

Macbeth

R. Dobson-Efpatriadis

ENG 1D1

St. Edmund Campion

Act I, i

- introduces characters
- introduces **theme of unnatural and supernatural**
- this setting develops overall **theme** of Macbeth *as a struggle of good against evil*
- introduces **theme of appearances vs. reality**
(looks are deceiving/ things are not as they seem)

Set in medieval Scotland, the play opens in an isolated and wild place. Amid thunder and lightning, three witches (the Weird Sisters) enter. They are spirits who have taken the form of old women, ragged and poor, skinny and physically hideous, full of hateful spite.

They reveal characteristics traditionally associated with witchcraft which were familiar to and believed in by Shakespeare's audiences:

- predict the future; foreshadow things to come; show things concealed
- they know in advance the outcome of a civil war that is being fought in Scotland *"when the battle's lost and won"*
- they know when and where they will encounter Macbeth
- they can vanish into thin air
- have the devil close by in the form of a toad, cat, etc.

The witches are called away by their companion spirits and they fly off into the murky air. The introduction of the supernatural sets the stage for a tragic conflict between right and wrong, *"fair and foul"*.

DEFINITION

Paradox **a contradictory statement which seems absurd yet is true**
(looks like/sounds like an extended oxymoron)

Questions

1. This short scene is filled with **paradox**. **Explain what this term means by referring to at least one example.**
2. From this scene, what do we know will occur at some point later on in the play?
3. What is the **atmosphere or mood** (feeling) created in this scene? How is it developed?

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Act I, ii

Dramatically Significant:

- introduces important characters; Duncan - the King; kind, generous and elderly; Malcolm - his eldest son and Donalbain - the younger
- reveals Macbeth's character

Fill in the blanks

This scene occurs at King Duncan's camp near Forres. There is a civil war going on between Scotland and rebels against the King. Some distance from the actual fighting, the _____, his _____ and attendants are given the latest report from the battlefield. A wounded soldier praises the bravery of the generals and _____. He describes their victory over the rebel _____, followed by their defence against the King of Norway whose forces have come to the aid of the rebels. The Thane of _____ arrives to announce the victory of Macbeth and Banquo over the King of Norway who has been assisted by the traitor Thane of _____. Kind Duncan orders Cawdor's _____ and will transfer the title to _____. All the reports stress the violent and bloody nature of the war.

1. How, specifically, does Macbeth kill rebel and traitor Macdonwald?
2. Explain the lines "As sparrows, eagles; or the hare, the lion:/ If I say sooth, I must report they were/As cannon overcharged with double cracks,"
3. From the descriptions given of Macbeth, does he have admirable qualities? List them.
4. What does Duncan mean by "What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won"?
5. Why is it significant that Macbeth is granted a traitor's title?

Additional Notes:

This scene presents a glowing picture of the military prowess of Macbeth. It reveals the great respect everyone seems to have for Macbeth. On the battlefield he is viewed as a brave and valiant leader and soldier, and a protector of the king. His success against the rebel leaders wins the favour of his king. Macbeth's acts of courage are vivid in their bloodiness. For his role in the battle, Macbeth will be rewarded.

This scene presents the clearest view of Macbeth before his choice of evil. He is evidently a person with a great potential for doing well.

MACBETH

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Act I, iii

Why is this scene so important?

Dramatic Significance:

- introduces Macbeth and Banquo and provides insight into each man's character
- advances the plot as one prophecy comes true: Macbeth gets reward for doing well in battle (title "Thane of Cawdor")
- continues the theme of supernatural since the scene opens with the witches who are casting a spell on a woman's husband
- outlines the range of powers and limitations possessed by the Weird Sisters
- The witches prophecies foretell the future.
- Their predictions are **believed to outwardly symbolize the desires within Macbeth's heart and therefore, they help to fan Macbeth's ambition.**
- Up to this point in his life he has never outwardly shown his desire to be King. Macbeth, however, is predisposed to their temptation since inwardly he must desire the respect and honour which comes with the position. **Thus, when they initially speak, it explains why he is "rapt withal" (I, iii, 60).**
- However, the witches have little power over Banquo. He is curious about their nature yet skeptical. He thinks them imaginary and warns Macbeth not to trust their words.
- **This scene is important to the structure of the play because it is the exciting force which sets the action of the play in motion. And like tragic figures in so many of Shakespeare's dramatic works, there is a stark contrast in a character's initial thoughts and actions and those displayed by the character later in the play and as in this case, within the same scene.**
- Macbeth's inner thoughts about the 2nd prophecy coming true are revealed through **two asides** which both **reveal he is eager to have all of them come true.**

