

Theme Quotes & Analysis

Macbeth

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Violence	Act 1	<u>"disdaining fortune... smok'd with bloody execution"</u>	<u>"smok'd"</u> could connote to heat and hell , foreshadowing his evil . The phrase <u>"disdaining fortune"</u> shows a disregard for his fate, and his attempt to manipulate the natural order .
	Act 3	<u>"in time will venom breed/ no teeth for th'present"</u>	He acknowledges his tumultuous fortune as a result of his violent nature, yet his hubris (pride) blinds him into a false sense of security suggesting that danger is not yet imminent .
	Act 3	<u>"I am in blood/ Stepp'd in so far that should I wade no more, returning were as tedious"</u>	<u>"blood"</u> was merely on his hands, yet now it has enrobed his entire body, and by extension his entire sense of being . He feels he has no choice but to further indulge in his heinous acts
	Act 4	<u>"His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls"</u> .	Their murders are emblematic of Macbeth's excessive bloodthirst , they presented no threat yet he is now on an unstoppable trajectory of murder . Macbeth takes on the Godly role of deciding who has the right to live.
	Act 5	<u>"Before my body, I throw my war like shield"</u>	As a 'shield' connotes protection, it shows Macbeth desperately wants to protect and preserve his former noble image of him being a <u>"worthy"</u> and <u>"valiant"</u> soldier. As his last words contain a violent semantic field , it shows how his ambitious and violent nature has directly caused his fall from grace .

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Ambition	Act 1	<u><i>"valour's minion"</i></u>	Strongly abides to codes of honour , alternatively the noun "minion" could foreshadow his susceptibility to manipulation and how he will soon be a marionette of the Witches .
	Act 1	<u><i>"Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself and falls on th' other"</i></u>	The verb vaulting describes Macbeth's mammoth ego- his ambition is his hamartia . The personification makes his ambition appear like a human-like force, controlling and plaguing his innocent mind. The metaphor likens Macbeth to a jockey riding his ambition- his ambition is akin to a barbaric animal.
	Act 2	<u><i>"With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design"</i></u>	Macbeth ambitiously wants to emulate Tarquin , a Roman tyrant whom raped his wife, so he will be a barbaric tyrant who feels no pity- his ambition and hubris obstructs his moral compass . He sees power synonymous with brutality and being a tyrant.
	Act 3	<u><i>"He hath wisdom that doth guide his valour to act in safety"</i></u> <u><i>(about Banquo)</i></u>	Banquo is a foil to Macbeth as Macbeth embodies reckless power, whereas Banquo has self-constraint and control . Macbeth is envious (7 deadly sin) of Banquo's ability to restrain his ambition and refrain from over-indulgence into "deep desires"
	Act 5	<u><i>"life is but a walking shadow...it is a tale...signifying nothing"</i></u>	Understands the futility of his ambition. Moreover, the noun "tale" extends the idea that the Witches' influence was like an ominous nursery rhyme - they speak in trochaic tetrameter and rhyming couplets which almost parody their dialogue .

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Supernatural	Act 1	<u><i>"so foul and fair a day I have not seen"</i></u>	Echo the Witches' paradox - slowly becoming a mouthpiece for the Witches' evil , he is a vessel for their misconduct .
	Act 1	<u><i>"why do you dress me in borrow'd robes?"</i></u>	Suggests he has been awarded a title that does not belong to him. It shows that throughout the play as he moves through the hierarchal ranking, it is superficial and transient (temporary), much like clothes. Significant he has been awarded this by the supernatural.
	Act 4	<u><i>"tell me" and "call em" (to Witches)</i></u>	He speaks with imperative phrases - he is driven by greed and hunger for power, he intentionally approaches the witches highlighting how he has embraced his new tyrannical demeanour .
	Act 4	<i>threatens the witches with an</i> <u><i>"eternal curse"</i></u>	Ironic as we have seen their overt supernatural power, he believes he can supersede this . His ego is prevalent as the Witches ambiguous apparitions provide him an ephemeral sense of security and invincibility .

