

Macbeth

Act One

Comprehension Check

Directions: To give you a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the play, answer the following questions. Make your best attempt to answer the questions! You may answer on a separate sheet of paper. You do not need to finish this as homework.

Scene 1

1. When, where, and with whom do the witches plan to meet next?

Scene 2

1. Who does the Captain say is “brave”? What did this brave man do to deserve the title?

2. Who was he fighting against?

3. From where has Ross come? What news does he bring?

4. What did Ross say Scotland demanded from the King of Norway? What did they promise in return?

5. Who gains the title of Thane of Cawdor?

Scene 3

1. Summarize the story the first witch tells. What do the witches plan in revenge?

2. Why is Banquo confused by the witches when he first sees them?

3. When the witches first speak to Macbeth and Banquo, what do they say?

4. What do they prophesy for Banquo?

5. Why is Macbeth confused by the witches’ prophecies?

6. Why have Ross and Angus come?

7. What does Macbeth mean when he says “Why do you address me in borrowed robes”? What does Angus tell Macbeth is the reason?

8. What does Macbeth mean by “the greatest is behind”?

9. In lines 127-129, Macbeth says “Two truths are told / as happy prologues to the swelling Act / Of the imperial theme.” What “imperial theme” is he talking about? What are the “happy prologues”?

10. In his asides, (lines 130-142), what problems does Macbeth mention? What does he decide to do about his issue (lines 143-144)?

Scene 4

1. What do we learn at the beginning of this scene?

2. What does the King say about Cawdor?

3. Who gains the estate?

4. What is Macbeth’s immediate reaction? What does Macbeth now feel he has to do?

5. What does Macbeth mean by “stars, hide your fires, / Let not light see my black and deep desires”? (lines 50-51)

Scene 5

1. Summarize what Macbeth tells his wife in his letter to her.

2. What is Lady Macbeth’s reaction to this news?

3. What does Lady Macbeth say about her husband? Why is her description surprising, considering the description of Macbeth in Scene 2?

4. After she hears that Macbeth is on his way home and that the King is coming over (lines 33-53), what does Lady Macbeth want? What does she have planned?

5. What does she want Macbeth to do?

Scene 6

1. How does Duncan feel at the Macbeth estate? Why is this ironic?

Scene 7

1. In his soliloquy, Macbeth says “If it were done when ‘tis done, then ‘twere well if it were done quickly.” What is “it”?

2. Why does Macbeth say Duncan is “here in double trust”? Why does this bother Macbeth?

3. Why does Macbeth second-guess the “deed”?

4. When Macbeth tries to call off the murder, what is Lady Macbeth’s reaction?

5. When trying to convince Macbeth, Lady Macbeth says “I have given suck and know / How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me; / I would while it was smiling in my face / Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums / And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you / Have done to this.” (lines 54-59) What is she saying? Why do you think she is being so dramatic?

6. What is Lady Macbeth’s answer when Macbeth asks “if they fail”? (line 60)

7. What is the plan?

8. What is your impression of the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth? Why do you think Lady Macbeth has so much control over Macbeth?

9. Were Lady Macbeth’s fears about Macbeth legitimate? Why or why not?

