



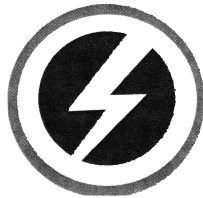
MACBETH

1

EASTER REVISION COURSE

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Leaving Certificate English

Single Text 60 Marks

Examination Technique & Sample Answers

According to the Chief-Examiner for English:

- Examiners reported that candidates generally seemed well prepared for answering on Single Text questions. Although most answers displayed a close knowledge of the studied texts, unfocused narrative remained a feature of the less successful attempts.
- Successful candidates avoided simple character sketches and wrote cogently, using focused narrative, on both aspects of the question. Quotations were used liberally, but not

always accurately or judiciously.

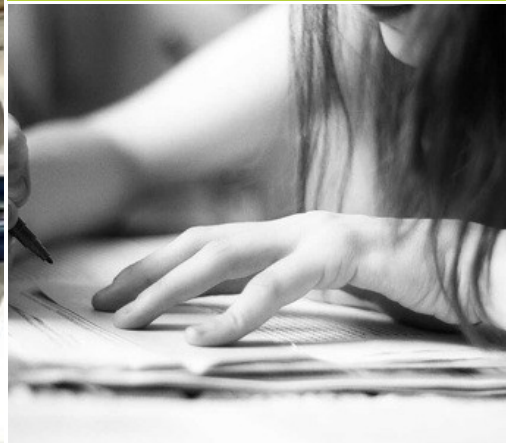
- Examiners noted that the best answers in the Single Text Section were anchored in a careful and assured examination of all aspects of the question. While unfocused narrative remains a minor problem, most candidates displayed an admirable flexibility in adapting their knowledge to the demands of the question

The Key to success is writing as many essays as possible.





“Your answer needs to be well thought out. You must use paragraphs, support what you are saying with quotation from the text and above all answer the question asked.” Don’t forget PQE !



Leaving Certificate English Macbeth Past Leaving Certificate Questions

1953

"Macbeth has physical courage, but moral weakness, and is subject to excited imaginative fears." Discuss this estimate of Macbeth, quoting freely from the play.

Or

"There is at once a grossness, a horrible reality about the witches, and a mystery

and grandeur of evil influence." Discuss, with suitable quotation from the play.

1962

"We find in "*Macbeth*" rapidity of movement, great diversity of character, and many spectacular scenes." Discuss this estimate of the play and quote in support of the points you make.

Or

"Lady Macbeth dominates the play up to the murder of Duncan; after that her influence gradually diminishes, while her husband's power for evil grows ever greater." Discuss with relevant quotation from the play.

1975

In "*Macbeth*," Shakespeare does not present Macbeth as a mere villain, but succeeds in arousing a measure of sympathy for him. Discuss the character of Macbeth in the light of this statement, supporting your answer by relevant quotation and reference.

Or

In "*Macbeth*" the inner self is conveyed, not through the ideas expressed, nor through the actions performed, but by means of an elaborate pattern of imagery and symbolism. Test the truth of this statement by considering any two of the play's characters and the images and symbols associated with them. Support your answer by relevant quotation or reference.

1987

"The Banquo Macbeth has killed is not the innocent soldier who met the witches and

scorned their prophecies, nor the man who prayed to be delivered from temptation. He is a man whose principles have been deeply compromised." Discuss this view, supporting the points you make by reference to or quotation from the play.

Or

Discuss the way in which the language of the play *Macbeth* contributes to the creation of the [atmosphere](#) of evil and violence that pervades the play. Support your answer by relevant quotation or reference.

1995

Discuss the course and nature of the resistance to Macbeth's rule in the play. Support your answer by quotation from or reference to the play.

Or

"Kingship, with all its potential for good or evil, is a major theme in the play, *Macbeth*. Discuss this view, supporting your answer by quotation from or reference to the play.

2003

"We feel very little pity for the central characters of *Macbeth* and Lady *Macbeth* in Shakespeare's play." To what extent

would you agree with the above view? Support your answer by reference to the play.

Notes

Or

"In Macbeth, Shakespeare presents us with a powerful vision of evil."

Write your response to the above statement. Textual support may include reference to a particular performance of the play you have seen.

2009

(i) "Macbeth's murder of Duncan has horrible consequences both for Macbeth himself and for Scotland."

