

# English

Literature, William Shakespeare



In Macbeth by William Shakespeare, Macbeth's corrupt ways and mind causes him to do evil doings and actions. In Act four, he shows many visions of malevolent doings. First, he visits the witches. Then, he plans the murders of Lady Macduff and her son. Next, Macbeth makes Macduff and Malcolm question their thoughts about him. Also, Macbeth vows that he will not be hasty in his moves any longer. Finally, he acts as a foil towards Malcolm. In Act 4, Macbeth's corrupt ways and mind causes evil doings and actions. In this, mysterious play, the main character, Macbeth, being his insane, corrupt, self, prefers to be in the presence of evil (the three witches). He visits the mystical sisters wanting their advice, help, and guidance, and he is saying it by, " I conjure you by that which you profess—" Howe'er you come to know it-, answer me. " Through this imperative of " answer me", we are shown a commanding tone being used by Macbeth, so from this point we soon unveil that he has become more accusatory. Also the use of the imperative shows that he is now more confident commanding and uses a more aggressive tone when speaking to the witches. The witches respond to his demand by saying that " we'll answer" and they will listen when he speaks. Shakespeare uses stichomythia in this part, which aligns Macbeth further with the witches. Also on the Jacobean times witches would be associated with evil, so Macbeth is aligning himself even more further with the witches, as he speaks to them, the way they speak to him, he has now become fearless. As Macbeth's character is presented as becoming more evil as the play progresses, in act 4 we are presented with horrific imagery from the witches " pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten" which is contrary to human nature, this is seen as a reminiscence to Lady Macbeth's character,

so instead of a mother murdering her child she is now eating it. This highlights Macbeth's evilness and creates an eerie atmosphere, as in the eyes of the Jacobean audience it is seen as evoking feelings of ghastly imagery. So through the witches' portrayal we are shown that Macbeth is now even more evil than lady Macbeth. Through this imagery Shakespeare conveys Macbeth's equivocal nature, and sets him up as a character that, as a result of the witches prophecies continues to degenerate. When the first apparition appears, Macbeth is questioned by the desolate power in which he sees. " Tell me, thou unknown power. Afterward, the first witch replied by saying that he can read Macbeth's thoughts, so there is no reason to speak, and advised Macbeth to listen to him. Banquo, being frightened of these " hags", stayed away, no matter what they said, while Macbeth did not, and any sane person would not visit such treacherous witches or do anything that Macbeth has done. In this act, Macbeth learns that the one who will defeat him wasn't born the right way from a woman. Shakespeare uses the stage direction " thunder" to give a sense of an ominous event, and thunder denotes impending evil before the second apparition is revealed. " Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn. The power of man, for none of woman born shall harm Macbeth, " When Macbeth revisits the witches, one of the apparitions has told Macbeth to " Beware Macduff, Beware the Thane of Fife. " So, Macbeth once again orders murderers to kill Macduff family. The using of other men to do Macbeth's own dirty deeds shows that Macbeth is politically strong but mentally weak. Even so, Macbeth still has a glimpse of humanity. Even though " Birnam wood has come to Dunsinan", Macbeth rather " die with harness on our back". Than flee. Although this is partly

because of Macbeth believing in personal invincibility “ no man of woman born shall harm Macbeth”, it is also because Macbeth is still a true soldier. But this is not what we approach in A4. 1 when Macbeth proves he has no conscience" and sleep in spite of thunder", where he refers to his old guilt, also the use of the image sleep confirms that he has no guilt what so ever, an that he has to murder Macduff. So through this whole scene we are given a sense that Macbeth is becoming as foul as the witches, as the use of stichomythia is on level with the witches. This also adds to the idea that Macbeth is evil and is given an even footing as the witches, through Shakespeare’s use of iambic pentameter . In this case Macbeth is being worse than lady Macbeth, and at this point the Jacobean audience feel that he is superseding her, in the level of evil morality. In A4. 2 Because of the witches prophecies before ‘ beware: Macduff’ Macbeth intends to kill macduff’s family. Before Lady Macduff and her children’s murder the audience get a sense of how innocent they are, as she describes herself like a ‘ poor wren’ looking after ‘ her young ones in her nest.’ in this she is comparing herself to a pure bird, and I makes her seem vulnerable and protecting herself from the “ owl" that is personified as Macbeth, attacking them on the cover of night, and showing he is merciless and, lost any sense of mobility. As owls are seen as bad omens, compared to a bird that is vulnerable and fragile. This is also seen as a senseless slaughter of macduff’s family, and this murder of innocents shows that Macbeth has become beyond ruthless, and is descending into the depths of barbaricness. Through this scene we are shown juxtaposition against scene 1 showing that Macbeth still has no qualms or conscience against murdering. At the end of this scene

