

# English Half-Term IL

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## Introduction

In the didactic and tragic play, Shakespeare presents the theme of “Appearance vs Reality” through the actions and dialogue of the protagonists Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. He, uses them as proxies, illustrating to the Jacobean audience how initial appearances can be deceptive and the reality behind them often sinister. Shakespeare, wrote the play in 1606, when animosity and dissidence between the Protestant majority and Catholic minority of England was at an all time high. Having just survived the gunpowder plot, a foiled and cowardly attempt to reinstate a Catholic monarch in the eyes of the Jacobean audience and also controversially authorising the first mainstream Latin to English translation of the Bible, King James I grew ever fearful of his life. In a time of uncertainty and speculation, Shakespeare wrote the play Macbeth with the King in mind, the lines between appearance and reality were heavily blurred in England. Multiple royal families made claims to the throne leaving the public unable to distinguish from what was right (being from God) and wrong. The Macbeth’s are used as proxies, warning the audience of how those who oppose King James I, may appear as truthful yet have sinister ulterior motives behind their plans for the throne.

## Paragraph 1

In this extract the theme of “Appearance vs Reality” is portrayed through the vivid hallucinations that Macbeth *appears* to suffer from as a result of his overwhelming guilt. Act 2 Scene 1 is a pivotal moment in the play, Macbeth makes his way to Duncan’s “bedchamber” to commit the act of regicide, he *appears* to detach from reality. Macbeth exclaims, “Is this a dagger which I see before me”. The noun “dagger” evokes panic in the Jacobean audience, it has connotations of malice and malevolence. Alternatively, the imagery of a dagger would have evoked an uproar in the Jacobean audience towards Macbeth. Contextually, through out history the “dagger” was seen as a sly weapon used for assassinations; this would have evoked resentment towards Macbeth, he not only kills King Duncan but does so sneakily, encapsulating his deceitfulness and cowardice. Macbeth *appears* to exhibit his insanity when he poses the rhetorical question, “The handle towards my hand?”. On the surface it *appears*, Macbeth appears unstable he cannot distinguish the difference between his hallucinations and reality, yet the rhetorical question captures Macbeth’s sinister side. The preposition “towards” evokes a feeling of choice, it illustrates to the Jacobean audience, that although Macbeth *appears* distraught he is faced with a choice - to commit regicide or not to. Macbeth then proclaims, “Come, let me clutch thee”. The imperative verb “Come” has a commanding tone, this would evoke extreme hatred in the audience towards Macbeth, his internal-conflict appears as a facade and when presented with the choice to commit regicide he is unwavering and chooses the more sinister and despicable option. However in stark contrast, the verb phrase “let me” encapsulates Macbeth’s weakness and indecisive attitude, he gives respect to the dagger, demonstrating the weapon’s power over him. This foreshadows, Macbeth’s poor kingship; contextually, in the Jacobean era a King was seen to be decisive and in control of their weapon. The verb “clutch” evokes a feeling of uneasiness in the audience, the verb highlights Macbeth’s sinister craze for power. Moreover, the verb encapsulates Macbeth’s blood-lust and further foreshadows his poor kingship. He, appears desperate to cling on to the dagger, this serves to foreshadow to the audience that Macbeth’s power will slip from his hands as he struggles to hold onto the throne. Macbeth’s hallucinations would call upon the audience to evoke *pathos* for him as he appears distraught and in mental anguish, however his hallucinations reveal to the audience his sinister motive behind his actions. Similarly, the notion that Macbeth is deceitful is perpetuated in Act 2 Scene 3. Donalbain and Malcolm gather in the courtyard with the other after the immediate death of their father. As they face suspicion from the other characters Malcolm says to his brother, “Where we are there’s daggers in men’s

