

KEY QUOTATIONS: MACBETH

Name: _____



A NOTE ON USING QUOTATIONS

The Macbeth section of Literature Paper 1 will consist of an extract and a question. You will need to answer the question, referring to both the extract and the whole of the play.

While your answer should make close analysis of the language in the given extract, you also need to be able to quote accurately from the rest of the play. This will enable you to draw connections between different scenes, and comment on how characters/themes/ideas are developed in the course of the play.

This booklet aims to identify some of the most useful quotations from Macbeth. These are quotations which illuminate key character traits and which highlight the deeper ideas within the play. They can be used to answer a wide range of questions, and are rich with possibilities for thoughtful and personal analysis. They are organised into themes, and labelled with the relevant character, act and scene.

There is no expectation that you will commit all of these quotations to memory; this is solely intended as a guide to some of the quotations you may wish to learn. If you are unsure of where to begin in memorising quotations, I would recommend starting with those that are highlighted in each section. These are some of the most versatile, in that they encompass several themes.

Remember: it's what you say about the quotation that is important. Think about levels of analysis:

1. What does this word literally mean?
2. What is this word's deeper/symbolic meaning?
3. What does this word reveal to us about this character?
4. How is this relevant to character development/plot?

I hope that this is useful to you as you undertake revision for this exam. Please don't hesitate to ask should you have any questions.

Happy reading!

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1 AMBITION

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 3

‘Why do I yield to that suggestion, whose horrid image doth unfix my hair and make my seated heart knock at my ribs [...]?’

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 4

‘Stars, hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5

‘I do fear thy nature, it is too full o’th’ milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5

‘Thou wouldst be great, art not without ambition, but without the illness should attend it.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5

‘Thy letters have transported me beyond the ignorant present, and I feel now the future in the instant.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5

‘Look like th’ innocent flower, but be the serpent under’t’

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7

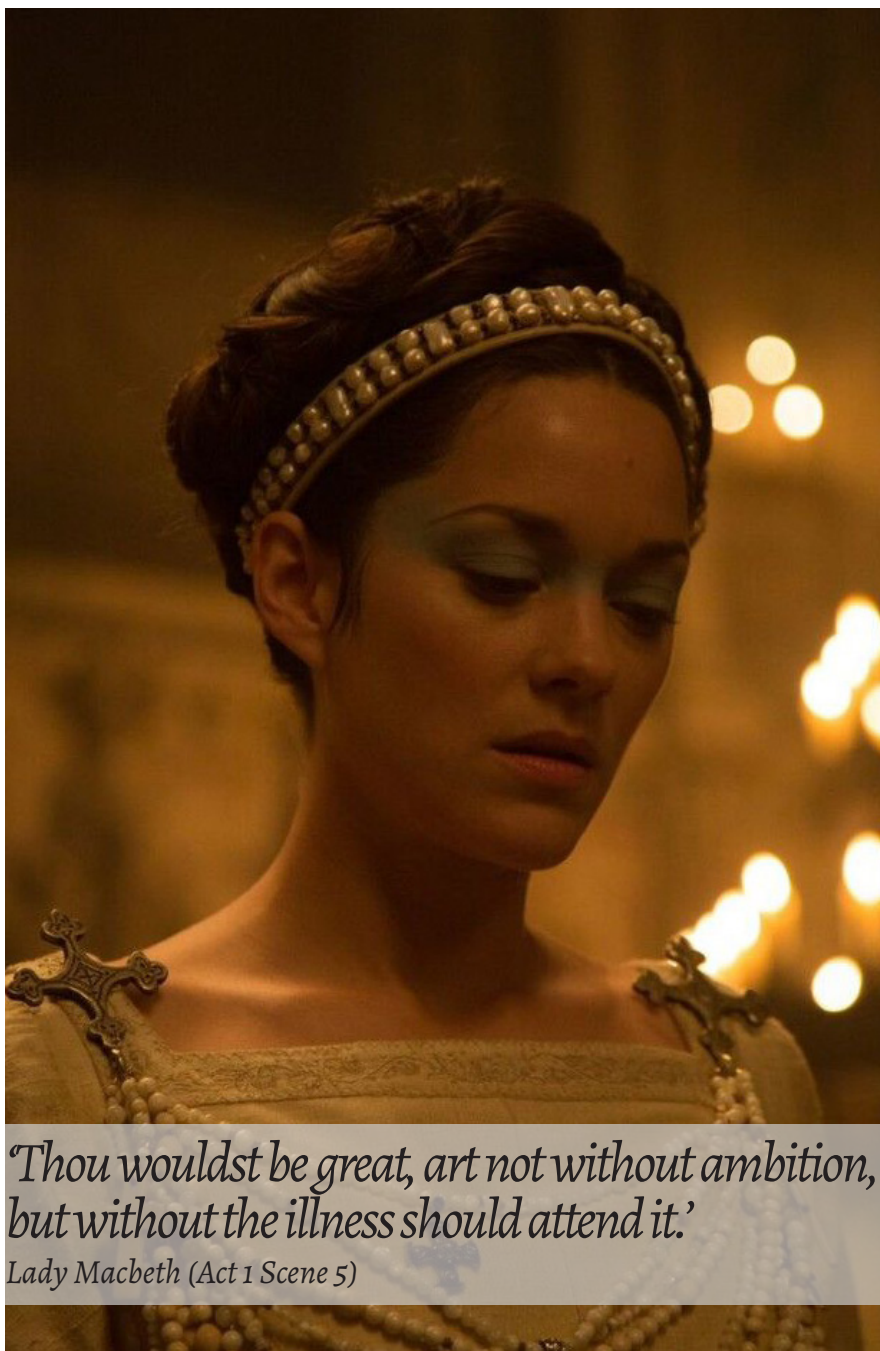
‘I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself and falls on the other.’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 1