when Macduff's family is killed, it is seen as Macbeth killing an innocent mothering child. Compared to lady Macbeth, Macbeth is seen as more evil at this point. When the murderer kills Lady Macduff's son he cry's a plaintive cry for help " he has killed me, mother" and this highlights how depraved Macbeth is and has lost all sense of human morality, it is seen as the death of innocence in Scotland. Also Shakespeare murders them off stage to add suspense. Also to make the murder more brutal and a mystery as well as it prolongs suspense. Shakespeare's plan is to make the audience feel Macbeth's emotions and this is a structural technique by him to create uneasy feeling. This is a turning point for Macbeth because it shows his character; personality, morals and everything are changing. He's not afraid to act out; he's no longer completely " good" -he's beginning his downfall. This is a link on the chain of events that ultimately lead to Macbeth's death. Until Act 5, Macbeth has been tormented with visions and nightmares while Lady Macbeth has derided him for his weakness. Now the audience witnesses the way in which the murders have also preyed on Lady Macbeth. In her sleepwalking, Lady Macbeth plays out the theme of washing and cleansing that runs throughout the play. After killing Duncan, she flippantly tells Macbeth " a little water clears us of this deed". But the deed now returns to haunt Lady Macbeth in her sleep. Lady Macbeth's stained hands " out, damned spot! Out I say! " Are reminiscent of what was seen as a sign if the devil in the Jacobean times and the guilt she has printed n her hands form all her wrong deeds. In this speech, Lady Macbeth's language is choppy, jumping from idea to idea as her state of mind changes. Her sentences are short and unpolished, reflecting a mind too disturbed to speak

eloquently. Although she spoke in iambic pentameter before, she now speaks in prose and black verse. Lady Macbeth's dissolution is swift. As Macbeth's power grows, Lady Macbeth's has decreased. She began the play as a remorseless, influential voice capable of sweet-talking Duncan and of making Macbeth do her deeds. In the third act Macbeth leaves her out of his plans to kill Banquo, refusing to reveal his intentions to her. Now in the last act, she has dwindled to a mumbling sleepwalker, capable only of a mad speech. Whereas even the relatively unimportant Lady Macduff has a stirring death scene, Lady Macbeth dies offstage. When her death is reported to Macbeth, his response is shocking in its cold interest. Here again Macbeth stands in relief to Macduff, whose emotional reaction to his wife's death almost "unmans" him. The doctor's behavior in Act 5 Scene 3 resembles that of a psychoanalyst. Like a Freudian psychoanalyst, the doctor observes Lady Macbeth's dreams and uses her words to infer the cause of her distress. Lady Macbeth's language in this scene betrays her troubled mind in many ways. Her speech in previous acts has been eloquent and smooth. In Act 1 Scene 4, for example, she declares to Duncan: In this speech, Lady Macbeth makes use of metaphor (Duncan's honor is "deep and broad"), metonymy (he honors "our house," meaning the Macbeths themselves), and hyperbole ("in every point twice done and then done double"). Her syntax is complex but the rhythm of her speech remains smooth and flowing, in the iambic pentameter used by noble characters in Shakespearean plays. What a contrast it is, therefore, when she talks in her sleep in Act 5: Over the course of the play Macbeth and Lady Macbeth greatly change with respect to their characters and their personalities. Although Macbeth was weak at first it was

the strong Lady Macbeth who helped him through the first murder but in sacrifice to controlling Macbeth and his conscience she lost control of hers and in consequence turned insane and killed herself. Thus in the end it was worthy to call Macbeth and his wife " a dead butcher and his fiend like queen" but it must not be forgotten that at the beginning of the play Macbeth and his wife were ordinary nobles at the time. When her death is reported to Macbeth, his response is shocking in its cold apathy. (Here again Macbeth stands in relief to Macduff, whose emotional reaction to his wife's death almost " unmans" him.) All three characters, the witches, Banquo and Macduff play a crucial role in demonstrating Macbeth's propensity for evil. Yet, Macbeth is a sympathetic character. He starts off as a hero but at the end of the play, he ends up as a villain and dies. This shows the tragic downfall of a man. If Macbeth can make the right choice in Act 1 in not believing the witches' prophecies, he can probably avoid the murder of Duncan and the other murders as a result. Though Macbeth has acted cruelly, sinfully and tyrannically, he is still a tragic hero.