MACBETH
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
Rather than so, come fate into the list.
And champion me to the utterance! Who’s there!
[Re-enter Attendant, with two Murderers]
Now go to the door, and stay there till we call.
[Exit Attendant]
Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

First Murderer
It was, so please your highness.

MACBETH
Well then, now
Have you consider’d of my speeches? Know
That it was he in the times past which held you
So under fortune, which you thought had been
Our innocent self: this I made good to you
In our last conference, pass’d in probation with you,
How you were borne in hand, how cross’d,
the instruments,
Who wrought with them, and all things else that might
To half a soul and to a notion crazed
Say ‘Thus did Banquo.’

First Murderer
You made it known to us.

MACBETH
I did so, and went further, which is now
Our point of second meeting. Do you find
Your patience so predominant in your nature
That you can let this go? Are you so gospell’d
To pray for this good man and for his issue,
Whose heavy hand hath bow’d you to the grave
And beggar’d yours for ever?

First Murderer
We are men, my liege.

MACBETH
Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;
As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,
Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept
All by the name of dogs: the valued file
Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,
The housekeeper, the hunter, every one
According to the gift which bounteous nature
Hath in him closed; whereby he does receive
Particular addition. from the bill
That writes them all alike: and so of men.
Now, if you have a station in the file, Not i’ the worst rank of manhood, say ’t; And I will put that business in your bosoms, Whose execution takes your enemy off, Grapples you to the heart and love of us, Who wear our health but sickly in his life, Which in his death were perfect.

Macbeth is merely putting words in their mouths. Of course they are going to agree because he is the King! Macbeth is a tyrant who rules by force. Both of you know Banquo was your enemy.

Second Murderer
I am one, my liege,
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
Have so incensed that I am reckless what I do to spite the world.

Both murderers state that they do not care whether they live or die anyway, so taking a risk is not going to bother them. The second murderer sounds as if he wants to get revenge on the world because the world has made him suffer.

First Murderer
And I another
So weary with disasters, tugg’d with fortune,
That I would set my lie on any chance,
To mend it, or be rid on’t.

Macbeth is merely putting words in their mouths. Of course they are going to agree because he is the King! Macbeth is a tyrant who rules by force.

Both Murderers
True, my lord.

Actually they aren’t murderers – they are desperate farmers. Because they are not real murderers they botch the murder of Fleance.

MACBETH
Both of you
Know Banquo was your enemy.

The audience would realise Macbeth’s sheer hypocrisy instantly: he is just trying to justify a premeditated and cold-blooded murder. Even worse, he is trying to justify the murder of a close friend. Macbeth states that he could, in public, order Banquo’s execution but will not do so because he knows that deep down, there would be a public outcry. Why? It must be because Banquo is a popular public figure who is well-liked.

MACBETH
So is he mine; and in such bloody distance,
That every minute of his being thrusts
Against my near’st of life: and though I could
With barefaced power sweep him from my sight
And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,
For certain friends that are both his and mine,
Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall
Who I myself struck down; and thence it is,
That I to your assistance do make love,
Masking the business from the common eye
For sundry weighty reasons.

Second Murderer
We shall, my lord,
Perform what you command us.

They will just do as they are told. They are desperate and dare not disobey Macbeth.
Annotated Act 3 (3.1, 3.2 and 3.4)

First Murderer
Though our lives —

MACBETH
Your spirits shine through you. Within this hour at most
I will advise you where to plant yourselves;
Acc quaint you with the perfect spy o’ the time,
The moment on’t; for’t must be done to-night,
And something from the palace; always thought
That I require a clearness: and with him —
To leave no rubs nor botches in the work —
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,
Whose absence is no less material to me
Than is his father’s, must embrace the fate
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:
I’ll come to you anon.

Both Murderers
We are resolved, my lord.

MACBETH
I’ll call upon you straight: abide within.
[Exeunt Murderers]
It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul’s flight,
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night.
[Exit]
[The palace.]
[Enter LADY MACBETH and a Servant]

LADY MACBETH
Is Banquo gone from court?

Servant
Ay, madam, but returns again to-night.

