



ACT 2

Scene 1 The court of Macbeth's castle.

It is past midnight, and Banquo and his son, Fleance, cannot sleep. When Macbeth appears, Banquo tells of his uneasy dreams about the witches. Macbeth promises that they will discuss the prophecies later, and Banquo goes to bed. Once alone, Macbeth imagines a dagger leading him toward the king's chamber. When he hears a bell, the signal from Lady Macbeth, he knows it is time to go to Duncan's room.

[Enter Banquo, and Fleance with a torch before him.]

Banquo. How goes the night, boy?

Fleance. The moon is down. I have not heard the clock.

Banquo. And she goes down at twelve.

Fleance. I take 't, 'tis later, sir.

Banquo. Hold, take my sword. [Giving his sword to Fleance]
There's husbandry in heaven;

5 Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose.

[Enter Macbeth, and a Servant with a torch.]

Give me my sword.—Who's there?

10 **Macbeth.** A friend.

Banquo. What, sir, not yet at rest? The King's abed.
He hath been in unusual pleasure, and
Sent forth great largess to your offices.
This diamond he greets your wife withal,

15 By the name of most kind hostess, and shut up
In measureless content. [He gives Macbeth a diamond.]

Macbeth. Being unprepared,
Our will became the servant to defect,
Which else should free have wrought. **A**

Banquo. All's well.
I dreamt last night of the three Weïrd Sisters.

20 To you they have showed some truth.

Macbeth. I think not of them.
Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,
We would spend it in some words upon that business,
If you would grant the time.

4–5 The heavens show economy (husbandry) by keeping the lights (candles) out—it is a starless night.

6 heavy summons: desire for sleep.

13 largess to your offices: gifts to the servants' quarters.

15 shut up: went to bed.

A DRAMATIC IRONY

Reread lines 16–18, in which Macbeth tells Banquo that he and his wife couldn't entertain the king as they would have liked. Why are these remarks ironic?

21 can entreat an hour: both have the time.



Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

Banquo. At your kind'st leisure.

Macbeth. If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,
25 It shall make honor for you.

Banquo. So I lose none
In seeking to augment it, but still keep
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,
I shall be counseled.

Macbeth. Good repose the while.

Banquo. Thanks, sir. The like to you.

[Banquo *and* Fleance *exit*.]

30 **Macbeth.** Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.

[Servant *exits*.]

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

35 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation
Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable

40 As this which now I draw. [*He draws his dagger.*]
Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses
Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,

45 And, on thy blade and dudgeon, gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing.
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one-half world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse

50 The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's off'rings, and withered murder,
Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design

55 Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives.

60 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives. **B**

24–28 Macbeth asks Banquo for his support (**cleave to my consent**), promising honors in return. Banquo is willing to increase (**augment**) his honor provided he can keep a clear conscience and remain loyal to the king (**keep my bosom . . . clear**). *How do you think Macbeth feels about Banquo's virtuous stand?*

32–42 Macbeth sees a dagger hanging in midair before him and questions whether it is real (**palpable**) or the illusion of a disturbed (**heat-oppressèd**) mind. The floating, imaginary dagger, which leads (**marshal'st**) him to Duncan's room, prompts him to draw his own dagger.

43–44 Either his eyes are mistaken (**fools**) or his other senses are.

45 He sees drops of blood on the blade and handle.

B SOLILOQUY

What does Macbeth's soliloquy in lines 32–60 reveal about his state of mind? Cite details that support your ideas.

[A bell rings.]

I go, and it is done. The bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

[He exits.]

Scene 2 Macbeth's castle.

As Lady Macbeth waits for her husband, she explains how she drugged Duncan's servants. Suddenly a dazed and terrified Macbeth enters, carrying the bloody daggers that he used to murder Duncan. He imagines a voice that warns "Macbeth shall sleep no more" and is too afraid to return to the scene of the crime. Lady Macbeth takes the bloody daggers back so that the servants will be blamed. Startled by a knocking at the gate, she hurries back and tells Macbeth to wash off the blood and change into his nightclothes.

[Enter Lady Macbeth.]

Lady Macbeth. That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold.
What hath quenched them hath given me fire. Hark!—Peace.

It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman,
Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it.