smiles”, they fear that the other characters act friendly on the surface but wish to plot against them. On the one hand, the Macbeth family *appear* hospitable and amiable. However in stark contrast, the metaphor insinuates the notion that the Macbeth’s are deceitful. The noun “smiles” has friendly connotations, however coupled with the noun “dagger” this creates a sinister undertone which further insinuates the notion that the couple are conniving and deceitful. Moreover, in the same act Malcolm then says to Donalbain, “let’s not consort with them”, he wishes to not associate himself with the Macbeth’s who have committed the act of regicide. The adjective “consort” is used subtly to illustrate to the audience that the Macbeth’s are not considered a part of Scottish society. Furthermore, Shakespeare warns the audience to distance themselves from those who oppose the King and wish him harm such as the Macbeth couple. Shakespeare, does this to please King James I. King James I was Shakespeare’s biggest patron and therefore a large source of revenue for his theatre company. Shakespeare, uses the dialogue between Malcolm and Donalbain as a reminder to the audience that by associating themselves with those who oppose the King, they will meet their downfall.

## Paragraph 2

Macbeth appears as weak-minded and delusional. Macbeth proclaims, “Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?”, Macbeth dismisses the hallucinations as a result of a mere fever. The adjective “heat” evokes a sense of tension in the Jacobean audience. The verb “oppressed” has connotations of abuse and ill-treatment, it illustrates to the Jacobean the sinister reality that Macbeth has not fully unleashed his true wicked potential - there is much worse to come. Alternatively, the verb “oppressed” coupled with the verb adjective “heat” foreshadows the tyranny Macbeth will unleash upon Scotland. The verb “heat” would evoke fear in the audience, the majority Christian audience would associate “heat” with hellfire, precisely illustrating to the audience that Macbeth will leave Scotland war-torn. Moreover, the verb “oppressed” foreshadows the notion that the people of Scotland subject under Macbeth’s rule will be brought onto their knees and exploited as Macbeth rules with an iron fist. Contextually, this would evoke hatred from the 21st century audience and the Jacobean audience. The majority protestant Jacobean audience, would have experienced brutal hardships and oppression from Mary I, as she burned many protestants at the stake and a modern audience would see Macbeth more as a dictator than a loving king. Macbeth then exclaims, “Thou marshall’st me the way that I was going”. On the surface, it *appears* the dagger is beckoning Macbeth to make his way to King Duncan’s bedchamber as seen from the verb “marshall’st”. However, the grim *reality* is precisely illustrated to the audience through the past tense verb “was”. The verb encapsulates Macbeth’s sinister-side and exemplifies the notion that he is deceitful and despicable. It would *appear* that the dagger was a pivotal moment in the play leading Macbeth to commit the heinous act of regicide, yet the verb highlights to the audience that Macbeth was planning to kill King Duncan - whether or not he would have seen the dagger. This would evoke extreme hostility and hatred in the Jacobean audience as the king was greatly revered, this is only reinforced by the verb “going”. The verb evokes a sudden casual tone, Macbeth dismisses the magnitude of the situation he is in. Contextually in the Jacobean era, the concept of the divine right of Kings would have been taught profusely to all members of the Jacobean audience. it iterates the notion that the King is heavenly appointed, meaning that the audience would have been induced into a fit of rage at Macbeth’s casual approach to the deplorable crime regicide. Macbeth’s is portrayed as treacherous and defiant, he dismisses the significance of the divine right of Kings, by killing his greatest benefactor King Duncan and does not see the dagger as a bad omen, deterring him from committing the murder. Whereas, earlier in the play in Act 1 Scene 2 Macbeth is held in high esteem by the Captain, regarded as a brave and valiant warrior. The captain proclaims, “Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel, which smoked with bloody execution,”. The figure of speech and adjective in “disdaining fortune” encapsulates Macbeth’s selflessness, he risks his life fighting for King Duncan and has no interest in gaining fortune from his fighting. Furthermore, the adjective “brandished” encapsulates Macbeth’s courage, he wavers his sword around fighting riskily. In the extract Macbeth, appears weak-minded due to his “heat-oppressed” brain, whereas the adjective “smoked” perfectly captures Macbeth’s fury and valiant warrior-like nature.

