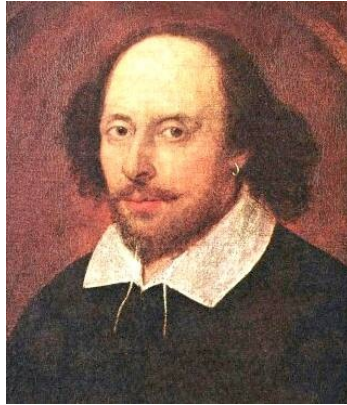


MACBETH

by William Shakespeare



THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born into the family of a prosperous tradesman in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. While in his mid-teens, he was forced to leave school because his family fell into a period of poverty, so that he had only a rudimentary education. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior and already three months pregnant. The marriage produced three children in three years, but in 1585, Shakespeare left Stratford to go to London to seek his fortune in the big city.

In London, he embarked upon a career on the stage, becoming a popular actor by the early fifteen nineties. In 1591, he penned his first play, *Love's Labour's Lost*. His early plays were comedies, and show nothing of the depth that characterized his later works. His plots were borrowed from a variety of sources, both ancient and contemporary. During his career, he wrote 37 plays, three narrative poems, and 154 sonnets.

His writing brought him fame and popularity, but he continued to act as well as write (critics love to speculate about which of the characters in his plays would have been played by the author). He eventually became a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men when James I ascended the throne). Most of his plays were performed at local theaters like the Rose, the Globe, and the indoor Blackfriars. When the Globe burned to the ground in 1613 (a cannon misfired during a performance of *Henry VIII*), Shakespeare retired, and died in Stratford three years later on his fifty-second birthday.

Macbeth, written in 1606, was the last of Shakespeare's great tragedies. The basic plot is taken from Raphael Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. The play itself is a study in the effects of evil on those who choose to follow its path, and it has since its introduction been one of the most popular of Shakespeare's plays. Most scholars believe it was intended for performance by the King's Men in the court of James I. The king had written a book on demonology a decade earlier, and the witches undoubtedly would have appealed to his interest in the occult. More importantly, since the Stuart monarchs were descendants of Banquo, the vision of the endless line of kings was clearly intended to flatter James (note also that, in Holinshed,

Banquo was Macbeth's accomplice in Duncan's murder; Shakespeare altered the story for obvious reasons).

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Macbeth - The protagonist, he is Thane of Glamis and a war hero when the play begins. When three witches predict that he will become Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland and he is named Thane of Cawdor shortly thereafter, he decides to take matters into his own hands and murder the king in order to seize the throne. The murder of Duncan initiates a trail of blood that includes two attendants, Banquo, and Macduff's wife and children. He is killed by Macduff at the end of the play.
- Lady Macbeth - Macbeth's wife. She drives him to commit the murder of Duncan, but eventually he is initiating the violence while her conscience is slowly driving her mad. She commits suicide before the final battle is joined.
- Duncan - King of Scotland, he is a noble ruler who is murdered by Macbeth while asleep in Macbeth's castle at Inverness.
- Malcolm - Son and heir of Duncan, he flees to England after the murder of his father, after which Macbeth blames him for the foul deed, then leads an army back to overthrow Macbeth. He is named king at the end of the play.
- Donalbain - Duncan's younger son, he flees to Ireland when the violence begins.
- Banquo - A Scottish general and Macbeth's best friend, he is told by the witches that his descendants will rule Scotland. Because Macbeth wants his own sons to rule, he hires two thugs to murder Banquo and his son Fleance, though Fleance escapes. Banquo's ghost appears at a banquet the night of the murder and terrifies Macbeth.
- Fleance - Banquo's son, he escapes the murder plot and flees the country.
- Macduff - Thane of Fife, he suspects Macbeth of treachery soon after Duncan's murder, and refuses to celebrate his coronation as king. Macbeth later has his family murdered. Macduff flees to England to join the army coming to fight Macbeth, and kills his enemy in the battle outside Dunsinane Castle.
- Lady Macduff - Macduff's wife, she and her children are slaughtered by murderers hired by Macbeth.
- Siward - Earl of Northumberland, he leads the English army against Macbeth. His son, Young Siward, is killed by Macbeth during the battle.
- Lennox, Ross, Menteith, Angus, Caithness - Scottish thanes who rebel against Macbeth.

