

Act III, Scene i

Synopsis

The setting is the king's castle at Dunsinane. Banquo ponders the witches' prophecies and wonders if his prophecies will come true as Macbeth's did. Macbeth invites Banquo to a feast. Banquo departs to go riding. Once Macbeth is alone, in another soliloquy he reveals that he does not feel secure in his kingship because of the witches' prophecies to Banquo. Macbeth sends for two hired murderers who agree to kill Banquo and his son that evening before the feast.



Questions

- 1) In what ways does Banquo's soliloquy at the beginning of the scene show that Banquo is a threat to Macbeth?

- 2) "To be thus is nothing; but to be safely thus" (lines 48-49). What assumptions underlie Macbeth's fears? Given Banquo's earlier soliloquy, to what extent do you feel his fears are justified?

- 3) Why is it interesting that Macbeth employs professional murderers to kill Banquo? Why doesn't Macbeth kill Banquo himself?

Act III, Scene ii

Synopsis

Write a brief synopsis of this scene:

Questions

- 1) In what ways do each of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth show that the crown has not brought peace of mind?

- 2) In what ways has Macbeth changed since the murder?

- 3) In many ways the roles of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have been reversed. Show how their relationship has altered. Pay particular attention to the way the "fair is foul" theme is used to emphasize this change.

Act III, Scene iii

Synopsis

Banquo is stabbed and killed by the murderers. His son, Fleance, escapes.

Act III, Scene iv

Synopsis

The Macbeths hold a banquet. Macbeth learns from the murderers that Banquo is dead but Fleance is not. Macbeth comments to his guests on how disappointed he is that

Banquo is not present. This comment causes: _____

_____. The guests do not see Banquo's ghost and are thus confused by Macbeth's horrified reaction. Macbeth's ravings start to betray too many secrets so that Lady Macbeth asks the guests _____.

As Lady Macbeth comforts Macbeth, he reveals that he is angry with Macduff for not attending the banquet, and plans to _____.



Questions

1) What does the fact that only Macbeth can see this ghost suggest about the nature of the ghost?

2) Once again there is a shift in the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Explain this shift.

3) Why do you think Macbeth decides to visit the witches again?

Act III, Scene v

Synopsis

We are introduced to Hecate, Queen of the Witches. She is angry at the three weird sisters because they have not involved her in their dealings with Macbeth. The witches plan to lead Macbeth to his downfall by making him feel overconfident.

Questions

- 1) Read Hecate's speech closely. In many productions of the play, this scene is left out. What does she suggest about the witches' plans for Macbeth? What effect does leaving the scene out have on our understanding of the role of the witches in determining Macbeth's actions?

Act III, Scene vi

Synopsis

Lennox and another Lord discuss how they are now certain about the crimes committed by Macbeth (the murders of Duncan and Banquo, and attempted murder of Fleance). They also reveal that Malcolm is safe in England at the court of King Edward, that Macduff is on his way to join Malcolm and seek England's military assistance against Macbeth, and that Macbeth is making preparations for defense.

Questions

- 1) This scene provides insight into how Macbeth is viewed by the other noblemen in his kingdom. Briefly describe these views.
