
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live;  
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,  
And sleep in spite of thunder.

Macbeth says that he then has no need of killing Macduff, but he changes his mind. He decides to kill Macduff anyway just to make certain that the prophecy comes true.

**Third Apparition**

The Third Apparition is a child with a crown on his head, holding a tree in his hand.

The Third Apparition could be a symbol of Malcolm, who will become King. The tree can be a symbol of new life.

The Third Apparition says (p. 64):

**Third Apparition**

Be lion-mettled, proud; and take no care  
 Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:  
 Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until  
 Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
 Shall come against him.

Macbeth's response is (p. 64):

**MACBETH**

That will never be  
 Who can impress the forest, bid the tree  
 Unfix his earth-bound root? Sweet bodements! good!  
 Rebellion's head, rise never till the wood  
 Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth  
 Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath  
 To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart  
 Throbs to know one thing: tell me, if your art  
 Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever  
 Reign in this kingdom?

**Act 4, Scene 1**

• **What happens when Macbeth asks, “shall Banquo's issue ever / Reign in this kingdom?” (4.1.102-103)?**

The witches tell him not to ask that question, but Macbeth insists that the witches answer it.

The witches then show him a vision. Eight Kings, all of whom look like Banquo, appear. Banquo, who smiles, also appears. The eighth King holds a mirror in his hand, in which is the reflection of many more Kings, all of whom look like Banquo.

I have said that Macbeth has no power over evil, and that the apparitions will not be commanded. Why then do the Witches show Macbeth this vision? In Dante's *Inferno*, a thief prophesies to Dante that he will be exiled from Florence. Why does he do this? Simply in order to cause Dante pain. Similarly, the Witches cause Macbeth pain, and they even say that they will “grieve his heart” (4.1.110). What may hurt even more is that Macbeth insisted that the Witches answer his question even though they told him not to seek the answer to that question.

On pp. 64-65, we read:

**ALL**

Seek to know no more.

**MACBETH**

I will be satisfied: deny me this,  
 And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know.  
 Why sinks that cauldron? and what noise is this?

*Hautboys*

**First Witch**

Show!

**Second Witch**

Show!

**Third Witch**

Show!

**ALL**

Show his eyes, and grieve his heart;

Come like shadows, so depart!

*A show of Eight Kings, the last with a glass in his hand; GHOST OF BANQUO following*

**MACBETH**

Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: down!

Thy crown does sear mine eye-balls. And thy hair,

Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.

A third is like the former. Filthy hags!

Why do you show me this? A fourth! Start, eyes!

What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?

Another yet! A seventh! I'll see no more:

And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass

Which shows me many more; and some I see

That two-fold balls and treble scepters carry:

Horrible sight! Now, I see, 'tis true;

For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,

And points at them for his.

*Apparitions vanish*

What, is this so?

**First Witch**

Ay, sir, all this is so: but why

Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?

Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,

And show the best of our delights:

I'll charm the air to give a sound,

While you perform your antic round:

That this great king may kindly say,

Our duties did his welcome pay.

**Act 4, Scene 1**

- **What news does Lennox bring Macbeth? How does Macbeth respond to that news?**

Lennox brings the news that Macduff has gone to Scotland.

Macbeth says that in the future he will act on his first thought. He will not think things over first. As it happens, his first thought is often murderous. Apparently, Macbeth has thought before about killing Macduff, but did not act on that thought, which he now regrets. He decides to murder Macduff's wife, children, and other relatives.

On p. 66, we read:

**MACBETH**

Time, thou anticipatest my dread exploits:  
 The flighty purpose never is o'ertook  
 Unless the deed go with it; from this moment  
 The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
 The firstlings of my hand. And even now,  
 To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:  
 The castle of Macduff I will surprise;  
 Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword  
 His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls  
 That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;  
 This deed I'll do before this purpose cool.  
 But no more sights!--Where are these gentlemen?  
 Come, bring me where they are.

**Act 4, Scene 2**

- **What do we learn from the conversation between Lady Macduff and Ross?**

Lady Macduff is worried.

She thinks that Macduff fled out of fear, leaving his wife and children in a dangerous place. Ross argues that Macduff may have fled out of wisdom. (Perhaps it is wise to urge Malcolm to overthrow Macbeth.)

On. 67, we read:

**LADY MACDUFF**

What had he done, to make him fly the land?

**ROSS**

You must have patience, madam.

**LADY MACDUFF**

He had none:

His flight was madness: when our actions do not,  
Our fears do make us traitors.

**ROSS**

You know not  
Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

**LADY MACDUFF**

Wisdom! to leave his wife, to leave his babes,  
His mansion and his titles in a place  
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;  
He wants the natural touch: for the poor wren,  
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,  
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.  
All is the fear and nothing is the love;  
As little is the wisdom, where the flight  
So runs against all reason.

Lady Macduff is worried that her husband has abandoned her and their children in a dangerous place from which he himself fled.

Ross tries to comfort her, but he too is worried. Ross is worried for Scotland, which has become a bad place to live. Ross does not completely speak his mind, but apparently he also is intending to fly to England and seek out Malcolm and Macduff. Because of the evils in Scotland, Ross dares not speak his mind.

Ross leaves Lady Macduff, saying that if he stays, he will disgrace himself by crying.

**Act 4, Scene 2**

**• What do we learn from the conversation between Lady Macduff and her son before the messenger arrives?**

Apparently, Lady Macbeth tries to steel her son against the bad things that she thinks he may be hearing soon. She tells him first that his father is dead, then that his father was a traitor.

The son says that he will be able to live as the birds do, now that he doesn't have a father. He will be able to live on what he gets. We may be reminded of the words of Jesus here: God takes care of the birds. The trouble is, we have all seen dead birds.

The son makes an important joke. When Lady Macduff says that the honest men will hang the liars and swearers, the son says that the liars and swearers are fools, for they outnumber the honest men.

That a young son can say and believe such things shows that Scotland is in a bad way. Young sons should not be so cynical. Apparently, Scotland is so filled with evil that the young son can easily believe such things.

We learn that Lady Macduff and her son love each other. I think that is shown in the way they talk in this scene.

On p. 69, we read:

**Son**

Was my father a traitor, mother?

**LADY MACDUFF**

Ay, that he was.

**Son**

What is a traitor?

**LADY MACDUFF**

Why, one that swears and lies.

**Son**

And be all traitors that do so?

**LADY MACDUFF**

Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged.

**Son**

And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

**LADY MACDUFF**

Every one.

**Son**

Who must hang them?

**LADY MACDUFF**

Why, the honest men.

**Son**

Then the liars and swearers are fools,  
for there are liars and swearers enow to beat  
the honest men and hang up them.

#### **Act 4, Scene 2**

##### **• What do we learn from the scene with the messenger?**

We learn that there are still good—but fearful—men in Scotland.

We learn that the good men in Scotland are relatively powerless.

We learn that even the good men in Scotland do not fight to protect women and children. The only thing that the messenger does is to warn Lady Macduff that she should fly.

On pp. 69-70, we read:

*Enter a Messenger*

**Messenger**

Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known,  
 Though in your state of honour I am perfect.  
 I doubt some danger does approach you nearly:  
 If you will take a homely man's advice,  
 Be not found here; hence, with your little ones.  
 To fright you thus, methinks, I am too savage;  
 To do worse to you were fell cruelty,  
 Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you!  
 I dare abide no longer.

*Exit*

**Act 4, Scene 2**

• **What do we learn from the scene with the murderers?**

Lady Macduff is innocent, but that is no protection for her in Macbeth's Scotland.

On p. 70, we read:

**LADY MACDUFF**

Whither should I fly?  
 I have done no harm. But I remember now  
 I am in this earthly world; where to do harm  
 Is often laudable, to do good sometime  
 Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas,  
 Do I put up that womanly defence,  
 To say I have done no harm?

They give no mercy. They would kill Macduff, they do kill Macduff's son, and they chase after Macduff's wife to kill her. We find out later that they succeed in killing her.

Macduff's son is loyal to him. When the First Murderer calls Macduff a traitor, Macduff's son says that the murderer is a liar. The First Murderer then kills him.

**Act 4, Scene 3**

• **Why is Malcolm suspicious of Macduff?**

Macduff has come to Malcolm to ask him to raise troops, return to Scotland, defeat Macbeth, and assume his rightful place as King of Scotland.

Malcolm is suspicious because Macbeth would love to get his hands on him and kill him. Already Macbeth has sent other messengers to Malcolm trying to get him to return to Scotland so he can be killed.

One reason that Malcolm is suspicious is that Macduff left his wife and children in Scotland. Why would he do that unless he knew that they would be safe? Of course, if Macduff is working for Macbeth, then he knows that his wife and children would be safe. (Obviously, they don't know yet that Lady Macduff and the Macduff children are dead.)

On p. 72, Malcolm says:

**MALCOLM**

Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.  
 Why in that rawness left you wife and child,  
 Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,  
 Without leave-taking? I pray you,  
 Let not my jealousies be your dishonours,  
 But mine own safeties. You may be rightly just,  
 Whatever I shall think.

On p. 75, after the two are reconciled, Malcolm says:

**MALCOLM**

Macduff, this noble passion,  
 Child of integrity, hath from my soul  
 Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts  
 To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth  
 By many of these trains hath sought to win me  
 Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me  
 From over-credulous haste: but God above  
 Deal between thee and me! for even now  
 I put myself to thy direction [...]

**Act 4, Scene 3**

**• What test does Malcolm give Macduff? How does Macduff respond?**

Malcolm pretends to be an absolutely horrible person to see how Macduff will react. If Macduff still wants him to return to Scotland, then Macduff must be working for Macbeth. But if Macduff does not want him to return to Scotland because Malcolm would be a worse King than Macbeth, then Macduff must truly love Scotland and want Macbeth overthrown because he is a bad King.

On p. 72, Malcolm says:

**MALCOLM**

Be not offended:  
 I speak not as in absolute fear of you.  
 I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;  
 It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash  
 Is added to her wounds: I think withal  
 There would be hands uplifted in my right;  
 And here from gracious England have I offer

Of goodly thousands: but, for all this,  
 When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,  
 Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country  
 Shall have more vices than it had before,  
 More suffer and more sundry ways than ever,  
 By him that shall succeed.

Malcolm says that he is very lecherous. No wife, no daughter, no older woman, no maids would be safe from his lust.

Macduff responds that many women would volunteer to have sex with a King.

On p. 73, we read:

**MALCOLM**

I grant him bloody,  
 Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,  
 Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin  
 That has a name: but there's no bottom, none,  
 In my voluptuousness: your wives, your daughters,  
 Your matrons and your maids, could not fill up  
 The cistern of my lust, and my desire  
 All continent impediments would o'erbear  
 That did oppose my will: better Macbeth  
 Than such an one to reign.

**MACDUFF**

Boundless intemperance  
 In nature is a tyranny; it hath been  
 The untimely emptying of the happy throne  
 And fall of many kings. But fear not yet  
 To take upon you what is yours: you may  
 Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty,  
 And yet seem cold, the time you may so hoodwink.  
 We have willing dames enough: there cannot be  
 That vulture in you, to devour so many  
 As will to greatness dedicate themselves,  
 Finding it so inclined.

Malcolm says that he is so greedy that he would seize the nobles' possessions.

Macduff replies that Scotland is so rich that it has enough wealth to satisfy his greed. Lechery and greed can be endured if Malcolm has other virtues to make up for these faults.

On pp. 73-74, we read:

**MALCOLM**

With this there grows

In my most ill-composed affection such  
 A stanchless avarice that, were I king,  
 I should cut off the nobles for their lands,  
 Desire his jewels and this other's house:  
 And my more-having would be as a sauce  
 To make me hunger more; that I should forge  
 Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,  
 Destroying them for wealth.

**MACDUFF**

This avarice  
 Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root  
 Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been  
 The sword of our slain kings: yet do not fear;  
 Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will.  
 Of your mere own: all these are portable,  
 With other graces weigh'd.

Malcolm says that he has no virtues, only vices.

Macduff then prays for Scotland, for Malcolm is not fit to live, let alone rule. Malcolm is not worthy to be the son of his parents.

On pp. 74-75, we read:

**MALCOLM**

But I have none: the king-becoming graces,  
 As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,  
 Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,  
 Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,  
 I have no relish of them, but abound  
 In the division of each several crime,  
 Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should  
 Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,  
 Uproar the universal peace, confound  
 All unity on earth.

**MACDUFF**

O Scotland, Scotland!

**MALCOLM**

If such a one be fit to govern, speak:  
 I am as I have spoken.

**MACDUFF**

Fit to govern!  
 No, not to live. O nation miserable,  
 With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,

When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,  
 Since that the truest issue of thy throne  
 By his own interdiction stands accursed,  
 And does blaspheme his breed? Thy royal father  
 Was a most sainted king; the queen that bore thee,  
 Oftener upon her knees than on her feet,  
 Died every day she lived. Fare thee well!  
 These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself  
 Have banish'd me from Scotland. O my breast,  
 Thy hope ends here!

Hearing this, Malcolm reveals his true nature, which is good.

