

that he is safe until Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane Hill

As the second and third predictions are logically and physically impossible, Macbeth feels relatively safe. However, he learns that Macduff has gone to join Malcolm in England. Angered by what he sees as Macduff's treachery, he orders Macduff's castle to be seized and the Macduff family to be slaughtered. A devastated Macduff swears revenge on Macbeth and vows to support Malcolm in regaining the Scottish throne.

Consequences

Ever since Duncan's death, Lady Macbeth's conscience has been troubling her. She has taken to sleepwalking and tries to wash her hands clean of imaginary blood. She eventually dies; it is suggested by Malcolm later that she kills herself, but Macbeth seems almost too preoccupied to notice.

Macbeth goes into battle against Macduff
Malcolm and Macduff's invasion begins; Macbeth still thinks he is protected by the Witches' predictions but he is wrong. When the invading army cut down the trees in Birnam Wood to use as camouflage, as they move to Macbeth's castle in Dunsinane, it seems as though the trees themselves are moving.

Macduff comes face-to-face with Macbeth in battle. Macbeth boasts that Macduff cannot harm him but Macduff declares that he was not born naturally (but by Caesarean section). The two men fight and Macduff kills and then beheads Macbeth. Malcolm is declared the new king of Scotland.

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Use of language in Macbeth

Language refers to the choices of style and vocabulary made by the author. When analysing the language Shakespeare uses you should think about:

What? - the playwright's choice of specific words and literary devices

Where/how? - the way in which the writer uses them

Why? – the effect on the reader

Social and historical context

Shakespeare was a genius with words. It is estimated that he had a vocabulary of 17,000 words (four times that of the average educated person of the time). Of these it has been calculated that he brought over 1,700 new words to the English language as well as inventing many of the phrases and sayings which we still use today. For instance, 'be all and end all', 'at one fell swoop' and 'crack of doom' all first appeared in Macbeth.

Evidence and explanation of the language used

Here are some examples of language choices which Shakespeare makes, key words and literary devices such as animal imagery.

1. Key words

There are a number of key words in Macbeth which are used over and over again. This repetition reinforces their importance in the mind of the audience or reader and adds strongly to the overall atmosphere of the play. Three of the most important key words in the play are blood, night and time.

Blood

What relevance does the word 'blood' have in the play?

Blood splattered on a surface
The word 'blood' appears numerous times in the play. Blood appears as a real substance all through the play. In one of the first scenes a blood-stained Captain reports on the battle to Duncan. Blood is evident when Duncan, Banquo and Lady Macduff are murdered and the Witches use animal blood as part of their potions. The play also finishes with real blood as Macbeth's severed head is displayed for all to see.

The word 'blood' also appears a number of times as a symbol of the guilt that runs through the play. For instance, Macbeth sees a vision of a bloodstained dagger before he kills Duncan and Lady Macbeth tries to wash away imaginary bloodstains during her guilt-ridden sleepwalking.