- Porter - Macbeth's porter who gives a drunken exposition before the murder of Duncan is discovered.
- Three Witches - Their prophecies to Macbeth and Banquo lead to the destruction of both.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

"Fair is foul and foul is fair." (Witches, Ii, 12)

"So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;
They smack of honor both." (Duncan, Iii, 47-48)

"So foul and fair a day I have not seen." (Macbeth, Iiii, 39)

"What, can the devil speak true?" (Banquo, Iiii, 115)

"Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?" (Macbeth, Iiii, 116-117)

"And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence." (Banquo, Iiii, 136-139)

"If chance will have me King, why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir." (Macbeth, Iiii, 158-160)

"Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it." (Malcolm, Iiv, 8-9)

"Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature.
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win." (Lady Macbeth, Iv, 14-21)

"The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty!" (Lady Macbeth, Iv, 42-47)

"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." (Lady Macbeth, Iv, 71-74)

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,
With his surcease, success, that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor. This even-handed justice
Commends the ingredience of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips." (Macbeth, Ivii, 1-12)

"I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other." (Macbeth, Ivii, 25-28)

"I dare do all that may become a man.
Who dares do more is none." (Macbeth, Ivii, 51-52)

"I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me.
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this." (Lady Macbeth, Ivii, 60-65)

"But screw your courage to the sticking place,
And we'll not fail." (Lady Macbeth, Ivii, 68-69)

"Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee!
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?" (Macbeth, Iii, 42-48)

"I could not say 'Amen!'
When they did say 'God bless us!'" (Macbeth, Iiii, 41-42)

“Methought I heard a voice cry ‘Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep’ - the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,
The death of each day’s life, sore labor’s bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature’s second course,
Chief nourisher in life’s feast.” (Macbeth, Iiii, 49-54)

“Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No. This my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.” (Macbeth, Iiii, 78-81)

“Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
The Lord’s anointed temple and stole thence
The life o’ the building!” (Macduff, Iiii, 70-73)

“Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant
There’s nothing serious in mortality;
All is but toys; renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.” (Macbeth, Iiii, 101-106)

“Where we are,
There’s daggers in men’s smiles; the near in blood,
The nearer bloody.” (Donalbain, Iiii, 162-164)

“To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus.” (Macbeth, IIIi, 52-53)

“Naught’s had, all’s spent,
Where our desire is got without content.
‘Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.” (Lady Macbeth, IIIi, 6-9)

“Things without remedy should be without regard.” (Lady Macbeth, IIIi, 13-14)

“Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed.” (Macbeth, IIIi, 50-51)

“Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.” (Macbeth, IIIi, 60)

“It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood.” (Macbeth, IIIiv, 152-153)

“I am in blood
Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o’er.” (Macbeth, IIIiv, 168-170)

“By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.” (Second Witch, IVi, 45-46)

“Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff;
Beware the Thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.” (Armed Head, IVi, 80-82)

“Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
The pow’r of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.” (Bloody Child, IVi, 89-91)
“Macbeth shall never vanquished be until
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill
Shall come against him.” (Child Crowned, IVi, 104-106)

“From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand.” (Macbeth, IVi, 166-168)

“He loves us not, he wants the natural touch.” (Lady Macduff, IVii, 10-11)

“The king-becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temp’rance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
I have no relish of them, but abound
In the division of each several crime,
Acting it many ways.” (Malcolm, IViii, 103-109)

“That of an hour’s age doth hiss the speaker.” (Ross, IViii, 198)

“Out, damned spot! out, I say! One; two. Why then ‘tis time to do’t. Hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our pow’r to account? Yet who would have thought the old man had so much blood in him? (Lady Macbeth, Vi, 31-36)

“Now does he feel his title
Hang loose about him, like a giant’s robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.” (Angus, Vii, 23-25)

“I have lived long enough. My way of life
is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,

