

Scene 1 A cave. In the middle, a boiling cauldron.

The three witches prepare a potion in a boiling kettle. When Macbeth arrives, demanding to know his future, the witches raise three apparitions. The first, an armed (helmeted) head, tells him to beware of Macduff. Next, a bloody child assures Macbeth that he will never be harmed by anyone born of woman. The third apparition tells him that he will never be defeated until the trees of Birnam Wood move toward his castle at Dunsinane. Macbeth, now confident of his future, asks about Banquo's son. His confidence fades when the witches show him a line of kings who all resemble Banquo, suggesting that Banquo's sons will indeed be kings. Macbeth curses the witches as they disappear.

Lennox enters the cave and tells Macbeth that Macduff has gone to the English court. Hearing this, Macbeth swears to kill Macduff's family.

[Thunder. Enter the three Witches.]

First Witch. Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed.

Second Witch. Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whined.

Third Witch. Harpier cries "'Tis time, 'tis time!"

First Witch. Round about the cauldron go;

- 5 In the poisoned entrails throw.
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Sweltered venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' th' charmed pot.

[The Witches circle the cauldron.]

- 10 **All.** Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Second Witch. Fillet of a fenny snake
In the cauldron boil and bake.
Eye of newt and toe of frog,

- 15 Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blindworm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

- 20 **All.** Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Third Witch. Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witch's mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravined salt-sea shark,

1–3 Magical signals and the call of the third witch's attending demon (harpier) tell the witches to begin.

4–34 The witches are stirring up a magical stew to bring trouble to humanity. Their recipe includes intestines (entrails, chaudron), a slice (fillet) of snake, eye of salamander (newt), snake tongue (adder's fork), a lizard (blindworm), a baby owl's (howlet's) wing, a shark's stomach and gullet (maw and gulf), the finger of a baby strangled by a prostitute (drab), and other gruesome ingredients. They stir their brew until it is thick and slimy (slab).



Macbeth and the three witches

- 25 Root of hemlock digged i' th' dark,
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat and slips of yew
Slivered in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
- 30 Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-delivered by a drab,
Make the gruel thick and slab.
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron
For th' ingredience of our cauldron.
- 35 **All.** Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
- Second Witch.** Cool it with a baboon's blood.
Then the charm is firm and good.
- [Enter Hecate and the other three Witches.]
- Hecate.** O, well done! I commend your pains,
40 And everyone shall share i' th' gains.
And now about the cauldron sing
Like elves and fairies in a ring,
Enchanting all that you put in.
- [Music and a song: "Black Spirits," etc. Hecate exits.]
- Second Witch.** By the pricking of my thumbs,
45 Something wicked this way comes.
Open, locks,
Whoever knocks.
- [Enter Macbeth.]
- Macbeth.** How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?
What is 't you do?
- All.** A deed without a name.
- 50 **Macbeth.** I conjure you by that which you profess
(Howe'er you come to know it), answer me.
Though you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches, though the yeasty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up,
- 55 Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down,
Though castles topple on their warders' heads,
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations, though the treasure
Of nature's germens tumble all together
60 Even till destruction sicken, answer me
To what I ask you.

Language Coach

Word Definitions Shakespeare (like other poets) invents many compound words by joining a noun and adjective with a hyphen. Reread lines 30–31. *Birth-strangled* is shorthand for “strangled at birth.” Why do you think Shakespeare uses this short version? What does *ditch-delivered* mean?

[Stage Direction] **Enter Hecate . . .** Most experts believe that the entrance of Hecate and three more witches was not written by Shakespeare. The characters were probably added later to expand the role of the witches, who were favorites of the audience.

50–61 Macbeth calls upon (**conjure**) the witches in the name of their dark magic (**that which you profess**). Though they unleash winds to topple churches and make foaming (**yeasty**) waves to destroy (**confound**) ships, though they flatten wheat (**corn**) fields, destroy buildings, and reduce nature's order to chaos by mixing all seeds (**germens**) together, he demands an answer to his question.

First Witch. Speak.

Second Witch. Demand.

Third Witch. We'll answer.

First Witch. Say if th' hadst rather hear it from our mouths
Or from our masters'.

Macbeth. Call 'em. Let me see 'em.

First Witch. Pour in sow's blood that hath eaten

65 Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten
From the murderers' gibbet throw
Into the flame.

All. Come high or low;
Thyself and office deftly show.

[*Thunder.* First Apparition, *an Armed Head.*]

Macbeth. Tell me, thou unknown power—

First Witch. He knows thy thought.

70 Hear his speech but say thou naught.

First Apparition. Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff!
Beware the Thane of Fife! Dismiss me. Enough.

[*He descends.*]

Macbeth. Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks.
Thou hast harped my fear aright. But one word more—

75 **First Witch.** He will not be commanded. Here's another
More potent than the first.

