

Act 2, Scene 2 –

- To summarise the key events in this scene.
- To understand the meaning of key quotes
- To explain what these key quotes tell us about Macbeth and Lady Macbeth



Act Scene 2 -

This is a very tense and dramatic scene following directly after the famous 'dagger' soliloquy which ended with Macbeth going to Duncan's bedroom having heard the bell, his signal from Lady Macbeth to carry out the murder. Macbeth is being questioned by his conscience as he is suffering misery from the deed he has committed.

Sum up the main events of the scene in no more than 6 sentences



Act Scene 2 -

1. Lady Macbeth waits nervously for her husband, she is drunk, and is scared he has not killed Duncan
2. Macbeth returns fearful that he has been heard.
3. Macbeth recalls listening to Duncan say his prayers and he fears he will never be able to pray or sleep again.
4. Lady Macbeth is furious as Macbeth has held onto the daggers she goes to plant them on the guards.
5. Macbeth feels he will never clean the blood from his hands.
6. Lady Macbeth tells him to calm down as a little water will wash him clean

Act Scene 2 – ANALYSIS OF QUOTES

KEY QUOTES –

“That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold,/ What hath quenched them hath given me fire.”

TRANSLATION - What has made the guards drunk has given me courage what has made them helpless has made me feel strong.

WHAT DOES THIS QUOTE YOU SHOW ABOUT MACBETH AND/OR LADY MACBETH?

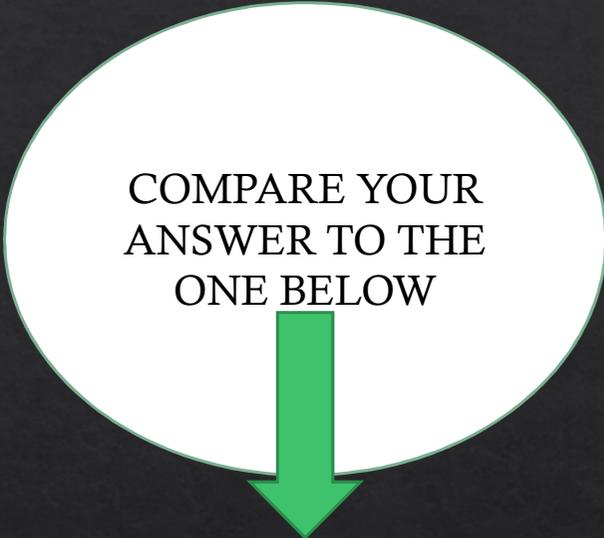
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COMPARE YOUR ANSWER TO THE ONE BELOW



This implies either that Lady Macbeth is excited and enthusiastic about the murders or, more likely, that she lacks natural aggression and so has had to give herself false confidence by drinking- this echoes the soliloquy in Act 1, Scene 5. Lady Macbeth has drugged the grooms' possets, so that their sleep is the next thing to death. Lady Macbeth herself has also had some wine, but she feels bold and fierce, not drunk and sleepy.

Act Scene 2 – ANALYSIS OF QUOTES

KEY QUOTES –

“Hark! I laid the daggers ready; he could not miss them. Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done’t“

TRANSLATION - What's that! I laid the knives out so there's no way Macbeth could miss them. If Duncan hadn't looked like my dad I would have killed him myself.

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Although Lady Macbeth has clearly been cunning in helping to plan the murder this implies she feels guilty about it. She clearly feels sympathy towards Duncan as she compares him to her father, someone you would respect and care for. [This momentary revelation of a spark of human sympathy foreshadows Lady Macbeth's descent into madness later in the play. It turns out that she's not nearly so steely as she now believes herself to be.]

Act Scene 2 – ANALYSIS OF QUOTES

KEY QUOTES – “...tis the eye of childhood/ That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed, I’ll gild the faces of the grooms withal....A little water clears us of these deeds”

TRANSLATION - Only children imagine scary things that don't really exist. If Duncan's bleeding I'll mark the guards faces...A drop of water will get rid of any sign of this crime.

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Lady Macbeth tries to humiliate Macbeth again by calling him childish, revealing her ruthless and manipulative side once more. She seems callous and uncaring to think any trace of the crime can be removed merely by washing away blood from their hands. Water is symbolic of absolution or washing away of sin and so this is deeply ironic.

Act Scene 2 – ANALYSIS OF QUOTES

KEY QUOTES – But wherefore could not I
pronounce ‘Amen’? I had most need of
blessing, and ‘Amen’/ Stuck in my throat
Macbeth shall sleep no more”

TRANSLATION - Why couldn't I say Amen? I
really needed God's help and 'Amen stuck in my
throat.. I'll never sleep again...'

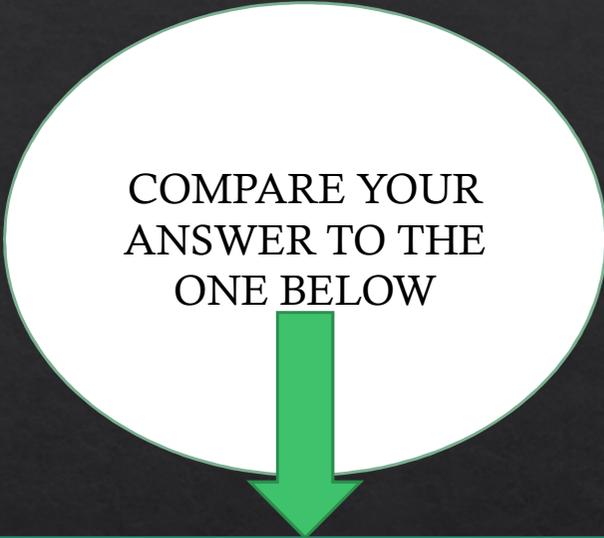
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Act Scene 2 – ANALYSIS OF QUOTES

KEY QUOTES – ” Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood/ Clean from my hand? No, this is my hand will rather/ The multitudinous seas incarnadine,/ Making the green one red..”

TRANSLATION - Will all the water in the ocean ever wash this blood off my hands? No, in fact my hand will make all the seas scarlet, making them turn from green to red.”

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The gruesome reality of the murder is conveyed to the audience here. Although Macbeth has fought in battle he is horrified by killing Duncan. He feels he will never be clear of the blood on his hands, symbolising his guilty conscience.

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Macbeth is panic stricken and realises that he has damned himself by committing the sin of killing the king. Sleep is a recurring symbol in the play- it represents peace of mind and a clear conscience, it can also represent death.

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As soon as Lady Macbeth has exited, we hear a knocking. Macbeth hears it, too, and it frightens him, but he can do nothing except stare at his hands. He looks at them as though he had never seen them before, and he feels that looking at them is like getting his eyes gouged out. It is the blood on his hands that causes this horrible fascination, and he feels that the blood can never be washed away. Before his hands are clean, they will make all the seas of the world turn red

PLENARY

Act Scene 2 – ANALYSIS OF QUOTES

HOW DOES
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Act Scene 2 – ANALYSIS OF QUOTES

1. Why do we do not actually witness the murder of King Duncan?

2. Why does this scene takes place at night?

3. What is noticeable about what is happening to the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth?

4. What do we learn about Lady Macbeth's softer side? What does this do to the audience?

5. As she waits she decides that she heard a screech owl, and she takes that as a good omen, because the screech owl is nature's own 'fatal bellman'. What is notable about this quote?

7. How is water used to describe the emotions Macbeth feels?

6. Whilst holding the dagger in his hand, Macbeth says 'This is a sorry sight'. How would the audience react to this?

HOW DOES SHAKESPEARE CREATE TENSION IN THIS SCENE?