I must not look to have; but, in their stead,
Curses not loud but deep, mouth-honor, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.” (Macbeth, Viii, 25-31)

“Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?” (Macbeth, Viii, 47-52)

“Throw physic to the dogs, I’ll none of it!” (Macbeth, Viii, 55)

“Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
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.” (Macbeth, Vv, 21-30)

“Despair thy charm!
And let the angel whom thou still hast served
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother’s womb
Untimely ripped.” (Macduff, Vviii, 17-20)

“Lay on, Macduff,
And damned be him that first cries ‘Hold, enough!’” (Macbeth, Vviii, 38-39)

NOTES

Act I, scene 1 - The three witches speak of meeting together again in order to encounter Macbeth.

Act I, scene 2 - Duncan, king of Scotland, receives word of the victory of his forces in battle against the King of Norway, who was assisted by Scottish rebels. Macbeth is the hero of the battle. Duncan orders the execution of the traitorous Thane of Cawdor and bestows his title on Macbeth.

Act I, scene 3 - The three witches meet Macbeth and Banquo as they return from battle. They greet Macbeth as Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and a future king, and predict that Banquo will beget kings. The two try to question the witches, but they vanish. Ross and Angus then enter and announce that the king has conferred the title Thane of Cawdor on Macbeth. He is clearly agitated by this immediate, though partial, fulfillment of the witches’ prophecy, but determines not to take any steps to bring the final part of the prophecy to pass.

Act I, scene 4 - Duncan receives word of the death of Cawdor, who died nobly, confessing his treason. Macbeth and Banquo arrives, and the king expresses his gratitude. He then announces that his son Malcolm will succeed him on the throne, and tells Macbeth that he will soon visit him at his castle in Inverness. Macbeth hastens home to prepare for the king's visit, but is already harboring thoughts of murder.

Act I, scene 5 - Back home at Inverness, Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband telling her of the witches' prophecy and its partial fulfillment. She is determined that her husband will gain the throne, but fears that he is too weak to seize the opportunity. A messenger comes with news that Duncan will visit Inverness that night, and Lady Macbeth is fixed on murder. When her husband arrives, she tells him to put on a good front, and says that she will arrange everything.

Act I, scene 6 - Duncan and Banquo arrive at Inverness, and are greeted with false warmth and courtesy by Lady Macbeth.

Act I, scene 7 - Macbeth struggles with his conscience, but Lady Macbeth challenges his manhood to motivate him to do the foul deed. The plan she has devised involves getting the king's attendants drunk so they are unable to interfere with the murder, then framing them for the crime. Macbeth agrees to go through with it.

Act II, scene 1 - Banquo has been thinking about the witches' prophecy, and initiates a conversation about it with Macbeth. The latter acts as if it is not a matter of importance, but sounds out Banquo to see if he will support him; Banquo insists he will participate in nothing that is dishonorable. Macbeth then sees a vision of a dagger, after which he leaves to murder the king.

Act II, scene 2 - Lady Macbeth has drugged the king's attendants and has left their daggers out for Macbeth to use; only Duncan's resemblance to her father has kept her from doing the bloody deed herself. Macbeth enters, almost in a state of shock, and still holding the bloody daggers. He refuses to reenter the bed chamber, so Lady Macbeth takes the daggers in and places them near the body. When a knock is heard at the gate, they hurry off to bed so no one will know they were up and around at the time of the murder.

Act II, scene 3 - The porter, aroused from a drunken sleep, goes to answer the door while pretending to be the porter at the gate of Hell. He admits Macduff and Lennox, who are greeted by Macbeth, who supposedly just climbed out of bed. Macduff enters the king's chamber and discovers the murder, whereupon Macbeth rushes in and, in a rage spurred by righteous indignation, kills the king's two attendants. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, fearing for their lives, flee to England and Ireland, respectively.

Act II, scene 4 - Ross and an old man discuss the evil omens connected with the evil events that have occurred. Macduff reports the rumor implicating Malcolm and Donalbain in their father's death, supposedly confirmed by their sudden flight. Macbeth has been named king, and is to be crowned at Scone, but Macduff declares that he will not attend the coronation; he is obviously suspicious about the cause of Duncan's death.