On p. 75, Malcolm says:

**MALCOLM**

Macduff, this noble passion,  
 Child of integrity, hath from my soul  
 Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts  
 To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth  
 By many of these trains hath sought to win me  
 Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me  
 From over-credulous haste: but God above  
 Deal between thee and me! for even now  
 I put myself to thy direction, and  
 Unspeak mine own detraction, here abjure  
 The taints and blames I laid upon myself,  
 For strangers to my nature. I am yet  
 Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,  
 Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,  
 At no time broke my faith, would not betray  
 The devil to his fellow and delight  
 No less in truth than life: my first false speaking  
 Was this upon myself: what I am truly,  
 Is thine and my poor country's to command:  
 Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,  
 Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,  
 Already at a point, was setting forth.  
 Now we'll together; and the chance of goodness  
 Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent?

Macduff is silent because he is astonished at the change in Malcolm. He had just accepted that Malcolm was very evil, but it turns out that Malcolm is very good.

This, of course, is part of the theme of appearance versus reality in *Macbeth*.

**Act 4, Scene 3**

- What do we learn about the King of England—Edward the Confessor—in this scene?

Edward the Confessor is to be compared to Macbeth.

Macbeth is a tyrant who murders his people.

Edward the Confessor is a religious King who helps his people by curing the King's Evil.

On p. 76, we read:

*Enter a Doctor*

**MALCOLM**

Well; more anon.--Comes the king forth, I pray you?

**Doctor**

Ay, sir; there are a crew of wretched souls  
That stay his cure: their malady convinces  
The great assay of art; but at his touch--  
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand--  
They presently amend.

**MALCOLM**

I thank you, doctor.

*Exit Doctor*

**MACDUFF**

What's the disease he means?

**MALCOLM**

'Tis call'd the evil:

A most miraculous work in this good king;  
Which often, since my here-remain in England,  
I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,  
Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people,  
All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,  
The mere despair of surgery, he cures,  
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,  
Put on with holy prayers: and 'tis spoken,  
To the succeeding royalty he leaves  
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,  
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,  
And sundry blessings hang about his throne,  
That speak him full of grace.

**Act 4, Scene 3****• What condition is Scotland in?**

It is in a bad way.

On p. 77, we read:

**MACDUFF**

Stands Scotland where it did?

**ROSS**

Alas, poor country!

Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot

Be call'd our mother, but our grave; where nothing,

But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;

Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the air

Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems

A modern ecstasy; the dead man's knell

Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives

Expire before the flowers in their caps,

Dying or ere they sicken.

**Act 4, Scene 3****• Why doesn't Ross immediately tell Macduff that Macbeth has murdered his wife and children?**

The easy answer may be the right answer here.

It is simply difficult to tell someone that his wife and children have been murdered. Ross may simply be delaying giving Macduff that news.

However, Ross may also be suspicious of Malcolm. He may want to find out more about Malcolm before giving news to Macduff. Once he learns that Malcolm is assembling an army to take into Scotland, he has no trouble telling Macduff that Macbeth has murdered his wife and children.

**Act 4, Scene 3****• How does Macduff take the news that Macduff has murdered his wife and children? How does Malcolm take this news?**

Macduff takes the news hard. He asks over and over if all of his family have been killed. He can't seem to believe the news.

Malcolm wants for Macduff to dispute his loss like a man, that is, to take action and fight like a man against Macbeth. Macduff replies that he will do so, but that first he must feel his loss like a man.

At one point, Malcolm makes a comment, and Macduff says, "He has no children" (4.3.216). This may be a comment about Macbeth, but it may also be a comment about Malcolm. Malcolm has no children, so he cannot feel what Macduff is feeling.

Macduff vows vengeance against Macduff.

On pp. 79-80, we read:

**MACDUFF**

And I must be from thence!  
My wife kill'd too?

**ROSS**

I have said.

**MALCOLM**

Be comforted:  
Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.

**MACDUFF**

He has no children. All my pretty ones?  
Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?  
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam  
At one fell swoop?

**MALCOLM**

Dispute it like a man.

**MACDUFF**

I shall do so;  
But I must also feel it as a man:  
I cannot but remember such things were,  
That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,  
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,  
They were all struck for thee! naught that I am,  
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,  
Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

**MALCOLM**

Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief  
Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.

**MACDUFF**

O, I could play the woman with mine eyes  
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission; front to front  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;  
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too!

**MALCOLM**

This tune goes manly.  
 Come, go we to the king; our power is ready;  
 Our lack is nothing but our leave; Macbeth  
 Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above  
 Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may:  
 The night is long that never finds the day.

**Act 4, Scene 3**

- **Why do you suppose Macduff left his wife and children unprotected in Scotland?**

Obviously, Macduff made a mistake.

One possible answer is that he did not think that Macbeth was so evil as to kill innocent women and children.

This answer may be wrong. On p. 77, Macduff asks Ross:

**MACDUFF**

How does my wife?

**ROSS**

Why, well.

**MACDUFF**

And all my children?

**ROSS**

Well too.

**MACDUFF**

The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?

This shows that Macduff knew that there was a possibility that Macbeth would do something against his wife and children.

Macduff seems to have put Scotland ahead of his wife and children, but this certainly seems cruel to his wife and children.

## Act 5

### Act 5, Scene 1

- **Write a character analysis of Lady Macbeth based on what you learn about her in this scene.**

Lady Macbeth is a sleepwalker.

Lady Macbeth requests that a light be by her bed every night and by her constantly.

Lady Macbeth is unable to rest.

Lady Macbeth has a guilty conscience.

What Lady Macbeth says in her sleep so frightens the gentlewoman that she will not repeat it—even to a doctor—because she doesn't have witnesses to what Lady Macbeth said.

Lady Macbeth makes motions with her hands as if she is washing them.

### Act 5, Scene 1

- **Write an analysis of what Lady Macbeth says in this scene.**

Lady Macbeth sees spots of blood on her hands.

Lady Macbeth says that hell is murky— no wonder she wants light by her always.

Lady Macbeth is reliving the murder of King Duncan—and she is reliving the gilding of the faces of the chamberlains:

- Why should we care who knows what we did? We are powerful enough not to care.
- Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

Lady Macbeth is reliving the murder of Macduff's wife:

The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now?

Again Lady Macbeth sees—and smells—blood on her hands.

Lady Macbeth relives telling Macbeth to put on his nightgown after they have murdered King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth relives the murder of Banquo.

Lady Macbeth relives the knocking at the gate after the murder of King Duncan.

On pp. 82-83, we read:

**LADY MACBETH**

Yet here's a spot.

**Doctor**

Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

**LADY MACBETH**

Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two: why, then, 'tis time to do't.--Hell is murky!--Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?--Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.

**Doctor**

Do you mark that?

**LADY MACBETH**

The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?--What, will these hands ne'er be clean?--No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

**Doctor**

Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

**Gentlewoman**

She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known.

**LADY MACBETH**

Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

**Doctor**

What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

**Gentlewoman**

I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.

**Doctor**

Well, well, well,--

**Gentlewoman**

Pray God it be, sir.

**Doctor**

This disease is beyond my practise: yet I have known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds.

**LADY MACBETH**

Wash your hands, put on your nightgown; look not so pale.--I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he cannot come out on's grave.

**Doctor**

Even so?

**LADY MACBETH**

To bed, to bed! there's knocking at the gate: come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What's done cannot be undone.--To bed, to bed, to bed!

*Exit*

**Act 5, Scene 1**

- **Write character analyses of the gentlewoman and the doctor.**

*Gentlewoman*

The gentlewoman has often seen Lady Macbeth walk in her sleep.

On p. 81, we read:

**Gentlewoman**

Since his majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep.

The gentlewoman has heard what Lady Macbeth says in her sleep, but without witnesses, she will not repeat what has heard to the doctor.

This shows that she is afraid of Macbeth. If the gentlewoman were to indicate that she has some knowledge of the many people Macbeth has murdered or had murdered, she would be murdered, too.

The gentlewoman has seen Lady Macbeth rubbing her hands together as if she were washing them for 15 minutes at a time. Lady Macbeth does this often.

The gentlewoman would not have Lady Macbeth's troubled heart in her in exchange for Lady Macbeth's rank.

*Doctor*

For two nights, the doctor has been sitting up with the gentlewoman waiting for Lady Macbeth to sleepwalk, but Lady Macbeth does not sleepwalk until this night.

The doctor asks the gentlewoman what Lady Macbeth says when she sleepwalks, but without witnesses, the gentlewoman will not tell him, although he is a doctor.

The doctor takes notes of what Lady Macbeth says.

After listening to Lady Macbeth for a while, the doctor says (p. 82):

Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

The doctor is aware that Lady Macbeth has been involved in murder.

The doctor says that he cannot help what ails Lady Macbeth. (She needs a minister or a priest, not a doctor.)

On p. 83, we read:

**Doctor**

This disease is beyond my practise: yet I have known  
those which have walked in their sleep who have died  
holily in their beds.

The doctor is aware that Lady Macbeth needs spiritual healing, not physical healing.

The doctor is afraid to speak of what he has heard.

On pp. 83-84, we read:

**Doctor**

Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds  
Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds  
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets:  
More needs she the divine than the physician.  
God, God forgive us all! Look after her;  
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,  
And still keep eyes upon her. So, good night:  
My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight.  
I think, but dare not speak.

**Act 5, Scene 2****• What is the attitude of the nobles toward Macbeth?**

The nobles are leading a Scottish army against Macbeth. The Scottish army is meeting the English army. Macbeth's own people are revolting against him.

Donalbain is not marching with Malcolm.

Many people think that Macbeth is mad; those who do not hate him as strongly say that Macbeth is filled with "valiant fury" (5.2.14).

None of the nobles—Angus, Menteith, Caithness, Lennox—like Macbeth. All are marching against him in what they consider a just war.

On p. 85, we read:

**ANGUS**

Now does he feel  
 His secret murders sticking on his hands;  
 Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;  
 Those he commands move only in command,  
 Nothing in love: now does he feel his title  
 Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
 Upon a dwarfish thief.

**MENTEITH**

Who then shall blame  
 His pester'd senses to recoil and start,  
 When all that is within him does condemn  
 Itself for being there?

**CAITHNESS**

Well, march we on,  
 To give obedience where 'tis truly owed:  
 Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal,  
 And with him pour we in our country's purge  
 Each drop of us.

**LENNOX**

Or so much as it needs,  
 To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.  
 Make we our march towards Birnam.

**Act 5, Scene 2****• What is Macbeth doing to get ready to meet the armies marching against him?**

He is fortifying the castle at Dunsinane.

On pp. 84-85, we read:

**CAITHNESS**

Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies:  
Some say he's mad; others that lesser hate him  
Do call it valiant fury: but, for certain,  
He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause  
Within the belt of rule.

**Act 5, Scene 3**

- Write a character analysis of the servant in this scene.

The most important characteristic of the servant is that he is terrified because 10,000 English soldiers are marching against Dunisane.

The servant's face is pale with fear.

Macbeth treats the servant badly and mocks his fear.

On p. 86, we read (Macbeth speaks first):

*Enter a Servant*

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!  
Where got'st thou that goose look?

**Servant**

There is ten thousand—

**MACBETH**

Geese, villain!

**Servant**

Soldiers, sir.

**MACBETH**

Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,  
Thou lily-liver'd boy. What soldiers, patch?  
Death of thy soul! those linen cheeks of thine  
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face?

**Servant**

The English force, so please you.

**MACBETH**

Take thy face hence.

*Exit Servant*

**Act 5, Scene 3****• What do you make of Macbeth in this scene? Is he rational?**

Macbeth is overconfident. He is taking faith in the three witches' prophecy that none born of woman can harm him. He doesn't even want to hear more reports of the forces the English are mustering in the field.

On pp. 85-86, we read:

**MACBETH**

Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:  
 'Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,  
 I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm?  
 Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know  
 All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus:  
 'Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman  
 Shall e'er have power upon thee.' Then fly,  
 false thanes,  
 And mingle with the English epicures:  
 The mind I sway by and the heart I bear  
 Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

Macbeth treats badly the servant who is terrified at the 10,000 English soldiers who are marching toward Dunsinane. Basically, he regards the servant as cowardly even though the servant does not have any assurance that none born of woman can harm him.

Macbeth is fully aware of how people regard him and he is fully aware of the consequences of the life he has chosen.

- Macbeth will not have the things that should accompany old age: honor, love, obedience, troops of friends.
- Macbeth will instead have curses that are not loud but which are deep. They will not be loud because the curser will be afraid that if Macbeth hears the curses he will kill the curser.

On p. 86, Macbeth says after the frightened servant leaves:

Seyton!--I am sick at heart,  
 When I behold--Seyton, I say!--This push  
 Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.  
 I have lived long enough: my way of life  
 Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;  
 And that which should accompany old age,  
 As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
 I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
 Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
 Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. Seyton!

Macbeth wants horsemen to scour the countryside and hang anyone who talks of fear—like the servant. At this time, ordering the death of someone is easy for Macbeth. He has done this so often that he is used to it.

