

Connect to the Literature

1. What Do You Think?

How has your impression of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth changed?

Comprehension Check

- What suspicions does Banquo voice?
- Why does Macbeth fear Banquo?
- What happens to Fleance when Banquo is killed?
- Where does Banquo's ghost appear?

Think Critically

2. **ACTIVE READING** **SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE** Summarize what Macbeth and Lady Macbeth say to each other in Act Three, Scene 2. What notes did you take in your **READER'S NOTEBOOK** about what these **characters** discuss? How would you restate Lady Macbeth's soliloquy (lines 4–7) in contemporary language?

3. How has the relationship between Macbeth and his wife changed since the death of Duncan?

THINK ABOUT

- Macbeth's view of Duncan's murder
- Lady Macbeth's view of Duncan's murder
- Macbeth's refusal to tell his wife about his plan to murder Banquo
- Macbeth's "fit" at the banquet and his wife's reaction to it

4. Why aren't Macbeth and Lady Macbeth happy being king and queen? Cite evidence to support your opinion.
5. Why is the escape of Fleance significant in the light of the witches' earlier predictions?

Extend Interpretations

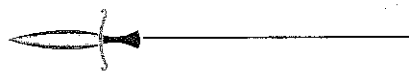
6. **Critic's Corner** In Act Three, Scene 1, Macbeth meets with two murderers, but three murderers take part in the actual murder in Scene 3. Critics have speculated about the identity of the third murderer, with some thinking that it may be Macbeth himself. How do you explain this situation?
7. **Comparing Texts** What do Macbeth and his wife have in common with the villainous characters in "The Pardoner's Tale" from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (page 141)?
8. **Connect to Life** Think about present-day explanations of the behavior of criminals. In what ways might Macbeth's state of mind and behavior in Act Three be similar to those of criminals today? Cite evidence to explain your response.

Literary Analysis

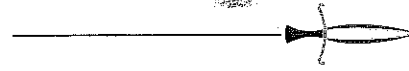
DRAMATIC IRONY Writers introduce **irony** into their works when they convey a contrast or discrepancy between appearance and reality—between the way things seem and the way they really are. In **dramatic irony**, what appears true to one or more characters in a play is seen to be false by the audience.

Cooperative Learning Activity With a small group of classmates, focus on one of the first three acts of *Macbeth* and analyze at least two remarks or incidents that create dramatic irony. Explain why the remarks or incidents are ironic, detailing the contrast between what characters think and what the audience knows. Then consider how the irony affects your enjoyment of the play. Before presenting your group's ideas to the class, organize your thoughts in a chart.

What Characters Think	What Audience Knows



Act 4



SCENE 1

A cave. In the middle, a boiling cauldron.

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

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

[Thunder. Enter the three Witches.]

First Witch. Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed.

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

Third Witch. Harpier cries; 'tis time, 'tis time.

First Witch. Round about the cauldron go;

In the poisoned entrails throw.

Toad, that under cold stone

Days and nights has thirty-one

Swelt' red venom sleeping got,

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

The Three Witches (1783), Henry Fuseli. Oil on canvas, Royal Shakespeare Theatre Collection, London.





- Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.
- 10 **All.** Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
- Second Witch.** Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
15 Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blindworm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing;
For a charm of pow'rful trouble
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.
- 20 **All.** Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
- Third Witch.** Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witch's mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravined salt-sea shark,
25 Root of hemlock, digged i' the dark;
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat, and slips of yew
Slivered in the moon's eclipse;
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips;
30 Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-delivered by a drab:
Make the gruel thick and slab.
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron
For the ingredience of our cauldron.
- 35 **All.** Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
- Second Witch.** Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.
- [*Enter Hecate and the other three Witches.*]
- Hecate.** O, well done! I commend your pains,
40 And every one shall share i' the gains.
And now about the cauldron sing
Like elves and fairies in a ring,
Enchanting all that you put in.
- [*Music and a song, "Black spirit," etc.*]
- Second Witch.** By the pricking of my thumbs,
45 Something wicked this way comes.
Open locks,
Whoever knocks!
- [*Enter Macbeth.*]

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

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



Macbeth. How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?
What is't you do?

All. A deed without a name.

50 **Macbeth.** I conjure you by that which you profess
(Howe'er you come to know it), answer me.
Though you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches; though the yesty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up;
55 Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down;
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure
Of nature's germens tumble all together,
60 Even till destruction sicken—answer me
To what I ask you.

