

Characters

The play focuses on the Scottish nobility



© Ellie Kurtz

Duncan is the King of Scotland.



© Amitava Sarkar

Malcolm is one of Duncan's sons.



© Marilyn Kingwill/Arena PAL.
TopFoto.co.uk

Macbeth is a Scottish general and the Thane of Glamis.

Lady Macbeth is Macbeth's wife.



© Donald Cooper

Banquo is a Scottish general.

Fleance is Banquo's son.



© Amitava Sarkar

Macduff is the Thane of Fife.



© Amitava Sarkar

Lady Macduff is Macduff's wife.



© Donald Cooper

Rosse is a Scottish noble.



© Donald Cooper

Lennox is Scottish noble.



© Amitava Sarkar

The Three Witches



© Rex Features

The Porter of Macbeth's castle.

Act 1, Scene 2 — Macbeth is a Hero

13 'kerns and gallowglasses' were foot soldiers and soldiers on horseback.

14-15 By this the Captain means that fortune seemed to favour the rebels.

19 'valour's minion' means 'bravery's loyal follower'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth beheads a traitor on the battlefield. This foreshadows his own death at the end of the play.

25 'From where the sun begins to rise (the East).'

31 'surveying vantage' means 'seeing his chance'.

32 'furbished' means 'polished'.

36 'say sooth' means 'tell the truth'.

Character — Macbeth

At the beginning Macbeth is praised for his bloodthirsty behaviour. The irony is that his violence will eventually cause his downfall.

37-39 'They were like cannons loaded with twice the ammunition — they attacked our enemies twice as hard. It was as if they wanted to bathe in our enemies' blood.'

46-47 'He's got a strange look in his eyes. He looks like he's got some odd news.'

49 'flout' means 'mock'.

And choke their art. The merciless Macdonald —
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that 10
The multiplying villainies of nature

Do swarm upon him — from the western isles
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;
And fortune, on his damnèd quarrel smiling,
Showed like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak: 15

For brave Macbeth — well he deserves that name —
Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valour's minion, carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave; 20

Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chops,
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!

CAPTAIN As whence the sun 'gins his reflection,
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,
So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come 25
Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark:

No sooner justice had with valour armed
Compelled these skipping kerns to trust their heels,
But the Norwegian lord, surveying vantage, 30
With furbished arms and new supplies of men,
Began a fresh assault.

DUNCAN Dismayed not this
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

CAPTAIN Yes —
As sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion. 35
If I say sooth, I must report they were

As cannons overcharged with double cracks, so they
Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:

Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,
Or memorise another Golgotha, 40
I cannot tell —

But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

DUNCAN So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;
They smack of honour both. Go get him surgeons.

Exit CAPTAIN, *attended*. *Enter* ROSSE and ANGUS.

Who comes here?

MALCOLM The worthy Thane of Rosse. 45

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

ROSSE God save the king!

DUNCAN Whence camest thou, worthy thane?

ROSSE From Fife, great king,

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

Norway himself, with terrible numbers,
Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,

Act 1, Scene 3 — Macbeth Meets the Witches

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 victory fell on us.

DUNCAN Great happiness!
ROSSE That now Sweno,

The Norway's king, **craves composition.**
Nor would we deign him burial of his men 60
Till he disbursed at Saint Colme's Inch
Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

DUNCAN No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive
Our bosom interest: go pronounce his present death,
And with his former title greet Macbeth. 65

ROSSE I'll see it done.

DUNCAN What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.

Exeunt

54 Bellona was the Roman goddess of war — Rosse is saying that Macbeth looked so fierce in his armour that he could have been Bellona's husband.

59 'asks for a peace treaty'.

60-62 'We wouldn't let him bury his men till he had handed over ten thousand dollars at Saint Colme's Inch'.

64 'Our bosom interest' means 'my interests'.

Theme — The Supernatural

"lost" and "won" mirrors the Witches' language (Scene 1, line 4). This suggests that the Witches can predict the future, and it hints at their power.

Macbeth and Banquo meet the Witches. The Witches predict that Macbeth will be made Thane of Cawdor, then king. They predict that Banquo's descendants will become kings too. Macbeth and Banquo meet Rosse and Angus, who tell Macbeth that he has been given the title Thane of Cawdor.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

A HEATH

Thunder. Enter the three WITCHES.

FIRST WITCH Where hast thou been, sister?

SECOND WITCH Killing swine.

THIRD WITCH Sister, where thou?

FIRST WITCH A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap
And munched, and munched, and munched. 5
'Give me', quoth I.

'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump-fed ronyon cries. 5
Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'th' Tiger:
But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
And like a rat without a tail,
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

SECOND WITCH I'll give thee a wind. 10

FIRST WITCH Thou'rt kind.

THIRD WITCH And I another.

FIRST WITCH *I myself have all the other,*
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know 15
I'th' shipman's card.
I'll drain him dry as hay:

4 'quoth' means 'said'.

5 "'Get lost, witch!'" shouted the spoilt cow.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

The Witches curse a sailor and send a storm to stop him sleeping. This foreshadows how Macbeth will be made sleepless with guilt and worry.

16 'shipman's card' means 'compass'.

Act 1, Scene 3

19 'penthouse lid' means 'eyelid'.

21 'sennights' means 'seven nights'.

23 'bark' means 'ship'.

32 'Posters' means 'people who travel quickly'.

36 'Quiet now, the spell's cast'.

Theme — Fate and Free Will

These words echo the final lines of [Scene 1](#). This hints that Macbeth's [fate](#) is [linked](#) with the Witches.

44-46 'You must be women, but as you've got beards, that's hard to believe.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

This is an example of [dramatic irony](#) — the audience already knows that this part of the Witches' [prophecy](#) has [come true](#).

52-53 'Are you imaginary or real?'

56 'rapt' means 'amazed'.

Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his [penthouse lid](#);
He shall live a man forbid. 20
Weary [sennights](#) nine times nine,
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.
Though his [bark](#) cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.
Look what I have. 25

SECOND WITCH Show me, show me.

FIRST WITCH Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wrecked as homeward he did come.

Drum within

THIRD WITCH A drum, a drum!
Macbeth doth come. 30

ALL The weird sisters, hand in hand,
[Posters](#) of the sea and land,
Thus do go, about, about,
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice again, to make up nine. 35
[Peace](#) — the charm's wound up.

Enter MACBETH and BANQUO.

MACBETH So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

BANQUO How far is't called to Forres? What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth, 40
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
Upon her skinny lips; [you should be women](#),
[And yet your beards forbid me to interpret](#)
That you are so. 45

MACBETH Speak if you can: what are you?

FIRST WITCH All hail Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH All hail Macbeth! Hail to thee, [Thane of Cawdor](#)!

THIRD WITCH All hail Macbeth that shalt be king hereafter!

BANQUO Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear 50
Things that do sound so fair? I'th' name of truth
[Are ye fantastical, or that indeed](#)
[Which outwardly ye show?](#) My noble partner
You greet with present grace and great prediction
Of noble having and of royal hope, 55
That he seems [rapt](#) withal. To me you speak not.
If you can look into the seeds of time
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favours nor your hate. 60

FIRST WITCH Hail!

SECOND WITCH Hail!

THIRD WITCH Hail!

Act 1, Scene 3

FIRST WITCH	Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.	
SECOND WITCH	Not so happy, yet much happier.	65
THIRD WITCH	Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none. So all hail Macbeth and Banquo!	
FIRST WITCH	Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!	
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, 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.	70 75
	<i>Witches vanish.</i>	
BANQUO	The earth hath bubbles, as the water has, 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.	80
BANQUO	Were such things here as we do speak about? Or have we eaten on the insane root, That takes the reason prisoner?	
MACBETH	Your children shall be kings.	
BANQUO	You shall be king.	85
MACBETH	And Thane of Cawdor too: went it not so?	
BANQUO	To th' selfsame tune and words — who's here?	
	<i>Enter ROSSE and ANGUS</i>	
ROSSE	The king hath happily received, Macbeth, The news of thy success, and when he reads Thy personal venture in the rebels' sight, His wonders and his praises do contend Which should be thine or his. Silenced with that, In viewing o'er the rest o' th' selfsame day, He finds thee in the stout Norwegian ranks, Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make, Strange images of death. As thick as tale Came post with post, and every one did bear Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence, And poured them down before him.	90 95
ANGUS	We are sent To give thee from our royal master thanks; Only to herald thee into his sight, Not pay thee.	100
ROSSE	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.	105
BANQUO	What, can the devil speak true?	

Character — The Witches

The Witches talk in **riddles** and **paradoxes** to **mislead** Macbeth and Banquo.

66 'You'll have descendants who will become kings'.

74-75 'Tell me where you got this information from'.

80 'corporal' means 'flesh and blood'.

Theme — Reality and Appearances

Macbeth and Banquo repeatedly ask questions. This shows their **confusion** — they **can't believe** what they've **seen**.

89-92 'When the King heard about how bravely you fought in the battle, he didn't know whether to be more surprised or impressed — he hardly knows what to give you as a reward.'

97 'post with post' means 'message after message'.

101 'to be your official escort to the King'.

103 'earnest' means 'taster'.

Act 1, Scene 3

107-108 'Why are you calling me by someone else's title?'

111-114 'I don't know whether the Thane of Cawdor fought alongside Norway, helped the rebel army or worked with both our enemies to try to ruin Scotland.'

117 'The greatest (title) is yet to come'.

120-121 'If you trust what they say, you might become king.'

Character — Banquo

Banquo is more suspicious of the Witches' prophecies than Macbeth — he believes they are telling the truth, but that they will "betray" them.

130-131 'This supernatural temptation can't be bad, but it can't be good either.'

Theme — Ambition

Already, Macbeth has started to think about murdering Duncan — but he's physically shocked by the thought.

139-141 'Even though it's just a fantasy, the thought of killing Duncan shakes me to the core. My mind is overcome with murderous thoughts...'

144-146 'Macbeth's not used to his new title. It's like new clothes which fit better after you've worn them for a while.'

146-147 'Whatever happens will happen.'

MACBETH The Thane of Cawdor lives. *Why do you dress me
In borrowed robes?*

ANGUS Who was the Thane, lives yet,
But under heavy judgement bears that life
Which he deserves to lose. 110

*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 wrack, I know not,
But treasons capital, confessed and proved,* 115
Have overthrown him.

MACBETH (*Aside*) Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor:
The greatest is behind. — Thanks for your pains. —
(*To Banquo*) Do you not hope your children shall be kings,
When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me
Promised no less to them?

BANQUO *That, trusted home,* 120
*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,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's* 125
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. —
This supernatural soliciting 130
Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair 135
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,* 140
But what is not.

BANQUO Look how our partner's rapt.

MACBETH 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, 145
But with the aid of use.

MACBETH *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

Act 1, Scene 4 — Duncan Thanks Macbeth

With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains 150
 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. 155
 MACBETH Till then, enough. Come, friends.
Exeunt

150-151 'I'll remember what you have done for me'.

153-155 'Think about what's happened and we'll talk about it later.'

King Duncan thanks Macbeth and Banquo for defeating the enemy armies. Duncan makes Malcolm heir to the throne. Macbeth considers murdering Duncan to make the second prophecy come true.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

THE ROYAL PALACE AT FORRES

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

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, 10
 To throw away the dearest thing he owed,
 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.

Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSSE, and ANGUS
 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

1-2 'Has Cawdor been executed yet? Are the people who were given the task of killing him back yet?'

2 'liege' means 'lord'.

8 'Became' means 'suited'.

8-11 'He died like a person who had practised throwing away his most treasured possession as if it were nothing'.

Theme — Reality and Appearances

Duncan says that people may seem good and trustworthy but they might not be. It's ironic because he misjudges Macbeth.

18-20 'Only if you deserved less could I thank and reward you enough'.

22-23 'Doing my duty for you is a reward in itself'.

Act 1, Scene 4

28-29 'I have planted the seeds of a great future for you, and I will make sure that you succeed.'

35 'drops of sorrow' means 'tears'.

36 'all my nearest and dearest'.

37-38 'I name my eldest son, Malcolm, the next in line to the throne'.

42-43 'Let's go to Macbeth's castle in Inverness to spend some time together.'

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth speaks in rhyming couplets as he exits. This emphasises the importance of his words. It's also similar to the way the Witches speak — this highlights Macbeth's evil intentions.

Character — Duncan

Duncan praises Macbeth and says Macbeth is without equal. Duncan is portrayed as a generous, grateful king — this makes his murder seem even more treacherous.

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 everything
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, 30
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known
No less to have done so, let me enfold thee
And hold thee to my heart.

BANQUO There if I grow,
The harvest is your own.

DUNCAN My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves 35
In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
And you whose places are the nearest, know
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland, which honour must
Not unaccompanied invest him only, 40
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,
And bind us further to you.

MACBETH The rest is labour, which is not used for you:
I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful 45
The hearing of my wife with your approach.
So humbly take my leave.

DUNCAN My worthy Cawdor!

MACBETH (*Aside*) The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap, 50
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires,
Let not light see my black and deep desires;
The eye wink at the hand. Yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

Exit

DUNCAN True, worthy Banquo: he is full so valiant,
And in his commendations I am fed; 55
It is a banquet to me. Let's after him,
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome:
It is a peerless kinsman.

