About the Selection
In Act IV, Macbeth’s decline is in full swing. He sees apparitions, who make seemingly contradictory predictions, and Macbeth, grown desperate to secure his throne, interprets the apparitions’ words in the most favorable way. Forces begin to gather against Macbeth, and his situation becomes desperate.

Literary Analysis
Archetypes
• Point out to students that, though images of witches vary from culture to culture, casting spells is something all witches have in common.
• Tell students that it is often difficult to draw the line between how the culture affected Shakespeare’s images and how Shakespeare shaped the culture’s images. This scene, for example, is so familiar that even people who have never read Shakespeare know the famous chant of “Double, double, toil and trouble.” In this case, Shakespeare has contributed to the culture’s image of witches.
• Ask students if any of them have heard part or all of this scene before. How many of these images are still familiar archetypes for witchcraft?
Answer: Some students will have heard at least part of the speech, but most will be familiar with the image of witches gathered around a cauldron, throwing in nasty items to create their magic brew.

Critical Viewing
What is the significance of a burning cauldron—like this one—to the play?

1. brinded striped.
2. hedge-pig hedgehog.
3. Harpier one of the spirits attending the witches.
4. Swelt’red ... got venom sweated out while sleeping.
5. fork forked tongue.
6. blindworm’s small, limbless lizard’s.
7. howlet’s small owl’s.
8. maw and gulf stomach and gullet.
9. ravined ravenous.

What are the witches doing as the act begins?

Reading Check
Answer: As the act begins, the witches are making a witches’ brew.
Poster for Macbeth, by Edmund Dulac

Edmund Dulac (1882–1953) was born in France and settled in England in 1904. He is most widely known as a book illustrator of fairy tales and legends, but he also was a caricaturist and a portrait painter. He did a lot of work for the British stage, such as this poster for Macbeth. In 1953, he was commissioned to produce a stamp commemorating the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

Use these questions for discussion:

1. Why is it ironic that Macbeth should be standing above the witches with his arms crossed?
   **Answer:** Despite the fact that Macbeth is commanding the three witches, he is actually at their mercy.

2. How does this depiction of the witches compare to the one on p. 308?
   **Possible responses:** Students may say that the picture on p. 308 shows three old women who look strange and gnarled, but the picture on this page depicts the witches as more obviously demonic or evil, and even shows one witch as being fairly young.

**Critical Viewing**

**Possible responses:** Students may say that the gloomy colors and the ragged appearance of the witches do seem appropriate. They also might say the artist has successfully depicted the witches’ brew as a powerful, supernatural force that is capable of bringing forth the apparitions.

**Critical Viewing** Has this artist captured the spirit of the witches as it is portrayed in IV, i? Explain. [Evaluate]

**Shakespeare, The Entertainer**

Many students approach Shakespeare as “Literature” and cannot get beyond the difficult language. Remind students that Shakespeare’s first and foremost purpose in writing plays was not to create great literature, but to entertain his audience.

Encourage students to think about a scary movie they have seen. Point out that, even though the movie may have depicted something really horrible, they enjoyed that experience at some level. Point out that this first scene in Act IV had the same effect on Shakespeare’s audiences, many of whom believed in witches and the occult—and still delights audiences today, who appreciate the archetypal images of evil and ambition.

The first 47 lines show the witches chanting as they cast their evil spell. The witches are evil, and their intent is to deceive Macbeth and pull him into further evil. Tell students to keep in mind the horror-movie aspects of Macbeth as they read lines 1–47.
Reading Strategy

Using Your Senses

How do you picture the strange world described in Scene i?

Possible response: Everything is disgusting, but the body parts are the worst. The brew looks kind of green and glowing with brown lumps. The smell is like wet dog and burning hair.

8 Literary Analysis

Imagery

In Macbeth’s speech, note the use of the word conjure. It can mean “earnestly ask,” but Shakespeare likely chose it because of the strong and more common connection to magic spells.

Ask students which images in lines 50–61 parallel things the witches have related in their several appearances.

Possible response: The witches have, particularly in Act I, described themselves as controlling the winds and sinking ships (“swallowing navigation”). Mayhem is implied in all they say. The comments about toppling castles may refer to the overthrow of governments, of which Macbeth is a participant.

9 Reading Check

Answer: Macbeth demands that the witches answer whatever he asks.
Literary Analysis

Imagery

- Review with students the patterns of imagery in *Macbeth* that are listed on p. 360. Tell students that this list doesn’t include all the images in the play, so they can look for others.

- Explain that an “armed head” would be a head wearing a war helmet. “Armed” refers to armor.

- Ask students the Literary Analysis question: How do the apparitions that Macbeth sees in Scene I, lines 68, 75, and 86 connect with the patterns of imagery in the play?

Possible response: The first apparition connects with the images of war, which open the play and seem to be how the play will end. The second combines the images of blood—which symbolizes revenge, murder, or guilt—and a child, which represents the future. The third apparition has a child but adds a crown, another recurring image, especially in Macbeth’s dreams of being king.

- Ask students if, after reading the prophecy of the third apparition, they know why the child holds a tree.

Answer: It probably relates to the prophecy about Birnam Wood.

- Remind students that an important theme in Macbeth has been things not always being what they seem. In light of this, ask students what they predict about the prophecies.

Answer: At least some of the prophecies are not as positive as Macbeth believes they are. He is not completely safe.

Critical Thinking

Analyze

- Direct out what the apparition might speak Macbeth’s name three times. Macbeth replies with a comment about three ears. Ask students to recall other occurrences of the number three or things occurring in threes.

