

## English 9

### *Macbeth*: Study Questions for Act 4

#### 4.1

1. What do you notice about the rhyming of the witches' incantations? How is it different from other rhyme schemes we have seen so far?
2. What powers does Macbeth ascribe to the witches when he greets them?
3. What three prophecies or pieces of advice does Macbeth receive? How does he react to each of them? What possible contradictions do the prophecies imply? What do you think the connection is between each apparition and the words it speaks?
4. Why do you think the witches tell Macbeth to "seek to know no more" (4.1.118)? What is the result of his insistence?
5. To what does the phrase "barren scepter" refer (3.1.67) and why does it trouble Macbeth?
6. How does Macbeth resolve to act upon learning that Macduff has fled to England? How does this compare to his previous behavior? Where is Lady Macbeth?

#### 4.2

1. What flaw does Lady Macduff see in Macduff's decision to flee?
2. Describe the interaction between Lady Macduff and her son. What insights does her son have that she has missed?
3. How does Lady Macduff respond to the messenger's news? Compare and contrast Lady Macduff with Lady Macbeth.

#### 4.3

1. How do Malcolm and Macduff view each other at the beginning of their conversation? What reasons does Malcolm say he has to distrust Macduff?
2. Describe the test Malcolm puts to Macduff. How does it work? Why does he do this? Compare Malcolm's behavior to his father's.
3. Macduff responds to Malcolm's admission of the truth by saying that "such welcome and unwelcome things at once/'Tis hard to reconcile" (4.3.157-158). What is unwelcome and welcome for Macduff in Malcolm's plan?
4. Malcolm, Macduff, and a Doctor discuss the King of England's miraculous powers of healing and prophecy. Compare and contrast this saint-like King of England with the current King of Scotland, Macbeth. What is the significance of this language of medicine and healing in the political realm?

5. How does Macduff react to the news of the slaughter of his family? What advice does Malcolm give him and why?