



READING 2B Compare and contrast the similarities and differences in classical plays with their modern day novel, play, or film versions. **4** Evaluate how the structure and elements of drama change in the works of British dramatists across literary periods.

The Tragedy of Macbeth

Drama by William Shakespeare

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML12-346A

Meet the Author

DID YOU KNOW?

William Shakespeare ...

- is often referred to as “the Bard”—an ancient Celtic term for a poet who composed songs about heroes.
- introduced more than 1,700 new words into the English language.
- has had his work translated into 118 languages, including sign language.

(background) Nash’s House, a Shakespeare museum in Stratford-upon-Avon

William Shakespeare 1564–1616

In 1592—the first time William Shakespeare was recognized as an actor, poet, and playwright—rival dramatist Robert Greene referred to him as an “upstart crow.” Greene was probably jealous. Audiences had already begun to notice the young Shakespeare’s promise. Of course, they couldn’t have foreseen that in time he would be considered the greatest writer in the English language.

Stage-Struck Shakespeare probably arrived in London and began his career in the late 1580s. He left his wife, Anne Hathaway, and their three children behind in Stratford. Over the next 20 years, Shakespeare rarely returned home. (See the biography on page 324 for more about Shakespeare’s early life in Stratford.)

Unlike most playwrights of his time, Shakespeare also worked as an actor. He even appeared in his own plays; among other roles, he played King Duncan in a stage production of *Macbeth*.

Toast of the Town In 1594, Shakespeare joined the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, the most prestigious theater company in England. A measure of their success was that the theater company frequently performed before Queen Elizabeth I and her court. In 1599, they were also able to purchase and rebuild a theater across the Thames called the Globe.

The company’s domination of the London theater scene continued after Elizabeth’s Scottish cousin James succeeded her in 1603. James became the patron, or chief sponsor, of Shakespeare’s company, thereafter known as the King’s Men.

The Curtain Falls Between 1600 and 1607, Shakespeare wrote his greatest tragedies, including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*. As he neared the end of his writing career and his life, even his comedies took on a darker tone. He wrote no more plays after 1613.

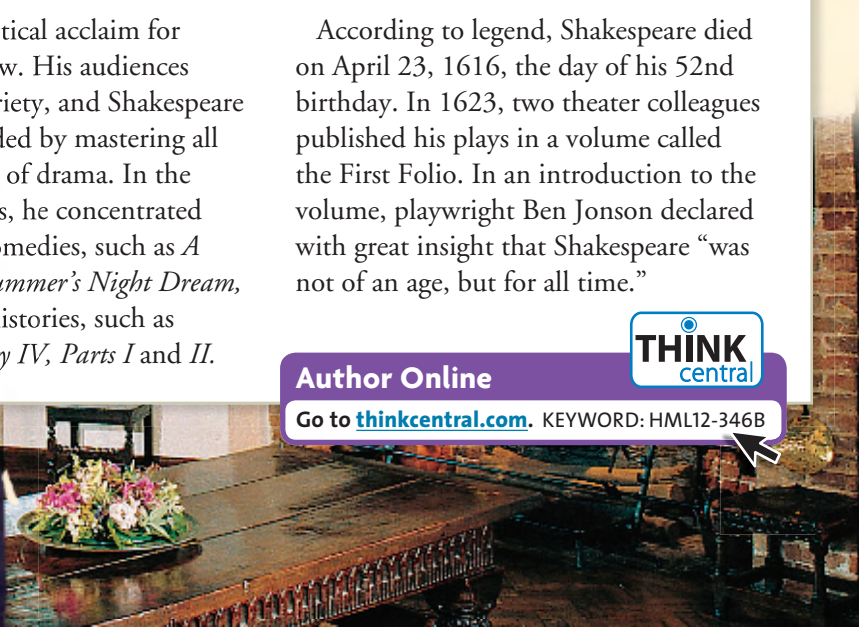
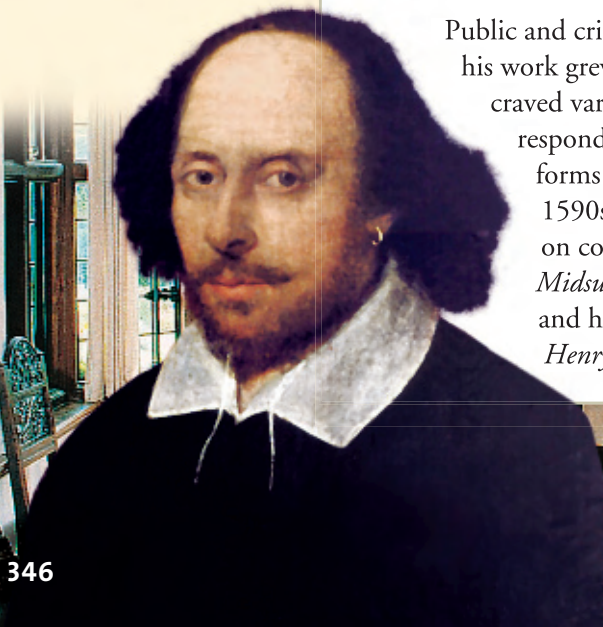
According to legend, Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, the day of his 52nd birthday. In 1623, two theater colleagues published his plays in a volume called the First Folio. In an introduction to the volume, playwright Ben Jonson declared with great insight that Shakespeare “was not of an age, but for all time.”

Public and critical acclaim for his work grew. His audiences craved variety, and Shakespeare responded by mastering all forms of drama. In the 1590s, he concentrated on comedies, such as *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*, and histories, such as *Henry IV, Parts I and II*.