Act III, scene 1 - Banquo suspects that Macbeth is responsible for Duncan's death, and wonders whether, as the witches predicted, his own descendants will sit on the throne. Macbeth enters and invites Banquo to a banquet that evening. Banquo accepts, but says that he and his son Fleance must take a ride that afternoon. Macbeth, jealous of Banquo because of the prophecy that his sons would rule while Macbeth's would not, convinces a pair of ruffians that Banquo is their enemy, and hires them to kill him and his son on the highway.

Act III, scene 2 - Lady Macbeth is now the queen, but finds she is not happy. Macbeth, too, is plagued by insomnia and fearful dreams. They speak of the importance of putting on a good front for their guests at the banquet. Macbeth tells his wife to pay special attention to Banquo, not bothering to tell her that he has already arranged to have Banquo and Fleance murdered.

Act III, scene 3 - The two murderers, joined by a third man (Macbeth himself in most productions), assail Banquo and Fleance on the road. Banquo is killed, but Fleance escapes.

Act III, scene 4 - While Macbeth is hosting the banquet, one of the murderers reports what happened on the road. He is upset that Fleance survived, but is pleased to receive assurances of Banquo's demise. Lady Macbeth notices that her husband is troubled and reminds him to put on a cheerful front for the guests. At this point, Banquo's ghost appears, visible only to Macbeth, who panics. Lady Macbeth calms the guests by telling them that Macbeth has suffered from hallucinations since childhood, then takes him aside to try to get him to pull himself together. When the ghost enters a second time and he again seeks to address it, Lady Macbeth dismisses the guests. After they leave, Macbeth voices his suspicions about Macduff's absence from the feast. He tells his wife that he plans to consult the witches again the next day, and hints that further bloodshed is yet to come.

Act III, scene 5 - This scene, generally considered by scholars to be a later interpolation, involves Hecate coming to the witches and telling them that Macbeth will come the next day to hear his fortune. It adds nothing whatsoever to the plot and interrupts the action.

Act III, scene 6 - Lennox and another lord are discussing the current political situation. At this point, no one doubts Macbeth's guilt, and Scotland is suffering under his tyranny. Macduff has gone to England to raise an army and put Malcolm on the throne. Macbeth, meanwhile, is preparing for war.

Act IV, scene 1 - Macbeth visits the witches and is shown three apparitions - an armed head, a bloody child, and a child crowned. He is warned against Macduff, but assured that none of woman born can harm him, and that he need not fear till Birnam Wood advance against Dunsinane Castle. The vision of an endless line of kings looking like Banquo disconcerts him, however. When he hears that Macduff has gone to England to raise troops against him, he determines to murder Macduff's family.

Act IV, scene 2 - Lady Macduff mourns her husband's departure, which leaves her and the children unprotected. Ross tries to comfort her, but soon the murderers arrive and carry out their grim charge.

Act IV, scene 3 - Macduff, in England, tries to convince Malcolm to overthrow Macbeth and seize the throne. Malcolm does not trust him at first, and paints a bleak picture of his own character to

discern Macduff's true feelings. When he becomes convinced that Macduff is sincere, he tells him that Siward has gathered ten thousand men to invade Scotland. Macduff then hears that his family has been slaughtered, and vows revenge against Macbeth.

Act V, scene 1 - A doctor has been summoned because of Lady Macbeth's strange behavior. The doctor observes her as she walks in her sleep and reenacts Duncan's murder. He doesn't understand all he sees, but knows that she is being tormented by her conscience. He demands that the servants watch her because he fears suicide.

Act V, scene 2 - Scottish lords move toward Birnam Wood to meet Malcolm and the English army. Macbeth has fortified Dunsinane, but the loyalty of his own men is questionable at best.

Act V, scene 3 - Macbeth awaits the attack with confidence because of the witches' prophecy, while Lady Macbeth, whose mind is daily more troubled, is under the doctor's care.

Act V, scene 4 - The Scottish lords and Malcolm's English forces meet and adopt a strategy of camouflaging themselves behind tree branches.