[*Thunder.* Second Apparition, *a Bloody Child.*]

Second Apparition. Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!—

Macbeth. Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

Second Apparition. Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn

80 The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth. **A**

[*He descends.*]

Macbeth. Then live, Macduff; what need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance double sure

And take a bond of fate. Thou shalt not live,

85 That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder.

[*Thunder.* Third Apparition, *a Child Crowned, with a tree in his hand.*]

What is this

That rises like the issue of a king

And wears upon his baby brow the round

And top of sovereignty?

63 masters: the demons whom the witches serve.

65–66 farrow: newborn pigs;
grease . . . gibbet: grease from a gallows where murderers were hung.

[Stage Direction] Each of the three apparitions holds a clue to Macbeth's future. *What do you think is suggested by the armed head?*

74 harped: guessed. The apparition has confirmed Macbeth's fears of Macduff.

A FORESHADOWING

Reread lines 79–81. Note the prophecy's apparent promise of safety. What effect do you think the prophecy will have on Macbeth?

84 The murder of Macduff will give Macbeth a guarantee (**bond**) of his fate and put his fears to rest.

87 issue: child.

88–89 the round and top: the crown.

All. Listen, but speak not to 't.

90 **Third Apparition.** Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are.
Macbeth shall never vanquished be until
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill
Shall come against him.

[*He descends.*]

Macbeth. That will never be.

95 Who can impress the forest, bid the tree
Unfix his earthbound root? Sweet bodements, good!
Rebellious dead, rise never till the wood
Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth
Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath
100 To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart
Throbs to know one thing. Tell me, if your art
Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever
Reign in this kingdom?

All. Seek to know no more.

Macbeth. I will be satisfied. Deny me this,

105 And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know!

[*Cauldron sinks. Hautboys.*]

Why sinks that cauldron? And what noise is this?

First Witch. Show.

Second Witch. Show.

Third Witch. Show.

110 **All.** Show his eyes, and grieve his heart.
Come like shadows; so depart.

[*A show of eight kings, the eighth king with a glass in his hand, and
Banquo last.*]

Macbeth. Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo. Down!

Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs. And thy hair,
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.

115 A third is like the former.—Filthy hags,
Why do you show me this?—A fourth? Start, eyes!
What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?
Another yet? A seventh? I'll see no more.
And yet the eighth appears who bears a glass
120 Which shows me many more, and some I see
That twofold balls and treble scepters carry.
Horrible sight! Now I see 'tis true,
For the blood-boltered Banquo smiles upon me
And points at them for his.

[*The Apparitions disappear.*]

What, is this so?

90–94 The third apparition tells Macbeth to take courage. He cannot be defeated unless Birnam Wood travels the 12-mile distance to Dunsinane Hill, where his castle is located.

95 impress: force into service.

96 bodements: prophecies.

97–100 Macbeth boasts that he will never again be troubled by ghosts (**rebellious dead**) and that he will live out his expected life span (**lease of nature**). He believes he will die (**pay his breath**) by natural causes (**mortal custom**).

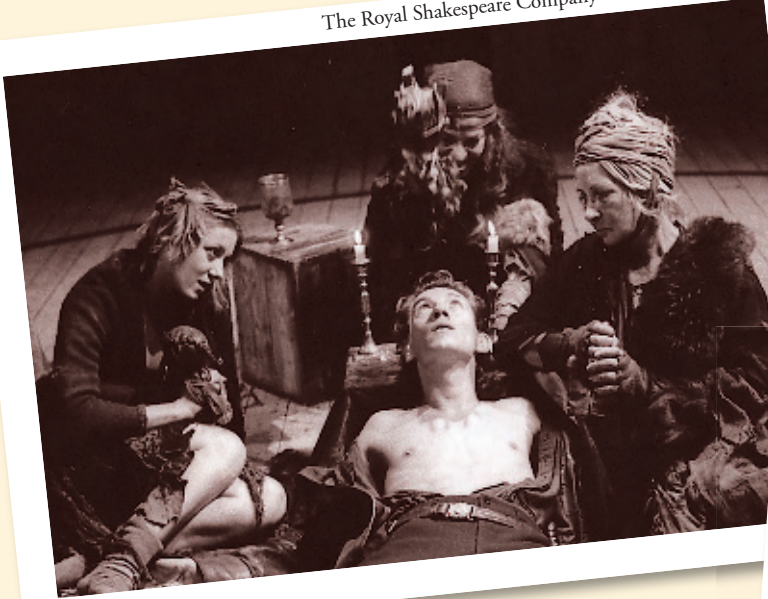
106 The cauldron is sinking from sight to make room for the next apparition.

[Stage Direction] **A show . . .** : Macbeth next sees a procession (**show**) of eight kings, the last carrying a mirror (**glass**). According to legend, Fleance escaped to England, where he founded the Stuart family, to which King James belonged.