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LITERARY ANALYSIS: SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

As you've learned, a Shakespearean **tragedy** presents a superior figure—the **tragic hero**—who comes to ruin because of an error in judgment or a weakness in character—a **tragic flaw**. One or more **antagonists**, or opposing characters, also work against the tragic hero, and the action builds to a **catastrophe**, a disastrous end involving deaths. As you read *Macbeth*, be aware of these dramatic conventions:

- The play is written in **blank verse**, or unrhymed **iambic pentameter**, in which the normal line has five stressed syllables, each preceded by an unstressed syllable.
- Characters often reveal their private thoughts through **soliloquies** and **asides**, which other characters cannot hear.
- Enjoyment of the play's action is sometimes enhanced through the use of **foreshadowing**—hints about what may happen later—and **dramatic irony**—the contrast created when the audience knows more about a situation than a character knows.

READING STRATEGY: READING SHAKESPEAREAN DRAMA

For centuries, Shakespeare has been celebrated for his powerful poetic language—what Shakespearean characters say defines them as much as what they do. However, the Bard's language can present a challenge for modern readers. Keep a chart like the one below to record the words and actions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to uncover their true personalities and motives. To help you understand Shakespearean language:

- Use stage directions, plot summaries, and sidenotes to establish the context, or circumstances, surrounding what characters say.
- Read important speeches aloud, such as soliloquies, focusing on clues they provide to each character's feelings and motivations.
- Shakespeare's unusual word order often puts verbs before subjects and objects before verbs. Find the subject, verb, and object in each line and rearrange them to clarify what the line means.

Character: Macbeth	
His Words or Actions	What They Reveal About Him
He defeats the enemy on the battlefield.	He's a brave and inspiring soldier and general.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Can you ever be too AMBITIOUS?

Ambition is a powerful motivating force. Often it is considered desirable, since it inspires people to realize their dreams. In fact, people without ambition are usually regarded as lazy. But is it possible to be overly ambitious? When might high aspirations lead to terrible consequences? Such questions are explored in the story of Macbeth, a general whose ambition is to become king.

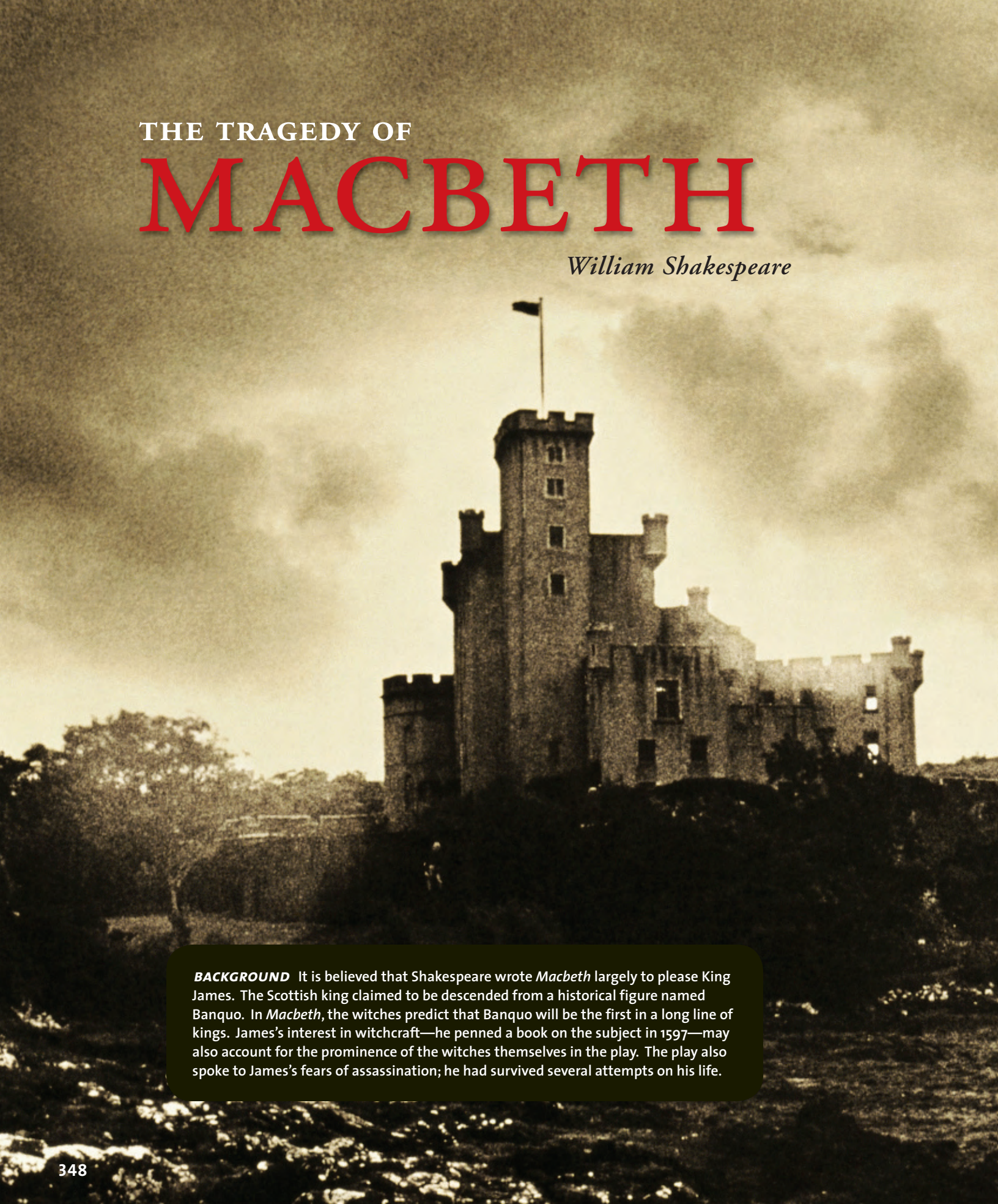
QUICKWRITE With a partner, brainstorm a list of people—historical and contemporary—whose ambitions had tragic consequences. Beside their names, jot down what they hoped to achieve and the negative results of their ambitions.




