

Macbeth Review Packet

Study Guide Questions

Act 1

Essential Questions

1. **(Scenes 1 and 2)** What do you learn about Macbeth in these opening scenes?
2. **(Scene 3)** What effect will the Witches' predictions have?
3. **(Scenes 4 and 5)** How do others' views of the Macbeths compare to the way they really are?
4. **(Scenes 6 and 7)** What causes Macbeth to change his mind multiple times about killing Duncan?

Analysis

1. Why do you think Shakespeare used a scene with three witches to begin this play? How might this beginning prepare the audience for what is to come?
2. Why is it so important that Macbeth should be presented to us as a brave and honored soldier at the very beginning of the play?
3. The Elizabethan audience actually believed in witches; a modern audience does not. What difference could this make in the reactions of the two groups to the prophecies of witches?
4. Can the weird sisters "make" anything happen, or do they merely foresee the future? How do you know?
5. What is the difference between Macbeth's and Banquo's reactions to the witches? How will this affect the whole play?
6. What does Lady Macbeth read in the letter from her husband?
7. What does Lady Macbeth fear about her husband?
8. In scenes 5 to 7, how much evidence can we find that Macbeth is more frightened by the plan to kill Duncan than Lady Macbeth is? Is there evidence that there has been previous discussion of the plan? If so, refer to the line or lines.
9. How does Lady Macbeth manage to strengthen Macbeth's courage and determination? What arguments does he use to force Macbeth to kill Duncan?
10. In your opinion, what is Lady Macbeth's attitude toward her husband? Give examples from the text to support your answer.
11. What is Macbeth's opinion of Banquo?
12. Do you agree with King Duncan that you cannot tell what people are really like just by looking at them? Reread King Duncan's speech in Act I, scene iv, lines 11-21, and discuss why you think Shakespeare had Duncan say this just before Macbeth enters?

Act II

Essential Questions

1. **(Scenes 1 and 2)** Who seems more determined to kill Duncan – Macbeth or Lady Macbeth?
2. **(Scene 3)** How is the murder plot working so far?
3. **(Scene 4)** Does anyone suspect Macbeth?

Analysis

1. Why did Shakespeare begin Scene 1 with Banquo and Fleance? What purpose did this scene serve dramatically?
2. What do you think would happen if the attempt to kill Duncan or the cover-up failed?
3. Analyze the “dagger” speech. In how many ways does Macbeth see the dagger? Is he becoming stronger or weaker in will and determination than he revealed himself in Act I?
4. In what ways is the feeling of horror revealed and made impressive at the beginning of Scene 2?
5. What dramatic effect is produced by the knocking and by the actions of the Porter?
6. Why did Macbeth kill Duncan’s guards? Was it a wise move? Explain. What reason did he give the others? How is Macbeth thinking at this point?
7. Why did Duncan’s sons flee rather than remain to inherit the throne?
8. What went wrong with Lady Macbeth’s plan, and how did she fix the situation? Why did she need to correct the error?

Act III

Essential Questions

1. **(Scenes 1 and 2)** How are the Macbeths enjoying their new status?
2. **(Scenes 3 and 4)** What is the impact of Banquo’s death?
3. **(Scenes 5 and 6)** How is Scotland reacting to Macbeth’s rule?

Analysis

1. Do Scenes 1 and 2 taken together indicate that Macbeth has either fallen or risen in a moral sense? Explain.
2. For what reasons does Macbeth want Banquo murdered? What reasons does he give the murderers? What does the conversation with the murderers reveal about Macbeth?
3. Scene 4 is considered by many to be a turning point in the play. You may either agree or disagree, but explain why this might be considered the climax.
4. What dramatic purpose is served by the appearance of Banquo’s ghost? How do Lady Macbeth and Macbeth respond to this vision?

5. In this act what hints or nuances are given of the gathering forces of opposition to Macbeth?
6. What does Lennox's and the other lord's conversation in Scene 6 reveal?
7. Describe how Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's behaviors have changed since they have become king and queen.
8. Why isn't Macbeth enjoying being king?
9. How does Macbeth manage to talk the murderers into killing Banquo?
10. What does Macbeth mean when he says, "Blood will have blood"?

Act IV

Essential Questions

1. **(Scene 1)** What does Macbeth's future hold?
2. **(Scene 2)** Is this slaughter necessary?
3. **(Scene 3)** Is Malcolm the right man for the job?

