

Witches' words

Read through the extract below and then pick out any words or phrases which you think show the witches are casting an evil spell. You might also want to think about repeated words and the rhyme and rhyme of the piece.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A cauldron. Thunder. Enter the three Witches.

FIRST WITCH:
Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed.

SECOND WITCH:
Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whined.

THIRD WITCH:
Harpier cries, "'Tis time, 'tis time."

FIRST WITCH:
Round about the cauldron go,
In the poisoned entrails throw.
Toad that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Sweltered venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

ALL:
Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

SECOND WITCH:
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL:
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

THIRD WITCH:
Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravind sea, sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' th' dark,
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat and slips of yew
Slivered in the moon's eclipse,

Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-delivered by a drab,
Make the gross blood thick and slab.
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,
For th'ingredients of our cauldron.

ALL:
Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

SECOND WITCH:
Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

Here are some of the words that you may have picked out to suggest that the witches are casting an evil spell.

poisoned	cold	venom	trouble	adder's fork
sting	hell-broth	hemlock	tooth of wolf	

Look at this example of an explanation of why the witches used a particular word in their speech:

Hemlock:

a type of plant which is extremely poisonous; people were sometimes forced to drink it as a form of execution e.g. Socrates – an ancient Greek philosopher.

This suggests that the witches are going to cause someone to do something which will end in their death.

Now complete the following:

1. **Hell –broth:** a kind of soup from hell
This suggests that...
2. **Trouble:** People get into trouble when they do something wrong. Other people might get them into trouble.
This suggests that...
3. Choose at least three more examples and explain how it shows the witches are creating evil.
4. Make a list of all the animals that feature in the poem and their body parts which go into the spell.
5. Why do you think Shakespeare chose these animals? (Why didn't he choose bunnies and kittens?)
6. Now bring all your points together into one or two paragraphs about the impression Shakespeare gives about the witches from this spell. Remember to focus on his choice of language and also the rhyme, rhythm and repetition of the spell.