THE TRAGEDY OF

MACBETH

William Shakespeare



BACKGROUND It is believed that Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* largely to please King James. The Scottish king claimed to be descended from a historical figure named Banquo. In *Macbeth*, the witches predict that Banquo will be the first in a long line of kings. James's interest in witchcraft—he penned a book on the subject in 1597—may also account for the prominence of the witches themselves in the play. The play also spoke to James's fears of assassination; he had survived several attempts on his life.



Go Behind the Curtain

As you read the play, you will find photographs from the 2005 production of *Macbeth* by the Derby Playhouse in Derby, England. Photographs from other productions appear in the **Behind the Curtain** feature pages, which explore the stagecraft used to create exciting theatrical productions of this famous play.

CHARACTERS

Duncan, king of Scotland

HIS SONS

Malcolm

Donalbain

NOBLEMEN OF SCOTLAND

Macbeth

Banquo

Macduff

Lennox

Ross

Menteith (měn-tēth')

Angus

Caithness (kāth'nŷs)

Fleance (flā'əns), son to Banquo

Siward (syōō'ərd), earl of Northumberland, general of the English forces

Young Siward, his son

Seyton (sā'tən), an officer attending on Macbeth

Son, to Macduff

An English Doctor

A Scottish Doctor

A Porter

An Old Man

Three Murderers

Lady Macbeth

Lady Macduff

A Gentlewoman attending on Lady Macbeth

Hecate (hěk'ŷt), goddess of witchcraft

Three Witches

Apparitions

Lords, Officers, Soldiers, Messengers, and Attendants

THE TIME

The 11th century

THE PLACE

Scotland and England

Scene 1 *An open place in Scotland.*

The play opens in a wild and lonely place in medieval Scotland. Three witches enter and speak of what they know will happen this day: the civil war will end, and they will meet Macbeth, one of the generals. Their meeting ends when their demon companions, in the form of a toad and a cat, call them away.

[Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches.]

First Witch. When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch. When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

3 hurly-burly: turmoil; uproar.

5 Third Witch. That will be ere the set of sun.

First Witch. Where the place?

Second Witch. Upon the heath.

Third Witch. There to meet with Macbeth.

First Witch. I come, Graymalkin.

8–9 Graymalkin . . . Paddock: two demon helpers in the form of a cat and a toad; **Anon:** at once.

Second Witch. Paddock calls.

Third Witch. Anon.

10 All. Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

10 The witches delight in the confusion of good and bad, beauty and ugliness.

[They exit.]

Scene 2 *King Duncan's camp near the battlefield.*

Duncan, the king of Scotland, waits in his camp for news of the battle. He learns that one of his generals, Macbeth, has been victorious in several battles. Not only has Macbeth defeated the rebellious Macdonwald, but he has also conquered the armies of the king of Norway and the Scottish traitor, the thane of Cawdor. Duncan orders the thane of Cawdor's execution and announces that Macbeth will receive the traitor's title.

[Alarum within. Enter King Duncan, Malcolm, Donalbain, Lennox, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding Captain.]

[Stage Direction] **Alarum within:** the sound of a trumpet offstage, a signal that soldiers should arm themselves.

Duncan. What bloody man is that? He can report,
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
The newest state.

Malcolm. This is the sergeant
Who, like a good and hardy soldier, fought
5 'Gainst my captivity.—Hail, brave friend!
Say to the King the knowledge of the broil
As thou didst leave it.

5 'gainst my captivity: to save me from capture.

6 broil: battle.



The three witches, from the 2005 Derby
Playhouse production of *Macbeth*

Captain. Doubtful it stood,
 As two spent swimmers that do cling together
 And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald
 10 (Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
 The multiplying villainies of nature
 Do swarm upon him) from the Western Isles
 Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;
 And Fortune, on his damnèd quarrel smiling,
 15 Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak;
 For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
 Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel,
 Which smoked with bloody execution,
 Like valor's minion, carved out his passage
 20 Till he faced the slave;
 Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
 Till he unseamed him from the navel to th' chops,
 And fixed his head upon our battlements.

Duncan. O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!

25 **Captain.** As whence the sun 'gins his reflection
 Shipwracking storms and direful thunders break,
 So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come
 Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark:
 No sooner justice had, with valor armed,
 30 Compelled these skipping kerns to trust their heels,
 But the Norweyan lord, surveying vantage,
 With furbished arms and new supplies of men,
 Began a fresh assault.

Duncan. Dismayed not this our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

35 **Captain.** Yes, as sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.
 If I say sooth, I must report they were
 As cannons overcharged with double cracks,
 So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.
 Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds
 40 Or memorize another Golgotha,
 I cannot tell—
 But I am faint. My gashes cry for help.

Duncan. So well thy words become thee as thy wounds:
 They smack of honor both.—Go, get him surgeons.
 [*The Captain is led off by Attendants.*]
 [*Enter Ross and Angus.*]

45 Who comes here?

Malcolm. The worthy Thane of Ross.

7–9 The two armies are compared to two exhausted swimmers who cling to each other and thus cannot swim.

9–13 The officer hates Macdonwald, whose evils (**multiplying villainies**) swarm like insects around him. His army consists of soldiers (**kerns and gallowglasses**) from the Hebrides (**Western Isles**).

19 valor's minion: the favorite of valor, meaning the bravest of all.

22 unseamed him . . . chops: split him open from the navel to the jaw. *What does this act suggest about Macbeth?*

25–28 As the rising sun is sometimes followed by storms, a new assault on Macbeth began.

31–33 The king of Norway took an opportunity to attack.

36 sooth: the truth.

37 double cracks: a double load of ammunition.