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Appearance vs reality	Act 1	<u><i>"Stars, hide your fires, Let not light see my black and deep desires"</i></u>	Paradoxes continue to plague his speech with "black" and "fire" juxtaposing one another. Fire creates irreversible damage , foreshadowing how his duplicitous (two-faced) façade will create irreversible damage.
	Act 2	<u><i>"I think not of them" (about the Witches to Banquo)</i></u>	Banquo is honest, characterising him as moral in order to amplify Macbeth's dishonesty and deception .
	Act 3	<u><i>"make our faces vizards to our hearts"</i></u>	"vizards" suggests they should wear masks to conceal their true evil nature . Closely resembles "look like th' innocent flower" - he is a marionette (puppet) of evil influence.

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Guilt	Act 2	<u><i>"is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle towards my hand? Come let me clutch thee"</i></u>	The handle towards my hand" suggests he is ridding himself of responsibility over the murder as the handle has been put "towards" him- he has involuntarily been subject to this inner turmoil.
	Act 2	<u><i>Calls the dagger an "instrument"</i></u>	Alluding to how the "instruments of darkness" (the witches), with their dark musicality , have bought him to this point of sheer inner turmoil .
	Act 2	<u><i>"I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more: / Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep"</i></u>	He is so perturbed by guilt that he is imprisoned within a state of restlessness . Motif of sleep with sleep being synonymous with innocence - his lack of sleep explores his complete loss of innocence.
	Act 3	<u><i>"Thy gory locks at me"</i></u>	"gory" is suggestive that Banquo's ghost is a physical manifestation of his violence. Structurally, the murderers enter the banquet before Macbeth, exacerbating how his kingship is unnatural as he's disrupted the divine right of kings .
	Act 3	<u><i>"O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!"</i></u>	"Scorpions" are poisonous, representing how Macbeth's ambition has poisoned his mind- he is consequently plagued by guilt and remorse . As it is "full" it highlights he has been completely engulfed with guilt and mercy . Moreover, the metaphor of a creature festering in his mind shows that his tyrannical nature has been so omnipotent, he now resembles more of a savage creature than a moral human .
	Act 5	<u><i>"my soul is too much charg'd with blood of thine already"</i></u>	His guilt begins to surface as he maintains his sense of humanity. This reiterates the notion that Macbeth must remain somewhat redeemable to be characterised as a tragic hero, he is not merely a villain .

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Gender	Act 1	<u><i>"his "face" is "a book where men may read strange matters"</i></u>	Mocks the candidness (honest and sincere) of his expression , portrays Macbeth as weak and vulnerable - these were qualities which fail to align with the ideal masculine archetype of the era .
	Act 1	<u><i>"Was the hope drunk/Wherein you dress'd yourself?"</i></u>	A rhetorical question is calculated , she wants to exploit his emotion of embarrassment or shame.
	Act 1	<u><i>"coward"</i></u>	Epithet (insult) which threatens his entire sense of being as a soldier, not only is she questioning his masculinity but also his livelihood .
	Act 3	<u><i>"be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck" (to LM)</i></u>	It is ironic that Macbeth now overpowers Lady M through feminine epithets which belittle her, much as she previously did to him .

Lady Macbeth

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Violence	Act 1	<u>"stop up the access and passage to remorse"</u>	She wants to be entirely violent, with no remnants of femininity - she is aware this constrains her. She sees emotion synonymous with weakness . By eradicating this weakness, she can unlock the barbaric tyrant she dreams of being.
	Act 1	<u>"dash'd the brains out" (also use in gender)</u>	The merciless act of rejecting maternal inclinations characterises Lady Macbeth as violent and determined , she effectively competes with Macbeth who as a man of that era, could not be weaker than a woman.
	Act 3	<u>"you lack the season of all natures, sleep"</u>	This is the antithesis to her previous violent depiction; It seems she is now trying to moderate and quell his evil. She is comparatively passive and is preoccupied with the noun "sleep" (a motif for peace and innocence). It appears she is yearning to reverse the murderous chaos as she realises her role as queen is not what she expected.

