

BEGC 133

BRITISH LITERATURE

PART 3

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS AND STORY DISCUSSION

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Overview of the Play:

Macbeth is a **tragic play** by **William Shakespeare**. It is about a man named **Macbeth**, who is a brave soldier, but his desire for power leads to his **downfall**.

The play is filled with **murder, ambition, and supernatural elements**. It shows how ambition can destroy a person and the consequences of making bad choices.

Main Characters:

1. **Macbeth** – Macbeth is the main character in the play. He is a brave soldier, but after hearing a prophecy from three witches, he becomes **obsessed with becoming king**. To make this happen, he **kills King Duncan** and takes the throne.
2. **Lady Macbeth** – Lady Macbeth is Macbeth's wife. She is very **manipulative** and convinces Macbeth to **kill King Duncan**. She wants power and is very determined to get it. But later, she feels **guilty** about the murder and **suffers emotionally** because of her actions.
3. **King Duncan** – King Duncan is the **king of Scotland**. He is **good and kind**, but Macbeth **murders him** to take his place as king.
4. **Banquo** – Banquo is Macbeth's **friend** and fellow soldier. The witches tell Banquo that his **children** will become kings, but Banquo doesn't try to act on this information. Macbeth, however, feels **threatened** by this prophecy and has Banquo **killed** to keep his throne.
5. **The Witches** – The witches are three **mysterious women** who predict Macbeth's future. They tell him he will become king, but also give him warnings that are **hard to understand**, which lead to his downfall and bad decisions.

6. **Macduff** – Macduff is a **Scottish nobleman**. He is very angry at Macbeth for killing his family. Macduff eventually **kills Macbeth** in the final battle, bringing **justice** for Macbeth's crimes.

SUMMARY

The Story of Macbeth:

Once upon a time in **Scotland**, there was a brave soldier named **Macbeth**. He was fighting in a war to help King **Duncan**. Macbeth fought really well and won a big battle. For his bravery, the king made him the **Thane of Cawdor**.

One day, as Macbeth and his friend **Banquo** were walking, they met three **witches**. The witches told Macbeth that he would one day be **king of Scotland**. They also told Banquo that his children would be kings, but Banquo would never be king himself. At first, Macbeth didn't believe the witches, but then he was told he was now **Thane of Cawdor**—just like they said! This made him wonder if he really could become king.

Macbeth's Ambition:

When Macbeth went home, he told his wife, **Lady Macbeth**, about the witches' prophecy. Lady Macbeth was excited and wanted Macbeth to **kill King Duncan** and take the throne right away. At first, Macbeth was unsure because Duncan was a good king and his guest. But Lady Macbeth pushed him, saying it was the only way for him to become king.

That night, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth **killed King Duncan** while he was sleeping. They made it look like Duncan's servants did it. The next morning, everyone was shocked when Duncan's body was found. Macbeth was made the new king.

Macbeth's Guilt:

But even though Macbeth became king, he felt **guilty** and scared. He remembered the witches' prophecy about Banquo's children becoming kings, so he decided to have **Banquo** and his son **Fleance** killed. Banquo was murdered, but Fleance managed to escape.

During a party, Macbeth saw **Banquo's ghost** sitting at the table. This scared him and showed how guilty he felt. Lady Macbeth tried to explain his strange behavior, but Macbeth's mind was already beginning to crack.

The Witches' New Prophecies:

Macbeth went back to the witches to learn more about his future. They gave him three new **prophecies**:

1. **Beware of Macduff**—a man who could be a threat.
2. **No man born of a woman** will be able to harm Macbeth.
3. He will not be defeated until **Birnam Wood** moves to **Dunsinane Hill**.

Macbeth thought these prophecies made him **invincible** (unbeatable). He believed no one could hurt him because all men were born of women, and the moving of a forest seemed impossible.

Macbeth's Downfall:

Meanwhile, **Macduff**, a Scottish nobleman, was angry at Macbeth for killing his family. He went to **England** to get help from **Malcolm**, Duncan's son. They raised an army to fight against Macbeth.

In the final battle, Macduff's army marched toward Macbeth's castle, and they used branches from **Birnam Wood** to hide their numbers. This made it look like the **forest** was moving toward the castle, just like the witches had said.

When Macbeth fought Macduff, he thought he was safe because of the witches' prophecy. But then Macduff revealed that he was **not born the usual way** (he was born by a **caesarean section**), so he was not "born of a woman." This meant that he could kill Macbeth, and **Macduff killed Macbeth**.

The End of Macbeth:

After Macbeth died, **Malcolm** became the new king of Scotland. The country was saved from Macbeth's cruel rule, and peace was restored.

Macbeth is a story about how **ambition** can destroy a person. Macbeth wanted to be king so badly that he **killed** others and caused harm to Scotland. In the end, his greed for power led to his **death**. The play teaches that ambition without **morality** and **self-control** can lead to tragedy.

1. What, in your opinion, is the role played by the witches in bringing about the tragedy of Macbeth?

The witches in *Macbeth* play an important role in causing the tragedy. They **predict** the future and tell Macbeth that he will become **king of Scotland**. This prophecy makes Macbeth **excited** and **obsessed with power**. However, the witches don't directly force him to do anything bad; they just give him a glimpse of his **future**.

The witches also give **cryptic (unclear)** warnings that confuse Macbeth, making him believe he is **invincible**. For example, they tell him that **no one born of a woman** can harm him, which makes him feel safe. However, they never explain what they mean by this, and in the end, **Macduff**, who was born by **caesarean section**, kills him.

In this way, the witches don't control Macbeth, but their **prophecies** push him to act in a way that leads to his **downfall**. So, they play a big part in the tragedy by planting the seeds of **ambition** and **paranoia** in Macbeth's mind.

2. Lady Macbeth is often called the "fourth witch" in the play. Do you agree with this view? Give your opinions on the role of Lady Macbeth in this play.

Yes, I do agree that **Lady Macbeth** is sometimes called the "fourth witch" because she plays a similar role in **influencing** Macbeth's actions. Just like the witches, Lady Macbeth **pushes Macbeth** to follow the path of evil.

When Macbeth hesitates to kill King Duncan, Lady Macbeth **manipulates** him and calls him **weak**. She **questions his courage** and **persuades him** to do the deed. Without her influence, Macbeth might have **never killed Duncan** or acted so cruelly. In this way, she plays a very important role in **starting the chain of events** that lead to the tragedy.

However, Lady Macbeth is not like the witches in one important way. While the witches only predict the future, Lady Macbeth has a **strong influence** on Macbeth's **decisions** and pushes him to act on his **ambition**. But later in the play, Lady Macbeth becomes **overwhelmed with guilt** for her actions. She starts **losing her mind** and eventually **dies** from her guilt and madness.

So, while Lady Macbeth is like the "**fourth witch**" in terms of pushing Macbeth towards evil, she is also a **tragic character** who ends up being destroyed by the consequences of her actions.