First Witch. Speak.

Second Witch. Demand.

Third Witch. We'll answer.

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

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

First Witch. Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten
65 Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten
From the murderer's gibbet throw
Into the flame.

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

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

Macbeth. Tell me, thou unknown power—

First Witch. He knows thy thought.

70 Hear his speech, but say thou naught.

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

[*He descends.*]

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

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

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

Second Apparition. Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

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

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

63 masters: the demons whom the witches serve.

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

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

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

[Stage Direction] Whom or what might the bloody child represent?



Act 4, Scene 1: Macbeth meets the second apparition (film 1971)

Second Apparition. Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
80 The pow'r of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.

[*Descends.*]

Macbeth. Then live, Macduff. What need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance double sure
And take a bond of fate. Thou shalt not live!
85 That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies
And sleep in spite of thunder.

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

What is this
That rises like the issue of a king
And wears upon his baby-brow the round
And top of sovereignty?

All. Listen, but speak not to't.

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

[*Descends.*]

Macbeth. That will never be.

79–81 How do you think this prophecy will affect Macbeth?

83–84 Despite the prophecy's apparent promise of safety, Macbeth decides to seek double insurance. The murder of Macduff will give Macbeth a guarantee (**bond**) of his fate and put his fears to rest.

[*Stage Direction*] Whom or what might the child crowned represent?

87 issue: child.

88–89 the round and top: the crown.

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



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

All. Seek to know no more.

Macbeth. I will be satisfied. Deny me this,

105 And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know.
Why sinks that cauldron? and what noise is this?

[Hautboys.]

First Witch. Show!

Second Witch. Show!

Third Witch. Show!

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

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

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

Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs. And thy hair,
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.
115 A third is like the former. Filthy hags!
Why do you show me this? A fourth? Start, eyes!
What, will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?
Another yet? A seventh? I'll see no more.
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass
120 Which shows me many more; and some I see
That twofold balls and treble scepters carry.
Horrible sight! Now I see 'tis true;
For the blood-boltered Banquo smiles upon me
And points at them for his. [Apparitions descend.] What?
Is this so?

125 **First Witch.** Ay, sir, all this is so. But why
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?
Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites
And show the best of our delights.
I'll charm the air to give a sound
130 While you perform your antic round,
That this great king may kindly say
Our duties did his welcome pay.

95 **impress:** force into service.

96 **bodements:** prophecies.

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

106 **Why . . . this:** The cauldron is sinking from sight to make room for the next apparition.

[Stage Direction] **A show . . . :**
Macbeth next sees a procession (**show**) of eight kings, the last carrying a mirror (**glass**). According to legend, Fleance escaped to England, where he founded the Stuart family. James I of England, the king when this play was first performed, was the eighth Stuart king, the first to rule over both England and Scotland.

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



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

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

135 Come in, without there!

[*Enter Lennox.*]

Lennox. What's your Grace's will?

Macbeth. Saw you the Weird Sisters?

Lennox. No, my lord.

Macbeth. Came they not by you?

Lennox. No indeed, my lord.

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

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

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

Macbeth. Fled to England?

Lennox. Ay, my good lord.

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

145 The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
Unless the deed go with it. From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done!
150 The castle of Macduff I will surprise,
Seize upon Fife, give to the edge o' the sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool!
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool.

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

[*Exeunt.*]

133–135 pernicious: deadly, destructive; **aye:** always. After the witches vanish, Macbeth hears noises outside the cave and calls out.

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



SCENE 2

Macduff's castle at Fife.

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

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

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

Ross. You must have patience, madam.

Lady Macduff. He had none.
His flight was madness. When our actions do not,
Our fears do make us traitors.

Ross. You know not

5 Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

Lady Macduff. Wisdom? To leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion, and his titles, in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not,
He wants the natural touch. For the poor wren,
10 (The most diminutive of birds) will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is the fear, and nothing is the love,
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason.

Ross. My dearest coz,
15 I pray you school yourself. But for your husband,
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
The fits o' the season. I dare not speak much further;
But cruel are the times, when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumor
20 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea
Each way and move—I take my leave of you.
Shall not be long but I'll be here again.
Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
25 To what they were before.—My pretty cousin,
Blessing upon you!

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

Ross. I am so much a fool, should I stay longer,
It would be my disgrace and your discomfort.