Write a response to this statement. You should refer to the play in your answer.

OR

(ii) "Macbeth has all the ingredients of compelling drama."

Write a response to this statement, commenting on one or more of the ingredients which, in your opinion, make Macbeth a compelling drama.

1987

'The Banquo Macbeth has Killed is not the innocent soldier who met the Witches and scorned their prophecies, nor the man who prayed to be delivered from temptation. He is a man whose principles have been deeply compromised.'

When we first meet Banquo he appears keen, observant and above all impervious to the temptation that the Witches represent. However, by Act III scene ii, Banquo's principles have been deeply compromised and we justifiably feel that he is not the innocent soldier who met the Witches and scorned their prophecies.

The first reports we receive of Banquo in battle show that he is brave and loyal, though not perhaps possessing the strength or charisma of Macbeth. His inner courage is emphasised when he meets the Witches. Unlike Macbeth, who is "**rapt**" by what they have to say, Banquo neither fears nor "**beg[s]**" their "**favours nor [their] hate**". This play examines the way in which evil tempts even the most loyal and most brave into committing unspeakable crimes. We know from the previous scene that the Witches are limited in their powers. Their petty and vindictive pursuit of the "**master o' the Tiger**" demonstrates to us just how circumscribed

they are in their ability to interfere with this unfortunate man's fate. Although this sailor's "**bark cannot be lost**", the Witches are able to "**drain him dry as hay**" by preventing him from sleeping. Sleep, with all its connotations of rest, innocence and peace, is one of the chief means by which the Witches interact with their victims. And, when we next meet Banquo, he has been having great difficulty in sleeping. His mind is troubled by unspecified, disturbing thoughts and "**a heavy summons lies like lead upon**" him. Despite his profound sense of weariness, he cannot sleep. His response to these "**cursed thoughts**" that have prevented him from rest is to pray to the "**merciful powers**" to come to his aid. At this stage in the play, Banquo is not yet morally compromised, although we do see clear signs that he has been affected by his encounter with the Witches.

This is confirmed to us in the same scene when Macbeth enters the stage. The man who once warned his close friend that:

*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.*

now speaks of the truth that the Witches have shown. There then follows an awkward exchange, during which Macbeth quite obviously suggests an underhanded and even treasonable enterprise that will be to Banquo's benefit:

*If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,
It shall make honour for you.*

Banquo's reply reveals the first signs of moral compromise. His refusal to become involved in anything underhanded is of course also a subtle acknowledgement that he sees Macbeth's proposal for what it is. Yet, despite this, he agrees to the meeting.

On the morning of the murder, Banquo arrives following the exit of Macduff and Lennox; initially incredulous, he becomes suspicious after he hears Macbeth's explanation of why he killed the grooms. In public, he says nothing about his suspicions, but vows in the strongest possible terms to stand unequivocally against "**treasonous malice**". He assures the assembled Thanes that he intends to fight the "**against undivulged pretence**" that now conceals Duncan's murderer. The manner in which he moves from using the inclusive "**us**," to stressing that he alone stands in the "**right hand of God**" suggests that he is aware that he has a different perspective on this ghastly crime. When we next meet Banquo on his own, in soliloquy, at the start of Act III, he voices his suspicions to us concerning Macbeth's guilt - suspicions that he has most obviously failed to raise in the off-stage council meeting that saw Macbeth named as Duncan's successor:

*Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promised, and, I fear,
Thou play'dst most foully for't:*

Banquo's king has just been murdered and the social hierarchy that he fought so valiantly to protect against the Norwegian invasion has been thrown into chaos, yet he chooses to ignore his suspicions that Macbeth is responsible for this horrific crime. He compromises his principles even further by brushing aside his fears in favour of an analysis of what the Witches' prophecies may hold for him. This kind of utilitarian, self-serving approach to

morality is completely at odds with the moral confidence that Banquo exudes in the early scenes of the play.

