

Macbeth Study Guide

Thoroughly answer these questions with direct quotations from the play to support your claim. Use proper citation for prose and verse in drama.

Act II Scene i

1. What is significant about the weather?
2. Outline the conversation, in scene 1, between Macbeth and Banquo as Act II opens.
3. In the line "There's husbandry [economy] in heaven; / Their candles are all out," (II i 6 -7). what do the candles represent?
4. What do you suppose is keeping Banquo from sleeping?
5. What is significant about Macbeth's saying, "I think not of them," after Banquo had admitted to dreaming about the Weird Sisters?
6. What does Macbeth mean when he says to Banquo, "If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis, / It shall make honour for you"?
7. What is significant about Banquo's reply?
8. In his soliloquy after Banquo leaves, what does Macbeth tell us he sees? What could account for this apparition?
9. Why does Shakespeare have Macbeth hallucinate?
10. Explain Macbeth's vision of the dagger, and what it shows about his state of mind. (You will need to learn to recite this soliloquy.)

Act II Scene ii

1. Compare Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's reactions immediately after the crime.
2. An allusion to an owl is made. What does the owl symbolize?
3. Macbeth, apparently troubled by the murder he has just committed, tells Lady Macbeth what he saw and heard. She tells him, "These deeds must not be thought of this way." Why?
4. Macbeth's response is frequently quoted. What is the sense of this response?
5. What does Macbeth hear as he goes to murder Duncan?
6. Immediately following the murder, what is Macbeth most concerned about?
7. What does Macbeth realize (or say) he has done by murdering Duncan?
8. How does Lady Macbeth get Duncan's blood on her hands?
9. What does Macbeth's refusal to return to Duncan's chamber echo?

Act II Scene iii

1. a. The Porter's scene, or the "knocking at the gate," is a much debated scene by scholars, but many agree it is the typical comic relief scene seen in Shakespeare's plays. What do you suppose the dramatic purpose of a comic relief scene is? Why is the Porter's soliloquy in prose rather than verse (poetry)? What lines contain the bawdy humor so often found in these scenes? The porter imagines he is the porter of what?

1. b. To whom is the porter referring when he says "in th' / other devil's name?"

2. How is the theme of "a crime against nature" reinforced in this scene?

3. What does Shakespeare accomplish with Macduff's allusion to "a new Gorgon"?

4. How does Macbeth react to the discovery of Duncan's body?

5. How does Lady Macbeth react?

6. Who is the one who points out the inappropriateness of Lady Macbeth's initial response?

7. What is the predominant image in this scene, and what effect does it create?

8. What double meaning might Shakespeare have intended for Macbeth's line, "He does: he did appoint so," in response to Lennox's asking, "Goes the King hence today?"

9. Who discovers that the king has been murdered?

10. After their father's murder, why do Malcolm and Donalbain leave Scotland?

11. In Scene 3, Lennox describes strange events in nature that reflect the events in Macbeth's castle. At the beginning of Scene IV, Ross and an old man discuss the strange events of the night. List some of the events described, and *explain why they are happening*.

Act II Scene iv

1. What is the purpose of this scene?

2. a. In Scene 3, Lennox describes strange events in nature that reflect the events in Macbeth's castle. At the beginning of Scene 4, Ross and an old man discuss the strange events of the night. List some of the natural or "unnatural" events that occur and *explain why they are happening*.

2. b. What additional natural, or "unnatural," events further the "crime against nature" theme or the ideology of disorder and the Chain of Being?

3. At the end of Act II, where has Macbeth gone? And Why?

4. What is Macduff's reaction to the flight of Duncan's sons?