Review and Anticipate  In Act I, we learn that Macbeth has distinguished himself in battle. Returning from the battlefield, he and Banquo meet three witches who predict that Macbeth will not only be rewarded by King Duncan, but that he will become king himself. However, the witches also greet Banquo as a father of kings. Motivated by the witches’ prophecies, Macbeth considers killing Duncan. The assassination becomes more likely when the king decides to visit Macbeth’s castle. Lady Macbeth, on hearing about the witches’ predictions and the king’s visit, resolves that she and her husband will kill Duncan. When Macbeth hesitates, she urges him on. As Act II begins, they are about to perform this evil deed.

Scene i. Inverness. Court of Macbeth’s castle.

[Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE, with a torch before him.]

BANQUO. How goes the night, boy?

FLEANCE. The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.

BANQUO. And she goes down at twelve.

FLEANCE. I take’t, ’tis later, sir.

BANQUO. Hold, take my sword. There’s husbandry1 in heaven.

Their candles are all out. Take thee that2 too.

A heavy summons3 lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose!

[Enter MACBETH, and a SERVANT with a torch.]

MACBETH. Give me my sword!

Who’s there?

BANQUO. What, sir, not yet at rest? The King’s a-bed:
He hath been in unusual pleasure, and
Sent forth great largess to your offices:4
This diamond he greets your wife withal,
By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up5
In measureless content.

MACBETH. Being unprepared,
Our will became the servant to defect,
Which else should free have wrought.6

Critical Viewing

What sort of person would be worthy of wearing a crown such as this one? [Generalize]

Critical Thinking

Infer

• Direct students’ attention to lines 1–3.
• Ask students how Shakespeare uses the opening dialogue to inform the audience of the time of the action.
• Answer: Banquo and Fleance discuss the moon and the hour, letting the audience know that it is past midnight.

Reading Strategy

Reading Verse for Meaning

Which line endings in lines 12–17 do not require a pause?

1. husbandry 2. that 3. summons 4. largess . . . offices 5. shut up 6. Being . . . wrought

Reading Check

Where and when do Macbeth and Banquo meet?

Answer: Macbeth and Banquo meet after midnight in a court of Inverness.

About the Selection

In this act, thoughts become deeds. It appears that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have committed the perfect crime. In fact, it may have been more successful than they had hoped—the attendants are slain and unable to defend themselves, and Duncan’s sons flee, casting suspicion on themselves. However, their plot begins to unravel and hints of tragedy begin to appear. One of the play’s major themes—the fatal flaw of excessive ambition—begins to be developed as Macbeth becomes tortured by guilt.
He sees a dagger that is based on Shakespeare's takes shape. All's well. He is asking Banquo to Ask
Ask
Ask how Banquo's "All's well" and adj. Thanks, sir. The like to you!

Students at which point in the adj. With Ta provided that.

Ask what Macbeth large drops. In Act I, Scene iv, lines 5v. I think not of them.

I see thee yet, in form as palpable At

In line 47, when he says I lose none. So does I lose none. In seeking to augment it, but still keep My bosom franchised and allegiance clear. I shall be counselled.

MACBETH. Good repose the while!

MACBETH. Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready, She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.

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, and yet I see thee still.

To feeling as to sight, or art thou but A dagger of the mind, a false creation, Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain?

I see thee yet, in form as palpable As this which now I draw. Thou marshal'st me the way that I was going: And such an instrument I was to use. Mine eyes are made the fools of 'th' other senses, Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still; And on thy blade and dudgeon

Whose howl's his watch, and withered murder, Alarumed 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.\(^{18}\) 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.]

**Scene ii. Macbeth’s castle**

**[Enter Lady Macbeth.]**

**Lady Macbeth.** That which hath made them drunk hath made
me bold:
What hath quenched them hath given me fire. Hark! Peace!
It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman,
Which gives the sternest good-night.\(^{1}\) He is about it.

5  The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms\(^{2}\)
Do mock their charge with snores. I have drugged their possets,\(^{3}\)
That death and nature do contend about them,
Whether they live or die.

**Macbeth.** [Within] Who’s there? What, ho?

**Lady Macbeth.** Alack, I am afraid they have awakened
10  And ’tis not done! Th’ attempt and not the deed
Confounds\(^{4}\) us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready; He could not miss ’em. Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done ’t.

