



Macbeth - Top Quotations



Quotation	When?	Who?	Methods + Analysis
"fair is foul and foul is fair"	Act 1 Scene 1	The witches	From the outset, the idea of moral confusion is introduced as Shakespeare uses the paradoxical language of fair and foul , suggesting that what seems to be good can in fact be evil. This may foreshadow the events of the play, as the hero Macbeth hides his true, evil nature. Alliteration of the letter "f" creates a sinister, uneasy tone. Use of trochaic meter makes the witches' speech seem magical, hypnotic and mysterious.
"Bellona's Bridegroom"	Act 1 Scene 2	Ross, describing Macbeth	The goddess Bellona was the Roman goddess of war. By describing Macbeth as her "bridegroom" (husband), this classical metaphor depicts Macbeth as a noble, archetypal hero. Shakespeare's use of alliterative "b" sounds creates a heavy and striking image, demonstrating Macbeth's power. Here, Shakespeare makes clear how Macbeth is an archetypal tragic hero , beginning the play as a heroic character.
As sparrows eagles or hare the lion	Act 1 Scene 2	Sergeant	This animalistic imagery portrays Macbeth as a predatory, ruthless killer at the start of the play. The fact that he is described as an eagle , the King of the skies, signifies his high status and role as a tragic hero. The comparison of him to a lion , the King of the animal kingdom, may be used to foreshadow Macbeth's desire to be at the very top of the social hierarchy - King.
So fair and foul a day I have not seen	Act 1 Scene 3	Macbeth	Macbeth's first line uses lexical mirroring , mirroring the language of the witches. This shows his instant connection to them, and highlights how, already, he is victim to their manipulations. Macbeth's use of paradoxical language demonstrates how his good and noble appearance may, in truth, hide a more evil soul.
"To win us to our harm, the instruments of darkness tell us truths"	Act 1 Scene 3	Banquo	Abstract noun "harm" - highlights the dangerous and threatening nature of the supernatural. Metaphor "instruments of darkness" - dehumanises the witches, highlighting Banquo's belief that they are threatening outsiders to the human world. Like instruments , Banquo recognises that the witches can manipulate and change the stability of humanity.
He was a gentleman on whom I built An absolute trust. Enter Macbeth	Act 1 Scene 4	Duncan	Macbeth enters just as Duncan is describing the disloyal traitor , the old Thane of Cawdor. The fact that Macbeth enters at this moment, may foreshadow his deceptive nature and his traitorous behaviour. Furthermore, just as Cawdor is executed, this may hint at Macbeth's own tragic death at the end of the play.
Stars, hide your fires. Let not light see my black and deep desires.	Act 1 Scene 4	Macbeth	Macbeth's use of an aside here indicates his secrecy and lack of honesty for the first time. The use of colour imagery , with his desires described as black , indicates his burgeoning evil and hidden darkness. Macbeth's use of evasive language , "hide" indicates his inner "foulness" that he wishes to hide.
I fear thy nature; it is too full of the milk of human kindness	Act 1 Scene 5	Lady Macbeth	The metaphor of milk, associated with comfort and soothing, indicate Macbeth's possible inner weakness . It becomes clear early on that Lady Macbeth is the catalyst and driving force of the play, as she urges Macbeth to commit regicide.
Come, you spirits... Unsex me here! And fill me from the crown to the toe full of direst cruelty.	Act 1 Scene 5	Lady Macbeth	Lady Macbeth delivers a soliloquy alone on stage, a type of scene usually used for a man. This indicates her rejection of stereotypical gender norms and her power and command. Her use of imperative language as she commands the spirits demonstrates how she is embracing supernatural, evil forces. Her use of the regal word "crown" demonstrates her ambition to be queen.
Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't	Act 1 Scene 5	Lady Macbeth to Macbeth	The juxtaposing images of the innocent flower and the serpent indicate the Macbeths' deceptive natures, with their "foulness" hiding underneath their "fairness." The biblical image of the serpent, known as the devil in animal form, indicates Lady Macbeth's devilish and inhuman nature.
Vaulting ambition	Act 1 Scene 7	Macbeth	For the first time, Macbeth recognises his hamartia or fatal flaw that will ultimately cause his downfall and make him a classical tragic hero. Macbeth's use of the adjective "vaulting" indicates his desire for power and status.