On p. 87, we read:

Send out more horses; skirr the country round;  
Hang those that talk of fear. Give me mine armour.

Macbeth talks of putting on his armor although it is not needed yet. However, as soon as it is put on he wants it taken off again, and he wants Seyton to carry the armor after him.

Macbeth wants the doctor to cure Lady Macbeth, who we have seen is ill. He also says that he wishes the doctor could cure the evil in the land. By evil in the land, Macbeth is referring to hostile (to him) armies, but he could better be talking about himself.

Note that the doctor does NOT want to be at Dunsinane. If he were away from it, no amount of money could bring him back.

If Macbeth is not mad, he is certainly deeply troubled.

On pp. 87-88, we read (Macbeth speaks first):

How does your patient, doctor?

**Doctor**

Not so sick, my lord,  
As she is troubled with thick coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest.

**MACBETH**

Cure her of that.  
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?

**Doctor**

Therein the patient  
Must minister to himself.

**MACBETH**

Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it.  
Come, put mine armour on; give me my staff.  
Seyton, send out. Doctor, the thanes fly from me.

Come, sir, dispatch. If thou couldst, doctor, cast  
 The water of my land, find her disease,  
 And purge it to a sound and pristine health,  
 I would applaud thee to the very echo,  
 That should applaud again.--Pull't off, I say.--  
 What rhubarb, cyme, or what purgative drug,  
 Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of them?

**Doctor**

Ay, my good lord; your royal preparation  
 Makes us hear something.

**MACBETH**

Bring it after me.  
 I will not be afraid of death and bane,  
 Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.

**Doctor**

[Aside] Were I from Dunsinane away and clear,  
 Profit again should hardly draw me here.

**Act 5, Scene 4**

**• How does the Third Apparition's prophecy concerning Birnam Wood come true?**

Malcolm orders his soldiers to hide their numbers by pulling boughs off trees and holding them before themselves. That way, it will be difficult for scouts to count their numbers.

From a distance, it looks as Birnam Wood is marching toward Dunsinane.

On p. 88, we read:

**SIWARD**

What wood is this before us?

**MENTEITH**

The wood of Birnam.

**MALCOLM**

Let every soldier hew him down a bough  
 And bear't before him: thereby shall we shadow  
 The numbers of our host and make discovery  
 Err in report of us.

### Act 5, Scene 5

- Why doesn't Macbeth meet the opposing armies in the battlefield instead of staying in his castle?

Macbeth doesn't have enough men to meet the opposing armies in head-to-head combat. He is vastly outnumbered.

One reason he is outnumbered that many Scottish soldiers are fighting against him. If Macbeth had been a good king instead of a tyrant, they would be fighting for him, not for Malcolm.

On pp. 89-90, we read:

*Enter MACBETH, SEYTON, and Soldiers, with drum and colours*

#### MACBETH

Hang out our banners on the outward walls;  
 The cry is still 'They come:' our castle's strength  
 Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie  
 Till famine and the ague eat them up:  
 Were they not forced with those that should be ours,  
 We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,  
 And beat them backward home.

### Act 5, Scene 5

- In your opinion, why has Macbeth almost forgotten “the taste of fears” (5.5.9)?

Macbeth may have forgotten fear because of overconfidence due to the prophecies of the Three Apparitions.

Macbeth may simply not be capable of feeling much at all at this point. Often, he is portrayed as drinking heavily. He doesn't sleep much. He is often irrational or at least his mind is always heavily burdened.

On p. 90, we read (Macbeth speaks first):

*A cry of women within*

What is that noise?

#### SEYTON

It is the cry of women, my good lord.

*Exit*

#### MACBETH

I have almost forgot the taste of fears;  
 The time has been, my senses would have cool'd

To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair  
 Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
 As life were in't: I have supp'd full with horrors;  
 Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts  
 Cannot once start me.

### Act 5, Scene 5

- Analyze the speech that Macbeth makes when he learns that Lady Macbeth has died.

Basically, the speech says that life is meaningless. Life is simply day after day after day, with none of them meaning anything.

On p. 90, we read (Macbeth speaks first):

*Re-enter SEYTON*

Wherefore was that cry?

**SEYTON**

The queen, my lord, is dead.

**MACBETH**

She should have died hereafter;  
 There would have been a time for such a word.  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
 To the last syllable of recorded time,  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.

### Act 5, Scene 5

- In the play, we are told is that Lady Macbeth is dead and later Malcolm says that it is thought that she committed suicide; we are not shown a scene of Lady Macbeth committing suicide. Why do you suppose that in many stage productions and movies, Lady Macbeth is shown committing suicide?

Lady Macbeth has already shown mental illness.

It is clear that she feels awful guilt for all the murders that she and Macbeth have committed.

Suicide seems likely or at least possible in such a case.

This can be a powerful scene in a theater or in a movie.

**Act 5, Scene 5**

- **What news does the messenger bring to Macbeth? How does he respond?**

The news is that Birnam Wood is coming to Dunsinane.

Macbeth responds in these ways:

- Macbeth insults the messenger: "Liar and slave!" (5.5.35).
- Macbeth threatens to hang the messenger if he has lied.
- Macbeth begins to think that three witches tricked him.
- Macbeth is tired of life and wishes that the world were at an end.
- Macbeth resolves to go down fighting.

On p. 91, we read:

**Messenger**

As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,  
The wood began to move.

**MACBETH**

Liar and slave!

**Messenger**

Let me endure your wrath, if't be not so:  
Within this three mile may you see it coming;  
I say, a moving grove.

**MACBETH**

If thou speak'st false,  
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,  
'Till famine cling thee: if thy speech be sooth,  
I care not if thou dost for me as much.  
I pull in resolution, and begin  
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth: 'Fear not, till Birnam wood  
Do come to Dunsinane:' and now a wood  
Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!  
If this which he avouches does appear,  
There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.  
I gin to be aweary of the sun,  
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.

Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! come, wrack!  
At least we'll die with harness on our back.

### Act 5, Scene 6

#### • What do you think are the purposes of this brief scene?

We learn the location of the army. It is right outside Dunsinane, meaning that the battle will soon start.

Malcolm is seen in a leadership position. He calmly orders his troops in contrast to the erratic Macbeth.

### Act 5, Scene 7

#### • Is young Siward brave?

Yes, he fights Macbeth and dies like a soldier.

As we will see later, his wounds are on his front, not on his back. He died facing the enemy, not fleeing from the enemy.

### Act 5, Scene 7

#### • Why does Macduff say he wants to fight Macbeth?

Macduff of course wants revenge for the deaths of his wife and children. He says that unless he gets revenge the ghosts of his wife and children will haunt him.

Macduff does not care to fight common, paid foot soldiers. He is out for the biggest prey.

In search of Macbeth, Macduff goes to where the greatest noise is.

All Macduff wants is to find Macbeth.

On p. 93, we read:

#### **MACDUFF**

That way the noise is. Tyrant, show thy face!  
If thou be'st slain and with no stroke of mine,  
My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.  
I cannot strike at wretched kerns, whose arms  
Are hired to bear their staves: either thou, Macbeth,  
Or else my sword with an unbatter'd edge  
I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be;  
By this great clatter, one of greatest note  
Seems bruided. Let me find him, fortune!  
And more I beg not.

**Act 5, Scene 7**

- **Does the castle fall easily, or does a hard battle have to be fought for it? Why?**

The castle falls very easily and very quickly.

Few soldiers are willing to fight for Macbeth.

On pp. 93-94, we read:

*Enter MALCOLM and SIWARD*

**SIWARD**

This way, my lord; the castle's gently render'd:  
The tyrant's people on both sides do fight;  
The noble thanes do bravely in the war;  
The day almost itself professes yours,  
And little is to do.

**MALCOLM**

We have met with foes  
That strike beside us.

**SIWARD**

Enter, sir, the castle.

**Act 5, Scene 8**

- **How does Macbeth die?**

Macbeth says that he doesn't want to fall on his own sword and commit suicide. Instead, he prefers that other people die.

Macbeth says that he would prefer not to fight Macduff as he has already killed Macduff's wife and children.

Macbeth tells Macduff that he cannot be harmed by one of woman born. Macduff replies that he was not born of a woman, but instead was delivered by Cesarean delivery.

Macduff invites Macbeth to surrender so that he can be exhibited as a tyrant (exhibited like a sideshow freak), but Macbeth decides to go down fighting.

Finally, Macduff kills him—offstage. Macduff is able to avenge his wife and children. Macduff cuts off Macbeth's head and exhibits it on a pole.

On pp. 94-95, we read:

**MACBETH**

Why should I play the Roman fool, and die  
 On mine own sword? whiles I see lives, the gashes  
 Do better upon them.

*Enter MACDUFF*

**MACDUFF**

'Turn, hell-hound, turn!

**MACBETH**

Of all men else I have avoided thee:  
 But get thee back; my soul is too much charged  
 With blood of thine already.

**MACDUFF**

I have no words:  
 My voice is in my sword: thou bloodier villain  
 Than terms can give thee out!

*They fight*

**MACBETH**

Thou lovest labour:  
 As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air  
 With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed:  
 Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;  
 I bear a charmed life, which must not yield,  
 To one of woman born.

**MACDUFF**

Despair thy charm;  
 And let the angel whom thou still hast served  
 Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb  
 Untimely ripp'd.

**MACBETH**

Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,  
 For it hath cow'd my better part of man!  
 And be these juggling fiends no more believed,  
 That palter with us in a double sense;  
 That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
 And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

**MACDUFF**

Then yield thee, coward,  
 And live to be the show and gaze o' the time:  
 We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,

Painted on a pole, and underwrit,  
'Here may you see the tyrant.'

**MACBETH**

I will not yield,  
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,  
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.  
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,  
And thou opposed, being of no woman born,  
Yet I will try the last. Before my body  
I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,  
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

*Exeunt, fighting. Alarums*

**Act 5, Scene 8**

• **Compare Macbeth's death with the death of the original Thane of Cawdor in Act 1.**

The original Thane of Cawdor died a good death, but Macbeth does not.

The original Thane of Cawdor repented before dying, but Macbeth does not.

Macbeth could have repented and saved his soul, but he did not. According to Christian theology, no matter how evilly a person has led his or her life, that person can be saved, as long as that person repents his or her sins, even if the repentance occurs at the very end of life.

**Act 5, Scene 8**

• **How do people react to the death of young Siward?**

His father, old Siward, is mainly concerned that his son died the death of a brave soldier, with his wounds in his back.

Malcolm shows more pity for the death of young Siward. This is an indication that he will be a good King. Malcolm wishes for the safety of the soldiers fighting for him.

We are meant to compare Macbeth's death to that of young Siward. Young Siward died well and honorably, while Macbeth died badly and dishonorably.

On pp. 95-96, we read:

*Retreat. Flourish. Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, SIWARD, ROSS, the other Thanes, and Soldiers*

**MALCOLM**

I would the friends we miss were safe arrived.

**SIWARD**

Some must go off: and yet, by these I see,  
So great a day as this is cheaply bought.

**MALCOLM**

Macduff is missing, and your noble son.

**ROSS**

Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt:  
He only lived but till he was a man;  
'The which no sooner had his prowess confirm'd  
In the unshrinking station where he fought,  
But like a man he died.

**SIWARD**

Then he is dead?

**ROSS**

Ay, and brought off the field: your cause of sorrow  
Must not be measured by his worth, for then  
It hath no end.

**SIWARD**

Had he his hurts before?

**ROSS**

Ay, on the front.

**SIWARD**

Why then, God's soldier be he!  
Had I as many sons as I have hairs,  
I would not wish them to a fairer death:  
And so, his knell is knoll'd.

**MALCOLM**

He's worth more sorrow,  
And that I'll spend for him.

**SIWARD**

He's worth no more  
They say he parted well, and paid his score:  
And so, God be with him! Here comes newer comfort.

**Act 5, Scene 8****• Will Malcolm make a good King of Scotland?**

Indications are that he will:

- Malcolm wants his soldiers to be safe in the battle.
- Malcolm mourns the death of young Siward.
- Malcolm gives out rewards to those who fought for him. He creates the first earls in Scotland.
- Malcolm promises further rewards.

On pp. 96-97, we read (Macduff speaks first):

Hail, King of Scotland!

**ALL**

Hail, King of Scotland!

*Flourish*

**MALCOLM**

We shall not spend a large expense of time  
 Before we reckon with your several loves,  
 And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,  
 Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland  
 In such an honour named. What's more to do,  
 Which would be planted newly with the time,  
 As calling home our exiled friends abroad  
 That fled the snares of watchful tyranny;  
 Producing forth the cruel ministers  
 Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,  
 Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands  
 Took off her life; this, and what needful else  
 That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,  
 We will perform in measure, time and place:  
 So, thanks to all at once and to each one,  
 Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.

*Flourish. Exeunt*

### Act 5, Scene 8

- Does *Macbeth* have a happy ending?

Maybe. Maybe not.

Indications are that Malcolm will make a good King, but we remember that Banquo's descendants will become Kings of Scotland.

