

### Macbeth Act 4 Scene 1

The **opening** of this Act is **set** in a dark mysterious cavern with the Three Weird Sisters. There is thunder and they are gathered around a cauldron, chanting a spell.

How does it engage you as a reader?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**SCENE I. A cavern. In the middle, a boiling cauldron.**

**Thunder.** Enter the three Witches

**First Witch**

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

**Second Witch**

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

**Third Witch**

Harpier cries 'Tis time, 'tis time.

**First Witch**

Round about the cauldron go;  
In the poison'd entrails throw.

Toad, that under cold stone  
Days and nights has thirty-one  
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,  
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

**ALL**

Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

**Second Witch**

Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the cauldron boil and bake;  
Eye of newt and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,

Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

**ALL**

Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

**Third Witch**

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,  
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf  
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,  
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,  
Liver of blaspheming Jew,  
Gall of goat, and slips of yew  
Silver'd in the moon's eclipse,

Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,  
Finger of birth-strangled babe  
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,  
Make the gruel thick and slab:  
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,  
For the ingredients of our cauldron.

**ALL**

Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

**Second Witch**

Cool it with a baboon's blood,  
Then the charm is firm and good.

Enter **HECATE** to the other three Witches

**HECATE**

O well done! I commend your pains;  
And every one shall share i' the gains;  
And now about the cauldron sing,  
Live elves and fairies in a ring,  
Enchanting all that you put in.

What **role** have the witches had in the play so far?

---

---

What has been their purpose?

---

---

What might the ingredients represent? Are there any that are particularly interesting?

---

---

Why does Shakespeare introduce Hecate the goddess of witchcraft, and why does she congratulate them?

Macbeth seeks them to guide him in his future decisions, and demands they answer his questions. They are deceptive to Macbeth and he calls them 'secret black midnight hags'. What does Shakespeare want you to think about how Macbeth describes the witches?

Apparition	What is the apparition? What does it tell Macbeth?	The first apparition...	Deceptive truth? Effect on Macbeth? Shakespeare's purpose?
First	What: an armed head Says: 'Beware Macduff, Beware Thane of Fife'	Macbeth takes this at face value and only thinks about what the witches have said and not what they've shown him. The witches don't tell Macbeth what about Macduff he needs to 'beware' of. The surface meaning of the 'armed head' is obvious: Macduff will come to fight against Macbeth; the second meaning doesn't become clear until the end of the play when Macduff beheads Macbeth.	Macbeth had already feared that Macduff had figured out he murdered Duncan. Macbeth's suspicions have been confirmed. This gives him a false sense of security. Shakespeare deliberately has the witches mislead Macbeth to reinforce...

Apparition	What is the apparition? What does it tell Macbeth?	The second and third apparition...	Deceptive truth? Effect on Macbeth? Shakespeare's purpose?
Second		Macbeth thinks he is safe because everyone is born from a woman however Macduff later reveals he was 'ripped' from his mother's womb not 'born'. Cesarean section doesn't count as being 'born'.	The witches actually mean that no one who was born 'naturally' will harm Macbeth but Macbeth is unaware that Macduff was 'ripped' out of his mother. Macbeth overconfident and secure with his crown. Macbeth is relieved.
Third		Macbeth takes this to mean he will never be defeated because trees cannot move. However, the trees will act as camouflage for Macduff's army. Macbeth recognizes the crowned child is son of a king, foreshadowing Malcolm becoming king.	The witches are actually telling Macbeth how Macduff's army will sneak up to his castle, but Macbeth interprets this as trees moving on their own which cannot happen.

In this scene we see Macbeth is not the 'brave' and 'settled' warrior he once was which is **ironic**. Here, the **irony** is the prophecies are double-edged and turn against Macbeth. The second apparition tells Macbeth that 'none of woman born/ Shall harm Macbeth' which builds a **false sense of confidence** to Macbeth. However, as we see later, Macduff 'was ripped from his mother's womb/ Untimely ripped'. Banquo's earlier comment accurately reflects the truth: 'The instruments of darkness tell us truths, Win us with honest trifles, to betray's/ In deepest consequence'. These words are prophetic and a condemnation of all that Macbeth comes to believe. Shakespeare has Banquo return once more in this scene (with his eight heirs) to mock the stability of Macbeth's throne.

Annotate the response above and pick out the ingredients: writers' method, evidence, opening point, and explanation.

Following his meeting with the witches Macbeth says, 'the very first things of my heart, be the first things of my hands'. What does this suggest about Macbeth's state of mind?

---

---

Why might this be a pivotal moment in the play?

---

---

Macbeth orders the murder of who, and why?

---

---

A student said, 'At this point in the play, Shakespeare dehumanises Macbeth and turns him into a tyrannical monster'. To what extent do you agree?

---

---

---

---

---

---

At the end of this scene, we see Lennox tell Macbeth that Macduff has fled to English. Why does Shakespeare end the scene in this way?

what do we know about Macduff based on our knowledge of the play so far? **Can you find a quote to evidence your responses?**

Was he loyal to Duncan? How do you know?

Was he first to discover Duncan's body? How did he react?

Did he suspect foul play when Duncan died? What did he say?

How does he show that he somehow thinks Macbeth is involved in Duncan's death at the end of Act 2?

## Macbeth Act 4 Scene 2

This scene takes place at Macduff's castle.

How does the **opening** of this scene interest you as a reader?



---

---

---

---

Imagine that you were Lady Macduff. Scotland is in uproar and your husband is not at home; you don't even know where he is. You are alone in the castle, trying to look after your young children. Meanwhile, the country is being run by a violent and seemingly mad king.

What different emotions might you be feeling? Write a diary entry about your fears and include as much context as possible.