LADY MACBETH
Say to the king, I would attend his leisure
For a few words.

Servant
Madam, I will.
[Exit]

LADY MACBETH
Nought’s had, all’s spent,
Where our desire is got without content:
’Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

[Enter MACBETH]

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard: what’s done is done.

MACBETH
We have scotch’d the snake, not kill’d it:
She’ll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth.
But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;
After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well;
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,
Can touch him further.
**LADY MACBETH**
Come on;
Gentle my lord, sleek o’er your rugged looks;
Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

**MACBETH**
So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you:
Let your remembrance apply to Banquo;
Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue:
Unsafe the while, that we
Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,
And make our faces vizards to our hearts,
Disguising what they are.

**LADY MACBETH**
You must leave this.

**MACBETH**
O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
Thou know’st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

**LADY MACBETH**
But in them nature’s copy’s not eterne.

**MACBETH**
There’s comfort yet; they are assailable;
Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown
His cloister’d flight, ere to black Hecate’s summons
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums
Hath rung night’s yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note.

**LADY MACBETH**
What’s to be done?

**MACBETH**
Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeing night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;
While night’s black agents to their preys do rouse.
Thou marv’st at my words: but hold thee still;
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.
So, prithee, go with me.

[Exeunt]
[The same. Hall in the palace.]
[A banquet prepared. Enter MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX, Lords, and Attendants]

MACBETH
You know your own degrees; sit down: at first
And last the hearty welcome.

Lords
Thanks to your majesty.

MACBETH
Ourself will mingle with society,
And play the humble host.
Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time
We will require her welcome.

LADY MACBETH
Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends;
For my heart speaks they are welcome.
[First Murderer appears at the door]

MACBETH
See, they encounter thee with their hearts’ thanks.
Both sides are even: here I’ll sit i’ the midst:
Be large in mirth; anon we’ll drink a measure
The table round.
[Approaching the door]
There’s blood on thy face.

First Murderer
’Tis Banquo’s then.

MACBETH
’Tis better thee without than he within.
Is he dispatch’d?

First Murderer
My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

MACBETH
Thou art the best o’ the cut-throats: yet he’s good
That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it,
Thou art the nonpareil.

First Murderer
Most royal sir,
Fleance is ’scaped.

This scene is a complete contrast to the end of 3.2. This is the public face of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, hiding their deceit and hypocrisy with a public show of dignity, loyalty and friendly rule. Macbeth is keen to show that he is willing to ‘mingle’ and be ‘humble’, to prove he is normal and approachable, rather than as a cold, aloof figure of authority. Macbeth cannot sit still because he is waiting for the murderers to make their secret entrance. This is why he asks his wife to make a toast because he has just seen one of the murderers appear at the door. Macbeth is therefore using his wife as a convenient distraction.
MACBETH

Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air:
But now I am cabin’d, cribb’d, confined, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo’s safe?

First Murderer

Aye, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,
With twenty trenched gashes on his head;
The least a death to nature.

MACBETH

Thanks for that:
There the grown serpent lies; the worm that’s fled
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: to-morrow
We’ll hear, ourselves, again.

[Exit Murderer]

LADY MACBETH

My royal lord,
You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold
That is not often vouch’d, while ’tis a-making,
’Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home;
From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;
Meeting were bare without it.

MACBETH

Sweet remembrancer!
Now, good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both!

LENNOX

May’l please your highness sit.

[The GHOST OF BANQUO enters, and sits in MACBETH’s place]

MACBETH

Here had we now our country’s honour roof’d,
Were the graced person of our Banquo present;
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness
Than pity for mischance!

ROSS

His absence, sir,
Lays blame upon his promise. Please’l your highness
To grace us with your royal company.

MACBETH

The table’s full.
LENNOX
Here is a place reserved, sir.

MACBETH
Where?

LENNOX
Here, my good lord. What is’t that moves your highness?

MACBETH
Which of you have done this?

Lords
What, my good lord?

MACBETH
Thou canst not say I did it: never shake Thy gory locks at me.

ROSS
Gentlemen, rise: his highness is not well.