More blood may be in store for Scotland.

## **Bibliography**

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. New York: Signet Classic, 1998. Edited by Sylvan Barnet.

### Paper Topics

- Write a character analysis of Macbeth and detail the struggle between his ambition and his sense of right and wrong.
- Write a character analysis of Lady Macbeth and the effect that King Duncan's murder has on her.
- According to *Macbeth*, can women be as ambitious and as bloodthirsty as men?
- An important theme of *Macbeth* is ambition unchecked by morality. Write a paper on that theme.
- According to *Macbeth*, can women be as ambitious and as bloodthirsty as men?
- Compare and contrast Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.
- Compare and contrast Macbeth to both Banquo and the original Thane of Cawdor.

### Paper Hints

- **An important theme of *Macbeth* is ambition unchecked by morality. Write a paper on that theme.**
- Macbeth becomes more evil as time goes by.
- Macbeth murders or has murdered King Duncan, Banquo, and Lady Macduff and her children.
- The murders become more and more evil as times goes by.
- Macbeth suffers because of his evilness.
- At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is a hero.
- Macbeth does not trust the two murderers. He sends a third murderer to make sure that they do the job.
- Macbeth knows that his old age will not be pleasant (5.3).
- “Something wicked this way comes” (4.1.45)—the witch is referring to Macbeth.
- Chronological organization works well in a paper giving a character analysis of William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

#### I. Introduction with Thesis Statement

A. After making the first decision to commit evil by murdering King Duncan, Macbeth finds it easier and easier to commit evil.

#### II. At the beginning of *Macbeth*, Macbeth is a good person.

A. Macbeth has defeated Macdonwald.

B. Macbeth has defeated the King of Norway.

#### III. As a result of the encounter with the witches, Macbeth is tempted to do evil.

#### IV. Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to murder King Duncan.

#### V. Macbeth becomes evil by murdering King Duncan.

#### VI. Macbeth becomes more evil by having Banquo murdered and trying to have Fleance murdered.

#### VII. Macbeth cares only for himself as shown in his next encounter with the witches.

A. Macbeth demands that his questions be answered no matter how it affects the universe.

B. “Something wicked this way comes”—this is now true of Macbeth.

#### VIII. Macbeth’s most evil action—having Lady Macduff and her children murdered.

#### IX. Macbeth’s death.

A. Life has no meaning for Macbeth.

B. Macbeth never repents.

#### X. Conclusion.

• **Write a character analysis of Macbeth and detail the struggle between his ambition and his sense of right and wrong.**

- Macbeth is a hero at the beginning of the play.
- The witches tempt to commit evil. Only then does Macbeth commit evil.
- Macbeth becomes more evil as the play progresses.
- “Something wicked this way comes” (4.1.45)—the witch is referring to Macbeth.
- Murders: King Duncan, the chamberlains, Banquo, Lady Macduff and her children.
- Macbeth turns two men down on their luck into murderers.
- Macbeth keeps spies in the houses of the thanes.

• **Write a character analysis of Lady Macbeth and the effect that King Duncan’s murder has on her.**

- Lady Macbeth pushes her husband to murder King Duncan. This is the first in a string of murders that he commits.
- Lady Macbeth is willing to risk her husband’s life in order to become Queen of Scotland.
- Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband by challenging his manhood.
- She would not kill King Duncan herself because he resembled her father as he slept.
- She does gild the chamberlains’ faces and hands with blood.
- The “murd’ring ministers” speech is in Act 1, scene 5.
- The “I have given suck” speech is in Act 1, scene 7.
- Lady Macbeth conveniently faints in Act 2.
- Lady Macbeth tries to make Macbeth act like a man in the banquet scene in Act 3.
- Lady Macbeth apparently does not know about Macbeth’s other murders—she does not participate in them.
- Guilt haunts her, as shown by the sleepwalking scene in Act 5, scene 1.
- Originally, Lady Macbeth spoke poetry (blank verse); in the sleepwalking scene, she speaks prose. That may be more evidence of her mental breakdown.
- “Nought’s had, all spent, / Where our desire is got without content” (3.2.4-5).

- **According to *Macbeth*, can women be as ambitious and as bloodthirsty as men?**
- Women can be as ambitious as men. Women cannot be as bloodthirsty as men. You may argue either way.
- Lady Macbeth participates in the murder of King Duncan, but not in any murders afterward.
- Lady Macduff is not bloodthirsty.
- The witches are totally evil.
- **Compare and contrast Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.**
- **Compare and contrast Macbeth to both Banquo and the original Thane of Cawdor.**

### Anecdotes: *Macbeth*

- During a matinee performance of *Macbeth* at which few people were in the audience, Laurence Olivier noticed a boy sitting in the balcony and decided to give a special performance just for him. Sir Laurence gave a wonderful performance and the entire company followed suit, so that during intermission Sir Laurence said, “That boy will never see anything like this as long as he lives; it’s an experience he’ll never forget.” Unfortunately, when Sir Laurence and the company went back on stage following the intermission, they discovered that the boy had left the theater and gone home.
- Vaudeville comedian Bobby Clark did not believe in the classics. For example, he thought that Lady Macbeth’s sleep-walking scene could be considerably enlivened if the director would put a carnival air blower under her skirts so that they would rise up as do Marilyn Monroe’s in *The Seven-Year Itch*.
- Richard Burbage originated such Shakespearian roles as Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Othello, and Richard III. When he died, the clever epitaph on his gravestone stated, “Exit Burbage.”
- Mrs. Patrick Campbell once played Lady Macbeth to James Hackett’s Macbeth—an experience she disliked, for, she said, “When he opens his mouth he spits at me, and whenever I speak he clears his throat.” She also complained during rehearsals about a scene in which she had to sit on a log while Mr. Hackett did all the talking. The director wanted to keep her happy, so he said, “I’ll ask Mr. Hackett to pat you once or twice.” Mrs. Campbell replied witheringly, “I *hate* being patted.”
- Actor-manager Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree (1853-1917) was bothered by mistakes during a rehearsal of *Macbeth*. Some actors playing soldiers battled so fiercely that they smacked the backcloth with their swords. Sir Herbert told them, “Never hit a backcloth when it’s down.” Later, one soldier gave another soldier a slight flesh wound. Sir Herbert said, “I make a ruling. Any one soldier found killing any other soldier will be fined.”
- In West Africa in the early 1960s, actress Judi Dench performed in *Macbeth* as several vultures perched above the outdoors theater. She advised the other actors to twitch when they were killed, because the vultures were “all sitting there waiting to pick our bones.”
- Judi Dench once performed in a production of *Macbeth* that was played straight through without an intermission. Marie Kean, who was playing the First Witch, once noticed that some schoolboys were hiding out in the boys’ restroom instead of watching the play, so she scared them back into the theater by marching into the restroom in full makeup and hissing at them, “Get back in there!”<sup>2</sup>
- Diana Rigg once performed as Lady Macbeth in a matinee given for schoolchildren. Apparently, they had all been studying *Macbeth*, because they joined in and recited the “I have given suck” speech along with her.
- As a student at Eton, Patrick Macnee was cast as Macduff in a performance of *Macbeth*. Playing Lady Macbeth was a young boy named Simon Phipps. Unfortunately, the wardrobe woman made a mistake when she designed young Simon’s costume—she used a couple of pieces of metal to give Lady Macbeth a 38-inch bust. Young Simon’s appearance as Lady Macbeth was punctuated with

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<sup>2</sup> Source: John Miller, *Judi Dench: With a Crack in Her Voice*, p. 146.

wolf whistles from the all-male audience. Reviews of the play stated that Mr. Macnee didn't seem to know what to do with his hands, so a friend suggested that he should have grabbed Lady Macbeth.

- At Bootham School, a school for Quakers, the students put on a production of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. One of the witches fell off the stage, but fortunately the witch was caught and then returned to the stage, where the witch was immediately asked, "Where hast thou been, sister?"
- A young actor grew tired of having just one line to speak in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*—he played the messenger who tells Macbeth, "My Lord, the queen is dead," then walks offstage. Therefore, he asked his boss, Sir Donald Wolfitt, for a bigger part. However, Sir Donald declined to give him a better part, so the actor decided to get revenge. At the next performance of *Macbeth*, he walked on stage and said, "My Lord, the queen is *much better and is even now at dinner.*"
- While working with Sir Donald Wolfitt, Eric Porter ran into a problem at a school matinee performance of *Macbeth*. Sir Donald disliked schoolchildren's giggling during a performance, so he told the schoolchildren before the play started that there was absolutely no reason to laugh during *Macbeth*. However, Mr. Porter was playing the porter, who is a humorous character, and he said afterwards, "I had to stand on my head, practically, before I could raise a giggle!"
- Sir Henry Irving (1838-1905) was proud of his performances as the lead of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Once he asked his dresser, Walter Collinson, to say in which play he was at his best, and he was pleased when Mr. Collinson answered, "*Macbeth.*" Sir Henry said, "It is generally conceded to be *Hamlet,*" but Mr. Collinson insisted, "Oh, no, Sir. *Macbeth.* You sweat twice as much in that."
- Lesbian comedian Sara Cytron was a class clown. To get her to be quiet during class, her English teacher used to give her five minutes at the beginning of class to recite any Shakespeare monologue in any accent she chose. Her favorite was a monologue with Lady Macbeth speaking with a Brooklyn accent.

### A Limerick

Macbeth, in a manner most flighty,  
 Aspired to the high and the mighty.  
     Urged on by his wife,  
     He stuck in his knife,  
 And the blood got all over his nightie!

— Author Unknown

## List of Major Characters

### **Macbeth**

A good man who becomes an evil man through his choices, Macbeth murders King Duncan to become King of Scotland. In doing so, he is influenced by his wife, Lady Macbeth, and by the Three Weird Sisters (Witches). He comes to believe that life—at least his life—has no meaning.

### **Lady Macbeth**

Intensely ambitious, Lady Macbeth insists that her husband, Macbeth, murder King Duncan. Her guilt over the murder drives her insane.

### **Duncan**

King of Scotland, Duncan is both old and good. Macbeth murders him.

### **The Three Witches**

The Three Witches tempt Macbeth into murdering King Duncan by giving him information. However, the information they give him each time they meet him is incomplete and misleading.

### **Banquo**

A man of integrity, Banquo distrusts the Three Witches. Macbeth murders him.

### **Malcolm**

Malcolm is one of the sons of King Duncan. He will be a good King of Scotland.

### **Macduff**

Macbeth murders Macduff's wife and children. Macduff, a Scottish nobleman, kills Macbeth. Macduff wants the rightful King on the throne.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the most important themes of *Macbeth*?

- One theme is unrestrained ambition. In *Macbeth*, we learn what happens when ambition is not restrained by morality.
- Among the themes of *Macbeth* are 1) ambition is bad when not restrained by morality, 2) appearance versus reality, 3) the relationship between cruelty and masculinity, and 4) the difference between kingship and tyranny.

### What is the difference between “you” and “thou”?

“You” is a pronoun of respect. “Thou” is a pronoun of familiarity. When addressing an equal or inferior, you would use “thou.” When addressing a superior, you would use “you.” After *Macbeth* has killed Duncan, the witches talk to him using “thou” in Act 4 to show that he has become evil like them:

Say if th’ hadst rather hear it from our mouths,  
Or from our masters?

### What is a thane?

A thane is “a feudal lord or baron in Scotland” (*The American Heritage College Dictionary*). It is a title of Scottish nobility.

## Scene Summaries

### Act 1

#### Scene 1

The three witches meet on a Scottish moor and make plans to meet Macbeth later.

#### Scene 2

A messenger tells King Duncan that Macbeth has fought valiantly, and the King decides to make Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor.

#### Scene 3

The three witches meet Macbeth and Banquo. They hail Macbeth as Thane of Glamis (Macbeth's original title) and as Thane of Cawdor. They also tell Macbeth that he will be King and they tell Banquo that although he will not be King, his sons shall be Kings. Macbeth quickly discovers that he has indeed been made the Thane of Cawdor.

#### Scene 4

King Duncan rewards Macbeth, then names Malcolm (King Duncan's son) as his successor to the throne. Macbeth regards Malcolm as a rival for the Scottish throne.

#### Scene 5

Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband about his encounter with the three witches and their prophecy, and she determines immediately that he shall become King of Scotland by killing King Duncan.

#### Scene 6

King Duncan enters Macbeth's castle. Lady Macbeth is a hypocrite as she welcomes him into the castle where she plans to have him murdered.

#### Scene 7

Macbeth does not want to assassinate King Duncan, but Lady Macbeth convinces him to do it.

### Act 2

#### Scene 1

Banquo and his son, Fleance, talk, then Macbeth enters. Banquo tells Macbeth that he has been dreaming about the Three Witches, but Macbeth lies and says that he has not been thinking about them. Alone, Macbeth has a hallucination about a dagger. At the end of the scene, a bell sounds—Lady Macbeth is signaling Macbeth that all is ready for the murder of King Duncan.