3–4 When our . . . traitors:

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

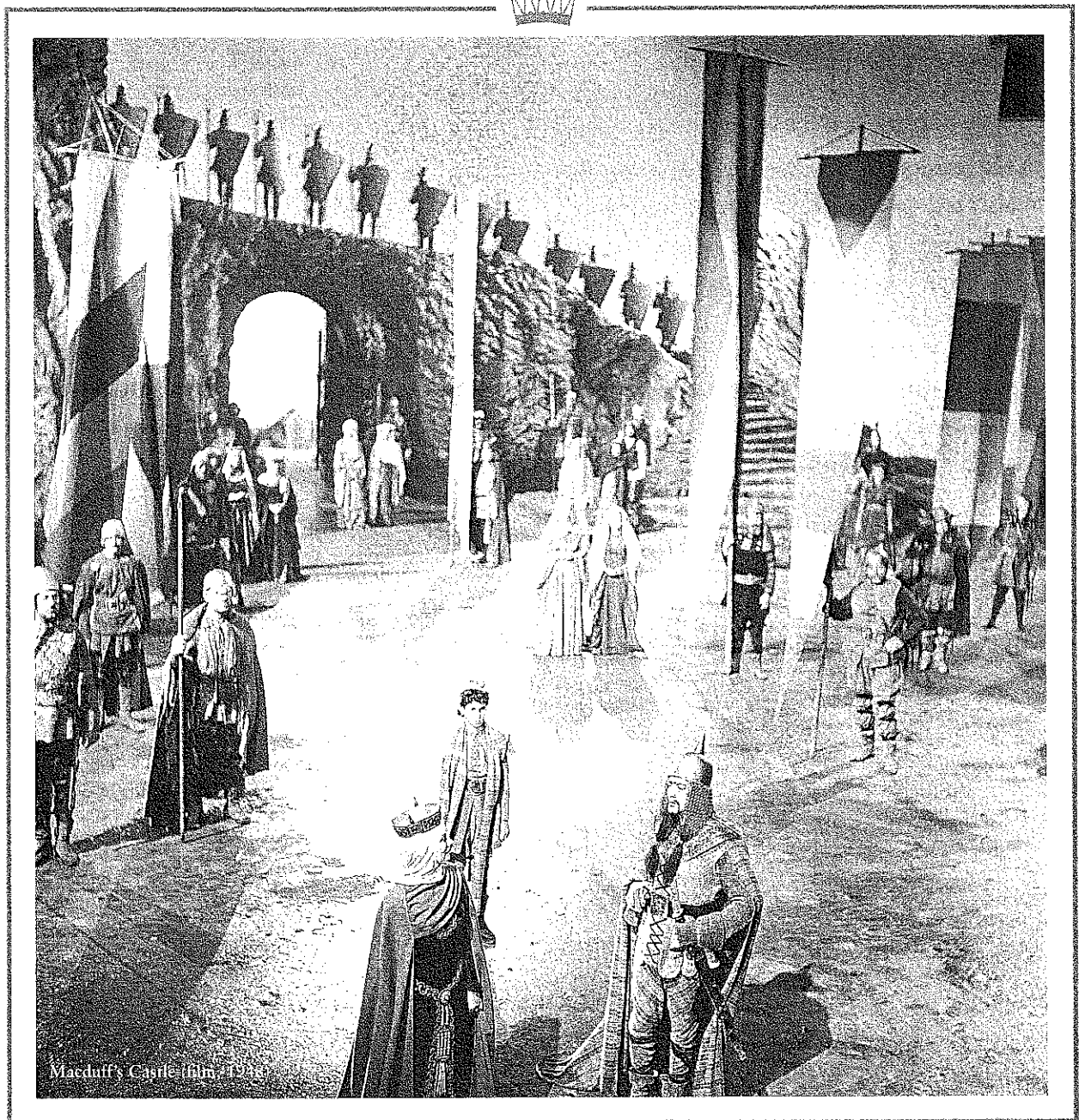
9 wants the natural touch: lacks the instinct to protect his family.

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

14–15 coz: cousin (a term used for any close relation); **school:** control; **for:** as for.

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

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



Macduff's Castle (film, 1948)

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30 I take my leave at once.

Lady Macduff. Sirrah, your father's dead;
And what will you do now? How will you live?