## 1 Draft Paragraph 3

Finally, another way Shakespeare presents the theme of Appearance vs Reality is through Macbeth’s reaction towards the death of his companions. In Act 2 Scene 2 Macbeth says, “But wherefore could not I pronounce amen”. The verb “pronounce” illustrates to the audience Macbeth is physically unable to utter the holy word, perpetuating the notion that Macbeth was deeply taken aback by the murder of Duncan. However, in Act 3 Scene 4 Macbeth appears completely unphased after the immediate death of Banquo he exclaims to the murderer, “Thou art the

best o' the cut-throats:". Macbeth initially appears distraught after committing the murder of Duncan, whereas in Act 3 Scene 4 Macbeth acts as if the killing of his best friend is comical, evoking anger in the audience towards Macbeth. The superlative adjective "best" is euphemistic and has a mocking undertone, this would evoke extreme hatred towards Macbeth from the Jacobean audience. Contextually, Banquo was the great ancestor of King James I, Macbeth's disregard to the severity of the situation is used as a stark warning to the Jacobean audience that there are nobles in Jacobean society similar to the likes of Macbeth that have false appearances, they mourn and grieve, however in reality they wish to harm members of the royal family and therefore go against God.

## Paragraph 3

### 2 Poem

The poet presents the children's world as elusive - a place reserved for children closed off to intruders (adults). The poet begins by saying, "We live in our own world." The collective pronoun "we" has connotations of unity and teamwork, illustrating to the reader that the children's world is community-like. The possessive pronouns "our" and "own" exemplify the notion that the children view their world as, a place reserved for them only. Moreover, the alliteration of the letter "o" adds emphasis and conveys a stern tone. Coupled, with the noun "world" the notion that there is a clear distinction between the adult and child world is further exemplified. The poet then says, "A world that is too small for you to stoop and enter". The superlative adjective "too" coupled with the adjective "small" illustrates the physical barriers preventing adults from accessing the children's secret world to the reader. The sensory verb "stoop" has connotations of degrading oneself, to stoop to a new low. Moreover, it carries a mischievous under-tone encapsulating the children's cheekiness and determination to dissuade adults from attempting to see the secretive children's world (for themselves). This is further accentuated when the poet says, "Even on hands and knees the adults subterfuge". The modal verb "even" coupled with the noun "subterfuge" illustrate to the reader that the children see adults as outsiders, who wish to deceive - yet their deception is seen through.

Secondly, the poet presents the way the children see their secret world as misunderstood. The poet says, "And though you probe and pry with analytical eye". The alliteration of the letter p creates emphasis. The verb "probe" has connotations of scrutiny, "pry" connotations of meddling, the coupling of the "verbs" precisely illustrate to the reader that the children believe the adults are trying to enter a secret world by force - rather than by understanding it. This is further reinforced by "analytic eye". The adjective has connotations of research and logic, further exemplifying the notion that they choose not to understand the children's world - instead they wish to study the children as if they were test subjects, demeaning them. The verb eavesdrop has connotations of distrust and further insinuates the notion that the adults are observers, they do not wish to engage in a conversation with the children - only "eavesdrop". The adults have an "amused look" on their face, the adjective amused has a humiliating undertone the adults view the children's world in a condescending manner, as if it was make believe.

Finally, the poet presents the way the children see their own world as innocent and natural. The poet says, "Where we dance, where we play, Where life is still asleep". The repetition of the pronoun "where" emphasises the notion that the children wish to distinguish themselves from adults. The sensory verbs "dance" and "play" coupled with the verb "asleep" creates a semantic field of childhood innocence. This evokes understanding and pathos from the reader, as they would have experienced the same things growing up, this creates a need to preserve the children's way of life from being corrupted by the adults. The adverb "still" encapsulates the children's naiveness and purity, they are unaware of what lies outside of their world. This is further accentuated by the adjective "closed flower". They have not matured enough and are protected by their "smooth shell". The noun shell alludes to the notion that the children's world acts as a form of protection. Moreover the adjective "smooth" illustrates to the readers' the children's purity they are devoid of imperfections such as scratches. Moreover, the ongoing enjambment creates a continuous rhythm for the reader, illustrating to them that for the children their world is not simply a phase but their simple and pure way of life.