

insight SHAKESPEARE PLAYS



Macbeth

William Shakespeare



Shane Barnes & Aidan Coleman

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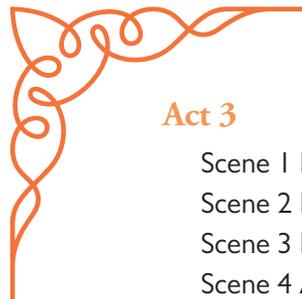
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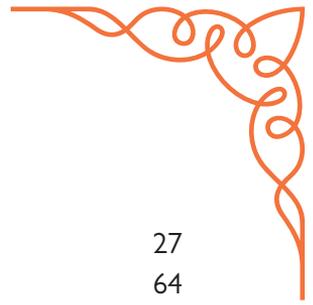
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Introduction

Who was Shakespeare?



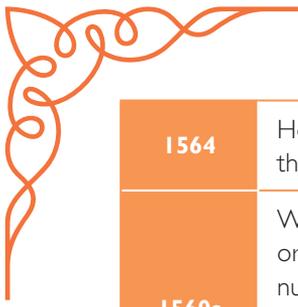
The Chandos Portrait of William Shakespeare

Shakespeare was neither a king nor a lord, and this is the reason we know little about him. While historians and writers made an effort to record the details of the lives of those born into noble families (kings, queens, ladies and lords), they were not generally interested in the important details of other people's lives. In his time Shakespeare was a famous playwright, but perhaps no more famous than some other London playwrights like Ben Jonson or Christopher Marlowe. Little effort was made to record the details of his life until some 50 years after his death.

Did Shakespeare write Shakespeare?

Nearly all scholars agree that we have enough evidence to confirm that William Shakespeare, the man born in Stratford-upon-Avon, was the author of the plays and poems attributed to him. However, a few other theories exist as to who wrote the plays. Some authors that have been suggested include Edward de Vere, the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford; Christopher Marlowe (a talented playwright who died in 1593 but who conspiracy theorists claim may have faked his own death); Francis Bacon (a philosopher and scientist) and even Queen Elizabeth I.

There are a number of problems with all of these theories and very little evidence to support them. No-one doubted Shakespeare was the author of the plays and poems until 200 years after his death and these theories are usually based on the argument that Shakespeare was not university-educated.



1564	He was baptised on 26 April 1564; it is likely that he was born three days before this on 23 April (St George's Day).
1560s	<p>William's parents, John and Anne, were possibly both illiterate (they couldn't read or write). His father, John Shakespeare, was a glove maker and was involved in a number of other business activities. He became a member of the town council when Shakespeare was very young.</p> <p>Shakespeare was John and Anne's third child. He had seven brothers and sisters but only five of them survived to adulthood.</p>
1571	It is believed that Shakespeare entered the King's New Grammar School in Stratford around the age of seven. Shakespeare's school days would have begun at six in the morning in summer and seven in winter and they would have finished at five in the evening (Monday to Saturday). The school would have been very strict and students could have expected to be beaten for misbehaving or showing any signs of laziness.
1578	Shakespeare probably left school at 14 or 15. His father owed quite a few people money by this time, and, for this reason, William was unable to attend university.
1582	At age 18, he married 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. They had three children – Susanna, and twins Judith and Hamnet (Hamnet died when he was only 11).
1590s	<p>We are unsure what Shakespeare did in his early twenties. There are stories of his being employed by a rich landowner in the north of England. It is possible that he joined a travelling company of actors. We do know that by the early 1590s he was a popular playwright in London; in 1594 he invested in the acting company of which he was a member (The Lord Chamberlain's Men), becoming a part-owner.</p> <p>Through the 1590s Shakespeare wrote a number of poems and many of his most popular plays, including <i>Richard III</i>, <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> and <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>. He acted in some of his own plays and those of other playwrights.</p> <p>In 1596 Shakespeare obtained a coat of arms for his father; which meant that he would be officially regarded as a gentleman. In the following year, Shakespeare bought New Place, the second largest house in Stratford-upon-Avon.</p>
1600s	<p>The first decade of the 1600s was his most productive period, when he wrote most of his greatest plays, including <i>Hamlet</i>, <i>Othello</i>, <i>Macbeth</i> and <i>King Lear</i>.</p> <p>In 1603 Shakespeare's company became the King's Men and regularly performed at Court before King James from this time. During this decade he bought more properties around London and the Stratford area and became very wealthy.</p>
1613	In 1613 Shakespeare returned to Stratford-upon-Avon but still travelled to London occasionally to look after his business interests.
1616	He died on his 52nd birthday (23 April 1616) and was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.

Jacobean England

Upon her death, Queen Elizabeth I was childless and it was widely accepted that her second cousin, James, already the King of Scotland, was the best candidate to replace her. James I of England came to the throne in 1603, and ruled both England and Scotland until his death in 1625. Historians refer to this period (1603–1625) as 'Jacobean'.

Most English people were pleased to finally have a man on the throne because they believed it would lead to greater stability. King James was intelligent and knowledgeable, but with no real practical sense, and this earned him the reputation of being 'the wisest fool in Christendom'. He was very opinionated, and wrote books and pamphlets on such diverse topics as politics, tobacco and witchcraft.

James was not as diplomatic as Elizabeth in dealing with the English Parliament and he promoted the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, which argued that kings received their power from God and could not, therefore, be challenged. James was instinctively conservative and, despite replacing many of the English courtiers with Scottish favourites, made few changes to the government of the realm. Early in his reign, James secured a lasting peace treaty with Spain, and tried to introduce a union between England and Scotland. Although the union was not achieved in James' lifetime, the flag he introduced still flies today as the British Union Jack.

The kingdom James inherited was thriving with confidence and patriotic feeling. This was the high point of the period often described as the English Renaissance. The modern scientific method was being developed, based on observation and experiment, and new discoveries were being made, particularly in the areas of anatomy, mathematics and astronomy. It was also a time of great achievement in the arts. At the centre were the English theatres, attracting audiences of around 20 000 per week.



Portrait of James I by an unknown artist



Illustration from 1579 of the Great Chain of Being

When James came to power, Shakespeare had already written many of his most famous plays, including *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*. James was quick to name Shakespeare's company of actors the King's Men. This new title allowed Shakespeare's company to march in processions and to play before the King, which they did on many occasions. In the next few years Shakespeare wrote some of his most profound plays, including *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*.

Unlike today, when the people of England vote for a government, England was ruled by a monarch, James I, and his advisors. Jacobean society was divided into two broad groups: the 'gentle', the two to five per cent of the population who governed the country (including earls, lords, ladies and gentlemen), and the 'base' or 'knaves', who made up most of the population. People were born into a certain class and marriages between

people of different classes were reasonably rare. While the 'gentle' were generally wealthy, some businessmen of lower rank were also beginning to make their fortunes during this time. The practice of knighting or even ennobling a person of lesser rank became more common under James; people usually paid for this privilege and James saw this as another source of income.

In the early 1600s, virtually everyone believed in a God who created and controlled the universe. Jacobeans believed in a divine order called the Great Chain of Being. In this way of seeing the world, God ruled the universe and below Him were a number of angels. The King was the highest earthly rank in the Chain of Being; beneath him were nobles and lesser lords, and below them the majority of the population. This Chain extended further to the animal and then the plant kingdom. Such an idea was used to reinforce the class system: everything had its place in the chain and people believed that upsetting this order in any way would cause chaos. A person's social class was even made clear through the clothing they wore, which was governed by strict laws.

Jacobeans were quite superstitious. Many of them believed in fairies and witches, whom they blamed for unexplained mishaps, although many educated people were becoming sceptical. A Jacobean would worry if a black cat crossed her path, and would avoid walking beneath ladders because this was considered bad luck. The Earth was generally believed to be the centre of the universe, and it was thought that in their motion around the Earth, the planets produced

musical notes that together formed a perfect harmony. Jacobeans also believed that the constellations and other heavenly bodies, including the moon, influenced human events and held clues about the future.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, England, like most other European countries, was Roman Catholic. Under Henry VIII, the country broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and formed the Protestant Church of England. Although England briefly became Catholic again under Queen Mary, the country remained Protestant throughout the reigns of Elizabeth and James. This meant James I was the head of the Church of England. Catholicism was illegal when James came to the throne and English Catholics hoped that their new king would change this. The King's wife, Anne of Denmark, was a Catholic and James had made some remarks as King of Scotland that suggested he might introduce a limited tolerance towards Catholics. The early years of James' reign were a disappointment for some, and in 1605 a group of radical Catholics attempted to assassinate James and the ruling elite by blowing up the Houses of Parliament. The scheme, known as the Gunpowder Plot, failed and everyone involved was executed.

Many Protestants, known sometimes as Puritans, appealed to James to reform the Church of England and make it more distinct from the Catholic Church. James ignored their appeals on most points, except their request for a new translation of the Bible. The now famous *King James Bible* was produced early in James' reign (1611) by a committee of Greek and Hebrew scholars. Many consider it the most poetic translation of the Bible into English. Like Shakespeare's plays, the *King James Bible* has had a profound effect on the development of the English language.



The New Globe Theatre

A day in the theatre, London 1607

Imagine you could go back to London on a Saturday afternoon in May 1607. It is a warm sunny day with a slight breeze blowing in from the country. You decide to avoid the crowds flowing over London Bridge, choosing instead to be rowed across the River Thames (pronounced *Temz*) in one of the many water taxis. There are dozens of similar boats making their way across the river from the main city to Southwark.



Panorama of London by Claes Van Visscher, 1616

Southwark is a poor, overcrowded suburb filled with hastily built houses and flats. This is where immigrants from other parts of England or overseas come to live when they first arrive in London because it's cheap and no-one asks questions. It is full of workshops and young apprentices and you notice a large number of beggars. It is also the location for five of London's prisons, including that most notorious prison: the Clink.

More importantly, Southwark is London's entertainment district. This is largely because it is outside the control of the city officials and their strict laws. The streets are packed with bowling alleys, brothels and taverns, where you can drink, or gamble illegally on dice, backgammon or cards. Here you can see all sorts of professional entertainers, from acrobats and clowns to musicians and puppeteers. You can also see some sickeningly violent entertainment. In the bear-baiting rings you are likely to see a bear or bull being attacked by vicious dogs. But you haven't crossed the river to see any of these things. You are here to see a play.

As you near the theatre, it is the smells you notice: roasting meats and pies mingle with the ever-present stench of horse dung, human sweat and sewage. Then you turn a corner, and there it is, standing thirty metres high: the Globe Theatre. The building is almost round in shape and white, criss-crossed with timbers. Above the brown thatched roof a white flag ripples in the breeze.

Today's play is *Macbeth*. You've heard that it has already been performed before the King last summer. It costs just a penny to enter. This is about a tenth of the average worker's daily wage, which makes it cheaper than a movie today. As you pass beneath the entrance you read the words *Totus mundus agit histrionem*: the whole world is a playhouse.

Inside, three tiers of gallery seating wrap around the stage. If you pay another penny, you can buy yourself a seat in one of the lower tiers, or for sixpence you can purchase one of the best seats in the upper galleries. This is where the upper classes sit: the gentlemen, lords and ladies.

The stage is raised about one and a half metres above the ground. Like the seats in the galleries, the performance area is covered. The ceiling, which they call the heavens, is painted with stars. You notice there are very few props of any sort and no backdrops or scenery: just a curtain at the back of the stage, and above this three balcony areas that face the audience. These are the most expensive seats in the house, where people sit to be seen.

The Globe is now almost full with 3000 noisy people. You find a place off to the side of the stage. You'll have to stand for two or three hours but you've done that before at plenty of concerts. There are no toilets, and you will need to keep a careful eye on your bag.

The audience around you are poorer Londoners, the groundlings. You'll find they're a lot like a crowd at the football but rougher. They will eat, drink and talk throughout the performance and will shout out or boo if they don't like what's happening.

When the actors come on you'll find they speak very quickly, but you'll be able to hear them clearly where you are. If you look very closely you may even notice something strange about the female characters. All of the parts are played by men, and female characters, like Lady Macbeth, are played by boys whose voices have not yet broken. Theatre companies are considered too dangerous for women, and they won't be permitted onstage for another 60 years.

Anyway, it's almost 2 o'clock and the performance is about to begin ...



Interior of the New Globe Theatre



Dates and sources

There is a popular story that *Macbeth* was first performed before King James on 7 August 1606. The story goes that the boy actor Hal Berridge, who was playing the part of Lady Macbeth, was taken ill and Shakespeare took his place. Hal Berridge died of his illness, beginning the tradition of bad luck associated with this play. The first reliable written record we have of any performance of *Macbeth* is Simon Forman's detailed diary entry from 1611. The play was first published in 1623 with 35 other plays by Shakespeare in a book now known as the First Folio.

Macbeth is set in Scotland in the eleventh century, about 550 years before Shakespeare wrote the play. Shakespeare adapted the story of *Macbeth* from a popular history book known as *Holinshed's Chronicles*.

Holinshed's portrayal of Macbeth is much more positive than Shakespeare's. In *Holinshed's Chronicles*, Macbeth seizes the crown in open combat with the support of many Scottish Lords, including Banquo. Holinshed portrays King Duncan as a weak, unpopular ruler, who does not punish injustices. After killing Duncan, Macbeth goes on to rule Scotland effectively for ten years.

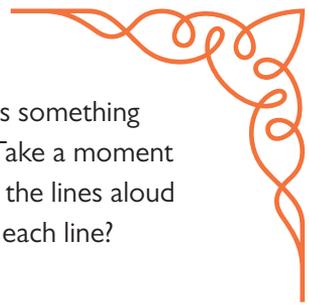
Many of the details that audiences find most fascinating in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* do not appear in *Holinshed's Chronicles*. For example, Holinshed presents Lady Macbeth as ambitious and persuasive, but she does not summon spirits, and nor does she sleepwalk.

Shakespeare looked elsewhere in *Holinshed's Chronicles* for his portrayal of Duncan's murder. In the tenth century, King Duff was murdered by Donwald and his wife, while he was staying at their castle. However, in Holinshed's account, the murder is committed by Donwald's servants, who remove the body from the castle. A number of supernatural signs occur after the murder, including the country being plunged into darkness, and horses eating each other. Shakespeare lists these same ominous signs in his play.

More important than any of these details, Shakespeare breathes life into characters that are otherwise two-dimensional, and, through soliloquy, gives the audience a window into the inner workings of Macbeth's mind.

Shakespeare's language

Shakespeare has an incredible command of language. His lines are packed with puns, metaphors and ironies. He often uses difficult, strange-sounding words and phrases, some of which have shifted in their meaning since he first wrote them. Sometimes he uses a different word order from what you might be used to,



Set out like a poem (verse) rather than a novel (prose), there is something else you might notice about these lines, particularly the first few. Take a moment to read them aloud. Can you hear the rhythm in the words? Read the lines aloud once more. Can you hear the regular heartbeat repeating itself in each line?

te-DUM, te-DUM, te-DUM, te-DUM, te-DUM ...

The general rule in Shakespeare's plays is to have ten beats per line, divided into what are called **iamb**s. Each iamb contains one unstressed beat and one stressed beat (te-DUM). As each line has five iambs, this forms what is called **iambic pentameter** ('penta' relates to a group of five, as in pentagon, a five-sided shape).

This pattern is made clearer below, where the CAPITALISED letters are a stressed or strong beat. They should be emphasised a little more than the weaker beats:

LADY MACBETH But SCREW your COURAge TO the STICKing-PLACE (Act 1 Scene 7)

Not only does Shakespeare's iambic pentameter (five te-DUMs per line) work **across** words (as in 'Did NOT you SPEAK?') and **within** words ('deSCEND'), but also **across speakers**:

LADY MACBETH Did NOT you SPEAK?
 MACBETH When?
 LADY MACBETH NOW.
 MACBETH As I deSCENDED? (Act 2 Scene 2)

In the lines above, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's conversation continues the iambic pentameter uninterrupted. This is shown in the text by indenting the characters' lines. Those reading Lady Macbeth's and Macbeth's parts should speak immediately after each other to complete the rhythm of the line. In this way, the heart of the play does not stop beating.

You will not necessarily be able to pick this rhythm straight away, but the more you read Shakespeare, the more you will develop a feel for iambic pentameter.

Having said this, the rhythm is often quite irregular in *Macbeth*, especially in comparison to Shakespeare's earlier plays such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III*.

Macbeth to look at his hands, which are covered in King Duncan's blood. The pause in the dialogue adds discord or tension to the scene.

d. Contractions and accents

Shakespeare frequently uses **contractions** in order to preserve the rhythm of iambic pentameter. Contractions are shortened words. You use contractions every day, such as don't (short for do not) and haven't (have not). In each of these examples, an apostrophe indicates that something is missing, that the word has been shortened:

'tis (it is); giv'n (given); o'er (over); know'st (knowest)

At other times, Shakespeare *adds* a syllable or a beat to a word to make it fit the iambic pentameter. This is indicated in the text by an accent mark to make an extra syllable:

cursèd [CURS-ed] (two beats instead of one)
reservèd [re-SERV-ed] (three beats instead of two)

e. Rhyme

When Shakespeare writes in rhyming verse, it is always for a reason. Throughout *Macbeth*, you should immediately notice that the Witches speak differently from the other characters: they speak in rhyming verse and not in iambic pentameter.

2ND WITCH By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.
Open, locks,
Whoever knocks! (Act 4 Scene 1)

The Witches deliberately seek to create havoc; their language emphasises their unnatural, even supernatural, features.

Sometimes, Shakespeare ends a scene with a **rhyming couplet** (two consecutive lines that rhyme). For example:

MACBETH It is concluded: Banquo, thy soul's flight,
If it find heav'n, must find it out tonight. (Act 3 Scene 1)

Ending a scene with a rhyming couplet helped the audience know that they could fidget a little; it also might have been a cue to the actors that they were soon due onstage for the next scene. Structurally, it ties up a speech neatly and makes a point memorable.



Important vocabulary

You can enjoy Shakespeare without understanding every word, but it is still a good idea to learn the words that are used regularly throughout the play. You might like to begin a vocabulary list of your own. Here are some examples you could add.

Anon: Soon

When the Porter cries, 'Anon, anon!' he is basically saying, 'I'll open the door soon'.

Art: Are

When Macbeth praises the 1ST Murderer for killing Banquo, he says, 'Thou art the best o' the cut-throats', or 'You are the best of the cut-throats (hired murderers)'.

Ay (pronounced eye): Yes

Towards the end of the play when a Doctor and a Gentlewoman are discussing Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, the Doctor comments on Lady Macbeth's eyes being open. The Gentlewoman agrees: 'Ay, but their sense is shut'.

Ere (pronounced air): Before

In the opening scene, the Witches arrange a time and place to meet again. The 3RD Witch remarks, 'That will be ere the set of sun', meaning they will meet again before sunset.

Hark: Listen; pay attention

When the Murderers lie in wait for Banquo, one of them says, 'Hark! I hear horses' to urge the other Murderers to listen.

Hence: Away from here

When confronted with Banquo's Ghost, Macbeth cries out, 'Hence, horrible shadow! / Unreal mockery, hence!' He is banishing the Ghost or sending it away.

Thou: You; **Thy:** Your; **Thine:** Yours

In Act 5, Macbeth mocks one of his servants by saying, 'Those linen cheeks of thine / Are counsellors to fear'. He suggests, 'Those white cheeks of yours give away your fear'.

Tyrant (pronounced tie-rant): A cruel, violent or wicked leader

When Lennox describes Macbeth's banquet as 'the tyrant's feast', he is emphasising his opinion of Macbeth as a cruel and wicked leader.

Valiant (pronounced valley-ent): Brave or courageous; **Valour:** Bravery

When Macbeth says of Banquo, 'He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour / To act in safety', he is pointing out that, although Banquo is courageous, he also acts wisely.

Whence: From what place, cause or origin

Macbeth questions the Witches: 'Say from whence / You owe this strange intelligence ...' He is asking from where they have acquired their knowledge.

Wrought: Worked

When Hecate tells her fellow Witches, 'Great business must be wrought ere noon', she is saying that the details of their important business must be 'worked' or worked out before midday.

The characters

MACBETH'S HOUSEHOLD



Macbeth Thane of Glamis, a general in the Scottish army; becomes Thane of Cawdor in Act 1 and King of Scotland from Act 3 (protagonist – the play's central character)

Lady Macbeth: Macbeth's wife; Queen of Scotland from Act 3

Porter, Gentlewoman, Doctor, Seyton

Murderers

Messengers and servants

ROYAL HOUSEHOLD OF SCOTLAND



Duncan: King of Scotland

Malcolm: A prince; King Duncan's eldest son and heir apparent; becomes King at end of Act 5

Donalbain: A prince; younger son of Duncan

SCOTTISH NOBLEMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Banquo: A general in the Scottish army

Fleance: His son

Macduff: Thane of Fife (antagonist – opposes central character)

Lady Macduff: His wife

Macduff's son

Lennox, Ross, Angus, Menteith, Caithness

Other characters

Witches, Hecate, Apparitions, Scottish Sergeant, Old Man, English Doctor, Soldiers, Siward, Young Siward



Act summaries for *Macbeth*

Act 1

Returning from a bloody battle, Macbeth and Banquo are greeted by three Witches, who address Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor and hail him as the future King of Scotland. They also predict that Banquo will be father to a line of kings. Two Lords arrive with news that the current Thane of Cawdor is to be executed for treachery and Macbeth is to be awarded his title. King Duncan thanks Macbeth and Banquo for their services and proclaims his son, Malcolm, the heir to the throne. Lady Macbeth reads a letter from Macbeth that informs her of the Witches' predictions. When she hears of King Duncan's plan to stay that night at their castle, she sets about persuading her reluctant husband to murder the King. After wrestling with his conscience, Macbeth agrees to commit the murder.

Act 2

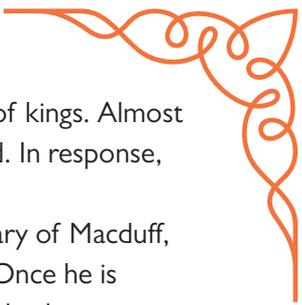
Macbeth kills King Duncan but is overcome with guilt and is unable to return the bloody daggers to Duncan's chamber. Lady Macbeth takes charge, fiercely criticising her husband before returning the daggers herself. Early the next morning, Macduff discovers Duncan's body. The household is sent into a panic and Macbeth kills Duncan's guards in order to cover his tracks. The two princes, Malcolm and Donalbain, flee to England and Ireland. Act 2 ends with the news that Macbeth is to be crowned the new King of Scotland.

Act 3

Macbeth is now King but neither he nor Lady Macbeth is happy, and Macbeth feels insecure. Macbeth plots with two Murderers to kill Banquo and his son, Fleance. That evening, these two Murderers are joined by a third. They succeed in killing Banquo but Fleance escapes. The Macbeths host a banquet that night, where Macbeth becomes unnerved and enraged upon seeing Banquo's ghost. Sensing danger, Lady Macbeth invents a story to explain Macbeth's strange behaviour, before hurriedly dismissing their guests. Act 3 ends with the news that discontent is growing in Scotland, and that a force opposing Macbeth is gathering in England.

Act 4

Macbeth seeks out the Witches in order to know his future. The Witches call up spirits who predict things that sound favourable to Macbeth but also warn Macbeth to beware of Macduff. When Macbeth asks if Banquo's descendants will



ever rule in Scotland, he is presented with an image of a long line of kings. Almost immediately, Macbeth is informed that Macduff has fled to England. In response, Macbeth orders the slaughter of Macduff's entire family.

In England, Macduff meets with Malcolm. Initially Malcolm is wary of Macduff, and so pretends that he would be a greater tyrant than Macbeth. Once he is convinced of Macduff's loyalty, Malcolm reveals his true, honourable character. Ross arrives with the news that all of Macduff's family have been murdered. With English support, the Scottish forces are ready to fight Macbeth.

Act 5

Lady Macbeth is often seen sleepwalking and talking of her guilt. As the forces led by Malcolm approach Macbeth's castle, they cut down branches to hide their numbers. Macbeth is informed of his wife's suicide and he despairs at the pointless monotony of life. Outnumbered by Malcolm's army, Macbeth fights bravely until he is finally killed by Macduff. As the new King of Scotland, Malcolm promises to restore peace and order.

Quick questions!



QUESTIONS

Spend a few minutes answering these questions in pairs or as a class.

- 1 At the start of the play, whom do the Witches address as Thane of Cawdor and hail as the future king?
- 2 What do the Witches predict for Banquo?
- 3 Which one of the Witches' predictions (or prophetic greetings) is fulfilled almost immediately?
- 4 Whom does King Duncan name as heir to the throne?
- 5 What does Lady Macbeth resolve to do at the end of Act 1?
- 6 Who murders King Duncan?
- 7 Who discovers Duncan's body?
- 8 Who kills Duncan's guards and why?
- 9 What do the two royal princes do after Duncan's murder?
- 10 Are Macbeth and Lady Macbeth happy as the new king and queen of Scotland?
- 11 What happens to Banquo and Fleance in Act 3?
- 12 What goes wrong at the Macbeths' banquet?
- 13 Why does Macbeth seek out the Witches?





- 14 Whom do the spirits (or apparitions) tell Macbeth to fear?
- 15 What does Macbeth do immediately after the spirits' predictions?
- 16 What strategy does Malcolm employ to test Macduff's loyalty?
- 17 What happens to Lady Macbeth in Act 5?
- 18 How do Malcolm's forces hide their numbers?
- 19 Who kills Macbeth at the end of the play?
- 20 Who becomes king at the end of the play?

Freeze-frames

The recommended time allocation for this task (preparation and performance) is approximately 50–60 minutes in total.

Present the play in five freeze-frames (one for each act) in groups of five to seven students.

Instructions

- Read carefully through the summary for each act.
- Work out how you will present the action of each act in a single 'frozen' pose.
- You may choose to represent a character, an event or even an idea. You may strike a pose where you are doing two things at once.
- Your teacher will tell you to present Act 1 and then instruct you to CHANGE and then FREEZE for your representation of Act 2. This will continue until you have represented all five acts.
- You shouldn't take longer than 15 seconds between acts, so make sure you practise your changeovers before you present your freeze-frames to the class.
- Make sure you can explain what you represent, who you are or what you are doing when you present your freeze-frames to the class.

Act 1

Act 1 Scene 1

CHARACTERS

1ST Witch
2ND Witch
3RD Witch



IN A NUTSHELL

The play begins with three Witches meeting in a deserted place. They agree that they will meet with Macbeth after the current battle.

Before you read

- In this scene, the Witches are called away by their supernatural companions (known as familiars), Graymalkin and Paddock. It was a common belief in Shakespeare's day that witches worked through these familiars or spirits, which were often animals such as cats or toads.



Hurly-burly: Confusion (in this case, the battle)
Heath: Barren land
Anon: Soon

A deserted place.

[Thunder and lightning; three WITCHES enter]

1ST WITCH When shall we three meet again:
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

2ND WITCH When the hurly-burly's done;
When the battle's lost and won.

3RD WITCH That will be ere the set of sun. 5

1ST WITCH Where the place?