#### Scene 2

Lady Macbeth has set everything up for the murder of King Duncan; she would have murdered him herself, but he resembled her father as he slept. Macbeth murders the king, then wonders if all the water in the ocean can wash the blood from his hands. Lady Macbeth takes the bloody daggers back to the King's chamberlains so that they can be framed for the murder. A knocking sounds at the gate.

**Scene 3**

A drunken porter opens the gate and admits Macduff and Lennox. Lennox describes the strange weather of the night, and Macduff discovers that King Duncan has been murdered. Macbeth murders the King's chamberlains. Macduff is suspicious, but Lady Macbeth faints. King Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, decide that they are not safe, and so they leave Scotland.

**Scene 4**

Ross and an old man discuss odd happenings in Nature; for example, an owl has killed a hawk. Macbeth has been crowned King of Scotland. Macduff is suspicious of Macbeth.

**Act 3****Scene 1**

Macbeth finds out from Banquo his plans for himself and Fleance, his son, all the more easily to have them murdered.

**Scene 2**

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth meet. Macbeth does not take her into his confidence.

**Scene 3**

A third murderer joins the first two murderers. The murderers succeed in killing Banquo, but Fleance, his son, escapes in the dark.

**Scene 4**

At a banquet, the first murderer informs Macbeth that Banquo is dead, but that Fleance has escaped. Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo, although no one else at the banquet can. After failing to make Macbeth return to his senses, Lady Macbeth sends everyone out of the room, and Macbeth tells her that he will go and see the Three Witches again.

**Scene 5**

Hecate, queen of the witches, criticizes the Three Witches for dealing with Macbeth without consulting her, then says that Macbeth will arrive the following day.

**Scene 6**

While talking with another lord, Lennox makes it clear that he believes that Macbeth had something to do with the murders of King Duncan and of Banquo.

**Act 4****Scene 1**

Macbeth seeks information from the Three Witches, who summon apparitions to tell him that he should beware Macduff, he will not be harmed by any man born of woman, and "Macbeth shall never vanquished be until / Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill shall come against him" (4.1.92-93). Macbeth sees apparitions of Banquo's ghost and eight crowned kings who look like Banquo. Macbeth then decides to have Macduff's wife and children murdered.

**Scene 2**

Murderers kill Lady Macduff and her son.

**Scene 3**

Malcolm tests Macduff, Macduff passes, and the two become allies. Ross tells Macduff that his wife and children have been murdered. They prepare to invade Scotland with English troops.

**Act 5****Scene 1**

This is known as the “sleepwalking scene.” As Lady Macbeth sleepwalks, she imagines that she has blood on her hands, and she tries to wash it off. A doctor says that only a priest can help her now.

**Scene 2**

Macbeth has fortified his castle at Dunsinane, and the opposing army is marching toward it.

**Scene 3**

Macbeth arms himself to fight. A doctor tells Macbeth that Lady Macbeth is ill and that he (the doctor) cannot help her.

**Scene 4**

To disguise the numbers of his soldiers, Malcolm orders his soldiers to cut branches from Birnam Wood and hold them in front of themselves as they march to Dunsinane.

**Scene 5**

Macbeth says he is confident that his castle will hold out against the enemy. After hearing that Lady Macbeth has committed suicide, he says that life is meaningless. He then learns that Birnam Wood is marching toward Dunsinane and resolves to die fighting.

**Scene 6**

Malcolm and his forces arrive, and he orders them to throw down the branches they have been carrying and draw their swords.

**Scene 7**

Macbeth kills young Siward, Macduff looks for Macbeth, and Malcolm and his forces have nearly won the battle.

**Scene 8**

Macbeth meets Macduff, who was not born of a woman, having been delivered by way of a C-section. Macduff kills Macbeth. Malcolm and his forces have won the battle. Malcolm restores peace and goodness to Scotland.

## Notes on Acts and Scenes

### Act 1, Scene 1

- The opening scene with the three witches creates a dark, somber mood. This entire play is dark.
- The witches cry, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (1.1.10). We know that things will be messed up in *Macbeth*. What seems like good news will be bad news. That Macbeth will be King of Scotland seems like good news, but the way it comes about is very bad. And what seems like bad news is good news. When Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, the news is bad for Macbeth but good for Scotland.
- The three witches arrange to meet Macbeth later. He is a special object of their attention.

### Act 1, Scene 2

- This scene is mainly exposition. Because King Duncan is old, he is in camp and a wounded soldier brings him news of the battle. Ross also brings news of the fighting.
- We still don’t meet Macbeth yet, but we learn that he is a brave and loyal soldier of King Duncan. The King is too old to fight on the battlefield, but Macbeth and Banquo fight valiantly, winning two important battles on the same day. First, they defeat the Scottish rebels, then they defeat some Norwegian invaders who tried to take advantage of the situation and invade Scotland when it was already fighting the rebels.
- Macbeth has fought well and has “unseamed” (1.2.22) a rebel named Macdonwald “from the navel to th’ chops” (1.2.22). That means that Macbeth has slit him open from the navel to the jaws. He then cut off the rebel’s head. Banquo is also a hero.
- Duncan is a just King. He says that he will reward Macbeth by making him Thane of Cawdor because the original Thane of Cawdor is a traitor who will be executed.
- We see irony because the original Thane of Cawdor was a traitor, and the new Thane of Cawdor—Macbeth—will also be a traitor.

### Act 1, Scene 3

- Finally, we see Macbeth in this scene that is a culmination of the first scene of the play. The three witches said that they would meet later to meet Macbeth, and here they—and he—are.
- The three witches—or the three weird sisters—are evil. One has been killing pigs (food). Another has been getting revenge on a sailor’s wife who refused to give her some chestnuts. She gets revenge by sending storms to harass the ship that the sailor is on. However, the power of the witches is limited because the bark (ship) cannot be lost (wrecked).
- Macbeth says, “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (1.3.38). The day is foul because the weather is so bad, yet it is fair because on this day he has won two important military victories.
- Banquo addresses the witches. We find out that they have beards. Banquo wonders if they are mortal, and he wonders if they are men.
- The witches greet Macbeth by calling him Thane of Glamis, which is his original title, and Thane of Cawdor. This astonishes Macbeth since he has not heard that the Thane of Cawdor is to be executed and the title given to him.
- The witches tell Banquo that he is “Lesser than Macbeth, and greater” (1.3.65) than Macbeth and “Not so happy, yet much happier” (1.3.66). They also tell Macbeth that he shall be King, and they tell Banquo that he shall be the father of Kings.
- The witches vanish, and Macbeth and Banquo talk about what the witches have said. Banquo asks Macbeth why he fears things that sound so fair. Macbeth may already be thinking about what he thinks he would have to do to become King.
- Ross and Angus arrive, and Macbeth learns that he is now Thane of Cawdor. This, of course, makes him wonder if the witches’ prophecy that he will be King of Scotland will come true.

- Banquo is aware that evil forces may lead men to their doom, giving them trifles so that the men may lose important things, such as their soul.
- By the end of the scene, Macbeth is thinking about the witches' prophecy, and he is thinking about becoming King.

#### **Act 1, Scene 4**

- The Thane of Cawdor, although he has been a rebel, dies an honorable death. He confesses his sins, he begs for forgiveness, and he dies honorably. In Christian terms, he has a chance of going to Heaven, so long as he has truly repented his sins, which it seems he has. The death of this Thane of Cawdor forms an important contrast to the death in Act 5 of the next Thane of Cawdor (Macbeth).
- King Duncan states that it is difficult to tell if a man is a traitor by looking at his face. This is true, because King Duncan cannot tell that Macbeth will be a traitor by looking at his face.
- If Macbeth were to do nothing—that is, not murder King Duncan—good things would happen to him, for King Duncan regards him highly, has already done good things for him, and has promised to do more good things for him in the future.
- When King Duncan names Malcolm, his son, Prince of Cumberland, and says that he wants to be succeeded by Malcolm, Macbeth takes it badly because he wants to be King. Malcolm now is between Macbeth and the kingship. The witches have awakened Macbeth's ambition.
- Note that the female characters in this play are wicked and strong. The three witches certainly fall into that category, and we will learn that Lady Macbeth also does.
- King Duncan also announces his intention to visit Macbeth at his castle in Inverness.

#### **Act 1, Scene 5**

- Lady Macbeth reads a letter to her from her husband, Macbeth. The letter is evidence that he loves her. The letter is also evidence that he thinks about what the witches have prophesied. Lady Macbeth's ambition will also be awakened by the three witches.
- Lady Macbeth knows that her husband is thinking of what the three witches have told him, but she also is aware that he may not want to take the most direct route to the throne—he may not want to murder King Duncan.
- In a famous speech, Lady Macbeth asked to be unsexed—to be like a man so that she can do evil. She wishes that the milk in her breasts could be exchanged for gall.
- Whatever is necessary to do to seize the throne, Lady Macbeth wishes that she were capable of—even if it is evil.
- Lady Macbeth tells her husband that she wishes to plan the murder.
- The driving force behind the murder of King Duncan is Lady Macbeth. She goads her husband into committing the murder.
- Lady Macbeth tells her husband to look innocent while he is around other people.

#### **Act 1, Scene 6**

- King Duncan enters the castle and shows that he is gracious. He praises Macbeth's castle, and he acts as if Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are doing him a favor to let him stay there. (As King, Duncan is doing them honor by staying there.)
- Lady Macbeth is a total hypocrite as she greets the man whose death she is planning.
- Macbeth's castle is a place of death, but King Duncan praises it.

#### **Act 1, Scene 7**

- Macbeth wrestles with his conscience. He knows that it is evil to kill the King. After all, murder is morally wrong. King Duncan is a kinsman, Macbeth is his subject, and Macbeth is King Duncan's

host. In addition, Macbeth fears getting caught and being punished for the crime. Finally, King Duncan has been a good King. In fact, Duncan has been a much better King than Macbeth will be. (Killing a King—regicide—is a serious matter.)

- Macbeth seems to resolve to not kill King Duncan, but his wife convinces him to kill the King. She does it by saying that Macbeth is not a man unless he can do such things. In an important speech, she says that she has known what it was like to have an infant suck on her breast, but she would be willing to dash out the brains of the infant. In response, Macbeth can only weakly ask what would happen if they should fail.
- Lady Macbeth equates being a man with the ability to do evil.
- Lady Macbeth tells her husband her plan: 1) she will get the chamberlains (the King’s attendants) drunk, 2) she and her husband will murder the King, and 3) they will smear blood on the chamberlains’ faces and hands to make it look as if they have murdered King Duncan.
- Macbeth says to Lady Macbeth: “Bring forth men-children only” (1.7.72).

Note that Act 1, scenes 5-7, is dominated by Lady Macbeth.

### Act 2, Scene 1

- This scene is set at midnight, a good time for a murder.
- Banquo and Fleance, his son, converse. (The fact that Banquo has a son is important. Banquo’s descendants will be Kings.) Banquo is uneasy because he has been dreaming about the three weird sisters—he has been having “cursèd thoughts” (2.1.8). In fact, Banquo is so uneasy that when Macbeth enters, Banquo is startled and calls for a sword. Because Banquo is in the castle of a friend, he should not be so uneasy.
- Banquo gives Macbeth a ring. The ring is a gift from King Duncan to Lady Macbeth. This is ironic because King Duncan is giving a gift to a person who is plotting to murder him.
- When Banquo tells Macbeth that he has been dreaming of the three weird sisters, Macbeth says, “I think not of them” (2.1.21). Macbeth is lying—he has been thinking of very little else since they spoke to him.
- Macbeth asks for Banquo’s loyalty. Apparently, he is thinking of what will happen after he murders King Duncan. Banquo is guarded in his reply and says that he will support Macbeth so long as it is honorable to do so.
- In the future, Banquo will be a danger to Macbeth. After all, Banquo knows about the three weird sisters.
- Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have arranged a secret message. Lady Macbeth will sound a bell when all is prepared for King Duncan’s murder.
- Macbeth sees a dagger floating before him, leading him toward King Duncan. The dagger is insubstantial. Macbeth tries to grab hold of it, but he cannot. Macbeth looks again, and the dagger is bloody. Is the dagger a hallucination? Possibly. Is it a real manifestation of evil? Possibly. We do know that the three weird sisters are real because Banquo also saw them.
- The scene ends with the tolling of a bell. All is ready for the murder.

### Act 2, Scene 2

- The murder takes place in this scene; Macbeth instantly regrets it.
- The murder takes place offstage. Perhaps Shakespeare felt that what we imagine would be horrifying than what we would see if we were to see the murder presented on stage. Perhaps Shakespeare wanted us to focus not on the murder, but on Macbeth’s reaction to it.
- Lady Macbeth enters. She is excited but nervous.
- This scene is filled with eerie noises. An owl shrieks, and knocks are heard at the gate.