‘To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 2

‘Nought’s had, all’s spent, where our desire is got without content.’



*'Thou wouldst be great, art not without ambition,
but without the illness should attend it.'*

Lady Macbeth (Act 1 Scene 5)

2 VIOLENCE

The Captain, Act 1 Scene 2

‘Like Valour’s minion carv’d out his passage [...] he unseam’d him from the nave to th’ chops, and fix’d his head upon our battlements.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5

‘Come, thick night, and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, that my keen knife see not the wound it makes’

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7

‘That we but teach bloody instructions, which being taught, return to plague th’inventor.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7

‘I would, while it was smiling in my face, have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums and dash’d the brains out, had I so sworn as you have done to this.’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 3

‘The castle of Macduff I will surprise; seize upon Fife; give to th’edge o’th’sword his wife, his babes, and all unfortunate soul that trace him in his line.’

Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 5

‘I have supp’d full with horrors; direness familiar to my thoughts cannot once start me.’



3 GUILT

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7

‘Then, as his host, who should against the murderer shut the door, not bear the knife myself.’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘I am afraid to think what I have done. Look on’t again, I dare not.’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No: this hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine’

Lady Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘A little water clears us of this deed.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘Wake Duncan with thy knocking, I would thou couldst.’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 1

‘For Banquo’s issue have I fil’d my mind; for them, the gracious Duncan have I murder’d’

Lady Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 2

‘Things without all remedy should be without regard; what’s done, is done.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 1

‘Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One, two. Why then ‘tis time to do’t. Hell is murky. [...] Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?’

Lady Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 1

‘Here’s the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. O, O, O.’

4 FATE

The witches, Act 1 Scene 1

‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’

Third witch, Act 1 Scene 3

‘All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!’

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 3

‘If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me without my stir.’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 1

‘Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 1

‘Upon my head they plac’d a fruitless crown and put a barren sceptre in my gripe’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 1

‘Come Fate into the list, and champion me to th’utterance.’

Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 5

‘Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing’

REMEMBER:

Shakespeare uses the play to explore the tension between fate and free will. As soon as the prophecy is delivered, we are forced to wonder: is action necessary to make fate reality? Macbeth attempts to master his fate by killing Duncan, and then is forced to keep trying to master it, murdering all those who pose a threat to his reign. He becomes delusional, unable to see that this will lead only to his ruin. Ultimately, fate is presented as ambiguous - as exemplified by the witches’ paradoxical statements - and uncontrollable.



*'If chance will have me king, why chance may
crown me without my stir.'*

Macbeth (Act 1 Scene 3)



5 MASCULINITY & FEMININITY

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5

‘Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here and fill me from the crown to the toe topfull of direst cruelty’

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5


‘Come to my woman’s breasts and take my milk for gall’

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7

‘I dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more is none.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7

‘When you durst do it, then you were a man.’



Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7

‘I would, while it was smiling in my face, have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums and dash’d the brains out, had I so sworn as you have done to this.’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 1

‘Upon my head they plac’d a fruitless crown and put a barren sceptre in my gripe’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 2

‘Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, til thou applaud the deed’

Lady Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 4

‘What, quite unmann’d in folly?’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 4

‘What man dare, I dare [...] take any shape but that and my firm nerves shall never tremble.’

Malcolm, Act 4 Scene 3

‘Dispute it like a man.’

Macduff, Act 4 Scene 3

‘I shall do so; but I must also feel it as a man.’

Ross, Act 5 Scene 9

‘Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier’s debt [...] like a man he died.’