Flourish. Exeunt.

Act 1, Scene 5 — Lady Macbeth Plots Against Duncan

Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband telling her about the Witches' prophecies. She begins to plot King Duncan's murder. Macbeth arrives and they decide to kill Duncan that evening.



© COLUMBIA / THE KOBAL COLLECTION

ACT 1, SCENE 5

MACBETH'S CASTLE IN INVERNESS

Enter LADY MACBETH *alone, with a letter.*

LADY MACBETH (*Reads*) "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 5
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 10
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
What thou art promised; yet do I fear thy nature, 15
It is too full o'th'milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false, 20
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,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear 25
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crowned withal.

Enter MESSENGER

What is your tidings?

MESSENGER The king comes here tonight.

LADY MACBETH Thou'rt mad to say it. 30

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 35
Than would make up his message.

LADY MACBETH Give him tending,
He brings great news.

Exit MESSENGER

6 'missives' means 'messengers'.

Character — Macbeth

Lady Macbeth assumes that Macbeth will hesitate over killing Duncan. This suggests that at this point Macbeth isn't totally evil.

17 'to do what it takes'.

18-19 'but you aren't wicked enough to do it.'

27 'golden round' means 'crown'.

28 'metaphysical aid' means 'supernatural help'.

31-32 'Isn't Macbeth with him? If the king was coming, Macbeth would have warned us.'

34-36 'Macbeth sent a messenger ahead of him, who arrived so out of breath that he could barely tell us his message.'

Act 1, Scene 5

37-39 'The messenger announces Duncan's fatal visit like a hoarse raven'.

Theme — Good and Evil

Lady Macbeth's **dark** and **terrifying** soliloquy shows how **evil** she is. Her references to "**spirits**" and "**hell**" links her with the **Witches**.

42-46 'Thicken my blood so I can't feel pity, so that no human kindness will stop me from carrying out my terrible plan.'

47 'gall' means 'acid'.

47 'murd'ring ministers' means 'murderous spirits'.

50 'And cover you in the darkest smoke of hell'.

Theme — The Supernatural

Lady Macbeth's **greeting** echoes the **Witches'** language from Act 1, Scene 3 (lines 47-49).

Theme — Reality and Appearances

Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth to **deceive** Duncan by **pretending** to be something he's not.

69 'sovereign sway' means 'kingly power'.

71 'if you act differently you'll arouse suspicion'.

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 40
And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull
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 45
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, 50
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, 'Hold, hold.'

Enter MACBETH

Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor,
Greater than both by the all-hail hereafter,
Thy letters have transported me beyond 55
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.
LADY MACBETH O never
Shall sun that morrow see. 60
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. **To beguile the time,**
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue; look like th'innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't. He that's coming 65
Must be provided for, and you shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch,
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely **sovereign sway** and masterdom.
MACBETH We will speak further —
LADY MACBETH Only look up clear; 70
To alter favour ever is to fear.
Leave all the rest to me.

Exeunt

Act 1, Scene 6 — Duncan Arrives at Macbeth's Castle

King Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle and is greeted by Macbeth and his wife. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth act politely towards Duncan to disguise the fact that they plan to murder him.

ACT 1, SCENE 6

MACBETH'S CASTLE

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

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

BANQUO This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath 5
Smells wooingly here: no jutting, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,
The air is delicate.

Enter LADY MACBETH

DUNCAN See, see, our **honoured** hostess! 10
The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you
How you shall bid God yield us for your pains,
And thank us for your trouble.

LADY MACBETH All our service 15
In every point twice done and then done double
Were poor and single business to contend
Against those honours **deep and broad** wherewith
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,
And the late dignities heaped up to them,
We rest your hermits.

DUNCAN Where's the Thane of Cawdor? 20
We **coursed** him at the heels, and had a purpose
To be his **purveyor**: but he rides well,
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath hold him
To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,
We are your guest tonight.

LADY MACBETH Your servants ever 25
Have theirs, themselves, and what is theirs, in compt,
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,
Still to return your own.

DUNCAN Give me your hand;
Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,
And shall continue our graces towards him. 30
By your leave, hostess.

Exeunt

A 'hautboy' is an instrument like an oboe.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Duncan comments on how "**pleasant**" and **welcoming** Macbeth's castle is. This is **ironic** — the audience knows that the Macbeths are actually plotting to **kill him**.

3-10 'House martins only nest where the air is lovely — and there are lots here.'

Character — Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth **flatters** Duncan and **thanks** him for his **generosity**. This **contrasts** with the previous scene, showing how **false** Lady Macbeth is.

20 'we shall pray for you'.

21 'coursed' means 'chased'.

22 A 'purveyor' is someone whose job it is to ride ahead and get things ready.

25-28 Something like, 'We are your servants — everything we have is for you to use because it's really yours in the first place.'

Act 1, Scene 7 — The Macbeths Plan the Murder



© Amitava Sarkar

At first Macbeth decides against killing Duncan — he's not sure he'll get away with it, and he knows Duncan is a good man. Then Lady Macbeth says they can make it look as if Duncan was killed by his servants. Macbeth agrees to the plan.

ACT 1, SCENE 7

MACBETH'S CASTLE. NEAR THE HALL.

Hautboys. Torches. Enter a butler and many servants with dishes and service over the stage. Then enter MACBETH.

MACBETH 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'ingredience 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, 15
 Who should against his murderer shut the door,
 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 20
 The deep damnation of his taking-off.
 And pity, like a naked newborn babe
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin 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 —

Enter LADY MACBETH

How now? What news?

LADY MACBETH He has almost supped. Why have you left the chamber?

MACBETH Hath he asked for me?

LADY MACBETH Know you not he has? 30

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

2-5 'If murdering Duncan could stop any consequences, then this murder might be all I have to do'.

7 'We wouldn't worry about the afterlife'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth comments that murderers themselves get killed. This foreshadows his death at the end of the play.

Theme — Kingship

Macbeth recognises that Duncan is a good king. Duncan's righteousness makes Macbeth feel even more guilty about his plan to murder Duncan.

25-28 'I have no reason to kill Duncan except my own ambition, and ambition causes people to rush towards their downfall.'

29 'He's almost finished eating. Why have you left the room?'

Act 1, Scene 7

LADY MACBETH	Was the hope drunk Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since? And wakes it now to look so green and pale At what it did so freely? From this time, Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard To be the same in thine own act and valour, As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life, And live a coward in thine own esteem, Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would", Like the poor cat i'th'adage?	35 40
MACBETH	Prithee, peace. I dare do all that may become a man; Who dares do more is none.	45
LADY MACBETH	What beast was't then That made you break this enterprise to me? When you durst do it, then you were a man. And to be more than what you were, you would Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place Did then adhere, and yet you would make both. They have made themselves and that their fitness now Does unmake you. I have given suck and know How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me: I would, while it was smiling in my face, Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn As you have done to this.	50 55
MACBETH	If we should fail?	
LADY MACBETH	We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking-place, And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep, Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey Soundly invite him, his two chamberlains Will I with wine and wassail so convince, That memory, the warder of the brain, Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep Their drenchèd natures lie as in a death, What cannot you and I perform upon Th'unguarded Duncan? What not put upon His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt Of our great quell?	60 65 70
MACBETH	Bring forth men-children only, For thy undaunted mettle should compose Nothing but males. Will it not be received, When we have marked with blood those sleepy two Of his own chamber and used their very daggers, That they have done't?	75
LADY MACBETH	Who dares receive it other, As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar Upon his death?	

35-39 'Was the hope you wore yesterday drunk? Has it slept since? And woken up green and pale and scared of our plan? From now on, I will think the same thing about our love.'

41-42 She means 'the crown'.

45 'adage' means 'proverb' — 'cats like eating fish, but they don't like getting their paws wet'.

46 'may become' means 'is suitable for'.

51-52 'Neither the time nor place were right before, but you would go ahead anyway'.

Theme — Good and Evil

Lady Macbeth's image of a **mother murdering her innocent child** emphasises how **evil** she is.

60 'force yourself to feel really brave'.

64 'wassail' means 'toasts' (e.g. 'cheers')

72 'quell' means 'murder'.

Character — Macbeth

Lady Macbeth **manipulates** Macbeth into agreeing to the **murder** even though he's decided against it. This hints that he's **easily influenced**, or that he **didn't need** much convincing to kill Duncan.

Act 2, Scene 1 — Macbeth Sees the Dagger

Banquo and his son, Fleance, are walking together at night. Macbeth comes across them, and he and Banquo talk about the Witches' predictions. When Banquo leaves, Macbeth begins to hallucinate — he sees a dagger. At the end of the scene, he leaves to kill Duncan.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

COURTYARD IN MACBETH'S CASTLE

Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE bearing a torch before him

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 heaven; **5**
Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.
 A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
 And yet I would not sleep: merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose!

Enter MACBETH, and a SERVANT with a torch
 Give me my sword. 10

Who's there?

MACBETH A friend.

BANQUO What, sir, not yet at rest? The King's abed.
He hath been in unusual pleasure, and
Sent forth great largess to your offices. 15
This diamond he greets your wife withal,
 By the 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 weïrd 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,**
It shall make honour for you.

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

MACBETH **Good repose** the while! 30

BANQUO Thanks, sir — the like to you!



© Marilyn Kingwill/Arena PAL.
 TopFoto.co.uk

5 'They're saving money'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

There are **no** stars shining — this **image** is used **several times** in the play to link **evil** with **darkness**. See Act 1, Scene 4 (lines 50-51) and Act 1, Scene 5 (lines 49-52).

9-10 'stop the nightmares that trouble me when I sleep.'

14-16 'The King's very happy. He's given you many rewards, such as this diamond for your wife.'

18-20 'Because we weren't prepared, we couldn't do as much for Duncan as we would have liked.'

23 'when we have an hour to spare'.

26-27 'If you follow my advice, when the time comes, it will be to your advantage.'

Character — Banquo

Banquo says he'll **only** help if he can keep a **clear conscience**, which is **more important** to him than his **ambition**.

30 'Good repose' means 'sleep well'.

Act 2, Scene 1

Exeunt BANQUO and FLEANCE

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

Exit SERVANT

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee. 35
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-oppressèd brain? 40
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use.

Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses, 45
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 50
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep. Now witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and withered murder,

Alarumed 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 65
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

Exit

37-38 'Can't you be touched as well as seen?'

41 'palpable' means 'solid'.

43-44 'The dagger directs me to where I was going (to Duncan's room) and it looks just like the dagger I'm going to use.'

Theme — Reality and Appearance

Macbeth isn't sure whether the dagger he sees is real or not. It's not clear to the audience if the witches have created the hallucination or he's imagining it.

56 Tarquin was a violent Roman prince.

59 'prate' means 'speak'.

61-62 In other words — 'While I'm talking, Duncan is still alive. The more I talk, the more I'll lose my nerve.'

64-65 'I hope you don't hear the bell, Duncan, because it's ringing to call you to heaven or to hell.'

Blank Verse

Most of *Macbeth* is written in blank verse.

Blank verse is a type of poetry that has three main features:

- The lines don't usually rhyme.
- Each line has around 10 syllables.
- Each line has 5 stressed syllables —

"But screw your courage to the sticking-place."

Most of the upper-class characters in *Macbeth* talk in blank verse.

When characters don't speak in blank verse it creates a contrast, e.g. Lady Macbeth speaks in prose when she's sleepwalking (Act 5, Scene 1), which shows her troubled state of mind.



© Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy

Act 2, Scene 2 — Macbeth Has Killed Duncan

Macbeth has killed Duncan and he's overcome with guilt. In his confusion he returns still holding the daggers. Lady Macbeth takes them back to Duncan's room and smears blood on the servants to make them seem guilty. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth end up with blood on their hands.



© CROMWELL / LAMANCHA / GRAMPAIN TV / THE ROBAL COLLECTION

ACT 2, SCENE 2

COURTYARD IN MACBETH'S CASTLE

Enter LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH That which hath made them drunk hath made
me bold;

What hath quenched them hath given me fire.

Hark! Peace!

It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman,
Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it.

The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms
Do mock their charge with snores — I have drugged

their possets,

That death and nature do contend about them,
Whether they live or die.

MACBETH (Within) Who's there? What, ho!

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

Enter MACBETH

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 (*Looking at his hands*) This is a sorry sight. 20

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

MACBETH There's one did laugh in's 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

1 'The alcohol that has made the servants drunk has given me courage.'

3 A 'bellman' was the person who rang a bell before an execution.

6 'posset' is a kind of hot drink.

10-11 'To try but not to follow through will be our downfall.'

Character — Lady Macbeth

This is the first time Lady Macbeth has wavered — it's the first sign that she'll struggle to get over her guilt.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth speak in very short sentences. Their language suggests that they're nervous and afraid of being caught.

Act 2, Scene 2

27 'As if they'd seen my bloody hands.'

30 'Don't think about it so much.'

33-34 'Don't think like that about what we've done or we'll go mad.'

Theme — The Supernatural

In Act 1, Scene 3 (lines 18-19), the Witches say that they'll stop the captain of the Tiger from sleeping.