39–40 The officer's admiration leads to exaggeration. He claims he cannot decide whether (**except**) Macbeth and Banquo wanted to bathe in blood or make the battlefield as famous as Golgotha, the site of Christ's crucifixion.

45 Thane: a Scottish noble, similar in rank to an English earl.

Lennox. What a haste looks through his eyes!
So should he look that seems to speak things strange.

Ross. God save the King.

Duncan. Whence cam'st thou, worthy thane?

- 50 **Ross.** From Fife, great king,
Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky
And fan our people cold.
Norway himself, with terrible numbers,
Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,
55 The Thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict,
Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapped in proof,
Confronted him with self-comparisons,
Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm,
Curbing his lavish spirit. And to conclude,
60 The victory fell on us.

Duncan. Great happiness!

Ross. That now Sweno,
The Norways' king, craves composition.
Nor would we deign him burial of his men
Till he disbursèd at Saint Colme's Inch

- 65 Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

Duncan. No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive
Our bosom interest. Go, pronounce his present death,
And with his former title greet Macbeth.

Ross. I'll see it done.

- 70 **Duncan.** What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.
[*They exit.*]

Scene 3 A bleak place near the battlefield.

While leaving the battlefield, Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches, who are gleefully discussing the trouble they have caused. The witches hail Macbeth by a title he already holds, thane of Glamis. Then they prophesy that he will become both thane of Cawdor and king. When Banquo asks about his future, they speak in riddles, saying that he will be the father of kings but not a king himself.

After the witches vanish, Ross and Angus arrive to announce that Macbeth has been named thane of Cawdor. The first part of the witches' prophecy has come true, and Macbeth is stunned. He immediately begins to consider the possibility of murdering King Duncan to fulfill the rest of the witches' prophecy to him. Shaken, he turns his thoughts away from this "horrid image."

49–60 Ross has arrived from Fife, where Norway's troops had invaded and frightened the people. There the king of Norway, along with the thane of Cawdor, met Macbeth (described as the husband of **Bellona**, the goddess of war). Macbeth, in heavy armor (**proof**), challenged the enemy and achieved victory.

62 craves composition: wants a treaty.

63 deign: allow.

64 disbursèd at Saint Colme's Inch: paid at Saint Colme's Inch, an island in the North Sea.

66–67 deceive our bosom interest: betray our friendship; **present death:** immediate execution.

68 *What reward has the king decided to give to Macbeth?*

[*Thunder. Enter the three Witches.*]

First Witch. Where hast thou been, sister?

Second Witch. Killing swine.

Third Witch. Sister, where thou?

First Witch. A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap

5 And munched and munched and munched. "Give me," quoth I.

"Aroint thee, witch," the rump-fed runnion cries.

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' th' *Tiger*;

But in a sieve I'll thither sail

And, like a rat without a tail,

10 I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

Second Witch. I'll give thee a wind.

First Witch. Th' art kind.

Third Witch. And I another.

First Witch. I myself have all the other,

15 And the very ports they blow,

All the quarters that they know

I' th' shipman's card.

I'll drain him dry as hay.

Sleep shall neither night nor day

20 Hang upon his penthouse lid.

He shall live a man forbid.

Weary sev'nights, nine times nine,

Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.

Though his bark cannot be lost,

25 Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.

Look what I have.

Second Witch. Show me, show me.

First Witch. Here I have a pilot's thumb,

Wracked as homeward he did come.

[*Drum within*]

30 **Third Witch.** A drum, a drum!

Macbeth doth come.

All. [*Dancing in a circle*] The Weïrd Sisters, hand in hand,

Posters of the sea and land,

Thus do go about, about,

35 Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine

And thrice again, to make up nine.

Peace, the charm's wound up.

[*Enter Macbeth and Banquo.*]

Macbeth. So foul and fair a day I have not seen. **A**

2 Killing swine: Witches were often accused of killing people's pigs.

6 "Aroint thee, witch," . . . runnion cries: "Go away, witch!" the fat-bottomed (**rump-fed**), ugly creature (**runnion**) cries.

7–8 The woman's husband, the master of a merchant ship (**th' Tiger**), has sailed to Aleppo, a famous trading center in the Middle East. The witch will pursue him. Witches, who could change shape at will, were thought to sail on strainers (**sieve**).

14–23 The witch is going to torture the woman's husband. She controls where the winds blow, covering all points of a compass (**shipman's card**). She will make him sleepless, keeping his eyelids (**penthouse lid**) from closing. Thus, he will lead an accursed (**forbid**) life for weeks (**sev'nnights**), wasting away with fatigue.

Language Coach

Synonyms Words with the same meaning are synonyms. Reread lines 22–23. What does *pine* mean in this verse? A pair of synonyms in the verse provide a clue. What are those words?

33 posters: quick riders.

36 Nine was considered a magical number by superstitious people.

A BLANK VERSE

Reread line 38. Compare its meter with that of line 10 in Scene 1, spoken by the three witches. What do the two lines suggest about the witches?

Banquo. How far is 't called to Forres?—What are these,
40 So withered, and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth
And yet are on 't?—Live you? Or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me
By each at once her choppy finger laying
45 Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.

Macbeth. Speak, if you can. What are you?

First Witch. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

Second Witch. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

50 **Third Witch.** All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!

Banquo. Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair? I' th' name of truth,
Are you fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly you show? My noble partner
55 You greet with present grace and great prediction
Of noble having and of royal hope,
That he seems rapt withal. To me you speak not.
If you can look into the seeds of time
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
60 Speak, then, to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favors nor your hate.

First Witch. Hail!

Second Witch. Hail!

Third Witch. Hail!

65 **First Witch.** Lesser than Macbeth and greater.

Second Witch. Not so happy, yet much happier.