Son. As birds do, mother.

Lady Macduff. What, with worms and flies?

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

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

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

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



35 The pitfall nor the gin.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Son. Was my father a traitor, mother?

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

Son. What is a traitor?

Lady Macduff. Why, one that swears, and lies.

Son. And be all traitors that do so?

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

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

Lady Macduff. Every one.

Son. Who must hang them?

Lady Macduff. Why, the honest men.

55 **Son.** Then the liars and swearers are fools; for there are liars
and swearers enow to beat the honest men and hang up
them.

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

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

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

[Enter a Messenger.]

Messenger. Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known,

65 Though in your state of honor I am perfect.
I doubt some danger does approach you nearly.
If you will take a homely man's advice,
Be not found here. Hence with your little ones!
To fright you thus methinks I am too savage;
70 To do worse to you were fell cruelty,
Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you!
I dare abide no longer.

Lady Macduff. Whither should I fly?
I have done no harm. But I remember now

[Exit.]

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

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

44–54 Continuing his banter, the son asks if his father is a traitor. Lady Macduff, understandably hurt and confused by her husband's unexplained departure, answers yes.

55–63 Her son points out that traitors outnumber honest men in this troubled time. The mother's terms of affection, *monkey* and *prattler* (childish talker), suggest that his playfulness has won her over.

64–72 The messenger, who knows Lady Macduff is an honorable person (in your state of honor I am perfect), delivers a polite but desperate warning, urging her to flee immediately. While he apologizes for scaring her, he warns that she faces a deadly (fell) cruelty, one dangerously close (too nigh).



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

[Enter Murderers.]

Murderer. Where is your husband?

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

Murderer. He's a traitor.

Son. Thou liest, thou shag-eared villain!

Murderer. What, you egg!

[Stabbing him.]

Young fry of treachery!

Son. He has killed me, mother.

Run away, I pray you! [Dies.]

[Exit Lady Macduff, crying "Murder!" followed by Murderers.]

80 **unsanctified:** unholy.

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

83 **young fry:** small fish.

SCENE 3

England. Before King Edward's palace.

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

[Enter Malcolm and Macduff.]

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

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



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

Macduff. I am not treacherous.

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

Macduff. I have lost my hopes.

25 **Malcolm.** Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.
Why in that rawness left you wife and child,
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,
Without leave-taking? I pray you,
Let not my jealousies be your dishonors,
30 But mine own safeties. You may be rightly just,
Whatever I shall think.

Macduff. Bleed, bleed, poor country!
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,
For goodness dare not check thee! Wear thou thy wrongs;
The title is affeered! Fare thee well, lord.
35 I would not be the villain that thou think'st
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp
And the rich East to boot.

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

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

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

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

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

34 **affeered**: confirmed.



More suffer and more sundry ways than ever,
By him that shall succeed.

Macduff. What should he be?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

58 luxurious: lustful.

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

61 voluptuousness: lust.

63 cistern: large storage tank.

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

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

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



Macduff. This avarice

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

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

Macduff. O Scotland, Scotland!

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

Macduff. Fit to govern?

No, not to live. O nation miserable,
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scept'red,
105 When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,
Since that the truest issue of thy throne
By his own interdiction stands accursed
And does blaspheme his breed? Thy royal father
Was a most sainted king; the queen that bore thee,
110 Oft'ner upon her knees than on her feet,
Died every day she lived. Fare thee well!
These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself
Have banished me from Scotland. O my breast,
Thy hope ends here!

Malcolm. Macduff, this noble passion,
115 Child of integrity, hath from my soul
Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts
To thy good truth and honor. Devilish Macbeth
By many of these trains hath sought to win me
Into his power; and modest wisdom plucks me
120 From over-credulous haste; but God above
Deal between thee and me! for even now
I put myself to thy direction and
Unspeak mine own detraction, here abjure

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

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

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



125 The taints and blames I laid upon myself
For strangers to my nature. I am yet
Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,
Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,
At no time broke my faith, would not betray
The devil to his fellow, and delight
130 No less in truth than life. My first false speaking
Was this upon myself. What I am truly,
Is thine and my poor country's to command;
Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,
Old Siward with ten thousand warlike men
135 Already at a point was setting forth.
Now we'll together; and the chance of goodness
Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent?
Macduff. Such welcome and unwelcome things at once
'Tis hard to reconcile.
[Enter a Doctor.]
140 **Malcolm.** Well, more anon. Comes the King forth, I pray you?
Doctor. Ay, sir. There are a crew of wretched souls
That stay his cure. Their malady convinces
The great assay of art; but at his touch,
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,
145 They presently amend.
Malcolm. I thank you, doctor.
[Exit Doctor.]
Macduff. What's the disease he means?
Malcolm. 'Tis called the evil:
A most miraculous work in this good king,
Which often since my here-remain in England
I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven
150 Himself best knows; but strangely-visited people,
All swol'n and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
Put on with holy prayers; and 'tis spoken,
155 To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne
That speak him full of grace.
[Enter Ross.]

