

MACBETH

ACT III, SCENE II



Questions:

1. In what ways do each of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth show that the crown has not brought them peace of mind?
2. In what ways has Macbeth changed since Duncan's murder?
3. In many ways the roles of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have been reversed. Show how their relationship has altered. Pay particular attention to the way the "fair is foul" theme is used to emphasize this change.
8. What is the meaning of Lady Macbeth's saying: "Naught's had, all's spent, / Where our desire is got without content"? Why might she conceal her true feelings from her husband?



9. In lines 18-28, from afflictions does Macbeth suffer?
10. In line 39, Lady Macbeth says, "You must leave this." What does she mean?
11. Is Lady Macbeth aware that Macbeth has planned the death of Banquo and Fleance? Explain why this fact is significant.
12. How is the planning of Banquo's murder quite different from that of Duncan's?
13. Explain how animal imagery is used to develop the mood in this scene?

Scene Summary

- Alone on stage, Lady Macbeth expresses her unhappiness: there seems to be no end to her desire for power and she feels insecure and anxious, and uncomfortable
- Macbeth enters looking upset and she counsels him to stop mulling over the crimes they have committed.
- But Macbeth declares that their job is not done: he still spends every waking moment in fear and every night embroiled in nightmares.
- He even envies Duncan, who now sleeps peacefully in his grave.
- Lady Macbeth warns him to act cheerful in front of their dinner guests (again, foul is fair...)
- Lady Macbeth is surprised by his plans to kill Banquo and Fleance, and thinks that these additional murders are unnecessary.
- Macbeth responds by telling her that "a deed of dreadful note" will be done in the night, though he will not divulge the details (33).
- Whereas in Act 2 Lady Macbeth had to orchestrate the whole crime and assume a manlier role, Macbeth is now fully enveloped in his role as the evil and powerful king. He is much more courageous in crime than he ever was in virtuous deed.

Shakespeare makes a clever study of the relationship between husband and wife and the power struggle that takes place. Remember that in Act I - Scene.v, Lady Macbeth spoke about the raven and the serpent. Now Macbeth uses language of horror by stating that his mind is 'full of scorpions'. You will also recall that Lady Macbeth made a plea to the spirit world for the loss of her femininity, to be unsexed. Now Macbeth also desires to be rid of his humanity, calling for the dissolution of the bond between him and the natural world.