37 'ravelled' means 'frayed'.

45-46 'You'll make yourself weak by thinking such disturbed thoughts.'

47 'witness' means 'evidence'.

50 'grooms' means 'servants'.

Character — Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth takes charge of the situation. She thinks clearly and rationaly about how to cover their tracks.

56-57 'I'll cover the faces of the servants with blood to make them look guilty.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth's words foreshadow Lady Macbeth's desperate attempts to 'wash' her hands in Act 5, Scene 1.

62 'incarnadine' means 'turn red'.

64-65 'My hands are bloody like yours, but I'd be ashamed if I was a coward like you.'

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.

MACBETH Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more,
Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast. 35

LADY MACBETH What do you mean? 40

MACBETH Still it cried, 'Sleep no more' to all the house,
'Glamis hath murdered sleep', and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more — Macbeth shall sleep no more.

LADY MACBETH Who was it, that thus cried? Why, worthy thane,
You do unbend your noble strength to think
So brain-sickly of things. Go get some water
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there. Go carry them and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood. 45

MACBETH I'll go no more. 50
I am afraid to think what I have done —
Look on't again, I dare not.

LADY MACBETH Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
For it must seem their guilt. 55

Exit. Knock within.

MACBETH Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? Ha — they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No — this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red. 60

Enter LADY MACBETH

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

Knock within

I hear a knocking 65

Act 2, Scene 3 — Duncan's Body is Discovered

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.

Knock within

Hark, more knocking.

Get on your night-gown, 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.

Knock within

Wake Duncan with thy knocking: I would thou couldst.

Exeunt

68-69 In other words —
'You've lost your nerve.'

70-71 'Put on your night-gown
in case someone sees us and
thinks we've been up all night.'

73 'It's better to be lost
in my thoughts than think
about what I've become.'

The scene begins with the Porter, who provides some dark [comic relief](#) from the [bloody chaos](#) of the previous scene and before the [uproar](#) when Duncan's body is [discovered](#). Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, decide to [run away](#) because they believe that they'll be [murdered next](#).

ACT 2, SCENE 3

THE ENTRANCE TO MACBETH'S CASTLE

Enter a PORTER. Knocking within.

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

(Knock)

Knock, knock, knock. Who's there i'th' name of
Beelzebub? Here's a farmer that hanged himself on
th' expectation of plenty. Come in time — have napkins 5
enough about you, here you'll sweat for't.

(Knock)

Knock, knock. Who's there in th' 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 10
heaven. O, come in, equivocator.

(Knock)

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.

(Knock)

Knock, knock. Never at quiet! What are you? But this 15
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 th' everlasting bonfire.

(Knock)

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

1-2 'The man in charge of
hell's gate would often have to
unlock it.'

Character — The Porter

The Porter [pretends](#) to be
the gate-keeper to hell.
This emphasises that [evil](#)
things have happened at
Macbeth's castle.

10 'equivocate' means 'telling
the truth in a misleading way' —
like the witches do to Macbeth.

16-18 'I'll stop playing the
devil's porter. I wanted to
let somebody from every
profession into hell.'

Act 2, Scene 3

25 'nose-painting' means 'it gives you a red nose'.

28 'equivocator' means 'a person who misleads'.

29 'mars' means 'ruins'.

34-36 'it got me right in the throat, but I got my own back, and, I think, even though the drink made me unsteady I was too strong for it, and I threw it up.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

The audience and Macbeth know that Duncan has been murdered, but the others don't. This builds suspense.

44 In other words — 'Work that we enjoy cures pain.'

48 'It was a very stormy night.'

53 'obscure bird' means 'owl'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth's short sentences make him seem tense, as if he's trying not to give himself away.

(Opens door)

Enter MACDUFF and LENNOX

MACDUFF Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed, 20
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.

MACDUFF What three things does drink especially provoke?

PORTER Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, 25
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 30
to and not stand to. In conclusion, equivocates him in
a sleep, and, giving him the lie, leaves him.

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 35
took up my legs sometime, yet I made a shift to cast him.

Enter MACBETH

MACDUFF Is thy master stirring?
Our knocking has awaked him — here he comes.

Exit PORTER

LENNOX Good morrow, noble sir.

MACBETH Good morrow, both.

MACDUFF Is the king stirring, worthy thane?

MACBETH Not yet. 40

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

MACBETH I'll bring you to him.

MACDUFF I know this is a joyful trouble to you, but yet 'tis one.

MACBETH The labour we delight in physics pain.
This is the door.

MACDUFF I'll make so bold to call, 45
For 'tis my limited service.

Exit

LENNOX Goes the King hence today?

MACBETH He does — he did appoint so.

LENNOX The night has been unruly — where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i'th'air, strange screams of death 50
And prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion and confused events,
New hatched to th'woeful time. The obscure bird
Clamoured the livelong night. Some say, the earth
Was feverous and did shake.

MACBETH 'Twas a rough night. 55

Act 2, Scene 3

LENNOX My young remembrance cannot parallel
A fellow to it.

Enter MACDUFF

MACDUFF O horror! Horror! Horror!
Tongue nor heart cannot conceive, nor name thee.

MACBETH and LENNOX What's the matter?

MACDUFF Confusion now hath made his masterpiece. 60
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence
The life o'th'building.

MACBETH What is't you say, the life?

LENNOX Mean you his majesty? 65

MACDUFF Approach the chamber and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon. Do not bid me speak —
See and then speak yourselves.

Exeunt MACBETH and LENNOX

Awake! Awake!

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

Bell rings. Enter LADY MACBETH.

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

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.

Enter BANQUO

O Banquo, Banquo, 80
Our royal master's murdered!

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

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

Enter MACBETH and LENNOX

MACBETH Had I but died an hour before this chance, 85
I had lived a blessed time, for from this instant,
There's nothing serious in mortality.
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of. 90

Enter MALCOLM and DONALBAIN

56-57 'I can't remember a night as bad as this one.'

58 'I can't believe it or say it.'

61-63 'Duncan's body is like a church which has been broken into and had the life stolen from it.'

67 Gorgons were characters from Greek myths — all who looked at them turned to stone.

71 'counterfeit' means 'forgery'.

74 'sprites' means 'ghosts or spirits'.

75 'countenance' means 'witness'.

75-77 'What's happened to wake everyone up?'

Theme — Reality and Appearances

Macduff thinks that because Lady Macbeth is a **woman**, she's too **vulnerable** to hear about the **murder**. It's **ironic** because Lady Macbeth wanted to **cast off** her **femininity** in Act 1, Scene 5 to make her **capable of murder**.

83-84 'Macduff, please say you're lying and it's not true.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

The audience knows that Macbeth's **grief is false** — his language is **too poetic** for someone who's supposed to be in **shock**. In lines 130-131, **Malcolm** says it's "**easy**" for **liars** to show **sadness** they **don't** feel.

Act 2, Scene 3

95 'Those of his chamber' means 'his servants'.

96 'badged' means 'covered'.

100 'repent' means 'regret'.

102 'temperate' means 'calm'.

104-105 'The speed of my rage overpowered my reason.'

Theme — Reality and Appearances

In some productions Lady Macbeth only pretends to faint, to distract everyone from Macbeth's suspicious actions, but in others she faints because she's shocked that Macbeth changes their plan and kills the grooms.

117 'We haven't begun to cry yet.'

118 'And our sadness hasn't yet caused us to act'.

120-123 'When we've dressed, let's meet to discuss the murder and find out what happened.'

125-126 'I'm going to fight against this treasonous plot.'

DONALBAIN	What is amiss?	
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.	
MACDUFF	Your royal father's murdered.	
MALCOLM	O, by whom?	
LENNOX	<i>Those of his chamber</i> , as it seemed, had done't. Their hands and faces were all <i>badged</i> with blood, 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.	95
MACBETH	O, yet I do <i>repent</i> me of my fury That I did kill them.	100
MACDUFF	Wherefore did you so?	
MACBETH	Who can be wise, amazed, <i>temperate</i> , and furious, Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man. <i>Th'expedition of my violent love</i> <i>Outran the pauser, reason.</i> Here lay Duncan, His silver skin laced with his golden blood 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 Courage to make's love known?	105
LADY MACBETH	Help me hence, ho!	
MACDUFF	Look to the lady.	
MALCOLM	<i>(To Donalbain)</i> Why do we hold our tongues, That most may claim this argument for ours?	
DONALBAIN	<i>(To Malcolm)</i> What should be spoken here, Where our fate hid in an auger hole may rush And seize us? Let's away. <i>Our tears are not yet brewed.</i>	115
MALCOLM	Nor our strong sorrow upon the foot of motion.	
BANQUO	Look to the lady, <i>LADY MACBETH is taken out</i> And when we have our naked frailties hid That suffer in exposure, let us meet, And question this most bloody piece of work To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us — In the great hand of God I stand and thence <i>Against the undivulged pretence I fight</i> <i>Of treasonous malice.</i>	120
MACDUFF	And so do I.	
ALL	So all.	
MACBETH	Let's briefly put on manly readiness And meet i'th'hall together.	
ALL	Well contented. <i>Exeunt all but MALCOLM and DONALBAIN</i>	125

Act 2, Scene 4 — Macbeth is to be King

MALCOLM What will you do? Let's not consort with them.
To show an unfelt sorrow is an office
Which the false man does easy. I'll to England. 130

DONALBAIN To Ireland, I. Our separated fortune
Shall keep us both the safer. Where we are,
There's daggers in men's smiles; the nea'er in blood,
The nearer bloody.

MALCOLM This murderous shaft that's shot
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way
Is to avoid the aim. Therefore to horse,
And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,
But shift away. There's warrant in that theft
Which steals itself when there's no mercy left. 140

Exeunt

129 'consort' means 'meet'.

130-131 'It's easy for a liar to pretend to be upset when he's not.'

Theme — Reality and Appearances

Donalbain says that people hide their true intentions. This echoes what Lady Macbeth says earlier (Act 1, Scene 5, lines 64-65).

135-137 'The arrow that's been shot hasn't landed yet — the best thing to do is get out of the way.'

Rosse and an old man discuss what has happened since Duncan's death. Macduff enters and says that Malcolm and Donalbain are under suspicion for murdering Duncan because they have run away. This leaves Macbeth to become king.

ACT 2, SCENE 4

OUTSIDE MACBETH'S CASTLE

Enter ROSSE and an OLD MAN.

OLD MAN Threescore and ten I can remember well;
Within the volume of which time I have seen
Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore night
Hath trifled former knowings. 115

ROSSE Ha, good father,
Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act, 5
Threatens his bloody stage: by the clock, 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,
When living light should kiss it?

OLD MAN 'Tis unnatural, 10
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,
A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.

ROSSE And Duncan's horses — a thing most strange and certain
— Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race, 15
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make
War with mankind.

OLD MAN 'Tis said they eat each other.

ROSSE They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes
That looked upon't.

1-4 'In the seventy years I can remember, I've seen terrible things. But what happened last night makes everything else seem trivial.'

7 By 'travelling lamp' he means 'the sun'.

15 'minions' means 'prime examples'.

Theme — Kingship

Strange events have occurred, which suggest that Duncan's murder and Macbeth's rise to become king are against nature.

Act 2, Scene 4

24 'What reason could they have had to murder Duncan?'

24 'suborned' means 'bribed'.

28 'ravin' means 'eat'.

Theme — Ambition

Rosse thinks that "thriftless (pointless) ambition" drove Malcolm and Donalbain to have their father murdered.

Character — Macduff

Macduff doesn't go to Macbeth's coronation, which suggests that he doesn't support Macbeth's claim to become king.

38 'I hope our new king is as good as our old king'.

40 'benison' means 'blessing'.

Enter MACDUFF

	Here comes the good Macduff.	20
	How goes the world, sir, now?	
MACDUFF	Why, see you not?	
ROSSE	Is't known who did this more than bloody deed?	
MACDUFF	Those that Macbeth hath slain.	
ROSSE	Alas, the day!	
	What good could they pretend?	
MACDUFF	They were <u>suborned</u> .	
	Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's two sons, Are stol'n away and fled, which puts upon them Suspicion of the deed.	25
ROSSE	'Gainst nature still!	
	Thriftless ambition, that wilt <u>ravin up</u> 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.	
ROSSE	Where is Duncan's body?	
MACDUFF	Carried to Colmekill, The sacred storehouse of his predecessors, And guardian of their bones.	
ROSSE	Will you to Scone?	35
MACDUFF	No, cousin, I'll to Fife.	
ROSSE	Well, I will thither.	
MACDUFF	Well, may you see things well done there — adieu! <u>Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!</u>	
ROSSE	Farewell, father.	
OLD MAN	God's <u>benison</u> go with you, and with those That would make good of bad, and friends of foes!	40
	<i>Exeunt</i>	

Symbolism

Bird imagery is used throughout the play. In this scene, the Old Man mentions how a "towering" falcon (a powerful bird that hunts high up in the air during the day) has been killed by a lowly mousing owl (a bird that flies close to the ground to catch mice at night). This could symbolise how Macbeth, who has committed his crimes at night, has gone against nature by killing Duncan.



