

Macbeth Study Guide Questions – Act I

Answer the following questions as you read the play in class, or as you review at home. They will help as a study guide for taking tests. Provide brief but thorough answers and practice answering the questions as if you were taking a test.

<p>Act I, scene i.- scene ii.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the purpose of this short scene? Select a quotation to illustrate the purpose you have chosen. 2. What information does the witches' conversation give the audience? 3. What does the soldier report about Macdonwald's character? 4. What does he report about the battle? 5. What information does Ross give about the thane of Cawdor that causes Duncan to order him dead? 6. Macbeth has not even appeared on the scene yet. What does the audience learn about Macbeth in scene ii before his appearance? 	<p>Quotation Identification and Significance</p> <p>a. speaker b. to whom c. significance to character, theme, and plot development. Not only translation.</p> <p>"Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I.i.11).</p> <p>"What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won" (I.i.77)</p>
<p>I. iii.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What three messages do the witches bring Macbeth? 2. What prophecies do the witches give Banquo? 3. How do Banquo and Macbeth react differently to the witches prophecies? 4. About what is Macbeth preoccupied at the end of this scene? 5. What is the difference between a soliloquy and an aside? 	<p>Quotation Identification and Significance</p> <p>"So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (I.iii.39)</p> <p>"The instruments of darkness tell us truths, / Win us with honest trifles, to betray us / In deepest consequence" (I.iii.132-5).</p> <p>"and nothing is / But what is not" (I.iii.151-2).</p>
<p>I.iv.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Duncan says he built his trust in Cawdor on his appearance (I.iv.13-16). On what has he based his judgement of Macbeth? 2. What does Macbeth say is the duty of loyal subjects, like himself, to King Duncan? Is he sincere? 3. Duncan appoints his son, Malcolm, to be Prince of Cumberland. What does this event mean for Macbeth? 	<p>Quotation Identification and Significance</p> <p>"our duties / Are to your throne and state" (I.iv.27-8).</p>
<p>I.v.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What news does Macbeth send Lady Macbeth in the letter? 2. What obstacle does Lady Macbeth see in the way of her husband becoming king? 3. Reread the lines in which Lady Macbeth calls upon the spirits of darkness. What is she asking them to eliminate from her character? What, specifically, does she ask them to help her do? 4. What speech in this scene shows that Lady Macbeth is cleverer than Macbeth is, and is also more aware of the appearance of things? 	<p>Quotation Identification and Significance</p> <p>"Yet do I fear thy nature; / It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way" (I.v.15-16)</p> <p>"unsex me here, / And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top full / Of direst cruelty!" (I.v.44-46)</p> <p>"look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under it" (I.v.72-3).</p>
<p>I.vi.-vii.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do Duncan and Banquo describe the atmosphere of Macbeth's castle? What is ironic about their description? 2. How does Lady Macbeth demonstrate the behaviour she suggested for Macbeth in scene v? 3. What state of mind does Macbeth reveal through his soliloquy? 4. When Macbeth says he will not go through with the murder "so soon" (I.vi.37), Lady Macbeth chides him and accuses him of cowardice. Is he a coward? Explain. 5. How does the end of Act I end the conflict in Macbeth's mind? How do we know this? 	<p>Quotation Identification and Significance</p> <p>"I have.../ only / Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself / And falls on the other" (I.vii.25-28).</p> <p>"Art thou afeared / To be the same in thine own act and valour / As thou art in desire? (I.vii.42-44).</p> <p>"But screw your courage to the sticking place, / And we'll not fail" (I.vii.66-68).</p>

Macbeth Study Guide Questions – Act II

Quotation ID and significance: a) speaker, b) audience, c) significance – do not merely translate.

Act I, scene i.- scene i.

1. Banquo expresses at the beginning of this scene that he cannot sleep. What symbolic meaning might this inability hold?
2. When Macbeth asks for Banquo’s loyalty, how does he respond? Can Macbeth trust him? (provide reasons for yes and no)
3. Summarize what Macbeth goes through in this scene’s soliloquy. What might this speech show about his mental state?
4. What does the last line of this scene reveal?

Quotation ID and Significance

“I think not of them: ” (II.i.25).

“Is this a dagger which I see before me, / ... Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible / To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but a dagger of the mind, a false creation /...?” (II.i.40-45)

I. i.

1. How does Lady Macbeth mock the guards in this scene?
2. What is her excuse for not killing Duncan herself? Is there more to this excuse than meets the eye?
3. How does Lady Macbeth react to the murder (lines 30-end) as compared to Macbeth? Use proof.
4. How do Lady Macbeth and Macbeth approach washing away the signs of murder? What clues in the text lead you to this conclusion?
5. With what sentiment (feeling, opinion, etc.) does this scene end?

Quotation ID and Significance

“A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight” (II.ii.30).

“I could not say, “Amen,” / When they did say, “God bless us” (II.ii.39-40).

“ ‘Sleep no more! / Macbeth does murder sleep’—the innocent sleep” (II.ii.47-48).

“Inform of purpose! / Give me the daggers: the sleeping, and the dead / Are but pictures” (II.ii.68-70).

I.iii.

1. What dramatic purpose does the porter scene serve?
2. Who does the porter pretend to be in his opening speech?
3. How is the word “equivocate” used through this scene? How does it contribute to theme?
4. What figurative battle does the porter express having with intoxication? (II.iii.36 and on)
5. *Pathetic fallacy* occurs when nature parallels the human condition. How does pathetic fallacy appear in this scene?
6. Does Macbeth mean it when he says that the only people remaining on earth are inferior (II.iii.107-108)? Explain.
7. Why does Lady Macbeth faint?
8. Why do Malcolm and Donalbain leave?

