

English 9

*Macbeth*: Study Questions for Act 3

3.1

1. How does Banquo now view the witches' prophecies?
2. Closely examine Macbeth's soliloquy (3.1.52-77). What does Macbeth currently think of Banquo? Does Macbeth recall their joint encounter with the witches accurately? Why might Banquo be dangerous? What problem does Macbeth see in the words of the Weird Sisters?
3. How does Macbeth manipulate the murderers? Critics point out that Macbeth is beginning to sound like Lady Macbeth in this scene—compare and contrast Macbeth here with his wife in the earlier scenes. How has his attitude towards murder changed?

3.2

1. Compare and contrast Lady Macbeth's mindset with Macbeth's now that they are King and Queen of Scotland. What is different about her private demeanor and the one she presents to Macbeth?
2. What do you think the "snake" represents in Macbeth's metaphor (3.2.15-17)?
3. What thoughts plague Macbeth? How is this different from or similar to the reaction he has predicted he would have before murdering Duncan?
4. What has changed in Macbeth's relationship with Lady Macbeth?
5. Notice Macbeth's reference to sleep. Has he been sleeping? What is the significance of sleep?

3.3

1. What are the recurring metaphors in this scene? Who is this third murderer and why is he there?

3.4

1. What is Macbeth's reaction when he is informed that Fleance has escaped? Why is Fleance's escape so significant to him?
2. What excuse does Lady Macbeth give for Macbeth's behavior? On what does she blame Macbeth's outburst when she speaks to him privately? What does Macbeth believe is happening?
3. What is significant about the timing of Banquo's appearances?
4. Macbeth notes that he would face anything on earth rather than the ghost of Banquo (3.4.121-128). What, to Macbeth, is so uniquely terrifying about the ghost of Banquo?
5. Macbeth says that "blood will have blood" (3.4.151). What does this mean, and how does it mirror Macbeth's pre-murder concerns?

6. What does Macbeth mean when he says, "I am in blood/Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more/Returning were as tedious as go o'er" (3.4.169-171). The passage continues, "Strange things I have in head, that will to hand/Which must be acted ere they may be scanned" (3.4.171-172). Paraphrase this passage as well.

7. Lady Macbeth is relatively silent after the guests leave, especially compared to her earlier anger. Why do you think this is?

8. Compare and contrast Macbeth's thoughts about the murders before and after the visit from Banquo's ghost.

3.5

1. What do we learn about the witches from Hecate? List the reasons that she is angry at them.

2. What does Hecate plan to do to Macbeth?

3. Hecate tells the witches that "security/is mortals' chiefest enemy" (3.5.32-33). What does this idea mean in the context of the play so far?

3.6

1. How does Lennox summarize the course of events so far? What conclusions do you think he has drawn about them?

2. What is the current state of the kingdom?

3. Why has Macduff left? What plans are being made abroad?