In fact, one of the most startling aspects of the change that takes place in Banquo's character, is the manner in which he begins to resemble Macbeth. His hope that the Witches' prophecies may become his "*oracles as well*," is strangely reminiscent of Macbeth's earlier desire to trust in "*chance*." The Banquo, who once warned his friend to guard against trusting in the truth of the prophecies, now scans the prophecies in order to ascertain what they may hold for him:

*Why, by the verities on thee made good,
May they not be my oracles as well,
And set me up in hope?*

The way in which Shakespeare juxtaposes Banquo's soliloquy, which is full of misgivings about Macbeth's innocence, with his near sycophantic reaction to Macbeth's meeting with him is very interesting. In a manner that recalls Macbeth's eager expressions of loyalty to Duncan, Banquo assures his new King that he may freely "*Command upon [him]; to which [his] duties | Are with a most indissoluble tie | For ever Knit*". At this stage, we are justified in feeling that Banquo has compromised many of his principles. Interestingly, in his final exchange with Macbeth, Banquo speaks of becoming a "*borrower of the night | For a dark hour or twain*". In a play where night holds such clear associations with evil, the reader rightly feels that Banquo's words may hold significance beyond their literal meaning.

There is no denying that Banquo fails to live up to his promise fight against the evil that has been visited on the Kingdom. In death, he does succeed in unmasking Macbeth's guilt: however, his self-interest and reluctance to take the type of hard decisions that see characters like Macduff sacrifice everything for

the cause of good, must lead to us to question his integrity. In the end, we are forced to accept that the Banquo Macbeth has Killed is not the innocent soldier who met the Witches and scorned their prophecies, nor the man who prayed to be delivered from temptation. He is a man whose principles have been deeply compromised.

| 99 |

“The eternal struggle between good and evil – a struggle in which evil comes very close to victory – is the central theme in the play Macbeth.”

Discuss this view and show how the struggle is illustrated in the imagery in the play. Support your answer by quotation or reference.

Shakespeare's "Macbeth" encompasses a complex fabric of *imagery* that articulates the *eternal struggle between good and evil*. Shakespeare highlights the frightening power that evil has for suffering and destruction in language that is powerful and visceral. At the same time, he offers us a vision of the potential that human beings hold for good. The conflict between good and evil takes place on two levels in this play. Firstly, we are presented with a series of internal struggles where characters wrestle with their consciences and attempt to resist the impulse to do wrong. At the same time, we are presented with the physical struggle between good and evil - a struggle in which evil comes very close to victory.

Perhaps the most obvious and potent image of evil in play is that of the Witches. If we take these characters as symbolising wickedness, then we learn a great deal about Shakespeare's vision of evil. The Witches are presented to us in a series of unforgettable visual images. Banquo describes them as looking "*not like the inhabitants of the earth*." He lays emphasis on their "*choppy finger*"

and "**skinny lips**." Their androgyny is underscored by his description of their "**beards**" which forbid him to "**interpret**" that they are "**women**." These are vile and paradoxical creatures. Yet, despite their obvious ugliness, they manage to tempt Macbeth into violating his most deeply held beliefs. This ability of evil to "**win us to our harms**" is an essential feature of Shakespeare's presentation of the eternal struggle between good and evil. As soon as Macbeth has met these creatures, he begins to struggle with his conscience. As he attempts to resist the lure of evil, he describes to us in visceral terms, the effect that it is having on him:

*[...] why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my
ribs, | Against the use of nature?*

However, Macbeth does yield to his evil impulses, and as a result, Scotland is plunged into a living nightmare.

Once Macbeth kills Duncan, the evil that has descended on Scotland is conveyed in a series of disturbing images. The play contains several references to the supernatural consequences of Macbeth's crime. The struggle between good and evil is fought initially on a supernatural plane. In Act II scene iv, Ross informs us that the "**heavens have become troubled with man's act**." The evil that Macbeth invokes earlier in play results in "**dark night strangl[ing] the travelling lamp**." This strange occurrence is matched by unusual behaviour in the animal world. Responding to what Ross has said, an old man informs us that Duncan's horses became unruly and "**ate each other**." Although Macbeth loses his struggle with evil early on in play, vestiges of his conscience continue to

reject the depravity that he has consciously embraced. He becomes haunted by nightmares and visions of evil. His thoughts are dominated by images of "**scorpions**" and other venomous creatures of the night. However, following the murder of Duncan, the rhythm and the cadence of Macbeth's speech changes until he begins to echo the speech patterns of the Witches:

*ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's
summons | The shard-borne beetle with his
drowsy hum*

The combination of visual imagery and the sound of Macbeth's words highlight for us the fact that Macbeth has lost his struggle with evil.

