***Macbeth - Notes on Act 1, scenes 5, 6 and 7***

**Scene 5:**

* The scene opens with Lady Macbeth reading a letter sent to her by her husband, outlining the strange events that have recently taken place. She is *very excited* to hear this. However, she feels that his “...nature; (is) too full o’ the milk of human kindness” *(lines 15-16).* This means that she believes her husband is too nice to do what needs to be done in order to gain the throne. She feels he must be ruthless and use “...the nearest way”*(line 17),* which means that she thinks he must murder Duncan.
* She goes on to say that while her husband has *some* ambition, he doesn’t have “The illness that should attend it”(*line 19),* meaning he is not wicked enough.
* She plans to overcome this by talking him into it *(lines 25 - 26).*
* Lady Macbeth is delighted with the news that Duncan is coming to her home. She now thinks it will be much easier to kill him.
* In line 43, Lady Macbeth calls on “spirits” to help her kill Duncan. ***This is very important!*** It shows that she, like the witches, has a connection to and belief in evil spirits.
* *In line 44, Lady Macbeth calls on the spirits to “unsex” her, meaning “make me more like a man”. Remember, this play took place during a time when the sexes were not very equal. That was the natural order of things. Women had to mind children, tend to the house, and so on. They were expected to obey their husbands, and be submissive to them. They were also expected to be* ***gentle, merciful and compassionate.*** *These were feminine qualities. Lady Macbeth wants them removed from her.* ***A woman acting like a man: another example of how the natural order of things (Great Chain of Being) is challenged.***
* Lady Macbeth also wants the spirits to take away any feelings of compassion, and make her cruel and *remorseless.*
* She wants **darkness** to hide her actions so that “heaven” won’t see(*lines53-55)*. **Darkness** here symbolizes evil.
* There is also ***blood imagery*** in this scene as well *(“...make thick my blood” - line46).* She doesn’t want pity or guilt to run through her veins.
* She tells her husband to hide his true feelings *(“...look like the innocent flower/But be the serpent under it” lines72-73).* **This is another example of one of Macbeth’s themes: things are not always as they appear!**

**Scene 6:**

* *(Lines 1-10)* The conversation between Duncan and Banquo is full of ***irony.*** Duncan says that Macbeth’s castle looks and smells so sweet and inviting. Yet, a plot is underway to kill him here.
* Banquo notices the presence of a bird called a **martlet** (line 5) and takes it as a good sign, since these birds are usually found in churches. It is ***ironic*** how this bird, usually found in good places, is found here.
* Lady Macbeth really overdoes it with her praise (lines 17-23). She is really sucking up.
* Duncan is presented as a kind and gentle old man. This will make his murder seem that much worse.

**Scene 7:**

* *(lines 1-28)* Macbeth’s ***soliloquy*** (private speech). He thinks of numerous reasons ***not*** to kill Duncan. However, he would do it right away if there were no negative consequences.
* *(line 7):* “We’d jump the life to come.” Dual meaning: *The life to come* could mean Duncan’s life, ie: I’d kill him to get the throne; It could also mean that Macbeth is willing to sacrifice heaven (the life to come) if he could get the throne here on earth.
* *(lines 7-12)* Macbeth says here that if a person commits evil, that evil will eventually come back to affect us in a bad way.
* *(line 12)* “He’s here in double trust”: Macbeth is not only Duncan’s servant, he is also his host on this night. More reason not to kill the king.
* *(lines 16-20)* Macbeth describes Duncan as a good man and king. Thus, killing him would be really bad.
* *(lines 25-27)* “...I have no spur...vaulting ambition”: Shakespeare uses ***horse and rider*** imagery to show that Macbeth has only one reason to kill the king: his own evil ambition.
* *(lines 33-37)* Macbeth tells his wife he has decided not to kill the king. He lists a number of reasons. His wife is very upset by this, and verbally attacks him. Note how harsh and cruel she is. She calls him a coward, questions his love for her, and so on.
* Lady Macbeth uses lots of ***violent imagery*** to express her feelings to her husband. Lines 60-64 are quite disturbing. She says she would rather kill her own baby than break a promise to him.
* *(lines 68-79)* Lady Macbeth outlines her plan for killing Duncan. She will get his guards drunk so that Macbeth can break into Duncan’s bedroom, stab him, and then place the murder weapon with the sleeping guards so that they will be blamed.
* *(lines 89-92)* Macbeth has been convinced, and is now willing to go through with the plan.

***Pay close attention to the last rhyming couplet!!*** It once again reinforces the theme of false appearance. Macbeth says that he will put on a “show” to make everyone think he loves the king and is loyal to him. The “false face” (fake appearance) must hide his “false heart” (what is on the inside, his true desires).