Act 3, Scene 1 — Macbeth Plots Banquo's Murder

Banquo suspects that Macbeth killed Duncan. Macbeth feels insecure — he's worried that Banquo's heirs will become kings. Macbeth orders two murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance.



© Donald Cooper

ACT 3, SCENE 1

THE ROYAL PALACE AT FORRES.

Enter BANQUO

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

4 'stand in thy posterity'
means 'stay in your family'.

8 'verities' means
'things that are true'.

Theme — Ambition

Banquo hopes the predictions will come true. He's ambitious, but unlike Macbeth, he isn't corrupted by his ambition.

'Sennet' means 'trumpet fanfare'.

Sennet sounded. Enter MACBETH, as king, LADY MACBETH, as queen, LENNOX, ROSSE, 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.

Theme — Reality and Appearances

Macbeth's flattering Banquo to make him feel safe and to find out his whereabouts so he can have him murdered that evening.

17 'indissoluble'
means 'unbreakable'.

21 'still' means 'always'.

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

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?

24-25 'I'll ride as far as I can
between now and supper'.

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

27 'Don't miss our feast.'

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*

Act 3, Scene 1

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? 35

BANQUO Ay, my good lord, our time does call upon 's.

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

Exit BANQUO

Let every man be master of his time
Till seven at night. To make society 40
The sweeter welcome,
We will keep ourself till supper-time alone —
While then, God be with you.

Exeunt all but MACBETH, and a SERVANT

Sirrah, a word with you.

Attend those men our pleasure?

SERVANT They are, my lord,
Without the palace gate.

MACBETH Bring them before us. 45

Exit SERVANT

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,
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind, 50
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
To act in safety. There is none but he
Whose being I do fear; and under him
My **genius** is rebuked; as, it is said,
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He **chid** the sisters 55
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,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe, 60
Thence to be wrenched with an **unlineal** hand,
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind,
For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered;
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace 65
Only for them, and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
Rather than so, come fate into the list.
And champion me to the utterance! Who's there? 70

Re-enter SERVANT, with two MURDERERS

Now go to the door, and stay there till we call.

Exit SERVANT

29-32 'Malcolm and Donalbain have gone to England and Ireland, without confessing to their father's murder. They've been telling all kinds of lies — but we'll talk about that tomorrow'.

39-40 'Everyone, occupy yourselves until seven o'clock'.

44 'Are those men here to see me?'

46 'Being king isn't enough if I don't feel secure'.

Character — Macbeth

In Act 1 Macbeth was **shocked** by the thought of murdering Duncan. But there's no hesitation when he orders the killing of Banquo. Murder has become **easy**.

54 'genius' means 'guardian angel'.

55 'chid' is a shortened version of 'chided' which means 'told off'.

61 'unlineal' means 'not descended from'.

63-67 Something like, 'For Banquo's children, I've defiled (polluted) my mind, murdered Duncan, put bitterness in the cup of my peace, and given my soul to the devil.'

Theme — Fate

Macbeth speaks as if he's **challenging fate to a fight**.

Act 3, Scene 1

75-76 'made your lives a nightmare'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth tricks the murderers into killing Banquo — he claims that Banquo's responsible for ruining their lives.

78 'I showed to you'.

81 'half a soul' means 'a fool'.

86 'gospelled' means 'religious'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth's speech echoes Lady Macbeth's in Act 1, Scene 7. He questions the murderers' masculinity to make them do what he wants.

92 'clept' means 'called'.

104 'Brings you closer to me'.

105-106 'I will be sick as long as Banquo lives — only his death could make me healthy'.

106-109 'The suffering in my life has made me so angry that I'll do anything to get back at the world.'

111-112 'I would risk my life on any opportunity to either make my life better or to be rid of it entirely.'

Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

FIRST MURDERER It was, so please your highness.

MACBETH

Well then, now

Have you considered of my speeches? **Know**

That it was he, in the times past, which held you

So under fortune, which you thought had been

Our innocent self. This I made good to you

In our last conference, **passed in probation with you,**

How you were borne in hand, how crossed, the instruments,

Who wrought with them, and all things else that might

To **half a soul** and to a notion crazed

Say, 'Thus did Banquo.'

FIRST MURDERER

You made it known to us.

MACBETH

I did so, and went further, which is now

Our point of second meeting. Do you find

Your patience so predominant in your nature

That you can let this go? Are you so **gospelled**

To pray for this good man and for his issue,

Whose heavy hand hath bowed you to the grave

And beggared yours for ever?

FIRST MURDERER

We are men, my liege.

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,

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.

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,

Who wear our health but sickly in his life,

Which in his death were perfect.

SECOND MURDERER

I am one, my liege,

Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world

Have so incensed that I am reckless what

I do to spite the world.

FIRST MURDERER

And I another,

So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,

That I would set my lie 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.

Act 3, Scene 1

MACBETH So is he mine; and in such bloody distance,
That every minute of his being thrusts
Against my near'st 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,
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,
Masking the business from the common eye
For sundry weighty reasons. 115

SECOND MURDERER We shall, my lord,
Perform what you command us. 120

FIRST MURDERER Though our lives — 125

MACBETH Your spirits shine through you. Within this hour, at most,
I will advise you where to plant yourselves,
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time,
The moment on't, for't must be done tonight,
And *something from* the palace; always thought,
That I require a clearness. And with him —
To *leave no rubs nor botches in the work* —
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,
Whose absence is no less material to me
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart —
I'll come to you anon. 130 135

BOTH MURDERERS We are resolved, my lord.

MACBETH I'll call upon you straight. Abide within.

Exeunt MURDERERS

*It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight,
If it find heaven, must find it out tonight.* 140

Exit

114-123 'He's my enemy too, and every minute that he's alive, he stabs at my heart. Although I could openly get rid of him myself, I mustn't because we share important friends I can't lose — so I'll have to mourn the man I've ordered to be killed. And so I need your help, to keep the plan a secret.'

128 'tell you the exact time'.

130 'something from' means 'away from'.

132 'Don't leave any evidence or make any mistakes.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth speaks in a **rhyming couplet** in the last two lines of the scene. This makes him sound **decisive**, and reminds the audience of the last lines of Act 2, Scene 1.

Character — Banquo

Macbeth says some **very nice** things about Banquo in this scene. Macbeth claims that Banquo has a "**royalty of nature**" (line 48), "**wisdom**" and "**valour**" (line 51). One of the reasons why Shakespeare might have Macbeth say these things is that the **real** Banquo was thought to be an **ancestor** of **King James I** (pictured).



© IMAGNO/Austrian Archives (AA) / TopFoto

Act 3, Scene 2 — Macbeth Feels Anxious

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth feel very insecure about their position as king and queen. Macbeth says that he feels guilty about Duncan's murder, but then he starts hinting that he's plotting to murder Banquo as well.



© COLUMBIA / THE KOBAL COLLECTION

ACT 3, SCENE 2

THE ROYAL PALACE AT FORRES

Enter LADY MACBETH and a SERVANT

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.

Exit

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.

Enter MACBETH

How now, my lord! Why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died 10
With them they think on? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard — what's done is done.

MACBETH We have scotched the snake, not killed it:
She'll close, and be herself, whilst our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth. 15
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;
Treason has done his worst — nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing 25
Can touch him further.

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

4-5 'Nothing is gained, everything is lost, we've got what we want but we're still unhappy.'

Character — Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth gloomily talks in rhyming couplets about how she's feeling, but her language and tone change when Macbeth enters. This suggests that she's trying to appear strong and positive for her husband.

9 'fancies' means 'thoughts'.

11-12 'Don't think about things you can't change'.

13 'scotched' means 'injured'.

14 'poor malice' means 'pathetic evil deeds'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth suffers from nightmares — reminding the audience of the voice he hears in Act 2, Scene 2 (lines 35-36).

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth envies Duncan's escape from the worries of being king. The problems Macbeth mentions — civil wars and foreign armies — foreshadow Macduff's rebellion and the English attack in Act 5.

Act 3, Scene 2

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 cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons
 The shard-borne *beetle*, with his drowsy hums,
 Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
 A deed of dreadful note.

LADY MACBETH What's to be done?

MACBETH Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, 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 the rooky wood.
 Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
 While night's *black agents* to their preys do rouse.
 Thou marvell'st at my words — but hold thee still,
 Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill. 55
 So, prithee, go with me.

Exeunt

32 'As long as we're not safe'.

Character — The Macbeths

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have **switched roles** — earlier it was Lady Macbeth who told her husband to **disguise** his **true intentions**.

34 'vizards' means 'masks'.

38 'But they won't live forever.'

39 'assailable' means 'able to be attacked'.

Theme — The Supernatural

The **unpleasant** animal imagery ("**scorpion**", "**beetle**", "**crow**" and "**bat**") is like the Witches' spell at the start of Act 4, Scene 1.

46 'seeling' means 'blinding'.

53 'evil spirits...'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth's speech in Act 3, Scene 2 has many **echoes** of Lady Macbeth's soliloquy from Act 1, Scene 5 (lines 39-53). They both **call on the darkness to hide the daylight** ("Come, thick night / And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell") and they both refer to **evil spirits** ("Come, you spirits"). This suggests that by Act 3, Macbeth is becoming **more** like his **wife**.



© Donald Cooper

Act 3, Scene 3 — Banquo is Murdered

Macbeth has sent another murderer to join the first two. The murderers wait outside the palace for Banquo and Fleance. The murderers attack and kill Banquo, but Fleance escapes.



© Amitava Sarkar

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth sends a third murderer because he doesn't trust the first two. This suggests that he's anxious and paranoid.

Shakespeare's Techniques

The sun is setting — the arrival of darkness could symbolise the horrors of Macbeth's reign.

9-11 'It's him — everyone else who's expected for dinner is already there'.

11 'go about' means 'turn back'.

Theme — Fate and Free Will

Fleance escapes — the Witches' prediction about Banquo's descendants becoming kings could still come true.

21 'We've only done half of what we were supposed to do'.

ACT 3, SCENE 3

PARK NEAR THE PALACE

Enter three MURDERERS.

FIRST MURDERER But who did bid thee join with us?

THIRD MURDERER Macbeth.

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

FIRST MURDERER Then stand with us.
The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day; 5
Now spurs the lated traveller apace
To gain the timely inn, and near approaches
The subject of our watch.

THIRD MURDERER Hark! I hear horses.

BANQUO (*Within*) Give us a light there, ho!

SECOND MURDERER Then 'tis he — the rest
That are within the note of expectation 10
Already are i' the court.

FIRST MURDERER His horses go about.

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

SECOND MURDERER A light, a light!
Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch.

THIRD MURDERER 'Tis he.

FIRST MURDERER Stand to't. 15

BANQUO It will be rain to-night.

FIRST MURDERER Let it come down.

They set upon BANQUO.

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

Dies. FLEANCE escapes.

THIRD MURDERER Who did strike out the light?

FIRST MURDERER Was't not the way?

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

SECOND MURDERER We have lost best half of our affair.

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

Exeunt

Act 3, Scene 4 — Banquo's Ghost Appears

Macbeth is holding a feast at his castle with the thanes. The first murderer arrives and tells Macbeth that Banquo has been killed but Fleance escaped. Macbeth is terrified by visions of Banquo's ghost.



© Amitava Sarkar

ACT 3, SCENE 4

THE BANQUETING HALL AT FORRES

A banquet prepared. Two thrones are placed on stage.

Enter MACBETH as King, LADY MACBETH as Queen, ROSSE, LENNOX, LORDS, and Attendants. *Lady Macbeth sits.*

MACBETH You know your own degrees, sit down.

The Lords sit

At first and last, the hearty welcome.

LORDS

Thanks to your majesty.

MACBETH **Our self will mingle with society,**
And play the humble host.

Our hostess **keeps her state**, but in best time
We will require her welcome.

5

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

Enter FIRST MURDERER

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

10

(To First Murderer) There's blood upon thy face.

FIRST MURDERER 'Tis Banquo's then.

MACBETH **'Tis better thee without, than he within.**
Is he dispatched?

15

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

MACBETH Thou art the best o'th'cut-throats,
Yet he's good that did the like for Fleance;
If thou didst it, thou art the **nonpareil**.

FIRST MURDERER Most royal sir, Fleance is scaped.

20

MACBETH Then comes my fit again — I had else been perfect;
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air.
But now I am **cabined, cribbed, confined**, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's **safe**?

25

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

MACBETH Thanks for that.

There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
No teeth for th'present. Get thee gone. Tomorrow

30

3 'I'm going to mingle with my guests.'

Theme — Reality and Appearances

Macbeth attempts to "play the humble host". He'll pretend to be a good host while hired murderers kill one of his guests.

5 'keeps her state' means 'sits on her throne'.

14 'It's better on your face than in him'.

19 'nonpareil' means 'best'.

22-23 'Firm as marble, solid as a rock, as free as the open air.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

This alliteration suggests that Macbeth feels trapped. He's fearful because Fleance has escaped which means that the prophecy about Banquo's heirs could still come true.

25 'safe' here means 'safely done away with'.