112–124 Macbeth is outraged that all eight kings in the procession look like Banquo. The mirror held by the last one shows a future with many more Banquo look-alikes as kings. The twofold balls and treble scepters pictured in the mirror foretell the union of Scotland and England in 1603, the year that James became king of both realms. Banquo, his hair matted (**boltered**) with blood, claims all the kings as his descendants. *What do you think is going through Macbeth's mind?*

Behind the Curtain

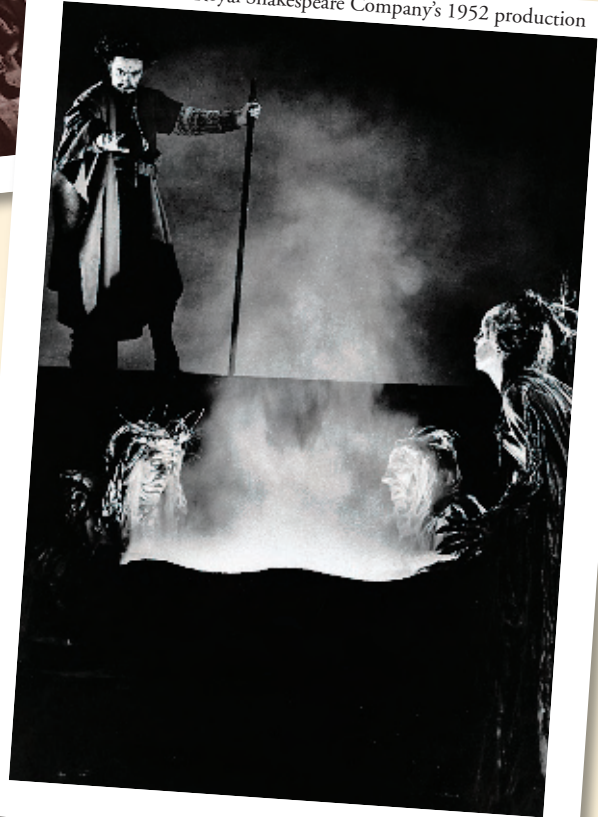
The Royal Shakespeare Company's 1976 production



Blocking

The placement and movement of actors on the stage is called **blocking**. These photos from different productions of *Macbeth* show Act Four, Scene 1, in which Macbeth sees the apparitions. What different ideas about the scene do you get from the different positions of the actors? Which arrangement has the most visual impact? Explain.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's 1952 production



The 2003 production by Utah's Pioneer Theatre Company

125 **First Witch.** Ay, sir, all this is so. But why
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?
Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites
And show the best of our delights.
I'll charm the air to give a sound

130 While you perform your antic round,
That this great king may kindly say
Our duties did his welcome pay.

[*Music. The Witches dance and vanish.*]

Macbeth. Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour
Stand aye accursèd in the calendar!—

135 Come in, without there.

[*Enter Lennox.*]

Lennox. What's your Grace's will?

Macbeth. Saw you the Weïrd Sisters?

Lennox. No, my lord.

Macbeth. Came they not by you?

Lennox. No, indeed, my lord.

Macbeth. Infected be the air whereon they ride,
And damned all those that trust them! I did hear

140 The galloping of horse. Who was 't came by?

Lennox. 'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word
Macduff is fled to England.

Macbeth. Fled to England?

Lennox. Ay, my good lord.

Macbeth. [*Aside*] Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits.

145 The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
Unless the deed go with it. From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:

150 The castle of Macduff I will surprise,
Seize upon Fife, give to th' edge o' th' sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool.

155 But no more sights!—Where are these gentlemen?
Come bring me where they are.

[*They exit.*]

133 **pernicious:** evil.

134 **aye:** always.

135 After the witches vanish, Macbeth hears noises outside the cave and calls out.

144–156 Frustrated in his desire to kill Macduff, Macbeth blames his own hesitation, which gave his enemy time to flee. He concludes that one's plans (**flighty purpose**) are never achieved (**o'ertook**) unless carried out at once. From now on, Macbeth promises, he will act immediately on his impulses (**firstlings of my heart**) and complete (**crown**) his thoughts with acts. He will surprise Macduff's castle at Fife and kill his wife and children. *Why does Macbeth decide to kill Macduff's family?*

Scene 2 Macduff's castle at Fife.

Ross visits Lady Macduff to assure her of her husband's wisdom and courage. Lady Macduff cannot be comforted, believing that he left out of fear. After Ross leaves she tells her son, who is still loyal to his father, that Macduff was a traitor and is now dead. A messenger warns them to flee but is too late. Murderers sent by Macbeth burst in, killing both wife and son.

[Enter Lady Macduff, her Son, and Ross.]