If Macbeth loses his soul to evil, other characters in the play reject temptation and oppose the forces of darkness. Banquo's struggle with evil is captured in his heartfelt prayer to those:

*merciful powers to | Restrain in [him] the
cursed thoughts that nature | Gives way to in
repose.*

The imagery of sleep, which is so central to Macbeth's struggle with evil returns here and is seen elsewhere in the play. Later, when the forces of good have begun to rally, an unnamed Lord prays that "**Northumberland**" and "**warlike Siward**" will grant them deliverance from Macbeth's tyranny. His hope is that "**sleep**" will return once again to this cursed country.

From this point on in the play, the imagery associated with the struggle between good and evil changes sharply. The inner

struggle that we witness in Macbeth and Banquo now becomes literal. In order to convey this, Shakespeare relies on blood, nature and clothing imagery. Caithness explains that he is willing to offer his life blood as a "*medicine*" to be used in the "*country's purge*." His feelings are echoed by Lennox when he speaks of the need to "*dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds*." Their willingness to die for Malcolm is, in part, a recognition of the potential that his kingship holds for good. Macbeth has brought fire and sword to Scotland and the evil that he represents has resulted in genocide:

*[...] good men's lives
Expire before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.*

This powerful image, drawn from the natural world, highlights not only the extent of Macbeth's evil but also the necessity of opposing him. Ross confirms what he has just said by providing us with further images of Macbeth's tyranny. He tells Macduff and Malcolm that under Macbeth, "*Each minute teems a new [grief]*." The need to resist Macbeth's rule is uppermost in Ross' mind. Drawing on clothing imagery, he informs Malcolm that his presence in Scotland "*would create soldiers, make our women fight | To doff their dire distresses*". Once Malcolm agrees to oppose Macbeth on the battlefield, his decision is given divine sanction. He tells us that ten thousand soldiers await his command and that "*the powers above | Put on their instruments*".

Although the rebels' final victory is, according to Siward, "*cheaply bought*," the play's imagery suggests that this is simply one event in the eternal struggle between good and evil – a struggle in which evil comes very close to victory.

1995

Discuss the course and the nature of resistance to Macbeth's rule in the play.

Short introduction / very question focused not committed to anything too specific.

The murder of Duncan leaves Scotland in a state of shock. It results in a ghastly "*breach in nature*" that strikes at the very heart of the country's political system. Initially, resistance to Macbeth's rule is muted and the Thanes accept the new status quo. However, over the course of play, resistance to Macbeth's tyranny grows, until Scotland is plunged into a state of civil war.

Topic Sentence / question focused pointing the direction that the paragraph is going to take.

PQE SEQUENCE * 2 (at least)

The first faint signs of resistance to Macbeth's rule can be seen on the morning of the discovery of Duncan's body. Macbeth's fevered defense of his inexplicable decision to murder the only material witnesses to the King's assassination is greeted by Macduff with genuine astonishment:

"Wherefore did you so?"

It is obvious to the assembled members of Duncan's court that the murderer of their King is in their midst. However, for the moment, they are unable to direct their misgivings and suspicions at any one individual. Banquo speaks for all the Thanes when he promises to "*stand*" "*In the great hand of God*" and to "*fight*" "*Against the undivulged pretence.*" The rightful heirs to Duncan's

Second PQE.

throne, Malcolm and Donalbain realise that open resistance to their father's murder is not possible at this point. They understand that:

"There's daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood, | The nearer bloody."

As result, they decide to flee Scotland in order *"to avoid the aim"* of the *"murderous shaft shaft that's shot."* Scotland has become so utterly corrupt that the only hope for a meaningful challenge to the evil that has been visited on the kingdom, lies outside its borders.

End on a question related sentence.

If resistance to the evil that Macbeth embraces is initially muted in the human world, the natural world is seen to be convulsed by Duncan's murder. According to Lennox:

Second Topic Sentence:

1. It must be question focused
2. It must point the direction that the paragraph is going to take
3. It has to link with the previous paragraph.

*The night has been unruly: where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death,
And prophesying with accents terrible
Of dire combustion and confused events*

It is as if Macbeth's crime is being resisted on a natural and supernatural level. An old man confirms that *"this sore night | Hath trifled former knowings"* and Ross explains that *"Duncan's horses broke their stalls, flung out, Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make | War with mankind"*. However, such attempts by nature to resist the evil that Macbeth represents are, in the first half of the play, ineffectual. *"Dark night"* descends over Scotland and resistance to the inevitability of Macbeth's ascension to the throne appears futile.