Third Witch. Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.
So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo! **B**

First Witch. Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

70 **Macbeth.** Stay, you imperfect speakers. Tell me more.
By Sinel's death I know I am Thane of Glamis.
But how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives
A prosperous gentleman, and to be king
Stands not within the prospect of belief,
75 No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence
You owe this strange intelligence or why
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
With such prophetic greeting. Speak, I charge you.
[Witches *vanish*.]

42–46 aught: anything; **choppy:** chapped; **your beards:** Beards on women identified them as witches. Banquo vividly describes the witches. *What does he notice about them?*

48–50 *What is surprising about the three titles the witches use to greet Macbeth?*

53 are you fantastical: Are you (the witches) imaginary?

54–57 The witches' prophecies of noble possessions (**having**)—the lands and wealth of Cawdor—and kingship (**royal hope**) have left Macbeth dazed (**rapt withal**).

B FORESHADOWING

In lines 65–68, the witches compare Banquo to Macbeth and prophesy that Banquo will not be king but will father (**get**) future kings. What do you think their words predict for Macbeth?

75–76 whence: where. Macbeth wants to know where the witches received their knowledge (**strange intelligence**).

Banquo. The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
80 And these are of them. Whither are they vanished?

Macbeth. Into the air, and what seemed corporal melted,
As breath into the wind. Would they had stayed!

Banquo. Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten on the insane root
85 That takes the reason prisoner?

Macbeth. Your children shall be kings.

Banquo. You shall be king.

Macbeth. And Thane of Cawdor too. Went it not so?

Banquo. To th' selfsame tune and words.—Who's here?
[Enter Ross and Angus.]

Ross. The King hath happily received, Macbeth,
90 The news of thy success, and, when he reads
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,
His wonders and his praises do contend
Which should be thine or his. Silenced with that,
In viewing o'er the rest o' th' selfsame day
95 He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,
Strange images of death. As thick as hail
Came post with post, and every one did bear
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defense,
100 And poured them down before him.

Angus. We are sent
To give thee from our royal master thanks,
Only to herald thee into his sight,
Not pay thee.

Ross. And for an earnest of a greater honor,
105 He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor,
In which addition, hail, most worthy thane,
For it is thine.

Banquo. What, can the devil speak true?

Macbeth. The Thane of Cawdor lives. Why do you dress me
In borrowed robes?

Angus. Who was the Thane lives yet,
110 But under heavy judgment bears that life
Which he deserves to lose. Whether he was combined
With those of Norway, or did line the rebel
With hidden help and vantage, or that with both
He labored in his country's wrack, I know not;
115 But treasons capital, confessed and proved,
Have overthrown him.

80 whither: where.

81 corporal: physical; real.

84 insane root: A number of plants were believed to cause insanity when eaten.

92–93 King Duncan hesitates between awe (**wonders**) and gratitude (**praises**) and is, as a result, speechless.

96–97 Although Macbeth left many dead (**strange images of death**), he obviously did not fear death himself.

104 earnest: partial payment.

106 addition: title.

111–116 The former thane of Cawdor may have been secretly allied (**combined**) with the king of Norway, or he may have supported the traitor Macdonwald (**did line the rebel**). But he is guilty of treasons that deserve the death penalty (**treasons capital**), having aimed at the country's ruin (**wrack**).

Macbeth. [*Aside*] Glamis and Thane of Cawdor!
The greatest is behind. [*To Ross and Angus*] Thanks for your pains.
[*Aside to Banquo*] Do you not hope your children shall be kings
When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me

120 Promised no less to them?

Banquo. That, trusted home,
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
Besides the Thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange.
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,

125 Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's
In deepest consequence.—

Cousins, a word, I pray you. [*They step aside.*]

Macbeth. [*Aside*] Two truths are told
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme.—I thank you, gentlemen.

130 [*Aside*] This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
135 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings.
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,

140 Shakes so my single state of man
That function is smothered in surmise,
And nothing is but what is not. **C**

Banquo. Look how our partner's rapt.

Macbeth. [*Aside*] If chance will have me king, why, chance may
crown me
Without my stir.

Banquo. New honors come upon him,
145 Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mold
But with the aid of use.

Macbeth. [*Aside*] Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

Banquo. Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

Macbeth. Give me your favor. My dull brain was wrought
150 With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are registered where every day I turn
The leaf to read them. Let us toward the King.

116 Aside: a stage direction that means Macbeth is speaking to himself, beyond hearing.

120 home: fully; completely.

121 enkindle you unto: inflame your ambitions.

123–126 Banquo warns that evil powers often offer little truths to tempt people. The witches may be lying about what matters most (**in deepest consequence**).

C ASIDE

Reread Macbeth's aside in lines 130–142. What private thoughts does he reveal to the audience? Why might he want to keep these thoughts hidden from the other characters?

144 my stir: my doing anything.

146–147 Come what . . . roughest day: The future will arrive no matter what.

148 stay: wait.

150–152 your pains . . . read them: I will always remember your efforts. The metaphor refers to keeping a diary and reading it regularly.

[*Aside to Banquo*] Think upon what hath chanced, and at more time,
The interim having weighed it, let us speak
155 Our free hearts each to other.

Banquo. Very gladly.

Macbeth. Till then, enough.—Come, friends.

[*They exit.*]

Scene 4 A room in the king's palace at Forres.

King Duncan receives news of the execution of the former thane of Cawdor. As the king is admitting his bad judgment concerning the traitor, Macbeth enters with Banquo, Ross, and Angus. Duncan expresses his gratitude to them and then, in a most unusual action, officially names his own son Malcolm as heir to the throne. To honor Macbeth, Duncan decides to visit Macbeth's castle at Inverness. Macbeth, his thoughts full of dark ambition, leaves to prepare for the king's visit.

[*Flourish. Enter King Duncan, Lennox, Malcolm, Donalbain, and Attendants.*]

Duncan. Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not
Those in commission yet returned?