2ND WITCH Upon the heath.

3RD WITCH There to meet with Macbeth.

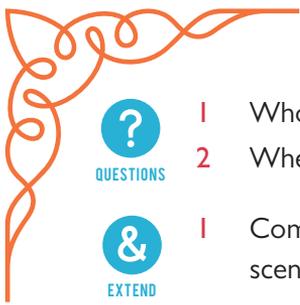
1ST WITCH I come, Graymalkin!

2ND WITCH Paddock calls. 10

3RD WITCH Anon!

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

[Exit]



QUESTIONS

- 1 Who are the Witches going to meet?
- 2 Where and when will this meeting take place?



EXTEND

- 1 Complete the following table, explaining how each feature of the opening scene helps to create a sense of chaos or evil in Scotland.

Feature of Act 1 Scene 1	How does this feature contribute to a sense of chaos or evil?
Stage directions (<i>thunder, lightning, deserted place</i>)	
The mention of a war being fought	e.g. <i>The play opens with Scotland in the midst of a war, which conveys a sense of conflict and uncertainty.</i>
The characters (Witches)	

- 2 A **paradox** is a statement that seems contradictory but contains elements of the truth. What do you think the Witches might mean by ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’?

Roman Polanski: *The Witches* (Act 1 Scene 1)



PRESS PLAY

View the opening scene of Polanski’s film (1971), which introduces the Witches.

- 1 Describe the sounds you can hear at the start of this scene. What sort of atmosphere does Polanski create by using these sounds?
- 2 To what extent does Polanski’s representation differ from your interpretation (or expectation) of Shakespeare’s stage directions?
- 3 The Witches bury a noose, a severed hand and a dagger, and then pour blood onto the sand. What theme(s) or idea(s) might these objects suggest?
- 4 How does Polanski use lighting to contribute to this scene?

Geoffrey Wright: *The Witches* (Act 1 Scene 1)

Now view the opening scene of the Witches in the graveyard in Geoffrey Wright’s 2006 version.

- 5 How does Wright convey a sense of chaos or anarchy at the start of this scene?
- 6 What techniques does Wright use to create a foreboding or ominous atmosphere?
- 7 Why do you think Wright suggests that the Macbeths have a dead son?

Note: The Wright film (2006) is rated MA and is not suitable to show in its entirety.

Comparison

- 8 Which version do you think makes the Witches appear more menacing? Why?

Discussion

- 9 How might *you* direct this scene? What would you do differently from Polanski and Wright? Which of their ideas or techniques would you consider using?

The language of the Witches

In Scene 3, Macbeth describes the three Witches as ‘secret, black and midnight hags’. They deliberately contribute to the disorder or chaos that spreads throughout the play like a deadly infection.

What you should notice quite quickly is that the rhythms and patterns of the Witches’ language are different from those of the language typically used by the play’s central characters:

- Rather than speaking in iambic pentameter with ten beats per line (te-DUM, te-DUM, te-DUM, te-DUM, te-DUM: see page 11 for an explanation), the Witches use a shorter, quicker rhythm. They tend to speak in a type of **trochaic tetrameter** (DOUB-le, DOUB-le, TOIL and TROUB-le), yet rather than having eight beats per line, most have only seven (WHEN shall WE three MEET a-GAIN?). This is even more unusual, clearly setting them apart from the other characters.
- This distinctive rhythm helps to create a sinister, incantatory (chant-like) quality, reinforcing the Witches’ evil nature.
- You should also notice in later scenes the Witches’ particular use of repetition: repeating words twice (Act I Scene 3, lines 28 and 31) or even three times (Act I Scene 3, lines 11, 49–51, 63–65). This detail enhances our understanding of the Witches’ unnatural quality. They eerily echo each others’ dialogue in an almost telepathic manner, and seem to think as one presence or consciousness.
- Finally, the Witches’ language is dominated by unusual paradoxes (equivocations or contradictory statements that both contain elements of the truth). For example, in Act I Scene 1, the Witches’ dialogue includes the paradoxical statements: ‘When the battle’s lost and won’ (line 4) and ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’ (line 12).

Be on the lookout for these aspects of the Witches’ language. Remember that Shakespeare uses these devices to differentiate them from the other characters, emphasising their supernatural ‘otherness’ and their deceptive nature.



Act 1 Scene 2

CHARACTERS

Sergeant
Duncan
Ross
Malcolm
Lennox



IN A NUTSHELL

A wounded sergeant reports his knowledge of the battle to King Duncan. He recounts that the battle looked doubtful for the King's army until Macbeth and Banquo overcame the enemy. The Thane of Ross brings further news: Norway had taken advantage of the situation and, assisted by the Scottish Thane of Cawdor, invaded Scotland; this invading army was also defeated by Macbeth. King Duncan orders the execution of the Thane of Cawdor and awards his title to Macbeth.

Before you read

- At the beginning of this scene, Malcolm asks the Sergeant about the battle. You may find the language the Sergeant uses challenging but you do not have to understand every word; the main idea is that the battle could have gone either way until Macbeth won the day, shedding an incredible amount of blood in the process.
- When Ross brings the second report to King Duncan, he describes Macbeth as 'Bellona's bridegroom'. Bellona is the Roman goddess of war.



Whence:

From what place, cause or origin

Kerns and gallowglasses:

Hired soldiers

Valour:

Bravery

A military camp near Forres.

[An alarm is heard offstage; DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX and Attendants enter, who meet a bleeding SERGEANT]

DUNCAN What bloody man is that? He can report,
 As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
 The newest state.

MALCOLM This is the sergeant
 Who, like a good and hardy soldier, fought



1-3 **He can report ... of the revolt / The newest state:** He can give us the latest news of the battle.



If I say sooth, I must report they were
 As cannons o'ercharged with double cracks; so they
 Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.
 Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,
 Or memorise another Golgotha,
 I cannot tell.

40

DUNCAN But I am faint: my gashes cry for help.
 So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;
 They smack of honour both – Go get him surgeons.

[SERGEANT, attended, exits]

Who comes here?

[ROSS and ANGUS enter]

MALCOLM The worthy Thane of Ross. 45

LENNOX What a haste looks through his eyes! So should he look
 That seems to speak things strange.

ROSS God save the King!

DUNCAN Whence cam'st thou, worthy thane?

ROSS From Fife, great King,

Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky
 And fan our people cold. 50

Norway himself, with terrible numbers
 (Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,
 The Thane of Cawdor), began a dismal conflict,
 Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapped in proof,
 Confronted him with self-comparisons, 55

Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm,
 Curbing his lavish spirit: and, to conclude,
 The vict'ry fell on us.

DUNCAN Great happiness!

ROSS That now

Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition;
 Nor would we deign him burial of his men 60
 Till he disbursèd at Saint Colme's Inch,
 Ten thousand dollars to our general use.



40 **Another Golgotha:** The battle is compared to Golgotha or Calvary, the place of Christ's crucifixion, a place of suffering where much blood was shed.

55–57 **Confronted him ... Curbing his lavish spirit:** Matched him on the battlefield and humbled him.

59–62 **Sweno ... to our general use:** The Norwegians are looking for a peace treaty ('composition'); the Scots would not allow them to bury their dead until they paid a large sum of money (a tribute). St Colme's Inch, also known as Inchcolm, is a small island located in the Firth of Forth (a large estuary where the River Forth flows into the North Sea). It has strong Christian (Viking) ties, and tradition (supported by archaeological and written evidence) suggests that the Danes, having been defeated in battle, paid a great deal of money to have their dead buried at this sacred Christian site.

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.

65

[Exit]



- 1 Why does King Duncan decide to make Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor?
- 2 What positive qualities do the characters in this scene see in Macbeth?
- 3 What do you think this scene tells us about the political situation in Scotland?
- 4 Find two quotes from this scene that suggest Macbeth is a violent character.



Macbeth has been described at great length in this scene, but has not yet made his entrance. Why do you think Shakespeare does this?

Roman Polanski: The Battle (up until the hanging in Act 1 Scene 2)



View the depiction of the battle scene in Polanski's film.

- 1 Why do you think Polanski chooses not to show the battle, but to represent it only through sound?
- 2 What elements of medieval Scotland are highlighted by Polanski in the battle scene?

Geoffrey Wright: The Battle (Act 1 Scene 2)

Now watch the battle scene in Wright's film.

- 3 What cinematic devices does Wright use to convey the intensity of the fight? Think in terms of camera work, sound, lighting, editing etc.
- 4 Do you think this modern adaptation works for this scene? Think of at least two reasons for or against.
- 5 In Wright's version of this scene, the visualisation of a battle replaces some of the Sergeant's speech. In your opinion, is the image of fighting an adequate substitute for the Sergeant's dialogue? Why or why not?

Note: The Wright film (2006) is rated MA and is not suitable to show in its entirety.



Introducing imagery: blood

Shakespeare's plays contain an abundance of powerful imagery. In *Macbeth* these images gain their power through frequent repetition, and from the way they interweave in distinct patterns throughout the play. The imagery of *Macbeth* is strongly connected with the central themes and ideas of the play.

For example, Shakespeare's focus on the conflict between good and evil, and between order and chaos, is effectively presented through imagery of violence, especially **blood**. Macbeth's rule, even his very character, is repeatedly associated with talk of blood, revealing him to be a particularly violent 'tyrant', worthy of Malcolm's final assessment of him as a 'butcher'.

Act 1 Scene 2 portrays Macbeth as a 'worthy' soldier, whose sword 'smoked with bloody execution' (line 18), who sliced one particular enemy soldier 'from the nave to th' chaps' (line 22), and who, as 'Bellona's bridegroom' (line 54), made the battlefield resemble 'another Golgotha' (line 40). Although Macbeth is accustomed to violence on the battlefield, the images of blood become more personal and frightening for him when he weighs up the consequences of murdering the sleeping King Duncan, and he considers 'bloody instructions' (Act 1 Scene 7, line 9) and examines 'gouts of blood' on an imaginary dagger (Act 2 Scene 1, line 47).

After the violent murder of King Duncan, the rest of the play is saturated with images of blood. Macbeth envisions Duncan's blood turning 'the multitudinous seas incarnadine' (Act 2 Scene 2, line 65), Banquo is killed 'with twenty trenchèd gashes on his head' (Act 3 Scene 4, line 27), and Macbeth has Macduff's entire household savagely slaughtered (Act 4 Scene 2). In fact, so pervasive is this imagery that Act 3 Scene 4 (especially lines 123–27) is characterised by an overwhelming repetition of references to blood. Macbeth even admits, 'I am in blood / Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o'er' (lines 137–39).

Additionally, Lady Macbeth is so obsessed by blood that in Act 5 Scene 1 she washes her hands in her sleep, and is fixated by 'the smell of the blood' (line 37). It seems a fitting end to a bloody and violent play that Macbeth is decapitated and Lady Macbeth is reported to have committed suicide (Act 5 Scene 9).

Act 1 Scene 3



CHARACTERS

Macbeth
Banquo
1ST Witch
Ross
Angus
3RD Witch
2ND Witch



IN A NUTSHELL

The Witches talk as they wait for Macbeth. They greet Macbeth as the Thane of Cawdor and predict that he will become the King of Scotland. They also predict that Banquo's descendants will be kings. When Macbeth seeks further information, the Witches disappear. Angus and Ross arrive with the news that Macbeth is now Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth is troubled by the Witches' predictions and agrees with Banquo to discuss it further at some future time.

Before you read

- If you are reading the part of Macbeth, look out for the sections marked *[Aside]*. Shakespeare uses asides to indicate times when a character is not talking to all the other characters onstage. In some places, we (the audience) have access to Macbeth's secret thoughts. Where the words are addressed only to a particular character, this is indicated by a direction such as *[Aside to Banquo]*.
- Watch out for the dashes (–), which appear when a character begins to speak to a different character. An example in this scene is when Macbeth interrupts his own thoughts by saying, 'I thank you, gentlemen' to Ross and Angus.



Thou / thine: You / yours
Aroint: Begone; go away
Prophetic: Foretelling the future
Corporal: Relating to the body
Wrought: Worked

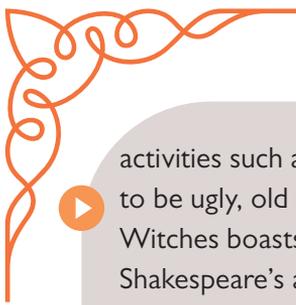


The weird sisters ...

King James and popular beliefs about witches

Shakespeare's depiction of witches in this scene reflects many of the popular English beliefs of the time. It was common, for example, to associate witches with storms and





activities such as ‘killing swine’ or other animals. Witches were also generally thought to be ugly, old and poor, which fits with Banquo’s description. One of Shakespeare’s *Witches* boasts that she will transform herself into ‘a rat without a tail’. Many in Shakespeare’s audience believed that a witch could take the form of any animal with four limbs, but, as humans do not have tails, this animal (be it a cat, a dog or, in this case, a rat) would also lack a tail. Witches were often accused of causing sickness. A Witch in this scene plans to make a sailor very ill (he will ‘dwindle, peak and pine’); consistent with popular belief, though, she does not have the power to inflict death or damnation, and so ‘his bark cannot be lost’.

Not all of Shakespeare’s audience would have held these beliefs. In 1584 Reginald Scot published a highly sceptical book about witches, entitled *Discovery of Witchcraft*. The book showed, with rational explanations, how many feats deemed to be magic could be carried out by any person. Scot dismissed the persecution of witches as irrational and unchristian. *Discovery of Witchcraft* was a popular book with educated people, and King James shared its scepticism until a series of strange events surrounding James’ wedding to Anne of Denmark changed his mind. When Princess Anne had set sail to meet James in Scotland, she had been driven back by fierce storms, which the Danish Admiral Peter Munk blamed on Danish witches. James ending up sailing to meet and marry Anne and, again, the couple encountered heavy storms on the return

journey, which were blamed on Scottish witches. There followed a trial of a group of women, who confessed to working on wax images of James in an attempt to kill him. James was unconvinced of the plot until one of the women took him aside and freakishly repeated the conversation James had with his bride on their wedding night.

James’ story was widely circulated in London as a pamphlet entitled *News from Scotland*. This pamphlet includes many details that Shakespeare uses in *Macbeth*; for example, we are given the stories of witches dancing together and ransacking graves for body parts. The pamphlet also displays an image of a group of women stirring something like a cauldron. Shakespeare uses this striking image for *Macbeth* and it has been popular ever since.



Medieval woodcut of witches cooking at a cauldron; artist unknown

James later wrote a book on the subject of witchcraft, entitled *Demonologie*, which refuted Scot's sceptical position. On becoming King of England, James tightened a number of laws concerning witchcraft. He ordered all copies of Reginald Scot's books to be burned, and ordered a reprinting of *Demonologie*. However, there were few convictions for witchcraft during James' rule, and in later years he returned to a more sceptical position.

A heath near Forres.

[Thunder. The three WITCHES enter]

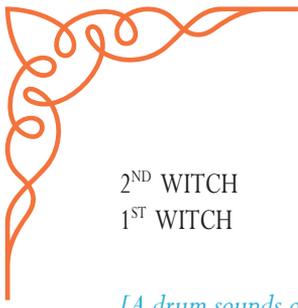
1 ST WITCH	Where hast thou been, sister?	
2 ND WITCH	Killing swine.	
3 RD WITCH	Sister, where thou?	
1 ST WITCH	A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap, And munched, and munched, and munched: 'Give me,' quoth I. 'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump-fed runnion cries. Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'the <i>Tiger</i> . But in a sieve I'll thither sail, And, like a rat without a tail,	5 10
2 ND WITCH	I'll give thee a wind.	
1 ST WITCH	Thou'rt kind.	
3 RD WITCH	And I another.	
1 ST WITCH	I myself have all the other, And the very ports they blow, All the quarters that they know In 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 sev'nights nine times nine Shall he dwindle, peak and pine. Though his bark cannot be lost,	15 20 25

8 **Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'the *Tiger*:** Her husband has sailed to Aleppo as captain of the *Tiger*.

21 **Pent-house lid:** Eyelid (a pent-house roof had a steep slope and this is a metaphorical comparison with the eyelid).

25–26 **Though his bark ... tempest-tossed:** Not just referring to creating a storm to attack his ship, but creating chaos in his soul as well.





Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.
 Look what I have.
 2ND WITCH Show me, show me.
 1ST WITCH Here I have a pilot's thumb,
 Wracked as homeward he did come. 30

[A drum sounds offstage]

3RD WITCH A drum, a drum!
 Macbeth doth come.
 ALL The weird sisters, hand in hand,
 Posters of the sea and land,
 Thus do go about, about: 35
 Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
 And thrice again, to make up nine.
 Peace! The charm's wound up.

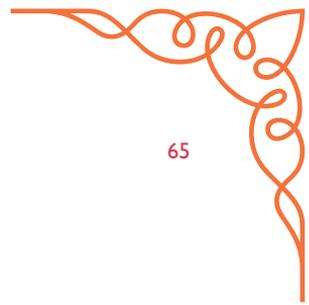
[MACBETH and BANQUO enter]

MACBETH So foul and fair a day I have not seen.
 BANQUO How far is't called to Forres? What are these, 40
 So withered and so wild in their attire,
 That look not like th' inhabitants o'th' 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 choppy finger laying 45
 Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
 And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
 That you are so.

MACBETH Speak, if you can: what are you?
 1ST WITCH All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!
 2ND WITCH All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor! 50
 3RD WITCH All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!
 BANQUO 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 55
 Which outwardly ye show? 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, 60
 Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
 Your favours nor your hate.
 1ST WITCH Hail!



52 **Start:** Jump in fear, as in the word 'startled'.



2ND WITCH Hail!

3RD WITCH Hail! 65

1ST WITCH Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

2ND WITCH Not so happy, yet much happier.

3RD WITCH Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.
So all hail Macbeth and Banquo!

1ST WITCH Banquo and Macbeth, all hail! 70

MACBETH Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more.
By Sinel's death I know I am Thane of Glamis,
But how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives,
A prosperous gentleman, and to be king
Stands not within the prospect of belief, 75
No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence
You owe this strange intelligence, or why
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.

[The WITCHES vanish]

BANQUO The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, 80
And these are of them. Whither are they vanished?

MACBETH Into the air, and what seemed corporal melted
As breath into the wind. Would they had stayed!

BANQUO Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten on the insane root 85
That takes the reason prisoner?

MACBETH Your children shall be kings.

BANQUO You shall be king.

MACBETH And Thane of Cawdor too; went it not so?

BANQUO To the selfsame tune and words – Who's here?

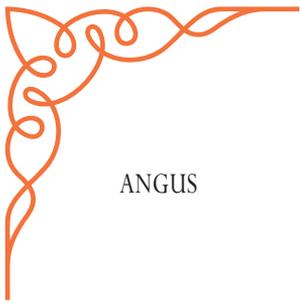
[ROSS and ANGUS enter]

ROSS The King hath happily received, Macbeth, 90
The news of thy success; and when he reads
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,
His wonders and his praises do contend
Which should be thine or his: silenced with that,
In viewing o'er the rest o'the selfsame day, 95
He finds thee in the stout Norway ranks,
Nothing afraid of what thyself didst make,
Strange images of death. As thick as hail
Came post with post, and every one did bear



85–86 Have we eaten on the insane root: It was believed that poisonous plants such as hemlock caused hallucinations.

98–99 As thick as hail / Came post with post: There were so many messengers with news that it was like a hail storm.



Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence, 100
And poured them down before him.

ANGUS We are sent
To give thee from our royal master thanks;
Only to herald thee into his sight,
Not pay thee.

ROSS 105
And, for an earnest of a greater honour,
He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor:
In which addition, hail, most worthy thane!
For it is thine.

BANQUO What, can the devil speak true?

MACBETH The Thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me
In borrowed robes?

ANGUS 110
Who was the thane lives yet,
But under heavy judgement bears that life
Which he deserves to lose. Whether he was combined
With those of Norway, or did line the rebel
With hidden help and vantage, or that with both
He laboured in his country's wreck, I know not; 115
But treasons capital, confessed and proved,
Have overthrown him.

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 120
Promised no less to them?

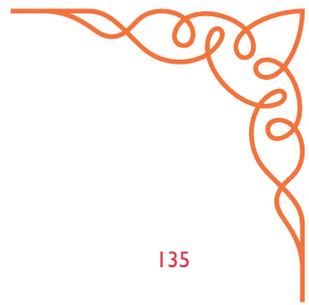
BANQUO That trusted home
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
Besides the Thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange:
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths, 125
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us
In deepest consequence.
Cousins, a word, I pray you.

MACBETH [Aside] Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme – I thank you, gentlemen – 130

117–18 Glamis ... the greatest is behind: I am already Thane of Glamis and Thane of Cawdor, so two out of three prophecies have already come true – I'm more than halfway there.

128–30 Two truths are told ... the imperial theme: Macbeth sees the titles of Thaness of Glamis and Cawdor as the opening scene to a play, with the climax of the play being when Macbeth becomes King of Scotland.





This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
 Why hath it giv'n 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 smothered in surmise, and nothing is
 But what is not.

BANQUO Look, how our partner's rapt.
 MACBETH *[Aside]* If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,
 Without my stir.

BANQUO New honours come upon him,
 Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould
 But with the aid of use.

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
 Are registered where every day I turn
 The leaf to read them. Let us toward the King.

[To BANQUO]

Think upon what hath chanced, and, at more time,
 The interim having weighed it, let us speak
 Our free hearts each to other.

BANQUO Very gladly.
 MACBETH Till then, enough – Come, friends.

[All exit]



133 Earnest of success: A down payment or deposit on his success.

141–43 Shakes so my single state ... But what is not: Macbeth claims that his mind and body are not working in harmony anymore; he cannot function properly because he is not sure if what he is imagining is real or not.



QUESTIONS

- 1 Describe the Witches' appearance from the information in this scene.
- 2 The collective character of the Witches is further developed in this scene. They are presented as deliberately causing chaos, as purposely nasty, malicious, even evil. How? What sorts of deeds have they been doing?

- 
- 3 By what three titles do the Witches greet Macbeth? What does Macbeth find surprising in these greetings?
 - 4 What do the Witches predict for Banquo?
 - 5 How does the news Ross and Angus bring fulfil one of the Witches' predictions?
 - 6 What is going to happen to the current Thane of Cawdor?
 - 7 What does Banquo warn about trusting too much in the Witches' prophecies (lines 121–27)?
 - 8 In line 39, Macbeth says, 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen'. We have heard a similar phrase before in Act 1 Scene 1. What might Shakespeare be trying to suggest by having Macbeth echo part of the Witches' dialogue?
 - 9 How does Shakespeare reinforce our view of the unnaturalness of the Witches in this scene?
 - 10 There are many instances in this scene of the Witches repeating words and phrases. List three or four examples. What do you think Shakespeare's reason for this repetition might be? What might he be trying to do? Is he successful?



- 1 What evidence can you find that suggests that Macbeth is disturbed by the Witches' prophecies? Consider not just what he says but what other characters (such as Banquo) say he does.
- 2 In *Macbeth*, sound effects (as indicated in the stage directions or sometimes in the dialogue) are important. What mood or atmosphere do you think Shakespeare creates in this scene with various sound effects (e.g. thunder, drums)?

Act 1 Scene 4

CHARACTERS

Duncan
Macbeth
Malcolm
Banquo



IN A NUTSHELL

King Duncan is told about the Thane of Cawdor's execution. Macbeth enters and Duncan praises him highly, promising future rewards. Duncan proclaims his eldest son, Malcolm, the next in line for the throne, and announces his intention to stay that night at Macbeth's castle. As Macbeth leaves to make preparations for the king, he reflects that Malcolm (the Prince of Cumberland) is another obstacle preventing him from obtaining the crown.



Forres. The palace.

[Trumpet flourish. DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX and Attendants enter]

DUNCAN Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not
Those in commission yet returned?

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 confessed his treasons, 5
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, 10
As 'twere a careless trifle.

DUNCAN There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust –

[MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS and ANGUS enter]

O worthiest cousin!
The sin of my ingratitude even now 15
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, 20
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, 25
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,



11 **A careless trifle:** A worthless object that is not worth worrying about.

11–12 **There's no art ... in the face:** It is impossible to know what someone is thinking simply by looking at his face.

16–18 **Thou art so far ... to overtake thee:** You have achieved so much in such a short period of time that I can hardly keep up with you to reward you.

18–20 **Would thou hadst ... might have been mine:** I wish you had done less, as then my thanks could have been even more generous than your deeds.



QUESTIONS

- 1 Briefly describe Duncan’s character from the information gained so far.
- 2 Whom does Duncan name as his heir and what is Macbeth’s reaction to this news?



EXTEND

- 1 How do you think the new Thane of Cawdor might compare with the previous one?
- 2 How are lines 11–14 ironic?
- 3 Read once again Macbeth’s **aside** in lines 48–53. Perhaps you have noticed some slight changes in Macbeth’s character. Draw up and complete the table below to show your understanding of how Macbeth has begun to change.

Macbeth’s character in Act I Scenes 2 and 3	Macbeth’s character in Act I Scene 4	How has Macbeth’s LANGUAGE changed?

Introducing dramatic irony

Imagine your friend is making fun of someone and does not know (but you do) that your teacher is standing right behind her! How would you feel? Tense? Like diving across in slow motion and shouting, ‘Nooooo!’? This is what **dramatic irony** is all about. Sometimes while viewing a play, we are placed in the position of knowing more than the characters onstage. For example, we might know that around the corner is someone with a gun, but the characters are unaware and go to walk around the corner. This creates dramatic tension between the characters’ limited knowledge and our greater knowledge.

Sometimes, though, dramatic irony can be harmless or even humorous and we experience mild amusement rather than tension. The television show *The Simpsons* often employs this kind of humorous irony. For example, in the ‘Brother from Another Planet’ episode, we know that Homer has been told to pick up Bart. While he struggles to remember what he has forgotten to do, the family dog, Santa’s Little Helper, makes the barking sound ‘Bart, Bart!’ and Maggie’s burp sounds just like the word ‘Bart’. Meanwhile, the TV screen that Homer is watching flashes the word ‘BART’ for a retiring football player and fans roll out a banner with the words ‘We’ll never forget you, Bart’ written in huge letters. Finally, in response to all of these reminders, Homer shouts, ‘I can’t think with all this noise!’ Here, the fact that we know what Homer is supposed to be remembering creates comedy.



V

Art: Are

Hie thee hither: Get yourself over here now!

Mortal: Will die (as opposed to immortal)

Gall: Bile; a bitter liquid produced by the gall bladder

Beguile: Fool or charm

Inverness. Macbeth's castle.

[LADY MACBETH enters, reading a letter from MACBETH]

LADY MACBETH *'They met me in the day of success, and I have learned by the perfectest report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the King, who all-hailed me "Thane of Cawdor"; by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time, with "Hail, king that shalt be!" This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.' Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be* 5

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; 10

Art not without ambition, but without The illness should attend it; what thou wouldst highly, That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false, 15

And yet wouldst wrongly win; thou'dst 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, 20

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, 25

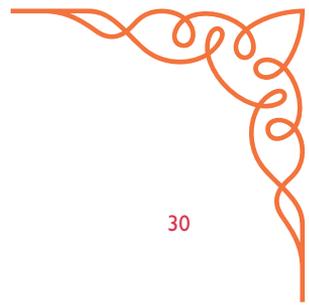
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem To have thee crowned withal –

[A MESSENGER enters]

What is your tidings?