Act V, scene 5 - A messenger tells Macbeth of his wife's suicide, but he cares little for it, and bemoans the meaninglessness of life. When told that Birnam Wood is advancing toward the castle, he begins to entertain doubts about the witches' prophecies, but vows to die fighting.

Act V, scene 6 - Malcolm's forces reach the castle and throw down their camouflage, preparing to attack.

Act V, scene 7 - Macbeth leaves Dunsinane Castle to meet his foes, and kills young Siward in combat; Macduff searches the battlefield for Macbeth. Meanwhile, most of Macbeth's troops have deserted to the enemy.

Act V, scene 8 - Macduff and Macbeth fight, and Macbeth is killed and beheaded. Scotland is thus freed from tyranny as Malcolm prepares to assume the throne.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, is the protagonist a tragic hero? Is he a noble man who is brought down to destruction because of a flaw in his character? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the play.
2. Discuss the playwright's portrayal of the progression of evil in the life of the protagonist in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. How do the consequences of Macbeth's initial choice to pursue evil ultimately overwhelm him? Assess from Scripture the picture of evil found in this great tragedy.

3. To what extent does William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* support the adage that "sin begets sin and violence begets violence"? Evaluate the truth of this statement from Scripture, and use specific incidents and quotes from the play to support your arguments.
4. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, who is the greater villain, Macbeth or his wife? Why do you think so? Support your conclusion with details from the play.
5. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, who is the stronger character, Macbeth or his wife? Why do you think so? Support your conclusion with details from the play.
6. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, who is the more ambitious character, Macbeth or his wife? Why do you think so? Support your conclusion with details from the play.
7. At the end of the first scene of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the witches cry, "Fair is foul and foul is fair." Trace the theme of the inversion of good and evil through the play. How does the inability to distinguish one from the other bring about the downfall of Macbeth and his wife? Be specific.
8. Discuss the imagery of clothing in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. How does the playwright utilize this image to depict the deterioration of the protagonist's character as the play progresses? Be specific.
9. After his first encounter with the witches in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Banquo says, "And oftentimes, to win us to our harm, / The instruments of darkness tell us truths, / Win us with honest trifles, to betray's / In deepest consequence." Compare and contrast the half-truths told by the witches with those told by Satan when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Why are half-truths more seductive than outright lies? Use specific examples from the play to support your arguments.
10. Discuss the use of the image of sleep in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. What characters can or cannot sleep, and why? What is the significance of their somnolence or insomnia? How do these incidents convey the major themes of the play? Use specific examples.
11. Compare and contrast the changes undergone by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the course of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. To what extent does each character cause changes in the other? What do both transitions say about the consequences of lives dominated by evil?
12. Discuss the images used in the speech of the drunken porter at the beginning of Act II, scene 3 of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. How do these images fit Macbeth? Support your arguments with specifics from the play.
13. Compare and contrast the views of kingship presented in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Henry IV, part 1*. Though the plays are very different in tone and content, do they present the same picture of the nature of kingship, and of what makes a good king? Use specifics from the two plays to support your conclusions.

14. In 1605, Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the houses of Parliament with the king and his cabinet in the building in the infamous Gunpowder Plot. One year later, William Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*. How does the content of the play reflect the fears of the people of Shakespeare's day concerning the consequences of the assassination of the king? What characteristics of the play support the need for a stable monarchy? Be specific.
15. When James I took the English throne in 1603 after the death of Elizabeth I, there were many who questioned his right to succeed his distant cousin. The Stuart family of which James I was a part traced its descent from hundreds of years of Scottish monarchs - all the way back to the Banquo who is a significant character in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In what ways could Shakespeare's play be viewed as an apologetic for the legitimacy of the Stuart monarchy? Use specific quotations from the play to support your arguments.
16. The Stuart kings who ruled England in the seventeenth century were strong believers in Divine Right monarchy. Shakespeare's King's Men were employed by James I, and one would naturally expect that the playwright would want to please the man who signed his paychecks. To what extent does William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* support the concept of Divine Right? Use specifics from the play to support your arguments.
17. In Act IV, scene 3 of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Malcolm paints a bleak picture of his own character in order to test Macduff's loyalty. The words that he uses in doing so convey much about Shakespeare's idea of a good king. Use this scene to discuss Shakespeare's view of the ideal monarch. Be specific.
18. A *foil* is a character who brings out certain characteristics of a main character by contrast. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, who do you think is more of a foil for Macbeth, Duncan or Banquo? Why? Support your conclusion with specifics from the play.
19. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the protagonist's "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech in Act V, scene 5 is an expression of despair and a cry against the meaningless of life. In what sense is such nihilism the natural consequence of the choices Macbeth makes throughout the play?
20. Many commentators have noticed the similarity between the witches in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Fates of Greek mythology. The Fates were said to control human destiny, but do the witches? To what extent is Macbeth "the master of his fate and the captain of his soul"? To what extent is he the victim of powers beyond his control? Discuss the view of free will versus determinism expressed in Shakespeare's great tragedy.
21. Discuss the role of gender in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. What pictures of masculinity and femininity does Shakespeare paint? To what extent do those pictures reflect the common beliefs of his day, and to what extent are they universally valid? Use specific examples to support your arguments.