Supplementary Topic Sentence that is question focused.

End on the question / continuity link with Topic Sentence.

Topic Sentence.

It falls to Macduff to resist Macbeth's tyranny. He refuses to be present at the coronation at Scone, and in an obvious rebuff to Macbeth's legitimacy as ruler of Scotland, he refuses to attend the royal banquet. Macduff's resistance to Macbeth's rule does not go unnoticed. According to Lennox, Macbeth has taken all of this very personally and "*Macduff [now] lives in disgrace.*" Once the potential danger that Macduff represents is confirmed by the Witches, Macbeth determines to eradicate any resistance. He decides to:

Point Quote Explain Sequence.

Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword

His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls

That trace him in his line.

The savagery of Macbeth's treatment of Macduff's family is matched by the brutality with which he confronts broader resistance to his rule. He brings fire and sword to his country and under Macbeth Scotland "*weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash is added to her wounds.*" Any resistance under such circumstances is virtually impossible. It is for this reason, that in the final two acts of the play, England offers the only hope of opposition to the savagery that Macbeth has visited on his country.

End on the question.

Nature of resistance to Macbeth's rule.

Malcolm's promise to tread upon the tyrant's head is only made possible because "*gracious England*" has offered the services "*Of goodly thousands*". As the forces of good begin to rally, their attempts to resist Macbeth's evil are given divine sanction. According to Malcolm, "*Macbeth | Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above | Put on their instruments.*" Malcolm has learned from his father's mistakes and he understands that any attempt to fight Macbeth must include deception. In the final movement of play,

I try at least once in the essay to include a quote minor character that is question focused.

Nature of resistance to Macbeth's rule.

1995

“Kingship, with all its potential for good or evil, is a major theme in the play, Macbeth.” Discuss this view supporting your answer by quotation from or reference to the play.

Shakespeare’s “Macbeth” encompasses a complex fabric of elements that articulate the potential that Kinship holds for good or evil. In the play, we are presented with four Kings: Duncan, Macbeth, Edward the confessor and finally Malcolm. In the case of three of these Kings, Shakespeare demonstrates that the lawful monarch has enormous potential for good. The King can be a source of inspiration, leadership and morality for the wider public. However, Shakespeare also stresses that, in the wrong hands, the monarchy has the potential to visit horrendous pain and suffering on a country.

When we first meet Duncan it is clear to us that he is loved and respected by his kinsmen. His Kingdom has just come under threat from Norway and from a fifth column in the form the Thane of Cawdor. Duncan faces this threat and with help of his loyal generals he restores peace to Scotland. Duncan’s first words in the play demonstrate to us that he cares deeply about his Kingdom and his subjects. Once the bleeding captain has finished his situation report, Duncan is eager that the man’s wounds receive medical attention:

*So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;
They smack of honour both. Go get him surgeons.*

The care and attention that Duncan demonstrates here, is matched by a decisive ruthlessness in how he deals with the Thane of Cawdor's treachery. He pronounces a death sentence on the man who has deceived his "*bosom interest*." If the potential that the monarchy holds to do good is to be realised, order needs to be restored in Scotland. And, when we next meet Duncan, the need to reestablish his authority is foremost in his mind. In a subtle manner, Duncan's language hints at the potential that Kingships holds for good. He uses words like "*trust*," "*honour*," "*thanks*" and "*love*." He also speaks of the potential for growth and prosperity that his stewardship of the country promises:

*I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing.*

And he openly acknowledges the debt of gratitude that he owes Banquo and Macbeth. This is the monarchy as it was intended to function. It is system that rewards valour and offers the hope of a stable and prosperous future; it is the very antithesis of the evil that Macbeth embraces.

If Duncan represents growth and prosperity, the Witches and the evil they espouse, represent a barren sterility. When Macbeth allows himself to fall under their influence he opens his heart to the darkness that they symbolise. Macbeth knows that Duncan's kingship has been beyond reproach and he understands perfectly well that Duncan is the lawful King of Scotland. On the night of the murder, as Macbeth wrestles with his conscience, he presents us with a very accurate account of the potential that Duncan's monarchy holds for good:

*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;*

This very accurate depiction of the good that Duncan represents, is made all the more poignant because it is delivered by the man that kills him.