Lady Macduff. What had he done to make him fly the land?

Ross. You must have patience, madam.

Lady Macduff. He had none.

His flight was madness. When our actions do not,
Our fears do make us traitors.

Ross. You know not

5 Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

Lady Macduff. Wisdom? To leave his wife, to leave his babes,

His mansion and his titles in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;

He wants the natural touch; for the poor wren

10 (The most diminutive of birds) will fight,

Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.

All is the fear, and nothing is the love,

As little is the wisdom, where the flight

So runs against all reason.

Ross. My dearest coz,

15 I pray you school yourself. But for your husband,

He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows

The fits o' th' season. I dare not speak much further;

But cruel are the times when we are traitors

And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumor

20 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,

But float upon a wild and violent sea

Each way and move—I take my leave of you.

Shall not be long but I'll be here again.

Things at the worst will cease or else climb upward

25 To what they were before.—My pretty cousin,

Blessing upon you.

Lady Macduff. Fathered he is, and yet he's fatherless.

Ross. I am so much a fool, should I stay longer

It would be my disgrace and your discomfort.

30 I take my leave at once.

[Ross exits.]

Lady Macduff. Sirrah, your father's dead.

And what will you do now? How will you live?

3–4 Macduff's wife is worried that others will think her husband a traitor because his fears made him flee the country (**our fears do make us traitors**), though he was guilty of no wrongdoing.

9 **wants the natural touch:** lacks the instinct to protect his family.

12–14 Lady Macduff believes her husband is motivated entirely by fear, not by love of his family. His hasty flight is contrary to reason.

14 **coz:** cousin (a term used for any close relation).

15 **school:** control; **for:** as for.

17 **fits o' th' season:** disorders of the present time.

18–22 Ross laments the cruelty of the times that made Macduff flee. In such times, people are treated like traitors for no reason. Their fears make them believe (**hold**) rumors, though they do not know what to fear and drift aimlessly like ships tossed by a tempest.

28–30 Moved by pity for Macduff's family, Ross is near tears (**my disgrace**). He will leave before he embarrasses himself.

30–31 *Why does Lady Macduff tell her son that his father is dead, though the boy heard her discussion with Ross?*

Son. As birds do, mother.

Lady Macduff. What, with worms and flies?

Son. With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

Lady Macduff. Poor bird, thou'dst never fear the net nor lime,

35 The pitfall nor the gin.

Son. Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.
My father is not dead, for all your saying.

Lady Macduff. Yes, he is dead. How wilt thou do for a father?

Son. Nay, how will you do for a husband?

40 **Lady Macduff.** Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

Son. Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

Lady Macduff. Thou speak'st with all thy wit,
And yet, i' faith, with wit enough for thee.

Son. Was my father a traitor, mother?

45 **Lady Macduff.** Ay, that he was.

Son. What is a traitor?

Lady Macduff. Why, one that swears and lies.

Son. And be all traitors that do so?

Lady Macduff. Every one that does so is a traitor and must be hanged.

50 **Son.** And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

Lady Macduff. Every one.

Son. Who must hang them?

Lady Macduff. Why, the honest men.

Son. Then the liars and swearers are fools, for there are liars and
55 swearers enough to beat the honest men and hang up them.

Lady Macduff. Now God help thee, poor monkey! But how wilt thou
do for a father?

Son. If he were dead, you'd weep for him. If you would not, it were a
good sign that I should quickly have a new father.

60 **Lady Macduff.** Poor prattler, how thou talk'st!

[Enter a Messenger.]

Messenger. Bless you, fair dame. I am not to you known,
Though in your state of honor I am perfect.
I doubt some danger does approach you nearly.
If you will take a homely man's advice,

65 Be not found here. Hence with your little ones!

To fright you thus methinks I am too savage;
To do worse to you were fell cruelty,
Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you!
I dare abide no longer.

[Messenger exits.]

32–35 The spirited son refuses to be defeated by their bleak situation. He will live as birds do, taking whatever comes his way. His mother responds in kind, calling attention to devices used to catch birds: nets, sticky birdlime (**lime**), snares (**pitfall**), and traps (**gin**).

40–43 Lady Macduff and her son affectionately joke about her ability to find a new husband. She expresses admiration for his intelligence (**with wit enough**).

44–53 Continuing his banter, the son asks if his father is a traitor. Lady Macduff, understandably hurt and confused by her husband's unexplained departure, answers yes.

54–60 Her son points out that traitors outnumber honest men in this troubled time. The mother's terms of affection, **monkey** and **prattler** (childish talker), suggest that his playfulness has won her over.

61–69 The messenger, who knows Lady Macduff is an honorable person (**in your state of honor I am perfect**), delivers a polite but desperate warning, urging her to flee immediately. While he apologizes for scaring her, he warns that she faces a deadly (**fell**) cruelty, one dangerously close (**too nigh**).