- 5 **Missives:** Messengers (though it usually means letters or messages).
- 24–27 **Chastise with ... have thee crowned withal:** Lady Macbeth claims that her powerful words will overcome any obstacle that threatens to stand between Macbeth and the crown (the 'golden round'), which she believes is the crown that has been destined for them.



MESSENGER The King comes here tonight.
 LADY MACBETH Thou'rt mad to say it:
 Is not thy master with him, who, were't so,
 Would have informed for preparation?
 MESSENGER So please you, it is true: our thane is coming.
 One of my fellows had the speed of him,
 Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more
 Than would make up his message.
 LADY MACBETH Give him tending;
 He brings great news.

30

[MESSENGER exits]

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 th' access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
 Th' effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
 And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring 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!'

35

40

45

50

[MACBETH enters]

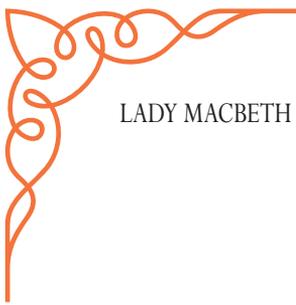
Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!
 Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
 Thy letters have transported me beyond
 This ignorant present, and I feel now
 The future in the instant.
 MACBETH My dearest love,
 Duncan comes here tonight.
 LADY MACBETH And when goes hence?
 MACBETH Tomorrow, as he purposes.

55



42-44 **That no compunctious visitings ... th' effect and it:** Lady Macbeth does not want natural feelings of conscience or compassion to stop her foul plans from being fulfilled.

48 **Pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell:** Lady Macbeth asks that 'thick night' make itself dark, by covering itself in the blackest smoke from hell. This way, not even God Himself will be able to see her or stop her.



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, 60
 Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
 Your hand, your tongue; look like th' 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, 65
 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. 70

[Both exit]



64–67 You shall put ... sway and masterdom: Let me look after tonight's important business, and we will have absolute royal power for the rest of our lives.



QUESTIONS

- 1 In lines 1–27, Shakespeare introduces us to Lady Macbeth. What sort of character is she? Include two or three quotes from the text to support your response.
- 2 What do you think she might mean when she asks the spirits to 'unsex' her?
- 3 When Macbeth arrives, who does most of the talking? What does this tell us about the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth?
- 4 Find a quote that suggests Macbeth is not skilled at hiding his emotions.
- 5 Can you find any hint in the play so far that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have discussed murdering Duncan at some earlier time?
- 6 Find some evidence from this scene that shows a contrast between Macbeth and his wife.



EXTEND

- 1 What clue do we have that Lady Macbeth is already some way through Macbeth's letter? Why might Shakespeare have chosen to start the scene at this point?
- 2 Read lines 31–54 again. Has your opinion of Lady Macbeth changed since answering Question 1 (see general questions above)? What words or phrases make her seem particularly evil?
- 3 Many readers and viewers believe Macbeth and Lady Macbeth love each other passionately. Can you find any evidence to support this view?



Roman Polanski: Lady Macbeth's 'unsex me here'



View Lady Macbeth's speech in Polanski's film.

- 1 How does Polanski use cinematography (e.g. camera angles, distances, framing etc.) in this scene to make Lady Macbeth appear powerful and Duncan appear vulnerable?

Geoffrey Wright: Lady Macbeth's 'unsex me here'

Now watch how this same speech is presented in Wright's film.

- 2 What film techniques does Wright employ to make Lady Macbeth's speech seem sinister?
- 3 How does Lady Macbeth's speech end in dramatic irony?
- 4 To what genre (type or style) of film do you think this scene is alluding?

Note: The Wright film (2006) is rated MA and is not suitable to show in its entirety.

Comparison

- 5 Which director's interpretation do you find more effective? Why?

Act 1 Scene 6

CHARACTERS

Duncan
Lady Macbeth
Banquo

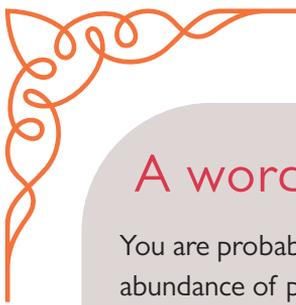


IN A NUTSHELL

King Duncan and his men arrive at Macbeth's castle, commenting on the pleasant surroundings. Lady Macbeth courteously welcomes them and takes them inside.

Before you read

- Banquo's initial speech contains a great deal of challenging vocabulary. There is no real need to understand every word. For example, 'jutting', 'frieze', 'buttress' and 'coign' are terms referring to various features of the castle's architecture, but you don't need to know the specific meaning of each word. The important thing is to realise that Banquo is making a point about the pleasant appearance of the castle: the martlet, a breed of bird that usually builds its nest around churches, is nesting around Macbeth's castle, portraying an image of peace and safety. This is ironic, considering the plan that has been hatched.



A word about soliloquies and asides

You are probably familiar with television soap operas, with their predictable plots and abundance of plastic surgery. You might have noticed that the characters on these sorts of shows sometimes express their thoughts aloud to themselves when nobody else is around! Actually, this is not as strange as it sounds – Shakespeare had his characters doing this hundreds of years ago and it is known as a **soliloquy** (so-li-lo-kwee).

A soliloquy involves a character talking when he or she is alone. Shakespeare uses this device to help the audience understand the mind of the character who is speaking and their motives for what they are doing or planning to do. We talk to ourselves all the time as we are thinking (try thinking without language!) and soliloquies reflect this.

The device was used by some playwrights before Shakespeare but he is generally considered the first writer to genuinely capture the inner workings of the human mind. Soliloquies are an essential theatrical device in assisting the audience to understand characters' motives. In the following scene, Act I Scene 7, Macbeth speaks his mind, weighing up the possible consequences of murdering King Duncan. No-one else is around and we as an audience catch a glimpse of his confusion and sense of moral dilemma.

Similar in some ways to soliloquies, **asides** (indicated by [*aside*] in the stage directions) also occur frequently in *Macbeth*. Whereas soliloquies are quite lengthy and are delivered with no-one else on the stage, asides are usually quite brief and allow a character to speak his or her thoughts, without the other characters onstage being aware that he or she is speaking. The first of many asides in *Macbeth* occurs in Act I Scene 3, when Macbeth reveals to the audience that his mind is full of 'horrible imaginings ... [of] murder'.

While Macbeth and Lady Macbeth hide their 'black and deep desires' from the other characters, Shakespeare often has his two central characters reveal their 'horrible imaginings' to the audience. He uses many soliloquies and asides to emphasise this deception, thus enhancing the dramatic irony.

Many of the most famous lines in the play are found in Macbeth's soliloquies. All the major soliloquies from this point on are delivered by Macbeth, differentiating him from the other characters and increasing the audience's sympathy for him.

Act 1 Scene 7



CHARACTERS

Macbeth
Lady Macbeth



IN A NUTSHELL

Macbeth leaves the banquet to wrestle with his conscience. When Lady Macbeth enters, he tells her that they should not kill Duncan. Lady Macbeth criticises his lack of courage and quickly persuades her husband with a plan to murder the King while he sleeps.

Before you read

- Several sections of Macbeth's soliloquy are quite challenging to pronounce. They contain jagged rhythms and tongue-twisting **alliterations** (repetition of a consonant sound, as in 'surcease success'). You might like to consider how to perform these difficult sections: would you say them quickly to show Macbeth's nervousness? Or slowly and deliberately with many pauses to portray a sense of doubt or equivocation?
- On the next page we have reproduced Macbeth's soliloquy from Act 1 Scene 7, lines 1–28. It has been annotated, which means that we have added notes to it that explain various aspects of Shakespeare's language and ideas. Carefully read the soliloquy and the annotations, then read the scene as a whole. The **Text notes** for this soliloquy appear below.



- 3 **Trammel up the consequence:** Macbeth is hoping that the murder's destructive consequences might be caught, like a fish in a net, and thus be removed simply and neatly.
- 3–4 **Catch / With his surcease success:** With no consequences, Duncan's death (surcease) could be immediately followed by Macbeth being crowned as king (success).
- 6–7 **Upon this bank ... life to come:** This metaphor could refer to Macbeth resting on a sandbank (or riverbank) while on his journey, or to Macbeth waiting in the King's courtroom (bank = bench; shoal = school). Either way, Macbeth is worried about risking not just his life *now* but the afterlife as well: killing a king was punishable by death in Elizabethan times and would also rule out the possibility of going to heaven.
- 16–17 **This Duncan ... so meek:** King Duncan has used his powers so humbly; he is a virtuous king.
- 18 **Clear:** Blameless, without fault.
- 20 **Taking-off:** Murder.
- 22 **Striding the blast:** Riding the wind; also refers to the speed at which the consequences will arrive.
- 23 **The sightless couriers of the air:** Invisible messengers, or the wind.
- 27–28 **Vaulting ambition ... o'erleaps itself:** Like someone who tries too enthusiastically to leap onto a horse's back but ends up leaping over the other side of it, Macbeth is afraid that his ambition will lead to his own downfall.

MACBETH

Note the abundant use of words, phrases and images relating to TIME in this soliloquy: then, now, time, when, the life to come ...

Macbeth considers that Duncan should trust him for two reasons: first, he is the King's subject, even related to him; second, as the host, he should be protecting the King at his house, not stabbing him!

Shakespeare also employs equine imagery (relating to horses) in this speech. Consider what an image of a galloping and vaulting horse might indicate about Macbeth's character (think especially about his ambition, which is perhaps the one thing in his character that will motivate him to perform 'the horrid deed').

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If th' assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success, that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all, here; 5
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgement here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th' inventor; this even-handed justice 10
Commends th' ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door, 15
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off; 20
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur 25
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th' other –

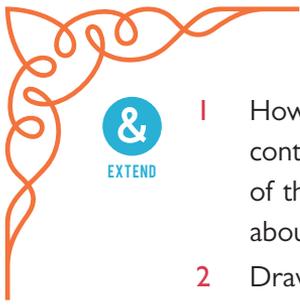
Note the difficulty Macbeth is having in calling the murder of Duncan what it is. He begins by referring to 'it' and later calls it 'the deed'. Interestingly, the word 'assassination' is used for the first time in literature in this play, a word perhaps invented by Shakespeare.

Macbeth includes two images of the consequences of his deed returning to punish him: being killed by someone he has taught how to kill, and drinking from a cup that contains poison that was meant for somebody else.

Note the contrast here between the evil nature of the assassination and the innocent character of Duncan. Shakespeare includes numerous images of innocence to reinforce this point.



Supped: Eaten supper
Mettle: Courage or spirit
Clamour: Noise or outcry



- 1 How does Macbeth's image of 'heaven's cherubim' (the powers of goodness) contrast with Lady Macbeth's image of heaven 'peep[ing] through the blanket of the dark' (Act I Scene 5, line 50)? What do these contrasting images tell us about their characters?
- 2 Draw up and complete the following table.

	Qualities of character at beginning of Act I	Qualities of character at end of Act I	To what extent has this character changed?	Your view of this character at end of Act I
Macbeth				
Lady Macbeth				



By questioning her husband's masculinity, Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to murder Duncan. Can you think of any examples nowadays where people can be persuaded to do things for similar reasons?

Roman Polanski: Before the murder



Discuss the effectiveness of various devices used by Polanski to create tension or suspense in this scene. Consider the camera work, visual symbols and the characters' actions as starting points.

Thinking about masculinity and femininity

The advertising industry creates powerful images of masculinity and femininity. We are told that 'real' (thus desirable) men or women have *this* body shape, drive *that* car or use *those* brands of deodorant. You might like to discuss the power and effect of these types of media images.

Notions of masculinity and femininity are central to *Macbeth* – not the biological concepts of being male or female, but how our society expects men and women to behave. Linked to the concept of the Great Chain of Being (see page 4), masculinity and femininity were, in Jacobean England, viewed as fixed, God-ordained, and more or less biologically determined. Today, however, they are perceived as more fluid social or cultural constructs.

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, it is the qualities of **bravery**, **ambition** and **violence** in the character of Macbeth that are espoused above all others as signs of true manliness. In Act I Scene 7, Lady Macbeth places an enormous question mark over Macbeth's



manhood. In so doing, she is able to motivate him to do what he had already been thinking about: murdering King Duncan.

- Q What masculine qualities do other characters claim Macbeth demonstrates in the play's opening scenes? Refer to Act I Scene 2, lines 16 to 23 (1.1.16–23), and Act I Scene 4, line 54 (1.4.54).
- Q What does Lady Macbeth say about her husband's masculinity in Act I? See 1.5.13–17 and 1.7.49–51.
- Q To what extent do you think Lady Macbeth's questioning of her husband's manhood motivates him to murder Duncan?

We also see that Lady Macbeth's lack of conventional feminine qualities presents a striking contrast to the way she views Macbeth. Early in the play, Lady Macbeth demonstrates what were considered, in Jacobean times, to be masculine qualities: a capacity for violence (1.5.37–47), ambition (1.5.54–55), leadership (1.5.64–65) and courage (1.7.60–61). Even Macbeth judges that his wife, if she were able to have children, would give birth to 'nothing but males' because her character is composed of 'undaunted mettle' (1.7.73–74). In fact, her lack of femininity could be used as further evidence that the natural order of things has been upturned, and that Scotland needs to be cured or restored to a state of order.

As the play progresses, look out for Shakespeare's treatment of masculinity and femininity in the following ways:

- Consider other characters' perceptions of manhood, or what they perceive to be masculine behaviour.
- Note Macbeth's inconsistency in his portrayal of masculine qualities.
- Observe the significant contrast in Lady Macbeth's character between Acts 1 and 5.

Act 2

Act 2 Scene 1

CHARACTERS

Macbeth
Banquo
Fleance



IN A NUTSHELL

Outside in the castle courtyard, Banquo comments on the extraordinary darkness of the night and tries to pray. Macbeth enters and talks uneasily with Banquo. After Banquo and his son Fleance leave, Macbeth experiences a hallucination of a dagger. He sets off to commit the murder.

Before you read

- This scene is one of the play's most memorable. In Macbeth's soliloquy (lines 34–65), he imagines a dagger before his very eyes, and this only moments before he murders King Duncan.
- In the **Before you read** section of Act 1 Scene 7 (see page 47), we have annotated another famous soliloquy of Macbeth's. In other words, we have written notes and comments about various elements of his speech. Take some time to write your own notes and comments for Macbeth's 'Is this a dagger' soliloquy, presented on the next page. Feel free to use lines, colours, boxes etc.
- Some hints or things to consider as you analyse this soliloquy are: What does this hallucination or vision reveal about Macbeth's state of mind? What words are repeated throughout the speech? What effect does this have? How do Shakespeare's stage directions relating to the ringing of a bell contribute to the meaning of the text? What about imagery, such as blood and time? What might Macbeth mean in line 62? There are many other notes you might make.



Repose: Rest
Entreat: Ask or plead
Augment: Add to
Palpable: Touchable, real

Macbeth's soliloquy: 'Is this a dagger ... ?'

See 'Before you read' on the previous page and refer to the example on page 48 for what to do with this soliloquy.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle t'ward 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-oppresèd 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'th' 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 half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and withered murder,
Alarmèd 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.

[MACBETH exits]



Court of Macbeth's castle.

[BANQUO enters with FLEANCE, who carries a torch before him to light the way]

BANQUO How goes the night, boy?
FLEANCE The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.
BANQUO And she goes down at twelve.
FLEANCE I take't, 'tis later, sir.
BANQUO Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heav'n; 5
 Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.
 A heavy summons lies like lead 'pon me,
 And yet I would not sleep – merciful powers,
 Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature
 Gives way to in repose! – Give me my sword – 10

[MACBETH enters, and a Servant with a torch]

 Who's there?
MACBETH A friend.
BANQUO What, sir, not yet at rest? The King's a-bed;
 He hath been in unusual pleasure, and
 Sent forth great largess to your offices. 15
 This diamond he greets your wife withal,
 By th' name of most kind hostess; and shut up
 In measureless content.
MACBETH Being unprepared,
 Our will became the servant to defect,
 Which else should free have wrought.
BANQUO All's well. 20
 I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters.
 To you they have showed some truth.
MACBETH I think not of them;
 Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,
 We would spend it in some words upon that business,
 If you would grant the time.
BANQUO At your kind'st leisure. 25
MACBETH If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,



5–6 **There's husbandry in heav'n; / Their candles are all out:** Banquo jokes that the reason there are no stars out is that heaven might be trying to save money. 'Husbandry' relates to being thrifty or economical.

15 **Sent forth great largess to your offices:** King Duncan has given generous tips to Macbeth's servants.

18–20 **Being unprepared ... should free have wrought:** Macbeth claims that they were not expecting a visit from King Duncan, thus their desire to entertain him properly was not fulfilled. He is being overly modest.

26 **Cleave to my consent, when 'tis:** Support me when the time comes.



Alarmed by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace, 55
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, 60
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. 65

[MACBETH exits]



QUESTIONS

- 1 Briefly describe the atmosphere at the start of this scene.
- 2 What 'cursed thoughts' do you think Banquo might want restrained (held back) in himself?
- 3 King Duncan gives Lady Macbeth a diamond and is said to be 'in measureless content'. Why do you think Shakespeare mentions this? What dramatic device is he using?
- 4 Find and quote some evidence from this scene that Macbeth has a very vivid imagination.



EXTEND

- 1 What evidence is there in this scene that Banquo is suspicious of Macbeth?
- 2 The stage directions indicate *[A bell rings]* at the end of the scene. How does this add to the ominous mood or atmosphere? How does Macbeth's final rhyming couplet reinforce this mood?

Geoffrey Wright: 'Is this a dagger ...?'



PRESS PLAY

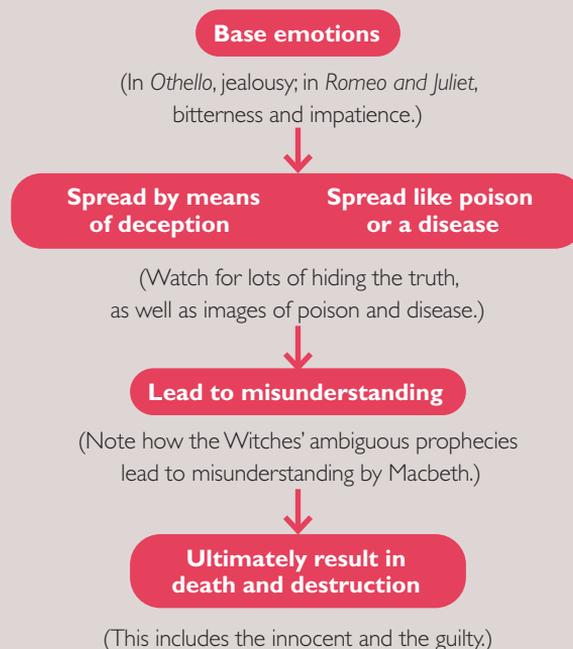
- Watch Macbeth's soliloquy in Wright's 2006 film.
- 1 What filmic elements (e.g. lighting, music, cinematography) does Wright use here to create suspense?
 - 2 How does he portray Macbeth's state of mind?
 - 3 How might you direct the end of this scene? Besides cinematography, discuss specifically a range of lighting and sound devices you might use to create a suspenseful mood. For example, you might consider the use of colour or music.

Note: the Wright film (2006) is rated MA and is not suitable to show in its entirety.

Thinking about characters' fatal flaws

In Shakespeare's tragedies (for a full definition of Shakespearean tragedy, see page 135) such as *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, one very important idea presented is the notion of a character's **personal weakness** leading to ruin. Because the end result is usually death and destruction, some authors call these personal weaknesses **fatal flaws**. They have also been given the label **base emotions** (the lowest or most negative human qualities) and are the opposite of virtues or positive human qualities such as love, patience, compassion and humility. Examples of base emotions or personal weaknesses in Shakespeare's plays are jealousy (in *Othello*) and bitterness and impatience (in *Romeo and Juliet*).

The **structure** of Shakespeare's tragedies (the sequence of events and development of ideas) is similar for *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Typically, a character's fatal flaws spread to others (throughout Scotland in *Macbeth*) by means of deception. They spread like poison or a disease, often lead to misunderstanding and ultimately result in destruction. The following diagram might make this idea clearer.



Look for how Shakespeare communicates these ideas in *Macbeth*. Watch for characters' **personal weaknesses**, for examples of **deception**, for references to **disease** and **poison**, for instances of **misunderstanding**, and for how all of these ultimately result in **tragedy**.



Act 2 Scene 2

CHARACTERS

Lady Macbeth
Macbeth
(Optional: someone to do the knocking)

IN A NUTSHELL



A nervous Lady Macbeth awaits her husband's return. Macbeth enters, clearly disturbed by the murder he has just committed. Lady Macbeth is horrified that he still has the bloody daggers with him, and when he refuses to return them to Duncan's chamber, she goes instead. While she is gone, Macbeth reflects on the consequences of the murder and on his guilt. The scene ends in tension with insistent knocking at the castle gate.

Before you read

- Sound can often be an important theatrical device. In the previous scene, we noticed this with the sounding of the bell. In this scene an owl shrieks, crickets cry and someone knocks loudly and insistently on the castle door, all of which add to the increasing tension. It is essential that whoever does the knocking pays careful attention to the stage directions. Timing is everything ...



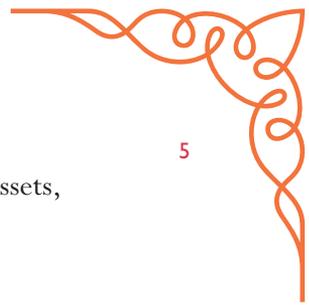
Hark:	Pay attention; listen
Wherefore:	Why
Balm:	Soothing cream or ointment
Grooms:	Male attendants (guards)
Whence:	Where

Court of Macbeth's castle.

[LADY MACBETH enters]

LADY MACBETH That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold;
What hath quenched them hath giv'n me fire – Hark! – Peace!
It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman,

- 
- 3 **The fatal bellman:** In Shakespeare's time, the shrieking of an owl was an evil omen or a bad sign, indicating certain death. When a person was near death in Renaissance England, the bellman had the task of ringing the village bell, as a call for prayer. This bell was also called a 'passing bell', to which the famous English war poet, Wilfred Owen, refers in his poem 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', in the line 'What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?'



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've drugged their possets,
 That death and nature do contend about them,
 Whether they live or die.

5

MACBETH *[Offstage]* Who's there? What, ho!

LADY MACBETH Alack, I am afraid they have awaked,
 And 'tis not done. Th' 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 –

10

[MACBETH enters]

My husband!

MACBETH I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
 Did not you speak?

15

MACBETH When?

LADY MACBETH Now.

MACBETH As I descended?

LADY MACBETH Ay.

MACBETH Hark!
 Who lies i'the second chamber?

LADY MACBETH Donalbain.

MACBETH This is a sorry sight. *[MACBETH looks on his hands]*

20

LADY MACBETH A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH There's one did laugh in sleep, and one cried 'Murder!'
 That they did wake each other. I stood and heard them,
 But they did say their prayers, and addressed them
 Again to sleep.

LADY MACBETH There are two lodged together.

25

MACBETH One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other;
 As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.
 List'ning their fear, I could not say 'Amen',
 When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH Consider it not so deeply.

30

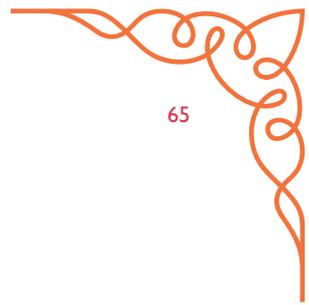
MACBETH But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
 I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
 Stuck in my throat.

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



5–8 The surfeited grooms ... live or die: The guards who are responsible for protecting the King are snoring because they have been drugged by Lady Macbeth, almost to the point of death.

10–11 The attempt and not the deed / Confounds us: Lady Macbeth knows that they will be executed ('confounds' suggests being overthrown or even cursed) for even attempting to kill King Duncan.



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.

65

[Knocking is heard offstage]

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.

70

MACBETH To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself –

[Knocking is heard offstage]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

[Both exit]



68–69 Your constancy / Hath left you unattended: Your sanity has deserted you (you're losing your mind). Constancy refers to the constant or regular orbiting of the moon (lunar), thus to be inconstant is to be mad (hence, lunatic).



QUESTIONS

- 1 How does the murder of King Duncan affect Macbeth? Find two or three quotes to support your answer.
- 2 Why would we expect Macbeth to be unfazed by the sight of blood? Why might he be shocked by this particular blood?
- 3 How does Lady Macbeth's remark, 'a little water clears us of this deed', contrast with Macbeth's view of the consequences of the murder? (Write three or four sentences.)



EXTEND

- 1 Why do you think Shakespeare does not show the murder of Duncan onstage?
- 2 Which two words does Lady Macbeth pun on in the following lines: 'I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal, / For it must seem their guilt'? Explain this play on words.



DISCUSS

In pairs, practise lines 14–20 together. Try delivering the lines in various ways: slowly, quickly, loudly, softly etc. Which way do you think is most effective and why?



Here is an equivocator ...

Equivocation and the Gunpowder Plot

At midnight on 5 November 1605, Guy Fawkes was discovered in the basement vaults underneath the Houses of Parliament, guarding twenty barrels of gunpowder. His intention was to blow up the House of Lords that day at the state opening, killing the King, the two royal princes and most of England's leading aristocracy.

The plot was the work of a small group of disgruntled Catholics, led by Robert Catesby, who resented the fact that the Catholic faith was not tolerated in England. Following the explosion, the group planned to raise a rebellion in the Midlands and kidnap the nine-year-old Princess Elizabeth, whom they would then install as a puppet Catholic monarch. On receiving news of the arrest of Guy Fawkes, the conspirators still tried to inspire the uprising but found little support. They were swiftly hunted down, and those who were not killed on the run were convicted of treason and executed.

Probably the least deserving of execution for the Gunpowder Plot was the Jesuit Catholic Priest, Henry Garnett. He had come to know of the plot through confession. Despite Father Garnett's strong opposition to the scheme, Catholic teachings on confession bound him to secrecy. His problems were compounded when a copy of *A Treatise of Equivocation* by Garnett was found in the possession of one of the conspirators. The doctrine of equivocation asserted that ambiguous or misleading answers could be given to deceive an unjust authority. Under questioning, Father Garnett employed this strategy but failed to escape execution. The idea of equivocation was made infamous by Father Garnett's trial, which was the talk of London in 1606.

