

Macbeth: A story of power, passion and betrayal

The story so far:

Macbeth is a general in the army and he and his trusted friend Banquo are returning home from a battle where they have defeated enemies of their King (Duncan). On the way they find three witches on the moors who tell them great predictions for the future – ‘that Macbeth will become Knight of Cawdor and then the King and that Banquo will not be King but his son will.’ This seems unlikely but soon afterwards King Duncan has the Knight of Cawdor killed for treason and gives that title to Macbeth, the first prediction has come true.

Macbeth writes a letter to his wife (Lady Macbeth) – write the letter you would write below to tell her of the Knighthood and that you have a prediction you’ll become King....

Next:

Lady Macbeth is determined that Macbeth will be King and she the Queen so she plots to kill King Duncan when he visits their house. She drugs the Guards and Macbeth then stabs Duncan in his sleep but the reality of what they have done soon kicks in. Lady M tries to calm Macbeth as he panics that he can hear voices and she takes the daggers back to hide them with the drugged guards but seeing the dead Duncan makes her realise what they have done. They go to bed and the next morning when the death is discovered they blame the guards and Macbeth kills them. Duncan's loyal Knights are upset to find him dead.

What might the Knights be saying to each other when they find their King dead in his bed and it seems the guards stabbed him? How would they feel? What might they be thinking? You can write this as a conversation or as a diary entry or a letter one of them sends to a friend or loved one....

Then:

Macbeth becomes King as Duncan's sons run away but Macbeth lives in fear that his crime will be discovered. He thinks Banquo suspects him and also knows that the witches said Banquo's son will become King so he decides to have them both killed but hires a hitman as he cannot bear to do it himself. The plot goes wrong as Banquo is killed but his son escapes. Macbeth then sees the ghost of his friend at a banquet attended by all the nobles; he speaks to the ghost which only he can see, making everyone else think he is seeing things.

What would Macbeth write in his diary after the banquet where he has seen the ghost of his friend Banquo? Does he believe it was a ghost or that Banquo was really there? How does he feel about what has happened? What does he think the others at the banquet will think of his behaviour?

Then:

Lady M cannot move on from what has happened and it haunts her dreams, she sleepwalks, washing her hands to remove the blood she thinks is still on them. She goes mad and ends her life, leaving behind her husband who is heartbroken. He loved her and cannot imagine being without her. He gives a beautiful speech about the love they shared before ambition ruined it.

What would Macbeth say in this speech for his beloved wife? How would he describe her and their life together?

Finally:

Macbeth's troubles continue as Duncan's son has returned with an army to get revenge for his father's death. A fierce battle ensues and Macbeth is killed during the fight. Duncan's son Malcolm is crowned King.

What thoughts will be going through Malcolm's head – is he proud that he got revenge for his father? Angry still at what happened? Bitter about Duncan's murder? Nervous about becoming King? What does he hope for in the future now he is King?

Macbeth

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N	C	U	S	I	E	A	O	R	Q	S	A	I	R
U	H	L	I	E	G	R	D	E	N	D	S	E	H
D	E	D	O	P	G	N	O	G	A	P	S	M	E
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T	A	M	U	R	D	E	R	Q	R	Y	N	M	E
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GREED
 ASSASSINATION
 HITMAN
 BETRAYAL
 PASSION
 DRUGGED
 BANQUO
 DUNCAN
 HEATH
 PROPHECY
 WITCHES
 KNIGHT
 POWER
 FAMILY
 KING
 DOCTOR
 DAGGERS
 REGRET
 MURDER
 CAULDRON

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‘Double, double toil and trouble,
 Fire burn and cauldron bubble.’ (Act 4, Scene 1)

‘To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
 To the last syllable of recorded time,
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.’ (Act 5, Scene 5)

‘Out damned spot! Out I say!’ (Act 5, Scene 1)