22. Discuss the role of visions in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. How do they influence the lives and choices of the characters who see them? Do you believe these to be supernatural or psychological occurrences? Why do you think so?
23. Compare and contrast the views of violence expressed in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Do the two stories demonstrate agreement or disagreement about the concept that Might makes Right? Support your arguments with specifics from the two books, and evaluate the answers they give on the basis of Scripture.
24. Compare and contrast the views concerning the consequences of evil expressed in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Do the two stories demonstrate agreement or disagreement about the wages of sin? Support your arguments with specifics from the two books, and evaluate the answers they give on the basis of Scripture.
25. Compare and contrast the views of women expressed in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. Do the two stories demonstrate agreement or disagreement about the issue of gender? Support your arguments with specifics from the two books, and evaluate the answers they give on the basis of Scripture.
26. Compare and contrast the views of the medieval Scottish nobility in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and T.H. White's *The Once and Future King*. To what extent do the two authors share the same view of the lawlessness of the Scottish highlands? Do the two writers agree or disagree about the solution for such lawlessness? Evaluate their solutions on the basis of Scripture.
27. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, almost all of the violent acts occur offstage. The choice to handle things in this manner resulted from not only a lack of special effects in the seventeenth century, but also Shakespeare's desire to create psychological impact. In short, what we imagine is usually much more powerful than what we actually see. This is not just true of the audience, however. How is the truth of this statement also borne out in the lives of the play's protagonists?
28. Discuss the role of the weather in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. What do storms and darkness tell us about the relationship between the natural order and the political order of the state? Relate this to the concept of natural law that gained popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
29. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, when Macbeth, speaking of the impending murder of Duncan, says, "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly," was he being realistic? Is a murder, or any other sin, really "done when 'tis done"? Support your arguments with specifics from the play.

30. Some critics have argued that *Macbeth* is the most Christian of William Shakespeare's great tragedies. Do you agree? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the play.
31. Sigmund Freud theorized that the foundational motive behind the actions of the protagonist and his wife in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was not ambition, but childlessness - that their own inability to have a family drove them to destroy the families of others, and ultimately brought them to the point of madness and death. Do you think this to be a credible theory? Why or why not? Support your conclusion with specifics from the play.
32. William Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth* at about the same time. The leading male figures in the plays have in common the fact that our ability to picture them as noble and worthy is largely dependent on the words others speak about them. Compare and contrast the ways in which Shakespeare establishes the nobility of Antony and Macbeth through the eyes of their friends and the foes who respect them. Are these testimonials sufficient to establish the quality of the characters in the eyes of the audience? Why or why not?
33. The theme of ambition is at the core of the tragedy in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the comedy in Anthony Trollope's *Barchester Towers*. Both stories, however, have serious things to say about the subject. Compare and contrast their portrayals of the dangers of "o'erweening ambition," using specific incidents and quotations from both works.
34. Compare and contrast the consequences of sin portrayed in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Which portrayal is more realistic? Which is more Christian? Why do you think so?
35. The protagonists in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* are both men consumed by ambition. Compare and contrast the two, being sure to consider the nature of their ambitions, the ways in which they pursue them, and the outcomes of their respective failures.
36. In William Shakespeare's *Henry VI, part 2*, Eleanor of Gloucester is willing to do almost anything to secure the throne for her husband though he shares no such ambition. Compare her character with that of the protagonist's wife in *Macbeth*. What do Eleanor and Lady Macbeth have in common? In what significant ways are they different? Be sure to consider the roles they play in the plots of the dramas as well as their personalities and their relationships to their husbands.
37. Compare the prophecies of the spirit in William Shakespeare's *Henry VI, part 2* to those of the witches in *Macbeth*. In your analysis, be sure to consider the language, content, and consequences of the prophecies as they are worked out in the two plays.

