

Key Quotes to Learn

This is the minimum you should know.

Make sure you have covered other key quotes by going through our notes on each act.

Quotation	Analysis
Act 1	
<p>brave Macbeth O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman! noble Macbeth worthiest cousin</p>	Duncan is talking about Macbeth. The adjectives give us a positive sense of what he is like and that he is well-respected.
No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive	The previous Thane of Cawdor was a traitor to his King and country. Macbeth is given his title after he is executed. It is ironic because Macbeth will become the next treacherous Thane of Cawdor and kill his King.
<p>Thrice to thine and thrice to mine And thrice again, to make up nine.</p>	The number 3 was considered to be an unlucky number and associated with the devil. The witches often repeat ideas in 3's or refer to it. The Elizabethan audience would know that this meant they were demonic (linked to the devil).
What can the devil speak true?	Banquo reminds us that the witches are linked to the devil.
<p>Let not light see my black and deep desires (Macbeth – after being given title Thane of Cawdor)</p> <p>Come, thick night, and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, That my keen knife not see the wound it makes, Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark, To cry, 'Hold, hold!' (Lady Macbeth – reading letter)</p>	Darkness is a common motif . Macbeth and Lady Macbeth both refer to the darkness as a way of hiding the terrible things they plan and will do.
<p>I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself And falls down on the other.</p>	Macbeth gives several reasons why he should not kill Duncan. The personification of ambition shows it is the only reason why he would kill his well-respected King and cousin.
Act 2	
I had most need of blessing and ' Amen ' Stuck in my throat	Macbeth has murdered Duncan and knows that he is damned. The word 'Amen' is repeated several times at this point. The Elizabethan audience considered a King to be God's representative on Earth so Macbeth has committed a terrible sin.
<p>'Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep'</p> <p>'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.'</p>	Disturbed sleep is a motif in the play. Macbeth repeats this idea several times and before Lady Macbeth is seen to sleep walk. Both are signs of a guilty conscience.
Act 3	
Nough's had, all's spent Where our desire is got without content	This foreshadows the tragedy to come. Lady Macbeth knows that they will never be happy.

Quotation	Analysis
'Shame itself'	Macbeth thinks he sees the ghost of Banquo. Lady Macbeth again suggests that Macbeth is cowardly and urges him to behave more like a man.
Act 4	
'Something wicked this way comes'	The witches are referring to Macbeth. They are waiting on the heath for him to visit them again. This idea is repeated throughout the last two Acts with Macbeth repeatedly called the 'devil' and a 'tyrant'. This needs to be compared with the way he is described by Duncan at the start of the play.
Act 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.	He has just been told that Lady Macbeth is dead and Macbeth's use of metaphors here shows that he realises that he has destroyed his life and everything he has done has been for nothing.
be these juggling fiends no more believed, That palter with us in a double sense; That keep the word of promise to our ear, And break it to our hope.	Macbeth knows he has been tricked by the witches.