

## **Macbeth**

### **Content Questions**

As we read through the play, complete the questions whenever we finish the scene. Make sure to write complete and detailed answers (these will be useful to review for quizzes, find key parts for essays and assignments, and study for the final exam).

### **Act I**

#### **Scene i**

1. What is the purpose of this scene?
2. How does Shakespeare set the mood of the scene?

#### **Scene ii**

1. Who rebelled against the King of Scotland?
2. Who were the two leaders of the Scottish army? Which side won the battle?
3. What title does the King give Macbeth?

#### **Scene iii**

1. Describe the discussion the witches have before Macbeth and Banquo arrive.
2. How do the witches greet Macbeth? Why is this strange? What is his reaction to his greeting?
3. **Extension Question:** What allusion (reference to history, religion, mythology, geography etc. which some of the audience will recognize) is being employed by the THREE witches and their THREE greetings to Macbeth?
4. What future do they predict for Banquo?
5. What news does Ross give to Macbeth? How does Macbeth react?

#### **Scene iv**

1. Describe the relationship between Macbeth and King Duncan.
2. Who does King Duncan proclaim as his heir to the throne? What is Macbeth's reaction?

#### **Scene v**

1. Summarize, in your own words, Lady Macbeth's two soliloquies (lines 14-30 and 37-53).
2. What character traits are shown by Lady Macbeth?
3. What plan does Lady Macbeth want her husband to carry out?

4. Who is the dominate partner in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's relationship?

### **Scene vi**

1. How does Lady Macbeth treat King Duncan?
2. What is ironic about this scene?
3. Why do you think Macbeth is not there to greet the King?

### **Scene vii**

1. Summarize, in your own words, Macbeth's soliloquy (lines 1-28). What has Macbeth decided by the end of this speech?
2. What arguments does Lady Macbeth use to convince her husband to kill the King?
3. Based on this scene, what does it mean to be "a man" in this time period?

## **Act II**

### **Scene i**

1. What do we learn about Banquo's character from his talk with Macbeth?
2. **Extension Question:** Shakespeare wrote this play to honour the new King of England, King James I of England (who was already King James VI of Scotland when he was crowned King of England). King James was a descendant of Banquo. How might that influence Shakespeare's writing of this scene (and other scenes with Banquo)?
3. In Macbeth's soliloquy he sees a floating dagger which he cannot touch. What are some possible explanations for this?

### **Scene ii**

1. What is Macbeth's state of mind after killing King Duncan? What is Lady Macbeth's state of mind?
2. What is the significance of Macbeth being unable to say "Amen"?
3. How do you think the murder will affect each of these two characters throughout the rest of the play?

### **Scene iii**

1. Why do you think Shakespeare followed the murder scene with this humorous opening of the scene?
2. What is an "equivocator"? (Look up the definition of "equivocation" if you don't know it).

3. How does Lennox describe the previous night? Why is this significant?
4. What is Lady Macbeth's reaction to hearing the king was murdered? Why is this an odd reaction?
5. What happened to the guards that were framed for the murder?
6. What do Malcolm and Donalbain decide to do upon learning of their father's murder? Why do you think they do this?

#### **Scene iv**

1. What strange events do the Old Man and Ross discuss? What do you think caused these events?
2. Who do people think hired the guards to kill the king? Why do they think this?
3. Who has been elected the new King of Scotland?

### **Act III**

#### **Scene i**

1. What does Banquo suspect about Macbeth?
2. In Macbeth's soliloquy (lines 50-73) why does Macbeth say that he fears Banquo? Is this a rational fear?
3. Macbeth hires some men to perform a task. What is the task? How does he convince them to complete the task?
4. Based on this scene, describe Macbeth's character. How has this changed from the beginning of the play?

#### **Scene ii**

1. How are Lady Macbeth and Macbeth enjoying their new roles as Queen and King?
2. How has the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth changed since the beginning of the play?