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Ambition	Act 2	<p><u>"a little water clears us of this deed"</u></p> <p>Can use any gender quotes and say how it shows she is ambitious to get rid of her femininity. Also can use violence quotes to show her ambition to be a violent tyrant.</p>	<p>Her over-powering ambition obstructs her from seeing the genuine distress of her husband. She uses litotes (under-exaggeration) to downplay the murder. it is laced with irony as Lady M shifts to a melodramatic state of insanity and begins speaking in hyperbole (exaggeration) as the guilt takes over. The euphemism hints at this, by referring to the murder as a "deed" Lady M fails to face up to the reality of it, she must placate it into less heinous (wicked) words in order to keep her (albeit temporary) composure.</p>

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Supernatural	Act 1	<p><u>"Come, you spirits", "pour my spirits"</u></p>	<p>It seems she is almost casting a spell, the nouns "spirits" and "night" allude to a dark supernatural force. She yearns to be rid of her femininity to encompass the inhumane and witchlike role that would grant her power. Her androgynous (male and female) nature would be perceived to be supernatural in the Jacobean era as the gender roles were rigid.</p>
	Act 1	<p><u>"dash'd the brains out" and the witches use "finger of a birth strangled babe"</u></p>	<p>They are amoral (have no sense of morals) and feel an absence of guilt in the destruction of innocent life. Both Lady Macbeth and the Witches disregard of fragile human life can be seen in their interactions with Macbeth.</p>

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Appearance vs reality	Act 1	<p><u><i>"Look like th' innocent flower, but be the serpent under't".</i></u></p> <p><i>Can use any gender quotes for this theme to as she appears like a submissive feminine woman, but in reality is barbaric.</i></p>	<p>The biblical allusion to the "serpent", seen in the fall of mankind in Genesis where the serpent tempts Adam and Eve, is used by Lady Macbeth to highlight how effective deception can be when executed with an "innocent" façade.</p>

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Guilt	Act 2	<u><i>"had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it"</i></u>	<p>The beginning exposes her guilty conscience coming to the service, exposing her inner cowardice and ingrained fear of patricide (killing of her father). Lady Macbeth is manipulative as she operates within a liminal gender, she takes advantage of alleged feminine weakness when it works in her favour yet brutally rejects it if it represses her.</p>
	Act 5	<u><i>Critic D.J Enright calls her "a sprinter of evil"</i></u>	<p>LM is classified as a sprinter of evil as her descent to madness is as rapid as her climb to tyranny- she quickly transitioned from a barbaric woman to a carcass of insanity. Macbeth comparatively is more like a long-distance runner as his descent is slower.</p>
	Act 5	<u><i>"out, damned spot! Out I say!"</i></u>	<p>This "spot" is emblematic of the scar the murder has created on her mind. However, this may be interpreted in another sense by Shakespeare's contemporaries. Madness was often perceived as a sign of being possessed by demons, it was believed that demons and witches had a "spot" on their bodies which identified them as evil, this is reinforced by "damned" which has connotations of hell.</p>
	Act 5	<u><i>Lady Macbeth [enters with a taper]</i></u>	<p>As a [taper] provides light, this is emblematic of how Lady Macbeth is seeking light, hope and solace in her eternal mental darkness. Jesus was seen to be the 'light' of the world, providing salvation for mankind, therefore Lady Macbeth's dependency on the light could illuminate how she is hopeful for salvation and retribution for her sins.</p>

