

Reading Guide: AP Language and Composition

MacBeth Act III Reading Guide

Act III Scene i

- Banquo:
 - Paraphrase lines 1-3.
 - Paraphrase lines 8-10.
 - How is Banquo being characterized? Is his motive based in virtue or self-interest?
 - Which *leitmotif* does Banquo's speech support?
- MacBeth:
 - King MacBeth uses the royal "we." How does this inform the audience of his character?
 - Summarize lines 65-72, 89, and 135.
 - Summarize lines 49 and 116-125.
 - Which *leitmotif* do lines 60-64 support (avarice, sleeplessness, guilt, false appearances, etc.)?
- Explain what we learn about MacBeth by the way he persuades the murderers?
- Explain the extended simile between men and dogs (lines 92-101).
- Why doesn't MacBeth directly use his power to order Banquo and his family killed?
- What do we learn about MacBeth's character regarding murder in lines 128-139?
- Each of the last two lines of II.i and III.i act as a closing couplet. What similarity do these couplets possess?

Act III Scene ii

- Explain how Lady MacBeth is characterized now? How has her tone changed concerning murder?
- Explain how lines 17-26 support the *leitmotifs* of sleeplessness and guilt.
- Explain the metaphor in line 13.
- What *leitmotif* is supported in lines 26-28?
- List the fauna between lines 35-50. What is the collective symbolism?

Act III Scene iii

- Who is killed?
- Who survives?
- Why might question 14 be understood as the technical climax?
- How many murders is MacBeth responsible for?

Act III Scene iv

- Had all been perfect, then MacBeth would have felt free as air (lines 21-25). Since Fleance 'scaped, MacBeth's fit comes again bound in saucy doubts and fears. Why do you suppose that MacBeth would have felt free if Fleance did not escape, or explain why MacBeth's guilty conscience would have been put to rest.
- Line 29 is the second reference to Banquo as a snake. The first reference is II.ii. What *leitmotif* does this belong to? Why is this verbal irony?
- How is line 41 foreshadowing?
- How does Ross's reason for Banquo's absence fit in with a *leitmotif*?
- MacBeth's meltdown:
 - Why doesn't MacBeth see the empty chair?
 - What is in the empty chair?
 - Why is the setting significant?
 - What is true and false about MacBeth's statement in line 50?
 - Besides guilt, what is the significance of having the dead sit down to a dinner party?
 - What other experience has MacBeth had like this?
- Lady MacBeth:
 - What language of Lady MacBeth's acknowledges MacBeth's hallucination as unreal in lines 60-64?
 - How has Lady MacBeth reverted to her previous characterization in lines 65-73?
- Who boldly refused to balance the guest list at the banquet?

Act III Scene v

- Who does Lennox claim killed Banquo in lines 6-7, and why does Lennox believe this?
- Lennox is a mechanical character. He apes the *leitmotif* without understanding. Defend this view with II.ii.95, III.vi.9-10, III.v.6-7, and III.vi.11-13.

Act III Scene vi

- Where has MacDuff gone and for what purpose?

MacBeth Act IV Reading Guide

Act IV Scene i

1. What is the tone created by the ingredients of the witches' brew?
2. Macbeth:
 - a. How is MacBeth characterized in lines 44-47?
 - b. How has MacBeth's behavior changed towards the witches (lines 48, 50-60)?
 - c. Is MacBeth a *dynamic* or *static* character?
3. What does the brief answer in line 63 imply about MacBeth and the power of the witches?
4. The first apparition is an armed, or helmeted, head. What does this symbol imply?
5. The second apparition is a bloody child. What does this symbol imply?
6. MacBeth still plans to kill MacDuff even though MacBeth believes he can not be harmed. How does this characterize MacBeth?
7. The third apparition is a crowned child with a tree in his hand. Guess what this foreshadows.
8. The last image is Banquo and eight kings. The last king is holding a mirror that reflects the entire line of apparitions. Explain the foreshadowing.
9. Explain the verbal irony in lines 138-9.
10. Explain MacBeth's intentions and the resulting characterization in lines 144-155.

Act IV Scene ii

11. How are Lady MacDuff and Lady MacBeth similar (line 10 and surrounding lines).
12. Lady MacDuff defines a traitor.
 - a. What are the criteria?
 - b. Why might Shakespeare have included this?
 - c. Why through the voice of Lady MacBeth?
13. We have discussed the heroic archetype of the Fool. In literature the ideas persist of a fool, a natural fool, or a wise fool. This character serves as a voice of truth. A quality fools possess is that they are unaware of the deeper truth-value or significance of their utterance. How does MacDuff's son function as a natural fool?
14. Lady MacDuff says, "Our fears do make us traitors..." IV.ii.4, how does this apply to MacDuff and Lady MacDuff?
15. How do the lines 70-75 (and surrounding) support the *leitmotif* of false appearances?
16. At the end of this scene, what is MacBeth's body count?

Act IV Scene iii

17. What is the dramatic irony in line 14?
18. There is a Biblical allusion in lines 22-24:
 - a. What angel would MacBeth be if he were an angel?
 - b. Which angel would MacDuff be?
 - c. Which *leitmotif* would these lines represent?
19. Explain the imagery of Scotland in lines 40-41.
20. Malcolm states he is not fit to be king because he suffers from one of the seven deadly sins (beginning line 60). Which one? Who does he say is better fit to rule, MacBeth or himself?
21. What is MacDuff's rebuttal and the social moral implications?
22. Which of the seven deadly sins does Malcolm next state he partakes in (beginning line 80)?
23. What is MacDuff's rebuttal and the social moral implications?
24. When Malcolm claims a complete lack of _____, how does MacDuff's reply change? What does this change of reply indicate about MacDuff?
25. Beginning in line 125, we see the *leitmotif* of False Appearances again:
 - a. What does Malcolm reveal about himself?
 - b. Why did he lie?
 - c. What news has Malcolm been withholding?
26. How is Edward the Confessor a foil to King MacBeth in lines 140-145? Include the symbolism of King Edward's epithet and the King's Evil from page 367.
27. Explain the imagery of Scotland beginning in line 165.
28. The definition of manhood:
 - a. How does Lady MacBeth define manhood?
 - b. How does Prince Malcolm define manhood?
 - c. How does MacDuff define manhood?
29. Explain the metaphor in lines 137-138.
30. An *aphorism* is a short, truthful statement that comes from experience.
 - a. Explain the aphorism in line 140.
 - b. Which *leitmotif* does the aphorism apply?