5 The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms
Do mock their charge with snores. I have drugged their possets,
That death and nature do contend about them
Whether they live or die.

Macbeth. [Within] Who's there? what, ho!

Lady Macbeth. Alack, I am afraid they have awaked,
10 And 'tis not done. Th' attempt and not the deed
Confounds us. Hark!—I laid their daggers ready;
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done 't.

[Enter Macbeth with bloody daggers.]

My husband?

Macbeth. I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

15 **Lady Macbeth.** I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?

Macbeth. When?

Lady Macbeth. Now.

Macbeth. As I descended?

Lady Macbeth. Ay.

Macbeth. Hark!—Who lies i' th' second chamber?

Lady Macbeth. Donalbain.

Macbeth. This is a sorry sight.

62 knell: funeral bell.

3 fatal bellman: town crier.

5 surfeited grooms: drunken servants.

6 possets: drinks.

9–10 Why does the sound of Macbeth's voice make his wife so afraid?

11 confounds: destroys. If Duncan survives, they will be killed (as his attempted murderers).

Lady Macbeth. A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

20 **Macbeth.** There's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried
"Murder!"

That they did wake each other. I stood and heard them.
But they did say their prayers and addressed them
Again to sleep.

Lady Macbeth. There are two lodged together.

Macbeth. One cried "God bless us" and "Amen" the other,
25 As they had seen me with these hangman's hands,
List'ning their fear. I could not say "Amen"
When they did say "God bless us."

Lady Macbeth. Consider it not so deeply.

Macbeth. But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen"?
30 I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"
Stuck in my throat.

Lady Macbeth. These deeds must not be thought
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

Macbeth. Methought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep"—the innocent sleep,
35 Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

Lady Macbeth. What do you mean?

Macbeth. Still it cried "Sleep no more!" to all the house.
40 "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more." **C**

Lady Macbeth. Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy thane,
You do unbend your noble strength to think
So brainsickly of things. Go get some water
45 And wash this filthy witness from your hand.—
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there. Go carry them and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

Macbeth. I'll go no more.
I am afraid to think what I have done.
50 Look on 't again I dare not.

Lady Macbeth. Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,

25–26 He imagines that the sleepers could see him listening to their exclamations of fear, with his hands bloody like those of an executioner.

34–38 Sleep eases worries (**knits up the raveled sleeve of care**), relieves the aches of physical work (**sore labor's bath**), soothes the anxious (**hurt minds**), and nourishes like food.

C FORESHADOWING

Reread lines 39–41. What mental state might the inability to sleep reflect? What do you suppose these lines foreshadow for Macbeth?

COMMON CORE L.4b

Language Coach

Roots and Affixes A **prefix** is an affix at the beginning of a word. The prefix *in-* can mean "in" or "not." What does it mean in *infirm* (line 50)? How can you tell? How would Lady Macbeth say this line?

I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
55 For it must seem their guilt.
[*She exits with the daggers. Knock within.*]

Macbeth. Whence is that knocking?
How is 't with me when every noise appalls me?
What hands are here? Ha, they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
60 The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

[*Enter Lady Macbeth.*]

Lady Macbeth. My hands are of your color, but I shame
To wear a heart so white. [*Knock*]

I hear a knocking
At the south entry. Retire we to our chamber.
65 A little water clears us of this deed.

How easy is it, then! Your constancy
Hath left you unattended. [*Knock*]

Hark, more knocking.
Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us
And show us to be watchers. Be not lost
70 So poorly in your thoughts.

Macbeth. To know my deed 'twere best not know myself.
[*Knock*]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would thou couldst.
[*They exit.*]

Scene 3 *Within Macbeth's castle, near the gate.*

The drunken porter staggers across the courtyard to answer the knocking. After Lennox and Macduff are let in, Macbeth arrives to lead them to the king's quarters. Macduff enters Duncan's room and discovers his murder. Lennox and Macbeth then go to the scene, and Macbeth, pretending to be enraged, kills the two servants. Amid all the commotion, Lady Macbeth faints. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, fearing for their lives, quietly leave, hoping to escape the country.

