

By the end of studying **Act 4 Scene 1** I need to know;

**Plot:** The witches assemble to meet Macbeth and promise to answer his questions.

**Ideas:** The Apparitions comfort Macbeth at first- and then give him cause for alarm. Macbeth is left on his own to decide how best to interpret those prophecies, but he fails to understand that Fate is inevitable, however he chooses to act.

<p><b>Vocabulary</b></p>	<p><b>brinded</b> streaked  <b>fenny</b> living in the marshes  <b>howlet</b> young owl  <b>yesty</b> frothing  <b>lodg'd</b> beaten down  <b>germens</b> seeds  <b>farrow</b> litter of pigs  <b>harp'd</b> guessed  <b>impress</b> force  <b>mortal custom</b> usual lifespan  <b>crack of doom</b> Day of Judgment  <b>antic round</b> mad dance  <b>this great King</b> possibly a reference to James I (the king in Shakespeare's audience)  <b>flighty . . . with it</b> Unless acted upon immediately intentions may be overtaken by time.</p>
<p><b>Context</b></p>	<p>Some of Banquo's descendants carry orbs and sceptres to show that they will be rulers of England as well as Scotland. Macbeth was written during the reign of King James, who ruled over Scotland and England.          At the time Shakespeare was writing, many people thought that Witches were real, so the Weird Sisters would have seemed believable and frightening to an audience in the 1600's.</p>
<p><b>Themes</b></p>	<p><b>Reality vs Appearance:</b> The Witches have not lied, they have deliberately misled Macbeth and he believes no woman born can defeat him.  <b>Supernatural:</b> The Witches are an evil supernatural force and their ability to predict the future gives them power over humans. The Witches are not in many scenes, but they drive the action of the play. Macbeth would have not committed the terrible crimes if he was not influenced by the Witches. The supernatural elements add to the atmosphere- they make the play darker and more frightening. Shakespeare only hints at what is real and what is not, which adds to the drama. The <b>stage directions</b> say that each apparition "descends"- this suggests that they are returning to hell. <b>Setting:</b> Whenever the Witches appear they accompanied by thunder. This disturbance of nature reflects their evil intentions.  <b>Ambition:</b> The Witches pretend to obey Macbeth "speak/demand/we'll answer". They trick him into asking for the apparitions by saying that he can talk to their "masters"- the Witches know Macbeth's biggest weakness is his ambition, so they play on his lust for power.  <b>Fate and Free Will:</b> Free will means that humans choose their own course of action, so their future is made up of the results of their choices. Macbeth only acts because he hears his future, so he causes it to happen. At times Macbeth seems to believe in fate after he hears the Witches' prophecies, he seems happy to let fate take its course.</p>
<p><b>Deeper understanding</b></p>	<p>Act4 scene 1 is a <b>Turning Point</b> in the action as Macbeth starts to believe that he's invincible. The Witches summon three apparitions to predict his future- they symbolise the threats to Macbeth:  <b>An armoured head warns Macbeth about Macduff:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could foreshadow Macbeth's decapitation.</li> <li>It could also symbolise treachery and the violence of the battle.</li> </ul> <b>A bloody child tells Macbeth that no one born from a woman can harm him:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could represent Macduff, born by Caesarean section.</li> </ul> <b>A child wearing a crown and carrying a branch tells Macbeth that he can't be beaten until Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane Hill:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could represent Malcolm- the rightful heir.</li> </ul> </p>

**Reading:**  
 Read up to the punctuation.  
 The Witches speak in rhyming couplets which makes their speech seem unnatural.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The branch could represent Birnam Wood, but also hope that Scotland might grow and flourish under Malcolm's rule.</li> </ul> <p>Macbeth takes the Witches' prediction at face value, even though he knows that people who trust the Witches are "damned". He is desperate for them to give him good news to make him feel secure.</p>
<p><b>Quotes</b></p>	<p><b>"Double, double toil and trouble; fire burn, and cauldron bubble"</b> The scene opens with the Witches casting a spell. This reminds the audience of the evil intentions.</p> <p><b>"By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes"</b> The Witches announce Macbeth's arrival which implies that he has changed from the brave hero of Act 1.</p> <p><b>"How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!"</b> Macbeth shows a lack of respect as he insults the witches. The word 'secret' implies that they are mysterious and dangerous.</p> <p><b>"I conjure you by that which you profess, howe'er you come to know it, answer me"</b> Macbeth is desperate for more knowledge and power. He commands the Witches to answer him.</p> <p><b>"Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth: beware Macduff, beware the Thane of Fife"</b> The Witches warn Macbeth to stay clear from Macduff, but he believes that he is invincible.</p> <p><b>"For none of woman born shall harm Macbeth"</b> Macbeth is confident, and he thinks he will never be defeated as he thinks he is invincible and believes that no man can harm him.</p> <p><b>"Macbeth shall never vanquish until Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him."</b> Macbeth refuses to believe the prophecy as he thinks that he will never be defeated because it is impossible for Birnam Wood to move.</p> <p><b>"From this moment the very firstlings of my heart shall be the firstlings of my hand"</b> Macbeth decides that he will act without hesitating. This contrasts with how he was worried about killing Duncan in Act 1, Scene 7.</p> <p><b>"The castle of Macduff I will surprise; seize upon Fife; give to the edge o'th' sword his wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls that trace him in his line."</b> Macbeth wants to kill Macduff's family- this shows how evil and paranoid he's become. He's willing to kill anyone associated with his enemy even if they don't pose a threat.</p> <p><b>"Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs"</b> Macbeth wants to know if the Witches' prophecy about Banquo is true, so they show him another vision- a line of Banquo's descendants. The juxtaposition of children (pictures of innocence) and images of death, warfare, and blood, is dramatic and terrifying, but especially so for Macbeth: For a man who has no offspring, the image of children can only fill him with hatred and loathing.</p>
<p><b>Terminology</b></p>	<p>"Through the yeasty waves/confound and swallow navigation up" which extends the metaphor that Macbeth is a sailor and Scotland is a ship.</p> <p>"Tell me", "Call'em" Macbeth uses imperatives to control the Witches and threatens them with "eternal curse" which shows he is not afraid of the Witches.</p> <p>"Thunder" pathetic fallacy is used to create a dark and violent atmosphere.</p> <p>"How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!" Exclamative sentence is used to show Macbeth's excitement to meet the Witches but he is also demonstrated a lack of respect.</p>

**Links across the text:**

Macbeth was known as 'brave Macbeth' in Act 1 but now he is referred to being 'wicked'.

The visions of the apparitions are like the visions of the bloody dagger in Act 2, Scene 1 and Banquo's ghost in Act 3, Scene 4.

In Act 3, the Witches gave Banquo a prophecy that his future children will be kings. In this scene Macbeth wants to know if this is true.

Macbeth plans to kill Macduff's family. This is linked to Act 4, scene 2 where they are murdered, and Macduff learns of his family's death in Act 4, Scene 3.