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Gender	Act 1	<u><i>"too full o'th'milk of human kindness"</i></u>	This suggesting she will replace this milk with evil. The noun <u>"milk"</u> is a symbol for femininity and maternal nurturing, Lady M rejects notions of femininity.
	Act 1	<u><i>"pour my spirits in thine ear"</i></u>	She is a femme fatale as she not only is manipulative but rejects her womanhood and motherhood - a typical trope (theme or idea) of a femme fatale. Her manipulation is salient in the quote as she wants to taint Macbeth's mind with her <u>"spirits"</u> .
	Act 3	<u><i>"Was the hope drunk/Wherein you dress'd yourself?"</i></u>	Used to ridicule him and uses the rhetorical question as calculated tool of her manipulation . she gives him time to ponder and think about his actions- it is clear she wants to exploit his emotion of embarrassment or shame.
		<u><i>"I shame to wear a heart so white"</i></u>	She ridicules his cowardice . As <u>"white"</u> connotes purity, she is mocking his pure and moral heart.

Witches

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Supernatural	Act 1	<u>"look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth"</u> (<u>Baquo says</u>)	Banquo perceives their overt evil and dehumanises them in his description. The witches' physiognomy (when appearances are believed to be reflective of your true character) exposes them as inhumane and evil. Banquo is portrayed as perceptive as it was believed he was an ancestor of James I, thus this is a form of indirect flattery .
	Act 1	<u>"Instruments of darkness"</u>	This is suggesting their evil musicality , perhaps showing how their words are almost hypnotic for Macbeth. This is compounded as they speak in trochaic tetrameter , which is distinct from the iambic pentameter that noble characters speak in throughout the play, this gives their speech an eerie songlike quality .
	Act 3	<u>"the pit of Acheron"</u>	The witches appear synonymous with wickedness and hell . Acheron was one of the rivers that ran through Hades (the underworld/ hell in Greek mythology), as they are depicted as meeting there it reinforces how the Witches are inextricably linked with hell .
	Act 4	<u>"eye of newt", "fire burn, and cauldron bubble", and "hell-broth, boil and bubble"</u>	Witches amplify the theme of deception and equivocation within this act as they speak in proverbial (common) supernatural phrases - they conform to the archetype (norm) of witches that the audience would fear.

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Appearance vs reality	Act 1	<u>"fair is foul and foul is fair"</u>	They speak in paradoxes and oxymorons . This is seen when they chant this paradoxical phrase - their speech is conflicting, and what they appear to say, does not correlate with the reality. Their conflicting language is notable throughout the entirety of the play reinforcing their deceitful and duplicitous intentions .
	Act 1	<u>"so foul and fair a day I have not seen"</u> (<u>Macbeth</u>)	They are successful in their manipulation of Macbeth through their duplicitousness , highlighted through him echoing the paradoxical language of the witches . The oxymoron "foul" and "fair" directly mirrors the Witches ominous nursery rhyme like chant - Macbeth is instantly introduced as malleable and susceptible to their malevolent schemes .
	Act 4	<u>[an isolated place. Thunder]</u>	'isolated' creates an image of restriction, illuminating how they want to restrict Macbeth mentally and physically so it is easier for them to employ their deception . This juxtaposes Act 1 being [thunder and lightning] . The lack of light alludes to how they will continue to keep Macbeth both in the physical and metaphorical dark about their intentions .
	Act 4	<u>"an armed head", "a blood child" and "a child crowned with a tree in his hand"</u>	The Witches summon three apparitions which are manifestations of the threats Macbeth faces. The first being emblematic of the violence of battle and foreshadows Macbeth's decapitation . The second representing Macduff who was born by Caesarean section . The third emblematic of Birnam wood, where Macbeth lives or the natural imagery could suggest that Scotland would flourish under Malcom's rule .
	Act 4	<u>"none of woman born shall harm Macbeth"</u>	Each of the prophecies are equivocal (vague) and ambiguous . They appear to be giving Macbeth pertinent (important) insight to his safety. Instead, the reality is they are giving him a Macbeth an ephemeral (temporary) sense of security and invincibility - they know his hubris obstructs him from seeing this.