[Enter Macbeth.]

My husband!!

**Macbeth.** I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

**Lady Macbeth.** I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry. Did not you speak?

**Macbeth.** When?

**Lady Macbeth.** Now.

**Macbeth.** As I descended?

**Lady Macbeth.** Ay.

**Macbeth.** Hark! Who lies i’ th’ second chamber?

**Lady Macbeth.** Donalbain.

**Macbeth.** This is a sorry\(^{5}\) sight.

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**Critical Thinking**

**Analyze**

- Have students review Lady Macbeth’s comments in lines 1–13. **Ask** students what it is that she has contributed to the murder plot. **Answer:** She has drugged the king’s servants and has placed their daggers where they can easily be found.
- **Ask** students what comments indicate that Lady Macbeth is not as hard and cold as she’d like to think. **Answer:** In line 2, she is jumpy, spooked by the owl. In lines 12–13, she admits that she could not have murdered Duncan herself, because he looked like her father while he slept.

**Literary Analysis**

**Blank Verse**

- **Ask** students what mood or atmosphere the series of short lines of dialogue, lines 14–19, creates. **Answer:** These lines suggest an atmosphere of tension, as if the characters are jumping at the sound of each other’s voice.
- **Point out** that, though it looks at first as if Shakespeare has abandoned writing in verse, the iambic pentameter is actually continued across these lines of dialogue, starting in line 16. **Ask** students the Literary Analysis question: Why might the playwright have chosen this artistry? **Possible response:** The choppy speech contributes to the mood. Also, having Macbeth and Lady Macbeth finishing each other’s lines adds to the sense of their complicity in the murder.

**Reading Check**

**Answer:** They have murdered Duncan.
LADY MACBETH. A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.
MACBETH. There’s one did laugh in ’s sleep, and one cried “Murder!” That they did wake each other. I stood and heard them. But they did say their prayers, and addressed them Again to sleep.

25 LADY MACBETH. There are two lodged together.
MACBETH. One cried “God bless us!” and “Amen” the other. As they had seen me with these hangman’s hands: List’n’ing their fear, I could not say “Amen.” When they did say “God bless us!”

LADY MACBETH. Consider it not so deeply.

30 MACBETH. But wherefore could not I pronounce “Amen”? I had most need of blessing, and “Amen” Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH. These deeds must not be thought After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

MACBETH. Methought I heard a voice cry “Sleep no more!” Macbeth does murder sleep”—the innocent sleep, Sleep that knits up the raveled sleave of care, The death of each day’s life, sore labor’s bath, Balm of hurt minds, great nature’s second course, Chief nourisher in life’s feast—

LADY MACBETH. What do you mean?

MACBETH. Still it cried “Sleep no more!” to all the house: “Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor Shall sleep no more: Macbeth shall sleep no more.”

LADY MACBETH. Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy Thane, You do unbend your noble strength, to think

45 So brainsickly of things. Go get some water, And wash this filthy witness from your hand. Why did you bring these daggers from the place? They must lie there: go carry them, and smear The sleepy grooms with blood.

MACBETH. I’l go no more. I am afraid to think what I have done; Look on ’t again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH. Infirm of purpose! 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,

55 I’ll gild the faces of the grooms withal, For it must seem their guilt. [Exit. Knock within.]
Humanities
Poster for Orson Welles’s film of Macbeth

Orson Welles, famous for the film Citizen Kane and the radio broadcast War of the Worlds, adapted Shakespeare’s Macbeth for the screen and then directed and starred in the production. This 1948 version also featured Jeanette Nolan and Roddy McDowall. The production is notable for its papier-mâché sets and brooding atmosphere.

The shadowy poster for Welles’s 1948 version of Macbeth emphasizes the darkness of the play’s content. Orson Welles’s face, made up as Macbeth at various points during the drama, conveys to viewers that the play is about a tortured individual.

Use these questions for discussion:
1. What emotion is portrayed by each of the expressions in Welles’s face in this poster? Possible responses: Welles’s face conjures up images of cold-blooded determination, fear, hate, helplessness, remorse, and resignation.
2. Do you find that the poster captures the essence of The Tragedy of Macbeth? Possible responses: Yes, the various expressions of Macbeth show that it is ultimately a human tragedy; no, the poster focuses too much on the Macbeth character and not enough on the others.