Once Macbeth assumes office, we see in graphic and disturbing detail the potential that Kingship holds for evil. The country is plunged into perpetual night and the balance of nature is disturbed. Banquo tells us that "*There's husbandry in heaven; Their candles are all out.*" This is confirmed by Ross when he reminds us that "*dark night strangles the travelling lamp.*" This metaphorical darkness is matched by a very real and palpable evil. Under Macbeth, Scotland experiences the most terrible suffering.

As King Macbeth becomes obsessed with securing his throne, he views kingship as a vehicle for personal gain and easily justifies the need for all other "*causes [to] give way.*" He becomes fixated on "*slaughterous thoughts,*" and in an insane act of meaningless brutality, he orders that Macduff's castle in Fife be given:

*to the edge o' the sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line.*

In a way that perhaps the murders of Banquo and Duncan fail to, this crime forces us to recognise the terrible consequences that Macbeth's tyranny holds for Scotland.

Under Macbeth, Scotland literally becomes a graveyard and we now see the full potential that monarchy holds for evil. It is

place where "*each new morn | New widows howl, new orphans cry,*" and "*new sorrows | Strike heaven on the face.*" Any and all opposition is met with deadly force. In Act IV scene iii, Ross informs Malcolm and Macduff of the terrible toll that Macbeth's rule is taking on Scotland. He speaks of how "*good men's lives | Expire before the flowers in their caps, | Dying or ere they sicken.*" The awfulness of this image is reinforced by Lennox much later in Act V, when he describes the rebel army as containing many:

*unrough youths that even now
Protest their first of manhood*

The implication is shockingly clear. Macbeth's tyranny has eliminated an entire generation of Scottish nobles.

Despite the fact that Macbeth decimates their ranks, the forces that assemble to face him at Dunsinane recognise the potential that the monarchy still holds for good. Caithness explains that he is willing to offer his life blood as a "*medicine*" in the "*country's purge*". His feelings are echoed by Lennox when he speaks of the need to "*dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.*" Their willingness to die for Malcolm is, in part, a recognition of the potential that kingship holds for good. Malcolm embodies the "*king-becoming graces*" such as:

*"justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage [and] fortitude,"*

In his own words, Malcolm remains at the "*command*" of Scotland. His attitude to kingship is the very antithesis of the evil that "*Devilish Macbeth*" represents. In this respect, Malcolm resembles his English counterpart, Edward the Confessor whom Lennox

describes as being "**most pious**" and whose goodness extends to being able to cure a disease known as "**the Evil**." The potential that this king holds for good is also seen in his "**heavenly gift of prophecy**" and in the "**sundry blessing that hang about his throne**." In the closing moments of the play, as Malcolm prepares to assume his rightful place on the throne of Scotland, he speaks of grace, growth and love. These words recall his father's speech following the invasion of the Norwegian forces in Act I, and in doing so, they remind us of great potential that kingship still holds for good.

"**Macbeth**" articulates the potential that kingship holds for both good and evil. During Macbeth's reign as King of Scotland we are afforded a vision of what it is to live under a "**butcher**" and a tyrant. However, the play balances this view of monarchy by presenting us with an equally powerful depiction of the potential that kingship holds for good.

2009

MACBETH – William Shakespeare

- (i) *“Macbeth’s murder of Duncan has horrible consequences both for Macbeth himself and for Scotland.” Write a response to this statement. You should refer to the play in your answer.*

OR

- (ii) *“Macbeth has all the ingredients of compelling drama.”*

Write a response to this statement, commenting on one or more of the ingredients which, in your opinion, make Macbeth a compelling drama.

MACBETH – William Shakespeare

- (i) *“Macbeth’s murder of Duncan has horrible consequences both for Macbeth himself and for Scotland.” Write a response to this statement. You should refer to the play in your answer.*

Mark ex 60 by reference to the criteria for assessment using the following breakdown of marks.

P 18

C 18

L 18

M 6

Expect candidates to identify and discuss the horrible consequences resulting from the murder of Duncan. Candidates should clearly focus on the extent of the horror for both Macbeth and Scotland, though not necessarily with equal emphasis.

Code CM for horrible consequences for Macbeth and CM – for not horrible consequences.

