

Shakespeare's Macbeth

Act 3, scene 1

In the royal palace of Forres, Banquo states his suspicion that Macbeth fulfilled the witches' prophecies by foul play. But he notes that since the prophecy came true for Macbeth, perhaps it will come true for him as well.

Macbeth enters, with other thanes, and Lady Macbeth. He asks Banquo to attend a feast that evening. Banquo says he will, but meanwhile he has to ride somewhere on business. Macbeth asks if Fleance will be riding with him. Banquo says yes, then departs.

Once he's alone, Macbeth sends a servant to summon two men. As he waits for them to arrive, he muses if the witches prophecy is true, then Banquo's descendants will be king, and he'll have murdered Duncan for nothing.

The two men(murderers) enter. Macbeth tells them it's Banquo's fault they're poor, then questions their manhood for bearing such offenses. The murderers agree to kill Banquo and Fleance.

Macbeth is now King of Scotland. In Scottish history, the real King Macbeth ruled from 1040 to 1057. He became king after leading a rebellion against King Duncan and slaying Duncan in battle. For ten years, Macbeth was a fairly good monarch. But in the last seven years of his rule, he became suspicious and cruel.

For the murder plot in the play, Shakespeare borrowed from another time in history. A Scottish king named Duff was murdered in his sleep when he was a guest of Donwald, one of his nobles. According to history, Donwald's wife convinced him to murder King Duff.

So Shakespeare used historical facts to make his play exciting and to please King James, but he changed history to suit his purposes.

In Scene 1, notice how the murder has affected Macbeth.



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Reread lines 1-10.

BANQUO.

Thou hast it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promised, and I fear
Thou play'dst most foully for 't. Yet it was said
It should not stand in thy posterity,
But that myself should be the root and father
Of many kings. If there come truth from them—
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—
Why, by the verities on thee made good,
May they not be my oracles as well
And set me up in hope? But hush, no more!

What threat does Banquo pose to Macbeth? Why might Banquo have kept the information about the witches to himself?

Banquo poses a threat because if he tells what he knows, he might cast suspicion on Macbeth. He may have kept the information to himself to use to his advantage, or he may have been afraid that telling others might implicate him in the murder. After all, he was promised that his descendants would be kings.

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Reread lines 75-84.

MACBETH.

Well then, now

Have you considered of my speeches? Know

That it was he in the times past, which held you

So under fortune, which you thought had been

Our innocent self: this I made good to you

In our last conference; passed in probation with you,

How you were born in hand, how crossed, the instruments,

Who wrought with them, and all things else that might

To half a soul and to a notion crazed

Say "Thus did Banquo."

FIRST MURDERER.

You made it known to us.

What has Macbeth told these men (murderers)? Why?

He appears to have told them that whatever miseries they have suffered can be blamed on Banquo.

He wanted to give them a reason to murder Banquo, to motivate them in a way that would make them feel that they would be solving a problem of their own.

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Conflict

External Conflicts:

Man versus Man

Conflict that pits one person against another.

Man versus Nature

A run-in with the forces of nature. On the one hand, it expresses the insignificance of a single human life in the cosmic scheme of things. On the other hand, it tests the limits of a person's strength and will to live.

Man versus Society

The character challenges the values and customs by which everyone else lives. The character may come to an untimely end as a result of his or her own convictions. The character may, on the other hand, bring others around to a sympathetic point of view, or it may be decided that society was right after all.

Internal Conflict:

Man versus Self

Internal conflict. Not all conflict involves other people. Sometimes people are their own worst enemies. An internal conflict is a good test of a character's values. Does he give in to temptation or rise above it? Does he demand the most from himself or settle for something less? Does he even bother to struggle? The internal conflicts of a character and how they are resolved are good clues to the character's inner strength.

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Conflict

Reread lines 116-126

MACBETH.

So is he mine, and in such bloody distance
That every minute of his being thrusts
Against my near'st of life: and though I could
With barefaced power sweep him from my sight
And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,
For certain friends that are both his and mine,
Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall
Who I myself struck down: and thence it is
That I to your assistance do make love,
Masking the business from the common eye
For sundry weighty reasons.

What conflicts does Macbeth express in these lines? Why type(s) of conflict are present?

*The external conflicts are between Macbeth and Banquo (man vs. man) and between Macbeth and public opinion. (man vs. society)
An internal conflict, though not directly stated, may be identified as existing between Macbeth and his fear. (man vs. self)*