- Macbeth enters with bloody hands. He has murdered King Duncan, and he already regrets it.
- Macbeth thinks that he has heard a voice saying, “Macbeth does murder sleep” (2.2.35). In the future, he will find it difficult to sleep. In addition, Lady Macbeth will restlessly sleepwalk.
- Although Macbeth has killed many men in battle, he deeply regrets this murder. Although she is a woman, Lady Macbeth welcomes this murder.
- Macbeth refuses to take the bloody daggers back to the King’s bedroom because he does not want to look again at his deed. Lady Macbeth takes the daggers back, and she smears blood on the King’s chamberlains’ hands and faces. When she returns, her hands are as bloody as her husband’s.
- Macbeth worries that all the water of the oceans will not clean his hands. Instead, he says that the blood on his hands will turn the green oceans red. Lady Macbeth, in contrast, thinks that “A little water clears us of this deed”(2.2.66).
- The mysterious knocking at the gate continues; Macbeth and his wife leave to clean up and to put on night clothing. Macbeth, however, wishes that the knocking at the gate could wake up King Duncan.

### Act 2, Scene 3

- This is the only scene with comedy in the play.
- The porter is a comic character, but this scene does touch on some major themes in *Macbeth*.
- The porter jokes that he is the porter of the gates of Hell, and certainly Macbeth’s castle is a hellish place.
- The porter jokes that the people knocking on the gate are sinners. Each sin is relevant to the play. One sinner is a greedy farmer, and Macbeth is greedy for power and the crown. Another sinner is an equivocator. Equivocation involves the use of misleading language, and the witches do that. The third sinner is a tailor who is a thief. Macbeth has stolen King Duncan’s life.
- After Macduff and Lennox enter, the porter says that alcohol both “provokes and unprovokes” (2.3.31) lechery. That is, a drunk man may want to have sex, but being drunk can keep him from having an erection. Similarly, Macbeth uses murder to seize the Kingship, but each murder he commits makes him less secure as King. Macbeth thinks being King will make him happy, but being King makes him miserable.
- The porter speaks prose, while the other characters normally speak iambic pentameter.
- Macbeth now becomes the most compelling character in the play.
- Macduff enters King Duncan’s bedchamber alone.
- Lennox speaks about the strange happenings of the night. Earthquakes shook the earth, and Scottish citizens heard strange screams. All Macbeth can respond is, “’Twas a rough night” (2.3.64). For him, it certainly was.
- Macduff discovers the murder: “O horror, horror, horror!” (2.3.66).
- Lady Macbeth enters. Ironically, Macduff calls Lady Macbeth “gentle lady” (2.3.85).
- When Lady Macbeth hears that King Duncan has been murdered, she exclaims, “What, in our house!” (2.3.89). Banquo replies that the murder would be “Too cruel anywhere” (2.3.90).
- Macbeth has killed the chamberlains to prevent them from telling their story. He has destroyed evidence. This makes Macduff suspicious. To direct attention away from her husband, Lady Macbeth pretends to faint.
- Duncan’s sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, whisper to each other that their lives are in danger, so Malcolm flees to England and Donalbain flees to Ireland. They are correct. Macbeth would murder them.
- Because Malcolm and Donalbain flee, they are suspected of having hired men to kill their father. However, many Scottish citizens doubt this “official version” of events. Their flight leaves the way clear for Macbeth, a relative of King Duncan, to become King of Scotland.

### Act 2, Scene 4

- This is a quiet scene outside of Macbeth's castle. Ross and an old man speak together. The old man tells of many strange happenings in the natural world: 1) Although it is daytime, the day is dark like night. 2) An owl recently killed a falcon. 3) King Duncan's horses ate one another—they engaged in cannibalism. In Shakespeare, disruptions in politics are mirrored by disruptions in nature.
- Macduff enters and, without saying so directly, makes it clear that he does not believe the “official version” of the death of King Duncan—that is, he does not believe that King Duncan's sons paid the King's chamberlains to murder the King. After all, this version of events is hard to believe.
- Macduff says that he will not go to Scone to see Macbeth crowned; instead, he will go home. This is an insult to Macbeth, and one that he will not ignore.
- At the end of the scene, Macbeth is King of Scotland, but already other nobles are suspicious that he murdered King Duncan.

### Act 3, Scene 1

- Banquo is nervous at the beginning of Act 3. He suspects that Macbeth, his friend, murdered Duncan, his King. He also can't stop thinking about the three witches, who predicted that his sons would become Kings.
- Macbeth invites Banquo to a banquet, telling him specifically, “Fail not our feast” (3.1.27). Banquo, although he will be murdered, will not fail that feast.
- Macbeth also specifically asks Banquo about his plans, all the better to plan his murder and the murder of his son, Fleance.
- Macbeth has become a hypocrite, an actor who is adept at hiding his feelings. Macbeth has also become more evil. Previously, he was willing to murder innocent adults, but now he is willing to murder innocent children. Doing evil makes doing more evil easier.
- Although Macbeth committed murder to become King of Scotland, he gets little pleasure from it. For one thing, according to the witches, his crown shall be “fruitless” (3.1.61). That is, he will not be able to pass the kingship on to his children.
- Macbeth is now jealous of Banquo (because his descendants shall be Kings) and fearful of Banquo (because Banquo knows about the witches and their prophecies).
- Macbeth speaks to two men who have suffered misfortunes. He convinces them that Banquo is their enemy and that they should murder him. In addition, he says that Banquo is his enemy, but that he can't murder him directly because they have friends in common.
- Macbeth asks the murderers whether they are men. The assumption is that if they are men, they will be willing to commit murder. Macbeth sounds like Lady Macbeth earlier, when she questioned his manhood in a successful attempt to convince him to murder King Duncan.
- Note that the evil of Macbeth is spreading. Now he is corrupting innocent men who have fallen on hard times.
- Macbeth is beginning to be paranoid—to fear all of the people around him.
- In *Macbeth*, Banquo serves as a foil to Macbeth. Both men know of the witches' prophecies, but only Macbeth acts on them. Banquo is a good man and stays a good man, while Macbeth is a good man who becomes an evil man.

### Act 3, Scene 2

- Lady Macbeth is now sorry that she and her husband murdered King Duncan. They got what they wanted, but being King and Queen has not made them happy.
- Macbeth is not happy in the present—Lady Macbeth asks him why he keeps himself “alone” (3.2.8). Macbeth is tortured by the past—he can't sleep because of nightmares. In addition, Macbeth

is worried about the future—he knows that the witches have predicted that his crown shall be “fruitless” (3.1.61).

- Lady Macbeth wants her husband to act as if he is happy, and she reminds him that Banquo and Fleance can be killed.
- Note that Macbeth has planned the murder of Banquo and Fleance without his wife’s knowledge. Even now, he does not tell her of the plot, but instead he tells her that she can “applaud the deed” (3.2.46) after it has been committed. Of course, he doesn’t tell her what the deed is.
- The relationship of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is changing. Now, Macbeth is in charge.

### Act 3, Scene 3

- As the two murderers wait to kill Banquo and Fleance, a third murderer appears. One reason for this is that Macbeth does not trust the two murderers and therefore wants a third murderer there to check up on them. Another reason may be that the two murderers are amateurs and Macbeth wants a professional present.
- Banquo is murdered, but Fleance, his son, escapes. The inexperience of the two murderers has caused them to bungle the murders. Of course, this means that the witches’ prophecy that Banquo’s descendants shall become Kings is still a possibility.
- The body count in *Macbeth* keeps rising. Macbeth had wanted King Duncan’s death to be the “end-all” (1.7.5)—the only murder he would have to commit. It hasn’t worked out that way.
- Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s characters begin to change. Lady Macbeth begins to despair, while Macbeth commits greater and greater evils.
- We clearly see in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth the play’s theme of the consequences of acting on ambition without moral constraints to keep them from doing evil.

### Act 3, Scene 4

- This scene is set in the banquet hall of the Macbeths’ castle. In this scene, Macbeth begins to act erratically.
- From the first murderer, Macbeth learns that Banquo has been murdered. That makes him happy. He also learns that Fleance has escaped. That makes him unhappy. Here we see the witches’ “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (1.1.10) in action. When Macbeth was a good man, it would have made him happy if his friends and his friends’ sons were safe. Now that he has become evil, he is happy that Banquo is dead, and he wishes that Fleance were dead, too.
- Banquo’s ghost sits in a chair at the feast; earlier, Macbeth had told him, “Fail not our feast” (3.1.27).
- Is the ghost real? People disagree. Some supernatural things exist in *Macbeth*; however, some things seem to be of psychological origin. For example, the witches are supernatural, but the spots of blood that Lady Macbeth will later see on her hands while she is sleepwalking seem to be of psychological origin.
- Ross wants everyone to leave when Macbeth begins to act erratically, but Lady Macbeth asks them to stay, saying that her husband often acts this way but only for a short time—Macbeth later confirms this and says that he suffers from a strange malady and has suffered from it since his youth. Later, Lady Macbeth will ask the guests to leave.
- Lady Macbeth again questions her husband’s manhood, asking him, “Are you a man?” (3.4.59). She does this because of his strange behavior in front of their guests.
- The ghost disappears—temporarily—and Macbeth muses that previously dead men remained dead. (Of course, King Duncan refuses to die—Macbeth keeps thinking about him.)
- When Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are alone, we learn that 1) Macbeth is suspicious of Macduff, who has been staying away from him, 2) Macbeth has paid spies in the houses of all the Scottish

nobles (this shows his growing paranoia), and 3) Macbeth intends on consulting the three witches again.

### Act 3, Scene 5

- The witches meet on the heath, with Hecate, goddess of witchcraft, who is angry because she has not had a part in turning Macbeth evil. The witches say that they will meet Macbeth at the gates of Hell the following day. They also say that “security / Is mortals’ chiefest enemy” (3.5.32-33). By “security,” they mean overconfidence.

### Act 3, Scene 6

- Lennox and another lord speak about Macbeth and show us how the Scottish lords are reacting to the rule of Macbeth. They refer to Macbeth as a tyrant, not as a king, so their opinion is that Macbeth is a very poor ruler.
- As Lennox speaks, we become aware that he is very suspicious of Macbeth and that he does not believe that King Duncan’s sons killed their father or that Fleance killed his father. These are the official versions of the murders, but Lennox clearly does not believe them.
- We also learn that Macduff has gone to England to prepare for war against Scotland. Macbeth is aware of this, and he is preparing for war.
- Macbeth is unpopular, and he knows it.

### Act 4, Scene 1

- The witches’ recipe for the brew in the cauldron consists of many nasty things. One ingredient is the finger of an infant that was delivered in a ditch by a prostitute, who immediately strangled the infant.
- The first witch says this:

Pour in sow’s blood, that hath eaten  
Her nine farrow; grease that’s sweaten  
From the murderer’s gibbet throw  
Into the flame. (4.1.64-67)

The Pathology Guy (Ed Friedlander) explains:

I’m an autopsy pathologist. I am very familiar with how human bodies decompose. To show Macbeth his future, the witches add to the brew “grease that’s sweaten / From the murderer’s gibbet” (4.1.65-66). Would you like to know what that means? The bodies of murderers were left hanging on the gallows (gibbet) until they were skeletonized, which takes weeks. At about ten days in suitable weather, there are enough weak points in the skin that the bodyfat, which has liquified, can start dripping through. There will be a puddle of oil underneath the body. This is for real. (Source: <http://www.pathguy.com/macbeth.htm>.)

- As always with the witches, there is thunder and darkness in this scene.
- When Macbeth enters, one of the witches says, “Something wicked this way comes” (4.1.45). This is true now; Macbeth is wicked. The witches could not say that at the beginning of the play.
- Macbeth is now dedicated to the doing of evil. He tells the witches that even if the world should end because of his questions, he wants to hear the witches’ answers. At this point, Macbeth does not care if all Creation is destroyed as long as he gets what he wants. Macbeth does get what he wants: the witches show him three apparitions that foretell the future (or part of it, as we will see in Act 5).
- The witches ask Macbeth if he wants to see the witches’ masters; Macbeth accepts without hesitation. Most people would be afraid of the witches, much less their masters.
- The first apparition, an armed head (a head wearing a helmet) tells Macbeth to beware of Macduff. Macbeth thanks the apparition and says that he was already suspicious of Macduff. This apparition

may be a mockery of Macbeth, who will have few supporters to resist the English army led by Malcolm in Act 5.

- The second apparition, a bloody child, tells Macbeth not to fear because no one born of woman can hurt him. Macbeth says that then Macduff shall live, but he quickly decides to kill him anyway. This apparition may also be a mockery because Macbeth has shed much blood, yet he will not pass on his crown to any descendants.
- The third apparition, a crowned child holding a tree, tells him not to fear until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill. Macbeth regards this as very good news indeed. This apparition represents new growth and life. It is a hopeful sign for Scotland, which will have peace after Macbeth's death.
- After hearing the witches thus far, Macbeth has “security” (3.5.32)—that is, overconfidence.
- Macbeth has one more question: Will Banquo's descendants inherit the throne? The witches don't want to answer that question, but they show him a procession of eight kings, all of whom look like Banquo. The final king holds a mirror in which is reflected the images of many more kings, all of whom look like Banquo. (We should remember that King James I was Scottish and a descendant of Banquo.)
- When the witches vanish, Macbeth says that “damned [be] all those that trust them!”(4.1.139). This is ironic because Macbeth has trusted the witches and Macbeth is damned.
- Macbeth learns from Lennox that Macduff has fled to England. Macbeth now plots the meaningless murder of Lady Macduff and the Macduffs' children.
- Are the witches' prophecies self-fulfilling? Maybe. Macbeth is unlikely to have murdered King Duncan without first hearing their prophecy. (Macbeth is still responsible for his actions, nevertheless.)
- Are the witches' prophecies accurate foretellings of the future? Possibly. How could they know how their prophecies in this scene would play out? How could they know that Macbeth would become Thane of Cawdor in Act 1?

