overview

I.1: three witches meet on barren heathland to discuss their meeting with Macbeth...
I.2: an injured captain reports Scotland's success and Macbeth's bravery to King Diuncan...
I.3 : Macbeth and Banquo meet three witches on the heath who make predications about their futures...

Act One Scene One

1. In groups of three, practice the reading of the scene until you feel you have the right voices, mood, expression and pace.

2. You are the director of this first scene. Write down your instructions for the actors playing the witches. You might think about whether they are all similar or different, their age, costume and movement.

3. In this first scene there are a number of *paradoxes.* This means statements that appear to contradict each other. Write down the ones you find, and guess what they might mean.

Act One Scene Two

1. Read the captain's report and answer the following questions:
a) Pick out all the *action* words (such as 'Swarm') that you can find in these lines. Why do you think they are there?
b) What sort of picture of Macbeth is built up in this speech? What will the audience be expecting?
c) Pick out the **animal images** in the scene and explain what they represent.

2. Briefly explain the story of the Thane of Cawdor in your own words and how this affects Macbeth.

3. 'What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.' How do these words echo something said by the witches in the first scene? What does this tell us about the witches'. powers?

Act One Scene Three

1.What comments would you make about the witches' style of speaking up to the first stage direction (*drum within*)?

2.Comment on the link between Macbeth's first words and the words of the witches in the first scene. It is a statement about the weather – but do you think it could mean something more?

3. What two predictions do the witches make about Macbeth when they greet him? Comment on the second.

4. What predictions are made about Banquo? How is the idea of the paradox continued here?

5. How does Macbeth react to the news that he has been made Thane of Cawdor? Focus on these lines in particular:

- *Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?*
- *Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor: / The greatest is behind.*
- *...horrid image doth unfix my hair...*
- *If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me / Without my stir*

Compare your answers to a partner's. What might be going through Macbeth's head at this point, and how would you be thinking if you were in his position?

Extension Activity – The First Three Scenes

The first three scenes contain very different characters and locations. Discuss the way that Shakespeare creates a contrast between the scenes and the characters, yet builds in elements that clearly link them together. The following prompt words might help you out:

- the words 'fair' and 'foul'
- the character of Macbeth
- Duncan and The Witches – Good and Evil

Write your ideas down in note form, but use quotations from the scenes to back up your ideas.