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

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

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



Macduff. See who comes here.

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

Macduff. My ever gentle cousin, welcome hither.

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

Ross. Sir, amen.

Macduff. Stands Scotland where it did?

Ross. Alas, poor country,

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

Macduff. O, relation
Too nice, and yet too true!

Malcolm. What's the newest grief?

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

Macduff. How does my wife?

Ross. Why, well.

Macduff. And all my children?

Ross. Well too.

Macduff. The tyrant has not battered at their peace?

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

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

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

Malcolm. Be't their comfort
We are coming thither. Gracious England hath

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

164–173 Ross describes Scotland's
terrible condition. In a land where
screams have become so common
that they go unnoticed (**are made,**
not marked), violent sorrow
becomes a commonplace emotion
(**modern ecstasy**). So many have
died that people no longer ask for
their names, and good men die
before their time.

173–174 relation too nice: news
that is too accurate.

175–176 If the news is more than
an hour old, listeners hiss at the
speaker for being outdated; every
minute gives birth to a new grief.

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

181–188 Notice how Ross avoids
the subject of Macduff's family. He
mentions the rumors of nobles
who are rebelling (**out**) against
Macbeth. Ross believes the rumors
because he saw Macbeth's troops
on the march (**tyrant's power**
afoot). The presence (**eye**) of
Malcolm and Macduff in Scotland
would help raise soldiers and
remove (**doff**) Macbeth's evil (**dire**
distresses).



190 Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men.
 An older and a better soldier none
 That Christendom gives out.

Ross. Would I could answer
 This comfort with the like! But I have words
 That would be howled out in the desert air,

195 Where hearing should not latch them.

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

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

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

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

Macduff. Humh! I guess at it.

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

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

Macduff. My children too?

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

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

Ross. I have said.

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

Macduff. He has no children. All my pretty ones?
 Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?
 What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
 At one fell swoop?

194 would: should.

195 latch: catch.

196 fee-grief: private sorrow.

197–198 No mind . . . woe: Every honorable (honest) person shares in this sorrow.

205–207 To relate . . . of you: Ross won't add to Macduff's sorrow by telling him how his family was killed. He compares Macduff's dear ones to the piled bodies of killed deer (quarry).

209–210 The grief . . . break: Silence will only push an overburdened heart to the breaking point.

212 Macduff laments his absence from the castle.

216–219 He has no children: possibly a reference to Macbeth, who has no children to be killed for revenge. Macduff compares Macbeth to a bird of prey (hell-kite) who kills defenseless chickens and their mother.



220 **Malcolm.** Dispute it like a man.

Macduff. I shall do so;
But I must also feel it as a man.
I cannot but remember such things were
That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,
225 They were all struck for thee! Naught that I am,
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,
Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

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

230 **Macduff.** O, I could play the woman with mine eyes
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,
Cut short all intermission. Front to front
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself.
Within my sword's length set him. If he scape,
235 Heaven forgive him too!

Malcolm. This tune goes manly.
Come, go we to the King. Our power is ready;
Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth
Is ripe for shaking, and the pow'rs above
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may.
240 The night is long that never finds the day.

[*Exeunt.*]

225 **naught:** nothing.

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

230–235 **O, I could play . . . him
too:** Macduff won't act like a
woman by crying or like a braggart
by boasting. He wants no delay
(**intermission**) to keep him from
face-to-face combat with Macbeth.
Macduff ironically swears that if
Macbeth escapes, he deserves
heaven's mercy.

236–240 Our troops are ready to
attack, needing only the king's
permission (**our lack is nothing but
our leave**). Like a ripe fruit,
Macbeth is ready to fall, and
heavenly powers are preparing to
assist us. The long night of
Macbeth's evil will be broken.