Create your own notes:

1. LOCATE THE ASIDES SPOKEN BY MACBETH.

Paraphrase his thoughts that provide evidence that he is anxious to have the prophecies come true:

a)

b)

These inner thoughts clearly contradict the image of himself that he reveals to Banquo.

2. Locate the evidence that he reveals to Banquo about himself:

a)

Later, however, he does consider the crimes needed to guarantee his spot on the throne, which at this point in the play, "unfix [his] hair/And make [his] seated heart knock at [his] ribs." (I, iii, 145-6).

Although the position is desirable, the actions to secure it are not, so Macbeth says to himself:

"If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me, /Without my stir" and "Come what come may."
Thus, as the scene ends, he concludes that he will take no measures at this time to help the prophecy along.

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Student Notes

Act I, iv-Dramatic Significance

This scene is satiated with irony:

Verbal Irony Duncan does not know that he will be deceived again since “There’s no art/To find the mind’s construction in the face:” **and once again Duncan will be unwise to choose a “gentleman on whom [he] built,/An absolute trust” (I, iv, 14-15)**

Situational Irony We know of the witches' prophecy that Macbeth will be king. Therefore, we are aware that Macbeth is somewhat hypocritical in his behaviour toward Duncan which contrasts with Banquo's loyalty. While Macbeth claimed in the last scene that he would do nothing to secure the king's position, **we see through his comments that he is set on attaining the crown at any cost.**

Dramatic Irony With the announcement that Malcolm is to be the King's heir, Macbeth realizes that if he wants the crown he must take steps to achieve it. (Malcolm the King's son is the rightful heir.) Yet the king praises him for being so honourable and valiant

Theme of Darkness and Evil

Macbeth calls upon darkness to hide his actions. This shows his intent to get the crown is by evil means

Foreshadowing By strange coincidence, Duncan plans to visit Macbeth's castle at once and therefore, plays into Macbeth's hands.

At this point in the play, the witches have influenced him to believe that third prophecy may come true. In speaking the first two truths, “the instruments of darkness” have told truths “to win him with honest trifles” only to betray him later.

Unfortunately, Macbeth doesn't recognize this nor does he wish to heed Banquo's advice.

Therefore, THE PRIMARY FORCE propelling Macbeth to act, as supported and seen in this scene, is HIS OWN AMBITION

Macbeth now believes he can be King and will take measures to fulfill the prophecy.

Macbeth

Act I, v

Dramatic Significance

introduces Lady Macbeth

- loving and sincere when it comes to her husband
- vile, corrupt, evil, ruthless and unscrupulous as she seems to take charge of the plan to rid Scotland of its King
- very ambitious

The introduction of Lady Macbeth in this scene is obvious. Her inflexible will, her great love for her husband, and **her willingness to sacrifice her better self in order to fulfil her husband's ambitions are brought out in her soliloquy when she makes an invocation to evil and to darkness to replace all her nurturing, feminine qualities with remorseless cruelty.**

This speech indicates that she is better suited to be an assassin than Macbeth. She realizes that Duncan's visit will be an ideal opportunity to carry out "her plan". She calls on the spirits to help her!! Not her husband.

Her influence over Macbeth, as we will see, is immense. We might even say that Lady Macbeth is just as ambitious as Macbeth if not more so.

reveals the relationship between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth

- the bond between husband and wife is strong and deep; this is brought out in the letter Macbeth sends to his wife, their meetings, and in phrases used throughout upcoming scenes
- he trusts her with the news and asks her to keep it a secret
- she seems to love him, but sees his good qualities as weaknesses

Lady Macbeth analyzes her husband in another soliloquy in this same scene. She sees him as ambitious but insufficiently ruthless. Her speech reveals her distrust in Macbeth to carry out a murder plot against Duncan.