Possible response: There are three witches. In Act I, they hail Macbeth three times. Macbeth heard three prophecies during his first encounter with the witches; during this encounter, he meets their “masters,” three apparitions, who will deliver three more prophecies.

### Enrichment

The Weird Sisters

Scholars have long debated whether Macbeth’s tragedy results from the inexorable pressures of fate or from his own free choice of evil. This debate tends to focus on the role of the witches. The great Shakespearean scholar George Lyman Kittredge argued that these weird sisters were not just run-of-the-mill crones, but arbiters of human destiny. He identified them with the Norns, Scandinavian goddesses of fate, who shaped men’s lives, setting the course at birth.

Irving Ribner, among other scholars, argued against this position. He felt that Shakespeare was writing from a Christian rather than a pagan perspective. While Christians acknowledge the reality of evil, they believe that God gave humans the power to choose evil or good. Though he is presented with temptation to do wrong, Macbeth chooses his own course. An argument for Macbeth’s free will is that Banquo, subject to the same temptation, remains virtuous.
90 **THIRD APPARITION.** Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:
Macbeth shall never vanquished be until
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill
Shall come against him. [Descends.]

**MACBETH.** That will never be.

95 Who can impress\(^{27}\) the forest, bid the tree
Unfix his earth-bound root? Sweet bodements,\(^{28}\) good!
Rebellious dead, rise never, till the Wood
Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth
Shall live the lease of nature,\(^{29}\) pay his breath
To time and mortal custom.\(^{30}\) Yet my heart
Throbs to know one thing. Tell me, if your art
Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever
Reign in this kingdom?

**ALL.** Seek to know no more.

**MACBETH.** I will be satisfied. Deny me this,
And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know.
Why sinks that caldron? And what noise is this?

[Hautboys.]

**FIRST WITCH.** Show!

**SECOND WITCH.** Show!

**THIRD WITCH.** Show!

100 **ALL.** Show his eyes, and grieve his heart:
Come like shadows, so depart!

[A show of eight kings and Banquo, last king with a glass\(^{31}\) in his hand.]

**MACBETH.** Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo. Down!
Thy crown does sear mine eyelids. And thy hair,
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.
A third is like the former. Filthy hags!
Why do you show me this? A fourth! Start, eyes!
What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?
Another yet! A seventh! I'll see no more.
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass
Which shows me many more: and some I see
That twofold balls and treble scepters\(^{32}\) carry:
Horrible sight! Now I see 'tis true:
For the blood-boltered\(^{33}\) Banquo smiles upon me,
And points at them for his.\(^{34}\) What, is this so?

105 **FIRST WITCH.** Ay, sir, all this is so. But why
Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?
Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,
And show the best of our delights:

27. impress force into service.
28. bodements prophecies.
29. lease of nature natural lifespan.
30. mortal custom natural death.
31. glass mirror.
32. twofold . . . scepters coronation emblems and insignia of the kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, united in 1603 when James VI of Scotland became James I of England.
33. blood-boltered with his hair matted with blood.
34. his his descendants.

13 Critical Thinking

**Draw Conclusions**

- **Ask** students what, in lines 100–103, is still bothering Macbeth.
  **Answer:** That Banquo’s descendants might be kings worries Macbeth.

- **Ask** students why they think the witches don’t want to give him this information.
  **Possible responses:** Perhaps they want to leave Macbeth feeling happy and overconfident. This motive seems to be confirmed by line 110. Perhaps they think it will change Macbeth’s plans.

- **Point out to students that the Hautboys mentioned after line 106 are wooden, pipe-like wind instruments, used here to signal the appearance of the kings.

14 Literary Analysis

**Imagery**

- **Reteach:** Remind students that, in addition to recreating sensory experiences, imagery is also used to relate information and stir the emotions.
- **Ask** students the Literary Analysis question: What does Macbeth learn from the images of the eight kings?
  **Answer:** He learns that Banquo’s descendants will reign. He also sees that the last one has a mirror (glass) which shows that there will be more than eight kings. He sees images (balls and scepters) that let him know that more than one country will be ruled by these kings (as explained in the margin note).

- **Point out to students that, though Macbeth threatened the witches so that he could find out about Banquo, he now asks in line 116 why they showed him this. Ask students to explain the change.
  **Possible response:** When he asked, he had received nothing but good (or so he believes) prophecies. Now, he feels he has been betrayed, because he has received bad news.

14 Reading Check

**Answer:** They tell Macbeth to beware Macduff, that no one born of woman will harm him, that he will not be conquered until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill. Macbeth sees a line of eight kings and Banquo.
I’ll charm the air to give a sound,
While you perform your antic round,
That this great king may kindly say
Our duties did his welcome pay.

[Music. THE WITCHES dance, and vanish.]

MACBETH. Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour
Stand aye accursed in the calendar!
Come in, without there!

[Enter LENNOX.]

LENNOX. What’s your Grace’s will?

MACBETH. Saw you the weird sisters?

LENNOX. No, my lord.

MACBETH. Came they not by you?

LENNOX. No indeed, my lord.

MACBETH. Infected be the air whereon they ride,
And damned all those that trust them! I did hear
The galloping of horse. Who was ’t came by?

LENNOX. ’Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word
Macduff is fled to England.

MACBETH. Fled to England?

LENNOX. Ay, my good lord.

MACBETH. [Aside] Time, thou anticipat’st my dread exploits.
The flighty purpose never is o’ertook
Unless the deed go with it.
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts be it thought and done:
The castle of Macduff I will surprise;
Seize upon Fife; give to th’ edge o’ th’ sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;
This deed I’ll do before this purpose cool:
But no more sights!—Where are these gentlemen?
Come, bring me where they are.

[Exit.]

