Macbeth Act II Study Guide

Scene 1:

1. What suspicion about Macbeth does Banquo reveal in his soliloquy?
   1. Finally, we see that Banquo suspects Macbeth of murdering Duncan.
2. What is Banquo hoping for?
   1. He hopes his prophecies will come true as well.
3. What does Macbeth say the “bloody cousins” (Malcom and Donalbain) are up to?
   1. That they are in England and Ireland, not confessing, but telling everyone lies of some kind.
4. For what reasons does Macbeth want Banquo murdered?
   1. He wants Banquo murdered because he sees him as a treat, He does not want him to get in the way during his rule as king, but also, he does not want Banquo’s prophecy coming true as Banquo’s children are predicted to take the throne.
5. What reason does Macbeth give for not killing Banquo himself?
   1. He is afraid it would look bad to their common friends.
6. When does Macbeth want Banquo and Fleance killed?
   1. That night, while they are out for a ride, before the banquet.
7. How are Macbeth’s fear justified in this scene?
   1. He should be afraid of Banquo-Banquo is suspicious of him, and although right now he is loyal, he may turn on him, and he has the power to turn others again Macbeth too.

Scene 2:

1. What lines reveal how Lady Macbeth is feeling about being queen?
   1. She says, “Naught’s had, all’s spent, where our desire is got without content.” She is not content with where she is. She thought she would be happier, and wonders if it is how she got to the throne (by killing Duncan to get there) is what is ruining it for her.
2. What is Lady Macbeth’s problem with Macbeth?
   1. She think she is too caught up in his thoughts and troubles.
3. What does Macbeth mean by, “be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck/ Till thou applaud the deed”?
   1. Macbeth basically says, “Don’t worry your pretty little head about these things, until you find out what I’ve done, and can applaud me for it.”

Scene 3:

1. What does the second murderer mean when he says, “we have lost/ Best half of our affair”?
   1. Fleance escaped
2. Some scholars believe that the third murderer might be Macbeth himself. Draw an argument as to whether Macbeth would participate in the murder or not. Give reasons for your position.
   1. Answers will vary.

Scene 4:

1. How does Macbeth react to the news that Fleance escaped?
   1. Basically, he is more afraid than ever.
2. Macbeth’s sighting have gotten worse, as he insists he see Banquo’s ghost. How might this progression be a reflection of Macbeth’s mental state?
   1. Because he is seeing Banquo’s ghost it could be an indication that Macbeth is beginning to really slip from reality. He could going insane.
3. What explanation does Lady Macbeth give for Macbeth’s behavior?
   1. That he has a medical problem (seizures) from childhood.
4. How does Lady Macbeth try to calm Macbeth down?
   1. She tells him it is not real, but just his imagination.
5. What is you explanation for the appearance of Banquo’s ghost at the table? Why do you think Macbeth is the only one who can see him?
   1. This is Macbeth slipping into insanity. He is seeing the ghost because his conscience is getting to him. He is the only one who can see him because it is a problem in Macbeth’s head and not a reality.
6. Besides Banquo, who was conspicuously absent from the banquet?
   1. Macduff

Scene 5:

1. Scholar’s believe that scene give was not written by Shakespeare, but was added later. Why do you think this scene was added at this point? (Consider what just happened in the play.)
   1. It may have been added as a break to the audience, since they have just witness Macbeth possibly slipping into insanity. It could also have been a scene so that the stagehands could disassemble any fancy staging or lighting that made Banquo’s ghost appear.
2. Why is Hecate angry?
   1. She wanted to “play” by showing off what she could do to Macbeth.
3. What does Hecate say will soon be coming?
   1. Macbeth is coming.
4. What do you think Hecate means when she says “An you all know security/ Is mortals’ chiefest enemy”? Do you agree? Why or why not?
   1. Hecate is saying that one should be on guard and if one becomes too comfortable they should remember Duncan and his fate for being too nice.
5. Some producers/ directors often omit this scene from their productions. Do think removing this scene would change the play? Why or why not?
   1. Answers will vary.

Scene 6:

1. What things does Lennox say have been “strangely borne”?
   1. That Duncan was pitied of Macbeth, then he was dead; that Banquo would up dead; Fleance might as well have been killed, and he has fled; and Malcolm and Donalbain killed their father
2. What have Malcom and Macduff been up to?
   1. They have been rallying the troops of England with Siward to overthrow Macbeth.