Act 3, Scene 4

32-37 'My king, you're not being a good host — if the guests don't think they're welcome, they'll feel like they are paying for their meal. Eating is best done at home, but feasts need more ceremony — they'd be dull without it.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth doesn't **notice** Banquo at first. This creates **suspense** — the audience don't know how he'll **react**.

40 'We would have all of Scotland's nobility under one roof'.

42-43 'I hope he's just being bad mannered, and nothing bad has happened to him.'

48 'What's wrong, your highness?'

54 'keep seat' means 'stay sitting down'.

56 'note' means 'stare at'.

Character — Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth **becomes dominant** again by asking Macbeth if he's a **man**. This **reminds** the audience of her **words** in **Act 1, Scene 7** (lines 47-59).

66 'grandam' means 'grandmother'.

We'll hear ourselves again.

Exit FIRST MURDERER

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 given with welcome. To feed were best at home. 35
From thence, the sauce to meat is ceremony,
Meeting were bare without it.

*Enter the GHOST OF BANQUO
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.

ROSSE 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 Thou canst not say I did it; never shake 50
Thy gory locks at me!

ROSSE Gentlemen, rise, his highness is not well.

LADY MACBETH joins the Lords.

LADY MACBETH Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus,
And hath been from his youth. Pray you, **keep seat**. 55
The fit is momentary. Upon a thought
He will again be well. If much you **note** him
You shall offend him and extend his passion.
Feed, and regard him not. (*To Macbeth*) 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.

Act 3, Scene 4

MACBETH Prithee, see there! Behold, look, lo! How say you?
(To Ghost) Why, what care I? If thou canst nod,
70 speak too.

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

Exit GHOST OF BANQUO

LADY MACBETH What, quite unmanned in folly?

MACBETH If I stand here, I saw him.

LADY MACBETH Fie, for shame.

MACBETH **Blood hath been shed ere now, i'th'olden time,** 75
Ere humane statute purged the gentle weal.

Ay, and since too, murders have been performed
Too terrible for the ear. **The time has been**
That when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end. But now they rise again 80

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.
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!

Enter GHOST OF BANQUO

I drink to th'general joy o'th'whole table,
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss. 90
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;
Thou hast no **speculation** in those eyes 95
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 th'Hyrcean tiger.

Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble. **Or be alive again,**
And dare me to the desert with thy sword —
If trembling I inhabit then, protest me 105
The baby of a girl. Hence horrible shadow!

Unreal mockery, hence!

Exit GHOST OF BANQUO

71 'charnel houses' are buildings where bones are kept.

72-73 'our graves shall be the stomachs of birds'.

73 'Has your foolishness taken away your manliness?'

75-76 'Years ago, before there were laws to prevent it, a lot of blood was spilled'.

Theme — The Supernatural

Macbeth comments that the dead now **rise again**. This emphasises how the **natural order** has been **disrupted** since Macbeth killed Duncan — like the things that **Rosse** and the **Old Man** talk about in Act 2, Scene 4 (lines 11-18).

84 'Don't forget to talk to the Thanes'.

85 'muse' means 'stare in amazement'.

95 'speculation' means 'sight'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth is **physically brave** — he's not **afraid to face his enemies**. But he's scared of anything he **can't fight**, like **Banquo's ghost**.

103-106 'Come back to life and challenge me to a duel in a deserted place. If I tremble then, you can call me a baby girl'.

Act 3, Scene 4

109-110 Something like, 'You've ruined the evening by acting so oddly.'

112-115 'You make me feel like I'm not the brave person I thought I was, when you aren't scared to see this vision.'

119-120 People would normally leave in order of importance, but Lady Macbeth tells them all to just go straight away.

Theme — Fate and Free Will

Macbeth is **fearful** — he thinks that the **murders** might be his **downfall**.

124-126 'The cleverest murderers have been revealed by secret signs from birds. What time is it?'

127 'Almost morning — you can't tell whether it's day or night.'

132 'I pay a servant to spy for me.'

135-136 'My safety is the most important thing now.'

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth's behaviour has become **reckless** — he's acting **impulsively** without **thinking things through**.

144 'We're still beginners when it comes to evil deeds.'

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

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

MACBETH Can such things be, 110
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special wonder? You make me strange
Even to the disposition that I owe,
When now I think you can behold such sights
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks, 115
When mine is blanced with fear.

ROSSE What sights, my lord?

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

LENNOX Good night, and better health 120
Attend his majesty.

LADY MACBETH A kind good night to all.
Exeunt LORDS and Attendants

MACBETH **It will have blood they say — blood will have blood.**
Stones have been known to move and trees to speak.
Augures, and understood relations, have 125
By maggot-pies, and choughs, and rooks brought forth
The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

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

MACBETH How sayst thou that Macduff denies his person
At our great bidding?

LADY MACBETH Did you send to him, sir?

MACBETH I hear it by the way, but I will send. 130
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.

Exeunt

Act 3, Scene 5 — The Witches Meet With Hecate

Hecate is annoyed that the Witches spoke to Macbeth without involving her. She tells them to meet her at the pit of Acheron to tell Macbeth his future. She is going to make an evil spell that will destroy Macbeth.

Many critics think this scene was added into Shakespeare's play by someone else.

ACT 3, SCENE 5

A HEATH

Thunder. Enter the three Witches meeting HECATE.

FIRST WITCH Why, how now, Hecate! You look angrily.

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 am for the air; this night I'll spend 20
Unto a dismal and a fatal end.
Great business must be wrought ere noon —
Upon the corner of the moon
There hangs a vaporous drop profound,
I'll catch it ere it come to ground. 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 30
He hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear —
And you all know, security
Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

Music and a song within: 'Come away, come away.'

Hark! I am called; my little spirit, see,
Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me. 35

Exit

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

Exeunt

1 Hecate was the goddess of witches.

2 'beldams' means 'hags'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

The Witches and Hecate speak in rhyme. This makes their speech sound unnatural — as if they are casting a spell.

15 'Acheron' is a river in hell.

24 'vaporous drop profound' means 'a drop of magic potion'.

26 'sleights' means 'tricks'.

Theme — Fate and Free Will

Macbeth thinks that he can control his own destiny by murdering Duncan and Banquo. This suggests that Macbeth's ambition and over-confidence are responsible for his downfall.

32 'security' means 'over-confidence'.

Act 3, Scene 6 — Lennox is Suspicious

Lennox suspects Macbeth of being behind Duncan and Banquo's murders but he doesn't want to say it openly — instead he hints at his thoughts with sarcastic comments. A lord tells him that Malcolm and Macduff are in England getting an army together.

ACT 3, SCENE 6

THE ROYAL PALACE AT FORRES

Enter LENNOX and another LORD.

LENNOX My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,
Which can interpret further — only, I say,
Things have been strangely borne. The gracious Duncan
Was pitied of Macbeth — marry, he was dead. 5
And the right-valiant Banquo walked too late,
Whom, you may say, if't please you, Fleance killed,
For Fleance fled — men must not walk too late.
Who cannot want the thought how monstrous 10
It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain
To kill their gracious father? Damnèd fact!
How it did grieve Macbeth! Did he not straight
In pious rage the two delinquents tear,
That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?
Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too,
For 'twould have angered any heart alive 15
To hear the men deny't. So that, I say,
He has borne all things well, and I do think
That had he Duncan's sons under his key —
As, an't please heaven, he shall not — they should find
What 'twere to kill a father; so should Fleance. 20
But, peace! For from broad words and 'cause he failed
His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear
Macduff lives in disgrace — sir, can you tell
Where he bestows himself?

LORD The son of Duncan,
From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth, 25
Lives in the English court, and is received
Of the most pious Edward with such grace,
That the malevolence of fortune nothing
Takes from his high respect. Thither Macduff
Is gone to pray the holy king, upon his aid 30
To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward,
That, by the help of these — with Him above
To ratify the work — we may again
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives, 35
Do faithful homage and receive free honours:
All which we pine for now — and this report
Hath so exasperate their king that he
Prepares for some attempt of war.

LENNOX Sent he to Macduff? 40
LORD He did — and with an absolute 'Sir, not I,'

1 'What I said before is the same as what you are thinking.'

3 'Strange things have happened'.

4 'marry' is an exclamation like 'well'.

8 'want the thought' means 'fail to think'.

13 'prisoners of sleep' — 'asleep'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Lennox uses rhetorical questions to imply that the answer is the opposite to what he seems to be suggesting.

31 'Siward' is the name of the Earl of Northumberland.

Theme — Kingship

The saintly King Edward of England provides a contrast with the tyrannical Macbeth.

Shakespeare's Techniques

This is another example of the sleeplessness caused by Macbeth's reign.

40-41 'Did Macbeth send a messenger telling Macduff to return?' 'He did — and Macduff told him 'I will not'.'

Act Three — Practice Questions

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
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!

45

LORD

I'll send my prayers with him. 50
Exeunt

42 'cloudy' means 'sulky'.

43 'hums' means 'mutters'.

44-46 'That might make him realise it would be wise to stay in England.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Even minor characters such as Lennox and the lord hate Macbeth. This shows how widespread the discontent is — it's affecting everyone.

Quick Questions

- 1) Why does Macbeth have Banquo killed?
- 2) How many murderers are sent to kill Banquo and Fleance in Act 3, Scene 3?
- 3) How many times does the ghost of Banquo appear in Act 3, Scene 4?
- 4) According to the lord in Act 3, Scene 6, where has Macduff gone?

In-depth Questions

- 1) What impression does Shakespeare give of Macbeth's state of mind in Act 3, Scene 4?
- 2) How do you think Lady Macbeth is feeling in Act 3, Scene 2?
- 3) Compare the actions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in Act 3, Scene 2 with Scene 4. What do these scenes tell you about their relationship?
- 4) How does Shakespeare build the tension in Act 3, Scene 6?
- 5) How do you think the thanes feel about Macbeth's behaviour in Act 3, Scene 4?
- 6) Rewrite Act 3, Scene 3 in modern English.

Act 4, Scene 1 — Macbeth Visits the Witches

Macbeth visits the Witches and they summon three apparitions. Each apparition makes a different prophecy about Macbeth's future. One of the apparitions tells Macbeth to be careful of Macduff, so Macbeth decides to have Macduff killed.



© Ellie Kurtz

ACT 4, SCENE 1

A DESERTED PLACE NEAR FORRES

Thunder. Enter the three WITCHES.

FIRST WITCH Thrice the **brindled** cat hath mewed.

SECOND WITCH Thrice and once the **hedge-pig** whined.

THIRD WITCH Harpier cries, "'Tis time, 'tis time."

FIRST WITCH Round about the cauldron go,

In the poisoned entrails throw.

Toad, that under cold stone

Days and nights has thirty-one

Sweltered venom sleeping got,

Boil thou first i'th' charmèd pot.

5

ALL Double, double toil and trouble,

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

10

SECOND 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,

Adder's fork, and **blind-worm's** sting,

Lizard's leg, and **howlet's** wing,

For a charm of powerful trouble,

Like a hell-broth, boil and bubble.

15

ALL Double, double toil and trouble,

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

20

THIRD WITCH Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,

Witches' mummy, maw and gulf

Of the ravined salt-sea shark,

Root of hemlock, digged i'th'dark,

Liver of blaspheming Jew,

Gall of goat, and slips of yew,

Slivered in the moon's eclipse;

Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips,

Finger of birth-strangled babe,

Ditch-delivered by a **drab,**

Make the gruel thick and **slab.**

Add thereto a tiger's **chawdron**

For th'ingredience of our cauldron.

25

30

ALL Double, double toil and trouble,

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

35

1 'brindled' means 'striped'.

2 'hedge-pig' means 'hedgehog'.

Theme — The Supernatural

The Witches are creating a vile potion which reminds the audience that they're a force for evil in the play.

16 'blind-worm' means 'slow worm'.

17 'howlet' means 'young owl'.

23-24 'Bits of mummified witch, the stomach and throat of a shark that's eaten its prey.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

The horrible list of things put into the potion, and the regular rhythm, creates a dark and menacing tone.

31 'drab' means 'prostitute'.

32 'slab' means 'sticky'.

33 'chawdron' means 'intestines'.

Act 4, Scene 1

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

Enter HECATE, and three other Witches

HECATE O well done! I commend your pains,
And every one shall share i'th' 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,' etc.

Exeunt Hecate and the three other Witches.

SECOND WITCH By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes. 45
Open locks, whoever knocks.

Enter MACBETH

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

ALL THE WITCHES A deed without a name.

MACBETH I conjure you by that which you profess,
However you come to know it, answer me. 50
Though you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches, though the **yeasty** 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 **germen** tumble altogether
Even till destruction sicken, answer me
To what I ask you.

FIRST WITCH Speak.

SECOND WITCH Demand.

THIRD WITCH We'll answer. 60

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

MACBETH Call 'em, let me see 'em.

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

ALL THE WITCHES Come high or low;
Thyself and office **deftly** show.

Thunder. Enter FIRST APPARITION, an armed head.

MACBETH Tell me, thou unknown power —

FIRST WITCH He knows thy thought:
Hear his speech, but say thou nought.

FIRST APPARITION Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! — beware
Macduff, 70

39-40 'Well done. I congratulate your efforts and we'll all benefit from them'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth is **no longer** the **honourable hero** of Act 1 — he is "something wicked".

