

Macbeth – william shakespeare response journal: act 2 essay sample

[Life](#), [Death](#)



This act commences with the murder of King Duncan. It is in this act that the reader is first convinced of Macbeth's weakness, as contrasted by Lady Macbeth's strength. Whereas Macbeth feels remorse for his actions, and wishes that his king could once more wake, Lady Macbeth contemplates on how to place the guilt on someone else. The scenes portray the true feelings and intentions of the characters.

As a character, Banquo is a potential ally and enemy to Macbeth's scheming, because of his knowledge of the witches' prophecy. Macbeth appears to be suspicious of Banquo's intentions, and attempts to mask his desire to discuss the prophecies with the witches. This suggests that Macbeth is conspiring to take further action to ensure that the throne will remain in his bloodline. This violence will most likely be directed towards Fleance, Banquo's son, whom the witches predicted would sit on the throne of Scotland.

This second act is particularly focused on Duncan's murder. The incident itself is unseen by the audience, as Shakespeare chooses to display the scenes leading up to the murder, and those after the murder has taken place. The characters are all seen entering Duncan's bedroom, and emerging effectively changed. This technique of not allowing the audience to witness the horrific murders can be seen throughout the entire play.

Lady Macbeth's reaction to the deceased Duncan is particularly remarkable. She claims that she would have murdered him herself if he had only not resembled her father sleeping. Her comparison of Duncan to her father suggests that in spite of her desire for power and her harsh reprimand of

Macbeth, she views her king as an authority figure to whom she must show loyalty.

Just as the murder scene is omitted from the play, the most direct consequence of this deed, Macbeth's election as king, is also left out. The news of Macbeth's kingship is conveyed through the characters of Macduff, Ross, and the Old Man. Macbeth assumes the role of king, and takes control of the nobles, as soon as Duncan's body is discovered. The discovery of the body appears to trigger Macbeth's ambitions, and determination.

As Macbeth's confidence builds, the other characters become suspicious of the murder. When Malcolm inquires of the person responsible for his father's murder, Lennox replies, "Those of his chamber, as it seemed, had done't" (II. iii. 102). Lennox's inclusion of the phrase "as it seemed" highlights the suspicious nature of the crime scene's appearance. Banquo, as well, conveys his caution of Macbeth's argument that the chamberlains were the murderers. He says: "let us meet, / And question this most bloody piece of work, / To know it further" (II. iii. 128-130). However, the most doubtful character is by far, Macduff. He questions Macbeth as to why he killed the chamberlains, and later expresses his suspicions to Ross and the old man. He openly opposes Macbeth's coronation by refusing to attend, and quickly establishes himself as Macbeth's eventual nemesis.