After visiting the witches, Macbeth resolves that **'The castle of Macduff I will surprise'** and kill **'His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls'**. This scene basically documents Macbeth's bloody plan in action.

As this scene depicts the **killing of a boy**, it is intended to **shock and anger audiences**, which perhaps hints that at this point in the play, Shakespeare is inviting audiences to view Macbeth as a **complete villain and monster for which we have no sympathy**.

There is an interesting interplay between positive and negative forces. We see the **bravery and courage of Macduff's son** in what seems a hopeless situation, contrasted with the cowardly acts of the murderers and their evil master.

**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.

**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.

Lady Macduff feels \_\_\_\_\_ I know this because \_\_\_\_\_

The messenger feels \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

Why does Macbeth not murder Macduff's family himself? What are Shakespeare intentions with this?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have we felt sympathy for Macbeth in the play so far? If so when/why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the purpose of this scene in terms of Macbeths journey in this play?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Challenge:

1. Throughout the scene reference is made to the idea of the son being a 'bird' what is meant by this and why does the son intend to live as a bird?
2. The son does not believe his mother that his father is dead. Why might the son feel like this, what does it show about his character/what he thinks about his father?
3. The son asks: **And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?** why is this line so significant to some of the wider themes and ideas of the play?
4. What point might Shakespeare be trying to make through the contrasting reactions of Lady Macduff and her son?

**Why Ross is important in this play...**

1. Ross is an interesting part of this scene. Having been loyal to Macbeth until this point, his conscience tells him that he must warn Lady Macduff of the danger she faces.
2. Ross wrestles with the idea of loyalty and treachery in his lines. He is essentially now a traitor to Macbeth, but believes he is being loyal to truth and goodness by warning the family of the imminent threat.
3. Through Ross' lines, Shakespeare wants us to question what loyalty really means. Should we be loyal to a king no matter how corrupt and evil they are? Or is loyalty more about being true to your morals?



**Complete the table below and analyse the key quotes for Ross.**

**Consider his role at this point in the play.**

Quote	What does it reveal about Ross?	Key Words?
I dare not speak much further;	Ross knows that he has crossed the line and is now a traitor to the king by warning Lady Macduff of danger.	The word 'dare' is significant as it implies Ross has taken a huge risk saying what he has. It reveals a climate of fear under Macbeth's rule, almost as if a spy is overhearing everything that is spoken.
But cruel are the times, when we are traitors And do not know ourselves		
when we hold rumour From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,		
But float upon a wild and violent sea Each way and move		
Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward		

1. What is the function and significance of this scene, particularly with the character of Ross?
2. How does this scene further establish the idea of Macbeth's downfall?
3. How does this scene develop the themes of treachery, loyalty and bravery?

**Give detail and evidence to your responses**

### Macbeth Act 4 Scene 3

In what different ways has the theme of doubt been presented in the play so far?

---

---

What might Shakespeare's deeper message be through the presentation of this theme?

---

---

## Background

- Having just seen Macbeth's descent into utter madness, ordering the family of Macduff murdered for no clear reason, we are here shown what Malcolm and Macduff – Macbeth's key enemies – are thinking
- A scene between Macduff (who does not yet know his whole family have been murdered) and Malcolm (Duncan's son and the true heir to the throne of Scotland), the audience learns a little more about the man who might eventually overthrow Macbeth. Shakespeare definitely wants his audience to compare Malcolm to Macbeth, and to come to their own conclusion about who is better for Scotland.
- Dramatically, this scene is quite important because if Malcolm has no wish to return to Scotland and fight for the crown, then Macbeth's tyranny and violence will carry on forever.
- It's worth noting that the scene is incredibly long, and often gets either edited down or even cut entirely to help maintain the pace of the play. However, it does deal with some of the play's core themes, which may explain its length.

**Thinking point – what do you think the terms 'kingship' and 'patriotism' mean?**

## Context – Kingship & Patriotism

- Whilst the modern-day monarchy is more of a ceremonial figure today, the kings and queens of old had a massive influence on their country as they made all the key decisions relating to how the country was to be run.
- Through this scene Shakespeare shines a light on the concept of Kingship – Malcolm thinks very carefully about what it means to be a king, and what sort of king he might make. Throughout the play we see different and contrasting forms of kingship.
- Similarly, Shakespeare wants audiences to think carefully about the idea of patriotism (love for your country) through the character of Macduff. In this play, patriotism is a force for good as love for your country leads to a willingness to fight for it and defend it. It's ultimately Macduff's patriotism in this scene which encourages Malcolm to return and fight for Scotland.

Shakespeare opens this scene at King Edwards Palace and sets the scene of Malcolm discussing his own vices and self-doubt to Macduff. Why might he be doing this?

---

---

---

There is a lot of mistrust and fear amongst characters. A student said, "At this point in the play Malcolm is testing Macduff to see if he can trust him, and if Scotland truly is Macduff's priority so that they can work together to overthrow Macbeth". To what extent do you agree?

What does the 'unnatural order' of things represent in this play? Can you be specific about any unnatural evidence?

---

---

---

There is a reference to Edward the Confessor in this scene. What was he like as a king? Is there a direct link between Malcom and him being at King Edwards Palace? Do you think Malcolm and Edward could be a contrast to Macbeth?

Macbeth	Edward the Confessor	Malcolm

Why would it be important contextually, to consider the various roles of these 'kings'? Who might Shakespeare be considering to impress/engage with this play?

---

---

---

In the final stage of this scene, Macduff learns about the murder of his whole family. He swears revenge on Macbeth!

Write a letter to Macbeth from Macduff stating how he feels about him and why he is a tyrant.

Things to include:

- His emotions
- His perspective/characters
- Events that have impacted throughout the play
- His relationship with others
- Macbeths actions
- Context
- His intentions and motives