52 'yeasty' means 'frothy'.

54 'lodged' means 'flattened'.

58 'nature's germen' means 'the seeds of life'.

63-66 'Pour in the blood of a mother pig that's eaten her nine babies, and the sweat of a hanged murderer.'

67 'Show yourself and do your job.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

The "armed (armoured) head" could **foreshadow** the beheading of Macbeth after **Act 5, Scene 8**.

Act 4, Scene 1

71 'Thane of Fife' is Macduff.

72-73 'Whatever you are, thank you for your good advice. I was already worried about Macduff.'

78-79 'Laugh at other men's power.'

82 'assurance' means 'guarantee'.

86 'issue' means 'child'.

91-93 'Macbeth can never be defeated until Birnam Wood attacks him at Dunsinane Hill.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Each spirit '*descends*' after they've spoken. This may suggest that they're *returning to hell*.

94-95 'Who can command the trees to pull up their roots and move?'

95 'bodements' means 'omens'.

Theme — Kingship

To Macbeth, making sure his *descendants* are kings is as important as being *king himself*.

Beware the Thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough. (*Descends*)

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

Thou hast harped my fear aright. But one word more —

FIRST WITCH He will not be commanded. Here's another,
More potent than the first. 75

Thunder. Enter SECOND APPARITION, a bloody child.

SECOND APPARITION Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

MACBETH Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

SECOND APPARITION Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth. (*Descends*) 80

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

*Thunder. Enter THIRD APPARITION,
a child crowned, with a tree in his hand.*

What is this, 85

That rises like the issue of a king
And wears upon his baby brow the round
And top of sovereignty?

ALL THE WITCHES Listen, but speak not to't.

THIRD APPARITION Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are. 90
Macbeth shall never vanquished be until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him. (*Descends*)

MACBETH That will never be:
Who can impress the forest, bid the tree
Unfix his earthbound root? Sweet bodements, good. 95
Rebellious dead, rise never till the wood
Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth
Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath
To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart
Throbs to know one thing. Tell me, if your art 100
Can tell so much, shall Banquo's issue ever
Reign in this kingdom?

ALL THE WITCHES Seek to know no more.

MACBETH I will be satisfied. Deny me this,
And an eternal curse fall on you. Let me know.

Cauldron descends. Hautboys.

Why sinks that cauldron? And what noise is this? 105

FIRST WITCH Show!

SECOND WITCH Show!

THIRD WITCH Show!

ALL THE WITCHES Show his eyes and grieve his heart,

Act 4, Scene 1

Come like shadows, so depart. 110

Enter a show of eight kings, and the last with a glass in his hand, BANQUO'S GHOST following

MACBETH Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo. Down!
Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs. And thy hair,
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first;
A third is like the former. Filthy hags,
Why do you show me this? A fourth? Start, eyes! 115
What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?
Another yet? A seventh? I'll see no more.
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass
Which shows me many more. And some I see,
That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry. 120
Horrible sight! Now I see 'tis true,
For the blood-boltered Banquo smiles upon me,
And points at them for his.

Exeunt show of kings and BANQUO'S GHOST

What, is this so?

FIRST WITCH Ay, sir, all this is so. But why
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly? 125
Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,
And show the best of our delights.
I'll charm the air to give a sound,
While you perform your antic round
That this great king may kindly say,
Our duties did his welcome pay. 130

Music. The WITCHES dance, and vanish.

MACBETH Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour,
Stand aye accursèd in the calendar.
Come in, without there!

Enter LENNOX

LENNOX What's your grace's will? 95

MACBETH Saw you the weird sisters?

LENNOX No, my lord. 135

MACBETH Came they not by you?

LENNOX No indeed, my lord.

MACBETH Infected be the air whereon they ride,
And damned all those that trust them. I did hear
The galloping of horse. Who was't came by?

LENNOX 'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word
Macduff is fled to England. 140

MACBETH Fled to England?

LENNOX Ay, my good lord.

MACBETH *(Aside)* Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits.
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
Unless the deed go with it. From this moment, 145
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,

112-113 In other words — 'Your blond hair, like another golden crown, resembles the first (vision).'

116 'Will the line go on until the end of the world?'

118 'glass' means 'mirror'.

120 In other words, Banquo's heirs will be kings of more than one country.

122 'blood-boltered' means 'hair matted with blood'.

123 'Is this really true?'

129 'antic round' means 'strange dance'.

132 'pernicious' means 'evil'.

133 'Stay cursed forever.'

143-145 'Time has prevented my murderous deeds. Unless you do something the moment you think of it, you'll never get a chance to do it'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth decides that he'll act without hesitating. This contrasts with how he worries about killing Duncan in Act 1, Scene 7.

Act 4, Scene 2 — Lady Macduff is Murdered

149-152 'I'll capture Macduff's castle in Fife and kill his family.'

To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done.
 The castle of Macduff I will surprise;
 Seize upon Fife; give to th'edge o'th'sword 150
 His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
 That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool,
 This deed I'll do before this purpose cool,
 But no more sights. Where are these gentlemen?
 Come, bring me where they are. 155
Exeunt

Rosse has come to see Lady Macduff and they talk about why Macduff has left his family to go to England. After Rosse leaves, murderers break in and kill Lady Macduff and all her children.

ACT 4, SCENE 2

MACDUFF'S CASTLE IN FIFE

Enter LADY MACDUFF, her SON, and ROSSE

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

ROSSE 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.

ROSSE You know not
 Whether it was his wisdom or his fear. 5

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, 10
 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.

ROSSE My dearest coz,
 I pray you, school yourself. But for your husband, 15
 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, 20
 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.
 Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
 To what they were before. (to Son) My pretty cousin, 25

1 'fly' means 'flee'.

3-4 In other words, 'Even if he isn't a traitor, running away makes him look like one.'

Theme — Loyalty and Betrayal

Lady Macduff feels betrayed — Macduff's abandoned his family to go to England. This suggests that he may be more loyal to his country than to his wife.

9 'He's lacking in feeling (for his family).'

10 'most diminutive' means 'smallest'.

15 'school yourself' means 'calm down'.

17 'fits o' the season' means 'the troubles of our times'.

19-20 'We believe rumours based on our fears, even though we're not sure what it is we're afraid of.'

21-22 'It's like being tossed about by a violent sea and never getting anywhere'.

Act 4, Scene 2

Blessing upon you!

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

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

Exit

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'dst 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 *Every one that does so is a traitor,
And must be hanged. 50*

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

LADY MACDUFF *Every one.*

SON *Who must hang them?*

LADY MACDUFF *Why, the honest men.*

SON *Then the liars and swearers are fools, for there are
liars and swearers enow to beat the honest men
and hang up them. 55*

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

SON *If he were dead, you'd weep for him: if you would not, 60
it were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father.*

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

Enter a MESSENGER

MESSENGER *Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known,
Though in your state of honour I am perfect.
I doubt some danger does approach you nearly. 65
If you will take a homely man's advice,
Be not found here. Hence, with your little ones.*

27 'He has a father, although that father has abandoned him.'

28-30 'If I stay longer then I'll cry and embarrass myself and make you feel uncomfortable. I'll leave now'

33 'I'll live on whatever comes my way.'

34-35 'net', 'lime', 'pitfall' and 'gin' are all traps used to catch birds.

36 'The traps are set for rich birds, not poor ones (like me).'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Lady Macduff and her son share some jokes — their relationship seems loving and close. This contrasts with how Lady Macbeth claims she would have "dashed the brains out" of her own child.

47 'swears' means 'makes promises'.

56 'enow' means 'enough'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

A messenger tells Lady Macduff that she is in danger. This increases the urgency of the scene.

Act 4, Scene 3 — Macduff Wants Revenge

Macduff is in England to see Malcolm and to persuade him to come back to Scotland. Malcolm thinks that Macduff might be a spy, so he tests Macduff's loyalty by saying terrible things about himself. Rosse enters and tells Macduff that his family has been murdered.



© Amitava Sarkar

ACT 4, SCENE 3

ENGLAND, THE KING'S PALACE

Enter MALCOLM and MACDUFF

- 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 5
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland and yelled out
Like syllable of dolour.
- 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. 10
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 15
To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb
To appease an angry god.
- 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: 20
That which you are my thoughts cannot transpose:
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 have lost my hopes.
- MALCOLM Perchance even there where I did find my doubts. 25
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, 30
Whatever I shall think.
- MACDUFF Bleed, bleed, poor country!
Great tyranny! Lay thou thy basis sure,
For goodness dare not check thee. Wear thou thy wrongs,

2-4 'It would be better if we take our swords, and go and defend the country where we were born.'

8 'syllable of dolour' means 'cry of pain'.

9 'redress' means 'put right'.

11 'perchance' means 'perhaps'.

13-14 'You were Macbeth's friend once, and he hasn't hurt you yet.'

15-16 'You might be rewarded for betraying me, and it would be a wise move to...'

Theme — Reality and Appearances

Malcolm says that it's **hard** to tell who's **good** and who's **evil**. This echoes Duncan in Act 1, Scene 4 (lines 11-12).

23-24 'Although evil people want to appear as though they are good, good people must appear to be good too.'

26 'rawness' means 'unprotected state'.

28 'leave-taking' means 'saying goodbye'.

32-33 'Don't worry Macbeth, your tyranny is secure because good men won't stop you.'

Act 4, Scene 3

34 'affeered' means 'assured'. In other words, Macbeth's crown is safe.

43-44 'The King of England has promised me thousands of men.'

Theme — Loyalty and Betrayal

Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty in this scene. He claims that he will be a terrible king and Scotland will be worse under his rule.

51 'grafted' means 'merged'.

52-53 In other words — 'When my evils are revealed, Macbeth will seem honourable compared to me.'

55 'confineless' means 'limitless'.

55 'legions' means 'armies'.

Theme — Kingship

Malcolm describes the characteristics of Macbeth that make him a bad king.

60-61 'There's no limit to my lust.'

63-65 'my desire would crush anything that tried to restrain me.'

66 'Boundless intemperance' means 'a total lack of self-control'.

71 'Convey your pleasures' means 'satisfy your desires'.

73-76 'You're not such an animal that you'll want more women than will give themselves to you, when they find out that's what you want.'

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

45

MACDUFF

What should he be?

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
Esteem him as a lamb, being compared
With my confineless harms.

50

MACDUFF

Not in the legions

Of horrid hell can come a devil more damned
In evils to top Macbeth.

55

MALCOLM

I grant him bloody,

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

60

65

MACDUFF

Boundless intemperance

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

70

75

MALCOLM

With this, there grows

In my most ill-composed affection such

Act 4, Scene 3

78 'stanchless avarice' means 'limitless greed'.

82-84 'I will invent disagreements against good and loyal people so that I can take their money.'

86 'summer-seeming lust' means 'lust that passes with youth'.

88 'Scotland has enough wealth to satisfy your greed.'

89-90 'These flaws are acceptable if they're balanced against your virtues.'

Theme — Kingship

Malcolm lists the virtues of a good king. Virtues such as "bounty" (generosity) and "lowliness" (modesty) are virtues that Duncan had.

97-100 'No, if I had power, I would toss harmony into hell, destroy world peace and throw unity into confusion.'

Character — Macduff

Macduff proves his loyalty to Scotland by saying that he won't help another tyrant (Malcolm) to succeed Macbeth.

106 'truest issue' means 'rightful heir'.

110 'upon her knees' means 'praying'.

111 'She was devoted to God every day of her life'.

114-116 'This honourable protest, proves your honesty and has rid me of my doubts about you.'

118 'trains' means 'tricks'.

A stanchless avarice that, were I king,
I should cut off the nobles for their lands,
Desire his jewels, and this other's house: 80
And my more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more, that I should forge
Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,
Destroying them for wealth.

MACDUFF This avarice
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root 85
Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been
The sword of our slain kings — yet do not fear;
Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will,
Of your mere own. All these are portable,
With other graces weighed. 90

MALCOLM But I have none. The king-becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude, 95
I have no relish of them, but abound
In the division of each several crime,
Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should
Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,
Uproar the universal peace, confound
All unity on earth.

MACDUFF O Scotland, Scotland! 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,
Oftener 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
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

Act 4, Scene 3

123-125 'I'll take back what I said about myself — I'm none of the things I said I was.'

126 'forsworn' means 'untruthful'.

130-131 'The first lies I've ever told are the ones I've just told you about myself.'

Theme — Kingship

Malcolm's **testing** of Macduff shows he could be a **better king** than **Duncan**, who was **too trusting** of those around him.

136-137 'may the chances of our success be equal to the righteousness of our cause.'

142-143 'their illnesses puzzle their doctors' best efforts'.

Theme — Kingship

King Edward of England is shown as a **saintly** king, whose **touch** can **heal** the **sick**. This **contrasts** with Macbeth's **evil**.

147 'what the king does is a miracle.'

150 'strangely-visited people' means 'people with strange conditions'.

151 'swoln' means 'swollen'.

153 'stamp' means 'medallion'.

156 'benediction' means 'blessing'.

164 'Are things in Scotland as bad as they were?'

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.

