

Macbeth: Act V Reading and Study Guide

I. Vocabulary: Be able to define the following words and understand them when they appear in the play. Also, be prepared to be quizzed on these words.

perturb: disturb, bother

taper: candle

note: our word *taper* that means to make gradually smaller (e.g., to taper someone off a medicine) probably comes from the sense of a taper (candle) gradually diminishing in size as it burns.

guise: outward appearance

note: think of the word *disguise*

fortify: to strengthen

pester: to annoy

hew: to cut down

abhor: hate, detest; to reject something very strongly

Etymology: **ab** (away) + **horror** (to tremble; shudder) The word literally means to shrink back (away) in horror (trembling). Word is stronger than *hate*.

II. Background Info:

Moirai (3 Fates): In Greek Mythology, these are the **three sisters** who have the power to decide man's destiny. The first of the sisters (Clotho) spun the thread of a person's life and decided what the life would be like. The second (Lachesis) measured the thread of life. She decided how long it would be. The third (Atropos) is the one who cut the thread of life. Essentially, these three sisters determined the length of each person's life as well as how much suffering. Their names in Roman Mythology are Nona, Decuma, and Morta. And Norse Mythology also has three goddesses of destiny. The exact details of these three goddesses differ in different stories and pieces of art. Most of our information comes from Hesiod's *Theogony*, although there are references in Homer's *Iliad* and Plato's *Republic*.

III. Literary Terms: these will be the terms that we use to discuss this act. Please know them for our discussion and your tests and quizzes.

anagnorisis: the moment in a story when the protagonist learns of his true identity or discovers the true nature of his situation. Aristotle wrote that anagnorisis is an essential part of a tragedy. Etymology: the word stem **Gno** means to know and appears in words such as *ignorance, diagnosis, prognosis, agnostic*

hubris: extreme arrogance. This is a common tragic flaw. When we use the word hubris, we often mean that the person has overestimated his own powers.

hamartia (Tragic Flaw): the flaw in character that leads to the downfall of the protagonist in a tragedy. The word *hamartia* means tragic flaw, but in its original sense, and the sense that Aristotle used it, it means an error in judgment. Think about how hamartia can be used correctly in both senses for Macbeth. Macbeth clearly has a tragic flaw, and he definitely makes an error in judgment.

catastrophe: final action that completes the unraveling of the plot in a play, especially in a tragedy. Catastrophe is synonymous with *denouement*. Catastrophe brings about the resolution. Etymology: **cata** (down) + **strophe** (turn). What is the catastrophe in *Macbeth*.

catharsis: purging of the feelings of pity and fear that, according to Aristotle, occur in the audience of a tragic. There is some debate to whether or not the audience experiences catharsis in *Macbeth*. Do you feel pity for Macbeth?

IV. Questions: answer the following questions while you read to check your comprehension.

Scene 1:

1. What does the gentlewoman tell the doctor that Lady Macbeth has been doing?
2. What does the gentlewoman refuse to do?
3. What does Lady Macbeth want next to her at all times?
4. According to the gentlewoman, what is Lady Macbeth accustomed to doing?
5. What does Lady Macbeth say in her sleepwalking that amazes the doctor?

Scene 2:

6. Who does Angus say they will meet near Birnam Wood?
7. According to Lennox, who is certainly not going to be with Malcolm?
8. What does Angus say is the feelings of the people who are in Macbeth's army?

Scene 3:

9. What is happening to all the thanes that were supposedly on Macbeth's side?

10. Why is Macbeth not afraid of Malcolm?
11. What does Macbeth say his mind will never do?
12. What does the servant report to Macbeth?
13. What does Macbeth say will not accompany him into old age?
14. What does Macbeth tell the doctor to do his wife?
15. Macbeth says that he will not be afraid until when?

Scene 4:

16. Where are Malcolm, Macduff, and Siward?
17. What does Malcolm say each soldier should do?

Scene 5:

18. What news does Seyton give to Macbeth?
19. Macbeth says, "It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing." What is the antecedent of the *It*? What does Macbeth mean?
20. What news does the messenger bring to Macbeth?
21. Macbeth says, "There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here. / I 'gin to be aweary of the sun / And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone." What does he mean?

Scene 6:

22. Who should lead the first battle? Siward and son.

Scene 7:

23. What is the outcome of the fight between Young Siward and Macbeth?
24. What does Macduff say will happen to him if he isn't the one who kills Macbeth?
25. What does Malcolm say about their foes?

Scene 8:

26. What reason does Macbeth give for not wanting to fight Macduff?
27. After Macbeth tells Macduff that he can't be hurt any man born from a woman, what does Macduff tell him?
28. What does Macduff say he will do with Macbeth if he truly won't fight?
29. What does Macduff deliver to Malcolm?