If she really understood her husband she would not have encouraged him to commit the crime which will lead to their ultimate destruction.

- he can't wait to get home so they can share in his joy

further develops the theme of evil

- after reading the letter she starts to speak her own thoughts about her husband
- seems to love him but very critical of his good traits
- she wants to fill him with evil inspiration so he won't wait around for legitimate means to get the crown
- **after the messenger leaves she states, "the raven croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan" which means the bird of darkness(death) announces his doomed entry.**

This image of darkness is repeated throughout the play as evil invades the actions of characters.

filled with dramatic irony

- when the Messenger announces the King is arriving, she jumps to the conclusion that her husband is already King.
- we know that he is not; then the messenger says the Thane is coming with the King.
- she seems at once disappointed by the news
- but she is excited about King Duncan coming to her castle

Macbeth

Act I, v

Questions

1. After reading his letter, why does Lady Macbeth think that her husband "doesn't have what it takes" to betray Duncan? **List the qualities she states he possesses that will lead him to be King, list the qualities that she states will keep him from being King.**
2. Paraphrase Lady Macbeth's equivocation to evil soliloquy, lines 42-56, following the instructions provided.
3. List the images in this speech, the one listed above, that help create i) the atmosphere of evil and doom, ii) the theme of evil, and iii) that reveal her character.
4. After Macbeth enters the scene, which character, Macbeth or Lady Macbeth, seems to want Macbeth to be King more? State your proof!

What is Lady Macbeth's motivation for wanting her husband to commit the murder?

What quality(ies) would make her better suited to be an assassin?
5. In lines 64- 80, list and explain the purpose of at least 3 literary devices.
6. What part do time and place (the setting) play in relation to Duncan's death?
7. What is the importance of Macbeth's statement, "We will speak further?"

Macbeth's determination to have the crown might have wavered when he was faced with the actuality of the means to that end (MURDER), but Lady Macbeth's strength will to win the crown holds him to that desire.

Macbeth in this scene feels apprehensive about committing the DEED, but we are left with the feeling that the murder will take place. Macbeth's doubts tend merely to increase suspense in the play.

Act I, vi**full of deception (examples of dramatic irony)**

- Lady Macbeth hides her real intentions and puts on an act when she meets Duncan.
- Macbeth chooses not to greet his guest. He hastened home with murder in his heart.
- Duncan's arrival at Macbeth's castle means that he is at the mercy of his unscrupulous hostess and her ambitious husband.
- Prior to the King's arrival, Lady Macbeth has independently made up her mind that her husband shall be King. Her great love for her husband increases her determination.
- Duncan's false sense of security is also ironic.

In contrast to most scenes in the play, this one takes place in daylight and in a beautiful and serene setting. It symbolically represents “the calm before the storm.” All the play’s major characters except Macbeth, are present. The sly lady Macbeth greets the king and his court. King Duncan appears to be generous in his praise and compliments which provides dramatic irony.

Macbeth

Act I, vii

Questions

1. Macbeth's soliloquy in this scene is broken down on the hand out below. Paraphrase each section carefully, making sure to provide the reasons Macbeth gives for not wishing to kill Duncan?
 - b) What does this reveal about Macbeth's character?
 - c) What factors are tempting him to kill Duncan?
 - d) Does Macbeth seem fully aware of the consequences of the planned murder?

2. In this scene, Macbeth reveals several hesitations about going through with the murder plot. List them, quoting lines. Make sure you FIND THEM ALL!!

3. What kind of pressure or techniques (lines 39-65) does Lady Macbeth exert in persuading her husband to kill Duncan? Give several examples from Lady M's speeches.
 - b) Which one do you feel most influences him?

4. What is L.Macbeth's plan to commit "the perfect crime?"
 - b) List the qualities of L. Macbeth that are further revealed in this scene? (Through what she says and how Macbeth responds to her)

5. Why does Macbeth respond as he does in lines 81-86?

6. What is Macbeth's final decision after their discussion as revealed in lines 90-94?