



## act two, scenes 1 and 2

### overview

II.1 - Macbeth discusses the witches' predictions with Banquo, then hallucinates, seeing a dagger float in mid-air.

II.2 - Macbeth returns from murdering Duncan with the murder weapons, and in a distressed state. Lady Macbeth tries to calm him, and gets rid of the murder weapons.

### Act Two, Scene One

#### Lines 1-32

1. In the first conversation between Banquo and Fleance, find and write down all the references to light and darkness. What have they got in common, and what do you think they mean?
2. **Dramatic irony** is where a character says something and the audience recognises that it has a deeper meaning or that the opposite is true. For example, when Banquo asks, 'Who's there?', Macbeth answers, 'A friend.' His thoughts towards Banquo, though, are anything but friendly, as we shall see later! Find more examples of **dramatic irony** in this section of the scene.
3. Macbeth says of the witches, 'I think not of them.' Find a quotation from Act One that proves this isn't true. Why would Macbeth lie to Banquo about this?
4. Re-read lines 25/6 ('If you shall cleave to my consent...'). What does Macbeth mean by this? What do you make of Banquo's response?

#### Lines 33-64 (end of scene)

5. List all the images of violence and death that you can find in this speech. Why do you think there are so many?
6. Why do you think Macbeth sees a dagger? List the reasons he gives. What do you think it represents? How would you stage this situation if you were the director of a production of *Macbeth*?
7. Notice Shakespeare's use of rhyme at the end of the final lines in this scene. Read the final five lines aloud with a partner - what is the effect of using rhyme here?

### Act Two, Scene Two

## Lines 1-8

8. How would you describe Lady Macbeth's mood at the start of the scene? How does it contrast with Macbeth's from the previous scene? Use quotations from these lines to back up your answer.

## Lines 9-24

9. Use these prompt words to explain how Shakespeare creates **dramatic tension** in this part of the scene:

- use of questions
- quick exchange of speech
- references to strange noises

Use quotations to back up your answer.

10. If you were directing this section, what advice would you give to the actors playing Macbeth and his wife in terms of movement, action and gestures?

## Lines 25 - 59

11. Macbeth dwells on the fact that he could not say the word 'amen' after hearing the prayer of Duncan's guards. Why do you think he was unable to say this word?

12. In line 39, Macbeth says he 'doth murder sleep.' By this, he says that by killing the guards, he has murdered the qualities that sleep brings. Explain these qualities in your own words. You could start by underlining the words you don't understand, and looking them up in the dictionary:

- *the innocent sleep*
- *sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care*
- *the death of each day's life*
- *sore labour's bath*
- *balm of hurt minds*
- *great nature's second course*
- *chief nourisher of life's feast*

Why do you think Macbeth believes he shall no longer enjoy these qualities?

13. How does Lady Macbeth react to her husband in lines 47-53 ('Who was it...grooms with blood' ? How does her behaviour continue to differ from that of her husband at this point in the play? Look also at lines 55-59

## Lines 60 - end of scene

14. We later find out that that the knocking at the end of the scene is Macduff and Lennox at the gates of the castle. What effect might this have on the characters, and therefore on the audience?

15. Macbeth clearly regrets his part in the murder at this point. Explain these statements of his in your own words, adding how they express his feeling sorry about what he has done:

- *Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?*
- *To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself*

16. Lady Macbeth accuses her husband of being a coward three times in this section. Copy down the three quotations that emphasise this.

### **Activities based on the Both Scenes**

#### 1. *Writing to Analyse / Review / Comment*

Shakespeare uses many **dramatic devices** in these scenes to make them more nail-biting for the audience. Look back over your other notes on these scenes.

- list the various techniques used
- find an example of each
- comment on how each example might affect the audience, and why it works well

#### 2. *Speaking and Listening - Pairs (Accompanying worksheet available)*

Write a script or improvise a situation where an officer of Duncan's is questioning a servant of Macbeth's over the murder. The servant has seen and heard everything in II.1 - but how much will he let on? Include information on:

- Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's states of mind throughout the scenes
- the events of the murder
- what might happen after the murder has been discovered

As the servant, describe how your master and mistress appeared throughout the episode. Be prepared to act out the interview in front of the rest of the class.

#### 3. *Writing to Inform / Explain / Describe ; Analyse / Review / Comment* (Accompanying worksheet available)

Lady Macbeth is clearly experiencing many emotions at this point in the play. Write down the notes of an actress taking her part, stating how she might approach II.2. Use key quotations from the scene as your starting points.