Critical Viewing Answer: The sinister shadows reflect the treachery that is hatched in Act II. The eyes of Macbeth reflect a sense of shock at the horrible nature of the crime. Lady Macbeth’s posture and facial expression suggest cold, almost mechanical determination.

Strategy for Special Needs Students
Have students use the Adapted Reader’s Notebook to help them get involved in the story. The summary and simplified version of the first scene may give them just the start they need to discover the story “buried” in the language. Then, as students continue reading Act II in the Student Edition, summarize each scene, so they don’t lose the thread of the story. Read important speeches aloud, so that the students can begin to get a feel for the language without getting lost in it.

Enrichment for Gifted/Talented Students
Suggest that students create their own “movie posters” for this play, using color, images, and words to “hook” potential audiences into coming to see Macbeth. Encourage them to think about the characters, actions, emotions, and images of the play as they plan their posters. When their posters are done, have students describe what message they were trying to get across, and what elements they chose to highlight. Hang their posters in the classroom.
### Literary Analysis

**Blank Verse, Prose, and Comic Relief**

- **Reteach:** Remind students that Shakespeare sometimes interrupts his blank verse with prose. Prose is usually reserved for low-ranking characters. Also, only low-ranking characters were bawdy or vulgar. Their often humorous speeches helped break up the dramatic narrative. This device is called comic relief and is common in Elizabethan drama.

- **Then, ask** students the Literary Analysis question: How do the shift from verse to prose in Scene iii and the porter’s remarks affect the mood?

  **Answer:** The mood shifts from one of great tension to one of light-hearted humor; this scene offers the audience some relief from the tension.

- **Discuss** how and why the porter’s reaction to the knocking is different from the reactions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the previous scene.

  **Possible responses:** For the porter, it is a job; for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, it is a warning that people approach. Macbeth is appalled, certain that the knocking is related to his guilt; Lady Macbeth views it as a signal to get moving, so they don’t get caught; the porter is annoyed at being awakened.

### Vocabulary Builder

**The Latin Root -voc-**

- Call students’ attention to the word *equivocate* and its definition. Tell students that the Latin word root -voc- means “voice” or “calling.”

- Tell students that this root is sometimes spelled -vok-, and it is the root of a large number of words.

- Ask students to suggest any words they can think of that contain this word. Supplement their suggestions as necessary, writing the words on the board. Possibilities include *advocate, avocation, conversation, equivocation, equivocal, evoke, invocation, irrevocable, provocation, provocative, revoke, vocabulary, vocal, vocation, vociferous.*

- Have students look up the meanings of unfamiliar words in the dictionary.

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### The Porter's Scene

This excerpt is from Thomas De Quincey’s (1785–1859) essay “On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth”:

The knocking at the gate which succeeds to the murder of Duncan produced to my feelings an effect for which I never could account. The effect was that it reflected back upon the murderer a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity.

. . . All action in any direction is best expounded, measured, and made apprehensible by reaction.

Now apply this to the case in *Macbeth*. Here, as I have said, the retiring of the human heart and the entrance of the fiendish heart was to be expressed and made sensible. Another world has stepped in . . . Hence it is that, when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the cloud: the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced.

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### Celebrating Humanity (1485–1625)

- **Vocabulary Builder**

  **multitudinous** (mul'tətō'dəl 'n os) adj. existing in great numbers

  **incarnadine** (in'kar nas) redden.

  **Your constancy . . . unattended** Your firmness of purpose has left you.

  **watchers** up late.

### Literary Analysis

**Blank Verse, Prose, and Comic Relief**

How do the shift from verse to prose in Scene iii and the porter’s remarks affect the mood?

1. porter doorman.
2. should have old would have plenty of.
3. Beelzebub (be’ e ë’ ba’ bub) the chief devil.
4. A farmer . . . plenty a farmer who hoarded grain, hoping that the prices would come up after a bad harvest.
5. enow enough.
6. an equivocator . . . scale a liar who could make two contradictory statements and swear that both were true.
7. stealing . . . hose stealing some cloth from the hose while making them.
8. goose pressing iron.
MACDUFF. Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,  
That you do lie so late?

PORTER. Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second  
ock cock and drink, sir, is a great provoker of three things.

MACDUFF. What three things does drink especially provoke?