Enter a DOCTOR

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

Exit DOCTOR

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 have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,
Himself best knows, but **strangely-visited people,** 150

All **swoln** and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
Hanging a golden **stamp** about their necks,
Put on with holy prayers — and 'tis spoken,

To the succeeding royalty he leaves 155
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.

Enter ROSSE

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!

ROSSE Sir, amen.

MACDUFF **Stands Scotland where it did?**

Act 4, Scene 3

ROSSE	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?	
ROSSE	That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker — Each minute teems a new one.	175
MACDUFF	How does my wife?	
ROSSE	Why, well.	
MACDUFF	And all my children?	
ROSSE	Well too.	
MACDUFF	The tyrant has not battered at their peace?	
ROSSE	No, they were well at peace when I did leave 'em.	
MACDUFF	Be not a niggard of your speech — how goes't?	180
ROSSE	When I came hither to transport the tidings, Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumour Of many worthy fellows that were out, Which was to my belief witnessed the rather, For that I saw the tyrant's power afoot. Now is the time of help. Your eye in Scotland Would create soldiers, make our women fight, To doff their dire distresses.	185
MALCOLM	Be't their comfort We are coming thither. Gracious England hath Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men; An older and a better soldier none That Christendom gives out.	190
ROSSE	Would I could answer This comfort with the like! But I have words That would be howled out in the desert air, Where hearing should not latch them.	
MACDUFF	What concern they? The general cause? Or is it a fee-grief Due to some single breast?	195
ROSSE	No mind that's honest But in it shares some woe, though the main part Pertains to you alone.	
MACDUFF	If it be mine, Keep it not from me; quickly let me have it.	200
ROSSE	Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever,	

168-173 'No one pays attention to sighs or groans. Intense sorrow is an everyday emotion. When there's a funeral, nobody asks who it's for. Good men die quicker than the flowers in their caps, dying before they even become sick.'

173 'relation' means 'story or report'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Shakespeare builds the tension here. The audience knows that Lady Macduff is dead, but Rosse can't bring himself to say so.

178 'Macbeth hasn't harmed them?'

180 'niggard' means 'a stingy person'.

184 'witnessed the rather' means 'proven'.

186-188 'Your presence in Scotland would inspire people, including the women, to fight and rid themselves of their troubles (i.e. Macbeth).'

192-193 'I wish I had some good news in return.'

196 'personal sorrow'.

197-199 'Every good person would feel sad at this news, but it mainly concerns you.'

Act 4, Scene 3

201-203 'Please don't hate me for giving you the worst news you've ever had.'

205-207 'To tell you how they died would kill you.'

208 In other words, 'Don't hide your feelings.'

214-215 'We will use revenge to cure our sadness.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macduff's repeated questions shows that he can't believe what's happened — he's in shock.

Character — Macduff

Macduff says that he'll "feel" his grief "as a man". His emotional reaction contrasts with Macbeth and his wife's desire to be able to act without pity.

227 a 'whetstone' is used to sharpen swords.

229-231 'Oh, I could cry and boast (about revenge), but there's no time for delay.'

231 'front to front' means 'face to face'.

236-238 'Macbeth is like a ripe apple ready to fall from the tree — the forces of heaven are arming themselves.'

Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound
That ever yet they heard.

MACDUFF H'm! I guess at it.

ROSSE Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes
Savagely slaughtered — to relate the manner, 205
Were, on the quarry of these murdered deer,
To add the death of you.

MALCOLM Merciful heaven!
What, man! Ne'er pull your hat upon your brows:
Give sorrow words — the grief that does not speak,
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break. 210

MACDUFF My children too?

ROSSE Wife, children, servants, all
That could be found.

MACDUFF And I must be from thence!
My wife killed too?

ROSSE I have said.

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

MACDUFF He has no children. 215
All my pretty ones? Did you say all?
O hell-kite! All? What, all my pretty chickens
And their dam at one fell swoop?

MALCOLM Dispute it like a man.

MACDUFF I shall do so,
But I must also feel it as a man. 220

I cannot but remember such things were,
That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,
They were all struck for thee! Naught that I am,
Not for their own demerits, but for mine, 225
Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

MALCOLM Be this the whetstone of your sword — let grief
Convert to anger. Blunt not the heart, enrage it.

MACDUFF O, I could play the woman with mine eyes
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens, 230
Cut short all intermission. Front to front
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;
Within my sword's length set him. If he 'scape,
Heaven forgive him too!

MALCOLM This tune goes manly.
Come, go we to the king; our power is ready; 235
Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may:
The night is long that never finds the day.

Exeunt

Act 5, Scene 1 — Lady Macbeth Sleepwalks



© Amitava Sarkar

A gentlewoman and a doctor watch Lady Macbeth while she's sleepwalking. Lady Macbeth appears to be losing her mind as she dreams about the night of Duncan's murder.

3 'field' means 'battlefield'.

8 'perturbation in nature' means 'physical disorder'.

10 'slumbry agitation' means 'sleep walking'.

13 'I won't tell you what I've heard.'

'taper' means 'candle'.

17 'This is what she always does'.

Character — Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth isn't the devious, dominant person she was in Acts 1 and 2. She's afraid of the dark — she demands to have a candle by her at all times.

23 'Yes, but they don't see anything.'

25-27 'She's always washing her hands in this way. I've see her do it before for 15 minutes.'

Character — Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth is overwhelmed with guilt — in her dreams, she can't get her hands clean. This contrasts with her attitude in Act 2, Scene 2 (line 67).

35 By 'old man' she means Duncan.

ACT 5, SCENE 1

A ROOM IN DUNSINANE CASTLE.

Enter a DOCTOR and a WAITING-GENTLEWOMAN.

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 slumbry 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. 15

Enter LADY MACBETH, with a taper.

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

DOCTOR How came she by that light?

GENTLEWOMAN Why, it stood by her — she has light by her continually. 'Tis her command. 20

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.

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. 25

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. 30

LADY MACBETH Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One, two: why, then, 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky! Fie, my lord, fie! A soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? 35

Act 5, Scene 1

DOCTOR Do you mark that?

LADY MACBETH The **Thane of Fife** had a wife — where is she now?
What, will these hands ne'er be clean? No more o' that,
my lord, no more o' that: **you mar all with this starting.** 40

DOCTOR Go to, go to — you have known what you should not.

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

LADY MACBETH Here's the smell of the blood still — all the perfumes
of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. O, o, o! 45

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

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

DOCTOR Well, well, well, —

GENTLEWOMAN Pray God it be, sir. 50

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.**

LADY MACBETH Wash your hands, put on your nightgown — look
not so pale — I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he 55
cannot come out on's grave.

DOCTOR Even so?

LADY MACBETH **To bed, to bed! There's knocking at the gate.
Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. What's
done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed.** 60

Exit

DOCTOR Will she go now to bed?

GENTLEWOMAN Directly.

DOCTOR Foul whisperings are abroad. Unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets. 65
More needs she the divine than the physician.
God, God forgive us all! Look after her;
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,
And still keep eyes upon her. So, good night,
My mind she has **mated**, and amazed my sight. 70
I think, but dare not speak.

GENTLEWOMAN Good night, good doctor.

Exeunt

Shakespeare's Techniques

Lady Macbeth's **language** has **changed** from **blank verse** to **confused prose**. This shows her **disturbed state of mind**.

38 'Thane of Fife' is Macduff.

40 'You'll ruin everything by looking worried.'

46 'She has a heavy heart.'

47-48 'I wouldn't want a heart like hers even if it meant I'd be queen.'

51-53 'I have known sleepwalkers who have died innocent of any crimes.' — People who sleepwalk haven't necessarily done something bad.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Lady Macbeth is **reliving** the moments after **Duncan's death**. Her **rambling language** shows that she's **asleep**.

66 'She needs a priest, not a doctor.'

70 'mated' means 'confused'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

The Macbeths' relationship **changes** during the play:

- At the start of the play the Macbeths **share** several scenes **together**. However, after Act 3, Scene 4, they **never** appear on stage together — their relationship has **broken down** as Macbeth becomes more **ruthless** and Lady Macbeth is **driven mad by guilt**.
- Lady Macbeth begins as the more **dominant** of the two, "screw your courage to the sticking place" (Act 1, Scene 7, line 60). After Duncan's murder, their roles **swap over** — Macbeth **doesn't** tell his wife about his **plan to kill Banquo**, "Be innocent of the knowledge" (Act 3, Scene 2, line 45).

Act 5, Scene 2 — The English Army Approaches

The Scottish thanes are talking about the arrival of the English army and how unpopular Macbeth is now. They plan to meet the English army near Birnam Wood.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

OPEN COUNTRY NEAR DUNSINANE

Drum and colours. Enter MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, and Soldiers.

MENTEITH The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,
His uncle Siward, and the good Macduff.
Revenches burn in them, for their dear causes
Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm
Excite the mortified man.

ANGUS Near Birnam Wood 5
Shall we well meet them; that way are they coming.

CAITHNESS Who knows if Donalbain be with his brother?

LENNOX For certain, sir, he is not. I have a file
Of all the gentry — there is Siward's son,
And many unrough youths that even now 10
Protest their first of manhood.

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 med'cine 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 30
To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.
Make we our march towards Birnam.

Exeunt, marching.

'colours' means 'flags'.

1 'The English army is approaching.'

3-5 'The things they've suffered would make the dead answer this call to bloody battle.'

Theme — Fate and Free Will

This reminds the audience of the prophecy that Macbeth will be defeated when Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane.

8 'file' means 'list'.

15-16 In other words, 'Macbeth is out of control.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Angus's language echoes Lady Macbeth's attempts to wash the blood from her hands.

18-20 'Every minute there's a rebellion against his treachery. His soldiers obey him through fear, not love.'

27-29 In other words, 'We'll go to Malcolm, who is the medicine for our sick country, and we'll pour out our blood to help him.'

29-30 In other words, 'However much it takes to water the royal flower (Malcolm) and drown the weeds (Macbeth).'

Act 5, Scene 3 — Macbeth isn't Afraid

Macbeth hears about the army coming to attack him, but he isn't afraid because he remembers the prophecies made by the apparitions. Macbeth also speaks to the doctor, who says that he cannot cure Lady Macbeth of her disease.



© COLUMBIA / THE KOBAL COLLECTION

ACT 5, SCENE 3

A ROOM IN DUNSINANE CASTLE

Enter MACBETH, DOCTOR, *and* Attendants.

MACBETH Bring me no more reports. Let them fly all;
Till Birnam Wood remove to Dunsinane,
I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm?
Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know
All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus: 5
'Fear not, Macbeth, no man that's born of woman
Shall e'er have power upon thee.' Then fly, false thanes,
And mingle with the English epicures.
The mind I sway by and the heart I bear
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear. 10

Enter a SERVANT

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

SERVANT There is ten thousand —

MACBETH Geese, villain?

SERVANT Soldiers, sir.

MACBETH Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,
Thou lily-livered boy. What soldiers, patch? 15
Death of thy soul, those linen cheeks of thine
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, why-face?

SERVANT The English force, so please you.

MACBETH Take thy face hence.

Exit SERVANT

Seyton! — I am sick at heart, 20
When I behold — Seyton, I say! — This push
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.

I have lived long enough. My way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf, 25
And that which should accompany old age,

As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not. 30
Seyton!

Enter SEYTON

2-3 'I won't be afraid until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill.'

8 'epicures' means 'people who like luxury'.

12 'Why do you look like a frightened goose?'

14-15 'pinch your cheeks and bring some colour to your face, you cowardly boy.'

17 'will frighten the others'.

17 'why-face' means 'pale-face'.

Character — Macbeth

Although Macbeth is confident, because of the apparitions' prophecies, he is beginning to despair. Macbeth seems to know that the end is coming.

24 'is withering'.

28 'mouth-honour' means 'false flattery'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth repeatedly calls for Seyton, who doesn't immediately appear. This shows that Macbeth isn't in control of his men, and there's an atmosphere of panic and disorder in his castle.

Act 5, Scene 3

36 'skirr' means 'search'.

39 'thick-coming fancies' means 'frequent nightmares'.

41-46 In other words — 'Can't you cure a troubled mind by taking away the sad memories? You must have some drug that will remove these troublesome thoughts?'

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth orders Seyton to "put mine armour on" and then tells him to "pull't off". This shows that Macbeth is **anxious** and **troubled**.

51-55 'Doctor, if you could diagnose the disease that is affecting Scotland and cure it — I'd praise you forever.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Scene 3 **continues** the idea from Scene 2 (lines 27-29) that **Scotland** needs **medicine** and **healing**. The **irony** here is that **Macbeth** himself is the **disease**.

60 'bane' means 'ruin'.