Scene ii. Macduff’s castle.

[Enter MACDUFF’s WIFE, her SON, and ROSS.]

LADY MACDUFF. What had he done, to make him fly the land?

ROSS. You must have patience, madam.

366 Celebrating Humanity (1485–1625)

Enrichment

Castles

When Macbeth lived, the idea of Scotland as a country was new. In fact, the idea of England as a united country was fairly new. These countries had long been made up of clans, tribes, and ethnic groups who were frequently at war, either with outside invaders (fairly common) or with each other (even more common). Hence, the head of any group, whether a chieftain, thane, or king, usually lived in a castle.

Castles were designed for defense. They were built in places that gave them a clear view of approaching enemies or that protected them from that approach, such as on cliffs or islands. They would have heavy doors, thick walls, and lots of places from which weapons could be shot, thrown, or dropped.

While only the ruler had a castle as a primary residence, all castles were designed so that everyone from the surrounding villages and farms (along with their animals) could be safe within the castle during times of attack.
LADY MACDUFF. He had none:
His flight was madness. When our actions do not,
Our fears do make us traitors.
ROSS. You know not
5 Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

LADY MACDUFF. Wisdom! To leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion and his titles, in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;
He wants the natural touch: for the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is the fear and nothing is the love:
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason.

ROSS. My dearest coz,3
15 I pray you, school4 yourself. But, for your husband,
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
The fits o’ th’ seasons,5 I dare not speak much further:
But cruel are the times, when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves;6 when we hold rumor
From what we fear,7 yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea
Each way and move. I take my leave of you.
Shall not be long but I’ll be here again.
Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
To what they were before. My pretty cousin,
Blessing upon you!

LADY MACDUFF. Fathered he is, and yet he’s fatherless.
ROSS. I am so much a fool, should I stay longer,
It would be my disgrace and your discomfort.8
I take my leave at once. [Exit ROSS.]

LADY MACDUFF. Sirrah, your father’s dead;
And what will you do now? How will you live?

SON. As birds do, mother.

LADY MACDUFF. What, with worms and flies?
SON. With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

LADY MACDUFF. Poor bird! thou’st never fear the net nor lime,9
The pitfall nor the gin.10
SON. Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.
My father is not dead, for all your saying.

LADY MACDUFF. Yes, he is dead: how wilt thou do for a father?
SON. Nay, how will you do for a husband?

Literary Analysis
Imagery What image is suggested by Lady Macduff’s use of the words “fly” and “flight” in lines 8 and 13?
1. titles possessions.
2. wants . . . touch lacks natural affection.
3. coz cousin.
4. school control.

Vocabulary Builder
judicious (jü dis’ əd) adj, showing good judgment
fits o’ th’ season disorders of the time.
when . . . ourselves when we are treated as traitors but do not know of any treason.
when . . . fear believe rumors based on our fears.

8. It . . . discomfort: I would disgrace myself and embarrass you by weeping.

Literary Analysis
Imagery What does the imagery in Scene ii, 34–35 suggest about what might happen?
9. lime birdlime, a sticky substance smeared on branches to catch birds.
10. gin trap.

Where has Macduff gone, and how will Macbeth revenge himself against Macduff?

Macbeth, Act IV, Scene ii ■ 367

Strategy for Special Needs Students
Shakespeare’s reliance on imagery to get ideas across may confuse some students. Show illustrations of as many images as possible, for example, from a heavily illustrated version of Macbeth or, in the case of the wren and owl, from a bird book. Have students read along while listening to this scene on Listening to Literature Audio CDs, stopping frequently to discuss what is happening and what the images are telling the audience/reader.

Support for English Learners
Illustrations may help students better understand the images. Drawings or photos of birds (wren and owl), crowns, an “armed head” (helmets), or more detailed illustrations in another version of Macbeth may help clarify meanings. Discuss and define any words that are not familiar that are not listed in the side notes. Then, listen to this scene on Listening to Literature Audio CDs. This will help students hear both the pronunciation and the rhythm of the language.

16 Literary Analysis
Imagery
• Tell students to look out for repeated words, ideas, and images throughout this scene. For example, the words traitor and fears appear frequently, as do fly and flight.
• Ask the first Literary Analysis question: What image is suggested by Lady Macduff’s use of the words “fly” and “flight”? Answer: The words “fly” and “flight” suggest images of birds and support the extended metaphor of birds used by both Lady Macduff and her son.
• Further discuss the bird imagery used by Lady Macduff in lines 6–14. Ask students how the imagery shows both her nobility and her helplessness.
  Answer: She compares herself to the wren, which she identifies as the smallest of birds. This smallness makes her seem vulnerable. However, she also points out that her love would, like the wren, cause her to fight the owl, a bird of prey, to protect her children.
• Point out the wordplay in lines 13–14. Shakespeare writes that flight runs. Remind students to keep an eye out for the ways in which Shakespeare plays with the language.
• You may also want to point out to students that, in the speech that follows, Ross reiterates the ideas of fear of traitors. He also, in contrast to Macbeth, shows that he does not have any idea what the future holds.

17 Literary Analysis
Imagery
• Read aloud lines 34–35.
• Then, have students use the text aids to define lime and gin.
• Ask students the second Literary Analysis question: What does the imagery in Scene ii, lines 34–35 suggest about what might happen? Answer: These images suggest that Lady Macduff and her son will be trapped by the murderers.

18 Reading Check
Answer: Macduff has fled to England, and Macbeth will revenge himself against Macduff by killing his wife and children.
Critical Thinking

Analyze

- Have students read the first bracketed passage.
- Explain to students that unlikely characters are often clever in Shakespeare’s plays.
- Then, ask students why it is significant that Macduff’s son makes this observation about liars and swearers, when just eight lines earlier he has to ask what a traitor is.

