

**Macbeth**

**Act Three  
Standards Focus: Characterization**

Characterization is the technique by which authors develop characters. **Direct characterization** is when the author or narrator directly tells the reader what the character is like. For example, "Jennifer is a good student." The author wants us to know this detail about Jennifer and does not give us the chance to take a guess about this aspect of her personality.

In drama, since the action of the play is written in dialogue form, there is little direct characterization. If the author wants you to know something concrete through direct characterization, it may appear in the stage directions. However, for the most part, anything you need to know about a character in a play is spoken by either the character himself or by other characters, which leads us to the concept of *indirect characterization*.

**Indirect characterization** is when the author gives information about a character and allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions about that character. Two of the ways we can learn about a character through indirect characterization are:

- *Through the character's own thoughts, feelings and actions*—the reader witnesses what the character does or says, and learns something about the character from these thoughts, feelings, or actions. For example, "On her way to class after lunch, Susan saw some trash on the ground that wasn't hers. She decided to pick it up anyway, and threw it in the trash can."

The reader can make some assumptions about Susan from this excerpt: she cares about the environment, she takes pride in her school, she likes things neat and tidy, etc. All of these are appropriate assumptions based on Susan's actions.

- *Through interactions with other characters*—the reader witnesses the interactions between characters, including how other characters react to another character, and what they say and do towards one another. For example:

"Maggie said, 'Julie seems not to care about her school work anymore. It's as if she is distracted or concerned about something. What do you think?'  
"I don't know, but it is certainly unlike her to get bad grades," Kamresha replied."

The reader can make assumptions about Julie from this conversation between Maggie and Kamresha. The reader can conclude that Julie used to work hard and get good grades in school, that she may be distracted about something, and that she is not behaving like her usual self.

**Part One: What Characters Say/Infer About Themselves**

**Directions:** To help you learn more about the characters in Macbeth, examine each of the following excerpts from Acts One-Three. For each excerpt, explain what we learn about the character and why this particular selection is important to the story so far. Act and scene numbers have been given to help with the context of the excerpt. An example has been done for you.

1x. Macbeth: *Is this a dagger 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? ... 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. (Act II, Scene 1)*

- What we learn about Macbeth: Macbeth must murder Duncan, but is clearly starting to have second thoughts about it. He begins to lose his mind a bit as he envisions a bloody dagger leading him to kill Duncan.
- Why it is important to the story so far: This is the first time that we see how the idea of the murder is starting to affect Macbeth. At this point, he has a conscience, and knows that what he is doing is not right. He knows there are supernatural, or at least evil, influences involved.

1. Duncan: *There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face. / He was a gentleman on whom I built an absolute trust. (Act I, Scene 4)*

- What we learn about Duncan: \_\_\_\_\_
- Why it is important to the story so far: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Lady Macbeth: *Your hand, your tongue, look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under 't. He that's coming / Must be provided for, and you shall put / This night's great business into my dispatch, / Which shall to all our nights and days to come / Give solely sovereign swag and masterdom. (Act I, Scene 5)*

- What we learn about Lady Macbeth: \_\_\_\_\_
- Why it is important to the story so far: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Macbeth: *What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes. / Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red. (Act II, Scene 2)*

- What we learn about Macbeth: \_\_\_\_\_
- Why it is important to the story so far: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

4. Banquo: *If there come truth from them— / as upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine— / Why, by the verities on thee made good, / May they not be my oracles as well? / And set me up in hope?* (Act III, Scene 1)

- a. What we learn about Banquo: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Why it is important to the story so far: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part Two: What Characters Say/Infer About Other Characters**

**Directions:** For each excerpt, explain what we learn about the character(s) and why this particular selection is important to the story so far. Act and scene numbers have been given to help with the context of the excerpt.

1. Captain: *For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name), / Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel, / Which smok'd with bloody executions, / Like valor's minion, curv'd out his passage / Till he faced the slave* (Act I, Scene 2)

- a. What we learn about Macbeth: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Why it is important to the story so far: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Banquo: *What are these, / So wither'd and so wild in their attire / That look not like th' inhabitants o' th' earth / And yet are on 't? ... You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so.* (Act I, Scene 3)

- a. What we learn about the witches: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Why it is important to the story so far: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Lady Macbeth: *Glammis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be / What thou art promised. Yet I do fear thy nature. / It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness, / To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great, / Art not without ambition, but without the illness should attend it.* (Act I, Scene 5)

- a. What we learn about Macbeth: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Why it is important to the story so far: \_\_\_\_\_