

# Macbeth scene analysis

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Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is one of the most well recognised tragedies written by the world-renowned playwright. It tells the tragic tale of Macbeth, a Thane in Scotland. Some of the many themes illustrated in the play include ambition, fate and deception. Three witches decide to confront the great Scottish general Macbeth on his victorious return from a war between Scotland and Norway. After receiving predictions of greatness from the witches, Macbeth plots to commit treason and murder King Duncan, ruler of Scotland. When the murder is successful the heirs to the throne flee to England, leaving Macbeth next in line. Once crowned, Macbeth becomes increasingly delusional in addition to an extreme paranoia, leading to his eventual downfall.

During Act 3 Scene 4 there are many different themes, which are important in portraying the true character of Macbeth. It is a vital part of the lead up to the turnover point of the text, Act 4 Scene 1, which is known as the 'middle' of the play. Act 3 Scene 4 is a prominent scene in demonstrating the play's overall themes including how supernatural and superstitious themes affect human behaviour and how power can lead to many forms of corruption. In this scene, Macbeth hosts a feast in honour of Banquo, who Macbeth has plotted to kill. While making the toast, Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo. Lady Macbeth attempts to mask the situation with false excuses for Macbeth's sudden burst of madness. Shakespeare uses this scene as a tool to represent the character development of Macbeth and uses visual imagery to illustrate the key messages.

Act 3 Scene 4 occurs mid-way through the play subsequent to the murders of King Duncan and Banquo. The scene focuses on the character of Macbeth,

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as it is discovered he is seeing the ghost of Banquo, who he ordered to be killed prior to this event. Lady Macbeth is also involved as she tries to calm her husband and reassure the guests. She does this as she feels people will begin to be suspicious about him if exposed to displays of his insane behaviour. 'Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus, and hath been from his youth. Pray you, keep seat'. After Macbeth's display of madness 'thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy glory locks at me!' Lady Macbeth ushers the guests from the banquet without any of the formality seen at the beginning, and attempts to comfort Macbeth once they are alone. The scene contributes to the play in that it shows Macbeth's progression as a character. The growing thirst for power that Macbeth has possessed since first encountering the witches is beginning to cause his own personal corruption, and causes the audience to question his sanity.

This scene proves to be the third instance within the play in which Macbeth sees something paranormal. After his experiences with the witches and then the floating dagger, it is debated by the audience as to whether Macbeth is seeing things that are not really there. This relates to one of the central themes, how superstition affects human behaviour. The question of whether Macbeth is truly seeing these things or whether he is beginning to become driven insane by power thickens the plot of the text. This scene is also crucial in showing Macbeth's overall progression as a character throughout the play. At the beginning of the play Macbeth's reluctance to commit murder against King Duncan is evident, and we can see that he is ultimately under the control of Lady Macbeth. As we have progressed to the mid section of the play, we can see that Macbeth has become increasingly

power-hungry, instigating the murder of Banquo. This displays the growth of Macbeth's paranoia, which is illustrated by the appearance of the ghost, which only he can see.

This scene includes a main factor, that the boundaries between reality and the supernatural become blurred as Macbeth encounters the ghost of Banquo on two separate occasions. The audience is subjected to various encounters with the mysterious, and causes sceptical thoughts as to whether any of these have in fact been reality. There are multiple outcomes that the audience can grasp from viewing the actions of Macbeth in this scene.

Firstly, they may gain the idea that Macbeth is imagining the ghost of Banquo purely because of the guilt of being behind his and Duncan's murders 'tis better thee without, than he within. Is he dispatch'd?' Secondly the audience may believe that the ghost of Banquo is another element of the supernatural; something which they had been exposed to earlier in the instances of the witches and the floating dagger. The author has purposefully presented the text in a way that the understanding of the audience may differ, which adds to the mystery of the supernatural aspect within the play. Shakespeare uses visual imagery to describe certain instances within the scene and to add significance to certain points. This includes the Macbeth's description of Banquo's ghost, 'thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold; thou has no speculation in those eye which thou dost glare with.'

Macbeth is a play and movie, which expresses many different themes. Shakespeare utilises language and manipulates the plot to portray the actions of the text and cause the audience to form opinions on the

boundaries between the supernatural and reality. In Act 3 Scene 4 it is clear that Shakespeare is showing the character development of Macbeth, and also introduces another example of the supernatural. Macbeth uses visual imagery and poetic language to capture the emotion and significance of the scene in contribution to the play.