Malcolm. My liege,
They are not yet come back. But I have spoke
With one that saw him die, who did report
5 That very frankly he confessed his treasons,
Implored your Highness' pardon, and set forth
A deep repentance. Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it. He died
As one that had been studied in his death
10 To throw away the dearest thing he owed
As 'twere a careless trifle.

Duncan. There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face.
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust. **D**

[*Enter Macbeth, Banquo, Ross, and Angus.*]

O worthiest cousin,
15 The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,
That the proportion both of thanks and payment
20 Might have been mine! Only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

153–155 Macbeth wants to discuss the prophecies later, after he and Banquo have had time to think about them.

2 those in commission: those who have the responsibility for Cawdor's execution.

6 set forth: showed.

8–11 He died as . . . trifle: He died as if he had rehearsed (**studied**) the moment. Though losing his life (**the dearest thing he owed**), he behaved with calm dignity.

D FORESHADOWING

Notice that in lines 11–14, Duncan admits he misjudged the thane of Cawdor, who proved a traitor. What might this admission foreshadow about the king?

14–21 The king feels that he cannot repay (**recompense**) Macbeth enough. Macbeth's qualities and accomplishments are of greater value than any thanks or payment Duncan can give.

Behind the Curtain



TEKS 2B, 4

Casting involves selecting actors to perform the roles in a play. Actors are chosen for their appearance (an actor playing Macbeth usually looks strong enough to be a soldier) and their ability to portray the psychological dimensions of a character through body language, such as gestures and expressions. In Shakespeare's time, only white male actors could be cast in plays, and boys played women's roles onstage because the theater was considered a corrupt environment unsuitable for women. In modern adaptations, casting incorporates actors from both genders and crosses racial lines.

Study the actors cast as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in these photographs from modern productions of the play. How would you describe their physical appearance? What expressions or gestures does each actor use? What does the body language of the actors suggest about Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's relationship?

If you were staging this play, name two actors you would cast in these roles and explain why they would be intriguing and effective choices.

The 2004 Out of Joint Theatre Company production in London



The 1999 Queen's Theatre production in London



The 2002 Albery Theatre production in London

Macbeth. The service and the loyalty I owe
In doing it pays itself. Your Highness' part
Is to receive our duties, and our duties
25 Are to your throne and state children and servants,
Which do but what they should by doing everything
Safe toward your love and honor.

Duncan. Welcome hither.
I have begun to plant thee and will labor
To make thee full of growing.—Noble Banquo,
30 That hast no less deserved nor must be known
No less to have done so, let me enfold thee
And hold thee to my heart.

Banquo. There, if I grow,
The harvest is your own.

Duncan. My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fullness, seek to hide themselves
35 In drops of sorrow.—Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
And you whose places are the nearest, know
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland; which honor must
40 Not unaccompanied invest him only,
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
On all deservers.—From hence to Inverness,
And bind us further to you.

Macbeth. The rest is labor which is not used for you.
45 I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful
The hearing of my wife with your approach.
So humbly take my leave.

Duncan. My worthy Cawdor.

Macbeth. [*Aside*] The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step
On which I must fall down or else o'erleap,
50 For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;
Let not light see my black and deep desires.
The eye wink at the hand, yet let that be
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. **E**
[*He exits.*]

Duncan. True, worthy Banquo. He is full so valiant,
55 And in his commendations I am fed:
It is a banquet to me.—Let's after him,
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome.
It is a peerless kinsman.
[*Flourish. They exit.*]

28–29 The king plans to give more honors to Macbeth. *What might Macbeth be thinking now?*

33–35 My plenteous . . . sorrow: The king is crying tears of joy.

39 Prince of Cumberland: the title given to the heir to the Scottish throne. *Now that Malcolm is heir, how might Macbeth react?*

42 Inverness: site of Macbeth's castle, where the king has just invited himself, giving another honor to Macbeth.

45 harbinger: a representative sent before a royal party to make proper arrangements for its arrival.

E TRAGEDY

Be aware that in Macbeth's aside in lines 48–53, he admits that he hopes the king will be murdered. Based on these lines, what do you think is Macbeth's tragic flaw?

Scene 5 Macbeth's castle at Inverness.

Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband that tells her of the witches' prophecies, one of which has already come true. She is determined that Macbeth will be king. However, she fears that he lacks the courage to kill Duncan. After a messenger tells her the king is coming, she calls on the powers of evil to help her do what must be done. When Macbeth arrives, she tells him that the king must die that night but reminds him that he must appear to be a good and loyal host.

[Enter Lady Macbeth, alone, with a letter.]

Lady Macbeth. [Reading the letter] "They met me in the day of success, and I have learned by the perfect'st report they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. Whiles I stood
5 rapt in the wonder of it came missives from the King, who all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor,' by which title, before, these Weïrd Sisters saluted me and referred me to the coming on of time with 'Hail, king that shalt be.' This have I thought good to deliver thee, my
10 dearest partner of greatness, that thou might'st not lose the dues of rejoicing by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell."

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness
15 To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false
And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou'd'st have, great Glamis,
20 That which cries "Thus thou must do," if thou have it,
And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valor of my tongue
25 All that impedes thee from the golden round
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crowned withal. **G**

[Enter Messenger.]

What is your tidings?

Messenger. The King comes here tonight.

Lady Macbeth. Thou'rt mad to say it!
Is not thy master with him? who, were't so,
30 Would have informed for preparation.

Messenger. So please you, it is true. Our Thane is coming.
One of my fellows had the speed of him,

F GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread line 8. Shakespeare frequently uses **inverted sentences** and other types of inverted word order to achieve a poetic effect. Notice that in this line, Shakespeare places *have*, part of the verb phrase *have thought*, before the subject *I* to create a regular, pleasing rhythm.