[*Knocking within. Enter a Porter.*]

Porter. Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell gate, he **D**
should have old turning the key. [*Knock*] Knock, knock, knock! Who's
there, i' th' name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer that hanged himself on
th' expectation of plenty. Come in time! Have napkins enough about
5 you; here you'll sweat for 't. [*Knock*] Knock, knock! Who's there, in th'

54–55 She'll cover (gild) the servants with blood, blaming them for the murder. *How is her attitude toward blood different from her husband's?*

59–61 **this my hand . . . one red:** The blood on my hand will redden (incarnadine) the seas.

66–67 **Your constancy . . . unattended:** Your courage has left you.

68–69 **lest . . . watchers:** in case we are called for and found awake (watchers), which would look suspicious.

71 **To know . . . myself:** To come to terms with what I have done, I must forget about my conscience.

D BLANK VERSE

Be aware that the porter's speech in lines 1–16 is written in prose rather than blank verse. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to have the porter speak in prose?

2 **old turning the key:** plenty of key turning. Hell's porter would be busy because so many people are ending up in hell these days.

3 **Beelzebub:** a devil.

other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake yet could not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator. [Knock] Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither for stealing out of a French hose. Come in, tailor. Here you may roast your goose. [Knock] Knock, knock! Never at quiet. —What are you? —But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devilporter it no further. I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to th' everlasting bonfire. [Knock] Anon, anon! [The Porter opens the door to Macduff and Lennox.]

15 Porter opens the door to Macduff and Lennox.]
I pray you, remember the porter. **E**

Macduff. Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed
That you do lie so late?

Porter. Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second cock, and drink, sir,
20 is a great provoker of three things.

Macduff. What three things does drink especially provoke?

Porter. Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir, it provokes and unprovokes. It provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance. Therefore much drink may be said to be an
25 equivocator with lechery. It makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes him off; it persuades him and disheartens him; makes him stand to and not stand to; in conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep and, giving him the lie, leaves him.

Macduff. I believe drink gave thee the lie last night.

Porter. That it did, sir, i' th' very throat on me; but I requited him for his lie, and, I think, being too strong for him, though he took up my legs sometime, yet I made a shift to cast him.

Macduff. Is thy master stirring?

[Enter Macbeth.]

Our knocking has awaked him. Here he comes.
[Porter exits.]

35 **Lennox.** Good morrow, noble sir.

Macbeth. Good morrow, both.

Macduff. Is the King stirring, worthy thane?

Macbeth. Not yet.

Macduff. He did command me to call timely on him.
I have almost slipped the hour.

Macbeth. I'll bring you to him.

Macduff. I know this is a joyful trouble to you,
40 But yet 'tis one.

3–10 The porter pretends he is welcoming a farmer who killed himself after his schemes to get rich (**expectation of plenty**) failed, a double talker (**equivocator**) who perjured himself yet couldn't talk his way into heaven, and a tailor who cheated his customers by skimping on material (**stealing out of a French hose**).

E TRAGEDY

Note that the porter's speech in lines 1–16 provides **comic relief**, which breaks the tension of the preceding scene. What is ironic about the porter's notion that he is opening hell's gate?

22–28 The porter jokes that alcohol stimulates lust (**lechery**) but makes the lover a failure.

29–32 More jokes about alcohol, this time described as a wrestler finally thrown off (**cast**) by the porter, who thus paid him back (**requited him**) for disappointment in love. *Cast* also means "to vomit" and "to urinate," two other ways of dealing with alcohol.

37 **timely**: early.

38 **slipped the hour**: missed the time.

Macbeth. The labor we delight in physics pain.
This is the door.

Macduff. I'll make so bold to call,
For 'tis my limited service. [Macduff *exits*.]

Lennox. Goes the King hence today?

45 **Macbeth.** He does. He did appoint so.

Lennox. The night has been unruly. Where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' th' air, strange screams of death,
And prophesying, with accents terrible,
50 Of dire combustion and confused events
New hatched to th' woeful time. The obscure bird
Clamored the livelong night. Some say the earth
Was feverous and did shake. **F**

Macbeth. 'Twas a rough night.

Lennox. My young remembrance cannot parallel
55 A fellow to it.

[*Enter Macduff.*]

Macduff. O horror, horror, horror!
Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee!

Macbeth and Lennox. What's the matter?

Macduff. Confusion now hath made his masterpiece.
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
60 The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence
The life o' th' building.

