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?

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.

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
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’th’other senses, Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still, 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Where is Macbeth going and to do what?

How has the dagger’s appearance changed?

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

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

© 2005 www.teachit.co.uk 4457.doc Page 1 of 4
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
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 whereabout,
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.

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...”

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow创pes 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.
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.