

The dramatic impact
and significance of
act 2 scene 2 within
the context of the w...



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There are many horrific and grave scenes in Shakespeare's Macbeth but act 2 scene 2 is by far the most intense in the whole play. As we don't see how King Duncan is murdered, more attention is given to Macbeth's reaction to the murder and it also focuses on the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The setting of this scene is also important as the darkness suggest a sinister feeling - and everything revolves around this scene. The stage lighting increases suspense as it would be dark and the only light on the whole stage would be focuses on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The audience would be dying to know what happens next and if Macbeth does murder his own king in the end.

If there wasn't enough tension created through lighting, it increases by Lady Macbeth nervously walking on the stage but there is a hint of excitement present in her body language. Lady Macbeth says ' had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done't.' This shows she isn't as tough as she seems and she has a softer side to her. She also says ' it was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman.

' This led her to believe her husband had committed the deed. The uses of short sentences during when Macbeth returns also create a feeling of tension for example ay / hark! / When / my husband / as I descended / now / this is a sorry sight. ' This is a sorry sight' suggests that Macbeth is feeling almost regretful. The blood on his band only makes the scene fuller of anxiety and intensifies the situation which would make the atmosphere more uneasy. As the feelings of regret settle into Macbeth's mind, he describes the events of that faithful night to Lady Macbeth and with their conversation the audience can tell their relationship has gotten dire. He can't believe he had just killed

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his own king and Lady Macbeth tries to comfort him but also saying he's foolish with ' a foolish thought, a sorry sight.

' Macbeth kept revisiting the murder in his thoughts. He is horrified and emotionally distressed by the fact he had just killed his own king because the king had treated Macbeth with respect. In a demeaning way, Lady Macbeth she claims that Macbeth is ' infirm of purpose.' He disagrees when Lady Macbeth tells him to ' Go get some water and wash this filthy witness from your hand.' Macbeth says ' will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?' by which he means no amount of water will wash away his sin, and he will never be forgiven in God's eyes. Lady Macbeth is upset with him so she talks to him in a derogatory way e.

g. she says ' a little water clears us of this deed,' which is very ironic. She also attempts to comfort him by saying ' my hands are of your colour but I shame to wear a heart so white,' but she's also suggesting he's a coward simultaneously. She also says ' consider it not so deeply,' in a mocking way. We can tell that Macbeth is quickly falling apart by the nervous ramblings of Macbeth and by this we can tell that Lady Macbeth ' wears the trousers' in their relationship as she is taking control and doesn't seem fazed by what has happened, even though her husband is on the brink of a nervous breakdown.

Tension is created and Macbeth shaken by the words heart by him when he was killing the king ' Glamis hath murther'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor shall sleep nomore.' He thought that it could be another one of the witch's predictions. Once again suspense rises as there is a knock at the door

Macbeth is very nervous because he doesn't know if anyone has discovered that the king has been murdered yet. Lady Macbeth is also very anxious because the possibility that they'd be caught remained.

Whilst Macbeth is still falling apart, Lady Macbeth returns the daggers to Duncan's grooms. This also shows that the woman in this relationship is mentally stronger which would have been a shock and very controversial for Shakespeare's 16th century audience where sexual equality is yet to be achieved. As the knocking continues, Lady Macbeth grows ever more anxious at the fact this murderous act could still be discovered, she appears more agitated than before. She orders her husband to his chamber - again taking control of the situation- where they can eradicate signs of this heinous murder. The tension fluctuates during the next part of the scene as Shakespeare gradually builds it, releases it and builds it again for a bigger impact on the audience towards the end of the scene.

The many uses of drama including irony and indecision heighten the anxiety and kept the audience wanting more. These uses of drama made the characters more believable. In conclusion, Act 2 Scene 2 is a rollercoaster of tension, suspense and apprehension. It is by far the most crucial and imperative part of the whole of the play and the rest of the play revolves around this one scene.