***Macbeth***

***Notes on Act 1, scenes 1 - 4***

**Scene 1:**

* Witches are introduced. They were a real concern for the people of Shakespeare’s time, who believed quite strongly in things like evil spirits, spells, and the power of Satan. Their presence means that bad things are likely to happen.
* They show their ability to tell the future (how the war will turn out, their meeting with Macbeth...), a *super natural* power associated with witches.
* “Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair...” (Line 11). A very important line. It foreshadows what is to come: a **reversal** of the natural order of things.

**Scene 2:**

* The scene opens with the sergeant giving a report on the battle.
* ***Imagery*** is the use of words to create powerful feelings or mental pictures. This is used freely throughout all Shakespearean plays (remember, there were no special effects and props were rare, so verbal descriptions had to be powerful).
* ***Blood Imagery*** (images related to blood) is quite common in **Macbeth**. Note lines 1 (“bloody man”), 20 (“bloody execution”) and 43 (“bathe in reeking wounds”).
* ***Similes*** (comparisons using ‘like’ or ‘as’) are a big part of creating imagery. Scene ii has many examples. The sergeant uses them freely in describing the battle: Macbeth and Macdonwald’s fighting “...**as** two spent swimmers”; Macdonwald’s luck was “... **like** rebel’s whore” (loves you one minute - leaves you the next); there are a number of such examples. Macbeth and Banquo were leading the king’s (Duncan) forces against Macdonwald, Sweno and the Thane of Cawdor. As reward for victory, the king orders that Cawdor is to be executed, and his land and **title** go to Macbeth. This is ***ironic***, because the new Thane of Cawdor (Macbeth) will soon turn against Duncan too.

**Scene 3:**

* The scene opens with the witches discussing some recent evil doings.
* Line 39 is very important: it is the first line spoken by Macbeth, and is ***very similar*** to what the witches said in scene 1 (“fair is foul and foul is fair...”). It **foreshadows** his connection to the witches.
* The witches greet him as Thane of Glamis (he already is), Thane of Cawdor and future king. Macbeth demands more information, while Banquo’s questions are met with paradoxical answers (contradictions). When Ross arrives to confirm that Macbeth is now Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth begins to believe.
* Note the use of ***aside***. This is meant to reflect the inner thoughts of a character.

**Scene 4:**

* Malcolm, the king’s son, confirms to Duncan that Cawdor has been executed.
* Duncan makes a very ***ironic*** statement about a major theme of Macbeth in lines 13 - 16. Basically, he says in reference to Cawdor, you can’t judge what is inside a person just by looking at them. Someone who appears “fair” on the outside may well be “foul” on the inside. The irony is that he has learned this about the old Thane of Cawdor, but doesn’t consider it when it comes to the new one - Macbeth.
* Macbeth’s address to the king could be seen as a little too deferential. Banquo is more direct.
* Duncan announces that his son Malcolm is next in line for the throne. Macbeth now plans to take action. In the previous scene, he was going to leave it up to fate. His ambition is surfacing.