Lady Macduff, Ross, and children of Macduff

Lady Macduff. Whither should I fly?

70 I have done no harm. But I remember now
I am in this earthly world, where to do harm
Is often laudable, to do good sometime
Accounted dangerous folly. Why then, alas,
Do I put up that womanly defense
75 To say I have done no harm?

[Enter Murderers.]

What are these faces? **B**

Murderer. Where is your husband?

Lady Macduff. I hope in no place so unsanctified
Where such as thou mayst find him.

Murderer. He's a traitor.

Son. Thou liest, thou shag-eared villain!

Murderer. What, you egg!

[Stabbing him]

80 Young fry of treachery!

Son. He has killed me, mother.

Run away, I pray you,

[Lady Macduff exits, crying "Murder!" followed by the Murderers bearing the Son's body.]

B SOLILOQUY

Reread Lady Macduff's speech in lines 69–75. How have some of the characters in the drama reflected her conclusions about "this earthly world"?

77 **unsanctified:** unholy.

79 **shag-eared:** long-haired. Note how quickly the son reacts to the word *traitor*. *How do you think he feels about his father?*

80 **young fry:** small fish.

Scene 3 England. Before King Edward's palace.

Macduff urges Malcolm to join him in an invasion of Scotland, where the people suffer under Macbeth's harsh rule. Since Malcolm is uncertain of Macduff's motives, he tests him to see what kind of king Macduff would support. Once convinced of Macduff's honesty, Malcolm tells him that he has 10,000 soldiers ready to launch an attack. Ross arrives to tell them that some revolts against Macbeth have already begun. Reluctantly, Ross tells Macduff about the murder of his family. Wild with grief, Macduff vows to confront Macbeth and avenge the murders.

[Enter Malcolm and Macduff.]

Malcolm. Let us seek out some desolate shade and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty.

Macduff. Let us rather
Hold fast the mortal sword and, like good men,
Bestride our downfall'n birthdom. Each new morn
5 New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland, and yelled out
Like syllable of dolor. **C**

Malcolm. What I believe, I'll wail;
What know, believe; and what I can redress,
10 As I shall find the time to friend, I will.
What you have spoke, it may be so, perchance.
This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
Was once thought honest. You have loved him well.
He hath not touched you yet. I am young, but something
15 You may deserve of him through me, and wisdom
To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb
T' appease an angry god.

Macduff. I am not treacherous.

Malcolm. But Macbeth is.
A good and virtuous nature may recoil
20 In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon.
That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose.
Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.
Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,
Yet grace must still look so.

Macduff. I have lost my hopes.

25 **Malcolm.** Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.
Why in that rawness left you wife and child,
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,
Without leave-taking? I pray you,

1–8 In response to Malcolm's depression about Scotland, Macduff advises that they grab a deadly (**mortal**) sword and defend their homeland (**birthdom**). The anguished cries of Macbeth's victims strike heaven and make the skies echo with cries of sorrow (**syllable of dolor**).

C DRAMATIC IRONY
What is ironic about Macduff's speech in lines 2–8?

8–15 Malcolm will strike back only if the time is right (**as I shall find the time to friend**). Macduff may be sincere, but he may be deceiving Malcolm to gain a reward from Macbeth (**something you may deserve of him through me**).

18–24 Malcolm further explains the reasons for his suspicions. Even a good person may fall (**recoil**) into wickedness because of a king's command (**imperial charge**). If Macduff is innocent, he will not be harmed by these suspicions, which cannot change (**transpose**) his nature (**that which you are**). Virtue cannot be damaged even by those who fall into evil, like Lucifer (**the brightest angel**), and disguise themselves as virtuous (**wear the brows of grace**).

25–31 Malcolm cannot understand how Macduff could leave his family, a source of inspiration (**motives**) and love, in an unprotected state (**rawness**). He asks him not to be insulted by his suspicions (**jealousies**); Malcolm is guarding his own safety.

Let not my jealousies be your dishonors,
30 But mine own safeties. You may be rightly just,
Whatever I shall think.

Macduff. Bleed, bleed, poor country!
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,
For goodness dare not check thee. Wear thou thy wrongs;
The title is affeered.—Fare thee well, lord.

35 I would not be the villain that thou think'st
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,
And the rich East to boot.

Malcolm. Be not offended.
I speak not as in absolute fear of you.
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke.
40 It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds. I think withal
There would be hands uplifted in my right;
And here from gracious England have I offer
Of goodly thousands. But, for all this,
45 When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country
Shall have more vices than it had before,
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,
By him that shall succeed.

Macduff. What should he be?

50 **Malcolm.** It is myself I mean, in whom I know
All the particulars of vice so grafted
That, when they shall be opened, black Macbeth
Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state
Esteem him as a lamb, being compared
55 With my confineless harms.