In this next scene, the Porter imagines himself porter at the gates of hell, where, among other sinners, he welcomes in an equivocator. This equivocator could deceive other people but could not deceive God. The term 'equivocation' is used one more time in *Macbeth*, towards the end of the play, when Macbeth 'begin[s] / To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend / That lies like truth'. This

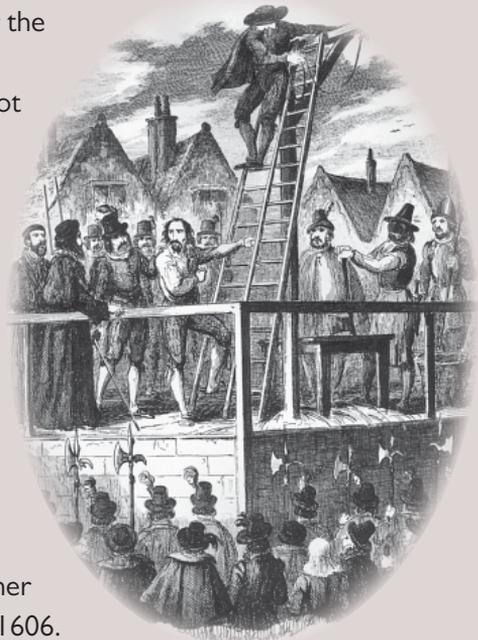


Illustration by George Cruikshank of Guy Fawkes' execution in 1606

expresses Macbeth's feelings of betrayal, as prophecies he considered reliable prove in reality to be equivocations. Numerous variations on the theme of equivocation echo throughout the play, from the opening where the Witches assert that 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair', to Macbeth's final tragic realisation of the real meaning of the Witches' words and his own downfall.

Act 2 Scene 3

CHARACTERS

Macduff
Porter
Macbeth
Lennox
Malcolm
Banquo
Donalbain
Lady Macbeth
All (*perhaps said by the whole class*)

IN A NUTSHELL

The knocking from the previous scene continues, awakening the Porter, who is very drunk. He humorously imagines himself as the porter of hell, letting in all sorts of sinners, and he continues his joking as he lets in Lennox and Macduff. Macbeth greets them and shows them to the King's bedchamber. Lennox and Macbeth are discussing the roughness of the night, when a horrified Macduff returns with the news of the King's murder. Macbeth reveals that he has killed Duncan's two guards, whom he claims are responsible. Fearing for their lives, the King's two sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, decide to flee the country.

Before you read

- The opening of this scene provides a rare example of comedy in this play. The Porter ushers a series of victims into hell: a suicidal farmer, an equivocator (see the History Box on page 64) and an English tailor who is guilty of theft. When he lets in Macduff and Lennox, he delivers a series of jokes about the effects of alcohol on sexual performance.
- Regicide (the killing of a regent or monarch) was the most serious crime imaginable, both in medieval Scotland and in Shakespeare's England, so all characters onstage are likely to be horrified. Of course, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth already know about the murder. They could be seen as acting for the sake of the other characters, but we know the murder has already disturbed Macbeth, so some anger and sorrow could be seen as genuine.

- All productions seem to assume that Lady Macbeth faints after line 112: 'Help me hence, ho!' Most directors interpret her faint as being disingenuous (feigned or put on), perhaps a ploy to distract attention from Macbeth. See what you think.



Beelzebub:	The devil
Treason:	Disloyalty to one's country or its ruler
Anon:	Soon
Lechery:	Lustful behaviour (sleeping around)
Lamenting:	Sounds of sorrow
Gorgon:	A female monster from Greek mythology
Temperate:	Mild or restrained

Court of Macbeth's castle.

[Knocking is heard offstage. A PORTER enters]

PORTER Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key.

[Knocking ...]

Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i'the name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer, that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty. Come in time! Have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat for't.

5

[Knocking ...]

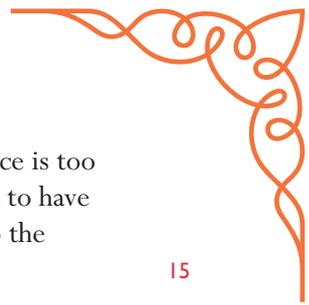
Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator.

[Knocking ...]

Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose. Come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose.

10

-
- 3 **I'the name of Beelzebub:** A medieval curse. The Devil is sometimes called Beelzebub, although technically Beelzebub is a prince of demons.
- 5 **Have napkins enow about you:** I hope you have lots of handkerchiefs with you (referring to the heat of hell that will cause them to sweat a great deal).
- 11 **Stealing out of a French hose:** The tailor lied about how much expensive material he used to make trousers.
- 12 **Roast your goose:** Literally, relating to a tailor heating up his smoothing iron (which had a handle shaped like a goose's neck); metaphorically, relating to the idea of a person about to be ruined or condemned in hell.



[Knocking ...]

Knock, knock; never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further. I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.

15

[Knocking ...]

Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter.

[The PORTER opens the gate, allowing MACDUFF and LENNOX to enter]

MACDUFF Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,
That you do lie so late?

PORTER 'Faith sir, we were carousing till the second cock; and drink,
sir, is a great provoker of three things.

20

MACDUFF What three things does drink especially provoke?

PORTER Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir, it provokes,
and unprovokes: it provokes the desire, but it takes away the
performance. Therefore, much drink may be said to be an
equivocator with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets
him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him, and disheartens
him; makes him stand to, and not stand to; in conclusion,
equivocates him in a sleep, and, giving him the lie, leaves him.

25

MACDUFF I believe drink gave thee the lie last night.

PORTER That it did, sir, i'the very throat on me, but I requited him for
his lie; and, I think, being too strong for him, though he took
up my legs sometime, yet I made a shift to cast him.

30

MACDUFF Is thy master stirring?

[MACBETH enters]

Our knocking has awaked him; here he comes.

LENNOX Good morrow, noble sir.

MACBETH Good morrow, both.

35

MACDUFF Is the King stirring, worthy thane?

MACBETH Not yet.

MACDUFF He did command me to call timely on him:
I have almost slipped the hour.

MACBETH I'll bring you to him.

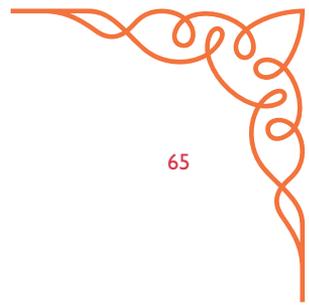


14–15 **Some of all professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire:** The Porter suggests that all sorts of people think they are on a pleasant path (primroses are flowers), but are really going straight to hell.

19 **Carousing till the second cock:** Partying until 3 a.m. The Porter also rudely puns on the word 'cock'.

22 **Nose-painting:** Turning the nose red from excessive alcohol.

30–32 **That it did ... a shift to cast him:** It sure did, sir, right in my throat. But I paid drink back: to prove I was stronger, just when it was going to throw me down, I threw it up!



[MACBETH and LENNOX exit together]

Awake, awake! 65

Ring the alarum bell. Murder and treason!
 Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! Awake!
 Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
 And look on death itself! Up, up, and see
 The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo! 70
 As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites
 To countenance this horror! Ring the bell!

[An alarm bell rings, after which LADY MACBETH enters]

LADY MACBETH What's the business,
 That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
 The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak! 75

MACDUFF O gentle lady,
 'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak;
 The repetition, in a woman's ear,
 Would murder as it fell.

[BANQUO enters]

O Banquo, Banquo,
 Our royal master's murdered!

LADY MACBETH Woe, alas! 80
 What, in our house?

BANQUO Too cruel anywhere.
 Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,
 And say it is not so.

[MACBETH and LENNOX re-enter, with ROSS]

MACBETH Had I but died an hour before this chance,
 I had lived a blessèd time, for, from this instant, 85
 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.

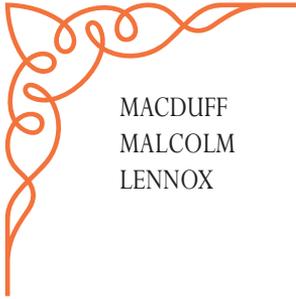
[MALCOLM and DONALBAIN enter]

DONALBAIN What is amiss? 90

MACBETH You are, and do not know't:
 The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood
 Is stopped; the very source of it is stopped.



88–89 The wine of life is drawn ... vault to brag of: Yet another metaphor describing King Duncan: Macbeth suggests that Duncan's removal from the world is like the best wine being removed from a bottle so that all that is left is the dregs.



MACDUFF Your royal father's murdered.

MALCOLM O, by whom?

LENNOX Those of his chamber, as it seemed, had done't:
 Their hands and faces were all badged with blood; 95
 So were their daggers, which unwiped we found
 Upon their pillows. They stared, and were distracted;
 No man's life was to be trusted with them.

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

MACDUFF Wherefore did you so? 100

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, 105
 And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature
 For ruin's wasteful entrance; there, the murderers,
 Steeped in the colours of their trade, their daggers
 Unmannerly breeched with gore. Who could refrain,
 That had a heart to love, and in that heart 110
 Courage to make's love known?

LADY MACBETH Help me hence, ho!

MACDUFF Look to the lady.

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, 115
 May rush, and seize us? Let's away;
 Our tears are not yet brewed.

MALCOLM [*Aside to DONALBAIN*] Nor our strong sorrow
 Upon the foot of motion.

BANQUO Look to the lady!

[*LADY MACBETH is carried out*]

And when we have our naked frailties hid,
 That suffer in exposure, let us meet, 120
 And question this most bloody piece of work,

114–16 **What should be spoken here ... rush, and seize us:** An auger-hole is a very small hole made by a carpenter's tool. Donalbain questions what he and his brother, Malcolm, could possibly say, and fears that spies or murderers could be hiding in the smallest of places.

119–20 **And when we have ... suffer in exposure:** This phrase can be understood in two ways: first, everyone has been woken from sleep, thus they do not have many clothes on and are cold; second, everyone's shock and distress are exposed and they are suffering.





6 Macduff is reluctant to tell Lady Macbeth about the murder, saying, ‘O gentle lady, / ’Tis not for you to hear what I can speak’. How is this ironic?



1 Why do you think Shakespeare includes the comical character of the Porter at the beginning of this scene? Consider the mood of the previous scene in your answer.

2 Choose two of the following literary devices and explain how Shakespeare uses each to show Macduff’s horror at finding Duncan’s body. Create a table similar to the one below for your notes.

Repetition of words and phrases ('horror')	
Emotive language	
Punctuation and short sentences	
Horrific imagery (including metaphors and similes)	

Roman Polanski: the morning after the murder



View Act 2 Scene 3 in Polanski’s film (from after the Porter leaves until Malcolm and Donalbain flee).

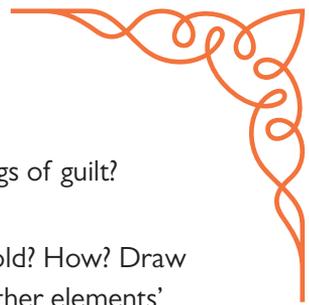
- 1 How does the actor playing Macbeth convey a sense of nervous tension?
- 2 What is the colour of the light on Macbeth as he talks to Lennox? What do you think Polanski is conveying by this? What other colours might Polanski have used and why?

Geoffrey Wright: the morning after the murder

Now watch the equivalent scene in Wright’s film.

- 3 Do you think the doorbell is an adequate substitute for the ‘knocking’ in the play? Why or why not?
- 4 How does the cinematography (composition, camera angles, camera movement etc.) capture the confusion when the household hears of Duncan’s murder?
- 5 Most interpretations present Lady Macbeth’s fainting as covering for (or drawing attention away from) Macbeth. Do you think Wright interprets it this way?

Note: the Wright film (2006) is rated MA and is not suitable to show in its entirety.



Comparison

- 6 Which director do you think better conveys Macbeth's feelings of guilt? In what ways?
- 7 Which director better captures the confusion of the household? How? Draw up a table like the one below to consider your response. ('Other elements' could include acting elements such as blocking, facial expression, tone of voice etc.)

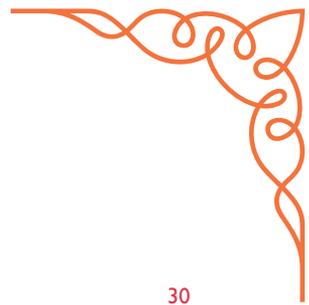
Technique to convey confusion	Polanski	Wright
Music		
Cinematography		
Lighting		
Other elements		

Act 2 Scene 4

CHARACTERS	IN A NUTSHELL
Ross Macduff Old Man	<i>Ross and an Old Man discuss the various unnatural events that have taken place. They are joined by Macduff, who brings the news that Macbeth is to be the new King of Scotland.</i>

Before you read

- In one of his speeches, Ross describes a falcon being killed by a mousing owl. A falcon is a far more powerful bird than a mousing owl, and Shakespeare's audience would have also believed that it had a higher place in the Great Chain of Being (see Jacobean England, pages 3–5). This image illustrates that the natural order of things has been thrown into chaos.



Are stol'n away and fled, which puts upon them
Suspicion of the deed.

ROSS 'Gainst nature still!
Thrifless ambition, that wilt ravin up
Thine own life's means! Then 'tis most like
The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth. 30

MACDUFF He is already named, and gone to Scone
To be invested.

ROSS Where is Duncan's body?
MACDUFF Carried to Colmekill,
The sacred storehouse of his predecessors,
And guardian of their bones.

ROSS Will you to Scone? 35
MACDUFF No, cousin, I'll to Fife.
ROSS Well, I will thither.
MACDUFF Well, may you see things well done there. Adieu,
Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

ROSS Farewell, father.
OLD MAN God's benison go with you, and with those 40
That would make good of bad, and friends of foes!

[All exit]



-
- 28–29 **Thrifless ambition, that will ravin up / Thine own life's means:** Careless ambition greedily swallows up their source of life or income (the throne).
- 33–34 **Colmekill / The sacred storehouse of his predecessors:** Duncan's body has been taken to Colmekill (Iona), an island off the coast of Scotland where early Scottish kings were buried in sacred tombs.
- 36 **I'll to Fife:** As Thane of Fife, Macduff plans to return to his castle.
- 36 **I will thither:** I will go there – Ross plans to go to Scone for the coronation.
- 38 **Lest our old robes sit easier than our new:** Macduff uses a metaphor of a new robe not fitting as well as the old robe, to suggest that the situation in Scotland is now even worse than it was previously.



QUESTIONS

- 1 List two unnatural events that Ross and the Old Man report.
- 2 What news does Macduff bring about Macbeth?



EXTEND

- 1 What evidence can you find to suggest that Macduff is suspicious of Macbeth?
- 2 How might what happens to the falcon be a metaphor for what is happening politically in Scotland?



More imagery: clothing and darkness

In addition to many images of blood, Shakespeare combines two images in Act 2 Scene 4 to convey a sense of chaos or disorder: references to poorly fitting clothes, and poetic descriptions of light and darkness.

Images of poorly fitting clothes

Look up the following textual references and answer the questions. For simplicity, we use the abbreviated form of Act, Scene and line numbers: e.g. Act 1 Scene 3, line 109 is written as 1.3.109.

- Q (1.3.109–110, and 1.3.145–147) When King Duncan declares Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor, what might Shakespeare be suggesting by comparing this new position to Macbeth wearing ‘borrowed robes’ or ‘strange garments’?
- Q (1.7.32–39) How does Shakespeare link Macbeth’s act of deception with wearing poorly fitting clothes?
- Q (2.4.37–38) After the murder of King Duncan, how do Macduff’s references to ‘old robes’ and ‘new [robes]’ relate to Macbeth?

Watch out for more images of ill-fitting clothes towards the end of the play (5.2.15–16 and 5.2.20–22), when various comments about clothes by the Scottish lords reinforce the notion of disorder in Scotland, a state of chaos that stems directly from Macbeth.

Images of light and darkness

Shakespeare frequently draws our attention to the conflict between good and evil by means of potent contrasts between light and darkness.

- Q (Act 1 Scene 4) How does Shakespeare emphasise the difference between King Duncan (lines 41–42) and Macbeth (lines 50–51) using images of light and darkness?
- Q Shakespeare’s Witches are effectively associated with darkness (1.3.125; 4.1.48). How does their presence in the play contribute to the focus on the conflict between good and evil?
- Q In Act 2, the murders of King Duncan and later Banquo occur in the night during times of unnatural darkness (2.1.1–7; 2.2.14–20; 2.3.46–56). How does this detail reinforce the ‘horror’ of Macbeth’s deeds?

Lady Macbeth calls upon the powers of ‘thick night’ to assist her with the murder of King Duncan (1.5.47–51); however, by the end of the play she descends into madness and possibly suicide. Keep a lookout for how she is constantly seen at night, sleepwalking and carrying a lighted candle (Act 5 Scene 1).

Finally, look for how the darkness of Macbeth’s ‘deed of dreadful note’ soon contaminates all of Scotland, not just metaphorically but literally (see 2.4.1–10 and 4.3.240).



Will you to Scone?

The story of the Stone of Scone

Scone (pronounced *skoon*) has an important place in Scottish history. It was the site where an ancient king of the Picts proclaimed the Christian faith in Scotland, and the first Scottish Council on record met there in 906 AD. Scone was also the site where the medieval kings of Scotland were crowned. Central to the coronation ceremony was the Stone of Scone, a rectangular block of sandstone weighing 152 kg, which was believed to be used as a pillow by Jacob in the Old Testament (Genesis 28).

The Stone, then called the Stone of Destiny, was brought over from Ireland, where it had been used in the coronation ceremonies of Irish kings. The first King of Scots, Kenneth MacAlpin, was crowned seated on the stone in 847 AD, and subsequent Scottish kings, including the historical Macbeth, were also crowned seated on the stone until late in the thirteenth century.

In 1296 the English King Edward I defeated a Scottish army and the Stone was taken to England and fitted into a wooden chair in Westminster Abbey. From that time, English monarchs and, later, British monarchs were crowned seated on this chair.

On Christmas Eve 1950, four Scottish students stole the Stone from Westminster Abbey and, after weeks on the run, managed to smuggle the Stone across the Scottish border, where it remained hidden for a few months. In 1996, the British Government returned the Stone to Scotland, where it is now on display in Edinburgh Castle. The stone will be transported back to Westminster Abbey for the crowning of the next British monarch.



The Coronation Chair and the Stone of Scone

Act 3

Act 3 Scene 1

CHARACTERS

Macbeth
Banquo
1ST Murderer
2ND Murderer
Lady Macbeth
Servant



IN A NUTSHELL

Banquo privately expresses his suspicions of Macbeth and his hopes for his own descendants. Macbeth tells him about the feast to be held that evening and they discuss Banquo's plans to ride that afternoon. When alone, Macbeth reflects on his fear of Banquo, then persuades two Murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance.

Before you read

- Banquo and Macbeth are suspicious of each other, so their conversation at the start of this scene is tense.

V

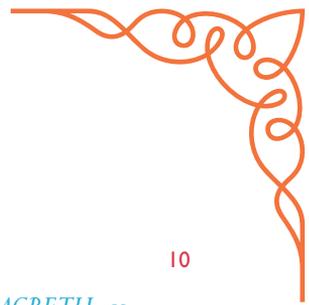
Indissoluble:	Permanent
Posterity:	Future generations
Twain:	Two
Parricide:	Murder of a parent or close relative
Valour:	Bravery, courage
Predominant:	Of the highest importance
Clept:	Called
Avouch:	To confirm or guarantee that something is true

Forres: the palace.

[BANQUO enters, alone]

BANQUO Thou hast it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promised, and I fear
Thou play'st most foully for't; yet it was said
It should not stand in thy posterity,
But that myself should be the root and father

5



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.

10

[A trumpet call for formal entrances is sounded. MACBETH, as king, and LADY MACBETH, as queen, enter with LENNOX, ROSS, Lords, Ladies and Attendants]

MACBETH Here's our chief guest.

LADY MACBETH If he had been forgotten,
 It had been as a gap in our great feast,
 And all-thing unbecoming.

MACBETH Tonight we hold a solemn supper, sir,
 And I'll request your presence.

BANQUO Let your highness
 Command upon me, to the which my duties
 Are with a most indissoluble tie
 For ever knit.

15

MACBETH Ride you this afternoon?

BANQUO Ay, my good lord.

MACBETH We should have else desired your good advice,
 Which still hath been both grave and prosperous,
 In this day's council, but we'll take tomorrow.
 Is't far you ride?

20

BANQUO As far, my lord, as will fill up the time
 'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,
 I must become a borrower of the night
 For a dark hour or twain.

25

MACBETH Fail not our feast.

BANQUO My lord, I will not.

MACBETH We hear our bloody cousins are bestowed
 In England and in Ireland, not confessing
 Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers
 With strange invention – but of that tomorrow,
 When therewithal we shall have cause of state
 Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse: adieu,
 Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?

30

BANQUO Ay, my good lord; our time does call upon us.

35



6–10 If there come truth from them ... set me up in hope: Banquo asks Macbeth if the Witches are telling the truth (after all, their predictions are coming true for Macbeth, so he wonders why he cannot live in the hope of their prophecies being fulfilled for himself).

13 All-thing unbecoming: Completely unacceptable (to forget to invite Banquo to the banquet).

33–34 When therewithal we shall have cause of state / Craving us jointly: When official royal duties will require us to work together.



MACBETH I wish your horses swift and sure of foot;
And so I do commend you to their backs.
Farewell.

[BANQUO exits]

Let every man be master of his time 40
Till seven at night: to make society
The sweeter welcome, we will keep ourself
Till supper-time alone. While then, God be with you!

[All exit, except for MACBETH and an attendant]

Sirrah, a word with you. Attend those men
Our pleasure? 45

ATTENDANT They are, my lord, without the palace gate.
MACBETH Bring them before us.

[Attendant exits]

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 feared: 'tis much he dares; 50
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, 55
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 hailed him father to a line of kings;
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown, 60
And put a barren sceptre in my grip,
Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding. If it be so,
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;

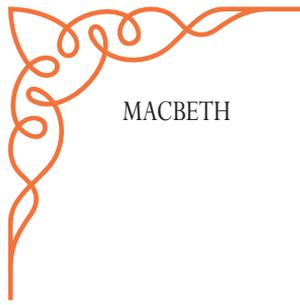


51 **Dauntless temper of his mind:** Macbeth is afraid of Banquo's fearless and balanced state of mind, perhaps because it contrasts with his.

54–56 **Under him ... Mark Antony's was by Caesar:** Macbeth feels inferior to Banquo. The Roman general, Mark Antony, was defeated by Octavius (who later became Caesar Augustus) in a series of battles.

56 **He chid the sisters:** Macbeth remembers that Banquo rebuked (told off) the Witches when they told Macbeth he would be king.

62 **Wrenched with an unlineal hand:** Twisted from his grip by someone outside his own family.



MACBETH Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men,
 As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,
 Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept
 All by the name of dogs. The valued file
 Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle, 95
 The housekeeper, the hunter, every one
 According to the gift which bounteous nature
 Hath in him closed, whereby he does receive
 Particular addition from the bill
 That writes them all alike; and so of men. 100
 Now, if you have a station in the file,
 Not i'the worst rank of manhood, say't,
 And I will put that business in your bosoms,
 Whose execution takes your enemy off,
 Grapples you to the heart and love of us, 105
 Who wear our health but sickly in his life,
 Which in his death were perfect.

2ND MURDERER I'm 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.

1ST MURDERER And I another 110
 So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,
 That I would set my life on any chance,
 To mend it, or be rid on't.

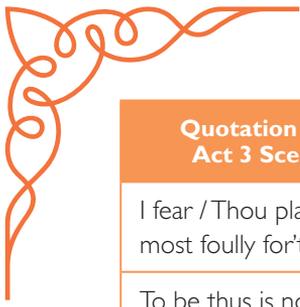
MACBETH Both of you
 Know Banquo was your enemy.

BOTH MURDERERS True, my lord.

MACBETH So is he mine; and in such bloody distance, 115
 That every minute of his being thrusts
 Against my nearest of life; and though I could
 With barefaced power sweep him from my sight
 And bid my will avouch it; yet I must not,
 For certain friends that are both his and mine, 120
 Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall
 Who I myself struck down; and thence it is,
 That I to your assistance do make love,



91–100 Ay, in the catalogue ... and so of men: Macbeth claims that the Murderers can be categorised as men, similar to there being many breeds of dogs of low pedigree that are still considered dogs. Shakespeare's extended comparison suggests that the Murderers are on the lowest rung of humanity, and they need to show some qualities of greatness (say, bravery) in order to prove their manhood.



Quotation from Act 3 Scene 1	Who says this?	What does he mean?
I fear / Thou playd'st most foully for't		
To be thus is nothing, / But to be safely thus		
And mine eternal jewel / Given to the common enemy of man		



- 1 Why do you think Shakespeare suggests that this is Macbeth's second conversation with the Murderers? What dramatic purpose does this serve?
- 2 How is Macbeth's remark 'Your spirits shine through you' ironic?
- 3 Continue to make notes on the various ways that Macbeth's character is undergoing a transformation.

Even more imagery: animals

Shakespeare presents Macbeth's murder of King Duncan as having interrupted the natural order of things. Disorder in Scotland is effectively signalled in the abundance of animal imagery throughout the play.

This idea is presented by Shakespeare in several ways.

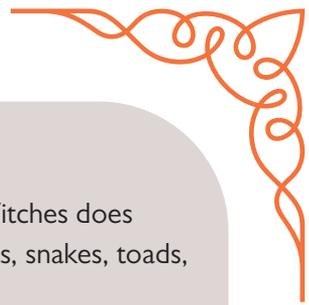
Animals performing unnatural acts

A falcon is killed by a mousing owl (Act 2 Scene 4, lines 10–13), and horses turn wild and eat each other (Act 2 Scene 4, lines 14–18).

Animals representing ominous signs or foreboding symbols

Owls shriek in the night (Act 2 Scene 2, lines 3 and 15), and there is frequent mention of ravens (Act 1 Scene 5, line 35), serpents (Act 1 Scene 5, line 63), bats and crows (Act 3 Scene 2, lines 40 and 50).

- Q How does the frequent mention of these creatures assist in creating an ominous or foreboding atmosphere in the play?
- Q Read Act 3 Scene 2, lines 13 and 36. Macbeth's mind and actions are compared with poisonous snakes and scorpions. What might Shakespeare be conveying to us about Macbeth's character by employing such imagery?



Animals as part of the Witches' spells

Q See Act 1 Scene 3 and Act 4 Scene 1. What sort of picture of the Witches does Shakespeare seek to create by using extensive lists of pigs, rats, newts, snakes, toads, bats, dogs, dragons etc.?

Animals associated with strength and masculinity

- Q Look up Act 1 Scene 2, line 35; Act 3 Scene 4, lines 101–102. List the animals that are associated with strength in these passages.
- Q Based on the discussion of masculinity at the end of Act 1 Scene 7 (page 52), do these images reinforce or contradict the notion of Macbeth's manliness? Explain your answer with evidence from the text.

Animals associated with innocence

- Q See Act 1 Scene 6, lines 4–10, and Act 4 Scene 2, lines 9–11, 56 and 81. What animals are associated with innocence in these passages?
- Q In Act 4 Scene 3, Macbeth is described as a 'hell-kite' that has slaughtered all of Macduff's 'pretty chickens'. How does this contrast in animal imagery contribute to your understanding of Macbeth's character?