SEYTON	What is your gracious pleasure?	
MACBETH		What news more?
SEYTON	All is confirmed, my lord, which was reported.	
MACBETH	I'll fight till from my bones my flesh be hacked. Give me my armour.	
SEYTON		'Tis not needed yet.
MACBETH	I'll put it on.	35
	Send out more horses, skirr the country round, Hang those that talk of fear. Give me mine armour. How does your patient, doctor?	
DOCTOR		Not so sick, my lord, As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies , That keep her from her rest.
MACBETH		Cure her of that. 40
	Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, Raze out the written troubles of the brain, And with some sweet oblivious antidote Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff Which weighs upon the heart?	45
DOCTOR		Therein the patient Must minister to himself.
MACBETH	Throw physic to the dogs — I'll none of it. Come, put mine armour on ; give me my staff. Seyton, send out. Doctor, the thanes fly from me. Come, sir, dispatch. If thou couldst, doctor, cast The water of my land, find her disease, And purge it to a sound and pristine health, I would applaud thee to the very echo, That should applaud again. Pull't off, I say.	50 55
DOCTOR	Ay, my good lord; your royal preparation Makes us hear something.	
MACBETH		Bring it after me. 60
	I will not be afraid of death and bane , Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.	
	<i>Exeunt all but DOCTOR</i>	
DOCTOR	Were I from Dunsinane away and clear, Profit again should hardly draw me here.	
	<i>Exit</i>	

Act 5, Scene 4 — The Army Hides Behind Branches

The English army organises itself for battle — Malcolm tells everyone to cut down a branch from Birnam Wood to hide behind. Malcolm, Macduff and Siward also talk about rumours of Macbeth's soldiers abandoning him.



© Amitava Sarkar

ACT 5, SCENE 4

OPEN COUNTRY NEAR BIRNAM WOOD

Drum and colours. Enter MALCOLM, SIWARD and YOUNG SIWARD, MACDUFF, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, ROSSE, and Soldiers, marching.

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,
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

Exeunt, marching

Theme — Loyalty and Betrayal

Lennox and Rosse, who were at the banquet in Act 3, Scene 4, have deserted Macbeth. None of the thanes stay loyal to Macbeth.

4-7 'Every soldier should cut down a branch to hide behind. That way the enemy can't tell how many of us there are.'

8-10 'All we know is that the overconfident Macbeth is waiting for us to lay siege to his castle.'

12 'more and less' means those of high rank (nobles) and those of low rank (soldiers).

13-14 'The soldiers that are left don't want to fight for him.'

14-16 'Let's keep our opinions to ourselves and concentrate on being good soldiers.'

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth's enemies are very calm and focused which contrasts with Macbeth's erratic behaviour in Act 5, Scene 5.

19-20 In other words, 'Wishful thinking is just useless — it's fighting that will sort this out.'

Act 5, Scene 5 — Lady Macbeth Kills Herself

Macbeth is waiting for the English army to attack his castle, and he's still not scared. He finds out that Lady Macbeth is dead, and then a messenger tells him that Birnam Wood is coming to the castle. Macbeth decides to go out and fight his attackers.

ACT 5, SCENE 5

INSIDE DUNSINANE CASTLE

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

MACBETH Hang out our banners on the outward walls;
The cry is still, 'They come!' Our castle's strength
Will laugh a siege to scorn — here let them lie
Till famine and the ague eat them up.
Were they not forced with those that should be ours, 5
We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,
And beat them backward home.

A cry of women within

What is that noise?

SEYTON It is the cry of women, my good lord.

Exit

MACBETH I have almost forgot the taste of fears;
The time has been, my senses would have 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.

Re-enter SEYTON

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.

Enter a MESSENGER

Thou comest to use thy tongue: thy story quickly.

MESSENGER Gracious my lord,
I should report that which I say I saw, 30
But know not how to do it.

MACBETH Well, say, sir.

3 'lie' here means 'wait'.

4 'ague' means 'disease'.

5-6 'We'd have fought them face to face if they weren't strengthened with soldiers who should be mine'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth claims to have "forgot the taste of fears", but his attitude changes when he hears that Birnam Wood is coming to his castle.

11-12 Something like, 'my hair used to stand on end when I was afraid'.

14-15 Something like, 'I'm so used to horrible things that they can't scare me anymore'.

17 This could mean 'She would have died later anyway', or 'She should have died later'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

Macbeth's language is sad and cynical. His actions have left him feeling that life is meaningless.

24 'poor player' means 'bad actor'.

28 'It's without meaning'.

31-32 'I should tell you what I saw, but I don't know how to do it.'

Act 5, Scene 6 — The English Army Attacks

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

MACBETH Liar and slave! 35

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

MACBETH If thou speak'st false,
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,
Till famine cling thee; if thy speech be sooth, 40
I care not if thou dost for me as much.
I pull in resolution, and begin
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend
That lies like truth: 'Fear not, till Birnam wood
Do come to Dunsinane,' and now a wood 45
Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!
If this which he avouches does appear,
There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.
I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone. 50
Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! Come, wrack!
At least we'll die with harness on our back.

Exeunt

33 'did my guard duty'.

34 'anon' means 'all at once'.

38 'grove' means 'small wood'.

40 'until you die of hunger'.

40 'sooth' means 'truth'.

41-44 'I don't care if you do the same to me. I'm losing confidence and I'm doubting what the apparition told me.'

47 'avouches' means 'says is true'.

48 'tarrying' means 'waiting'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth is **tired** 'of the sun' — he **doesn't** seem to **care** if he lives or dies.

52 'harness' means 'armour'.

Malcolm orders the soldiers to **throw down** their **branches** and reveal themselves. He then begins the **attack** on Macbeth's castle.

ACT 5, SCENE 6

OUTSIDE DUNSINANE CASTLE

Drum and colours. Enter MALCOLM, SIWARD, MACDUFF, and their Army, with boughs.

MALCOLM Now near enough — **your leafy screens throw down,**
And show like those you are. You, worthy uncle,
Shall, with my cousin, your right-noble son,
Lead our first battle. Worthy Macduff and we
Shall take upon's what else remains to do, 5
According to our order.

SIWARD Fare you well.
Do we but find the tyrant's power tonight,
Let us be beaten, if we cannot fight.

MACDUFF Make all our trumpets speak; give them all breath,
Those **clamorous harbingers** of blood and death. 10

Exeunt

Shakespeare's Techniques

The **short scenes** in Act 5 help to **speed up** the action.

1-2 'Throw down your branches and let them see who you are.'

6 'According to our battle plan.'

10 'clamorous harbingers' means 'noisy announcers'.

Act 5, Scene 7 — Macbeth Kills Young Siward

Macbeth fights and kills Young Siward, before he exits . Macduff enters looking for Macbeth — he's determined to be the one that kills Macbeth .

2 'bear-like' — like a bear chained to a post and forced to fight dogs, a popular sport in Shakespeare's day.

10 'abhorred' means 'hated'.

Character — Macbeth

This scene reminds the audience that Macbeth is a great warrior — as he was in Act 1, Scene 2. It's a big contrast with all the moments in the play where he seems weak and confused.

Shakespeare's Techniques

The number of entrances and exits in this scene help to create a sense of confusion in the battle .

17-20 'I don't care about fighting hired soldiers — I'll only fight you, Macbeth, or else I'll put my sword away unused.'

22 'bruted' means 'announced'.

24 'gently rendered' means 'quietly surrendered'.

25 'Some of Macbeth's soldiers have joined our side.'

27 'You've almost won the battle.'

28-29 'We've fought enemies that are trying not to hurt us.'

ACT 5, SCENE 7

THE BATTLEFIELD OUTSIDE THE CASTLE

Alarums. Enter MACBETH.

MACBETH They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,
But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's he
That was not born of woman? Such a one
Am I to fear, or none.

Enter YOUNG SIWARD

YOUNG SIWARD What is thy name?

MACBETH Thou'lt be afraid to hear it. 5

YOUNG SIWARD No, though thou call'st thyself a hotter name
Than any is in hell.

MACBETH My name's Macbeth.

YOUNG SIWARD The devil himself could not pronounce a title
More hateful to mine ear.

MACBETH No, nor more fearful.

YOUNG SIWARD Thou liest, abhorred tyrant. With my sword 10
I'll prove the lie thou speak'st.

They fight and YOUNG SIWARD is slain

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

Exit. Alarums. Enter MACDUFF

MACDUFF That way the noise is. Tyrant, show thy face!
If thou be'st slain, and with no stroke of mine, 15
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; 20
By this great clatter, one of greatest note
Seems bruted. Let me find him, fortune!
And more I beg not.

Exit. Alarums

Enter MALCOLM and SIWARD

SIWARD This way, my lord. The castle's gently rendered.
The tyrant's people on both sides do fight; 25
The noble thanes do bravely in the war.
The day almost itself professes yours,
And little is to do.

MALCOLM We have met with foes
That strike beside us.

SIWARD Enter, sir, the castle.

Exeunt. Alarums

Act 5, Scene 8 — Macbeth and Macduff Fight

Macbeth and Macduff meet face to face. Macbeth finds out that Macduff wasn't born of a woman (he was delivered by caesarean section), but Macbeth fighters him anyway.

ACT 5, SCENE 8

ANOTHER PART OF THE FIELD

Enter MACBETH

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

Enter MACDUFF

MACDUFF Turn, hell-hound, turn!

MACBETH Of all men else I have avoided thee —
But get thee back, my soul is too much charged 5
With blood of thine already.

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

They fight.

MACBETH **Thou lovest labour.**
As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air
With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed. 10
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield
To one of woman born.

MACDUFF **Despair thy charm,**
And let the angel whom thou still hast served
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb 15
Untimely ripped.

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; 20
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

MACDUFF **Then yield thee, coward,**
And live to be the show and gaze o' the time.
We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are, 25
Painted on a pole, and underwrit,
'Here may you see the tyrant.'

MACBETH **I will not yield,**
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse. 30
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!'

Exeunt, fighting. Alarums. Re-enter fighting, and MACBETH slain.

1 'Roman fool' — some famous Roman generals killed themselves when they were defeated.

5-6 'Get back, — I've shed too much blood in your family already.'

Character — Macduff

Macduff is a **soldier**. He lets his **sword** do the **talking**.

8-13 'You're wasting your time. You can't hurt me, you might as well cut the air with your sword. Fight some normal soldiers — I live a charmed life — I can't be killed by anyone born of a woman.'

15-16 In other words, he was delivered by caesarean section.

18 'cowed' means 'intimidated'.

20 'that trick me with words with double meanings'.

Character — Macbeth

Macbeth **won't** live and be **humiliated**, so he chooses to **fight** and **die**. At the **end** he returns to being something like the **brave hero** he was at the beginning of the play.

Act 5, Scene 9 — Malcolm Becomes King

Siward finds out that Macbeth has killed his son, but he's happy that his son died bravely. Macduff enters with Macbeth's head. Malcolm is made king and he rewards everyone who fought with him.



© AF archive / Alamy

ACT 5, SCENE 9

INSIDE DUNSINANE CASTLE

Retreat. Flourish.

Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, SIWARD, ROSSE, the other Thanes, and Soldiers.

MALCOLM I would the friends we miss were safe arrived.

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

MALCOLM Macduff is missing, and your noble son.

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

SIWARD Then he is dead?

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

SIWARD Had he his hurts before?

ROSSE Ay, on the front.

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

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

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

Re-enter MACDUFF, with MACBETH's head

MACDUFF Hail, king! For so thou art. Behold, where stands
The usurper's cursèd head. The time is free.
I see thee compassed with thy kingdom's pearl,
That speak my salutation in their minds;
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine:
Hail, King of Scotland!

ALL Hail, King of Scotland!

Flourish

2-3 'Some people will always die in battle, but it seems as if not many people have died given what we've achieved.'

5 'paid a soldier's debt' means 'died'.

7 'prowess' means 'bravery'.

8 'unshrinking station' means a place you can't retreat from.

12 'Were his wounds on the front of his body?' ('did he die facing the enemy?')

16 'So, his death bell is rung'.

Shakespeare's Techniques

The play begins (Act 1, Scene 2, line 23) and ends with the beheading of a traitor.

21 'usurper' means 'thief of the crown'.

21-24 'We are free. I see all of Scotland's nobles around you (Malcolm), and I'm sure they're all thinking the same thing. I want them all to say with me...'

Act Five — Practice Questions

MALCOLM We shall not spend a large expense of time
 Before we **reckon with your several loves**,
 And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,
Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland
In such an honour named. What's more to do, 30
 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, 35
 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, 40
 Whom we invite to see us crowned at **Scone**.
Flourish. Exeunt

27 'give each of you a reward'.

29-30 'From now on you'll be Earls, the first Earls Scotland has ever had.'

34-35 In other words, 'finding the people who helped Macbeth'.

Theme — Kingship

Things are **back** to how they **should be**. The king is **guided by God** — "grace of Grace" — **not evil**.

41 Scone is a place near Perth in Scotland where Scottish Kings were crowned.

Quick Questions

- 1) Who sleepwalks in Act 5, Scene 1?
- 2) What does Lady Macbeth think she has on her hands in Act 5, Scene 1?
- 3) Who is the Thane of Fife's wife?
- 4) Who is Seyton?
- 5) What happens to Lady Macbeth in Act 5, Scene 5?
- 6) How does the Witches' prophecy about Birnam Wood come true?
- 7) Who does Macbeth kill in Act 5, Scene 7?
- 8) Why is Macbeth afraid to hear that Macduff was born by caesarean section?
- 9) Who kills Macbeth in Act 5, Scene 8?
- 10) How does Malcolm reward his loyal thanes in Scene 9?
- 11) Give two examples of props mentioned in the stage directions of Act 5.