Macduff. Not in the legions
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damned
In evils to top Macbeth.

Malcolm. I grant him bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
60 That has a name. But there's no bottom, none,
In my voluptuousness. Your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons, and your maids could not fill up
The cistern of my lust, and my desire
All continent impediments would o'erbear
65 That did oppose my will. Better Macbeth
Than such an one to reign.

34 **affeered:** confirmed.

46–49 **yet my . . . succeed:** To test Macduff's honor and loyalty, Malcolm begins a lengthy description of his own fictitious vices. He suggests that Scotland may suffer more under his rule than under Macbeth's.

50–55 Malcolm says that his own vices are so plentiful and deeply planted (**grafted**) that Macbeth will seem innocent by comparison.

58 **luxurious:** lustful.

59 **sudden:** violent; **smacking:** tasting.

61 **voluptuousness:** lust.

63 **cistern:** large storage tank.

63–65 His lust is so great that it would overpower (**o'erbear**) all restraining obstacles (**continent impediments**).

Macduff. Boundless intemperance
 In nature is a tyranny. It hath been
 Th' untimely emptying of the happy throne
 And fall of many kings. But fear not yet
 70 To take upon you what is yours. You may
 Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty
 And yet seem cold—the time you may so hoodwink.
 We have willing dames enough. There cannot be
 That vulture in you to devour so many
 75 As will to greatness dedicate themselves,
 Finding it so inclined.

Malcolm. With this there grows
 In my most ill-composed affection such
 A stanchless avarice that, were I king,
 I should cut off the nobles for their lands,
 80 Desire his jewels, and this other's house;
 And my more-having would be as a sauce
 To make me hunger more, that I should forge
 Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,
 Destroying them for wealth.

Macduff. This avarice
 85 Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root
 Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been
 The sword of our slain kings. Yet do not fear.
 Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will
 Of your mere own. All these are portable,
 90 With other graces weighed.

Malcolm. But I have none. The king-becoming graces,
 As justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness,
 Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
 Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
 95 I have no relish of them but abound
 In the division of each several crime,
 Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should
 Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,
 Uproar the universal peace, confound
 100 All unity on earth.

Macduff. O Scotland, Scotland!

Malcolm. If such a one be fit to govern, speak.
 I am as I have spoken.

Macduff. Fit to govern?
 No, not to live.—O nation miserable,
 With an untitled tyrant bloody-sceptered,
 105 When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,

66–76 Macduff describes uncontrolled desire (**boundless intemperance**) as a tyrant of human nature that has caused the early (**untimely**) downfall of many kings. When Malcolm is king, however, his lustful appetite (**vulture in you**) can be satisfied by the many women willing to give (**dedicate**) themselves to a king.

76–78 Malcolm adds insatiable greed (**stanchless avarice**) to the list of evils in his disposition (**affection**).

84–90 Macduff recognizes that greed is a deeper-rooted problem than lust, which passes as quickly as the summer (**summer-seeming**). But the king's property alone (**of your mere own**) offers plenty (**foisons**) to satisfy his desire. Malcolm's vices can be tolerated (**are portable**).

91–95 Malcolm claims that he lacks all the virtues appropriate to a king (**king-becoming graces**). His list of missing virtues includes truthfulness (**verity**), consistency (**stableness**), generosity (**bounty**), humility (**lowliness**), and religious devotion.

Since that the truest issue of thy throne
 By his own interdiction stands accursed
 And does blaspheme his breed?—Thy royal father
 Was a most sainted king. The queen that bore thee,
 110 Oft'ner upon her knees than on her feet,
 Died every day she lived. Fare thee well.
 These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself
 Have banished me from Scotland.—O my breast,
 Thy hope ends here!

Malcolm. Macduff, this noble passion,
 115 Child of integrity, hath from my soul
 Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts
 To thy good truth and honor. Devilish Macbeth
 By many of these trains hath sought to win me
 Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me
 120 From overcredulous haste. But God above
 Deal between thee and me, for even now
 I put myself to thy direction and
 Unspeak mine own detraction, here abjure
 The taints and blames I laid upon myself
 125 For strangers to my nature. I am yet
 Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,
 Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,
 At no time broke my faith, would not betray
 The devil to his fellow, and delight
 130 No less in truth than life. My first false speaking
 Was this upon myself. What I am truly
 Is thine and my poor country's to command—
 Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,
 Old Siward with ten thousand warlike men,
 135 Already at a point, was setting forth.
 Now we'll together, and the chance of goodness
 Be like our warranted quarrel. Why are you silent?

Macduff. Such welcome and unwelcome things at once
 'Tis hard to reconcile.

[*Enter a Doctor.*]

140 **Malcolm.** Well, more anon.—Comes the King forth, I pray you?