Act 3 Scene 2

CHARACTERS

Macbeth
Lady Macbeth
Servant



IN A NUTSHELL

Lady Macbeth is reflecting on her unhappiness when Macbeth enters the room, speaking of his insecurity and tortured mind. They discuss the importance of hiding their anxieties at that evening's banquet. Macbeth hints at his plan to murder Banquo but does not disclose any details.

Before you read

- In this scene, Lady Macbeth lacks the energy of earlier scenes. Note how the murder of King Duncan has noticeably affected her state of mind. Look for other signs of transformation (more specifically, of reversal) in Lady Macbeth's character, as well as a change in her husband.



V

Ere: Before
Affliction: Something that causes suffering
Treason: Betrayal of one's country or its ruler
Jovial: Happy and cheerful
Assailable: Can be overcome

The palace.

[LADY MACBETH and a SERVANT enter]

LADY MACBETH Is Banquo gone from court?
 SERVANT Ay, madam, but returns again tonight.
 LADY MACBETH Say to the King, I would attend his leisure
 For a few words.
 SERVANT Madam, I will.

[SERVANT exits]

LADY MACBETH Nought's had, all's spent,
 Where our desire is got without content; 5
 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
 Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

[MACBETH enters]

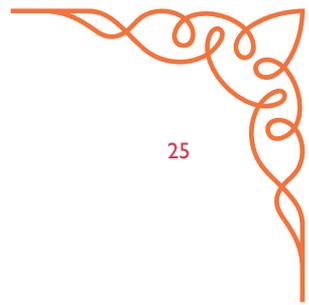
MACBETH How now, my lord! Why do you keep alone,
 Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
 Using those thoughts which should indeed have died 10
 With them they think on? Things without all remedy
 Should be without regard: what's done is done.
 We have scorched the snake, not killed it;
 She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice 15
 Remains in danger of her former tooth.
 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; better be with the dead,
 Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace, 20
 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;

6-7 **'Tis safer ... doubtful joy:** Lady Macbeth considers that she should be joyful now that she has what she wanted, but instead she is living in fear of being found out for her crime.

13 **Scorched:** Slashed or wounded.

16-17 **But let the frame of things disjoint ... eat our meal in fear:** Even if the universe splits in two, if heaven and earth perish, we won't let it interrupt our eating and sleeping.





Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
 Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
 Can touch him further. 25

LADY MACBETH Come on,
 Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;
 Be bright and jovial among your guests tonight.

MACBETH So shall I, love, and so, I pray, be you:
 Let your remembrance apply to Banquo; 30
 Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue:
 Unsafe the while, that we
 Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,
 And make our faces vizards to our hearts,
 Disguising what they are.

LADY MACBETH You must leave this. 35
 MACBETH O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
 Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

LADY MACBETH But in them nature's copy's not eterne.
 MACBETH There's comfort yet: they are assailable;
 Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown 40
 His cloistered 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, 45
 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 50
 Makes wing to th' rooky wood:



-
- 25 **Malice domestic, foreign levy:** Civil war, being invaded by a foreign army.
 - 33 **Must lave our honours in these flattering streams:** To 'lave' means to wash; Macbeth uses this metaphor to suggest that they need to shower Banquo with compliments and thus wash away some of the guilt of their murderous deeds.
 - 38 **But in them nature's copy's not eterne:** Lady Macbeth implies that Banquo and Fleance (the son being 'nature's copy' of the father) are not immortal. This is ironic in light of the Witches' prophecies in Act 4 Scene 1.
 - 40 **Be thou jocund:** Cheer up.
 - 41–43 **Ere to black Hecate's ... yawning peal:** Hecate (goddess of hell) is a personification of darkness or night here; the hum of the 'shard-borne beetle' also relates to darkness or night-time. Thus, this double metaphor suggests that Macbeth's 'deed of dreadful note' (killing Banquo) will be performed before the middle of the night.



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.

[Both exit]



QUESTIONS

Macbeth talks of 'terrible dreams / That shake us nightly'. What earlier idea (expressed in Act 2) do these lines echo?



EXTEND

1 In this scene, Shakespeare further reverses the previous characterisation of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. In your notes, draw up a table similar to the one below to show how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have changed since they were introduced in Act 1.

Device used by Shakespeare	Act 1		Act 3	
	Macbeth	Lady Macbeth	Macbeth	Lady Macbeth
Proportion of dialogue (who does most of the talking?)				
Repeated words				
Images				

2 There is abundant use of **alliteration** and **repetition** in this scene. Find one or two examples of each device. Why, in this particular scene, do you think Shakespeare uses these language devices?

Act 3 Scene 3



CHARACTERS

1ST Murderer
2ND Murderer
3RD Murderer
Banquo
Fleance (*non-speaking role*)



IN A NUTSHELL

The two Murderers from Act 3 Scene 1 are now joined by a third. They ambush Banquo and Fleance, who are riding back to Macbeth's castle. The Murderers succeed in killing Banquo but Fleance escapes.

Before you read

- The lines from 'O treachery!' onwards mark the beginning of the attack. From this point on, the characters' lines should be delivered with more frantic desperation, especially as Banquo and Fleance are fighting for their lives.
- There has been much debate about the mysterious figure of the 3RD Murderer (see page 91). Whoever he is, his presence provides a useful illustration of Macbeth's increasing paranoia.



Hark: Listen
Hence: From here
Treachery: Betrayal

A park near the palace.

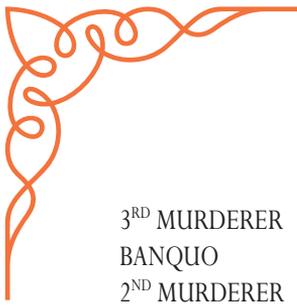
[Three MURDERERS enter]

1ST MURDERER But who did bid thee join with us?
3RD MURDERER Macbeth.
2ND MURDERER He needs not our mistrust, since he delivers
Our offices and what we have to do
To the direction just.
1ST MURDERER Then stand with us.
The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day.

5



2-4 **Since he delivers ... direction just:** He gave us our orders, telling us what to do right down to the smallest detail.



Now spurs the lated traveller apace
To gain the timely inn, and near approaches
The subject of our watch.

3RD MURDERER Hark! I hear horses.

BANQUO [*Offstage*] Give us a light there, ho!

2ND MURDERER Then 'tis he; the rest

That are within the note of expectation 10
Already are i'the court.

1ST MURDERER His horses go about.

3RD MURDERER Almost a mile; but he does usually,
So all men do, from hence to th' palace gate
Make it their walk.

2ND MURDERER A light, a light!

[*BANQUO enters with FLEANCE, who carries a torch*]

3RD MURDERER 'Tis he.

1ST MURDERER Stand to't. 15

BANQUO It will be rain tonight.

1ST MURDERER Let it come down.

[*The MURDERERS attack BANQUO*]

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

[*BANQUO dies and FLEANCE escapes*]

3RD MURDERER Who did strike out the light?

1ST MURDERER Was't not the way?

3RD MURDERER There's but one down; the son is fled. 20

2ND MURDERER We've lost best half of our affair.

1ST MURDERER Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

[*MURDERERS exit*]



6–7 Now spurs ... timely inn: This is the time of day that travellers who are running late spur their horses on to reach a convenient inn (before nightfall).

10 Within the note of expectation: The 2ND Murderer notes that all the others on the official guest list are already inside the castle.



QUESTIONS

- 1 How successful have the Murderers been in carrying out Macbeth's instructions?
- 2 Why do you think Macbeth appointed a third Murderer? What does this tell us about Macbeth?



EXTEND

- 1 Could light be symbolic in this scene? Explain your answer.
- 2 Note that the pace of this scene is faster than previous scenes. What sort of effect does the faster pace have on the atmosphere that Shakespeare might wish to create?



But who did bid thee join with us?

Macbeth as the 3RD Murderer

In this scene, an unidentified 3RD Murderer joins the original two. The presence of this mysterious figure suggests that Macbeth does not trust the two Murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance. In more recent times, many critics have wondered if Macbeth himself could be the 3RD Murderer, and some directors have made use of this interpretation. Those who find the theory persuasive point to the following:

- When the 3RD Murderer is asked, 'who did bid thee join with us?' he answers simply, 'Macbeth'.
- The 3RD Murderer is the first one to hear the horses, which is consistent with Macbeth hearing horses before anyone else at the end of Act 4 Scene 1.
- The 3RD Murderer shows a familiarity with Banquo's habits. When the 1ST Murderer remarks that Banquo's 'horses go about' (meaning the long way round), the 3RD Murderer responds, 'he does usually' then hurriedly corrects himself, 'so do all men'.
- The 3RD Murderer is also the first one to recognise Banquo: 'Tis he'.
- The 3RD Murderer asks, 'Who did strike out the light?' It has been suggested that, for either the 1ST or 2ND Murderer, killing the child, Fleance, was going too far. Perhaps one of these two Murderers struck out the light to assist Fleance's escape.
- Finally, it seems the 3RD Murderer is the one most concerned about Fleance's escape, alerting the others to the fact that 'there's but one down; the son is fled.'

Whether or not Macbeth is the 3RD Murderer, ultimate responsibility rests with him. It has been pointed out that the 1ST Murderer's comment 'The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day' could be a fitting image of the last streaks of Macbeth's moral conscience, before he kills a good friend.

On the other hand, the strongest evidence *against* this theory comes in the next scene, in which one of the Murderers informs Macbeth of Fleance's escape. In an aside, Macbeth responds:

*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 cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears ...*

- Q How might this quote be used as evidence against the 3RD Murderer theory? To what extent is this conclusive proof against the theory?
- Q Can you think of any other evidence against Macbeth being the 3RD Murderer? How convincing do you find the theory?



Act 3 Scene 4

CHARACTERS

Macbeth
Lady Macbeth
1ST Murderer
Ross
Lennox
Lords (*could be read
by Ross and Lennox*)

IN A NUTSHELL



Macbeth holds a banquet for the leading Scottish nobles. One of the Murderers appears at the door to report the news of Banquo's murder and Fleance's escape. When Macbeth rejoins his guests, Banquo's Ghost enters and sits in Macbeth's place, sending Macbeth into a mad panic. Lady Macbeth fails to calm her husband but he recovers when the ghost vanishes. When the ghost returns, Macbeth's mad rage causes Lady Macbeth to dismiss all their guests. Once alone, Macbeth informs his wife of his determination to visit the Witches.

Before you read

- This banquet is an important state occasion for Macbeth. Such banquets were meant to reinforce community values and give a sense of order and harmony. Formal language is fitting for such an occasion. The statement 'you know your own degrees' makes it clear that everyone knows their place at the table. This is also ironic because Macbeth has violated this order and taken King Duncan's 'degree' or place.
- It is also important to note that Macbeth is the only character who can see Banquo's Ghost. Shakespeare's stage directions indicate a ghost entering, though some directors ignore this particular stage direction.



- Nonpareil:** Without equal
Folly: Foolish or stupid behaviour
Infirmity: Usually a physical defect or weakness; here a mental defect
Hence: From here
Avaunt: Be gone
Mirth: Merriment or laughter



There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled
Hath nature that in time will venom breed, 30
No teeth for the present – Get thee gone; tomorrow
We'll hear ourselves again.

[1ST MURDERER exits]

LADY MACBETH My royal lord,
You do not give the cheer. The feast is sold
That is not often vouched, while 'tis a-making,
'Tis giv'n with welcome: to feed were best at home; 35
From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;
Meeting were bare without it.

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

MACBETH Sweet remembrancer!
Now, good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both!

LENNOX May't please your highness sit.
MACBETH Here had we now our country's honour roofed, 40
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? 45
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 Which of you have done this?

LORDS What, my good lord?

MACBETH [To the GHOST OF BANQUO]
Thou canst not say I did it; never shake 50
Thy gory locks at me.

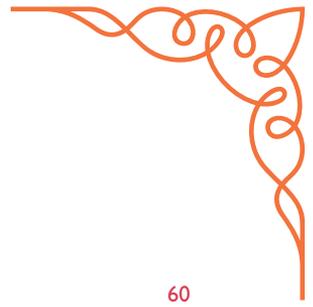
ROSS Gentlemen, rise: his highness is not well.

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 55



32–37 **My royal lord ... bare without it:** Lady Macbeth politely reprimands her husband for failing to play the host. She claims that the guests could have stayed at home if all they wanted was food: the important thing that is missing on this occasion is the ceremony, and its absence adds to the lack of royal atmosphere. She wishes Macbeth would remember to act like a royal host, as part of their plan to pretend all is well.

42–43 **Who may I rather challenge for unkindness / Than pity for mischance:** Macbeth tells his guests that he hopes Banquo's absence, for which he has the royal right to reprimand him, is due to bad manners and not some terrible accident. There is rich irony in this statement.



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! 60
 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, 65
 Authorised 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. 70
 If charnel-houses and our graves must send
 Those that we bury back, our monuments
 Shall be the maws of kites.

[GHOST OF BANQUO exits]

LADY MACBETH What, quite unmanned in folly?
 MACBETH If I stand here, I saw him.
 LADY MACBETH Fie, for shame! 75
 MACBETH Blood hath been shed ere now, i'the olden time,
 Ere human statute purged the gentle weal,
 Ay, and since too, murders have been performed
 Too terrible for the ear. The times have been,
 That, when the brains were out, the man would die, 80
 And there an end, but now they rise again,
 With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
 And push us from our stools. This is more strange
 Than such a murder is.

LADY MACBETH My worthy lord,
 Your noble friends do lack you.

MACBETH I do forget – 85
 Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends:



-
- 60 **O proper stuff:** What absolute nonsense!
 - 71–73 **If charnel-houses ... maws of kites:** If burial vaults and graves send back to us those we bury, then we might as well leave them out for the birds to devour.
 - 76–77 **I'the olden time ... gentle weal:** Many years ago, before civilised society made laws against violence.
 - 81–82 **Now they rise again, / With twenty mortal murders on their crowns:** Macbeth is overcome by the notion that Banquo could have survived twenty gashes to his head when one would have been enough to kill him.



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.

[*The GHOST OF BANQUO re-enters*]

I drink to th' general joy o'the whole table, 90
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.

MACBETH Avaunt and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless; thy blood is cold; 95
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. 100
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The armed 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; 105
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.

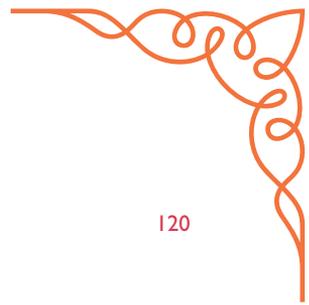
LADY MACBETH You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting, 110
With most admired disorder.

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, 115
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,
When mine is blanced with fear.



101–07 **Approach thou ... baby of a girl:** The Russian bear was the largest known, and the tiger from Hyrcania the most ferocious. Macbeth is claiming that he is manly or brave enough to fight these, but is terrified of Banquo's Ghost. Macbeth asks to be called a little girl's doll, if he really lacks the courage of other men in such combat situations.

113–17 **You make me strange ... Blanched with fear:** Macbeth now starts to doubt his own bravery or masculinity. He is shocked that the colour in his wife's face remains the same at the sight of Banquo's Ghost, when his own cheeks have been drained of all colour.



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.

120

LENNOX Good night, and better health
Attend his majesty!

LADY MACBETH A kind good night to all!

[All exit except MACBETH and LADY MACBETH]

MACBETH It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood.
Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;
Augurs and understood relations have
By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth
The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

125

LADY MACBETH Almost at odds with morning, which is which.

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

LADY MACBETH Did you send to him, sir?

130

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 tomorrow,
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,

135

All causes shall give way. I am in blood
Stepped 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 scanned.

140

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.

145

[Both exit]

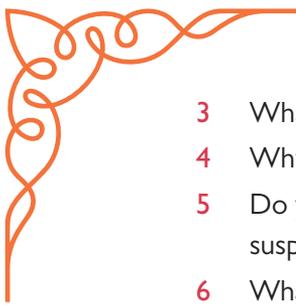


134 **Betimes:** Early (tomorrow morning).

143–44 **My strange and self-abuse / Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:** Macbeth claims that his self-deception or delusion makes him feel like a beginner who lacks practice.



- 1 What is Macbeth's reaction to the news that Fleance has escaped?
- 2 When Banquo's Ghost enters, what tactics does Lady Macbeth employ in an attempt to calm her husband?

- 
- 3 What is ironic about Macbeth's toast to Banquo?
 - 4 Why does Lady Macbeth dismiss their guests?
 - 5 Do you think that by the time the guests leave they would be any more suspicious of Macbeth? Why do you think this?
 - 6 What do you think Macbeth means when he says, 'I am in blood / Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o'er'?



EXTEND

- 1 There are numerous instances of **irony** in this scene. Some examples you might consider:
 - a Why is it ironic that Macbeth describes Banquo as 'safe'?
 - b Macbeth states his intention to 'play the humble host'. How is this ironic?
- 2 What is the particular significance of Banquo's Ghost sitting in Macbeth's place?
- 3 When Macbeth hears of Fleance's escape, he describes himself as 'cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in'. How do the repeated sounds of these words convey Macbeth's feelings?
- 4 How does the structure of the line 'Prithee, see there! Behold! Look! Lo! How say you?' convey Macbeth's emotions and state of mind?
- 5 Shakespeare often leaves it to the dialogue of other characters to reveal Macbeth's actions, rather than to stage directions that are much more prevalent in modern plays. What does the other characters' dialogue reveal about Macbeth in this scene?



DISCUSS

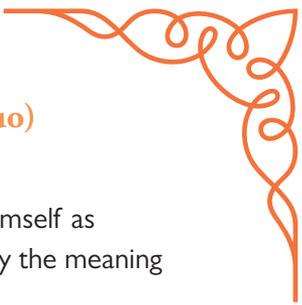
The earliest manuscripts we have of *Macbeth* give directions for Banquo's Ghost to enter. However, many modern scripts and productions avoid this and choose to have Macbeth address a ghost that is invisible to the audience. Which approach do you prefer and why?

Roman Polanski: *The Banquet* (after the murder of Banquo)



PRESS PLAY

- View the banquet scene in Polanski's film.
- 1 Why do you think Polanski chooses to show a bear being set upon by dogs at this point in the film?
 - 2 How does the setting where Macbeth hears of Banquo's murder and Fleance's escape reflect Macbeth's state of mind?
 - 3 What happens to the Murderers? Why do you think Polanski includes this detail?
 - 4 How does Polanski make Banquo's Ghost particularly nightmarish?



Geoffrey Wright: *The Banquet* (after the murder of Banquo)

Now watch the equivalent scene in Wright's film.

- 5 When told of Fleance's escape, Macbeth does not describe himself as 'cabined, cribbed, confined'. Instead, how does Wright convey the meaning of these lines by the composition of this shot?
- 6 How do various elements of the cinematography convey Macbeth's state of mind?
- 7 What devices does Wright employ to convey Macbeth's terror when he sees Banquo's Ghost for the second time?
- 8 What do you think is the significance of one of the men at the table picking up and taking Banquo's earring?

Note: the Wright film (2006) is rated MA and is not suitable to show in its entirety.

Comparison

- 9 Which depiction of Banquo's Ghost (and Macbeth's terror) do you think is more effective? Why?

A word about repetition

What is the best way to learn anything: times tables, a musical instrument, a foreign language or even how to drive a car? The answer is repetition, repetition, repetition. And sometimes the best way for an author to emphasise the central themes of a text is by repetition of key words, phrases and ideas.

Throughout *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's characters make frequent reference to blood, darkness and time (see discussion of imagery on pages 26, 76 and 84–85). The echoing of these words and ideas throughout the entire play fashions a bigger picture of the corrupting effect of Macbeth, who plunges Scotland into a state of chaos. The heaping on of words or images, almost saturating the mind, has an accumulative effect, which we call **cumulation**.

There is also abundant repetition of key words and phrases within various scenes. Shakespeare uses this sort of repetition to assist in making the characters' dialogue memorable, as well as to draw our attention to the significance of the characters' actions and motives.

- Q** Look up the following scenes and construct a table in your workbook like the one on the following page, taking note of Shakespeare's use of repetition in various scenes (1.3.49–51 refers to Act 1 Scene 3, lines 49–51).



Watch out for other examples of repetition that occur later in the play (e.g. in Act 4 Scene 1).

Scene	Repeated words, phrases or ideas	What might Shakespeare be showing us about the characters' actions or motives?
1.3.49–51, 63–65 1.7.1–2; 2.2.10–14 2.2.35–43 2.3.1–15 2.3.91–111; 3.4.123–27 3.4.24–25		

Act 3 Scene 5

CHARACTERS

Hecate
1ST Witch
2ND and 3RD Witches
(non-speaking roles)



IN A NUTSHELL

Hecate (the goddess of hell and witchcraft) is angry with the Witches for not involving her in their plans. She advises them to give Macbeth a false sense of security.

Before you read

- When this scene is included in productions of *Macbeth*, Hecate's lines are performed as a kind of chant, which emphasises the rhyme and rhythm of the shorter four-beat line.



Beldams: Old hags
Saucy: Cheeky or rude
Wrought: Worked
Ere: Before

A heath.

[Thunder. The three WITCHES enter, meeting HECATE]

1 ST WITCH	Why, how now, Hecate! You look angerly.	
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;	5
	And I, the mistress of your charms, The close contriver of all harms, Was never called to bear my part, Or show the glory of our art?	
	And, which is worse, all you have done	10
	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	15
	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'm for the air; this night I'll spend Unto a dismal and a fatal end.	20
	Great business must be wrought ere noon: Upon the corner of the moon There hangs a vap'rous drop profound; I'll catch it ere it come to ground:	25
	And that distilled 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 His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear: And you all know, security Is mortals' chiefest enemy.	30

[Music and a song are heard offstage: 'Come away, come away']



15 Pit of Acheron: Hecate refers to one of the rivers of Hades, the Underworld of Greek mythology. Metaphorically, she could be telling the Witches to meet her in a place of darkness, or she could be asking the Witches to meet her at the gates of hell.

30–33 He shall spurn fate ... chiefest enemy: Hecate wants to instill in Macbeth a false sense of security. This sense of hubris (pride) will ultimately lead to his downfall.



Hark! I am called. My little spirit, see,
Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me.

35

[HECATE exits]

1ST WITCH Come, let's make haste; she'll soon be back again.

[WITCHES exit]



QUESTIONS

- 1 Why is Hecate angry (see particularly lines 3–9)?
- 2 What advice does Hecate give concerning Macbeth (lines 23–33)?



EXTEND

Having read this scene, can you see any indications that the Witches deserve some of the blame for the tragic outcome of the play? You might like to reconsider your answer to this question later.



Come away, come away ...

The original *Macbeth*

Copies of many of Shakespeare's plays appeared in his lifetime in what were known as quarto versions, perhaps the equivalent of a modern-day paperback. Many of these unauthorised versions were recounted by actors who had performed the play, or even by spectators. These quarto versions are often very different from the versions widely performed and read today, but they do provide a useful source for establishing the original (or the performance) text. Unfortunately, no quarto version of *Macbeth* was published in Shakespeare's lifetime.

Macbeth was first published in 1623, by two actors in Shakespeare's company, Henry Condell and John Heminges, in a collection of 36 plays entitled *Mr William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*. Today this book is referred to as the First Folio and is generally considered the most authoritative or trustworthy version of the texts for these 36 plays.

The idea of copyright did not exist in Shakespeare's day; any script was the property of a certain theatre company, which would fiercely guard it as a source of future income. As the script was not the property of the author, the company had the right to make alterations and additions to suit the tastes of their audience.

It is believed that Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* around 1606, and it would have been performed many times after this date, beyond Shakespeare's retirement and death. The company went on to perform another popular play, *The Witch* by Thomas Middleton,

and many critics believe that some of the lines and songs from Middleton's play were added later to *Macbeth*. These critics suggest that Hecate's lines in Act 3 Scene 5 and Act 4 Scene 1 were not written by Shakespeare.

- Q What factors might these critics consider in establishing the authorship of this scene?
- Q Do you think Shakespeare was the author of this scene? Why or why not?
- Q If Shakespeare is not the author of this scene, can you see any reason the company might have had for including it?

Act 3 Scene 6

CHARACTERS

Lennox
Lord



IN A NUTSHELL

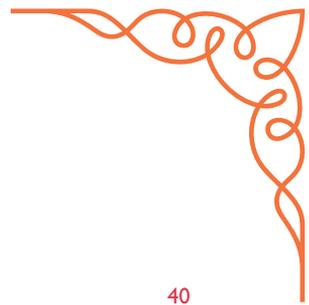
Lennox comments on the strangeness of the recent murders, and questions the official explanations. An unnamed Lord informs him of a force gathering in England under Malcolm's command. Macduff has recently joined this force, and Macbeth is now making preparations for war. Both men wish for a return to peace in Scotland.

Before you read

- In his opening speech, Lennox is particularly sarcastic. He does not for a second believe that Fleance would kill his father, but merely points out the absurdity of Malcolm and Donalbain murdering their own father.
- These two minor characters (Lennox and a Lord) are not clearly defined but they provide information about the political and social state of Scotland. In this way, we could say they provide a **choric** function. The word 'choric' relates to the word 'chorus'. In ancient Greek drama, a chorus would report important news and general developments, and also provide moral commentary on the play.



- Marry:** An exclamation of surprise or anger
- Tyrant:** An unjust or cruel ruler
- Ratify:** To give formal recognition to something



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.

LENNOX Sent he to Macduff?

LORD 40
 He did, and with an absolute 'Sir, not I,'
 The cloudy messenger turns me his back,
 And hums, as who should say, 'You'll rue the time
 That clogs me with this answer.'

LENNOX And that well might

Advise him to a caution, to hold what distance
 His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel 45
 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!

LORD I'll send my prayers with him.

[Both exit]



36–37 Do faithful homage ... pine for now: The Scottish Lord hopes that, with the help of the English forces, Scotland will be restored to its rightful ruler (Malcolm), a restoration that he 'pines for' or craves. By 'receiving free honours' he is perhaps suggesting that he wants a ruler who gained his 'honours' (power) legitimately, not by false means as Macbeth did. Alternatively, he could be expressing his desire for a ruler who gives honours 'freely' (generously), rather than ruling only to further his own interests.

40–43 He did ... this answer: The messenger Macbeth sent to summon Macduff was angry ('cloudy', as in a stormy mood) because Macduff had said 'Sir, not I' – that is, Macduff refused to go to Macbeth. The messenger then turned his back as if to say to Macduff, 'You'll regret giving me this answer'.

43–49 And that well might ... under a hand accursed: Lennox advises Macduff to keep his distance from Macbeth. He wishes that an angel might fly ahead to let the English know that Macduff is on his way, for then Scotland could be restored more quickly to a state of blessing instead of suffering under the curse of Macbeth.



QUESTIONS

- 1 What three recent events does Lennox question Macbeth's explanations for?
- 2 Summarise the important news that the Scottish Lord tells Lennox.
- 3 How does the Lord's saying 'I'll send my prayers with him' contrast to the language used by Macbeth in previous scenes?



EXTEND

The Lord describes his idea of Scotland restored to its former state: 'we may again / Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights, / Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives'. How do these images echo back through the play? (Write three or four sentences.)