PORTER. Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine.  
Lechery, sir, it provokes and unprovokes; it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance: therefore much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery: it makes him and it mars him; it sets him on and it takes him off; it persuades him and disheartens him; makes him stand to and not stand to: in conclusion equivocates him in a sleep, and giving him the lie, leaves him.

MACDUFF. I believe drink gave thee the lie last night.

PORTER. That it did, sir, ’t the very throat on me: but I requited him for his lie, and, I think, being too strong for him, though he took up my legs sometime, yet I make a shift to cast him.

MACDUFF. Is thy master stirring?

PORTER. Our knocking has awaked him; here he comes.

LENNOX. Good morrow, noble sir.

MACBETH. Good morrow, both.

MACDUFF. Is the king stirring, worthy Thane?

MACBETH. Not yet.

MACDUFF. He did command me to call timely on him:  
I have almost slipped the hour.

MACBETH. I ’ll bring you to him.

MACDUFF. I know this is a joyful trouble to you:  
But yet ’tis one.

MACBETH. The labor we delight in physics pain.  
This is the door.

MACDUFF. I ’ll make so bold to call.  
For ’tis my limited service.[Exit MACDUFF.]

LENNOX. Goes the king hence today?

[Enter MACBETH and LENNOX.]

MACBETH. Why is it appropriate for the dialogue in lines 43–44 to change back from prose to blank verse?

MACDUFF. To what gate does the porter compare the gate of Macbeth’s castle?

LENNOX. What is thy master stirring?

[Enter MACBETH.]

Our knocking has awaked him; here he comes.

LENNOX. Good morrow, noble sir.

MACBETH. Good morrow, both.

MACDUFF. Is the king stirring, worthy Thane?

MACBETH. Not yet.

MACDUFF. He did command me to call timely on him:  
I have almost slipped the hour.

MACBETH. I’ll bring you to him.

MACDUFF. I know this is a joyful trouble to you:  
But yet ’tis one.

MACBETH. The labor we delight in physics pain.  
This is the door.

MACDUFF. I’ll make so bold to call.  
For ’tis my limited service.[Exit MACDUFF.]

LENNOX. Goes the king hence today?

**Literary Analysis**

**Blank Verse** Why is it appropriate for the dialogue in lines 43–44 to change back from prose to blank verse?

**Answer:** It is appropriate for the dialogue to change back from prose to blank verse because the comic relief provided by the porter has ended, and serious matters are about to begin. Also, prose is used for low-ranking characters, such as the porter, so blank verse is appropriate for the high-ranking Macduff and Lennox.

**Reading Check**

**Answer:** The porter compares the gate of Macbeth’s castle to the gate of hell.
Reading Strategy
Reading Verse for Meaning
• Have students read lines 55–62.
• Ask them the first Reading Strategy question.
  Answer: There are three sentences in lines 55–62.
• Have students describe the night Lennox has experienced.
  Answer: The wind was wild and blew down the chimney. There were a lot of ominous sounds. An owl screeched all night. Some reported an earthquake.

Reading Strategy
Reading Verse for Meaning
• Have students read the bracketed passage on this page and the next page.
• Then ask them the second Reading Strategy question.
  Answer: You should not pause at the ends of lines 77, 78, and 80.
• Ask what comparison Macduff makes between sleep and death.
  Answer: He says that sleep is a counterfeit, or “fake” death.

Reading Strategy
Reading Verse for Meaning
• Have students read lines 55–62. How many sentences are there in these lines?
  Answer: There are three sentences in lines 55–62.

Reading Strategy
Reading Verse for Meaning
• In the latter part of Macduff’s speech, lines 75–81, where should you not pause at the ends of lines?
  Answer: You should not pause at the ends of lines 77, 78, and 80.

Literature in Context
Monarchy The idea that the monarch was appointed by God fit into the whole Elizabethan idea of an ordered universe. Remind students of the idea of a universal order, where everything is connected. Point out that this connection is reflected in Lennox’s speech in lines 55–62; because the king has been killed, the order of nature itself responds with howling and shaking. But the idea of a monarch being appointed by God is not an Elizabethan invention. The idea goes back thousands of years.

Connect to the Literature Point out the religious imagery Macduff uses in lines 68–69. Then ask the Connect to the Literature question.
  Answer: Macduff refers to the king’s body as the “Lord’s anointed temple” and calls the murder “sacrilegious.”

