

Macbeth’s character

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# Act 1, Scene 2 – We hear about Macbeth’s bravery

Sergeant

Doubtful it stood,

As two spent swimmers that do cling together

And choke their art. The merciless Macdonald —

Worthy to be a rebel, for to that,

The multiplying villainies of nature

Do swarm upon him — from the Western Isles,

Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied.

And Fortune, on his damned quarry smiling,

Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak,

For brave Macbeth — well he deserves that name

Disdaining fortune with his brandished steel

Which smoked with **blood**y execution,

Like Valor's minion carved out his passage

Till he faced the slave,

Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,

Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chaps,

And fixed his head upon our battlements.

Duncan

O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman.

…

Ross

God save the king.

Duncan

Whence camest thou, worthy thane?

Ross

From Fife, great king;

Where the Norwegian banners flout the sky

And fan our people cold.

Norway himself, with terrible numbers,

Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,

The Thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict,

Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapped in proof,

Confronted him with self-comparisons,

Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm,

Curbing his lavish spirit; and, to conclude,

The victory fell on us —

Duncan

Great happiness.

# Act 1, scene 3 – Macbeth’s first thoughts of murder

Macbeth

[Aside] Two truths are told

As happy prologues to the swelling act

Of the imperial theme. [To Ross and Angus] I thank you, gentlemen.

[Aside] This supernatural soliciting

Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,

Why hath it given me earnest of success,

Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion

Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,

And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,

Against the use of nature? Present fears

Are less than horrible imaginings.

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,

Shakes so my single state of man that function

Is smothered in surmise — and nothing is,

But what is not.

Banquo

Look, how our partner's rapt.

Macbeth

[Aside] If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,

Without my stir.

Banquo

New honors come upon him

Like our strange garments cleave not to their mould

But with the aid of use.

Macbeth

[Aside] Come what come may,

Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

# Act 1, Scene 4 - The gratitude of King Duncan contrasts Macbeth’s “black desires”

King Duncan

O worthiest cousin,

The sin of my ingratitude even now

Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before,

That swiftest wing of recompense is slow

To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,

...

That the proportion both of thanks and payment

Might have been mine. Only I have left to say:

More is thy due, than more than all can pay.

Macbeth

The service and the loyalty I owe,

In doing it, pays itself.

Your highness' part is to receive our duties,

And our duties are, to your throne and state—

Children and servants, which do but what they should,

By doing every thing safe toward your love

And honor.

...

Duncan

My plenteous joys,

Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves

In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,

And you whose places are the nearest, know

We will establish our estate upon

Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter

The Prince of Cumberland; which honor must

Not unaccompanied invest him only,

But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine

On all deservers. [To Macbeth] From hence to Inverness,

And bind us further to you.

Macbeth

The rest is labour which is not used for you.

I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful

The hearing of my wife with your approach.

So, humbly take my leave.

…

Macbeth

[Aside] The Prince of Cumberland — that is a step

On which I must fall down, or else overleap,

For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires,

...

Let not light see my black and deep desires.

The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be

Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

...

[Trumpets sound, all exit]

# Act 1, Scene 7 – Macbeth having doubts about the murder

[Macbeth castle, near the dining hall. Torches indicate that it is evening. Servants carry dishes across the stage on their way to set up for dinner. Enter Macbeth.]

Macbeth

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well

It were done quickly. If the assassination

Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,

With his surcease, success, that but this blow

Might be the be-all and the end-all here —

But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,

We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases

We still have judgment here — that we but teach

**Blood**y instructions, which, being taught, return

To plague the inventor. This even-handed justice

Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice

To our own lips. He's here in double trust —

First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,

Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,

Who should against his murderer shut the door,

Not bear the knife myself. Besides this, Duncan

Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been

So clear in his great office, that his virtues

Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against

The deep damnation of his taking-off;

And pity, like a naked newborn babe

Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim horsed

Upon the sightless couriers of the air,

Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,

That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur

To prick the sides of my intent, but only

Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself

And falls on the other...

# Act 2, Scene 1 – Macbeth deciding on the murder and going crazy at the same time

[Outside the walls of Macbeth's castle, late at night. Banquo and his son Fleance are taking an after dinner walk.]

…

[Exit Banquo and Fleance]

Macbeth

Is this a dagger which I see before me,

The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight, or art thou but

A dagger of the mind, a false creation,

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

I see thee yet, in form as palpable

As this which now I draw.

[Macbeth draws out his dagger]

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;

And such an instrument I was to use.

Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,

Or else, worth all the rest. I see thee still,

And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of **blood**,

Which was not so before. There's no such thing!

It is the **blood**y business which informs

Thus to mine eyes. Now, o'er the one half world

Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse

The curtained sleep; witchcraft celebrates

Pale Hecate's offerings; and withered murder —

Alarmed by his sentinel, the wolf,

Whose howl's his watch — thus with his stealthy pace,

With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design

Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,

Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear

Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,

And take the present horror from the time,

Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives.

Words, to the heat of deeds, too cold breath gives.

[A bell rings]

I go and it is done; the bell invites me.

Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell

That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

[Exit]

# Act 2, Scene 2 – Just after the murder

Macbeth

I'll go no more.

I am afraid to think what I have done; **Macbeth is scared, guilty and in a way we start feeling sorry for him.**

Look on't again I dare not.

Lady Macbeth

Infirm of purpose. **In contrast, LM is not feeling guilty, she is attacking Macbeth.**

Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead

Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood

That fears a painted devil. If he do **bleed**,

I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,

For it must seem their guilt.

[Exit. Knocking offstage.]

Macbeth

Whence is that knocking?

How is't with me, when every noise appalls me? **This shows that at this point Macbeth is still capable of fear.**

What hands are here? Ha, they pluck out mine eyes.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this **blood**

Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine, **Here Shakespeare is using hyperbole (exaggeration) to increase the horror of the scene.**

Making the green one red.

[Re-enter Lady Macbeth]

Lady Macbeth

My hands are of your colour, but I shame

To wear a heart so white.

**How to add context: By making “Macbeth” such a violent play, Shakespeare was paying tribute to the genre of play called revenge tragedy. In “Macbeth” we have 3 key ingredients of revenge tragedy: murder, madness, and a ghost (of Banquo) asking for revenge.**

# Act 3, Scene 2 – Macbeth is becoming obsessed with killing Banquo and his son

Macbeth

**We have scorched the snake, not killed it.**

She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice

Macbeth mentions here several disgusting creatures like a snake, scorpion and dung beetle. These creatures in Sh’s time were associated with the devil, witchcraft, so it shows Macbeth’s descent into worse and worse evil.

Remains in danger of her former tooth.

But let the frame of things disjoint,

Both the worlds suffer,

Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep

In the affliction of these terrible dreams

That shake us nightly. **Better be with the dead**,

Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,

**Than, on the torture of the mind, to lie**

**In restless ecstasy. Macbeth is now not scared to die in the process of securing his power.**

**Duncan is in his grave,**

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.

Treason has done his worst. Nor steel, nor poison,

Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,

Can touch him further.

Lady Macbeth --Come on;

Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;

Be bright and jovial among your guests tonight.

Macbeth

So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you.

Let your remembrance apply to Banquo;

Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue.

Unsafe the while, that we must lave our honors

In these flattering streams, and make our faces

Vizards to our hearts, disguising what they are.

Lady Macbeth --You must leave this.

**Macbeth**

**O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife.**

**Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.**

Lady Macbeth --But in them nature's copy's not eterne.

Macbeth

There's comfort yet; they are assailable;

Then, be thou jocund. Ere the bat hath flown

His cloistered flight, ere to black Hecate's summons

The shard-born beetle with his drowsy hums

Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done

A deed of dreadful note.

Lady Macbeth -- What's to be done?

Macbeth

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,

Till thou applaud the deed. Come, sealing night,

Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;

And with thy **blood**y and invisible hand

Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond

Which keeps me pale. Light thickens,

and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood.

Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;

While night's black agents to their preys do rouse.

Thou marvell'st at my words, but hold thee still.

Things bad begun **alliteration** make strong themselves by ill.

So, prithee, go with me. [Exit]

# Act 3, Scene 4 – Macbeth goes mad, sees Banquo’s ghost at the banquet.

- The word ‘blood’ is repeated here more than anywhere else in the play – Macbeth’s crime forces him to commit more crimes.

- The toll of dead bodies rises: in total, Macbeth kills more that 5 people in the play.

- Key quotes:

“blood will have blood” This shows that Macbeth will have consequences of his actions.

“to the weird sisters.” Macbeth here wants to speak to the witches himself. This links him to the evil side even more. King James hated the witches, so here Shakespeare’s audience would see Macbeth as descending into evil.

“I am bent to know the worst.” The repetition of the word “worst” foreshadows Macbeth’s tragic end.

The verb “wade” and the adjective “tedious” show how by now Macbeth is beginning to feel tired of his own violence.

Macbeth is presented as desperate to keep his power by any means, to keep “wading” through blood till the end. Also, he is losing his sanity, seeing the ghost.

Tortured conscience (угрызения совести) – 3 animals (tiger, bear, rhino) show how scared Macbeth is of Banquo’s ghost – Jacobean (James I) audiences would see those animals as scary.

[Re-enter ghost of Banquo]

Macbeth

Avaunt and quit my sight; let the earth hide thee.

Thy bones are marrowless, thy **blood** is cold,

Thou hast no speculation in those eyes

Which thou dost glare with.

…

What man dare, I dare:

A list of three

Approach thou like the rugged **Russian bear,**

**The armed rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;**

Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves

Shall never tremble — or be alive again,

And dare me to the desert with thy sword.

If trembling I inhabit, then protest me

The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow.

Unreal mockery, hence.

[Ghost of Banquo vanishes]

…

[Exit all but Macbeth and Lady Macbeth]

Macbeth

It will have **blood**. They say, **blood** will have **blood**.

Stones have been known to move, and trees to speak; SUPERNATURAL FEEL OF THE SCENE

Augurs and understood relations have

By maggot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth

The secret'st man of **blood**. What is the night?

