

Practice Questions

Macbeth

Read the following extract from Act 5 Scene 1 of *Macbeth* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth has learned that Lady Macbeth is dead.

SEYTON

The queen, my lord, is dead.

MACBETH

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
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.

Starting with this speech, explain whether you think Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a tragic character.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth in this speech
- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth in the play as a whole

Macbeth

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 7 of *Macbeth* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth is deliberating on whether he should kill Duncan.

He's here in double trust;
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other.

Starting with this speech, explain how Shakespeare deals with the theme of ambition in the play.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare deals with ambition in this speech
- how Shakespeare deals with ambition in the play as a whole

Macbeth

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 7 of *Macbeth* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth has returned home to his castle where his wife has just read his letter about the witches' prophesies.

LADY MACBETH

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant.

MACBETH

My dearest love,
Duncan comes here to-night.

LADY MACBETH

And when goes hence?

MACBETH

To-morrow, as he purposes.

LADY MACBETH

O, never
Shall sun that morrow see!
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't. He that's coming
Must be provided for: and you shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch;
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

Starting with this speech, explain how Shakespeare presents the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in this speech.
- how Shakespeare presents the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the play as a whole.