13–18 Lady Macbeth fears her husband is too good (**too full o' th' milk of human kindness**) to seize the throne by murder (**the nearest way**). Lacking the necessary wickedness (**illness**), he wants to gain power virtuously (**holily**).

G SOLILOQUY

Notice that in her soliloquy in lines 12–27, Lady Macbeth expresses her thoughts about the prophecies. What conclusions can you draw about Lady Macbeth?

32 had the speed of him: rode faster than he.

Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more
Than would make up his message.

Lady Macbeth. Give him tending.

35 He brings great news.

[Messenger *exits*.]

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
40 Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood.
Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
Th' effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts
45 And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
50 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry "Hold, hold!"
[Enter Macbeth.]

Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor,
Greater than both by the all-hail hereafter!
Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
55 The future in the instant.

Macbeth. My dearest love,
Duncan comes here tonight.

Lady Macbeth. And when goes hence?

Macbeth. Tomorrow, as he purposes.

Lady Macbeth. O, never
Shall sun that morrow see!
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
60 May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue. Look like th' innocent flower,
But be the serpent under 't. He that's coming
Must be provided for; and you shall put
65 This night's great business into my dispatch,
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

35 raven: The harsh cry of the raven, a bird symbolizing evil and misfortune, was supposed to indicate an approaching death.

37–51 Lady Macbeth calls on the spirits of evil to rid her of feminine weakness (**unsex me**) and to block out guilt. She wants no normal pangs of conscience (**compunctious visitings of nature**) to get in the way of her murderous plan. She asks that her mother's milk be turned to bile (**gall**) by the unseen evil forces (**murd'ring ministers, sightless substances**) that exist in nature. Furthermore, she asks that the night wrap (**pall**) itself in darkness as black as hell so that no one may see or stop the crime.

Language Coach

Roots and Affixes A word's root may contain its core meaning. The Latin root *ignorare*, meaning "to have no knowledge of," is the root of *ignore*, *ignoramus*, and *ignorant*. Reread lines 53–55. Why does Lady Macbeth call the present "ignorant"?

60–63 To beguile . . . under 't: To fool (**beguile**) everyone, act as expected at such a time, that is, as a good host. *Who is more like a serpent, Lady Macbeth or her husband?*

65 my dispatch: my management.

67 give solely sovereign sway: bring absolute royal power.

Macbeth. We will speak further.

Lady Macbeth. Only look up clear.

To alter favor ever is to fear.

70 Leave all the rest to me.

[*They exit.*]

Scene 6 *In front of Macbeth's castle.*

King Duncan and his party arrive, and Lady Macbeth welcomes them.

Duncan is generous in his praise of his hosts and eagerly awaits the arrival of Macbeth.

[*Hautboys and Torches. Enter King Duncan, Malcolm, Donalbain, Banquo, Lennox, Macduff, Ross, Angus, and Attendants.*]

Duncan. This castle hath a pleasant seat. The air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

Banquo. This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
5 By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here. No jutting, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle.
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,
10 The air is delicate.

[*Enter Lady Macbeth.*]

Duncan. See, see, our honored hostess!—
The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains
And thank us for your trouble.

Lady Macbeth. All our service,
15 In every point twice done and then done double,
Were poor and single business to contend
Against those honors deep and broad wherewith
Your Majesty loads our house. For those of old,
And the late dignities heaped up to them,
20 We rest your hermits.

Duncan. Where's the Thane of Cawdor?
We coursed him at the heels and had a purpose
To be his purveyor; but he rides well,
And his great love (sharp as his spur) hath helped him
To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,
25 We are your guest tonight.

69 To alter . . . fear: To change your expression (**favor**) is a sign of fear.

[Stage Direction] **hautboys:** oboes.

1 seat: location.

3–10 The martin (**martlet**) usually built its nest on a church (**temple**), where every projection (**jutting**), sculptured decoration (**frieze**), support (**buttress**), and convenient corner (**coign of vantage**) offered a good nesting site. Banquo sees the presence of the martin's hanging (**pendant**) nest, a breeding (**procreant**) place, as a sign of healthy air.

16 single business: weak service. Lady Macbeth claims that nothing she or her husband can do will match Duncan's generosity.

20 we rest your hermits: we can only repay you with prayers. The wealthy used to hire hermits to pray for the dead.

21 coursed him at the heels: followed him closely.

22 purveyor: one who makes advance arrangements for a royal visit.



Lady Macbeth greets King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth. Your servants ever
Have theirs, themselves, and what is theirs in compt
To make their audit at your Highness' pleasure,
Still to return your own.

Duncan. Give me your hand.
[Taking her hand]
Conduct me to mine host. We love him highly
30 And shall continue our graces towards him.
By your leave, hostess. **H**
[They exit.]

Scene 7 A room in Macbeth's castle.

Macbeth has left Duncan in the middle of dinner. Alone, he begins to have second thoughts about his murderous plan. Lady Macbeth enters and discovers that he has changed his mind. She scornfully accuses him of cowardice and tells him that a true man would never back out of a commitment. She reassures him of success and explains her plan. She will make sure that the king's attendants drink too much. When they are fast asleep, Macbeth will stab the king with the servants' weapons.

[Hautboys. Torches. Enter a Sewer, and divers Servants with dishes and service over the stage. Then enter Macbeth.]

Macbeth. If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If th' assassination
Could trammel up the consequence and catch
With his surcease success, that but this blow
5 Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases

25–28 Legally, Duncan owned everything in his kingdom. Lady Macbeth politely says that they hold his property in trust (**compt**), ready to return it (**make their audit**) whenever he wants.

H DRAMATIC IRONY
Why is the exchange between Lady Macbeth and Duncan in lines 25–31 ironic?

[Stage Direction] **Sewer:** the steward, the servant in charge of arranging the banquet and tasting the king's food; **divers:** various.

