

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.

*In this scene, King Duncan is told the news of Macbeth's brave actions fighting for the king against his enemies.*

## ACT I, SCENE II. Removed from the battlefield.

### DUNCAN

What bloody man is that? He can report,  
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt  
The newest state.

### MALCOLM

This is the sergeant  
Who, like a good and hardy soldier, fought  
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!  
Say to the King the knowledge of the broil  
As thou didst leave it.

### CAPTAIN

Doubtful it stood,  
As two spent swimmers that do cling together  
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald  
(Worthy to be a rebel, for to that  
The multiplying villainies of nature  
Do swarm upon him) from the Western Isles  
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;  
And Fortune, on his damnèd quarrel smiling,  
Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak;  
For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),  
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel,  
Which smoked with bloody execution,  
Like Valour's minion, carved out his passage  
Till he faced the slave;  
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,

Till he unseamed him from the nave to th' chops,  
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

## **DUNCAN**

O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!

## **LANGUAGE**

1. How is Macbeth viewed by the characters in this scene?

Consider: the Captain's heroic imagery to describe Macbeth's achievements on the battlefield, Duncan's praise of Macbeth

2. Valour is a Roman mythical figure who symbolises bravery. How is Macbeth presented when he is described as "Valour's minion"?

Consider: why is Macbeth linked to this figure? What does it mean to be a "minion"? How could this link to Macbeth's relationship with Duncan?

3. How is Macbeth presented as a brutal and violent figure?

Consider: "Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel, which smoked with bloody execution"

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

1. How are Macbeth's violent abilities seen by Duncan and the other characters?
2. What happens to the rebels? What are the consequences of their violence?
3. How does Shakespeare want the audience to view the people on the two sides of this conflict?

Challenge: Consider Shakespeare's intention when writing this play. Who was his patron at the time? Why would it please this patron to see loyal soldiers and rebels presented in these ways?

## **CHARACTER**

1. This scene forms the audience's first impression of Macbeth. What is our first impression of him?
2. Do you expect Macbeth to have a tragic end at this stage? Why/why not?