

**Theme:** Shakespeare – a literary giant

**Text:** Macbeth Soliloquy

**Extract from:** Act 2. scene 1. Inverness. Court of Macbeth's castle

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### Annotations

**4** art – are **10** marshall'st – you conduct me **14** dudgeon – handle of the dagger; gouts – large drops **17** half-world – northern hemisphere **20** offerings – sacrifices; withered [dried up] murder – [personification!] **21** alarumed - called to action; sentinel – guard **23** Tarquin – Roman prince who raped Lucrece; design – here: (act of) murder **26** prate – talk **27** time ..... suits with it – night is a time that is suitable for murder **28** threat – say threatening things **32** knell – funeral bell

### Assignments

- 1) Why does it make sense for Shakespeare to have Macbeth soliloquize at this stage of the drama? [Contents / Context]
- 2) There are a number of literary devices that Shakespeare uses to show us Macbeth's mental state (e.g. comparison, imagination, references to ...). Take the rhyming couplet, which we know from the sonnets, as a starting point in your analysis of these devices. [Analysis]
- 3) It is amazing to see that in spite of a language that seems rather unintelligible to modern audiences Shakespeare's works are so popular. Give an explanation of this fact. Refer back to the soliloquy at hand in your argumentation. [Evaluation]

**Hint:** Do not plagiarize in your answers- use your own thoughts and formulations (unless you quote).

- Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
- 5 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
- 10 As this which now I draw.  
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;  
And such an instrument I was to use.  
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,  
Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
- 15 And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:  
It is the bloody business which informs  
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
- 20 The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings, and withered murder,  
Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,  
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,  
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
- 25 Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,  
And take the present horror from the time,  
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:
- 30 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.  
[A bell rings]  
I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.  
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.