Act 4

Act 4 Scene 1

CHARACTERS

Macbeth
1ST Witch
2ND Witch
3RD Witch
Lennox
Hecate
3RD Apparition
2ND Apparition
1ST Apparition

IN A NUTSHELL

The Witches are making a charm when Macbeth arrives and demands to know his future. Three Apparitions (or spirits) make favourable predictions for Macbeth, and when Macbeth further demands to know whether Banquo's descendants will ever rule in Scotland, he is presented with a vision of a line of kings all descending from Banquo himself. The Witches vanish and Lennox arrives with news that Macduff has fled to England. Macbeth determines to murder Macduff's family.

Before you read

- The charm that the Witches make at the beginning of this scene is deliberately designed by Shakespeare to shock his audience. The details of the charm are not very important, so do not worry if you are not familiar with all the references. Included in the charm is a list of body parts of some wild and disgusting creatures, as well as body parts of people such as Jews and Tartars, whom Shakespeare's audience (largely ignorant of these cultures) would have thought exotic and maybe even dangerous.

V

Brinded: Streaked or striped
Harpier: Probably the familiar of one of the Witches (perhaps an owl)
Germens: Seeds
Potent: Powerful
Resolute: Firm in purpose or belief
Pernicious: Wicked, deadly
Firstlings: First thoughts and actions



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

James and the Stuart line

There is a story that *Macbeth* was performed before King James in the summer of 1606. Whether this is true or not, we can be sure that the King would have seen *Macbeth* at some stage because, as the King's Men, Shakespeare's company gave regular performances at the royal court. There are many elements of *Macbeth* that James would surely have found compelling. Not only is the play set in Scotland, where James lived until 1603, but it also explores many political and religious issues of interest to James.

James was believed to be a direct descendant of Banquo, so he would have been pleased with the depiction of his ancestor as a noble and trustworthy general. Macbeth's vision of a line of kings, descending from Banquo, would have delighted James. In this vision, the eighth king holds a glass, or mirror, which shows 'many more' kings, some with 'two-fold balls and treble sceptres'. Here, the two-fold balls refer to the orbs of office – two-fold because, starting with James, the kings of Scotland would also be kings of England. James would certainly have hoped that Macbeth's vision of many more kings descending from James would prove true.

A cavern: in the middle is a boiling cauldron.

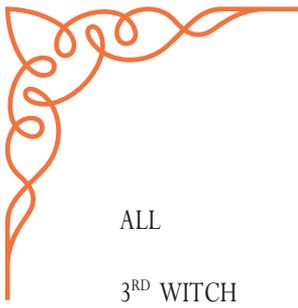
[Thunder. The three WITCHES enter]

1 ST WITCH	Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.	
2 ND WITCH	Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.	
3 RD WITCH	Harpier cries, 'Tis time, 'tis time.'	
1 ST WITCH	Round about the cauldron go; In the poisoned entrails throw.	5
	Toad, that underneath cold stone Days and nights has thirty-one. Sweltered venom sleeping got, Boil thou first i'the charmèd pot.	
ALL	Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.	10
2 ND WITCH	Fillet of a fenny snake, In the cauldron boil and bake; Eye of newt and toe of frog, Wool of bat and tongue of dog,	15
	Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,	



12 **Fenny snake:** A snake that lives in the fens or swamps of Scotland.

16 **Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting:** Tongue (forked) of a snake and the sting of a small lizard.



Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
 For a charm of powerful trouble,
 Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL Double, double toil and trouble;
 Fire burn and cauldron bubble. 20

3RD WITCH Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
 Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
 Of the ravined salt-sea shark,
 Root of hemlock diggèd i'the dark, 25
 Liver of blaspheming Jew,
 Gall of goat, and slips of yew
 Silvered in the moon's eclipse,
 Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
 Finger of birth-strangled babe 30
 Ditch-delivered by a drab,
 Make the gruèl thick and slab:
 Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,
 For th'ingredients of our cauldron.

ALL Double, double toil and trouble;
 Fire burn and cauldron bubble. 35

2ND WITCH Cool it with a baboon's blood,
 Then the charm is firm and good.

[HECATE enters and approaches the other three WITCHES]

HECATE O, well done! I commend your pains;
 And every one shall share i'the gains. 40
 And now about the cauldron sing,
 Like elves and fairies in a ring,
 Enchanting all that you put in.

[Music and a song: 'Black Spirits', after which HECATE exits]

2ND WITCH By the pricking of my thumbs,
 Something wicked this way comes. 45
 Open, locks,
 Whoever knocks!

[MACBETH enters]

MACBETH How now, you secret, black and midnight hags!
 What is't you do?

ALL A deed without a name.

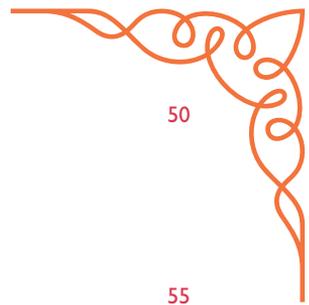


23–24 **Maw and gulf / Of the ravined salt-sea shark:** Stomach and throat of a vicious (ravenous) shark.

27 **Slips of yew:** Fleshy, bright red outer layers of the flower belonging to the poisonous yew plant.

30 **Birth-strangled babe:** Killed immediately after birth, but not baptised, many in Shakespeare's audience would have considered this baby damned.

33 **Tiger's chaudron:** The intestines and other internal organs of a tiger.



MACBETH I conjure you, by that which you profess, 50
 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; 55
 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,
 E'en till destruction sicken; answer me 60
 To what I ask you.

1ST WITCH Speak.

2ND WITCH Demand.

3RD WITCH We'll answer.

1ST WITCH Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths,
 Or from our masters'?

MACBETH Call 'em; let me see 'em.

1ST WITCH Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten 65
 Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten
 From the murderer's gibbet throw
 Into the flame.

ALL WITCHES Come, high or low;
 Thysel'f and office deftly show!

[Thunder. 1ST APPARITION: an armed head rises from the cauldron]

MACBETH Tell me, thou unknown power –

1ST WITCH He knows thy thought:

Hear his speech, but say thou nought. 70

1ST APPARITION Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff;
 Beware the Thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.

[1ST APPARITION descends into the cauldron]

MACBETH Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks;



50 **I conjure you, by that which you profess:** Macbeth commands the Witches in the name of their occult practices (black arts) to answer him. He is also playing on the word 'conjure', which means to call upon or make to appear (like calling upon a spirit or ghost).

53–54 **Though the yesty waves ... navigation up:** In this speech, Macbeth uses a number of images relating to a general sense of chaos. This one presents an image of wild and foamy ('yeasty', like the head of a beer) seas that confuse navigation and swallow up ships.

65–67 **Grease that's sweaten ... Into the flame:** The Witches are pouring into the cauldron the further ingredient of sweat from a convicted murderer who was sent to the gallows to be hanged. It was thought that such individuals sweated grease.

68 **Thysel'f and office deftly show:** The Witches here call upon the 1ST Apparition (or vision) to show himself and to reveal his message or purpose.

- 4 What news does Lennox bring at the end of this scene? How does Macbeth respond to this news?
- 5 In your notes, create and complete a table like the one below.

	Description of the Apparition	Apparition's prediction
1 ST Apparition		
2 ND Apparition		
3 RD Apparition		



- 1 When Macbeth arrives at the Witches' cavern, the 2ND Witch says, 'By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes'. How is this ironic and how might it contribute to the audience's perception of Macbeth's moral character?
- 2 Why do you think Macbeth resolves to murder Macduff's family? How might this action benefit Macbeth politically? How might it harm him?



If you were directing this scene onstage, how would you present the Apparitions? Consider elements such as lighting, actors (present or absent), blocking (positioning and movement), sound, props, costumes etc.

Thinking about the consequences of deception

A recurring theme throughout *Macbeth* is **deception and its consequences**. The consequences of deception are usually – but not always – negative, both for those who are deceived and for those practising the deception.

At the heart of the play is the conflict between illusion and reality, between what **seems** to be true and what is **actually** true. The characters are deceived when reality is hidden beneath words or appearances that only seem to be true. For example, in Act I Scene 3, Macbeth and Banquo are unsure if the Witches are real (lines 39–42 and 80–83), and Macbeth doubts whether his murderous thoughts can be trusted (lines 140–43). Moreover, can Macbeth trust his senses when he sees a dagger before him, prior to murdering King Duncan (Act 2 Scene 1, lines 34–50)?

Q Re-read Act I Scene 2, lines 52–53 and 63; and Act I Scene 4, lines 11–14.

These lines refer to the deception of King Duncan by the Thane of Cawdor, who pretends to be loyal when in fact he is a traitor. What are the consequences of this deception for the Thane of Cawdor and for King Duncan?



The central acts of deception are performed by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Create a table similar to the one below for your notes to show your understanding of the theme of deception.

Scene	Who deceives whom?	What sort of deception occurs?	What are the consequences of this deception (by Act 5)?
1.4.48–5			
1.5.60–63			
1.7.81–82		Macbeth plans to hide his knowledge of the murder of King Duncan behind his 'false face'.	
3.2.27–28, 34–35			

In the previous scene (Act 4 Scene 1), the Witches' prophecies are deceptive, in that they are deliberately ambiguous or equivocal. As you read Acts 4 and 5, take particular note of the Witches' prophecies, how Macbeth misunderstands or misinterprets them, and the ways in which Macbeth's misinterpretation of the prophecies leads to his downfall.

NOTE: Not all acts of deception in *Macbeth* lead to tragedy; sometimes they have positive consequences. Look out for acts of deception and their positive consequences in Act 4 Scene 3 and Act 5 Scene 4.

Act 4 Scene 2

CHARACTERS

Lady Macduff
 Son
 Ross
 Messenger
 1ST Murderer
 2ND Murderer
 (non-speaking role)



IN A NUTSHELL

Lady Macduff and Ross briefly discuss Macduff's departure to England. Before leaving, Ross attempts to defend Macduff's actions. Later, as Lady Macduff is talking with her son, an unidentified messenger brings news of danger. Almost immediately, two Murderers enter, demanding to know the whereabouts of Macduff. They kill the son, and the scene ends with the Murderers pursuing Lady Macduff offstage.

Before you read

- Lady Macduff is the second most significant female character in *Macbeth* and this scene contains the play's only depiction of motherhood. You might reflect on how different Lady Macduff's character is from Lady Macbeth.

V

Diminutive: Very small
Judicious: Wise
Abide: Stay
Laudable: Praiseworthy
Unsanctified: Unholy

Fife: Macduff's castle.

[LADY MACDUFF, her SON and her cousin ROSS enter]

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.

ROSS My dearest coz,

I pray you, school yourself. But for your husband,
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
The fits o' the season. I dare not speak much further;
But cruel are the times, when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves, when we hold rumour
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea
Each way and move. I take my leave of you;
Shall not be long but I'll be here again.

5

10

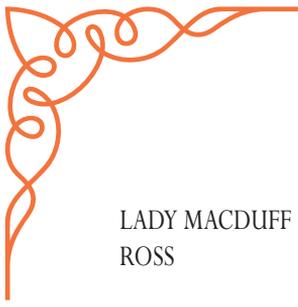
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20



9

He wants the natural touch: He is lacking in natural human affection.



Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
To what they were before. My pretty cousin,
Blessing upon you! 25

LADY MACDUFF Fathered he is, and yet he's fatherless.

ROSS I am so much a fool; should I stay longer,
It would be my disgrace and your discomfort.
I take my leave at once.

[ROSS exits]

LADY MACDUFF Sirrah, your father's dead, 30
And what will you do now? How will you live?

SON As birds do, mother.

LADY MACDUFF What, with worms and flies?

SON With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

LADY MACDUFF Poor bird! Thou'ldst never fear the net nor lime,
The pitfall nor the gin. 35

SON Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.
My father is not dead, for all your saying.

LADY MACDUFF Yes, he is dead; how wilt thou do for a father?

SON Nay, how will you do for a husband?

LADY MACDUFF Why, I can buy me twenty at any market. 40

SON Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

LADY MACDUFF Thou speak'st with all thy wit, and yet, i'faith,
With wit enough for thee.

SON Was my father a traitor, mother?

LADY MACDUFF Ay, that he was. 45

SON What is a traitor?

LADY MACDUFF Why, one that swears and lies.

SON And be all traitors that do so?

LADY MACDUFF Everyone that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged.

SON And must they all be hanged that swear and lie? 50

LADY MACDUFF Everyone.

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
enough to beat the honest men and hang up them. 55

LADY MACDUFF Now, God help thee, poor monkey!
But how wilt thou do for a father?



30 **Sirrah:** A way of greeting people of lower rank or status; here it is used as an affectionate way of addressing a child.

34–35 **Poor bird ... nor the gin:** Lady Macduff speaks affectionately to her son, comparing his innocence, despite the dangerous situation in Scotland, to that of a little bird that does not realise it is surrounded by deadly traps. Lime was a sticky substance put on trees to catch birds; a pitfall and gin were other types of bird traps.

42–43 **Thou speak'st ... for thee:** Lady Macduff comments on how clever her son is for his young age.

SON If he were dead, you'd weep for him; if you would not, it were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father.

LADY MACDUFF Poor prattler, how thou talk'st! 60

[A MESSENGER enters]

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! 65
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.

[MESSENGER exits]

LADY MACDUFF Whither should I fly? 70
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, 75
To say I've done no harm?

[MURDERERS enter] What are these faces?

1ST MURDERER Where is your husband?

LADY MACDUFF I hope, in no place so unsanctified
Where such as thou mayst find him.

1ST MURDERER He's a traitor.

SON Thou liest, thou shag-haired villain!

1ST MURDERER What, you egg! 80

[Stabs him]

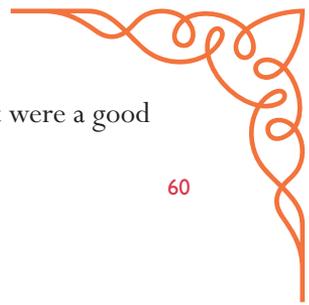
SON Young fry of treachery!
He has killed me, mother.
Run away, I pray you! *[He dies]*

[LADY MACDUFF runs out, crying 'Murder!' MURDERERS exit, following her]

67–68 **Fell cruelty, / Which is too nigh your person:** The Messenger does not wish to be brutal or inhumane with his cruel news, but he realises that terribly violent things are about to happen to Macduff's family.

78–79 **In no such place ... find him:** Lady Macduff insults the Murderer by suggesting that he typically spends his time in unholy or evil places.

81 **Young fry of treachery:** Playing on the reference to being an egg, the Murderer calls Macduff's son the child or offspring of someone treacherous.





QUESTIONS

- 1 Briefly describe how Ross and Lady Macduff differ in their opinions of Macduff's actions.
- 2 Thinking back to Macbeth's words in the previous scene, why is the audience likely to be tense at the beginning of this scene?
- 3 What happens to Lady Macduff's son at the end of this scene? What can we assume happens to Lady Macduff?
- 4 What details does Shakespeare include in this scene to cause us to feel sympathy for Lady Macduff and her son? Consider the way they speak to each other and what they say.
- 5 In what ways could Lady Macduff be viewed as the antithesis (opposite) of Lady Macbeth?



EXTEND

- 1 How does the conversation about the 'liars and swearers' and the 'honest men' touch on elements relevant to Scotland under the rule of Macbeth?
- 2 What do you think Lady Macduff means when she says, 'I am in this earthly world, where to do harm / Is often laudable, to do good sometime / Accounted dangerous folly' (lines 72–74)?
- 3 Shakespeare chooses not to show the murder of Lady Macduff onstage; instead, the audience assumes it takes place offstage. Do you think this is more effective than actually witnessing the character's murder? Why or why not?



A most miraculous work in this good King ...

King Edward the Confessor

This next scene is the only one set in England. Malcolm has been living under the protection of King Edward, who is also providing Malcolm with English soldiers to reclaim the Scottish throne. Malcolm and an English Doctor describe King Edward as possessing the gifts of healing and prophecy, reflecting popular medieval beliefs about this king.

The historical King Edward spent much of his life exiled in Normandy (a region of modern-day France), but eventually succeeded to the throne in 1042. Although he lacked the power of most medieval kings of England, Edward's reign was a time of relative peace and prosperity. In the 1040s, King Edward began the construction of Westminster Abbey, which was consecrated (blessed to be an operational church) a week before the King's death in 1066.

Roman Catholic Church tradition defines saints who died for their faith as martyrs, and those who died of natural causes as confessors. Edward was made a saint (canonised) a century after his death, becoming Edward the Confessor, Patron Saint of Kings. For

some time, Edward was also considered the Patron Saint of England, before being replaced by Saint George in 1349.

In Shakespeare's play, the saintly King Edward provides a sharp contrast to Macbeth. Whereas Macbeth brings murder, destruction and chaos, King Edward brings healing. Directors who employ dark and perhaps claustrophobic interior settings for most of the play often set this next scene outside in daylight to further emphasise this contrast.



Illustration of Edward the Confessor from the early 1300s

Act 4 Scene 3

CHARACTERS

Malcolm
Macduff
Ross
Doctor

IN A NUTSHELL

Macduff arrives in England, hopeful of persuading Malcolm to lead an army against Macbeth. Suspecting Macduff to be a traitor, Malcolm claims to be a greater tyrant than Macbeth. Consequently, Macduff expresses his disgust and goes to leave. Convinced of Macduff's loyalty, Malcolm reveals his true (good) character and proclaims his readiness to fight Macbeth. Ross arrives and, after some hesitation, reports the murder of Macduff's entire family. Overcome by grief, Macduff vows revenge.

Before you read

- Audiences are often confused by Malcolm's behaviour in this scene. It is important to understand that Malcolm sets about testing Macduff almost immediately. He claims that no wife or daughter would be safe from his lust (his 'voluptuousness'), and that his hunger for wealth ('avarice') would cause him to steal, to stir up disputes and possibly to murder. He further claims to possess none of the qualities that would make a good king. It is only when Macduff exclaims that Malcolm is not fit to 'govern' or even 'live', that Malcolm knows he can trust him. From that moment (beginning at line 114), Malcolm is honest with Macduff.



V

- Resounds:** Sounds out loudly and clearly
- Redress:** To restore or correct
- Appease:** To satisfy or relieve
- Vices:** Bad qualities
- Sundry:** Various
- Hoodwink:** To deceive
- Concord:** Agreement, peace
- Interdiction:** Condemnation or judgement

England: before the King's palace.

[*MALCOLM and MACDUFF enter*]

MALCOLM Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty.

MACDUFF Let us rather
Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men
Bestride our down-fall'n birthdom. Each new morn
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland and yelled out
Like syllable of dolour.

5

MALCOLM What I believe I'll wail;
What know believe; and what I can redress,
As I shall find the time to friend, I will.
What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.
This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
Was once thought honest: you have loved him well.
He hath not touched you yet. I am young, but something
You may deserve of him through me, and wisdom
To offer up a weak poor innocent lamb
To appease an angry god.

10

15

MACDUFF I am not treacherous.

MALCOLM But Macbeth is.
A good and virtuous nature may recoil
In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon:
That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose;

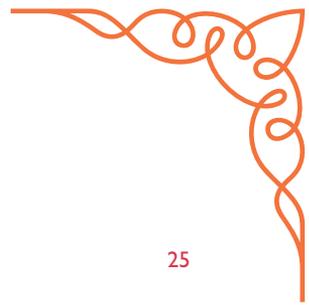
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2-4 **Let us rather ... birthdom:** Instead (of crying), we need to fight with swords, and defend our country like noble men.

8 **Syllable of dolour:** Cry of grief or suffering.

19-20 **A good and virtuous nature may recoil / In an imperial charge:** Even someone good and virtuous might eventually give in to the command of a king.





Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.
 Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,
 Yet grace must still look so.

MACDUFF I've lost my hopes. 25

MALCOLM Perchance e'en 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. 30

MACDUFF Bleed, bleed, poor country!
 Great tyranny! Lay thou thy basis sure,
 For goodness dare not check thee: wear thou thy wrongs;
 The title is affeered. Fare thee well, lord:
 I would not be the villain that thou think'st
 For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,
 And the rich East to boot. 35

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. 40

MACDUFF What should he be? 45

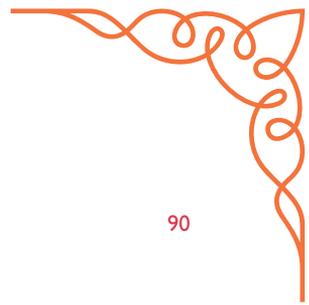
MALCOLM It is myself I mean, in whom I know
 All the particulars of vice so grafted
 That, when they shall be opened, black Macbeth
 Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state 50



22 **Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell:** The brightest angel here is Lucifer or Satan, who fell from heaven when he proudly challenged God. Malcolm suggests that, even though Lucifer was close to God and fell, the possibility of goodness in the world still exists.

33–34 **Wear thou thy wrongs; / The title is affeered:** Macduff is pointing out that Macbeth cannot just call himself King simply because he stole the crown; the title is confirmed by law ('affeered'). Therefore, he does not believe Macbeth is the rightful King of Scotland.

51–53 **All the particulars of vice ... pure as snow:** Malcolm pretends that he is so rotten and corrupt that, if he were a flower, the blossom would be so vile as to make evil Macbeth look as pure as snow.



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 weighed. 90

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 95
 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! 100

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-sceptered,
 When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again, 105
 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,
 Oft'ner upon her knees than on her feet, 110
 Died every day she lived. Fare thee well!
 These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself
 Have banished me from Scotland. O my breast,
 Thy hope ends here!

MALCOLM Macduff, this noble passion,
 Child of integrity, hath from my soul 115
 Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts
 To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth



-
- 88–89 Scotland ... your mere own:** Scotland is rich in wealth.
 - 91–94 The king-becoming graces ... fortitude:** Malcolm claims to have no qualities that a king should have, such as justice, verity (truth), temperance (self-control), stableness (stability), bounty (generosity), mercy, lowliness (humility), devotion (love of his people), patience, courage or fortitude (bravery).
 - 97–100 Nay, had I power ... All unity on earth:** Malcolm claims that, if he gained power, peace and harmony would be sent to hell and would be replaced by division, confusion and chaos.
 - 106–8 Since that ... blaspheme his breed:** Since the rightful heir to the throne (Malcolm) is condemned by his own confession, dishonouring his ancestors.
 - 110 Oft'ner on her knees than on her feet:** She spent more time praying than anything else.
 - 114–17 This noble passion ... To thy good truth and honour:** Malcolm has been convinced of Macduff's honour and integrity.



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 120
 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 125
 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 130
 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. 135
 Now we'll together, and the chance of goodness
 Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent?
 MACDUFF Such welcome and unwelcome things at once
 'Tis hard to reconcile.

[DOCTOR enters]

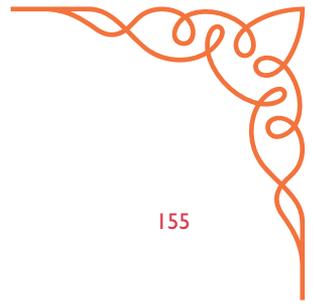
MALCOLM Well, more anon – Comes the King forth, I pray you? 140
 DOCTOR Ay, sir; there are a crew of wretched souls
 That stay his cure. Their malady convinces
 The great assay of art; but at his touch
 (Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand)
 They presently amend.
 MALCOLM I thank you, doctor. 145

[DOCTOR exits]

MACDUFF What's the disease he means?
 MALCOLM 'Tis called the evil.
 A most miraculous work in this good king,
 Which often, since my here-remain in England,
 I've seen him do. How he solicits heaven,
 Himself best knows; but strangely-visited people, 150
 All swol'n and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,



120 **Over-credulous haste:** Believing too quickly.
 123–31 **Unspeak mine own detraction ... was this upon myself:** Malcolm admits to lying when he described himself as lust-filled and power-hungry. He reassures Macduff that he is still a virgin, has never been engaged, is not jealous of other people's things, is a faithful believer and always tries to speak the truth. In other words, he is everything a king should be.



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.

155

[ROSS enters]

MACDUFF See, who comes here?

MALCOLM My countryman, but yet I know him not.

160

MACDUFF My ever-gentle cousin, welcome hither.

MALCOLM I know him now. Good God, betimes remove
 The means that makes us strangers!

ROSS Sir, amen.

MACDUFF Stands Scotland where it did?

ROSS Alas, poor country!

Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
 Be called 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 marked; where violent sorrow seems
 A modern ecstasy; the dead man's knell
 Is there scarce asked for who; and good men's lives
 Expire before the flowers in their caps,
 Dying or ere they sicken.

165

170

MACDUFF O, relation

Too nice, and yet too true!

MALCOLM What's the newest grief?

ROSS That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker:
 Each minute teems a new one.

175

MACDUFF How does my wife?

ROSS Why, well.

MACDUFF And all my children?

ROSS Well, too.

MACDUFF The tyrant has not battered at their peace?

ROSS No; they were well at peace when I did leave 'em.

MACDUFF Be not a niggard of your speech. How goes't?

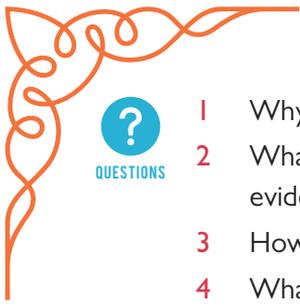
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156–59 With this strange virtue ... full of grace: Besides being able to heal this disease, he has a gift of prophecy from God; he is full of God's grace and blessings.

170–73 The dead man's knell ... ere they sicken: Nobody asks for whom the bell tolls (a funeral bell); good men die before the flowers in their caps die: their lives are far too short.

180 Be not a niggard of your speech: Do not be stingy or hold back anything; tell me everything.



QUESTIONS

- 1 Why does Malcolm initially lie to Macduff?
- 2 What is Malcolm's opinion of Macbeth in this scene? Include a few quotes as evidence.
- 3 How does Malcolm describe his true character in this scene?
- 4 What news does Ross bring from Scotland?
- 5 How does Macduff's statement 'But I must also feel it as a man' contrast with Lady Macbeth's definition of manhood (e.g. in Act 1 Scene 7, lines 49–51)?



EXTEND

- 1 Construct and complete a table like the one below to show your understanding of how Shakespeare conveys Macduff's grief.

Aspect of Shakespeare's language	Examples from this scene	How might this language device convey Macduff's grief?
Short sentences		e.g. Shakespeare represents Macduff as choking on his emotions, unable to articulate his thoughts.
Punctuation		
Repetition		
Emotive words and phrases		
Imagery of birds		

- 2 Macduff and Malcolm describe Scotland as suffering from the poison or disease of Macbeth's rule. Find at least three quotes from this scene that convey how Scotland has been infected.

Act 5

Act 5 Scene 1

CHARACTERS

Lady Macbeth
Doctor
Gentlewoman



IN A NUTSHELL

A servant to the Queen (a Gentlewoman) tells the Doctor about Lady Macbeth's strange behaviour, which includes sleepwalking, but refuses to repeat what she has heard. Their conversation is interrupted by the sleepwalking figure of Lady Macbeth, who, in disjointed language, reveals details of Macbeth's murders and her inability to wash the (imagined) blood from her hands.