Doctor. Ay, sir. There are a crew of wretched souls
 That stay his cure. Their malady convinces
 The great assay of art, but at his touch
 (Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand)

145 They presently amend.

Malcolm. I thank you, doctor.

[*Doctor exits.*]

102–114 Macduff can see no relief for Scotland's suffering under a tyrant who has no right to the throne (**untitled**). The rightful heir (**truest issue**), Malcolm, bans himself from the throne (**by his own interdiction**) because of his evil. Malcolm's vices slander his parents (**blaspheme his breed**)—his saintly father and his mother who renounced the world (**died every day**) for her religion. Since Macduff will not help an evil man to become king, he will not be able to return to Scotland.

114–125 Macduff has finally convinced Malcolm of his honesty. Malcolm explains that his caution (**modest wisdom**) resulted from his fear of Macbeth's tricks. He takes back his accusations against himself (**unspeak mine own detraction**) and renounces (**abjure**) the evils he previously claimed.

133–137 Malcolm already has an army, 10,000 troops belonging to old Siward, the earl of Northumberland. Now that Macduff is an ally, he hopes the battle's result will match the justice of their cause (**warranted quarrel**).

Language Coach

Multiple Meanings Lines 142–143 contain three out-of-date usages. Here, *convinces* means “defeats”; *assay* means “efforts”; and *art* refers to medical practice. Rephrase the lines in modern language. With the help of a dictionary, use each word in a sentence with its modern meaning.

Macduff. What's the disease he means?

Malcolm. 'Tis called the evil:

A most miraculous work in this good king,
Which often since my here-remain in England
I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven
150 Himself best knows, but strangely visited people
All swoll'n and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks
Put on with holy prayers; and, 'tis spoken,
155 To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne
That speak him full of grace.

[Enter Ross.]

Macduff. See who comes here.

160 **Malcolm.** My countryman, but yet I know him not.

Macduff. My ever-gentle cousin, welcome hither.

Malcolm. I know him now.—Good God betimes remove
The means that makes us strangers!

Ross. Sir, amen.

Macduff. Stands Scotland where it did?

Ross. Alas, poor country,
165 Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
Be called our mother, but our grave, where nothing
But who knows nothing is once seen to smile;
Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rent the air
Are made, not marked; where violent sorrow seems
170 A modern ecstasy. The dead man's knell
Is there scarce asked for who, and good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken. **D**

Macduff. O relation too nice and yet too true!

175 **Malcolm.** What's the newest grief?

Ross. That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker.
Each minute teems a new one.

Macduff. How does my wife?

Ross. Why, well.

Macduff. And all my children?

Ross. Well too.

141–159 Edward the Confessor, king of England, could reportedly heal the disease of scrofula (**the evil**) by his saintly touch. The doctor describes people who cannot be helped by medicine's best efforts (**the great assay of art**) waiting for the touch of the king's hand. Edward has cured many victims of this disease. Each time, he hangs a gold coin around their neck and offers prayers, a healing ritual that he will teach to his royal descendants (**succeeding royalty**).

162–163 **Good God . . . strangers:** May God remove Macbeth, who is the cause (**means**) of our being strangers.

D TRAGEDY

Reread lines 164–173, in which the audience learns that in Macbeth's bloody reign, screams go unnoticed (**are made, not marked**) and violent sorrow has become commonplace (**modern ecstasy**). What emotions does Macbeth inspire as a **tragic hero** at this point?

174 **relation too nice:** news that is too accurate.

176–177 If the news is more than an hour old, listeners hiss at the speaker for being outdated; every minute gives birth to a new grief.

Macduff. The tyrant has not battered at their peace?

180 **Ross.** No, they were well at peace when I did leave 'em.

Macduff. Be not a niggard of your speech. How goes 't?

Ross. When I came hither to transport the tidings
Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumor
Of many worthy fellows that were out;
185 Which was to my belief witnessed the rather
For that I saw the tyrant's power afoot.
Now is the time of help. Your eye in Scotland
Would create soldiers, make our women fight
To doff their dire distresses.

Malcolm. Be 't their comfort
190 We are coming thither. Gracious England hath
Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men;
An older and a better soldier none
That Christendom gives out.

Ross. Would I could answer
This comfort with the like. But I have words
195 That would be howled out in the desert air,
Where hearing should not latch them.

Macduff. What concern they—
The general cause, or is it a fee-grief
Due to some single breast?

Ross. No mind that's honest
But in it shares some woe, though the main part
200 Pertains to you alone.

Macduff. If it be mine,
Keep it not from me. Quickly let me have it.

Ross. Let not your ears despise my tongue forever,
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound
That ever yet they heard.

Macduff. Hum! I guess at it.