Macbeth. What is 't you say? The life?

Lennox. Mean you his majesty?

Macduff. Approach the chamber and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon. Do not bid me speak.

65 See and then speak yourselves.

[*Macbeth and Lennox exit.*]

Awake, awake!

Ring the alarum bell.—Murder and treason!
Banquo and Donalbain, Malcolm, awake!
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself. Up, up, and see
70 The great doom's image. Malcolm. Banquo.
As from your graves rise up and walk like sprites
To countenance this horror.—Ring the bell.

[*Bell rings.*]

41 **physics:** cures.

43 **limited service:** appointed duty.

F BLANK VERSE

In lines 46–53, Lennox discusses the strange events of the night and the confusion they foretell. Would prose have been as effective as blank verse in conveying the **mood** of the speech?

58–61 Macduff mourns Duncan's death as the destruction (**confusion**) of order and as sacrilegious, violating all that is holy. In Shakespeare's time the king was believed to be God's sacred representative on earth.

64 **new Gorgon:** Macduff compares the shocking sight of the corpse to a Gorgon, a monster of Greek mythology with snakes for hair. Anyone who saw a Gorgon turned to stone.

68 **counterfeit:** imitation.

70 **great doom's image:** a picture like the Last Judgment, the end of the world.

71 **sprites:** spirits. The spirits of the dead were supposed to rise on Judgment Day.

[Enter Lady Macbeth.]

Lady Macbeth. What's the business,
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
75 The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak!

Macduff. O gentle lady,
'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak.
The repetition in a woman's ear
Would murder as it fell. **G**

[Enter Banquo.]

O Banquo, Banquo,
Our royal master's murdered.

Lady Macbeth. Woe, alas!
80 What, in our house?

Banquo. Too cruel anywhere.—
Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself
And say it is not so.

[Enter Macbeth, Lennox, and Ross.]

Macbeth. Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant
85 There's nothing serious in mortality.
All is but toys. Renown and grace is dead.
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

[Enter Malcolm and Donalbain.]

Donalbain. What is amiss?

Macbeth. You are, and do not know 't.
90 The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood
Is stopped; the very source of it is stopped.

Macduff. Your royal father's murdered.

Malcolm. O, by whom?

Lennox. Those of his chamber, as it seemed, had done 't.
Their hands and faces were all badged with blood.
95 So were their daggers, which unwiped we found
Upon their pillows. They stared and were distracted.
No man's life was to be trusted with them.

Macbeth. O, yet I do repent me of my fury,
That I did kill them.

Macduff. Wherefore did you so?

100 **Macbeth.** Who can be wise, amazed, temp'rate, and furious,
Loyal, and neutral, in a moment? No man.

74 trumpet calls to parley: She compares the clanging bell to a trumpet used to call two sides of a battle to negotiation.

G DRAMATIC IRONY

Recall Lady Macbeth's soliloquy in Act One, in which she calls on the spirits of evil to "unsex her." How do Macduff's words in lines 75–78 ironically echo Lady Macbeth's speech?

84–88 for from . . . brag of: From now on, nothing matters (there's nothing serious) in human life (mortality); even fame and grace have been made meaningless. The good wine of life has been removed (drawn), leaving only the dregs (lees). *Is Macbeth being completely insincere, or does he regret his crime?*

94 badged: marked.

Language Coach

Antonyms Words with opposite meanings are **antonyms**. Reread lines 100–101. *Temp'rate* (*temperate*) means "self-restrained." Which word in the same line is its antonym? Do other antonym pairs appear in these lines?

Th' expedition of my violent love
Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood,
105 And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature
For ruin's wasteful entrance; there the murderers,
Steeped in the colors of their trade, their daggers
Unmannerly breeched with gore. Who could refrain
That had a heart to love, and in that heart
110 Courage to make 's love known?

Lady Macbeth. Help me hence, ho!

Macduff. Look to the lady.

Malcolm. [*Aside to Donalbain*] Why do we hold our tongues,
That most may claim this argument for ours?

Donalbain. [*Aside to Malcolm*]
What should be spoken here, where our fate,
Hid in an auger hole, may rush and seize us?
115 Let's away. Our tears are not yet brewed.