Possible response: Shakespeare seems to be juxtaposing childlike innocence with a more mature, unadulterated truth. Shakespeare may be implying that children are wiser than the adults around them.

Reading Strategy

Using Your Senses

Retell: Remind students that imagery can appeal to any of the five senses. Point out, too, that because this is a play and is intended to be visual, there are also often hints about what the people look like or how they behave.

- Ask students how they think the messenger appears, and what the delivery of his lines would be like.

Possible response: He would probably have been in a hurry, and his lines would probably be delivered in a rushed, somewhat breathless manner.

Monitor Progress: Ask students the Reading Strategy question: What do the content of the messenger’s speech and the context suggest about his dress, appearance, and manner?

Answer: He is probably in a hurry, so he may be abrupt. The fact that he observes that he has frightened Lady Macduff (line 68) confirms that he has probably rushed in and just blurted out his warning. He may also be a little disheveled, because of his rush. He says he is “homely,” which means simple, not part of the nobility. Hence, he is probably dressed in the clothing of a worker or farmer.

- You may wish to point out that, because the messenger speaks in blank verse, we know that, even if he is simple, he is not a servant or someone who can be ignored.

40 LADY MACDUFF. Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

SON. Then you’ll buy ’em to sell again.

LADY MACDUFF. Thou speak’st with all thy wit, and yet i’ faith, With wit enough for thee.  

SON. Was my father a traitor, mother?

45 LADY MACDUFF. Ay, that he was.

SON. What is a traitor?

LADY MACDUFF. Why, one that swears and lies.  

SON. And be all traitors that do so?

LADY MACDUFF. Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be hanged.

50 SON. And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

LADY MACDUFF. Every one.

SON. Who must hang them?

LADY MACDUFF. Why, the honest men.

SON. Then the liars and swearers are fools; for there are liars and swearers enow to beat the honest men and hang up them.

55 LADY MACDUFF. Now, God help thee, poor monkey! But how wilt thou do for a father?

SON. If he were dead, you’d weep for him. If you would not, it were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father.

LADY MACDUFF. Poor Prattler, how thou talk’st!

[Enter a Messenger.]

MESSENGER. Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known, Though in your state of honor I am perfect.  

I doubt some danger does approach you nearly: If you will take a homely man’s advice, Be not found here; hence, with your little ones. To fright you thus, methinks I am too savage; To do worse to you were fell cruelty. Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you! I dare abide no longer. [Exit Messenger.]

LADY MACDUFF. Whither should I fly? I have done no harm. But I remember now I am in this earthly world, where to do harm is often laudable, to do good sometim

70 Accounted dangerous folly. Why then, alas, Do I put up that womanly defense, To say I have done no harm?—What are these faces?

The Rules of Hospitality

When Macbeth murdered Duncan, he broke two tenets of his society: he killed his king, and at the same time, he killed a guest under his roof.

According to the rules of hospitality in most cultures, guests are to be treated with a deliberate respect and kindness. Though there were sometimes different ideas about who received hospitality, once visitors were your guests, they were to be protected.

In ancient Greek culture, Zeus was the god of hospitality. People treated all guests well, lavishing attention and gifts on them, lest they discover that the poor traveler they had treated badly was actually Zeus in disguise, testing them. Hospitality was also an important part of Middle Eastern culture, and is reflected in ancient Jewish and Christian literature; the Bible commands that its followers show hospitality.

Even today, in many areas of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, any traveler, whether an acquaintance or a complete stranger, can expect to receive a warm welcome. “My house is your house” is taken literally in many cultures.
**Wood Engraving After Sir John Gilbert.**

This wood engraving was made from a drawing by Sir John Gilbert. He created this drawing of Lady Macduff and the murderers for Mackey’s *Shakespeare*, an illustrated book in a series that won Gilbert great acclaim as an illustrator. The ease with which the figures are drawn highlights the superior sketching ability that Gilbert achieved through continual practice. This drawing is balanced in terms of motion and the placement of the characters, yet it contains a deadly tension.

Use these questions for discussion:

1. Judging from this engraving, how did Sir John Gilbert envision the murderers in Act IV, scene ii of *Macbeth*?
   
   **Answer:** Gilbert imagined the murderers as large, brutish men against whom Macduff’s family would not have a chance.

2. Does Lady Macduff’s protective action seem appropriate given her earlier description of herself as a “wren”?
   
   **Answer:** Lady Macduff’s protective stance and fierce expression are appropriate. When she described the wren, she described it as small, but willing to fight an attacking predator to protect her children.

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**Reading Check**

**Answer:** Macbeth’s men kill Macduff’s son and, though not on stage, Macduff’s wife and other children.

**Critical Viewing**

**Answer:** As the murderers approach, Lady Macduff’s son appears defiant and protective. It matches well with his defiant words, calling the murderers liars and villains.

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**Enrichment for Gifted/Talented Students**

Encourage students to think of music that might accompany the action in different parts of Act IV. Students may pick specific scenes only or do the entire act. You may even wish to allow them to do scenes in other acts. Have students bring the music to class to share (specify format, if necessary). Tell them to be prepared to explain why they feel the music highlights or underscores the actions or emotions of the scene for which they selected it.

**Enrichment for Advanced Readers**

After students read Act IV, scene ii, ask them to compare the characters of Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff. Students should reread Act I, scene v, and Act I, scene vii to revisit Lady Macbeth’s character. Encourage them to consider both women’s ideas of motherhood, womanliness, and doing harm. Students may prepare their observations as essays or as oral reports.
Scene iii. England. Before the King’s palace.