Analysis

1. Name all the devices Shakespeare uses in creating a feeling of horror and impending doom at the beginning of this act. Point these out in the play.
2. What are the three new prophecies the witches make to Macbeth? Which seems the most immediately dangerous? What effects do the witches' enhancements have upon Macbeth's morals?
3. For what did Macbeth deliberately search out the witches? Why does the answer horrify him?
4. What further moral degeneration does Macbeth show at the end of Scene 2?
5. Why might Ross' appearance at Macduff's castle represent a weakening of Macbeth's position? Do you think the Messenger who warns Lady Macduff might have been sent by Lady Macbeth? Give reasons for or against.
6. How does the murder of Macduff's family differ from that of Banquo?
7. In Scene 3, why does Malcolm misrepresent his own character to Macduff? How does Macduff's reaction as well as his horrible personal news set him up as a nemesis?
8. Why does Macbeth decide to kill Macduff's family?
9. How does Malcolm test Macduff's loyalty?
10. Why do you think Shakespeare included the discussion about the King of England and his special talents in Act IV, scene iii?
11. Review the ingredients that the witches put into their cauldron. What might this repulsive stew symbolize?
12. Find at least 3 examples of foreshadowing in this act.

Act V

Essential Questions

1. **(Scene 1)** What's troubling Lady Macbeth?
2. **(Scenes 2, 3, and 4)** How is the battle going?
3. **(Scenes 5 and 6)** Is there any way out for Macbeth?
4. **(Scenes 7 and 8)** Did Macbeth have to die?

Analysis

1. In Scene 1, what words by Lady Macbeth show that she has been brooding over the past crimes? Untangle the confused mixture of words to show which crime she dwells on most frequently. What is the reason for this?
2. What lines foreshadow (are harbingers) Lady Macbeth's death?
3. How does Macbeth react to his wife's death?
4. How is each of the witches' prophecies revealed? (Scenes 4, 5, and 8)
5. Trace the final mental state of Macbeth through significant speeches. Where does he show false bravery which masks the underlying fear? Where does he reveal dependence upon the witches' prophecies? Where does he reveal the sense of betrayal by the witches? Where does he reveal his horrified realization of his misspent life?
6. In what ways does Macbeth show his better qualities (i.e. bravery and humaneness) in Scene 8?
7. Does Lady Macbeth's mental condition come as a surprise, or was this possibility part of her character from the beginning? Explain.
8. Review Macbeth's speech. What are the things that Macbeth thinks should accompany old age? What does he think will happen to him instead?
9. Explain how Macbeth is lulled into a false sense of security by the witches' predictions and how the truth of the predictions leads to his downfall.
10. What dramatic purpose might there be to having eight short scenes in the last act?
11. Is there any point in this act at which you feel sympathy for Macbeth? Explain your answer.

Commonly Used Shakespeare Words

anon—right now, OR “I come right away” “*Anon, good nurse! Speak!*”

art—are, OR skill. “*Thou art dead; no physician’s art can save you.*”

dost or doth—does or do. “*Dost thou know the time?*”

ere—before. “*We must leave ere daybreak.*”

fain—gladly. “*I fain would bake Mr. Love cookies if I could get an A.*”

fie—an exclamation of dismay or disgust. “*You cheated? Fie upon it!*” OR “*Fie! Are you mad?*”

hark—listen. “*Hark to the owl,*” OR “*Hark! The herald angels sing!*”

hence—away. “*Get thee hence, beggar!*” OR “*We must hence before the army arrives.*”

hie—hurry. “*Hie thee hence, or lose your life!*”

hither—here. “*Come hither, young lad.*”

thither—there. “*Look to the east—thither doth the sun arise.*”

hath—has. “*He hath killed many a man.*” OR “*He hath a horse.*”

ho—hey (roughly equivalent). “*Lucius, ho!*” [*Brutus calling his servant*]

mark—pay attention to. “*Mark my words.*”

marry—indeed. “*He says I should respond quickly; marry, I want to.*”

pray/prithee—a polite way of asking something. “*I prithee answer the question.*”

saucy—cheeky; sassy. “*Hence, thou saucy boy!*”

sirrah—a term of address used for inferiors. “*Sirrah, bring the letter over here.*”

thee—you. “*When will I see thee next?*”

thou—you. “*Thou art a villain.*”

thy—your. “*Thy name is more hateful than thy face.*”

whence—from where. “*Whence came that news?*” OR “*Return to whence you came.*”

wherefore—why. “*Wherefore dost thou leave?*” OR “*Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?*”
[As in, “why can’t you be someone else, whom my family doesn’t hate?”]

Character Map