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Is this a dagger I see before me?	Act 2 Scene 1	Macbeth	Macbeth's use of the rhetorical question indicates his uncertain state of mind; his mind is spiralling out of control. The dagger is a classical symbol of sacrifice , used by Cain to kill his brother Abel. This indicates how Macbeth is killing an innocent man, as close to him as a brother. In a deceptive and immoral manner. Here, Macbeth's use of complex sentences indicate his anxiety and fear. He is no longer the hero we saw at the start of the play.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean? A little water clears us of this deed	Act 2 Scene 2	Macbeth Lady Macbeth	Macbeth's use of hyperbolic language demonstrates his anxiety and fear as he returns from killing Duncan. The quantifier "all" demonstrates his belief that he will never truly be able to escape the consequences of his sinful deeds. The symbolism of blood , symbolising guilt, demonstrates how Macbeth's noble character is now being figuratively stained by his evil acts. In contrast, Lady Macbeth's use of the quantifier "little" (in contrast to Macbeth's "all") indicates her lack of remorse. Her use of the pronoun "us" may indicate her belief that she and Macbeth are equals, which was unusual in a patriarchal society.
His silver skin, laced with golden blood	Act 2 Scene 3	Macbeth	Macbeth's use of metaphors , comparing Duncan's body to a precious object, indicates Duncan's goodness and almost Christ-like nature. Duncan is a foil to Macbeth, symbolising goodness and truth, whereas Macbeth symbolises evil and deception.
A falcon... was by a mousing owl killed	Act 2 Scene 4	Old Man	Shakespeare uses bird imagery to depict how the natural order has been overturned, demonstrating the moral confusion that has overtaken Scotland.
Our fears in Banquo Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature Reigns that which would be fear'd	Act 3 Scene 1	Macbeth	Metaphor "stick deep" - Macbeth sees Banquo like a dagger, capable of causing great pain and suffering to him. This is because Macbeth feels paranoid that the witches have prophesied that Banquo will be father to a line of Kings, which Macbeth feels threatened and insecure about. Juxtaposing Macbeth, Banquo has a "royalty of nature" - this highlights how Banquo is a foil to Macbeth, representing goodness and honesty in comparison to Macbeth's increasingly evil nature. Verb "feared" - highlights Macbeth's growing anxiety and paranoia over retaining his power.
O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!	Act 3 Scene 2	Macbeth	Apostrophe "O" - indicates Macbeth's intense fear and internal pain as he falls deeper into anxiety and desperation for power. Metaphor "scorpions" - highlights how Macbeth's mind is almost poisoned by his ambitious and paranoid thoughts.
Hence, horrible shadow! Unreal mockery, hence!	Act 3 Scene 4	Macbeth	Exclamatory sentences - Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo and exclaims his intense fear. This highlights his growing mental instability and anxiety. Noun "mockery" - indicates Macbeth's inner guilt; he feels judged for his sinful actions.
All my pretty ones?.. I must also feel it as a man.	Act 4 Scene 3	Macduff	Macduff is a foil to Macbeth. Where Macbeth lacks humanity and emotion, demonstrating toxic masculinity and violence, Macduff presents an alternative masculinity and acts as a symbol of goodness, as he shows how to channel his feelings healthily.
Not in the legions Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd In evils to top Macbeth.	Act 4 Scene 3	Macduff	Alliteration "devil more damned" - the harsh repetition of the "d" sound highlights Macbeth's evil and brutality. Hyperbolic statement indicates Macduff's intense hatred of Macbeth. By this point in the play, Macbeth and Macduff have become foils of one another - Macduff represents order, strength and honest manliness, whereas Macbeth represents corruption, evil and the dangers of unchecked ambition.
All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!	Act 5 Scene 1	Lady Macbeth	Lady Macbeth's complex sentence structures and hyperbolic language symbolise her mania and madness, as she is finally consumed by guilt. Her repetition of guttural sounds demonstrates her inner pain and guilt. She finally experiences a tragic fall, mirroring Macbeth.
Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow	Act 5 Scene 5	Macbeth	Metaphor "brief candle" "walking shadow" - following the news of Lady Macbeth's death, Macbeth admits that life is nothing more than a candle that burns brightly, or a fleeting shadow that easily dies away. This highlights his nihilism and how he has almost become numbed to the pain and reality of life - his brutal actions in pursuit of power have numbed his senses.
Hellhound	Act 5 Scene 8	Macduff to Macbeth	Macbeth has now completed the tragic downfall . While at the start of the play, he was a lion , he is now little more than a worthless dog, in hell rather than in the starry heaven he was in when he was a hero at the start of the play.