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Violence	Act 1	<u><i>[Thunder and lightning]</i></u>	Shakespeare couples their introduction with pathetic fallacy —the atmosphere is volatile, ominous and dangerous from the offset . This could foreshadow the violence that will ensue throughout the play— the disrupted and aggravated weather being nature’s fury at this coming violence.

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Gender	Act 1	<u><i>"beards"</i></u> <u><i>You could use their influence on Macbeth to show how he is constantly manipulated by women throughout the play.</i></u>	Throughout the text masculinity is synonymous with power , thus this description imbues them with a threatening dominance. They therefore appear androgynous , and alike to Lady Macbeth, express gender non-conformity .

Banquo

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Supernatural	Act 1	<u>"look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth"</u>	Banquo perceives their overt evil and dehumanises them in his description. The witches' physiognomy (when appearances are believed to be reflective of your true character) exposes them as inhumane and evil. Banquo is portrayed as perceptive as it was believed he was an ancestor of James I , thus this is a form of indirect flattery .
	Act 1	<u>"If you can look into the seeds of time, // And say which grain will grow and which will not, // Speak then to me".</u>	He references the bible, Ecclesiastes 11.6, it says "sow your seed in the morning" . The natural imagery is parallel to the bible; thus Banquo seeks solace in biblical teachings - using these to protect him from malevolent supernatural forces. Moreover, A natural semantic field is established with "seeds" and "grains will grow" . This reinforces how Banquo remains obedient to the natural order and God- he does not try altering his position akin to Macbeth.
	Act 3	<u>"I dream'd of the three weird sisters last night."</u>	He is still plagued by thoughts of the witches' prophecies. It seems superstition is taking a hold of him and trespassing on his unconscious . This is a contrast to Macbeth who claims "I think not of them" Banquo is honest, characterising him as moral in order to amplify Macbeth's dishonesty and deception .
	Act 4	<u>"restrain in me the cursed thoughts"</u>	Banquo understands the ludicrousness of plotting to kill the king based on the unsubstantiated prophecies of supernatural beings . This is the antithesis to Lady Macbeth who voluntarily calls the "spirits" and supernatural forces. Banquo wants to blockade any corruption by unnatural force- he perceptively recognises them as "cursed" .

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Ambition	Act 3	<u><i>"royalty of nature"</i></u> (said by Macbeth)	<p>Banquo is depicted as having an exemplary balance of ambition and respectability. His noble and majestic nature is not over-powered by his ambition. "Royalty" connotes "power" and "status". Macbeth recognises that Banquo has maintained his power as an ambitious stoic hero whilst maintaining his status as a rational and intelligent being.</p>
	Act 3	<u><i>"He hath wisdom that doth guide his valour to act in safety"</i></u> (said by Macbeth)	<p>As envy is one of the 7 deadly sins, a cardinal sin, Banquo is used by Shakespeare to explore the detrimental effects of envy and unchecked ambition- Macbeth's envy of Banquo's ability to restrain himself. Thus, Macbeth is envious (7 deadly sin) of Banquo's ability to restrain his ambition and refrain from over-indulgence into "deep desires".</p>

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Appearance vs reality	Act 2	<u><i>The heaven's "candles are all out"</i></u>	<p>He is the antithesis of deceitful, he is honest and sincere and confesses his temptation- he is emblematic of Jesus as he confesses his temptation. He comments on the lack of stars in the sky- Banquo seeks solace from heaven. Macbeth tries to hide this, opposed to confess: "stars hide your fires", this motif of stars exposes Macbeth and Banquo as diametrically opposed in their aspirations: Macbeth wants to hide his malicious intentions from God yet Banquo wants to confess his temptations to be free of them.</p>

