

Act 2 Scene 1, lines 33-61

A soliloquy is a speech made by a character alone on stage. It is usually a way to make the audience aware of what the character is thinking and feeling.

Is this a soliloquy which I see before me?

The servant has just left. Why do you think Shakespeare has left Macbeth alone on stage when he speaks about what he can see?

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me
clutch thee:

Which word shows that he is talking to the dagger **and** what should the actor do when he says this line?

I have thee not and yet I see thee still.

Why is this a "fatal vision" **and** what happens when he tries to touch it?

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

Where does he think that this dagger might have come from?

What must the actor do when he says this? How clearly can he see the dagger?

As this which now I draw.

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use.

Something is wrong with his sight! What are the two possibilities?

Mine eyes are made the fools o'th'other
senses,

Where is Macbeth going **and** to do what?

Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,

How has the dagger's appearance changed?

And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such
thing:

More blood! Why does Shakespeare create these references to blood?

It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-
world

There are three questions in the first seven lines of this speech. What is the effect?

You must imagine an Elizabethan bed to understand why Shakespeare writes of "curtain'd sleep". Can you explain this image?

Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's off'rings, and wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy
pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his
design

****See below**

Why is he thinking so much about ideas of moving? (underlined)

What is Macbeth talking to now?

Again, Macbeth's vivid imagination and jittery state are shown by Shakespeare. In this piece of personification, Macbeth imagines that the stones of the castle are alive. What might the stones be doing if they were people?

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;
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath
gives.

Lots of chilling words but no hot deeds so far! What happens to change this situation?

Who is actually ringing the bell and why?

In this metaphor, how is this bell like a "knell" (funeral bell)? From now on, Macbeth also knows whether he will go to heaven or hell. Which one will it be and why?

How does Shakespeare make these last two lines sound very final? (Look at the ends!)

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.

****These lines (51 to 56) are quite difficult!**

Macbeth knows that what he is about to do is more like the things in "wicked dreams" than in a refreshing night's sleep. His world is like a nightmare where witchcraft will flourish because the goddess of witchcraft (Hecate) has gone through successful rites or ceremonies. This is like the witches that Macbeth met: their evil work is flourishing because Macbeth is about to kill Duncan. Shakespeare personifies "murder" to make it like a person moving spookily (in the simile "like a ghost") towards "his design", or plan, just as Macbeth is going towards murdering Duncan. In the middle of this complicated sentence, Shakespeare creates other images, all to do with evil or horrific things. Murder has been called to action by a wolf's howl and he moves like Tarquin, a rapist who attacked his friend's wife. The evil and treachery suggested by referring to Tarquin are like Macbeth who is also about to do evil and commit treachery.

Remind yourself of the main events that have occurred between the first speech and this next one. Re-read what has happened immediately before this monologue. Where is Macbeth and who else is with him?

Act 5 Scene 5, lines 18-27

A **monologue** is a fairly - (or very!) - long speech made by one character. It is not meant to be part of a conversation and the character might be almost talking to him (or her)self.

The monologue “Tomorrow and tomorrow...”

Again, fitting the mood, there is a sense of the inevitable. What do “all our yesterdays” always lead to?

Notice the triple usage of this word. What effect does the repetition create?

Notice the alliteration in this line. Where? How does this sound contribute to a depressing mood?

Why is death “dusty”? What effect does the alliteration have?

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief
candle,
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the
stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.

In this metaphor, why does he say that life is a “brief candle” and why does he tell it to go out?

This is another metaphor created by Shakespeare to capture Macbeth’s feeling that life is meaningless. How is it like an unsuccessful actor?

This is yet another metaphor. If an idiot or lunatic told a story s/he might tell it in a wild way. There might be an impression that the story was exciting, but, actually, how good would it be? Why does Macbeth say that this is like life?

Consider the two speeches together:

Macbeth's feelings

- What are his feelings in the soliloquy?
- What are his feelings in the monologue?

Atmosphere

- What atmosphere and mood does Shakespeare create in each speech?

Macbeth's life

- How has his life changed between the soliloquy and the monologue?

Similarities

- Can you find any similarities between the first speech and the second, especially in the language?

Differences

- Can you find any differences between the language used in the two speeches?

TASK - Consider what Macbeth is saying in these two speeches and examine how Shakespeare uses language to make Macbeth's feelings clear to the audience.

- 1) Write a brief introduction, perhaps saying where the soliloquy comes in the play and what is happening.
- 2) Using your answers from your work on the soliloquy, write an examination of the language in that speech. Use lots of P.Q.C. (Point Quote Comment).
- 3) In the same way, use your work on the monologue to write an examination, with lots of P.Q.C.
- 4) Use your ideas from the comparison of the speeches to write a conclusion where you make some comparative points.

Two examples of Point Quote Comment

Macbeth tries to touch the dagger but he cannot and so he realises that it might be "a dagger of the mind" which he is hallucinating because he is so tense.

Life seems meaningless to Macbeth and he calls it a "brief candle". This metaphor suggests that life does not last long, is easily extinguished and will leave no trace once gone.