#### **Act 4, Scene 2**

- This scene is set in the Macduffs' castle in Fife. That is where the senseless murders of Lady Macduff and her children take place.
- Lady Macduff is alarmed by the flight of her husband. She wonders why he left her, and she worries about getting along without him.
- Ross tries to tell Lady Macduff that her husband had a good reason to leave for England, but he leaves before he begins to cry.
- A messenger warns Lady Macduff that she is in danger.
- The murderers kill her son, then they chase Lady Macduff as she flees offstage. We learn later that she has been murdered.
- Could Macduff have known that Macbeth would kill his wife and children? Possibly not. It is an incredibly evil and senseless act, and Macduff may not have realized that Macbeth was that evil.
- This scene shows the utter evil of Macbeth. These murders serve no purpose, except perhaps to terrorize his subjects.

#### **Act 4, Scene 3**

- This scene is set in England, where Macduff has gone to persuade Malcolm and the English army to take up arms against Macbeth.
- Malcolm is suspicious of Macduff, although he knows that Macduff has the reputation of being an honest man. (But then, so did Macbeth.) Malcolm is worried that Macduff is setting a trap for him, is trying to get him to return to Scotland where Macbeth can kill him.

- Malcolm tests Macduff by saying that he has none of the qualities that a just king should have. Malcolm says that he is full of lust. Macduff replies that lots of women are willing to sleep with a king. Malcolm says that he is greedy. Macduff replies that Scotland has lots of treasure. Malcolm then enumerates the qualities that a just king should have and says that he has none of them. Macduff mourns for Scotland, passing Malcolm's test, and Malcolm then reveals that he has been lying to test Macduff. In fact, Malcolm says, he has all the qualities of a just king.
- The King of England stands in contrast to Macbeth. The King of England cures disease with his touch, but Macbeth brings disease upon an entire country.
- Ross tells Macduff that his wife and children "were well at peace when I did leave 'em" (4.3.179). This is more equivocation in a play that is full of it.
- Ross enters and eventually tells Macduff that his wife and children have been murdered by Macbeth's men. Macduff takes a long time to accept this truth, and says that he must feel his loss "like a man" (4.3.221) before he can "Dispute [Counter] it like a man" (4.3.219).
- As the act ends, Malcolm and Macduff and 10,000 English soldiers are ready to march against Macbeth.

### Act 5, Scene 1

- This famous scene is known as the sleepwalking scene. In it, a doctor and a gentlewoman (Lady Macbeth's maid) wait for Lady Macbeth. The gentlewoman has told the doctor that Lady Macbeth sleepwalks but has not dared to tell the doctor what Lady Macbeth says in her sleep.
- While sleepwalking, Lady Macbeth suffers from a delusion that her hands are spotted with blood. That is why she says, "Out, damned spot!" (5.1.38). While Lady Macbeth sleepwalks, actresses playing that role make motions as if they were washing their hands.
- Lady Macbeth is being eaten away by guilt over what she and Macbeth have done. One theme of the play is that evil will be punished, and we see in this scene that Lady Macbeth is being punished by her great feelings of guilt.
- Ironically, Lady Macbeth said earlier, "A little water clears us of this deed" (2.2.66). Now, however, no amount of water seems to clean her hands. While sleepwalking, she sees and smells blood no matter what she does.
- Of course, Macbeth is also being punished by his feelings of guilt. He can't sleep at nights and is awakened by nightmares when he does sleep.
- While sleepwalking, Lady Macbeth relives the murder of King Duncan. She asks how the old man could have so much blood in him—King Duncan's death was particularly bloody.
- One theme of the play is appearance versus reality. In this scene, Lady Macbeth appears to be awake, yet she is sleeping. Her hands appear to be clean, yet Lady Macbeth sees blood on them. She has appeared to others to be innocent, yet she is guilty of planning King Duncan's murder and of persuading her husband to commit that murder.
- It is ironic that Lady Macbeth has prayed for darkness to cover her sins, yet now she keeps a candle near her to light the darkness.

### Act 5, Scene 2

- In this scene, some Scottish thanes discuss military matters. We learn that the English army, Malcolm, Macduff, and old Siward are nearby.
- We learn the English forces will join the Scottish forces near Birnam Wood. Of course, we remember that the witches mentioned Birnam Wood in their prophecies.
- We learn that Donalbain, Malcolm's brother, is not with the English army. Donalbain is a loose thread to the plot—we do not hear of him again.

- Angus and the other Scottish thanes have a very poor opinion of Macbeth. They realize that he has committed “secret murders” (5.2.17).
- Macbeth has fortified his castle, but he has very few supporters.

### Act 5, Scene 3

- Macbeth tries to be confident as this scene begins. He is still trusting the prophecies of the witches that no man born of woman can harm him and that he should not fear till Birnam Wood comes to high Dunsinane Hill. He is overconfident, and as the witches have said, “security” (3.5.32)—that is, overconfidence—is mortals’ chiefest enemy.
- A servant tells Macbeth that 10,000 English soldiers are coming. Later, Seyton confirms that number.
- Macbeth realizes that old age will not hold pleasures for him. A person who has led a good life can look forward to honor, love, obedience, and friendship, but Macbeth can look forward only to curses. They will not be loud, because the utterers will be afraid that Macbeth will hear them, but the utterances will come from the heart.
- Macbeth acts erratically in this scene. He asks that his armor be put on, although it is not yet time to fight, but very quickly he asks that his armor be taken off again.
- Macbeth asks the doctor to cure Lady Macbeth, but the doctor says that he cannot. (Only a priest can help her at this time.)
- Macbeth also says that he wishes the doctor could cure the disease of Scotland. Macbeth is referring to the English army, but the real disease of Scotland is himself.
- Macbeth’s language is erratic. He flies from thought to thought on different subjects. Macbeth is raving.

### Act 5, Scene 4

- In this scene, Malcolm says that he hopes that chambers in Scotland will soon be safe to sleep in again.
- Malcolm orders his soldiers to cut off branches from Birnam Wood to carry before them as they march toward Dunsinane. That way, Macbeth will not be able to know their true numbers.
- Given that trees are a symbol of nature, the marching of Birnam Wood to Dunsinane means that a natural order is returning to Scotland, taking the place of Macbeth’s unnatural order.

### Act 5, Scene 5

- Macbeth is boastful at this point. He says that his castle is strong and can withstand a siege.
- The cry of women is heard. Macbeth muses that at one point a sudden scream would have made him afraid. Now, however, it does not. He may be so confident because of the witches’ prophecy that he fears nothing, or he may be so immersed in evil that he can no longer feel anything.
- The women are crying because Lady Macbeth is dead. (The assumption is that she has committed suicide.) Formerly, Macbeth loved his wife and would have grieved over her death, but now he says that her death came at an inconvenient time. He also makes an important speech about the meaninglessness of life: “Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow [...]” (5.5.19).
- Although Macbeth believes that life is meaningless, the reader need not. In addition, Shakespeare need not.
- Macbeth then learns that Birnam Wood is coming to Dunsinane. He says, “I ’gin to be aweary of the sun” (5.5.49). He is tired of living and is ready to die. He also says that he will die in armor like a man. His death will not an honorable death after repenting like the original Thane of Cawdor; instead, he will take as many men as possible into death with him.

### Act 5, Scene 6

- This is the shortest scene in the play. We find out that the English army is outside of Dunsinane, meaning that the battle will start soon. We also see Malcolm in a leadership role, as he orders his men to throw down the branches of Birnam Wood that they have been carrying before them.
- The throwing down of the branches can be seen as symbolic. Malcolm's reign will not be one of appearances, as was Macbeth's. (Macbeth tried to appear innocent, but really he was guilty.)
- The battle begins.

### Act 5, Scene 7

- Macbeth meets and kills young Siward, who dies fighting. After Macbeth exits, Macduff enters. He is looking for Macbeth, because he wants to kill Macbeth in revenge for the murders of his wife and children.
- The battle is nearly over. Macbeth has so few supporters that the English army easily took Macbeth's fortified castle.

### Act 5, Scene 8

- Macbeth enters, then Macduff enters. Macbeth does not want to fight Macduff because he is aware that he has already killed so many of Macduff's relatives. Macduff, of course, especially wants to fight Macbeth for that very reason. Macbeth tells Macduff that he leads a charmed life, since none of woman born can harm him. Macduff then reveals that he was not of woman born. He did not leave his mother's womb through the birth canal, but instead he was from his mother's womb untimely ripped. In other words, he was born through a C-section or Cesarean. The last of the witches' prophecies comes true.
- Macduff tells Macbeth that if he surrenders, he will be put on display with a sign that says, "Here may you see the tyrant" (5.8.27). Macbeth decides to fight, and he and Macduff exit, fighting.
- Malcolm, old Siward, and Ross enter, and old Siward discovers that his son has died. Old Siward asks if his son's wounds were in the front. They were, and old Siward is happy that his son died fighting, not running away like a coward. Malcolm, however, says that his son deserves more sorrow than that. (Malcolm apparently learned something from the scene in which Macduff learned that his wife and children had been murdered.)
- Macduff enters, carrying Macbeth's head on a pole.
- Did you know that the first soccer balls were probably severed heads?
- Peace comes to Scotland.
- Malcolm rewards the Thanes who fought for him by making them Earls, the first Earls in Scottish history.
- The play does have a happy, but bloody, ending. Malcolm has the appearance of being a good King, and he invites all to see him crowned King of England at Scone.
- It is possible to see the ending as not as happy as it could be. Why isn't Donalbain present? When will Fleance become King? Possibly, much more violence is in Scotland's future.

## Shakespeare Checklist

Check to make sure that you are not making these common errors.

- Make sure that the titles of plays are underlined or italicized.

*Macbeth*

*Hamlet*

*Romeo and Juliet*

- Make sure that you use numbers to refer to acts and lines that you cite in your paper.

(5.14-15) = Act 5, lines 14-15

- Make sure that you use MLA style when quoting Shakespeare.
- Make sure that you use a dash—not a hyphen—when a dash is needed.

Dashes are longer than hyphens.

— is longer than -

- Make sure that you use a hyphen when a hyphen is needed (as when you put two words together to form an adjective that appears before the noun it modifies).

Epic poems are thought-provoking literature.

- Make sure that you use a comma after an introductory element.

Although Macbeth begins the play as a morally good hero, he ends the play as a morally evil tyrant.

- Make sure that you put commas and periods inside quotation marks—this is the American style.

“Hi,” said Sally. George replied, “Hello.”

- Make sure you proofread well. Make sure you spell words correctly (double-check difficult-to-spell names) and use apostrophes, commas, etc. correctly.
- Make sure you do a spelling check one final time before printing your paper. Often, a writer will misspell a word during revision.

## How Should I Quote Poetry in Shakespeare?

### Notes

- 1) For information about the MLA style of using quotations, see almost any English handbook.
- 2) Your major papers will be double-spaced.
- 3) Use a Works Cited list.

### Identify the Act, Scene, and Line Number(s)

For example, 2.2.2-3 means Act 2, scene, lines 2-3.

For example, 3.1.64-70 means Act 3, scene 1, lines 64-70.

### A Note on How to Tell Poetry from Prose in Shakespeare

Shakespeare uses both poetry and prose in his plays. A quick way to differentiate between the two is to look at capitalization. If each line of a passage begins with a capital letter, it is poetry; if it does not, it is prose. This is true of the Signet Classic edition.

### How to Quote Short Passages of Poetry (Three Lines or Fewer)

- When quoting three or fewer lines of poetry, run them in with your text.
- Use a slash mark to separate the lines of poetry.
- Use a blank space before and after the slash mark.
- Quote poetry correctly, both in content and in style. (Quote every word accurately, and use the punctuation that appears in the original quotation.)
- Tell the reader where the passage is located. Use numbers to indicate act, scene, and lines of the passage.
- Use quotation marks.

For example:

When Romeo first sees Juliet in the Capulets' garden, he says, "But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? / It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!" (2.2.2-3).

