Macbeth: Act III 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.

posterity: future generations

cide: kill (Shakespeare uses parricide, which means the act of killing one’s parents.) Also, think about regicide, patricide, matricide

naught: nothing

jovial: jolly; cheerful

muse: to think about in silence

mirth: joy

ruby: red

blanch: turn pale white

wayward: turned away (perverted) from what is the expected norm; resistant to guidance or discipline

II. Background Info:

Mark Antony & Octavius (Augustus) Caesar: after Julius Caesar was assassinated, Antony and Octavius joined forces to defeat Cassius and Brutus (co-conspirators in the assassination of Julius Caesar). The two joined forces with a third man (Lepidus) to rule Rome. Accounts have Antony and Octavius being friends early on, but later Octavius turns on Antony and defeats him to take supreme rule of Rome.

Acheron: a river in Hades (underworld) over which the souls of the dead were ferried. Similar to Styx. The word often comes to represent Hades altogether. The dictionary defines it as hell. In Dante’s Inferno, the river borders hell.

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.

apostrophe: (Etymology = apo [away] + strophe [turn]) When a character makes an apostrophe, or apostrophizes, that character turns away and speaks to nothing. They may speak to someone who is absent, dead, or something that is not human, e.g., Fate. An apostrophe is a type of speech similar to soliloquy and aside.
IV. Questions: answer the following questions while you read to check your comprehension.

Scene 1:
1. According to Banquo, how did Macbeth get all that the weird women promised? "played foully for it" - did something bad to get all they promised

2. What has Macbeth invited Banquo to do? Come to his banquet

3. Where will Banquo be between now and this evening? Riding his horse

4. What does Macbeth say has been learned of Malcom and Donalbain? They were found in England and Ireland ("bloody cousins") and are lying about their involvement with their father's murder

5. Who will Banquo take with him? His son, Fleance

6. Macbeth says, “For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered.” Who is he talking about? What is bothering Macbeth in this soliloquy? Banquo and Fleance; He ended up killing Duncan for them, since his a "fruitless crown" and he won't pass it on to anyone. Fleance will be king according to prophecy.

7. In a previous speech, what did Macbeth try to convince the murderers of? That Banquo caused their troubles.

8. What do the murderers say about their own lives and their willingness to do what Macbeth want them to do? They have such bad luck anyway that they can be reckless and do anything to spite the world.

9. Besides Banquo, who else does Macbeth want dead? Fleance

Scene 2:
10. Lady Macbeth voices concern about getting what one desires but not being “content.” What does she say is “safer” to be? Dead like Duncan than to live with uncertain joy (she is struggling with what they've done.)

11. What reasons does Macbeth give for why Duncan is better off than he? Duncan can sleep; nothing bad can touch him anymore.

12. How does Macbeth instruct Lady Macbeth to act toward Banquo? Pay special attention to him

13. What does Lady Macbeth say that provides comfort to Macbeth? Nature does not give Fleance/Banquo immortality
14. Macbeth says, “Be innocent of the knowledge.” Who should be innocent? **Lady Macbeth**

What knowledge is Macbeth talking about? **His plan for something dreadful (Banquo and Fleance)**

**Scene 3:**

15. Who hired the third murderer? **Macbeth**

16. The murderers are about a mile away from the palace gate. What do most men usually do from this place? **Secure their horses and walk the rest of the way to the palace.**

17. How successful were the murderers? **1/2—killed Banquo, let Fleance escape**

**Scene 4:**

18. What is happening at the beginning of this scene? **Macbeth and Lady Macbeth welcome everyone to their banquet**

19. What is the first thing Macbeth tells the murderer? **There is blood on his face; better outside of Banquo's body than in it.**

20. What does Macbeth mean when says, “There the serpent lies. The worm that’s fled / Hath nature that in time will venom breed, / no teeth for th’ present”? **Fleance has fled and does no harm now, but will as he gets older (king prophecy)**

21. Macbeth says that he hopes he can “challenge,” or accuse, Banquo of _____ unkindness _____ rather than pity him for ____ mischief ____. 

22. Macbeth says, “Which of you have done this?” What is Macbeth looking at when he says this? **Banquo's ghost**. What is Macbeth referring to when he says “done this”? **Who has made him appear/messing with him**

23. What does Lady Macbeth say is the problem? **Macbeth has fits, and always has since youth**

24. Lady Macbeth tell the lords not to do what because it enrages Macbeth in these fits? **Look at him (just ignore it and he will stop)**

25. She tells them to ignore rank and do what? **leave as quickly as possible**

26. What behavior of Macduff does Macbeth find unnerving? **His refusal to come to the banquet**

27. Macbeth says, “There’s not a one of them but in his house I keep a servant fee’d.” What does this mean? **Macbeth has paid Macduff's servants to spy on the thanes there**
28. Who does Macbeth say he will go visit? The weird sisters (three witches)

Scene 5:

29. What does Hecate accuse the Weird Sisters of? Not including her in their plans with Macbeth

30. Where does Hecate tell the Weird Sisters to meet her in the morning? The pit of Acheron (in a hellish place)

31. What does Hecate say she will spend the night planning? A disastrous and fatal end to Macbeth

32. What does Hecate say is mortal’s worst enemy? Security/confidence

Scene 6:

33. What is Lennox’s thoughts on what has been happening in Scotland? Strange things are going on, like men killing their fathers, and Macbeth is handling it well.

34. What does Lennox say he has heard about Macduff? Is in disgrace by the king (Macbeth) for not showing up to the banquet

35. According to the Lord, where is Macduff? In England to help Malcom