

Reflections:

*A Student Response Journal for...*

# *Macbeth*

*by William Shakespeare*

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*Macbeth*

**Act I**

1. In the first scene, the Witches use the phrase “fair is foul and foul is fair.” Have you ever experienced anything that was both “foul and fair”? Write about what you experienced in a letter to Shakespeare.
2. Duncan reigns over Scotland, which is at war with Norway, but his country is also filled with internal rebellion. Imagine that you are Duncan’s advisor. What advice would you give him to face these difficult challenges?
3. You are one of the Three Weird Sisters and participate in a conversation that takes place among these three Witches before they announce their prophecies to Macbeth and Banquo. What do you say to them? Your dialogue could begin as follows:  
  
**First Witch:** Let’s tell Macbeth exactly what he wants to hear.  
  
**You:** Maybe we should...
4. The Witches have told Macbeth that in time he will become King of Scotland. His ambition drives him to perform deeds that will speed up the process. Pretend that you overhear your parents talking about buying you a car next year. Do you wait patiently for it to happen, or do you do whatever is needed to make it happen? Explain your reasoning.
5. Macbeth insists on knowing what the future holds for him, even though at times he doesn’t believe what the Witches tell him. Would you like to have your future predicted? Why or why not?

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*Response Journal*

6. Macbeth hides his amazement at Duncan's announcement that Malcolm will succeed him as King. If you were Macbeth, what would you say to Duncan?
7. Lady Macbeth has revealed her plan to murder Duncan. As Macbeth, write a diary entry examining the feelings about it that you would not share with your wife.
8. Pretend that you are a marriage counselor and that the Macbeths have sought your advice. What problems do you think they have in their relationship, and what solutions do you propose? Write out a list of steps they could take to prevent any more marriage problems.
9. Lady Macbeth ruthlessly pushes her husband to commit monstrous crimes. Have you, or someone you know, ever pressured another person to do something that you were reluctant to do yourself? Explain.
10. Macbeth must prove to his wife that he is a man. The proof she requires is the murder of King Duncan. The word for killing a king is "regicide." Make a list of as many words as you can find in a dictionary or that you know that use the suffix "cide" meaning to "kill." Across from each word, write a definition. You can follow this example:

<b>WORD</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
Regicide	killing a King

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11. Macbeth and his wife plan the cold-blooded murder of an innocent man. They calculate how to place the blame on others and appear free of guilt. Such a crime might seem to call for the death penalty if Macbeth and his wife are discovered. Explain your feelings about the death penalty in a few paragraphs, and back up your opinions with facts.
  
12. How do you feel about Lady Macbeth's treatment of her husband, for example her constant criticism of his inability to act like a man? What would you say to her if you could?
  
13. Lady Macbeth has demonstrated that she will do anything to get what she wants. Have you ever wanted anything so much that you were willing to do anything to make it happen? Write a diary entry explaining what happened.
  
14. You and Duncan are both guests at Inverness at the same time. You overhear the plan to murder the King. You want to warn Duncan, but you do not want to put yourself in danger. What will you do? Explain your reasoning.

## **Act II**

15. Macbeth is troubled by his fear of discovery or of retribution for committing this murder. Write a letter to Macbeth to convince him not to do this. You may cite moral or personal reasons.
  
16. Lady Macbeth does not fear the consequences of her murderous scheme. Explain why you probably would not be able to talk her out of going through with this crime.
  
17. The witches seem to be in control of the action in the play. What they say comes true, even if not in the ways we expect. Make a list of some common superstitions and see if you can determine their origins. You may need to use the Internet or an encyclopedia.
  
18. You do not know if Macbeth makes his choices willingly or if his actions are pre-ordained and out of his control. Were you ever in a situation where you felt you had no control over your actions? Explain how you handled the situation.
  
19. Macbeth sees a dagger hovering in the air before him. You do not know if Shakespeare intended this as a warning to Macbeth not to commit the murder or as an encouragement to go forward with his plan. Take Macbeth's speech about the dagger and rewrite it in modern English.
  
20. You witness Duncan's murder and make a deal with Macbeth not to reveal his identity as the murderer, as long as he does one thing for you. What would it be and why?

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*Macbeth*

21. You overhear the conversation between Malcolm and Donalbain as they ride away from the castle. They have decided to leave Scotland rather than stay and avenge their father's murder. Write an explanation of why you think they leave and whether you think they are cowardly or smart.
  
22. Malcolm and Donalbain ride away quickly after the murder, possibly because they are afraid they will be blamed for it even though they are innocent. Have you or someone you know ever been blamed for some wrongdoing of which you were innocent? Write a letter to the accusing person and explain what the circumstances really were.
  
23. Imagine you are a TV reporter at the time, covering the widespread rumors of strange and unnatural events immediately following the murder of Duncan. Write a script you would use on the air explaining what has happened. Your script might begin as follows:  
  
Good morning. Last night, our King Duncan was brutally murdered by his two guards, who were then slain in retaliation. Many strange phenomena have occurred since then, including...
  
24. What would you, as a skeptic, add to the conversation among the Old Man, Ross, and Macduff about the strange events that have occurred?