### How to Quote Long Passages of Poetry (Four Lines or More)

- When quoting four or more lines of poetry, indent the lines a little more than you indent the paragraphs. (This is MLA style.)
- Do not center the lines of poetry.
- Do not use quotation marks unless they appear in the original lines of poetry.
- Be aware that some dialogue in plays by Shakespeare is poetry and must be quoted as poetry.
- Quote poetry correctly, both in content and in style. (Quote every word accurately, and use the punctuation that appears in the original quotation.)
- Tell the reader where the passage is located. Use numbers to indicate act, scene, and lines of the passage.

For example, the below quotation is correct. It is quoted as poetry—the lines break exactly where they break in the poem.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Titania says:

Come, now a roundel and a fairy song;  
 Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;  
 Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,  
 Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings,  
 To make my small elves coats, and some keep back  
 The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders  
 At our quaint spirits. Sing me now asleep;  
 Then to your offices and let me rest. (2.2.1-8)

Another correct quotation:

Macbeth says:

No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
 For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;  
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered;  
 Put rancors in the vessel of my peace  
 Only for them, and mine eternal jewel  
 Given to the common enemy of man,  
 To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings! (3.1.64-70)

- Be sure capitalization remains the same as in the original source. If the original source capitalizes the beginning of each line, your quotation should do the same.
- Note that no quotation marks are needed unless they appear in the original source. The indentation shows that the passage is a quotation.
- Look up the quotation to see that it is quoted correctly, with no words left out. Make sure that the poetry is quoted as poetry, not as prose. (Each line of the poem should be indented, as above.) Tell the reader the page number of the quoted passage.

### How Can I Identify Very Long Lines of Poetry as Being One Line?

Occasionally, a line of poetry is too long to be set as a single line in a copy of one of William Shakespeare's plays, so the last word or two is printed below the first, long line. However, you may still quote it as a single line.

For example, the Signet Classic edition of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has this:

Call you me fair? That fair again unsay.  
 Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!  
 Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet  
     air  
 More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,  
 When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear. (1.1.181-185)

The word "air" is printed on a line of its own because the width of the page it is printed on is not long enough for the whole line. How do we know this? We can count the lines. Immediately preceding this quotation, Hermia says, "God speed fair Helena! Whither away?" That line is marked 180. If we count out the lines of Helena's speech, we discover that "Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet air" is line 183. If "Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet" was line 183, and if "air" was line 184, we would have too many lines. After all, "More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear" would have to be line 185, but the book clearly identifies "When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear" as line 185.

In your papers, you may quote it as a single line.

When Hermia calls Helena fair, Helena replies:

Call you me fair? That fair again unsay.  
 Demetrius loves your fair. O happy fair!  
 Your eyes are lodestars, and your tongue's sweet air  
 More tuneable than lark to shepherd's ear,  
 When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear. (1.1.181-185)

### How Do I Quote Shakespeare's Prose?

Quote prose with line breaks the way you quote poetry in Shakespeare's plays. To make it easy for scholars to refer to passages in Shakespeare's plays, passages of prose have also been given lines. Therefore, use the line breaks that appear in the play and cite the passages of prose just like you do with poetry.

Here is an example of a short quoted passage of prose from the Signet Classic edition of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*:

When Mercutio has been fatally wounded by Tybalt, he makes a final joke: "Ask / for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave / man" (3.1.98-100).

Here is an example of a longer passage of quoted prose from the Signet Classic edition of *Romeo and Juliet*:

When Mercutio has been fatally wounded by Tybalt, he makes a final joke even as he calls down a plague on both the House of Capulet and the House of Montague:

No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide  
as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve. Ask  
for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave  
man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A  
plague a both your houses! Zounds, a dog, a rat, a  
mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death! A braggart,  
a rogue, a villain, that fights by the book of arith-  
metic! Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt  
under your arm.

(3.1.97-105)

## Short Reaction Memos

The questions in this short guide to William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* can be used in discussions; however, they can also be used for short reaction memos. For example, I do this at Ohio University. See below for the assignment and sample short reaction memos.

### *How Do I Complete the Reaction Memo Assignments?*

During the quarter, you will have to write a series of short memos in which you write about the readings you have been assigned.

Each memo should be at least 250 words, not counting long quotations from the work of literature. Include a word count for each memo, although that is not normally part of the memo format.

Following the memo heading (To, From, Re, Date, Words), write the question you are answering and the part of the book that the question applies to.

You may answer one question or more than one question. I will supply you with a list of questions that you may answer

Note that a Works Cited list is needed if you use quotations.

For examples from my Great Books courses at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, see the following pages.

**To:** David Bruce  
**From:** Jane Student  
**Re:** *Odyssey*, Book 12 Reaction Memo  
**Date:** Put Today's Date Here  
**Words:** 323

### ***Odyssey*, Book 12: Is Odysseus a bad leader?**

This is an important question in the *Odyssey*. After all, Odysseus leads 12 ships and many men to Troy, but the ships are all destroyed and all of his men die and he returns home to Ithaca alone. Who is responsible for the deaths of Odysseus' men? Is Odysseus responsible for their deaths, or do the men bear some responsibility for their own deaths? Many readers prefer Odysseus, the great individualist, to Aeneas, the man who founds the Roman people, but then they realize that all of Odysseus' men died, while Aeneas succeeded in bringing many Trojans to Italy. When readers think of that, they begin to have a greater respect for Aeneas.

From the beginning of the *Odyssey*, this has been an issue. The bard says that the men perished because of the "recklessness of their own ways" (1.8). However, we notice that Odysseus is asleep at odd times. In Book 10, Aeolus gives Odysseus a bag in which the contrary winds have been tied up. This allows Odysseus to sail to Ithaca safely. However, they reach the island and see smoke rising from the fires, Odysseus goes to sleep and his men open the bag, letting the contrary winds escape, and the ship is blown back to King Aeolus' island. Similarly, in Book 12, on the island of the Sun-god, Odysseus is asleep when his men sacrifice the Sun-god's cattle.

It does seem that Odysseus does not bear the blame for his men's death. In many cases, they do perish through their own stupidity. In other cases, of course, they die during war or during adventures, but in those times, Odysseus was with them, and he could have died, too.

One other thing to think about is that Odysseus is telling his own story. Could he be lying? After all, some of the adventures he relates are pretty incredible. (Probably not. The gods vouch for some of what he says.)

#### Works Cited

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books, 1996. Print.

**To:** David Bruce  
**From:** Jane Student  
**Re:** *Inferno*, Canto 1 Reaction Memo  
**Date:** Put Today's Date Here  
**Words:** 263

***Inferno*, Canto 1**

• **What do you need to be a member of the Afterlife in Dante's *Inferno*?**

To be a member of the afterlife in Hell, you must meet a number of criteria:

- 1) You must be dead.
- 2) You must be an unrepentant sinner.
- 3) You must be a dead, unrepentant sinner by 1300.

Of course, only dead people—with a few exceptions such as Dante the Pilgrim—can be found in the *Inferno*.

Only unrepentant sinners can be found in the *Inferno*. Everyone has sinned, but sinners who repented their sins are found in Purgatory or Paradise, not in the *Inferno*.

Dante set his *Divine Comedy* in 1300, so the characters who appear in it are dead in 1300.

***Inferno*, Canto 1**

• **What does it mean to repent?**

A sinner who repents regrets having committed the sin. The repentant sinner vows not to commit the sin again, and he or she does his or her best not to commit the sin again.

***Inferno*, Canto 1**

• **What is the geography of Hell? In *The Divine Comedy*, where is Hell located?**

Hell is located straight down. We will find out later that when Lucifer was thrown out of Paradise, he fell to the Earth, ending up at the center of the Earth. The center of the Earth is the lowest part of Hell. On the other side of the earth away from the spot that Lucifer hit the Earth is the Mountain of Purgatory. Lucifer created the Mountain of Purgatory when he hit the Earth.

**To:** David Bruce  
**From:** Jane Student  
**Re:** *Candide*, Ch. 26-30  
**Date:** Today's Date  
**Words:** 368

**Ch. 30: Write a brief character analysis of the old man and his family.**

When Candide and his friends meet the old man, the old man is “sitting in front of his door beneath an arbor of orange trees, enjoying the fresh air” (119). The old man basically ignores politics that he cannot influence. Some people have recently been killed in Constantinople, and the old man does not even know their names. However, the old man does enjoy some material things, including good food, and he enjoys hospitality.

The old man invites Candide and his friends to enjoy some refreshments inside his house. They are served with “several kinds of fruit-favored drinks” and “boiled cream with pieces of candied citron in it, oranges, lemons, limes, pineapples, pistachio nuts, and mocha coffee” (119). The old man and his family have an abundance of food, but although Candide wonders if the old man has an enormous farm, the old man tells him, “I have only twenty acres of land, which my children and I cultivate. Our work keeps us free of three great evils: boredom, vice, and poverty” (119).

From this brief encounter, we learn several things:

- The old man and his family are content—even happy.
- The old man and his family ignore the wars and murders and crimes that happen elsewhere.
- The old man and his family have enough. They work hard on their little farm, and they have plenty of food and good things to eat.
- The old man and his family have only 20 acres, but 20 acres are enough.

Candide and his friends decide to emulate the old man and his family. Each of them begins to work hard on their little farm. Cunegonde learns to make pastry, Paquette begins to embroider, and the old woman does the laundry and repairs the linen. Brother Giroflée becomes a carpenter, and Candide and the others grow “abundant crops” (120). At the end of the short novel, the group of friends seem to have come the closest they can to happiness in a world filled with evil, but it does take an effort on their part. As Candide says in the short novel’s last words, “... we must cultivate our garden” (120).

Works Cited

Voltaire. *Candide*. Trans. Lowell Bair. New York: Bantam Books, 1981. Print.

**To:** David Bruce  
**From:** Jane Student  
**Re:** *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Ch. 1-4 Reaction Memo  
**Date:** Put Today's Date Here  
**Words:** 286

### CHAPTER 3: "KNIGHTS OF THE TABLE ROUND"

• **What hints do we have of the relationship between Queen Guenever and Sir Launcelot?**

Some hanky-panky is going on between Sir Launcelot and King Arthur's wife, Queen Guenever. Some six or eight prisoners address her, and they tell her that they have been captured by Sir Kay the Seneschal. Immediately, surprise and astonishment are felt by everybody present. The queen looks disappointed because she had hoped that the prisoners were captured by Sir Launcelot.

As it turns out, they were. Sir Launcelot first rescued Sir Kay from some attackers, then he took Sir Kay's armor and horse and captured more knights. All of these prisoners were actually captured by Sir Launcelot, not by Sir Kay at all.

Two passages let us know that something is going on between Sir Launcelot and Queen Guenever:

1. The first is subtle; she looks disappointed when Sir Kay says that he captured the knights: "Surprise and astonishment flashed from face to face all over the house; the queen's gratified smile faded out at the name of Sir Kay, and she looked disappointed ..." (503).
2. The other is much more overt and occurs after Guenever learns that the knight who really captured the prisoners was Sir Launcelot: "Well, it was touching to see the queen blush and smile, and look embarrassed and happy, and fling furtive glances at Sir Launcelot that would have got him shot in Arkansas, to a dead certainty" (503).

#### Works Cited

Twain, Mark. *Four Complete Novels*. New York: Gramercy Books, 1982. Print.

### About the Author

It was a dark and stormy night. Suddenly a cry rang out, and on a hot summer night in 1954, Josephine, wife of Carl Bruce, gave birth to a boy—me. Unfortunately, this young married couple allowed Reuben Saturday, Josephine’s brother, to name their first-born. Reuben, aka “The Joker,” decided that Bruce was a nice name, so he decided to name me Bruce Bruce. I have gone by my middle name—David—ever since.

Being named Bruce David Bruce hasn’t been all bad. Bank tellers remember me very quickly, so I don’t often have to show an ID. It can be fun in charades, also. When I was a counselor as a teenager at Camp Echoing Hills in Warsaw, Ohio, a fellow counselor gave the signs for “sounds like” and “two words,” then she pointed to a bruise on her leg twice. Bruise Bruise? Oh yeah, Bruce Bruce is the answer!

Uncle Reuben, by the way, gave me a haircut when I was in kindergarten. He cut my hair short and shaved a small bald spot on the back of my head. My mother wouldn’t let me go to school until the bald spot grew out again.

Of all my brothers and sisters (six in all), I am the only transplant to Athens, Ohio. I was born in Newark, Ohio, and have lived all around Southeastern Ohio. However, I moved to Athens to go to Ohio University and have never left.

At Ohio U, I never could make up my mind whether to major in English or Philosophy, so I got a bachelor’s degree with a double major in both areas, then I added a master’s degree in English and a master’s degree in Philosophy. Currently, and for a long time to come, I publish a weekly humorous column titled “Wise Up!” for *The Athens News* and I am an English instructor at Ohio U.

#### *Shameless Commerce*

Visit David Bruce’s storefront at

<http://stores.lulu.com/bruceb>

By the way, this storefront offers free downloads of collections of my students’ autobiographical essays. For example, one such collection is titled *Love and Friendship: Stories About Growing Up*.

If all goes well, I will publish one or two books a year for the rest of my life. (On the other hand, a good way to make God laugh is to tell Her your plans.)