205 **Ross.** Your castle is surprised, your wife and babes
Savagely slaughtered. To relate the manner
Were on the quarry of these murdered deer
To add the death of you.

Malcolm. Merciful heaven!
What, man, ne'er pull your hat upon your brows.
210 Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.

Macduff. My children too?

Ross. Wife, children, servants, all that could be found.

180 well at peace: Ross knows about the murder of Macduff's wife and children, but the news is too terrible to report.

182–189 Notice how Ross avoids the subject of Macduff's family. He mentions the rumors of nobles who are rebelling (**out**) against Macbeth. Ross believes the rumors because he saw Macbeth's troops on the march (**tyrant's power afoot**). The presence (**eye**) of Malcolm and Macduff in Scotland would help raise soldiers and remove (**doff**) Macbeth's evil (**dire distresses**).

195 would: should.

196 latch: catch.

197 fee-grief: private sorrow.

198–199 No mind . . . woe: Every honorable (**honest**) person shares in this sorrow.

206–208 Ross won't add to Macduff's sorrow by telling him how his family was killed. He compares Macduff's dear ones to the piled bodies of killed deer (**quarry**).

210–211 The grief . . . break: Silence will only push an overburdened heart to the breaking point.

Macduff. And I must be from thence? My wife killed too?

215 **Ross.** I have said.

Malcolm. Be comforted.

Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge
To cure this deadly grief.

Macduff. He has no children. All my pretty ones?

220 Did you say "all"? O hell-kite! All?

What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
At one fell swoop?

Malcolm. Dispute it like a man.

Macduff. I shall do so,
But I must also feel it as a man.

225 I cannot but remember such things were

That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,
They were all struck for thee! Naught that I am,
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,

230 Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now.

Malcolm. Be this the whetstone of your sword. Let grief
Convert to anger. Blunt not the heart; enrage it.

Macduff. O, I could play the woman with mine eyes
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,

235 Cut short all intermission! Front to front

Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself.
Within my sword's length set him. If he scape,
Heaven forgive him too. **E**

Malcolm. This tune goes manly.

Come, go we to the King. Our power is ready;

240 Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth

Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may.
The night is long that never finds the day.

[*They exit.*]

214 Macduff laments his absence from the castle.

219–222 **He has no children:** possibly a reference to Macbeth, who has no children to be killed for revenge. Macduff compares Macbeth to a bird of prey (**hell-kite**) who kills defenseless chickens and their mother.

228 **naught:** nothing.

231 **whetstone:** grindstone used for sharpening.

E FORESHADOWING
What event does Macduff's speech in lines 233–238 foreshadow?

239–243 Our troops are ready to attack, needing only the king's permission (**our lack is nothing but our leave**). Like a ripe fruit, Macbeth is ready to fall, and heavenly powers are preparing to assist us. The long night of Macbeth's evil will be broken.

Comprehension

1. **Recall** What three messages does Macbeth receive from the three apparitions?
2. **Clarify** What happens to Lady Macduff and her children?
3. **Paraphrase** Reread Scene 3, lines 235–238. How would you paraphrase these lines?



READING 4 Evaluate how the structure and elements of drama change in the works of British dramatists across literary periods.

Literary Analysis

4. **Recognize Cause and Effect** What is the result—or effect—of each of the following events? Use specific details to explain your answers.
 - Macbeth’s second visit to the Three Witches (Scene 1, lines 48–133)
 - Malcolm tests Macduff (Scene 3, lines 37–114)
 - Macduff’s family is murdered (Scene 2, lines 76–81)
5. **Examine Shakespearean Drama** Review the notes you recorded about Macbeth’s actions in Act Four. How does Macbeth react when he encounters the apparitions? What does his reaction reveal about how he has changed?
6. **Analyze Shakespearean Tragedy** What is **foreshadowed** by each of the apparitions that appear to Macbeth in Scene 1?
7. **Analyze Rhythm and Rhyme** Reread Scene 1, lines 4–38, in which the witches make their magical brew. What effect do you think the rhythm and rhyme in the lines would have on an audience?
8. **Compare Characters** Compare Lady Macbeth with Lady Macduff. How are the characters similar? How do they differ? Cite specific evidence from the play to support your ideas.
9. **Draw Conclusions** Lady Macduff and Malcolm both question Macduff’s motives for fleeing Scotland. Think about the crimes Macbeth has already committed. Why might the nature and manner of these crimes have led Macduff to believe that his family would be safe at his castle?

Literary Criticism

10. **Different Perspectives** In some productions of *Macbeth*, the director omits Malcolm’s lengthy test of Macduff. Do you agree with this decision? What would be lost or gained by omitting the speech? Support your response.

Can you ever be too **AMBITIOUS?**

According to one definition, knowledge is power. When might this be true? When might it not be true? Provide concrete examples from the play that prove *and* disprove this definition of “knowledge.”