We still have judgment here, that we but teach
 Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
 10 To plague th' inventor. This even-handed justice
 Commends th' ingredience of our poisoned chalice
 To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
 First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
 15 Who should against his murderer shut the door,
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
 Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues
 Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
 20 The deep damnation of his taking-off;
 And pity, like a naked newborn babe
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin horsed
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
 25 That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only
 Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
 And falls on th' other— ❶
 [Enter Lady Macbeth.]

How now? What news?

Lady Macbeth. He has almost supped. Why have you left the chamber?

30 **Macbeth.** Hath he asked for me?

Lady Macbeth. Know you not he has?

Macbeth. We will proceed no further in this business.
 He hath honored me of late, and I have bought
 Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
 Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,

35 Not cast aside so soon.

Lady Macbeth. Was the hope drunk
 Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?
 And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
 At what it did so freely? From this time
 Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
 40 To be the same in thine own act and valor
 As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
 Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life
 And live a coward in thine own esteem,
 Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would,"

45 Like the poor cat i' th' adage?

Macbeth. Prithee, peace.

1–10 Again, Macbeth argues with himself about murdering the king. If it could be done without causing problems later, then it would be good to do it soon. If Duncan's murder would have no negative consequences and be successfully completed with his death (**surcease**), then Macbeth would risk eternal damnation. He knows, however, that terrible deeds (**bloody instructions**) often backfire.

Language Coach

Homonyms Homonyms have different meanings but the same pronunciation. *Bear* can mean "shaggy, four-footed carnivore" or "carry." What does it mean in line 16? What form of *bear* in line 17 has a homonym meaning "come to life"? How is each homonym spelled?

❶ SOLILOQUY

Note that in lines 12–28 of his soliloquy, Macbeth lists the reasons why he shouldn't kill Duncan. How do you think other characters will react if Macbeth kills the king?

32–35 **I have . . . so soon:** The praises that Macbeth has received are, like new clothes, to be worn, not quickly thrown away. *What has Macbeth decided?*

35–38 Lady Macbeth sarcastically suggests that Macbeth's ambition must have been drunk, because it now seems to have a hangover (**to look so green and pale**).

39–45 Lady Macbeth criticizes Macbeth's weakened resolve to secure the crown (**ornament of life**) and calls him a coward. She compares him to a cat in a proverb (**adage**) who wouldn't catch fish because it feared wet feet.

I dare do all that may become a man.
Who dares do more is none.

Lady Macbeth. What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
50 And to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both.
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
55 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me.
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this. **J**

Macbeth. If we should fail—

Lady Macbeth. We fail?
60 But screw your courage to the sticking place
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep
(Where'to the rather shall his day's hard journey
Soundly invite him), his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince
65 That memory, the warder of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep
Their drenchèd natures lie as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
70 Th' unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
Of our great quell?

Macbeth. Bring forth men-children only,
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males. Will it not be received,
75 When we have marked with blood those sleepy two
Of his own chamber and used their very daggers,
That they have done 't?

Lady Macbeth. Who dares receive it other,
As we shall make our griefs and clamor roar
Upon his death?

Macbeth. I am settled and bend up
80 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
Away, and mock the time with fairest show.
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.
[*They exit.*]

54 **I have given suck:** I have nursed a baby.

J TRAGEDY

Reread lines 47–59. How does Lady Macbeth urge her husband to carry out his terrible plan?

60 When each string of a guitar or lute is tightened to the peg (**sticking place**), the instrument is ready to be played.

65–67 Memory was thought to be at the base of the brain, to guard against harmful vapors rising from the body. Lady Macbeth will get the guards so drunk that their reason will become like a still (**limbeck**), producing confused thoughts.

72 **quell:** murder.

72–74 **Bring forth . . . males:** Your bold spirit (**undaunted mettle**) is better suited to raising males than females. *Do you think Macbeth's words express admiration?*

79–82 Now that Macbeth has made up his mind, every part of his body (**each corporal agent**) is tightened like a bow. He and Lady Macbeth will return to the banquet and deceive everyone (**mock the time**), hiding their evil intent with gracious faces.



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

Comprehension

1. **Recall** What predictions do the witches make about Macbeth and Banquo?
2. **Clarify** How does Macbeth react when Duncan declares his son Malcolm heir to the Scottish throne?
3. **Summarize** What do Macbeth and his wife plan to do to make the witches' predictions come true?

Literary Analysis

4. **Identify Mood** Reread Scene 1, lines 1–11. What mood is created by the witches? Why do you think the drama opens with this scene?
5. **Make Inferences** What can you infer about Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's marriage from their interaction in Scene 7?
6. **Examine Shakespearean Drama** Review the actions you've recorded in your charts so far for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. At this point in the play, which **character** do you think is more forceful? Cite evidence to explain your answer.
7. **Analyze Shakespearean Tragedy** Use a chart like the one shown to record the **soliloquies** and **asides** in Act One that provide insight into the characters who speak them. What do Macbeth's and Banquo's asides to each other after hearing the witches' prophecies (Scene 3, lines 118–126) reveal about each man?

<i>Scene, Lines</i>	<i>Soliloquy or Aside?</i>	<i>Insight</i>

8. **Make Judgments About a Character** What character traits do Macbeth's exploits on the battlefield demonstrate? Are these qualities consistent with the plot he devises? Explain why or why not.

Literary Criticism

9. **Critical Interpretations** Some critics have pointed out that Macbeth clearly recognizes the immorality of his murderous plan and foresees its terrible consequences, yet still goes through with it. Why would Macbeth do this? Provide evidence from the text to support your explanation.

Can you ever be too **AMBITIOUS?**

Without the witches' predictions, do you think Macbeth and Lady Macbeth would have been satisfied with their place in life? Explain why.