REMEMBER:

In *Macbeth*, masculinity is inextricably linked with bravery and acts of violence. Macbeth proves his manhood on the battlefield, and Lady Macbeth pushes him to kill Duncan by presenting the regicide as a test of his masculinity, a deed that will make him ‘so much more the man’ (1.7). Meanwhile, in her violence and ruthless ambition, Lady Macbeth is shown to subvert conventional ideas of femininity.



6 MADNESS & PARANOIA

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 1

‘Art thou but a dagger of the mind, a false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 1

‘There’s no such thing: it is the bloody business which informs thus to mine eyes.’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘Methought I heard a voice cry, ‘Sleep no more: Macbeth does murder sleep’

Lady Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘Why, worthy thane, you do unbend your noble strength to think so brain-sickly of things.’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 2

‘O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 4

‘Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me!’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 4

‘Strange things I have in head that will to hand, which must be acted ere they may be scann’d.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 1

‘Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One, two. Why then ‘tis time to do’t. Hell is murky. [...] Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?’

Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 5

‘I have almost forgot the taste of fears’

7 KINGS AND LEADERSHIP

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7

‘Duncan hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been so clear in his great office’

Lennox, Act 3 Scene 6

‘Our suffering country, under a hand accurs’d.’

Lord, Act 3 Scene 6

‘The son of Duncan, from whom this tyrant holds the due of birth [...] is received by the most pious Edward’

Malcolm, Act 4 Scene 3

‘This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues, was once thought honest’

Macduff, Act 4 Scene 3

‘Not in the legions of horrid hell can come a devil more damn’d in evils to top Macbeth.’

Malcolm, Act 4 Scene 3

‘What I am truly is thine, and my poor country’s, to command’

Angus, Act 5 Scene 2

‘Now does he feel his title hang loose about him, like a giant’s robe upon a dwarvish thief.’

8 SLEEP

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘Methought I heard a voice cry, ‘Sleep no more: Macbeth does murder sleep’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘The innocent sleep, sleep that knits up the ravell’d sleeve of care [...] balm of hurt minds’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘Macbeth shall sleep no more.’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘The affliction of these terrible dreams that shake us nightly.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 4

‘You lack the season of all natures, sleep.’

REMEMBER:

Shakespeare uses the motifs (repeated images/ideas) of blood and sleep throughout the play. Blood is always closely linked to violence, but over the course of Macbeth, blood comes to symbolize something else: guilt. Death and killing happen in an instant, but blood remains, and stains. At the times when both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth feel most guilty, they despair that they will never be able to wash the blood—their guilt—from their hands.

When he murders Duncan, Macbeth thinks he hears a voice say ‘Macbeth does murder sleep’. Sleep symbolises innocence, purity, and peace of mind, and in killing Duncan Macbeth actually does murder sleep: Lady Macbeth begins to sleepwalk, and Macbeth is haunted by his nightmares. Shakespeare uses sleep to symbolise a peace that Macbeth will never again know, and its loss affects his sanity, exacerbating his paranoia and unpredictable behaviour. An example of this is in Act 3 Scene 4, when Macbeth rants and raves at Banquo’s ghost, and Lady Macbeth reminds him: ‘you lack the season of all natures, sleep.’

9 BLOOD

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 1

‘I see thee still, and on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘A little water clears us of this deed.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘My hands are of your colour, but I shame to wear a heart so white.’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2

‘Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?’

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 3

‘Here lay Duncan, his silver skin lac’d with his golden blood, and his gash’d stabs look’d like a breach in nature’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 4

‘Blood will have blood.’

Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 4

‘I am in blood stepp’d in so far, that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o’er.’

Lady Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 1

‘Out, damned spot! Out, I say! [...] Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?’

Lady Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 1

‘Here’s the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. O, O, O.’

10 NATURE

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 3

‘Here lay Duncan, his silver skin lac’d with his golden blood, and his gash’d stabs look’d like a breach in nature’

Old Man, Act 2 Scene 4

‘I have seen hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night hath trifled former knowings’

Ross, Act 2 Scene 4

‘Duncan’s horses [...] turn’d wild in nature’

Doctor, Act 5 Scene 1

‘A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching!’

Doctor, Act 5 Scene 1

‘Unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles’



DEPTH OF ANALYSIS

When you are analysing Shakespeare's language, you need to look at the meaning and the effects of individual words, but you also need to think about how these words work together to convey ideas to the audience. The example below shows how you can apply levels of analysis to a commonly-used quotation in order to add depth to your writing. In this quotation, Lady Macbeth is advising Macbeth to hide his true intentions towards King Duncan. Overall, Shakespeare uses this line to reveal her calculating mind and to suggest the idea that evil may hide behind a mask of innocence.