[Enter MALCOLM and MACDUFF.]

MALCOLM. Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty.

MACDUFF. Let us rather
Hold fast the mortal sword, and like good men
Brestide our down-fall’n birthdom. Each new morn
New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland and yelled out
Like syllable of dolor.1

MALCOLM. What I believe, I’ll wail;
What know, believe; and what I can redress,
As I shall find the time to friend,2
I will.

What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.
This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
Was once thought honest: you have loved him well;
He hath not touched you yet. I am young; but something
You may deserve of him through me;3 and wisdom4
To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb
T’ appease an angry god.

MACDUFF. I am not treacherous.

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Vocabulary Connection

Shifting Meanings

Language changes over time. However, old and new definitions are usually related. For example, both definitions of mortal include the idea of death—and anyone who knows the phrases “mortal combat” and “mortal enemy” is familiar with Shakespeare’s use of mortal to mean “deadly.”

Connect to Literature Discuss with students the meanings they know for the word recoil. Mention the action of springs if students do not do so. Then, ask the Connect to the Literature question.

Answer: The usual meaning of recoil is “to shrink back;” in line 19, it means “to give way.”

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Literary Analysis

Imagery

Ask students the Literary Analysis question: How do the images in Scene iii, lines 1–4 help establish a contrast between Malcolm and Macduff?

Answer: Malcolm is showing a sentimental, emotional side; Macduff is displaying no weakness and remains warrior-like.

Ask students to what they might attribute the differences between the two men.

Possible response: Malcolm is young. He has just seen his father murdered and his kingdom lost, so he is already in an emotional state. Macduff is an experienced soldier.

Critical Thinking

Analyze

Ask students how Malcolm’s comment in line 14 is ironic.

Answer: Malcolm states Macduff has not yet suffered personal loss at the hands of Macbeth. Neither of them knows that Macduff’s entire family has just been murdered at Macbeth’s order.

Though he is young, Malcolm is not a fool. Ask students what Malcolm is saying in lines 15–24.

Answer: Malcolm is saying that Macduff would have much to gain by turning him over to Macbeth. Even if Macduff is virtuous, he might do it because it was commanded by the king. Also, even angels have fallen.

Literature in Context

Shifting Meanings

Language changes over time. However, old and new definitions are usually related. For example, both definitions of mortal include the idea of death—and anyone who knows the phrases “mortal combat” and “mortal enemy” is familiar with Shakespeare’s use of mortal to mean “deadly.”

Connect to Literature Discuss with students the meanings they know for the word recoil. Mention the action of springs if students do not do so. Then, ask the Connect to the Literature question.

Answer: The usual meaning of recoil is “to shrink back;” in line 19, it means “to give way.”
MALCOLM. But Macbeth is.
A good and virtuous nature may recoil
In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon:
That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose:
Angels are bright still, though the brightness fell:
Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace.
Yet grace must still look so.

MACDUFF. I have lost my hopes.

MALCOLM. Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.
Why in that rawness left you wife and child.
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love.
Without leave-taking? I pray you,
Let not my jealousies be your dishonors.
But mine own safeties. You may be rightly just
Whatever I shall think.

MACDUFF. Bleed, bleed, poor country:
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure.
For goodness dare not check thee: wear thou thy wrongs:
The title is affeered. Fare thee well, lord;
I would not be the villain that thou think'st
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp
And the rich East to boot.

MALCOLM. Be not offended:
I speak not as in absolute fear of you.
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds. I think withal
There would be hands uplifted in my right;
And here from gracious England have I offer
Of goodly thousands: but, for all this,
When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country
Shall have more vices than it had before,
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,
By him that shall succeed.

MACDUFF. What should he be?

MALCOLM. It is myself I mean, in whom I know
All the particulars of vice so grafted
That, when they shall be opened, black Macbeth
Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state
Esteem him as a lamb, being compared
With my confineless harms.

MACDUFF. Not in the legions
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damned
In evils to top Macbeth.

27 Literary Analysis Imagery

• Ask students to list some of the images Malcolm uses to describe Scotland.
• Students may not be familiar with the image of a yoke. Explain that, while some yokes were used to connect working animals to plows or wagons, the yoke referred to here was a wooden frame that a person would put across his or her shoulders to help with carrying a heavy load, with half of the load on each side of the yoke.

• Then, ask the Literary Analysis question on p. 365: Why are the images Malcolm uses to describe Scotland in lines 39–41 more effective than a simple statement that the country is in trouble and getting worse?

Answer: The imagery used helps the reader or audience “feel” the badness of what is happening to Scotland by creating sensory images of a crushing burden (sinks beneath the yoke), sorrow (it weeps), and terrible pain (bleeding wounds).

Monitor Progress: Have students consider in what way this imagery connects to some of the repeated images in Macbeth.

Answer: The image of Scotland wounded and bloody is consistent with the repeated images of bloodshed in the play.

28 Reading Check

Answer: Malcolm describes himself as having so many vices that Macbeth will seem “pure as snow.”
Critical Thinking

Analyze

- Point out that, as the dialogue between Malcolm and Macduff progresses, Malcolms stops talking about his worries and his safety and begins talking about how awful he is.
- Ask students if the things Malcolm is saying about himself sound believable.

Possible response: Students may respond that they do not sound reasonable. First, if he were that bad, he wouldn’t tell anyone; he’d be secretive, like Macbeth. Second, it is unlikely that he could be that bad and not have anyone at all notice before now.

- Ask students if they can imagine a reason Malcolm would talk this way about himself.

Possible responses: Perhaps he is still worried about Macduff and is trying to drive him away. Perhaps he is testing Macduff.