#### **Scene iii**

1. At the opening of the scene a third murderer was sent by Macbeth to join the original two. There are many different theories about why Macbeth sent a third murderer (if he did indeed send him), or who that murderer might be. List as many different possibilities as you can think of for different ways to stage this.

2. What is the outcome of Banquo's and Fleance's encounter with the murderers?
3. In what ways can this scene be viewed as the climax and turning point of the play?

#### **Scene iv**

1. What appears to Macbeth at his banquet? Aside from Macbeth, who can see this thing?
2. Do you think the ghost is real, or is Macbeth losing his sanity? Give reasons for your answers.
3. How will this scene affect the confidence that the noblemen have in Macbeth as their King?
4. What nobleman (aside from Banquo) was not at the banquet? What consequences do you think will result from this fact? Why?

#### **Scene v**

Most scholars think that this scene was not written by Shakespeare. Instead, they believe it was written several years after Shakespeare wrote Macbeth and added to the play.

1. Why do you think scholars believe that this scene was not written by Shakespeare?
2. Why do you think people who were performing this play would create this scene?

#### **Scene vi**

1. Who do people think killed Banquo?
2. Where is Malcolm now?
3. Where is Macduff headed?

### **Act IV**

#### **Scene i**

The opening of this scene—before Macbeth arrives—is also thought to have been added.

1. Why do you think people would add extra scenes of the witches? Do you agree with their decision, or should the play have been left the way Shakespeare wrote it?
2. What does each of the three apparitions tell Macbeth?
3. What does the show of Kings represent? Who is the eighth King in the line?
4. What news does Lennox bring Macbeth?
5. What orders has Macbeth already given concerning Macduff?

**Scene ii**

1. To what does Lady Macduff equate her husband fleeing to England?
2. What happens to Macduff's family?
3. What do you think is the purpose of including such a gory and terrible scene in the play? Would you have written the deaths in this scene differently if you were writing the play? If so, how?

**Scene iii**

1. What is Macduff trying to encourage Malcolm to do?
2. What reasons does Malcolm initially give for why he should not be King?
3. What was the purpose of Malcolm's deception?
4. When Ross first arrives, what does he tell Macduff about his wife and children? What does he mean by this? This is an example of: \_\_\_\_\_. Why do you think he used this deception?
5. How does Ross expect Macduff to act upon hearing of the death of his family? How does Macduff actually act? In your opinion, which reaction is the proper reaction of a "man"?

**Act V****Scene i**

1. From what is Lady Macbeth suffering?
2. What does she believe is wrong with her hands?
3. What moral message can be taken from this scene?

**Scene ii**

1. Where will these lords meet with the English army? Why is this place significant?
2. What does Angus say about the way Macbeth's servants follow him?

**Scene iii**

1. Is Macbeth worried about the approaching army? Why or why not?
2. What is Lady Macbeth's condition?

**Scene iv**

1. What do the soldiers do in Birnam Wood? Why do they do this?

2. Why is this action significant?

#### **Scene v**

1. What has happened to Lady Macbeth? What is Macbeth's reaction?

2. What unusual event does the messenger report seeing to Macbeth?

#### **Scene vi**

The English Army begins their attack of Dunsinane Castle. No questions on this brief scene.

#### **Scene vii**

1. What gives Macbeth his confidence when he fights Young Siward?

2. What does it mean when Malcolm says "We have met with foes/That strike beside us" (Shakespeare V.vii.29-30)?

#### **Scene viii**

1. Why does Macbeth not wish to fight Macduff (at first)?

2. Why is Macduff able to defeat Macbeth, yet hold true to the prophecy of the witches?

3. The way the witches prophecies "came true" is another example of: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Scene ix**

1. What is Siward primary concern when he learns his son is dead? How does this differ from Macduff reaction when he learned similar news? Which is the "proper" and "manly" reaction in this time period? Which reaction do you think is the better reaction?

2. Who is named King of Scotland?