

Macbeth – Act I

Scene 1

1. What atmosphere and tone are created by the witches in the opening scene?
2. How does the line “fair is foul, foul is fair,” later echoed in Scene 3 foreshadow the events in the entire act?

Scene 2

3. We first hear about Macbeth in Scene 2, through the speeches of the wounded sergeant as he reports to Duncan. What initial impression are you given of Macbeth?
4. What images does he associate with Macbeth

Scene 3 & 4

5. During Scene 3, what prophecies do the witches make for Macbeth and Banquo?
6. Compare the reactions of Macbeth and Banquo to the witches and their predictions.

Macbeth:

Banquo:

7. When Macbeth enters in Scene 3, why does he say “So foul and fair a day I have not seen?”
8. In what ways is Banquo “lesser than Macbeth, and greater”?

Scene 5

9. What are Lady Macbeth’s reactions when she receives Macbeth’s letter in Scene 5?
10. After reading the letter, what are her criticisms of Macbeth?

11. What impression do you form of her character in the remaining scenes of this act?

Scene 6

12. How does Lady Macbeth greet her guests in Scene 6?

Scene 7

13. Study carefully Macbeth's soliloquy at the beginning of Scene 7.

- a. What do you learn about Macbeth's state of mind from his speech?
- b. What is his conflict?
- c. How does he describe Duncan's character?
- d. What is the effect of Lady Macbeth's arguments?

14. With "double trust" (Scene 7, line 12), Duncan comes to Macbeth's house. Name three relationships that bind Duncan and Macbeth.

- a.
- b.
- c.

15. In Scene 7, Macbeth is on the verge of giving up his plan to murder Duncan. How does Lady Macbeth encourage him?

16. Shakespeare ends Act I with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth plotting the murder of Duncan. How exactly do they plan to kill him?

Macbeth – Act II

Scene 1

17. At the beginning of Act II, how does Banquo show that he is already on guard and fears for his life?

18. What sign do you see that, even before the murder, Macbeth is losing touch with reality?

Scene 2

After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth is troubled by voices he heard or thought he heard.

19. Why could he not say "Amen" when a voice said, "God bless us"?

20. What is meant by "Macbeth does murder sleep"?

21. Why won't Macbeth return to Duncan's room?

The images of blood and water are interwoven in lines 55-68 of Scene 2.

22. What does each suggest?

23. How do the different attitudes of Macbeth and his wife to their bloodstained hands serve to point up the basic difference in their character?

Scene 3

24. Lennox tells Macbeth of several strange events that indicate trouble. What are they?

25. Why does Macbeth kill Duncan's grooms?

26. Summarize the reactions of the following characters to Duncan's death.

a. Banquo:

b. Malcolm and Donalbain:

c. Macduff:

Scene 4

27. Ross and an Old Man talk of an outbreak of unnatural events that forebode ill. What are these events?

In Scene 4, there are several examples of dramatic irony in which situations are the tragic reverse of what the participants think.

28. What is ironic about Macduff's replying to Ross' question "Those that Macbeth hath slain" (line 23)?

29. What is ironic about Macduff's suspicion of Duncan's two sons, Malcolm and Donalbain?

Macbeth – Act III

Scene 1

In the opening speech of Act III, Banquo muses on the witches' prophecies.

30. Which have come true?

31. Which give Banquo hope for the future?

32. Why has Banquo remained silent when he believes that Macbeth has played "mostly foul" (line 3)?

33. Macbeth says that he fears no one but Banquo. Why does Macbeth fear Banquo?

Scene 2

34. In Scene 2, both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth voice regret for their actions. How are their thoughts similar?

35. How do scenes 1 and 2 reveal moral change in Macbeth?

36. There is also a change in the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. What is the change and where is it most apparent?

37. What does it reveal about Macbeth's moral state?

Scene 3

38. Why does Macbeth want to kill Banquo's son Fleance? What happens to Fleance in Scene 3?

Scene 4

39. In the banquet scene, what speeches by Macbeth seem to call forth Banquo's ghost?

40. What is ironic about the timing in number 10?

41. How does Lady Macbeth act to save Macbeth?

Scene 5

42. Why is Hecate angry in Scene 5?

Scene 6

43. What is Malcolm, Duncan's son, doing in England?

44. Macduff has gone to England. Why?

Macbeth – Act IV

Scene 1

Hecate and the witches call up four separate apparitions for Macbeth. Use this to answer questions 45-48:

45. What are they?

46. Why is Macbeth oblivious to the hidden meanings in the witches' prophecies?

47. What occurrence in this scene deeply disturbs him?

48. Why does the last king carry a looking glass?

49. How does Macbeth react to the news that Macduff has left for England?

50. Why does Macbeth decide to murder Macduff's family?

51. How does the decision to kill Macduff's family differ from his decisions to murder Duncan and Banquo?

52. What does this indicate about the development of Macbeth's character?

Scene 2

53. What is Lady Macduff's reaction to her husband's leaving her and her family alone and unprotected?

Reread the conversation between Lady Macduff and her son.

54. What is Lady Macduff like?

55. What is her son like?

56. How does this lively, intimate exchange affect our response to the brutal killing with which this scene ends?

Scene 3

57. How does Malcolm describe himself to Macduff?

58. Why does he misrepresent his character to Macduff?

59. What aspects of his character here suggest that he will be a strong leader of the Scottish patriot forces against Macbeth?

60. How does Macduff respond to Malcolm's confessions?

61. What does Malcolm say to try to help Macduff control his grief and redirect his emotions?

62. Whom does Macduff blame for the deaths of his family and servants?

Macbeth – Act V

Scene 1

In the famous “sleepwalking scene,” Lady Macbeth relives events that have taken place earlier in the play. In her raving she skips from one event to another but she always returns to the same one.

63. Of the three events she broods over, which troubles her most deeply? Why?

64. Why is Lady Macbeth obsessed with the idea of washing her hands?

Scene 2

65. Macbeth's enemies discuss his mental condition. What is their appraisal of Macbeth's sanity?

66. How have Macbeth's subjects reacted to their new king's actions?

Scene 3

Reread lines 22-28

67. What does this soliloquy tell us about Macbeth's state of mind on the eve of battle?

68. What traditional comforts of old age does he realize will not be his?

Scene 4

69. How does Malcolm's plan fulfill the prophecy that the Birnam forest will “come against” Macbeth?

Scene 5

70. How would you characterize Macbeth's state of mind in Scene 5?

Scene 6

71. Macbeth's enemies plan their battle strategy. Who issues the commands for the battle plan?

Scene 7

72. What does Macbeth mean when he says, "I cannot fly, /But bearlike I must fight the course."

Scene 8

The play ends with a public oration Malcolm, who is about to be crowned King of Scotland.

73. What aspects of this speech make it an appropriate conclusion?

74. Do we learn anything new in the speech?