LADY MACBETH
Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus, And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat; The fit is momentary; upon a thought He will again be well: if much you note him, You shall offend him and extend his passion: Feed, and regard him not. Are you a man?

MACBETH
Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that Which might appal the devil.

LADY MACBETH
O proper stuff!
This is the very painting of your fear: This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said, Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts, Impostors to true fear, would well become A woman’s story at a winter’s fire, Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself! Why do you make such faces? When all’s done, You look but on a stool.
Annotated Act 3 (3.1, 3.2 and 3.4)

MACBETH
Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo!
how say you?
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.
If charnel-houses and our graves must send
Those that we bury back, our monuments
Shall be the maws of kites.
[GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes]

LADY MACBETH
What, quite unmann’d in folly?

MACBETH
If I stand here, I saw him.

LADY MACBETH
Fie, for shame!

MACBETH
Blood hath been shed ere now, i’ the olden time,
Ere human statute purged the gentle weal;
Ay, and since too, murders have been perform’d
Too terrible for the ear: the times have been,
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now they rise again,
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools: this is more strange
Than such a murder is.

LADY MACBETH
My worthy lord,
Your noble friends do lack you.

MACBETH
I do forget.
Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends,
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing
To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;
Then I’ll sit down. Give me some wine; fill full.
I drink to the general joy o’ the whole table,
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;
Would he were here! to all, and him, we thirst,
And all to all.

Lords
Our duties, and the pledge.
[Re-enter GHOST OF BANQUO]
**MACBETH**

Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with!

**LADY MACBETH**

Think of this, good peers,
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

**MACBETH**

What man dare, I dare:
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm’d rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble: or be alive again,
And dare me to the desert with thy sword;
If trembling I inhabit then, protest me
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!
Unreal mockery, hence!

[GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes]

Why, so: being gone,
I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

**LADY MACBETH**

You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting,
With most admired disorder.

**MACBETH**

Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer’s cloud,
Without our special wonder? You make me strange
Even to the disposition that I owe,
When now I think you can behold such sights,
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,
When mine is blanched with fear.

**ROSS**

What sights, my lord?

**LADY MACBETH**

I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and worse;
Question enrages him. At once, good night:
Stand not upon the order of your going,
But go at once.

**LENNOX**

Good night; and better health
 Attend his majesty!
**LADY MACBETH**
A kind good night to all!

[Exeunt all but MACBETH and LADY MACBETH]

**MACBETH**
It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood:
Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;
Augurs and understood relations have
By magot-pies and coughs and rooks brought forth
The secret’st man of blood. What is the night?

**LADY MACBETH**
Almost at odds with morning, which is which.

**MACBETH**
How say’st thou, that Macduff denies his person
At our great bidding?

**LADY MACBETH**
Did you send to him, sir?

**MACBETH**
I hear it by the way; but I will send:
There’s not a one of them but in his house
I keep a servant fee’d. I will to-morrow,
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,
All causes shall give way: I am in blood
Stepp’d in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o’er:
Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;
Which must be acted ere they may be scann’d.

**LADY MACBETH**
You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

**MACBETH**
Come, we’ll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:
We are yet but young in deed.

[Exeunt]
The play was probably first performed in 1603 to James I who had a deep interest in anything supernatural. The fact that the ghost of Banquo appears at all is a clear signal to the audience that the natural order of society has been disrupted and disturbed by evil. An audience in 1603 might have believed that Banquo’s appearance is a sign that society has become infected by evil influences and that ghosts are doomed to wander in limbo until justice has been done. This can be compared to the ghost of Hamlet’s father in ‘Hamlet’. Murdered souls did not have immediate access to Heaven, because often, the person murdered did not have time to make confession before dying. Why? Because they were murdered suddenly and violently, without warning.

Possible questions:

Comparing and contrasting the scenes, discuss how the relationship between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth changes.

1. Analyse how the character of Macbeth changes during these scenes.
2. How would you stage these scenes as a director to show the different sides to Macbeth’s character?

Do not forget to use:

- POINT
- EVIDENCE
- EXPLAIN