Malcolm. [*Aside to Donalbain*]
Nor our strong sorrow upon the foot of motion.

Banquo. Look to the lady.

[*Lady Macbeth is assisted to leave.*]

And when we have our naked frailties hid,
That suffer in exposure, let us meet
120 And question this most bloody piece of work
To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us.
In the great hand of God I stand, and thence
Against the undivulged pretense I fight
Of treasonous malice.

Macduff. And so do I.

All. So all.

125 **Macbeth.** Let's briefly put on manly readiness
And meet i' th' hall together.

All. Well contented.

[*All but Malcolm and Donalbain exit.*]

Malcolm. What will you do? Let's not consort with them.
To show an unfelt sorrow is an office
Which the false man does easy. I'll to England.

130 **Donalbain.** To Ireland I. Our separated fortune
Shall keep us both the safer. Where we are,
There's daggers in men's smiles. The near in blood,
The nearer bloody.

102–103 He claims his emotions overpowered his reason, which would have made him pause to think before he killed Duncan's servants.

105 breach: a military term to describe a break in defenses, such as a hole in a castle wall.

110 Lady Macbeth faints.

111–112 Malcolm wonders why he and Donalbain are silent, since they have the most right to discuss the topic (**argument**) of their father's death.

118–121 Banquo suggests that they all meet to discuss the murder after they have dressed (**our naked frailties hid**), since people are shivering in their nightclothes (**suffer in exposure**).

121–124 Though shaken by fears and doubts (**scruples**), he will fight against the secret plans (**undivulged pretense**) of the traitor. *Do you think Banquo suspects Macbeth?*

127–129 Malcolm does not want to join (**consort with**) the others because one of them may have plotted the murder.

Behind the Curtain

The 1980 Old Vic Theatre production in London



The 2002 Albery Theatre production in London



The 2002 Shakespeare & Company production in Lenox, Massachusetts

COMMON CORE RL.7

There is no law that *Macbeth* must be staged in 11th-century Scotland for the sake of historical accuracy. Recent adaptations set the play in the late 20th century in such diverse places as a war-torn African state, the slums of Melbourne, Australia, and a Pennsylvania fast-food restaurant.

Because *Macbeth* is about the ruthless struggle for power, directors can adapt it surprisingly well to a variety of unexpected time periods and settings. Such innovative productions risk becoming gimmicks that may distract us from the play itself, but they also invite us to see it with fresh eyes. When an inventive adaptation works, it reminds us that Shakespeare's characters and themes remain relevant today.

Costumes reflect the production's time period and setting, as well as representing each character's personality or position. The production's costume designer carefully selects fabrics, colors, and details to create costumes for each character. In the top photograph, for example, the costume Macbeth wears tells us this is a traditional production of the play, set in medieval Scotland. Macbeth may parade publicly as king, but he has a bloody history to hide. His luxurious red robe may signify his power as king, but it is also the color of blood.

What time periods and settings do the two other photographs of Macbeth represent? What do these costumes suggest about his character? If you could stage *Macbeth* in any time or place, what would you choose? What costume would you have Macbeth wear to reflect his personality?

Malcolm. This murderous shaft that's shot
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way
135 Is to avoid the aim. Therefore to horse,
And let us not be dainty of leave-taking
But shift away. There's warrant in that theft
Which steals itself when there's no mercy left.
[*They exit.*]

Scene 4 *Outside Macbeth's castle.*

[*Enter Ross with an Old Man.*]

Old Man. Threescore and ten I can remember well,
Within the volume of which time I have seen
Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore night
Hath trifled former knowings.

Ross. Ha, good father,
5 Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
Threaten his bloody stage. By th' clock 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp.
Is 't night's predominance or the day's shame
That darkness does the face of earth entomb
10 When living light should kiss it?

Old Man. 'Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last
A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.

Ross. And Duncan's horses (a thing most strange and certain),
15 Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would
Make war with mankind.

Old Man. 'Tis said they eat each other.

Ross. They did so, to th' amazement of mine eyes
20 That looked upon 't.
[*Enter Macduff.*]

Here comes the good Macduff.—
How goes the world, sir, now?

Macduff. Why, see you not?

Ross. Is 't known who did this more than bloody deed?

137–138 There's . . . left: There's good reason (**warrant**) to steal away from a situation that promises no mercy.