Forensics
In Shakespeare’s time, little was known of blood types, fingerprints, and similar modern evidence-gathering methods. As is seen in Act II, conclusions about the manner in which a crime was committed and the guilt or innocence of a suspect were made largely on the basis of appearances and unsubstantiated theories.

Today, crime scenes are preserved and investigated in depth. Blood samples and fingerprints are collected. Weapons are scientifically examined, and witnesses, victims, and suspects are questioned. Of course, even modern forensic methods may not have prevailed in this case. The weapons used belonged to the accused, the blood on them was the victim’s blood. Even today, some crimes are solved because the criminals “crack” from fear or guilt—or they brag.
And look on death itself! Up, up, and see
The great doom’s image!20 Malcolm! Banquo!
As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,21
To countenance22 this horror. Ring the bell.

[Bell rings. Enter LADY MACBETH.]

LADY MACBETH. What’s the business,
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley,23
The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak!

MACDUFF. O gentle lady,
Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:
The repetition, in a woman’s ear,
Would murder as it fell.

[Enter BANQUO.]

O Banquo, Banquo!
Our royal master’s murdered.

LADY MACBETH. Woe, alas!
What, in our house?

BANQUO. Too cruel anywhere.
Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,
And say it is not so.

[Enter MACBETH, LENNOX, and ROSS.]

MACBETH. Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant
There’s nothing serious in mortality:24
All is but toys,25 Renown and grace is dead,
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees26
Is left this vault27 to brag of.

[Enter MALCOLM and DONALBAIN.]

DONALBAIN. What is amiss?

MACBETH. You are, and do not know ’t.
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood
Is stopped; the very source of it is stopped.

MACDUFF. Your royal father’s murdered.

MALCOLM. O, by whom?

LENNOX. Those of his chamber, as it seemed, had done ’t:
Their hands and faces were all badged28 with blood;
So were their daggers, which unwiped we found
Upon their pillows. They stared, and were distracted.
No man’s life was to be trusted with them.

MACBETH. O, yet I do repent me of my fury,
That I did kill them.

20. great doom’s image likeness of Judgment Day.
21. sprites spirits.
22. countenance be in keeping with.
23. parley war conference.
24. serious in mortality worthwhile in mortal life.
25. toys trifles.
26. lees dregs.
27. vault world.

Literary Analysis
Blank Verse
Where is there a pause in line 100? How does it reinforce the meaning?

28. badged marked.

According to Macbeth, why did he kill the grooms?

Macbeth, Act II, Scene iii ■ 335
MACBETH. Who can be wise, amazed, temp'rate and furious,
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man.
The expedition29 of my violent love
Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood,
And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature
For ruin’s wasteful entrance: there, the murderers,
Steeped in the colors of their trade, their daggers
Unmannerly breeched with gore.30 Who could refrain,

Critical Viewing
This painting depicts the moment when Macbeth comes from
murdering Duncan (II, ii, 14). However, it also captures the nature of the relationship
between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the first part of the play. What do their facial
expressions and body language suggest about that relationship? [Interpret]

1. How does the lack of color contribute to the mood of this scene?
   Answer: The lack of color creates a dream-like scene, as if the characters were ghosts, or from
   another world. It also makes the blood on the daggers stand out.

2. How does the artist’s depiction of these two characters compare with your conception of them?
   Possible responses: Some students will be surprised by the cowardly, submissive appearance
   of Macbeth. Lady Macbeth’s aggressive posturing and determined look may be more in keeping
   with students’ mental picture of the character.

Critical Viewing
Answer: Lady Macbeth’s face and body suggest a determined and aggressive personality. She seems to
dominate her shrinking, horrified husband.

Critical Thinking
Interpret
• Direct students’ attention to lines 119–120.

• Ask students if they think Lady Macbeth has actually fainted, or if she is merely pretending to faint to
  deflect suspicion.

   Possible responses: A case can be made for either position. However, most students will probably
   think that Lady Macbeth has shown herself to be a treacherous, plotting villain, and her actions are
   as false as Macbeth’s protests of love and loyalty.
That had a heart to love, and in that heart
Courage to make’s love known?

LADY MACBETH. Help me hence, ho!

MACDUFF. Look to the lady.

