

**This resource is intended to support teachers in leading students' analysis of a key scene. This could be used for discussion as a class, in pairs or groups, or as a homework task.**

**ACT 1 SCENE 7. Macbeth's castle.**

**Macbeth talks to the audience about his plans to kill King Duncan.**

**MACBETH**

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well	1
It were done quickly: if the assassination	
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch	
With his surcease success; that but this blow	
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,	5
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,	
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases	
We still have judgment here; that we but teach	
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return	
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice	10
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice	
To our own lips.	
He's here in double trust;	
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,	
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,	15
Who should against his murderer shut the door,	
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan	
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been	
So clear in his great office, that his virtues	
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against	20
The deep damnation of his taking-off;	
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,	
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed	
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,	
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,	25
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur	
To prick the sides of my intent, but only	
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself	
And falls on the other.	

## **LANGUAGE**

1. Find all the words in the semantic field of religion. What does this use of language tell us about Macbeth at this moment?
2. Highlight or underline all the repeated words within this speech. What do you notice? The word 'done' is repeated frequently throughout the play. Identify where else it occurs. Looking at these, consider why you think it is used so often.
3. Macbeth uses two metaphors, Lines 7-11, to describe the possible consequences of his actions. What are the two metaphors? What are the similarities and differences between them?

## **THEMES (Violence and Conflict)**

1. Look at the violent language used in the opening of this soliloquy up to the caesura in Line 7. What do you notice about the sounds that are used here?  
Consider: sibilance, plosives, alliteration etc. How does Shakespeare's use of sound help Macbeth present himself to the audience at this moment?
2. For the rest of the soliloquy, Macbeth is in conflict with himself about whether or not to be Duncan's murderer. What do you think Shakespeare wants the audience to feel about him?

## **CHARACTER**

1. Look at lines 14 – 21. What reasons does Macbeth list for not murdering Duncan? Which, do you think, is the one that concerns him the most? Why do you think this?
2. By the end of this speech, how much do you sympathise with Macbeth? Explain your answer with reference to the text.  
Why is this an important question to consider? How does it link to the conventions of tragedy?