- Have students consider Macduff’s response in lines 84–90. How does he feel about Malcolm’s claim of avarice? How does he reply to Malcolm’s confession?

Answer: Macduff considers avarice to be worse than the previously confessed lust. However, Macduff says that Scotland can afford to satisfy Malcolm’s greed.

Literary Analysis

Imagery

- Discuss with students what Malcolm is saying he will do in line 98.

Answer: He says that he will destroy the harmony (concord) of life in Scotland.

- Ask students the Literary Analysis question: How does the image in Act IV, Scene iii, line 98 echo those in Act I, Scene v, lines 17 and 47–48?

Answer: In all three passages, milk represents something good—kindness, concord—and it is shown as the thing that stands between good acts and evil. Hence, Lady Macbeth says Macbeth has too much “milk of human kindness” to kill, she asks to have her milk exchanged for the bitterness of gall, and Malcolm threatens to pour this same milk into hell, implying that nothing will stop him then from evil.

Vocabulary Builder

- With this there grows
In my most ill-composed affection21 such
A stanchless22 avarice that, were I King,
I should cut off the nobles for their lands.
Desire his jewels and this other’s house:
And my more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more, that I should forge
Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,
Destroying them for wealth.

MACDUFF. This avarice
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root
Than summer-seeming23 lust, and it hath been
The sword of24 our slain kings. Yet do not fear.
Scotland hath foisons25 to fill up your will
Of your mere own.26 All these are portable,27
With other graces weighed.

MACDUFF. Boundless intemperance
In nature19 is a tyranny: it hath been
Th’ untimely emptying of the happy throne.
And fall of many kings. But fear not yet
To take upon you what is yours: you may
Convey20 your pleasures in a spacious plenty.
And yet seem cold, the time you may so hoodwink.
We have willing dames enough. There cannot be
That vulture in you, to devour so many
As will to greatness dedicate themselves,
Finding it so inclined.

MACDUFF. I grant him bloody,
Luxurious,16 avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden,17 malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name: but there’s no bottom, none.
In my voluptuousness: your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons and your maids, could not fill up
The cistern of my lust, and my desire
All continent impediments18 would o’erbear,
That did oppose my will. Better Macbeth
Than such an one to reign.

372 Celebrating Humanity (1485–1625)

The Number Three

Three appears often in Macbeth. Three is significant in an astonishing range of connections. The more one looks, the more “threes” one sees. In art, there are three primary colors, from which all others are created. In math, three is the fewest number of points needed to create a closed figure (a triangle). For this reason, three has come to symbolize that which is real, solid, and complete.

Celtic art and literature (and the Scots were largely Celts) was preoccupied with the number three. One often sees objects repeated three times or with three faces.

The Greeks used the number three a lot. The infernal goddess Hecate is always shown as one of three. There were three fates, three graces, and three furies.

In the Bible, three is important, from the Holy Trinity to the three denials of Peter. Blessings, questions, and judgments are often repeated three times. It is often a symbol of things being completed, either in judgment or in redemption.
All unity on earth.

MACDUFF. O Scotland, Scotland!

MALCOLM. If such a one be fit to govern, speak: I am as I have spoken.

MACDUFF. Fit to govern!

No, not to live. O nation miserable!

With an untitled[30] tyrant bloody-sceptered,

When shall thou see thy wholesome days again,

Since that the truest issue of thy throne[31]

By his own interdiction[32] stands accursed,

And does blaspheme his breed?[33] Thy royal father

Was a most sainted king: the queen that bore thee.

Oft’ner upon her knees than on her feet,

Died[34] every day she lived. Fare thee well!

These evils thou repeat’st upon thyself

Hath banished me from Scotland. O my breast,

Thy hope ends here!

MALCOLM. Macduff, this noble passion,

Child of integrity, hath from my soul

Wiped the black sculpures, reconciled my thoughts

To thy good truth and honor. Devilish Macbeth

By many of these trains[35] hath sought to win me

Into his power; and modest wisdom[36] plucks me

From over-credulous haste: but God above

Deal between thee and me! For even now

I put myself to thy direction, and

Unspeak mine own detraction,[37] here abjure

The taints and blames I laid upon myself.

For[38] strangers to my nature. I am yet

Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,

Scarcely have coveted what was mine own.

At no time broke my faith, would not betray

The devil to his fellow, and delight

No less in truth than life. My first false speaking

Was this upon myself. What I am truly,

Is thine and my poor country’s to command:

Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,

Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,

Already at a point,[39] was setting forth.

Now we’ll together, and the chance of goodness

Be like our warranted quarrel[40]! Why are you silent?

MACDUFF. Such welcome and unwelcome things at once

Tis hard to reconcile.

[Enter a DOCTOR.]

MALCOLM. Well, more anon. Comes the King forth, I pray you?

Literary Analysis

Imagery

How does the image in Act IV, Scene iii, line 98 echo those in Act I, Scene v, line 17 and Act I, Scene v, lines 47–48?

30. untitled having no right to the throne.

31. truest . . . throne child of the true king.

32. interdiction exclusion.

33. blaspheme his breed slander his ancestry.

34. Died prepared for heaven.

35. trains enticements.

36. modest wisdom prudence.

Vocabulary Builder

credulous (kre′l də los) adj. tending to believe too readily

detration slander.

For as.

38. at a point prepared.

39. the chance . . . quarrel

May our chance of success equal the justice of our cause.

40. the chance . . . quarrel

Vocabulary Builder

The Latin Word Root -cred-

• Call students’ attention to the word credulous and its definition. Tell students that the Latin word root -cred- means “belief.”