Lady Macbeth

Almost at odds with morning, which is which.

Macbeth

How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person

At our great bidding?

Lady Macbeth

Did you send to him, sir?

Macbeth

I hear it by the way; but I will send.

There's not a one of them, but in his house

I keep a servant fee’d. I will tomorrow —

And betimes I will — to the weird sisters.

More shall they speak for now I am bent to know

By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,

All causes shall give way. I am in **blood**,

Stepped in so far that **should I wade (VERB) no more,**

**Returning were as tedious as go o'er.**

Strange things I have in head that will to **hand,**

Which must be acted ere they may be **scanned.**

THE RHYME WRAPS UP MACBETH’S DETERMINATION TO CARRY ON KILLING.

Lady Macbeth

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

Macbeth

Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse

Is the initiate fear that wants hard use.

We are yet but young in deed. [Exit]

# Act 5, Scene 3 – Macbeth is tired, but ready to fight till the end

[Macbeth castle at Dunsinane. Enter Macbeth, Doctor, and Attendants]

Macbeth

[He is denial]

Bring me no more reports; let them fly all.

Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,

**I cannot taint with fear.** What's the boy Malcolm?

Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know

All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus:

'Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman

Shall e'er have power upon thee.' Then fly, false thanes,

And mingle with the English epicures.

The mind I sway by, and the heart I bear,

Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

[Enter a Servant]

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon.

Where got'st thou that goose look?

Servant

There is ten thousand —

Macbeth

Geese, villain?

Servant

[Macbeth is calling his general, but Shakespeare uses a homophone here, to make it look like he is calling Satan (the devil) – to further associate Macbeth with the evil for Shakespeare’s audience

Soldiers, sir.

Macbeth

Go prick thy face and over-red thy fear,

Thou lily-livered boy. What soldiers, patch?

Death of thy soul — those linen cheeks of thine

Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face?

Servant

The English force, so please you.

Macbeth

Here Macbeth is tired.

Take thy face hence.

[Exit Servant]

**Seyton!**

— **I am sick at heart –**

Shakespeare uses assonance (the repetition of the sound “ea”) to highlight Macbeth’s breathlessness/tiredness. His speech starts sounding monotonous.

When I behold — Seyton, I say! — This push

Will cheer me ever, or dis-seat me now.

I have lived long enough. My way of life

Is fall'n into the **sear, the yellow leaf;**

And that which should accompany old age,

As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,

I must not look to have — but, in their stead:

Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honor, breath

Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.

... Seyton!

[Enter Seyton, Macbeth's military assistant, who helps him with his armor]

Seyton: What is your gracious pleasure?

At the end of the speech, Macbeth collects his will and is ready to fight. Shakespeare uses graphic/violent imagery (the verb “hacked”) to show his final determination. This scene echoes the beginning of the play, where Macbeth was “hacking” down the traitors of the king.

Macbeth: What news more?

Seyton

All is confirmed, my lord, which was reported.

Macbeth

I'll fight till, from my bones, my flesh be hacked.

Give me my armor.

# Act 5, Scene 5 – Macbeth’s last speech

[Dunsinane castle. Military drums and flags. Enter Macbeth, Seyton (his armorer), and Soldiers]

Macbeth

Hang out our banners on the outward walls,

The cry is still 'They come': our castle's strength

Will laugh a siege to scorn; here let them lie

Till famine and the ague eat them up—

Were they not forced with those that should be ours,

We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,

And beat them backward home.

Shakespeare appeals here to five senses, making this speech almost physically palpable by the audience. The noun “taste” suggests that Macbeth is literally numb and dying.

[Seyton goes to see what the cries were about]

What is that noise?

Seyton

It is the cry of women, my good lord.

[Exit]

Macbeth

**I have almost forgot the taste of fears.**

The time has been, my senses would have cooled

To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair

The verb “supped” is used metaphorically here, to suggest Macbeth has witness too many horrors in his life and can’t take any more.

Would, at a dismal treatise, rouse and stir

As life were in't. I have supped full with horrors.

Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,

Cannot once start me.

[Re-enter Seyton]

Wherefore was that cry?

Seyton

The queen, my lord, is dead.

- repetition

Macbeth

She should have died hereafter;

There would have been a time for such a word.

- personification

**Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow**

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

To the last syllable of recorded time;

This links to the popular image in Shakespeare’s time of the world as a stage.

A chain of metaphors – Macbeth is tired, annoyed, full of despair, he has given up, accepted his destiny, and exasperated.

Macbeth is giving a very complex speech, almost like trying to mask his pain with words. He is feeling empty and devastated.

And all **our yesterdays have lighted** fools

**The way to dusty death**. Out, out, **brief candle**.

Life's but a walking shadow, **a poor player**,

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,

And then is heard no more. It is **a tale**

**Told by an idiot**, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing.

[Enter a Messenger]

Thou comest to use thy tongue – thy story quickly.

Messenger

Gracious my lord,

I should report that which I say I saw,

But know not how to do it.

Macbeth

Well, say, sir.

Messenger

As I did stand my watch upon the hill,

I looked toward Birnam, and anon, methought,

The wood began to move.