1–4 Nothing the old man has seen in 70 years (**threescore and ten**) has been as strange and terrible (**sore**) as this night. It has made other times seem trivial (**hath trifled**) by comparison.

6–10 By th' clock . . . kiss it: Though daytime, an unnatural darkness blots out the sun (**strangles the traveling lamp**).

12–13 The owl would never be expected to attack a high-flying (**tow'ring**) falcon, much less defeat one.

15 minions: best or favorites.

17 Contending 'gainst obedience: The well-trained horses rebelliously fought against all constraints.

Macduff. Those that Macbeth hath slain.

Ross. Alas, the day,
What good could they pretend?

Macduff. They were suborned.

25 **Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's two sons,**
Are stol'n away and fled, which puts upon them
Suspicion of the deed.

Ross. 'Gainst nature still!
Thriftless ambition, that will ravin up
Thine own lives' means. Then 'tis most like

30 The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

Macduff. He is already named and gone to Scone
To be invested.

Ross. Where is Duncan's body?

Macduff. Carried to Colmekill,
The sacred storehouse of his predecessors

35 And guardian of their bones.

Ross. Will you to Scone?

Macduff. No, cousin, I'll to Fife.

Ross. Well, I will thither.

Macduff. Well, may you see things well done there. Adieu,
Lest our old robes sit easier than our new.

Ross. Farewell, father.

40 **Old Man.** God's benison go with you and with those
That would make good of bad and friends of foes.

[*All exit.*]

24 What . . . pretend: Ross wonders what the servants could have hoped to achieve (**pretend**) by killing; **suborned:** hired or bribed.

27–29 He is horrified by the thought that the sons could act contrary to nature (**'gainst nature still**) because of wasteful (**thriftless**) ambition and greedily destroy (**ravin up**) their father, the source of their own life (**thine own lives' means**).

31–32 Macbeth went to the traditional site (**Scone**) where Scotland's kings were crowned.

40–41 The old man gives his blessing (**benison**) to Macduff and all those who would restore good and bring peace to the troubled land.

Comprehension

- 1. Recall** Whom do Macbeth and his wife frame for Duncan’s murder?
- 2. Clarify** Why do Malcolm and Donalbain flee after their father’s death?
- 3. Summarize** How does the flight of Duncan’s sons play into Macbeth’s hands?

Text Analysis

- 4. Identify Stage Directions** The stage directions in Act Two often contain instructions about **sound effects**. Find the important sound effects listed in the chart shown and note the action or events they signal. What purpose do you think these sound effects might play in the drama?

<i>Sound Effects</i>	<i>Events They Signal</i>
<i>bell at the end of Scene 1</i>	
<i>knocking in Scene 2 and Scene 3</i>	
<i>alarum bell in Scene 3</i>	

- 5. Recognize Figurative Language** Reread Macbeth’s dagger speech in Scene 1, lines 32–46. Note the use in these lines of **apostrophe**, a figure of speech in which an object is addressed directly. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to use apostrophe rather than have Macbeth describe a menacing dagger?
- 6. Examine Shakespearean Drama** Review your notes about the actions of Macbeth and his wife in Act Two. What does each character do after Duncan’s body is discovered? What do these actions reveal about them?
- 7. Analyze Shakespearean Tragedy** Copy the following passages of **blank verse** from Act Two and mark the unstressed (˘) and stressed (ˊ) syllables: Scene 1, line 32; Scene 2, lines 58–60; and Scene 3, lines 83–85. How does the rhythm of the lines help convey the meaning of each passage?

Text Criticism

- 8. Author’s Style** Shakespeare uses the drunken porter at the beginning of Scene 3 to provide **comic relief**, a humorous break from intense emotion. However, the porter’s speech also ironically comments on Macbeth. Explain the connections that can be made between the porter’s words and Macbeth’s actions.

Can you ever be too **AMBITIOUS?**

Macbeth tries to hide his ambition and ignore its effects, but evidence of it seeps into the world around him. What are some of the symbols Shakespeare uses to represent the dangers of Macbeth’s ambition?

COMMON CORE

RL 3 Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a drama. **RL 4** Analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. **RL 5** Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text contribute to its overall structure and meaning. **L 4b** Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.