• Have students suggest words and phrases that contain this root, and list them on the chalkboard. Feel free to add to students’ suggestions.

Possible responses: incredible, incredulous, credibility, incredulity, credence, credential, credit, creed, credo

• Next, have students look up these words in a dictionary.

Reading Check

What response by Macduff convinces Malcolm that Macduff is being honest?

Answer: Macduff laments that Malcolm is not fit to govern or to live, that he cannot compare to his father Duncan, and he banishes himself from Scotland because he despair of its ever righting itself with Malcolm in power. This response convinces Malcolm that Macduff is being honest.

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DOCTOR. Ay, sir. There are a crew of wretched souls
That stay\(^{41}\) his cure: their malady convinces
The great assay of art:\(^{52}\) but at his touch,
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,
They presently amend.\(^{43}\)

145 MALCOLM. I thank you, doctor. \[Exit doctor.\]

MACDUFF. What’s the disease he means?

MALCOLM. \(^{150}\) “Tis called the evil:\(^{44}\)
A most miraculous work in this good King,
Which often since my here-remain in England
I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,
Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people,
All swell’n and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere\(^{45}\) despair of surgery, he cures,
Hanging a golden stamp\(^{46}\) about their necks,
Put on with holy prayers: and ’tis spoken,
To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne
That speak him full of grace.

[Enter ross.]

MACDUFF. See, who comes here?

160 MALCOLM. My countryman; but yet I know him not.

MACDUFF. My ever gentle\(^{47}\) cousin, welcome hither.

MALCOLM. I know him now: good God, betimes\(^{48}\) remove
The means that makes us strangers!

ROSS. Sir, amen.

MACDUFF. Stands Scotland where it did?

ROSS. Almost afraid to know itself! It cannot
Be called our mother but our grave, where nothing\(^{49}\)
But who knows nothing is once seen to smile;
Where sighs and groans, and shrieks that rent the air,
Are made, not marked, where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy.\(^{50}\) The dead man’s knell
Is there scarce asked for who,\(^{51}\) and good men’s lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.

MACDUFF. O, relation
Too nice,\(^{52}\) and yet too true!

374 Celebrating Humanity (1485–1625)

Enrichment

Facts versus Entertainment

Macbeth was probably performed for King James I during the summer of 1606. Scholars believe that Shakespeare wanted to flatter the king, so he made the characters of Banquo and Fleance more noble than they appeared in Holinshed’s account. But flattery was only a small part of Shakespeare’s motivation.

Shakespeare’s audiences knew Holinshed well. These histories were far from accurate but were widely accepted. However, people didn’t expect facts from a play. They expected to be entertained—and no one did that better than Shakespeare. He invented wonderfully, but he gladly borrowed any good plot devices he found. For example, Holinshed related that, a century before Macbeth lived, there was a Scot named Donwald whose wife nagged him into killing King Duff. Shakespeare adapted this scenario for Macbeth.
Literary Analysis
Imagery
Why do you think Ross uses such an exaggerated image in lines 186–188?
Possible responses: Ross uses such an exaggerated image because he wants to convince Malcolm how much his presence would inspire people to fight against Macbeth.

Ask students what real opinion of Malcolm Ross’s speech reflects.
Answer: Ross has a high opinion of Malcolm. He believes people will be inspired by someone who is honorable.

Point out that, in the lines preceding this speech, Macduff asks why Ross suddenly has so little to say. (Explain that nigard means stingy.)
Ask students why Ross might be reluctant to tell Macduff about his family. Also, in what way might saying “they are at peace” be viewed by Ross as kind of a truth.
Possible responses: Ross is reluctant to speak because no one likes telling someone about a loved one’s death. As for what he says about their being “at peace,” it is fairly common to say that someone who is dead is at peace, and tombstones often read “Rest in Peace.”

Reading Check
Answer: Ross brings a report from Scotland that the country suffers greatly.

Critical Viewing
Possible responses: This castle is strongly fortified, and looks imposing and regal, as Inverness would. Some students might think that this castle is much more modern than Inverness would be, and much larger. They might also observe that the large number of windows would make it harder to defend, so it doesn’t seem to be the kind of castle one would expect in a war-like era, such as that of the play.

Strategy for Less Proficient Readers
Review with students the events in this scene and the information gained: Malcolm tests Macduff, Ross arrives, Scotland’s distress is described, an army is growing, and news of Macduff’s family is received. Discuss how this scene fits into the plot. (It shows that opposition to Macbeth is growing.) To help students connect words with emotions, have them listen to this scene on the Listening to Literature Audio CDs. Discuss how the images, events, and emotions build on or contribute to each other.

Enrichment for Gifted/Talented Students
Emotions run high in this scene. Malcolm is nervous. Ross mourns Scotland’s distress. There are two anguished outbursts from Macduff—then he thinks hope for Scotland is lost and then when he learns of the death of his family. Have students pick a speech from this scene, or work with partners and pick a passage of dialogue, and prepare it for presentation. Encourage them to think about how they would feel under the circumstances, and bring these emotions to their performances.
Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever, Dispute it. Ross was sad about the news. If it be mine, students how Macduff's disbe-
Whispers the o'er-fraught No mind that's honest That ever yet they heard.
I have said. Merciful heaven!
Malcolm's return would create soldiers. What concern they? And I must be from thence!
He is saying that, because Malcolm addresses Co
By comparing them to heap of game
60. fee-grief personal grief.

MACDUFF. What concern they?
61. quarry heap of game
slain in a hunt.

