The main idea

Malcolm learns caution in a court where appearances deceive. His return offers political repair after Macbeth’s rule.

Character development

Flees danger

Tests loyalty

Organises resistance

Restores the succession

Caution becomes judgement

“This murderous shaft” — Malcolm, 2.3

“What I am truly” — Malcolm, 4.3

The image of an arrow still in flight makes danger seem unfinished after Duncan’s death. In testing Macduff, Malcolm temporarily disguises himself before revealing his account of his true character.

A wounded country and repair

“It weeps, it bleeds” — Malcolm about Scotland, 4.3

“by the grace of Grace” — Malcolm, 5.9

Personification makes Scotland a suffering body. The final religious language proposes a different basis for rule from Macbeth’s fear and private ambition.

Develop the interpretation

His invented vices in 4.3 are part of a test; do not quote them as a straightforward confession of what he is really like.

Recall question

How does Malcolm’s testing of Macduff respond to the danger that killed Duncan?