Quotation ID and Significance

“Oh, gentle lady, / ‘Tis not for you to hear what I can speak: / The repetition, in a woman’s ear, / Would murder as it fell” (II.iii.92-95).

“Had I but died an hour before this chance. / I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant / There’s nothing serious in mortality” (II.iii.143-105).

“O, yet I do repent me of my fury, / That I did kill them” (II.iii.121-2).

I.iv.

1. What types of unnatural events have taken place to parallel Duncan’s unnatural death?
2. Who do Macduff determine has killed Duncan? Why?
3. How is it possible that Macbeth will become king even though Malcolm is still alive?

Quotation ID and Significance

Select a quotation you deem important and explain its significance.

Macbeth Study Guide Questions – Act III

Quotation ID and significance: a) speaker, b) audience, c) significance – do not merely translate.

Act III, scene i.

1. What seemingly innocent question does Macbeth ask Banquo about Fleance?
2. By referring to Macbeth’s soliloquy (II.52 and on), summarize his reasons for wanting Banquo dead.
3. Draw a chart with “Lady Macbeth as Manipulator” and “Macbeth as Manipulator” as headings. Explain how each character acts manipulatively to achieve his/her own goals in light of this scene (Macbeth) and earlier scenes (Lady M).

Quotation ID and Significance

“Now if you have a station in the file, / Not in the worst rank of manhood, say it, / And I will put that business in your bosoms...” (III.i.110-12)

III. ii.

1. Paraphrase the following lines:
*We have scotch’d the snake, not kill’d it;
 She’ll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice
 Remains in danger of her former tooth* (III.ii.15-17).
2. Show through examples how Macbeth’s relationship with Lady Macbeth has changed.
3. What evidence is there in this scene of Macbeth’s a) growing ruthlessness, b) tormented conscience, and c) poetic imagination?

Quotation ID and Significance

“’Tis safer to be that which we destroy, / Than, by destruction, dwell in doubtful joy” (III.ii.8-9).
 “Things without all remedy / Should be without regard: what’s done is done” (III.ii.13-14).

III.iii.

1. Which do you regard as the greater crime: Duncan’s murder, or Banquo’s? Give reasons.
2. How is Fleance’s escape a turning point in the play?

Quotation ID and Significance

“But who did bid thee join with us?” (III.iii.1).
 “A light, a light!” (III.iii.20).
 “It will be rain to-night” (III.iii.23).

III.iv.

1. After the murderer reports that only Banquo is dead, how does Macbeth speak hypocritically about Banquo to his guests?
2. The first hallucination was caused by mental conflict and Macbeth’s inability to cope with the pressure. How is the cause of his second hallucination similar/different?
3. Through what arguments does Lady Macbeth try to restore Macbeth to normality at the Banquet?
4. At what commands does Banquo’s ghost come and go? What might that answer indicate?

Quotation ID and Significance

“I am in blood / Stepp’d in so far, that, should I wade no more, Returning were as tedious as go o’er” (III.iv.167-9).
 “My strange and self-abuse / Is the initiate fear, that wants hard use: / We are yet but young in deed” (III.iv.173-5).

III.v.-vi.

1. Why is Hecate so angry?
2. What is “mortal’s chiefest enemy”? and how will the witches take advantage of it?
3. Lennox’s speech seems to agree with Macbeth’s innocence. But he calls Macbeth “tyrant.” How does Lennox’s speech contribute to the theme of Appearances vs. Reality?

Quotation ID and Significance

“tyrant” (III.vi.22, 26).
 “we may again / Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights; / Free from our fests and banquets bloody knives” (III.vi.34-6).

Macbeth Study Guide Questions – Act IV

Quotation ID and significance: a) speaker, b) audience, c) significance – do not merely translate.

Act IV, scene i.	Quotation ID and Significance
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Briefly describe the three apparitions that offer prophecy.2. What might we learn about Macbeth's character when he, against the witches' prompting to a) demand more visions, and b) speak to the apparitions?3. Do you agree with Macbeth's line that "the flighty purpose never is o'ertook / Unless the deed go with it (unless a person acts immediately, he/she never carries out his/her intentions)?"	<p>"Infected be the air whereon they ride, / And damn'd all those that trust them!" (IV.i.151-2).</p> <p>"the firstlings of my heart shall be / the firstlings of my hand" (IV.i.161-2).</p>
IV. ii.	Quotation ID and Significance
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. At the beginning of this scene, what is Lady Macduff's response to Macduff going to England?2. How does Ross redirect her?3. How does the conversation between Lady Macduff and her son reveal about how she views Macduff? Find a line to support your idea.4. What discussion of gender roles emerges in this scene?	<p>"your father's dead" (IV.ii.34).</p> <p>"He has kill's me, mother: / Run away, I pray you" (IV.ii.96-7).</p>
IV.iii.	Quotation ID and Significance
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In this scene, why does Malcolm test Macduff?2. Identify and explain an example of Malcolm testing Macduff.3. How does Malcolm personify Scotland (l.42 and on)?4. Malcolm and Macduff create a catalogue for how awful Macbeth is. Make a list of the qualities they name.5. What, then, makes up a good king? Draw also on Malcolm's expression of what he would be were he king.6. What does Malcolm describe King Edward the Confessor as being capable of doing? How might this ability contrast Macbeth?7. Why does Ross evade the truth at first about Macduff's family?	<p>"He hath not touch'd you yet" (IV.iii.16).</p> <p>"Dispute it like a man" (IV.iii.257).</p> <p>"Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief convert to anger" (IV.iii.266-7).</p>