

William Shakespeare's

Macbeth

A Study Guide for Act 4 (pp. 115-151)



Be able to define
(and read for the ideas of):

Fate	Loyalty
Free Will	Honor
Ambition	Destiny
Guilt	Fear
Power	Deception

Name: _____

(This guide may be collected—fair warning) ☺

A tragic hero is a character whose basic nobility is marred by a tragic flaw – something wrong with his personality that leads to a fatal error in judgment and his eventual downfall. Before their fall, tragic heroes usually perceive how they have contributed to their own destruction, which seems to intensify their pain. As you continue reading, decide whether you think Macbeth is a tragic hero.

Aristotle's Tragic Hero:

- ✓ Man of noble Stature
- ✓ Good—but not perfect (hamartia)
- ✓ Downfall is his own fault
- ✓ Vulnerable—often an excess of virtue
- ✓ Learns from his tragic flaw/hamartia
- ✓ Arouses solemnity—not depression

Scene 1:

1. What is the setting of this scene?
2. Describe the three apparitions that appear to Macbeth when he visits the witches and list their prophecies:
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

3. How many kings appear to Macbeth, why is that number significant, and whom do they resemble?
4. What news does Lennox bring?
5. Macbeth decides that he needs to act on his impulses – no more delay. What does he decide to do?

Scene 2:

1. What is the setting of this scene?
2. Why is Lady Macduff upset? Does she seem justified?
3. What message does the messenger bring, and is it timely?

Scene 3:

1. What is the setting of this scene?
2. In scene iii, Malcolm test Macduff's honesty—in each of the sections of his speech below, summarize what he is saying.
 - A. "When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head / Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country / Shall have more vices than it had before (IV.iii.45-47
 - B. "Black Macbeth / Will seem as pure as snow" (IV.iii.52-53).
 - C. "There's no bottom, none / In my voluptuousness. Your wives, your daughters, / Your matrons, and your maids could not fill up / The cistern of my lust; and my desire" (IV.iii.72-5).

- D. "Were I King 'I should cut off the nobles for their lands, / Desire his jewels, and this other's house, / And my more-having would be as sauce / To make me hunger more, that I should forge / Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal, / Destroying them for wealth" (IV.iii.78-84)
- E. "Nay, had I pow'r, I should / Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell, / Uproar the universal peace, confound / All unity on earth" (IV.iii.97-100).
3. At the bottom of p.145, Ross enters—and the question of manliness comes up again. Ross at first tells Macduff that his family is fine, but when he finally breaks the news to Macduff, how does Macduff react? What does Malcolm tell him regarding how a man should act?

Note: Malcolm and Macduff become allies, but Macduff is definitely the more sympathetic here. He is a foil to Macbeth, a king who slaughters a family for no reason. Macduff makes it clear that a good king must be just, must have a heart, and must do what he does for the love of his country, not for political gain. Nothing that Macbeth does is for the good of Scotland.

Student Section:

1. **Write the most significant quote in the space below (including Act.scene.line)—and state how/why it is the most significant quote in this Act.**
2. **Write down one question you find worthy of discussion from this Act.**
3. **Select one of the ideas listed on the cover of this study guide to discuss in a brief paragraph of 3-5 sentences).**

Act IV: Quotable Quotes: Several of these will resurface on quizzes—be ready—
(this means you need to understand them AND be able to relate them to literary devices;
a few, for example, contain a type of irony...)

1. "Double, double, toil and trouble, / Fire burn and cauldron bubble" (IV.i.20-21).
"By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes"(IV.i.44-45).
2. "How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags, / What is't you do?" (IV.i.48-9).
3. "Howe'er you come to know it, answer me. / Though you untie the winds and let them fight / Against the churches, though they yesty waves/ Confound and swallow navigation up... / Of Nature's germaines tumble all together / Even till destruction sicken, answer / To what I ask you" (IV.i.52-62).
4. "None of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (IV.i.91-2).
"Macbeth shall never vanquished be until / Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him" (IV.i.107-8).
5. "What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?" (IV.i.133).
6. "Infected be the air whereon they ride, / And damned all those that trust them!" (IV.i.158-9).
7. "From this moment / The firstlings of my heart shall be / The firstlings of my hand...The castle of Macduff I will surprise...No boasting like a fool" (IV.168-176).
8. "Each new morn / New widows howl, new orphans cry new sorrows / Strike heaven on the face" (IV.iii.5-7).
9. These quotes are part of the same speech (see scene iii, question 2)
 - A. "When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head / Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country / Shall have more vices than it had before (IV.iii.54-6).
 - B. "Black Macbeth / Will seem as pure as snow" (IV.iii.62-3).

- C. "There's no bottom, none / In my voluptuousness. Your wives, your daughters, / Your matrons, and your maids could not fill up / The cistern of my lust; and my desire" (IV.iii.72-5).
- D. "Were I King 'I should cut off the nobles for their lands, / Desire his jewels, and this other's house, / And my more-having would be as sauce / To make me hunger more, that I should forge / Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal, / Destroying them for wealth" (IV.iii.92-8).
- E. "Nay, had I pow'r, I should / Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell, / Uproar the universal peace, confound / All unity on earth" (IV.iii.112-15).

10. "Fit to govern? / No, not to live... (IV.iii.119-20).

11. "My first false speaking / Was this upon myself. What I am truly, / Is thine and my poor country's to command" (IV.iii.148-50)

12. "Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever, / Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound / That every yet they heard" (IV.iii.235-7).

13. "Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak / Whispers the o'erfrught heart and bids it break" (IV.iii.245-6).
 "Be comforted. / Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge / To cure this deadly grief" (IV.iii.253-5).

14. "He has no children. All my pretty ones? / Did you say all? O hell-kite! All? / What, all my pretty chickens and their dam / At one fell swoop?" (IV.iii.256--9).
 "I shall do so; / But I must also feel it as a man / I cannot but remember such things were / That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on / And would not take their part? Sinful Madcuff, / They were all struck for thee!" (IV.iii.261-5).

15. "Be this the whetstone of your sword. Let grief / Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it" (IV.iii.269-70).

16. "O, I could play the woman with mine eyes / And braggart with my tongue. But, gentle heavens, / Cut short all intermission. Front to front / Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself / Within my sword's length set him. If he scape, / Heaven forgive him too!" (IV.iii.271-6.).