MALCOLM. [Aside to DONALBAIN] Why do we hold our tongues. That most may claim this argument for ours?31

DONALBAIN. [Aside to MALCOLM] What should be spoken here. Where our fate, hid in an auger-hole,32 May rush, and seize us? Let’s away: Our tears are not yet brewed.

MALCOLM. [Aside to DONALBAIN] Nor our strong sorrow Upon the foot of motion.33

BANQUO. Look to the lady.

[LADY MACBETH is carried out.]

And when we have our naked frailties hid,34 That suffer in exposure, let us meet And question this most bloody piece of work. To know it further. Fears and scruples36 shake us. In the great hand of God I stand, and thence Against the undivulged pretense37 I fight Of treasonous malice.

MACDUFF. And so do I. 

ALL. So all.

MACBETH. Let’s briefly38 put on manly readiness, And meet i’ th’ hall together.

ALL. Well contented.

[Exit all but MALCOLM and DONALBAIN.]

MALCOLM. What will you do? Let’s not consort with them. To show an unfelt sorrow is an office39 Which the false man does easy. I’ll to England.

DONALBAIN. To Ireland, I: our separated fortune Shall keep us both the safer. Where we are There’s daggers in men’s smiles; the near in blood, The nearer bloody.40

MALCOLM. This murderous shaft that’s shot Hath not yet lighted,41 and our safest way Is to avoid the aim. Therefore to horse; But shift away. There’s warrant42 in that theft Which steals itself43 when there’s no mercy left.

[Exit.]
Scene iv. Outside Macbeth’s castle.

[Enter ROSS with an OLD MAN.]

OLD MAN. Threescore and ten I can remember well: Within the volume of which time I have seen Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore\(^1\) night Hath trilled former knowlings.

ROSS. Ha, good father,

Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man’s act.
Threatens his bloody stage. By th’ clock ’tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp.\(^2\)
Is ’t night’s predominance, or the day’s shame,
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,
When living light should kiss it?

OLD MAN. ’Tis unnatural,

Even like the deed that’s done. On Tuesday last
A falcon, tow’ring in her pride of place,\(^3\)
Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.

ROSS. And Duncan’s horses—a thing most strange and certain—

Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending ’gainst obedience, as they would make War with mankind.

OLD MAN. ’Tis said they eat\(^4\) each other.

ROSS. They did so, to th’ amazement of mine eyes,
That looked upon ’t.

[Enter MACDUFF.]

Here comes the good Macduff.
How goes the world, sir, now?

MACDUFF. Why, see you not?

ROSS. Is ’t known who did this more than bloody deed?

MACDUFF. Those that Macbeth hath slain.

ROSS. What good could they pretend?\(^5\)

MACDUFF. They were suborned:\(^6\)

Malcolm and Donalbain, the king’s two sons,
Are stol’n away and fled, which puts upon them Suspicion of the deed.

ROSS. ’Gainst nature still.
Thriftless ambition, that will ravin up\(^7\)
Thine own life’s means! Then ’tis most like

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Critical Reading

1. **Respond:** Whom do you blame more for the murder of King Duncan—Macbeth or Lady Macbeth? Explain.

2. 
   (a) **Recall:** Describe Macbeth’s and Lady Macbeth’s reactions to the murder just after it is committed.  
   (b) **Compare and Contrast:** Compare and contrast their reactions to the deed.

3. 
   (a) **Recall:** What kind of gate does the porter imagine he is tending?  
   (b) **Interpret:** In what way is the porter’s playful fantasy a comment on Macbeth’s situation?

4. 
   (a) **Recall:** What two strange occurrences are reported in this act?  
   (b) **Interpret:** Why would Shakespeare include reports of such occurrences at this point in the play?  
   (c) **Connect:** In what way do these strange occurrences relate to the Elizabethan notion of an orderly and interconnected universe?

5. 
   (a) **Analyze:** What question does Ross ask that indicates he doubts that the grooms committed the murder? Explain.  
   (b) **Infer:** Is Ross satisfied by the answer? Explain.

6. **Speculate:** Do you think a political assassination like the one Macbeth commits is ever justifiable? Why or why not?

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8. **Scone** (skōn) where Scottish kings were crowned.

9. **Fife** where Macduff’s castle is located.

10. **Benison** blessing.

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For additional information about William Shakespeare, have students type in the Web Code, then select S from the alphabet, and then select the author’s name.