ROSS. Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever, Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound That ever yet they heard.
MACDUFF. Humh! I guess at it.
ROSS. Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes Savagely slaughtered. To relate the manner, Were, on the quarry of these murdered deer, To add the death of you.
MACDUFF. My children too?
ROSS. Wife, children, servants, all That could be found.
MACDUFF. And I must be from thence! My wife killed too?
ROSS. I have said.
MALCOLM. Be comforted.
Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge, To cure this deadly grief.
MACDUFF. He has no children. All my pretty ones? Did you say all? O hell-kite! All? What, all my pretty chickens and their dam At one fell swoop?
MALCOLM. Dispute it like a man.
MACDUFF. I shall do so;
But I must also feel it as a man.
I cannot but remember such things were, That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on, And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,

That would be howled out in the desert air, Where hearing should not latch them.

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<th>Literary Analysis</th>
<th>Imagery</th>
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<td>• Ask students what Ross means by “To relate the manner were. . . to add the death of you.” Answer: He means that it was so ghastly that, if Macduff heard the whole story, he’d die, too.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask students the Literary Analysis question: How does the imagery in line 206 emphasize the ghastly fate of Macduff's family? Answer: By comparing them to deer and a heap of game after a hunt, it emphasizes that they were innocent and that they were treated inhumanly.</td>
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<th>Critical Thinking</th>
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<td>• Ask students whom Malcolm is addressing. What is his advice? Answer: Malcolm addresses Macduff; he tells him not to hold in his grief.</td>
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<td>• Ask students how Macduff's disbelief and then sorrow are reflected in the dialogue that follows. Answer: He keeps asking who was killed, as if it isn’t sinking in, it’s too horrible to believe. He then swings from disbelief to sorrow and to fury.</td>
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<td>• Ask what Macduff means in line 216 when he says, “He has no children.” Answer: He is saying that, because Malcolm has no children, he can’t understand what Macduff is feeling.</td>
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<td>• Point out that, as the act ends, a lot of the imagery used thus far appears in the closing speeches.</td>
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<td>• Ask students what images used by Lady Macduff to her son in scene ii are echoed in lines 217–218. Answer: Both use bird imagery.</td>
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<td>• Note that manhood is discussed in line 219 and following. How do these images differ from previous ones? Answer: Here, a more traditional image of manhood—loving husband and father, protector, upholder of what is right—contrasts with previous images of manhood as being murderous.</td>
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<td>• Point out that the closing line echoes the recurring theme of light and dark.</td>
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They were all struck for thee! Naught\(^65\) that I am, Not for their own demerits but for mine Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

**MALCOLM.** Be this the whetstone of your sword. Let grief Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.

**MACDUFF.** O, I could play the woman with mine eyes, And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens, Cut short all intermission; front to front\(^66\) Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself; Within my sword’s length set him. If he ‘scape, Heaven forgive him too!

**MALCOLM.** This time goes manly. Come, go we to the King. Our power is ready; Our lack is nothing but our leave.\(^67\) Macbeth Is ripe for shaking, and the pow’rs above Put on their instruments.\(^68\) Receive what cheer you may. The night is long that never finds the day.

**Critical Reading**

1. **Respond:** Do you blame Macduff for abandoning his family? Why or why not?

2. (a) **Recall:** What are the predictions made by the second and third apparitions? (b) **Analyze:** Why does Macbeth readily accept these predictions?

3. (a) **Recall:** What happens to Macduff’s family? (b) **Infer:** What does the fate of Macduff’s family suggest about Macbeth’s state of mind?

4. (a) **Recall:** How does Malcolm test Macduff? (b) **Analyze:** What does this test reveal about both Malcolm and Macduff? Explain.

5. (a) **Recall:** How does Macduff respond when asked to take the news about his family “like a man”? (b) **Interpret:** How would you characterize Macduff, based on his reaction to the murder of his wife and son? (c) **Compare and Contrast:** Compare and contrast Macduff’s understanding of manhood with definitions of it earlier in the play.

6. (a) **Hypothesize:** If Shakespeare were alive today, would he argue that evildoers are primarily influenced by genetics, upbringing, or their own free choice? Base your answer on evidence from Act IV. (b) **Evaluate:** Would you agree with his position? Explain.

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**Macbeth, Act IV, Scene iii**  ■  377

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1. **Possible responses:** Yes. He could have secured his castle with guards or taken his family with him to England. No. He couldn’t have foreseen the extent of Macbeth’s wrath and evil.

2. (a) The second apparition says that none of woman born shall harm Macbeth. The third apparition tells Macbeth he won’t be vanquished until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane. (b) Macbeth accepts the predictions because they appear favorable. Also, the witches’ other prophecies came true.

3. (a) Macduff’s wife and children are murdered. (b) Macbeth has degenerated into complete, unbridled evil.

4. (a) Malcolm tests Macduff by claiming to be worse than Macbeth. (b) Malcolm is a cautious man, testing Macduff. He is no fool and shows signs of being a great leader. Macduff is an honorable, honest man who is loyal to his country and the vows he has taken.

5. (a) He says that he must feel his grief as a man does. (b) Macduff reacts as a deeply loving man who is staggered by the news of his family’s death. (c) Macduff’s idea of manhood includes tenderness, love, and honor; earlier definitions do not. However, Macduff and Macbeth both speak of making wrongs right as manly, though Macduff’s motives are honorable and Macbeth’s aren’t.

6. (a) **Possible response:** Shakespeare would argue that everyone has free choice. (b) **Possible response:** Macbeth chooses evil—he even says that no one should trust the witches, he says that whatever he thinks he will do, which shows that he knows what he is doing. Malcolm believes that Macduff, who has a similar background to Macbeth, might have chosen evil, but he has not. Macduff, who knows the goodness of Duncan and his queen, cannot believe that Malcolm has chosen evil.