Before you read

- In her sleep-talking, Lady Macbeth seems to be switching from talking to herself to addressing Macbeth, and perhaps some other people who are not present. There are no dashes in this speech, so the actor must interpret whom Lady Macbeth is addressing with each phrase.
- The disjointed nature of her speech conveys Lady Macbeth's madness and all the nervous tension that goes with it.

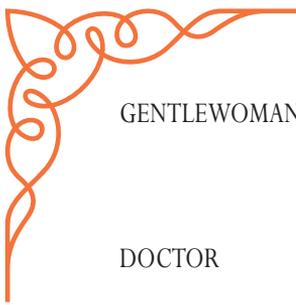
V

Perturbation:	Disturbance
Meet:	Appropriate
Guise:	External appearance
Mar:	Ruin; make bad
Starting:	Sudden movement (nervous behaviour)

Dunsinane: ante-room in the castle.

[DOCTOR and a WAITING-GENTLEWOMAN enter]

DOCTOR I have two nights watched with you, but can perceive no truth in your report. When was it she last walked?



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. 5

DOCTOR A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching! In this slumbery agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you heard her say? 10

GENTLEWOMAN That, sir, which I will not report after her.

DOCTOR You may to me, and 'tis most meet you should.

GENTLEWOMAN Neither to you nor any one, having no witness to confirm my speech.

[LADY MACBETH, with a taper, enters]

Lo you, here she comes! This is her very guise, and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close. 15

DOCTOR How came she by that light?

GENTLEWOMAN Why, it stood by her: she has light by her continually; 'tis her command.

DOCTOR You see, her eyes are open.

GENTLEWOMAN Ay, but their sense is shut.

DOCTOR What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands. 20

GENTLEWOMAN It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands; I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

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. 25

LADY MACBETH Out, damnèd 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? 30

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. 35

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

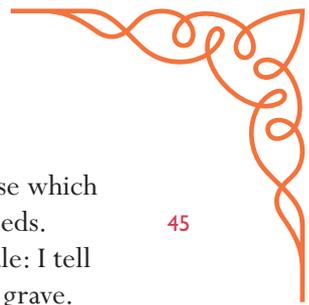
DOCTOR What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

GENTLEWOMAN I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body. 40



8 **Slumbery agitation:** Lady Macbeth is restless and very active while trying to sleep.

15 **Stand close:** Hide behind something so we cannot be seen.



DOCTOR Well, well, well –
 GENTLEWOMAN Pray God it be, sir.
 DOCTOR This disease is beyond my practice: yet I have known those which
 have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds. 45
 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, 50
 to bed, to bed!

[LADY MACBETH exits]

DOCTOR Will she go now to bed?
 GENTLEWOMAN Directly.
 DOCTOR Foul whisp'rings are abroad: unnatural deeds
 Do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds 55
 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. 60
 My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight.
 I think, but dare not speak.
 GENTLEWOMAN Good night, good doctor.

[Both exit]

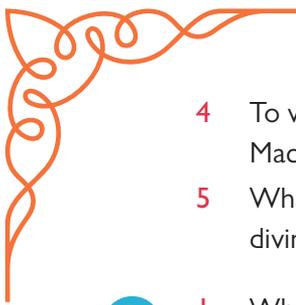


61 **My mind she has mated:** She has astonished or amazed me.



- 1 What details does the Gentlewoman report to the Doctor?
- 2 Lady Macbeth is not able to wash the blood from her hands. Thinking back to Act 2, how is this ironic?
- 3 In your notes, create a table like the one below to show how Lady Macbeth's words in this scene directly echo Macbeth's from previous scenes.

Lady Macbeth	Macbeth
'Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.'	From Act 2 Scene 2 =
'What's done cannot be undone.'	From Act 1 Scene 7 =

- 
- 4 To what extent is Lady Macbeth's mental state in this scene similar to Macbeth's directly after the murder of King Duncan?
 - 5 What do you think the Doctor means when he says, 'More needs she the divine than the physician' (line 57)?



- 1 What might Lady Macbeth mean when she says 'none can call our power to account'? Is she right about this?
- 2 In this scene, Lady Macbeth carries a lamp or taper (candle). What does the Gentlewoman say about this action? Is Lady Macbeth's action in any way ironic? Think back to Act 1.
- 3 How is Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking perhaps foreshadowed in Act 2 Scene 2 (lines 35–43)?



In pairs or small groups, discuss how you might stage this scene. Consider the following aspects:

- Lighting, including colour.
- Blocking (positioning and movement) – will the Doctor and Gentlewoman be in the foreground? Should Lady Macbeth come among the audience or should she be lost on the stage?
- Sound: music, effects, use of voice etc.

Roman Polanski: Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking



Watch the sleepwalking scene in Polanski's film.

- 1 During the conversation between the Doctor and the Gentlewoman, we see Lady Macbeth peering through a lattice (as if looking through a keyhole). What effect do you think Polanski is trying to create here?
- 2 How does Lady Macbeth's appearance contribute to your understanding of her mental state?
- 3 Do you think Lady Macbeth should have carried a candle as she does in the play? Why or why not?
- 4 When the Doctor brings him the news of Lady Macbeth's condition, what does Macbeth's positioning on the battlements suggest? What do you think Macbeth's facial expression and his tone of voice indicate?
- 5 How effective is Polanski's use of shadows (across the set and across Macbeth's face) in this scene? What do you think Polanski is trying to communicate about Macbeth by means of this device?



And many unrough youths that even now
Protest their first of manhood. 10

MENTEITH What does the tyrant?

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 distempered cause 15
Within the belt of rule.

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 20
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.

MENTEITH Who then shall blame

His pestered senses to recoil and start,
When all that is within him does condemn
Itself for being there?

CAITHNESS Well, march we on, 25

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. 30
Make we our march towards Birnam.

[All exit, marching]



10–11 **Many unrough youths ... manhood:** Lennox comments here on the number of young boys who have volunteered to fight. 'Unrough' seems to indicate that their faces are smooth, i.e. they do not yet have beards (the 'first [sign] of manhood').

15–16 **He cannot buckle ... belt of rule:** See the box on 'More imagery: clothing and darkness' following Act 2 Scene 4 for a detailed overview of clothing imagery in the play.

18 **Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach:** In this passage, Angus exaggerates the extent to which Macbeth's thanes are turning against him, suggesting that every minute there is another revolt.



In two or three sentences, summarise what is said about Macbeth in this scene.

QUESTIONS

H

My way of life is fall'n into the sear ...

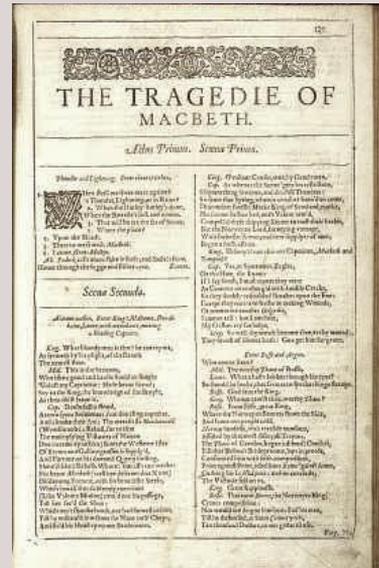
Macbeth as tragedy

What we now call the First Folio was published in 1623, a thick book entitled *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies*. *Macbeth* was included in the section marked *Tragedies*, along with such famous plays as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *King Lear*. The book does not offer a definition of tragedy: many of the history plays include tragic elements; many of the tragedies, such as *Macbeth*, include plenty of historical detail; and all of Shakespeare's plays have some comic elements. So, what did the editors mean by tragedy?

The term tragedy generally suggests an unhappy ending, while comedy suggests a happy ending. It could be argued that *Macbeth* ends happily – a tyrannical ruler is killed, allowing peace and order to be restored to Scotland – but the play does not end happily for the protagonist, Macbeth. At the beginning of the play, Macbeth seems in a highly desirable position, but then Shakespeare charts his moral, spiritual and material downfall. Therefore, this interpretation of tragedy is perhaps not entirely applicable to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

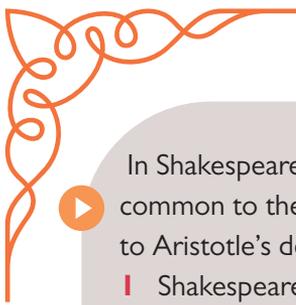
The term tragedy was first used in ancient Greece. The Greek philosopher Aristotle asserted the following things about tragedy in his work *Poetics*:

- 1 It should be serious and dignified, and written in a language more elevated than everyday speech.
- 2 It should focus on a hero or heroes, usually distinguished by their rank or ability.
- 3 The tragic hero should make some error in action, causing suffering for himself and those around him.
- 4 The tragic hero should arrive at some sort of profound moment of recognition, which Aristotle called *anagnorisis*.
- 5 The audience should feel sympathy for this tragic hero.
- 6 Tragedy should evoke feelings of pity and fear, leading the audience to question their assumptions about human experience and finally bringing about a release from tension (*catharsis*).
- 7 The plot should involve dramatic reversals or ironies.



The first page of *Macbeth* in a facsimile edition of the First Folio





In Shakespeare's day, the term tragedy was used more loosely but some elements are common to the majority of Shakespeare's tragedies. These elements are certainly closer to Aristotle's definition than to the 'unhappy ending' model:

- 1 Shakespeare's tragic heroes (generally men) tend to be elevated above the majority of society by rank or ability.
- 2 The tragic hero is generally alienated from his own society through his experiences or through the choices that he has made.
- 3 The fall of the hero affects the whole community.
- 4 Towards the end of the play, the tragic hero recognises the consequences of his actions and from this draws some meaning of universal significance.

Questions

When you have finished reading the play, revisit this box and consider the following two questions:

- Q To what extent does *Macbeth* adhere to Aristotle's model for tragedy?
- Q In what ways does *Macbeth* follow the Shakespearean model?

Act 5 Scene 3

CHARACTERS

Macbeth
Doctor
Seyton
Servant

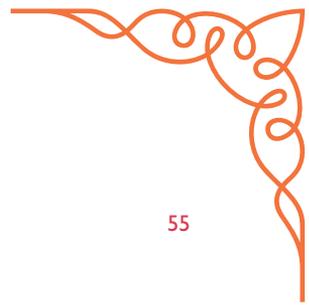


IN A NUTSHELL

News of the great strength of the invading army is brought to Macbeth, who claims he is not troubled. At the same time, though, he admits his unhappiness. As Macbeth puts on his armour, he discusses Lady Macbeth's worsening condition with the Doctor.

Before you read

- Macbeth boasts of his absolute invincibility in this scene, but also requests his armour before it is needed, perhaps suggesting an inner doubt. In reading the part of Macbeth, your delivery should attempt to capture this tension.



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, senna, or what purgative drug,
 Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of them?

55

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.

60

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

[All exit]



55–56 What rhubarb ... English hence? Macbeth asks the Doctor (jokingly) if he has any drug that would cleanse or purge Scotland of the English, whom he regards as a disease.



QUESTIONS

- 1 Why does Macbeth claim he does not fear the advancing army (consider the Witches' prophecies from Act 4)?
- 2 What are the causes of Macbeth's unhappy state?
- 3 Why is the Doctor unable to help Lady Macbeth?



EXTEND

- 1 How does Macbeth's decision to put his armour on before it is needed contradict the things he has said in this scene?
- 2 How does Shakespeare convey an atmosphere of hurried preparation in this scene?
- 3 In what ways does Macbeth's conversation with the Doctor about Lady Macbeth parallel other characters' conversations in earlier scenes about the condition of Scotland?
- 4 Discuss the irony of Macbeth's claim that the English are a disease for which he wishes there were a cure.



DISCUSS

In this scene, Macbeth repeatedly asserts that he is not afraid. Do you think this repetition conveys his confidence? Arrogance? Or something else?



Act 5 Scene 4

CHARACTERS

Malcolm
Siward
Macduff
Menteith
Soldiers and other
Lords



IN A NUTSHELL

Upon arriving at the edge of Birnam Wood, Malcolm orders each soldier to 'hew' or cut down a branch from a tree to conceal the true size of their army from Macbeth. He discusses Macbeth's military position with the other leaders.



Err: To do wrong or make an error
Censures: Severe criticisms

A clearing near Birnam Wood.

[MALCOLM, SIWARD and YOUNG SIWARD, MACDUFF, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, ROSS and Soldiers enter, marching, with drum and colours]

MALCOLM Cousins, I hope the days are near at hand
That chambers will be safe.

MENTEITH We doubt it nothing.

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. 5

SOLDIERS It shall be done.

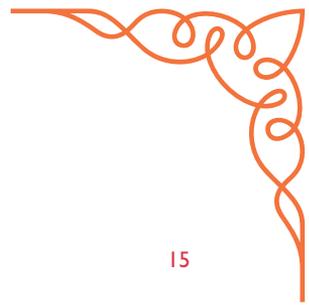
SIWARD We learn no other but the confident tyrant
Keeps still in Dunsinane, and will endure
Our setting down before't.

MALCOLM 'Tis his main hope, 10
For where there is advantage to be given,



5-7 **Thereby shall we shadow ... Err in report of us:** By hiding his army behind the branches, Malcolm hopes to conceal how many soldiers he has, causing Macbeth's spies or scouts to make an error in their report.

9-10 **Will endure / Our setting down before't:** Siward has heard that Macbeth is prepared for his enemies to besiege his castle.



Both more and less have given him the revolt,
 And none serve with him but constrained things
 Whose hearts are absent too.

MACDUFF

Let our just censures

Attend the true event, and put we on
 Industrious soldiership.

15

SIWARD

The time approaches

That will with due decision make us know
 What we shall say we have and what we owe.
 Thoughts speculative their unsure hopes relate,
 But certain issue strokes must arbitrate,
 Towards which advance the war.

20

[All exit, marching]



13–14 None serve him ... absent too: Malcolm knows that Macbeth's followers only serve him because they are constrained (forced), rather than doing so from the heart.

14–16 Let our just censures ... Industrious soldiership: Macduff warns against making such hasty judgements of Macbeth and his soldiers, and then encourages his own soldiers to prepare carefully to fight Macbeth.

19–20 Thoughts speculative ... must arbitrate: It is no use speculating (guessing) – only carefully planned fighting will decide the outcome.



QUESTIONS

- 1 What tactical advantage is Malcolm hoping to gain by his plan?
- 2 How might Malcolm's tactical decision play out in terms of the prophecies that Macbeth heard in Act 4?

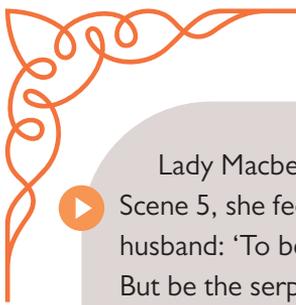
Thinking about time

Images or references to time permeate almost every scene of *Macbeth*. This preoccupation is linked to Shakespeare's focus on ambiguity or equivocation (see the History Box 'Equivocation and the Gunpowder Plot' on page 64). In fact, the word 'time' or 'times' occurs 47 times in the course of the play.

In the opening scene, the Witches establish this focus by asking, 'When shall we three meet again?' and by giving the ambiguous answer: 'When the hurly-burly's done, / When the battle's lost and won' (repeating the word 'when' three times in the opening four lines).

Throughout Act 1, before the murder of King Duncan, much of the Macbeths' dialogue centres on the passage of time, in phrases such as 'the seeds of time' (Scene 3, line 59) and 'the coming on of time' (Scene 5, lines 7–8). *Macbeth* also focuses our attention on contrasts between the present and the future, between the 'done' and the 'undone' (Scene 5, line 22; and Scene 7, lines 1–2).





Lady Macbeth urges her husband to kill King Duncan as soon as possible. In Act 1 Scene 5, she feels ‘now / The future in the instant’ (lines 54–55) and pleads with her husband: ‘To beguile the time, / Look like the time ... Look like th’ innocent flower, / But be the serpent under’t’ (lines 60–63).

After the night of King Duncan’s murder, when time seems to have stood still, Macbeth as ‘master of his time’ (Act 3 Scene 1, line 40) sees no gap between his thoughts and his actions: ‘From this moment / The very firstlings of my heart shall be / The firstlings of my hand’ (Act 4 Scene 1, lines 146–48). Subsequently, without hesitation he recklessly slaughters all who oppose him.

As you read the rest of the play, watch out for further references to time, including:

- Macbeth’s response to the death of his wife (Act 5 Scene 5, lines 17–28) shows his feeling that time passes in a meaningless fashion.
- Macduff’s pronouncement that ‘the time is free’ (Act 5 Scene 9, line 21), coupled with Malcolm’s concluding words, reinforce the notion that order has been restored to Scotland.

Act 5 Scene 5

CHARACTERS

Macbeth
Messenger
Seyton



IN A NUTSHELL

Macbeth is organising the castle’s defences when he is informed of the death of Lady Macbeth. As he reflects on the pointlessness of life, a messenger reports that Birnam Wood appears to be moving towards the castle.



Ague: Fevers
Fell: Cruel
Direness: Horror
Signifying: Meaning
Harness: Armour



Before you read

- This scene contains one of the most famous yet most pessimistic speeches in all of Shakespeare's work. Macbeth delivers this soliloquy after being informed of his wife's death:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day 20
 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 25
 And then is heard no more; it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.

- These words speak of the tedious monotony of life that marches on towards death in the hope of something better. Paradoxically, life is also described as a 'brief candle', whose burning is very short and gives little light in the vast darkness. Macbeth then compares life with an actor, who has an hour to deliver his lines and make his empty gestures. Finally, Macbeth settles on the metaphor of a story 'told by an idiot', a story which, despite being 'full of sound and fury', is ultimately meaningless. The sentiment of this speech can certainly be described as nihilistic – expressing the pointlessness of existence – but it must be read in context: it is delivered by a murderer, facing death and defeat, whose wife has died. For an overview of how this speech has been used in other works in recent times, see page 146.

Dunsinane: within the castle.

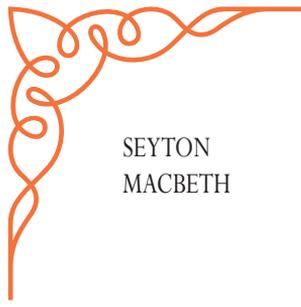
[MACBETH, SEYTON and Soldiers enter, with drum and colours]

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, 5
 We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,
 And beat them backward home.

[A cry of women is heard offstage]



2–4 **Our castle's strength ... eat them up:** One medieval siege tactic was to surround a castle to prevent escape; thus those inside would eventually starve or perhaps die of disease (such as the plague). Here Macbeth personifies the strength of his castle, which would laugh at or make laughable any such attempt.



What is that noise?

SEYTON

It is the cry of women, my good lord. *[SEYTON exits]*

MACBETH

I have almost forgot the taste of fears.

The time has been, my senses would have cooled

10

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 supped full with horrors:

Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,

Cannot once start me.

[SEYTON re-enters]

Wherefore was that cry?

15

SEYTON

The Queen, my lord, is dead.

MACBETH

She should have died hereafter:

There would have been a time for such a word.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day

20

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

25

And then is heard no more; it is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing.

[A MESSENGER enters]

Thou com'st to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

MESSENGER

Gracious my lord,

30

I should report that which I say I saw,

But know not how to do it.

MACBETH

Well, say, sir.

MESSENGER

As I did stand my watch upon the hill,

I looked toward Birnam, and anon, methought,

The wood began to move.

MACBETH

[Striking the MESSENGER] Liar and slave!

35

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.



11–13 **My fell of hair ... As life were in't:** Macbeth remembers when he used to be so afraid of horror stories that it would make his hair stand on end.

22–23 **All our yesterdays ... dusty death:** The past has only served to light a pathway that leads fools towards death. 'Dusty death' is a biblical allusion: 'For dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return' (Genesis 3:19).

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 th' 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 th' 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.

40

45

50

[All exit]



40 **If thy speech be sooth:** If you are telling the truth.

42–44 **I pull in ... lies like truth:** Macbeth plans to rein in his arrogance, realising that he has been tricked by the unclear or ambiguous prophecies of the Witches.

47–48 **If this which he avouches ... tarrying here:** Macbeth concedes the point that, if the report about Birnam Wood is true, then it does not matter if he runs away or stays, the result will be the same: death.

51 **Blow, wind! Come, wrack!** The wind was often seen as an ill omen (a bad sign). Macbeth is giving himself over to fate, daring the supernatural powers to bring him to 'wrack' or ruin.



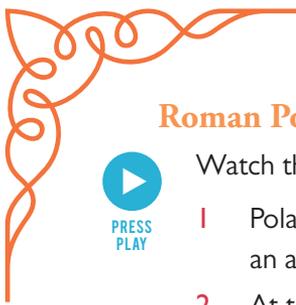
QUESTIONS

- 1 'I have almost forgot the taste of fears. / The time has been, my senses would have cooled / To hear a night-shriek ...' How does this quote suggest that Macbeth has changed from the character introduced to us by Shakespeare in Acts 1 and 2?
- 2 Why might Macbeth be concerned that Birnam Wood is moving? Think back to Act 4.
- 3 How does Macbeth's language ('Liar and slave!') show his emotions at the news of the moving forest?
- 4 What is Macbeth's state of mind by this stage of the play? Quote two lines that sum up his condition.
- 5 Why do you think Shakespeare chooses not to show Lady Macbeth's death onstage?



DISCUSS

What literary device does Shakespeare employ in the following line: 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow'? What might he be seeking to convey by using this device?



Roman Polanski: 'Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow'



Watch the scene in Polanski's film in which Macbeth delivers his final soliloquy.

- 1 Polanski has Macbeth descending the stairs of his castle. How might this be an appropriate action (or visual symbol) for this speech?
- 2 At the end of the soliloquy, Polanski uses a close-up shot of Macbeth. What might be the purpose of this close-up and how effective do you think it is? Might Polanski have achieved a similar effect by using any other camera, sound or lighting technique?



Out, out, brief candle!

Allusions to this famous speech

This speech – lines 19–28 – struck a particular chord with many readers and viewers in the twentieth century, and it is often alluded to in other works of literature. By way of example, *The Sound and the Fury* is the title of a famous novel set in the southern United States by American writer William Faulkner. Much of the story is told by three unreliable narrators – ‘idiots’ in the sense that they have limited knowledge and do not properly understand the forces at work in their lives. The novel charts the decline of the upper-class Compson family, which endures suicide and disgrace on its ‘way to dusty death’.

Robert Frost's poem ‘Out, Out–’ also alludes to this speech. The poem records the death of a young boy in a farm accident. Not only is his short life portrayed as a ‘brief candle’ but the seemingly random nature of the boy's death is also in keeping with the nihilism of Macbeth's speech. The poem ends with the community's reaction: ‘they, since they / Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs’. Here, the boy's death is presented as ‘signifying nothing’. Finally, the title ‘Out, Out–’ sets up an ironic tension between the murdering king, Macbeth, and the innocent farm boy.

This speech is alluded to in still more subtle ways. One example is James McAuley's autobiographical poem ‘Because’, which portrays his detached and destructive relationship with his father. McAuley acknowledged that he had the unique rhythm of the line ‘Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow’ in mind when he wrote the opening line: ‘My mother and my father never quarrelled’. This faint allusion effectively establishes a feeling of emotional numbness at the start of the poem, and foreshadows the tragic despair of the poem's ending.

MACBETH

Thou wast born of woman.

But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,
Brandished by man that's of a woman born.

[MACBETH exits; call to arms sounds and MACDUFF enters]

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 unbattered edge
I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be;
By this great clatter, one of greatest note
Seems bruited. Let me find him, fortune!
And more I beg not.

15

20

[MACDUFF exits. Call to arms sounds, and MALCOLM and SIWARD enter]

SIWARD

This way, my lord; the castle's gently rendered:
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.

25

MALCOLM

We have met with foes

That strike beside us.

SIWARD

Enter, sir, the castle.

[All exit. Call to arms continues to sound]



- 11 **Thou wast born of woman:** Macbeth relates the killing of Young Siward to the Witches' prophecy that no-one 'of woman born' could harm him.
- 17–18 **I cannot strike ... bear their staves:** Macduff says he cannot fight with mercenaries or soldiers who are paid to carry spears.
- 18–20 **Either thou, Macbeth ... undeeded:** Either I kill you (Macbeth) or else I will not even bother using my sword.
- 21–22 **By this great clatter, one of the greatest note / Seems bruited:** Macduff judges that the level of noise (either from talking and shouting, or perhaps from the clash of weapons) announces ('bruits') that someone of high rank is nearby; he assumes it is Macbeth.
- 24 **The castle's gently rendered:** Everyone has surrendered without too much resistance.



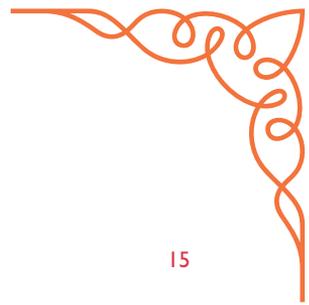
QUESTIONS

Which of the Witches' prophecies does Macbeth now cling to for reassurance?



EXTEND

In Act 5 Scenes 6 and 7, how does Shakespeare convey the sense of a battle, using only a few actors?



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 ripped.

15

MACBETH

Accursèd be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cowed 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.

20

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

25

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 damned be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

30

[Both exit, fighting. Call to arms continues to sound. Both re-enter fighting, and MACBETH is slain]

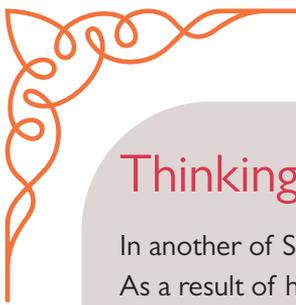


- 15–16 **Macduff was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped:** Macduff was not born naturally but perhaps by Caesarean section before his due date; thus, technically, he was not 'of woman born'.
- 19–20 **Be these juggling fiends ... double sense:** Macbeth curses the Witches, who juggle with words like a jester juggles with objects. He claims to have been fooled by the 'double sense' or ambiguity of the Witches' prophecies.
- 24–27 **And live to be ... see the tyrant:** Macduff warns Macbeth that he will end up being similar to a freak show at a local fair, imprisoned inside a tent and with a painting of him outside labelled, 'Here may you see the tyrant'.
- 29 **Baited with the rabble's curse:** Macbeth refuses to be mocked and tormented by the commoners or the 'rabble'.



Why does Macbeth initially refuse to fight Macduff? What is Macbeth's reason for not fighting Macduff later in the scene?

QUESTIONS



Thinking about restoring Scotland to good health

In another of Shakespeare's plays, *Hamlet*, Denmark is ruled by a corrupt King Claudius. As a result of his corruption, the whole of Denmark is morally contaminated and one of the minor characters, Marcellus, aptly observes, 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark'. The same can be said for Scotland under the rule of Macbeth.

On page 59, we introduced the notion of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's base emotion of ambition. Their corrupting influence spreads throughout Scotland like poison or a disease, and ultimately results in tragedy. Throughout *Macbeth*, Shakespeare effectively uses images of sickness and infection to convey the state of chaos or disorder in Scotland that stems from Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's unbridled ambition.