Macduff

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Violence	Act 4	<u>"Let's make us medicines of our great revenge, // To cure this deadly grief".</u>	<p>'Medicines' and 'revenge' are alike in their outcome- solving/ curing something. Macduff uses this idea, as the only way to help solve/ partially cure his insurmountable grief, is to make Macbeth accountable for his sins.</p> <p>Thus, his violence is justified and he still remains the archetype of the avenging hero- motivated by revenge for a just cause.</p>
	Act 4	<u>"I have no word; my voice is my sword".</u>	<p>This emphasises Macduff's heroic qualities, and draws on a key idiom - actions speak louder than words- Macbeth's ungodly actions are not worthy of words anymore, Macduff believes that order can only be restored when terminating his tyranny.</p>

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Ambition	Act 4	<u>"bleed, bleed, poor country!"</u>	His lamenting of Scotland shows what fuels his ambition to restore order. This also suggests Scotland is dying under Macbeth's reign captivating Macbeth's misanthropic nature, a quality which juxtaposes the role of a king.
	Act 5	<u>"Turn, hell-hound, turn"</u>	Repetition of the word <u>"turn"</u> emphasises the extent to which Macbeth has turned order on its head, while the epithet "hell-hound" is used to highlight the true nature of the tyrant king. Unlike to Macbeth, he is not ambitious to make himself more powerful, but ambitious to restore justice and order in Scotland.
	Act 5	<u>"Here you may see the tyrant".</u>	Macduff is the first character to explicitly brand Macbeth as a tyrant- this is his motivated and has ignited his ambition to extinguish Macbeth. This is the last thing Macbeth hears before dying. The poignancy of Macduff's words shine through, signifying an end to Macbeth's destruction and the beginning of the restoration of order.

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Appearance vs reality	Act 2	<u>"most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope the Lord's anointed temple".</u>	<p>Macduff clearly does not put on a false façade and is entirely dedicated to the king. His hyperbolic language and reaction reinforces this and how he abides strictly to the religious moral code. Moreover, there is a religious semantic field as "sacrilegious" and "anointed" create an image of sacredness and holiness. This reinforces Macduff's extreme distress that the king, divinely ordained by God as believed by the divine right of kings, has been callously murdered despite his sacredness.</p>
	Act 2	<u>"O horror, horror, horror".</u>	<p>Shakespeare makes use of repetition here to emphasise the strength of Macduff's devastated emotions, and to emphasise his loyalty to the late king. Aside from Macbeth, the tragic hero, we see Macduff express grief and pain- he is the most personable character who remains noble and honourable throughout.</p>

Malcolm

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Violence	Act 2	<u>"This murderous shaft that's shot // Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way // Is to avoid the aim".</u>	The antithesis of violence , when Duncan is murdered, his suggestion is not to combat it with violence but instead pacify it through fleeing.

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Ambition	Act 4	<u>"A good and virtuous nature may recoil // In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon".</u> <u>He refers to Macbeth as a "weak poor innocent lamb // To appease an angry God".</u>	<p>Implying that the power that comes with being king could distort his morals as it did with Macbeth- this awareness of the fatalities of ambition once again exacerbates Macbeth's recklessness and unchecked-ambition. By testing Macduff's morals, Malcolm is ensuring his subjects are morally sound to mirror himself.</p> <p>Although ambitious, typical of a stoic male of the era, his understanding of the detrimental impact of Macbeth's ambition is salient. Moreover, 'Lamb', within a biblical context, is an animal used for sacrifice- a symbol of triumphant and suffering. By Malcolm referring to Macbeth as this, he may be alluding that Macbeth's triumphant in becoming King, has directly lead to his pitiful suffering.</p>

THEME	ACT	QUOTES	ANALYSIS
Appearance vs reality /loyalty	Act 5	<u>"What's more to do... // As calling home our exiled friends abroad // That fled the snares of watchful tyranny".</u>	Though he is in no position of power, he prioritises Scotland, as a true king would, and condemns the "watchful tyranny" Macbeth subjected Scotland to- Malcolm has no ulterior motives, except focuses on the restoration of his beloved country . His patriotism is poignant and is a stark contrast to the leadership of Macbeth.