38. Compare and contrast the prophecies pronounced by Fedallah in chapter 117 of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* with those of the witches in Act IV, scene 1 of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Give attention to language, content, and the roles played by the prophecies in the respective stories.
39. Would you describe the protagonist in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as a Machiavellian? Would the author of *The Prince* have approved of the way Macbeth gained and sought to hold power? Why or why not?
40. Compare the prophecies of Queen Margaret in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* to those of the witches in *Macbeth*. Consider the tone, atmosphere, and content of the respective prophecies as well as their impact on those to whom they are spoken. Do the prophecies drive the plots or simply serve as foreshadowing devices?
41. Compare and contrast the protagonists in William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*. In what ways are their actions, motivations, and final destinies similar? In what ways are they different? To what extent do the differences show the maturing of Shakespeare's art over a period of more than a decade between the writing of the two plays?
42. Compare and contrast the overall themes of William Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Macbeth*. Consider that the former was written a decade before Elizabeth's death, while the latter was written shortly after the uncovering of the Gunpowder Plot during the reign of James I. How do the political situations in England during the two eras affect the plots of the plays? Give special attention to the reasons why Richard and Macbeth are portrayed as villains, relating those reasons to the dangers faced by the kingdom under Elizabeth and James, respectively.
43. Compare and contrast the character of Mamillius in William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* with that of the son of Macduff in *Macbeth*. Consider the impact of the few lines given to the two boys as well as the significance of their deaths to the themes of the two plays.
44. Compare and contrast the flattery of the ruling monarch found in Moliere's *Tartuffe* and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Is what these playwrights do justifiable, or is it a prostitution of their art? Use examples from both plays to justify your conclusion.
45. Compare the qualities of a good king presented in Moliere's *Tartuffe* with those pictured in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. To what extent do the two share the same view of monarchy? Use specifics from the plays to support your arguments.
46. Compare and contrast the role played by Egdon Heath in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* to the way similar terrain functions in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Be sure to consider matters of setting, plot, and character and incorporate specific references from both works of literature.

47. The Stuart monarchs of England and the French Bourbon kings of the seventeenth century both strongly believed in the concept of Divine Right. How are these beliefs treated in Moliere's *Tartuffe* and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*? Do the two playwrights support the justification of monarchy that was popular in the age in which they lived, or do they simply give lip-service to what will please their patrons? Support your arguments with specifics from the two plays.
48. In both John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, one of the villains goes mad with guilt. Compare and contrast the madness of Ferdinand and Lady Macbeth, being sure to consider its causes, the form it takes, and the consequences of their madness.
49. Compare and contrast the death speeches of Antonio in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and Macbeth in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Consider especially what they have to say about the meaninglessness of life. How does the fact that one is a good man and the other a villain affect your analysis of their speeches?
50. Compare and contrast the portrayals of the corrupting nature of power in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Consider both the nature of the power that is in view and the effects of that power on the ones who possess it. Which tale most effectively illustrates the inevitably evil nature of unfettered power? Support your conclusion with specifics from both works.
51. In both William Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and *Macbeth*, the title characters, though they appear strong and violent before the people around them, are dominated by even stronger women - Coriolanus by his mother and Macbeth by his wife. To what extent do these domineering women bring about the downfalls of the protagonists in the two plays? In what ways would the two men have been better off had they not submitted to the influence of the ambitious women in their lives?