Evidence of chaos / disorder

The opening scenes of *Macbeth* present a number of elements of chaos or disorder:

- Scotland is embroiled in civil war
- the country has also been invaded by Norway
- the first characters onstage are Witches
- the play opens with thunder and lightning
- more abnormal weather persists throughout the play.

These unnatural elements are further reinforced by:

- Lady Macbeth's unnatural lack of feminine qualities (Act 1 Scenes 5 and 7)
- the presence of more storms, abnormal darkness and strange, violent animal behaviour (Act 2 Scene 4, lines 1–18)
- the appearance of Banquo's Ghost (Act 3 Scene 4)
- Lady Macbeth's descent into madness and sleepwalking – 'a great perturbation of nature' (Act 5 Scene 1, line 7).

Disease / infection / poison

Q What sort of infection, wound or poison is mentioned or suggested in the following textual references?

- a** Act 3 Scene 2, line 36
- b** Act 4 Scene 3, lines 40 and 146
- c** Act 5 Scene 1, lines 44 and 55

Healing / cure

Q If Macbeth is the source of the 'disease' infecting Scotland, then:

- a** What seems to be the 'cure' or 'medicine' for the sickness (4.3.213–15; 5.1.44; 5.2.27–29)?

- b** How is the King of England (Edward the Confessor) presented as a positive contrast to Macbeth (4.3.141–56)?
- c** How is it ironic that Macbeth commands the Doctor not only to cure his wife, but to ‘purge’ Scotland of the English (5.3.39–45, 50–56)?

Scotland is restored

The following scene (Act 5 Scene 9) sees Scotland beginning to be restored to a state of order, having been healed of its ‘disease’ – Macbeth. See the Extend question on page 155 for a more in-depth look at this.

Act 5 Scene 9

CHARACTERS

Malcolm
Ross
Macduff
Siward
All (*the whole class*)



IN A NUTSHELL

After being proclaimed the new King of Scotland, Malcolm promises to restore peace and order.

Before you read

- Note the shift in tone achieved in this scene, from the heightened tension in Scene 8 to a feeling of victory and celebration.

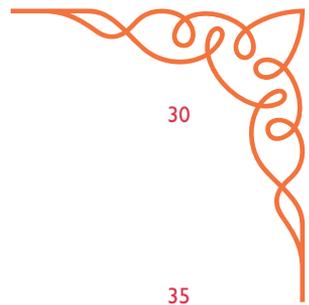


Prowess: Skill
Usurper: A person who unlawfully seizes power
Salutation: Greeting

Dunsinane: before the castle.

[Trumpet calls, signalling the end of fighting and a victory gained. MALCOLM, SIWARD, ROSS, the other Thanes and Soldiers enter, with drum and colours]

MALCOLM I would the friends we miss were safe arrived.
SIWARD Some must go off, and yet, by these I see,



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 crowned at Scone.

30
 35
 40

[Trumpets sound a victory flourish. All exit]



35–37 His fiend-like queen ... Took off her life: Malcolm reports hearing that Lady Macbeth has committed suicide.



- 1 In what ways could this scene be described as a 'happy ending'?
- 2 Are there any ways in which it is not a 'happy ending'?

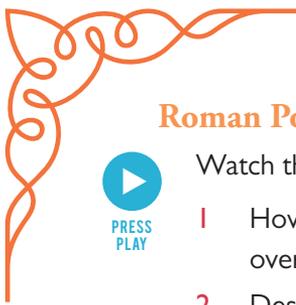


In your notes, make a table like the one below to show how Shakespeare uses language and structural devices in this scene to present the idea of the restoration of peace and order.

Device used by Shakespeare	Effect of this device
Image of time being set free	
Textual framing: the first and last scenes of the play focusing on honourable fighting in battle	
Repetition of 'Hail, King of Scotland'	
Image of a newly planted garden	
Narrative resolution: the problem plaguing Scotland is dealt with	
Structure: ending the play with a pair of rhyming couplets	



Do you think Macbeth's defeat will introduce a lengthy period of peace in Scotland? Use evidence from the text.



Roman Polanski: Scenes 8 and 9: the battle and ending



Watch the final scenes from Polanski's film.

- 1 How does the combat at the start of Scene 8 convey Macbeth's overwhelming confidence?
- 2 Describe the camera movement throughout the battle scene. How does this cinematic technique contribute to the mood of the scene?
- 3 Do you think the point-of-view shot after Macbeth has been decapitated is effective? How does Polanski's use of sound complement or reinforce the message of his camera work?
- 4 Polanski's ending omits Malcolm's speech about peace and order being restored. Instead, he has Donalbain going to meet with the Witches. What does this and the music he selects to close the film suggest about Polanski's interpretation of Shakespeare's play?

Geoffrey Wright: Scenes 8 and 9: the battle and ending

Now watch the equivalent scenes that conclude Wright's film of *Macbeth*.

- 5 How has Wright made Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane? Do you find this a clever twist or an unnecessary distraction?
- 6 How is Macbeth portrayed before his house is stormed by attackers? Why do you think Wright has him wearing a kilt?
- 7 Describe the way in which Wright presents the battle. Do you find this cinematic style effective?
- 8 Do you think a wine cellar is an exciting setting for a shoot-out? Why or why not? What alternative settings might Wright have considered?
- 9 Wright reintroduces Fleance in the final scenes, where he shoots a comparatively innocent servant. What idea might Wright be wishing to communicate to the audience?
- 10 This film ends with an image of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth lying dead with the 'Out, out, brief candle' speech from Act 5, Scene 5 played as a voice-over. Do you like this ending? Why or why not?

Note: the Wright film (2006) is rated MA and is not suitable to show in its entirety.

Comparison

- 11 Both films choose to omit Malcolm's final speech of restoration, which seems to make them more pessimistic than Shakespeare's play. Why might modern directors take this approach?
- 12 If you were a director, would you include Malcolm's speech of restoration? Why or why not?

General activities



Oral presentations / performances

- 1 Make your own soundtrack for a film version of *Macbeth*. Choose at least eight songs that you feel are appropriate for different scenes in the film. Specify which eight scenes you have chosen and write at least 50 words on each song to say why it is appropriate for a particular scene. Include at least four of the following scenes:
 - Act 1 Scene 1 (The Witches)
 - Act 1 Scene 5 ('Unsex me here')
 - Act 2 Scene 1 ('Is this a dagger which I see before me?')
 - Act 2 Scene 3 (The Porter)
 - Act 3 Scene 4 (Banquo's Ghost)
 - Act 4 Scene 1 (The Apparitions)
 - Act 5 Scene 1 (Lady Macbeth sleepwalking)
 - Act 5 Scene 5 (Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane)
 - Act 5 Scene 9 (Malcolm becomes King)

You may choose to perform this as an oral presentation, playing short excerpts from each song and explaining your choices.

- 2 Explain what your emphasis would be if you were given the chance to direct your own version of *Macbeth*. In particular, cover your choice of costume for six of the main characters and the Witches as a group. Explain what sort of atmosphere you would look to create through the set.
- 3 Record a scene from the play as part of a radio play.
- 4 Perform a scene from the play as a group, or perform one of the soliloquies or monologues on your own.
- 5 Produce a one-minute trailer advertising your film version of *Macbeth*. This can take the form of a television, film or radio advertisement. Make sure you consider music, sound effects and voice-over.
- 6 Set up a chat-show style interview with one of the characters from the play where you discuss what has happened to this particular character. Your character can take time out at any stage of the play; e.g. Act 2 Scene 1 for Banquo, or Act 5 Scene 3 for Macbeth. Make sure you stay in character for the entire length of the interview.

- 
- 7 Cover one of the following scenes as a two-minute news story:
- The battle described at the beginning of the play (Act 1 Scene 2)
 - The discovery of Duncan's murder (Act 2 Scene 3)
 - Macbeth's coronation (takes place between Act 2 and Act 3)
 - Banquo's murder and its consequences (based on events in Act 3)
 - The murder of Macduff's family (Act 4 Scene 2)
 - The resistance movement growing in England (Act 4 Scene 3)
 - The mood in the castle on the eve of battle (Act 5 Scene 3)
 - Macbeth's death and a new king for Scotland (Act 5 Scenes 8 and 9)

This can take the form of either a video or a radio news story. Make it attention-grabbing and include some interviews.

- 8 Deliver Act 1 Scene 1 or Hecate's speech in Act 3 Scene 5 as a rap, emphasising the rhythm. You may perform this as a group or individually.
- 9 Place the Witches on trial for complicity in Macbeth's crimes. This will be a group oral presentation involving at least five students, who will take the roles of the prosecution, the defence and the three Witches.
- 10 Memorise a passage from *Macbeth* and perform it for your class. Briefly place the speech in context before you deliver the lines, and then explain your interpretation after your performance.

Question for debate

Debate the following topic:

Macbeth bears total responsibility for the murder of Duncan.

The Affirmative Team will agree with the statement, while the Negative Team will disagree. Both teams should consist of three members who each speak for two minutes.

Creative writing

- 1 Try writing part of one of the scenes as a chapter from a modern novel. This will require you to fill in some of the details of setting, incorporate dialogue into the flow of your writing, and give some idea of what characters are thinking, even in places where they do not have a soliloquy or aside. Make sure you use modern language.
- 2 Write a letter in modern prose from the Witches to Hecate after Act 4 Scene 1, explaining their actions and hopes for Macbeth.

- 
- 3 Write a 300–500-word newspaper article on one of the events listed in Question 7 under Oral presentations / performances on page 158. Make sure your headline and your opening sentence grab the reader’s attention. Also, include some quotes from the play or from fictitious interviews with characters. You might like to present this using ICT (PowerPoint, Flash or create a website).
 - 4 Write a 300-word psychiatric report for Lady Macbeth, incorporating the material provided in Act 5 Scene 1. Describe her symptoms and speculate on possible causes of her condition. Use modern language to write your report.
 - 5 Think of three alternative titles for *Macbeth* and write a few sentences on why each of these titles would effectively market the play or film to a modern audience.
 - 6 Script a conversation that occurs between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth at some point between Scenes 5 and 7 in Act 1, in which Lady Macbeth convinces Macbeth to murder Duncan. Use the same conventions you have observed Shakespeare using throughout the play. Make sure, for example, that you begin a new line each time a different character speaks.
 - 7 In Act 3 Scene 1, Macbeth refers to an earlier conversation he had with the Murderers that the audience never hears. In this conversation, Macbeth persuades the Murderers that Banquo is their enemy. Script this using the conventions you have observed Shakespeare using throughout the play. Make sure, for example, that you begin a new line each time a different character speaks.
 - 8 Give Lady Macbeth a final moment of clarity before her death and write her dying soliloquy (10–20 lines in length). Make sure you employ Shakespearean language and devices.
 - 9 Create a blog in which you write some entries from one character’s point of view at different stages in the play, responding to the events that have occurred. Add other characters’ comments to your character’s blog.

Illustration

- 1 Design a poster for your own film version or stage production of *Macbeth*. Include quotes, some phrases that will catch the viewer’s attention and a list of the cast for your film or production.
- 2 Present one of the scenes from *Macbeth* as a comic book or comic strip.
- 3 Create a PowerPoint or Flash presentation on five characters in the play, using key quotes, a background that you feel is representative of each character, an appropriate symbol for them and some background music. Write 50 words on each character, explaining why you made these creative choices.



Group or class discussion questions

- 1 Does Shakespeare portray Macbeth sympathetically?
- 2 What effect does the murder of Duncan have on the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth?
- 3 To what extent is Macbeth the victim of forces beyond his own control?
- 4 What do you think *Macbeth* has to say about masculinity?
- 5 Do you think Macbeth's over-active imagination contributes to his downfall?
- 6 Does *Macbeth* distinguish between honourable and dishonourable violence?
- 7 Does the supernatural play a significant role in *Macbeth*?
- 8 Does the new regime under Malcolm, with Macduff as king-maker, suggest a hopeful future for Scotland?
- 9 Scotland will be no different under Malcolm than under Macbeth. Do you agree?

Essay questions

- 1 Macbeth's rule marks a period of chaos and cruelty in Scotland. Only his death can restore peace and order. Discuss.
- 2 How does imagery reinforce the main themes of *Macbeth*?
- 3 In what ways is *Macbeth* a morality tale that explores the destructive effects of ambition?
- 4 Do Macbeth and Lady Macbeth deserve the epitaph 'this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen'?
- 5 How does *Macbeth* explore the themes of masculinity and violence?
- 6 Macbeth is haunted by his imagination, his vaulting ambition and his uncertain sense of identity. Explore the way each of these factors affects his behaviour in the play.
- 7 As *Macbeth* unfolds, the roles and attitudes of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are reversed. Discuss.
- 8 How important are soliloquies in *Macbeth*?
- 9 Can *Macbeth* be accurately described as a play of opposites?
- 10 What themes or ideas does Roman Polanski's film version of *Macbeth* emphasise?
- 11 *Macbeth* does much more than convey the physical details of the overthrow of a king and the rule of a usurper; it draws the audience into the inner lives of two central characters and the tragedy that engulfs them. Discuss.
- 12 *Macbeth* is not really a tragedy. Discuss.

APPENDIX 1

To the teacher

It will not be possible for your students to attempt every activity in this book, but we have given you a wide range of activities and questions so that you can choose those that best suit the particular needs of your class. Listed below are some of the features of this book and a brief explanation of how they might be useful in your lessons.

We have used a range of icons to identify different parts of the text, and to help you and your students.

1. Understanding the narrative

Before you begin reading the text, it is important that your students have a sound grasp of the story. It is a good idea for the class to read through the **Act summaries** on pages 16–17, and complete the Quick questions and Freeze-frames activity on pages 17–18.

At the beginning of each scene, we have given a brief outline of what happens, called **In a nutshell**.

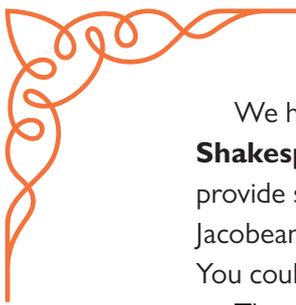
2. Reading the text

While it is likely you will read most of the play as a class, you should also read some scenes in smaller groups and perform some.

At the beginning of each scene we have listed the **Characters** in order of importance. It is advisable that you take a major role and delegate the other major parts to your most confident readers. It is also helpful if one student reads the stage directions in some of the scenes.

Where possible, try to delegate parts the day before you perform a scene so that students have an opportunity to look over, and perhaps practise, their part. Encourage students to read loudly and clearly, and be forthcoming with your praise.

Shakespeare's language (pages 8–13) provides some basic reading tips and explanations of key language features. We recommend that you look at the reading tips before you begin reading or explain them to your class. It is important that you do not overwhelm your students with too many concepts in a short space of time. Introduce concepts such as iambic pentameter after your students have begun to gain an intuitive sense for the language.



We have also provided general introductions on **Jacobean England**, **Shakespeare** himself, and the **Dates and sources** of *Macbeth*. These will provide some background and a context in which to read the play. The notes on Jacobean England and the theatre are the most important of these introductions. You could read these as a class or ask students to read them in their own time.

There is, of course, no substitute for seeing the text performed as a live production and we recommend you have actors or performance companies visit your school.

3. Understanding the text

A summary of **Important vocabulary** at the front of the book (page 14) lists key words that recur regularly throughout the play. Students should try to learn the meanings and pronunciation of these words.



We have also included some shorter vocabulary lists at the beginning of each scene, indicated by this icon. All of these words, plus some others from the **Text notes**, are repeated in the **Vocabulary list** on pages 166–68. This means you can find a word without having to remember where it was first introduced.

The **Before you read** section, at the beginning of most scenes, provides reading tips and anticipates problems students may have.

Phrases and words that are more secondary to the understanding of a scene are printed as **Text notes** at the end of each scene. In most cases, these notes provide an interpretation of a specific word or phrase and, in this way, can be limiting. We would encourage students not to make these their first point of reference but rather to use them, where necessary, after they have read through the scene and thought about it themselves.



Finally, a number of **History Boxes** provide useful historical information on Jacobean England, medieval Scotland and aspects of historical interpretation. Most of this information we have included to give a historical context for specific scenes. Other information has been provided to fire the students' curiosity.

We have provided a **Shakespeare reading list** on page 165, in case you wish to read more on Shakespeare and the Jacobean world.

4. Analysing the text



QUESTIONS

In ordering the **Questions**, we have attempted to balance chronology against degree of difficulty. For some scenes you may look to save time by dividing the questions among different groups in the class, or you may simply use them as a springboard for discussion.



EXTEND

We have also included challenge or **Extend** questions that will allow some students or the entire class to analyse a scene in greater depth. It is important that all students engage with the technical aspects of the play and, for this reason, we have also included questions relating to technique among the general questions.



DISCUSS

Finally, some questions have been designed for general discussion of personal responses to the text. These are indicated with the **Discuss** icon.

A word about ...

Shakespeare's themes and techniques highlight particular ideas and devices used by Shakespeare throughout this play. We recommend that students first read these boxes themselves and that you then explain the concept using the examples.

5. The films (Press play)



PRESS
PLAY

It is useful to show excerpts from both the Polanski (1971) and Wright (2006) films to reinforce students' understanding of key scenes, and these may provide an alternative to reading some scenes if you are running short of time. The **Press play** activities provide opportunities for further analysis and discussion.

NOTE: The Wright film is rated MA and is not suitable to show in its entirety; however, the scenes we have identified for study are appropriate for students to watch. We would recommend watching all of the Polanski film after you have read through the text.

In addition to these two films, the Trevor Nunn version (1978), starring Ian McKellen and Judi Dench, and the BBC production directed by Jack Gold (1983), while visually sparse, provide some powerful performances of the main soliloquies. Also, Orson Welles' 1948 version is still widely available and remains compelling. If you have enough time, the subtitled Japanese film *Throne of Blood*, directed by Akira Kurosawa (1957), which transfers the story of *Macbeth* to fifteenth-century Japan, is worth watching and would pair nicely with Shakespeare's script or one of the film versions of the play.

6. Other activities

There is deliberate overlap between the **Essay questions**, **General questions** and **Questions for debate**. How you use these will depend largely on the type of class you have. We have generally found that it is better to read through the play before beginning debates, essays or creative activities. Again, this will depend on your personal preference. You could consider breaking up your reading of the play with one of the **Creative activities** after Act 2 or 3.



7. A note about the text

We have based this edition of *Macbeth* primarily on the First Folio. Some of the stage directions and the spelling have been modernised, in line with standard editorial practices for preparing editions of Shakespeare's plays. We have taken particular care not to disrupt Shakespeare's rhythm, which can be rough and irregular in parts of this play. Modern punctuation conventions are followed, with the exception of the dash (–), which we have used to indicate an interruption in the flow or the direction of the conversation; for example, when a character switches from soliloquising to addressing another character onstage or when a character switches from addressing one character to addressing another (see **Shakespeare's language** on pages 8–13 for a more detailed explanation).

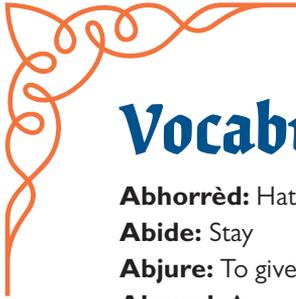
8. Finally ...

No-one could reasonably expect to understand every phrase or allusion in Shakespeare's plays and your students should not expect to either. Making this clear from the outset will foster the confidence in students to talk about what they do understand and what they do know: to see the text as a glass half full, rather than a glass half empty. Moreover, this will encourage students to appreciate the subtleties and resonances of the language and to truly understand that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our pedagogy.

APPENDIX 2

A Shakespeare reading list

- 
- Ackroyd, Peter, *Shakespeare: The Biography*, Vintage, London, 2005.
- Bate, Jonathan, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, Picador, London, 1997.
- Dersin, Denise (ed.), *What Life Was Like: In the Realm of Elizabeth*, Time-Life Books, Richmond, Virginia, 1998.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, Pimlico, London, 2005.
- Greer, Germaine, *Shakespeare: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002.
- Gurr, Andrew, *The Shakespearean Stage*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.
- Hussey, SS, *The Literary Language of Shakespeare*, Longman, Harlow, 1982.
- Kay, Dennis, *Shakespeare: His Life, Work and Era*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1991.
- Kermode, Frank, *Shakespeare's Language*, Penguin, London, 2001.
- Kermode, Frank, *The Age of Shakespeare*, Phoenix, London, 2005.
- Rodenburg, Patsy, *Reading Shakespeare*, Methuen, London, 2002.
- Shapiro, James, *1599: A Year in the life of William Shakespeare*, Faber and Faber, London, 2005.
- Tillyard, EMW, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, Vintage Books, New York, 1960.
- Wells, Stanley, *A Dictionary of Shakespeare*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.
- Wood, Michael, *In Search of Shakespeare*, directed by David Wallace, Maya Vision International, 2004.



Vocabulary list

Abhorred: Hated

Abide: Stay

Abjure: To give up, reject or abstain from

Abroad: Around the place

Absolved: Forgiven

Adieu: Goodbye (a French word)

Affliction: Something that causes suffering

Ague: Fever

Ambiguities: Unclear or confusing matters; events or words that invite more than one interpretation

Amend: Adjust or alter

Anon: Soon

Antic: A grotesque theatrical trick or representation

Appease: To pacify or satisfy someone or something

Art: Are

Assailable: Able to be overcome

Athwart: Across

Attire: Clothing

Aught: Anything

Augment: To increase or add to

Avarice: Greed

Avaunt: Be gone

Avouch: To confirm or guarantee that something is true

Ay: Yes

Balm: Soothing cream or ointment

Bane: Cause of ruin; poison

Bedaubed: Covered or plastered

Begot: Born or created

Beguile: To fool or charm

Benison: Blessing

Bounteous: Generous

Brandish: To wave a weapon in a menacing way

Brinded: Streaked or striped

Canker: A cancer or infection

Censures: Severe criticisms

Chide / chid: To tell someone off or criticise them

Cistern: A tank for storing water

Clamour: Noise or outcry

Commendations: Praises

Concord: Agreement; peace

Corporal: Of the body

Deftly: Skilfully

Diminutive: Very small

Dire: Disastrous; horrific

Direness: Horror

Discords: Disagreements or conflicts

Disjoint: In a state of brokenness or disunity

Disposition: Nature, temperament or feeling

Doff: To put aside or take off (opposite of don: to put on)

Enmity: Hatred or a state of being enemies

Entreat: Ask or plead

Equivocation: The deliberately misleading use of words that have multiple meanings

Ere: Before

Err: To do wrong or make a mistake

Exile: Being banished (thrown or locked out) from a place

Fain: Gladly; well-pleased

Fatal: Deadly; causing death

Fell: Cruel

Fi: An expression of annoyance, disapproval or even disgust

Flattering: Pleasing

Folly: Foolish or stupid behaviour

Forfeit: Loss

Fortitude: Strength

Gall: Bile – a bitter liquid produced by the gall bladder

Gibbet: Gallows or scaffold

Grace: Goodness or virtue (has Christian connotations)

Grooms: Male attendants (guards)
Guise: External appearance

Hark: Listen; pay attention
Harness: Armour
Heath: Barren land
Hemlock: A poison
Hence: From here; therefore
Hie: Hurry or go quickly
Homage: A show of respect or formal acknowledgement
Hoodwink: To deceive
Humour: Mood or behaviour

Impediments: Obstacles
Indissoluble: Permanent
Infirmity: Usually a physical defect or weakness
Ingratitude: Lack of thanks
Intemperance: Overindulgence

Kerns: Hired soldiers
Kinsman: Relative by blood or marriage
Knell: The sound of a bell rung slowly

Jocund: Lighthearted or joyful
Jovial: Happy and cheerful
Judicious: Wise

Laudable: Praiseworthy
Lechery: Lustful behaviour (sleeping around)
Liege: A lord or sovereign such as a king

Knave: Troublemaker

Malady: A physical or psychological disorder or disease
Malevolent: Evil; having a desire to harm
Malice: Desire to hurt or cause harm
Marr: To ruin or make bad
Marry: An expression of surprise or frustration, referring in medieval (and Jacobean) times to the Virgin Mary
Meet: Appropriate or fitting
Mettle: Courage or spirit



Mirth: Merriment or laughter
Missives: Letters
Moderately: With restraint
Mortal: Subject to death; will die (opposite of immortal)
Mortified: Dead

Niggard: A stingy person
Nought: Nothing

Palpable: Able to be touched or felt
Palter: To equivocate or trick someone
Parricide: Murder of a parent
Peerless: Without equal
Perchance: Maybe
Pernicious: Wicked; deadly
Pertains: Relates to or concerns
Perturbation: Disturbance
Physic: Medical science
Pious: Holy or religious
Portentous: Serious; a sign that something bad is going to happen
Posterity: Future generations
Potent: Powerful
Predominant: Of the highest importance
Presage: To give a sign or warning of something
Pristine: Unspoilt
Prithee: Used to introduce a request (I pray thee ...)
Procure: To get or obtain something
Profess: To announce or proclaim
Prophetic: Foretelling the future
Prowess: Skill
Purge: To remove toxins from; to make clean
Purveyor: A person who prepares or pre-arranges something

Rancour: Hatred and bitterness
Ratify: To give formal approval to a decision; to confirm
Recoil: To move back suddenly in fear or disgust
Recompense: To pay or reward for help
Reconcile: To put right, make friends or heal



Redress: To restore or correct
Relish: To enjoy or delight in
Repentance: Expression of sorrow or regret
Repose: Rest
Resolute: Firm in purpose or belief
Resound: Reverberate or echo

Salutation: Greetings
Saucy: Cheeky or rude
Scruples: Sense of right and wrong
Sepulchre: Tomb
Shrift: Confession
Signifying: Meaning
Sirrah: A form of address similar to Sir, but often used to address people of lower social rank or position (e.g. a servant or a child)
Starting: Sudden movement (nervous behaviour)
Suborned: Bribed
Sundry: Various
Surcease: Stop or end

Temperate: Mild or restrained
Thence: From that place (or time)
Thine: Yours (something belonging to you)
Thither: To or towards that place
Thou: You
Thy: Your

Traitor: Someone disloyal
Treachery: Betrayal
Treason: Betrayal of a country or its ruler
Tyrant: An unjust or cruel ruler

Unhallowed: Evil
Unsanctified: Unholy
Usurper: A person who unlawfully seizes power

Valiant: Brave or heroic
Valour: Bravery
Vices: Bad qualities
Villain: A wicked person; a rascal or rogue: used as a harsh insult
Virtues: Good qualities
Vizard: Someone's face or facial expression

Weal: Country
Whence: From what place, cause or origin
Wherefore: Why
Wit: Cleverness (especially with humour)
Withal: With (when the word appears at the end of a clause), as in: 'This diamond he greets your wife withal' (2.1.16)
Wrought: Worked

Yield: Give in

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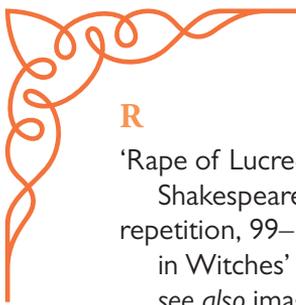
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