

MACBETH

ACT III, SCENE I

Scene Importance

- reveals people's growing suspicions about Macbeth's involvement in Duncan's death
- shows Macbeth's paranoia about the security of his kingship (soliloquy)
- Shakespeare wishes to stress to the audience the witches' prophesy in Act I, and also that Banquo suspects Macbeth of Duncan's murder
- We also see that Banquo is ambitious for his sons, but he unlike Macbeth, has done nothing to facilitate the prophecy.
- We also see a change in the Macbeths due to their new rank, and the new King has quickly adopted the use of the royal 'we'. This expression shows unity with his subjects and also authority over them.
- Banquo was once on equal terms with Macbeth, but now he refers to him as 'my Lord'.
- Macbeth clearly wishes to relish every moment of his Kingship and there is a distinct lack of urgency now about his actions. A word that he is now commonly using is 'tomorrow', e.g. "we will take such actions tomorrow", but this will come back to haunt him later in the play.

Questions:

1. How does Macbeth feel about being king? (Provide evidence to support your opinion from his main soliloquy)
2. Describe Lady Macbeth's mood (provide supporting evidence).
3. What does Macbeth announce will happen that evening?
4. What information does Macbeth divulge about Malcolm and Donalbain?
5. What evidence is there that Macbeth and Banquo don't trust one another anymore?
6. Do you think Macbeth feels inferior to Banquo? Why or why not?
7. In his soliloquy, what does Macbeth mean when he says:
"To be thus is nothing; But to be safely thus, -our fears in Banquo stick deep"/ "They hail'd him father to a line of kings: Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown"?
8. What persuasive devices does Macbeth use to convince the murderers to kill Banquo?
9. What does the fact that Macbeth employs assassins to murder Banquo reveal about him? Why wouldn't he just murder Banquo himself?

Scene Summary

- Banquo dwells on the fact that all of Macbeth's prophecies have come true
- He suspects Macbeth of murdering Duncan, but decides not to say anything because he wants to see if his prophecy will come true as well
- Macbeth realizes that the witches' third prediction concerning Banquo threatens his hold on the crown
- His attendant admits 2 murderers whom Macbeth has hired to kill Banquo and Fleance on the road