Code CS for horrible consequences for Scotland and CS– for not horrible consequences for Scotland.

Possible consequences:

Macbeth

- psychological – guilt, remorse, trauma, confusion
- violent – paranoid killings of Banquo, Macduff's family
- moral – “supped full with horrors”, reliance on the witches
- social – isolation, alienation from Lady Macbeth
- spiritual – soliloquies, awareness of failure, despair, futility

Scotland

- social – banquet disorder, fear and suffering, “widows howl, new orphans cry”
- natural – darkness, “night has been unruly”
- political – tyranny, “Alas! Poor country”
- future – “the time is free”, new order

When we first meet Macbeth, he is introduced to us as a general of extraordinary prowess who has won the respect and admiration of his kinsmen. However, Macbeth's murder of Duncan has horrible consequences both for Macbeth and for Scotland. For Macbeth, the murder marks a frightening turning point in his life. At first, he becomes wracked with guilt and remorse. Then, as the play

progresses, he becomes increasingly dehumanised. As result, he visits the most appalling suffering on his country. Furthermore, following the murder of Duncan, Scotland's political and social systems are irrevocably altered.

One of the most obvious ways in which Macbeth changes following the murder of Duncan is to be seen in his relationship with Lady Macbeth. His love for his wife is seen in the trust he places in her. Following the encounter with the Witches, Macbeth is eager to share news of the prophecy with his "**dearest partner in greatness.**" From Macbeth's point of view, the Witches' prophecy is a source potential joy for both of them, and in his letter to his wife, he stresses that he does want her "**to lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of [the] greatness [...] promised**" her. As the night of murder approaches, Macbeth relies heavily on his wife's encouragement and on her determination to see the grim business through to its awful conclusion. When speaking of the murder, Macbeth consistently uses the personal pronoun "**we**". For Macbeth, this is a joint enterprise to be carried out by both them for the benefit of both. Although, in the immediate aftermath of Duncan's murder, Lady Macbeth remains committed to her husband, Macbeth begins to distance himself from her. He plans the murders of Banquo and the destruction of Macduff's castle without her and is eager that she "**remain innocent of the knowledge until [she] applaud the deed**". As she recedes from the action, she makes repeated attempts to reach him but to no avail:

*How now, my lord! Why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making
what's done is done*

The relationship is literally fractured by the killing of Duncan. Macbeth becomes obsessed with clinging to power and with killing all dissenters, while his wife retreats into a frightening world of waking nightmares. When news reaches him that she is ill, his attention remains fixed on military matters. And when Seyton confirms that Lady Macbeth has killed herself, Macbeth shows very little real emotion. Instead, he offers us a nihilistic view of existence where Lady Macbeth "***should have died hereafter.***" It is philosophy that sees:

***"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
[Creeping] in this petty pace from day to day to the
last syllable of recorded time."***

So, one of the most obvious consequences of the murder of Duncan is the way in which it drives a once very loving couple apart. As a result of the murder, Macbeth becomes isolated and dehumanised. In the end, he is literally incapable of experiencing human emotion.

The change that occurs in Macbeth's character is not confined to his relationship with his wife. Following the murder of Duncan, Macbeth's relationship with his kinsmen and Scotland is altered radically. As his paranoia concerning the Witches' prophecies mounts, his attention is drawn to the threat that his former friends and allies present to his security. His "***fears in Banquo | Stick deep***" and he comes to believe that his former friend's "***royalty of nature***" implies a direct threat to his rule. Macbeth's growing paranoia has the direst of consequences for Banquo. Hiring two murderers, he stresses to them the urgency of having his friend killed:

*[...] every minute of his being thrusts
Against my near'st of life [...]*

The killing of Banquo marks the beginning of a series of shocking crimes that sees Macbeth attempt to murder his way to peace of mind. As he sups "**full with horrors**," Macbeth becomes fixated on "**slaughterous thoughts**." In an insane act of meaningless brutality, he orders that Macduff's castle in Fife be given:

*give to the edge o' the sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line.*

Unlike the murders of Banquo and Duncan, this crime forces us to recognise the terrible consequences that Macbeth's tyranny holds for Scotland.

Under Macbeth, Scotland literally becomes a graveyard. It is place where "**each new morn New widows howl, new orphans cry**," and "**new sorrows | Strike heaven on the face**." Any and all opposition is met with bloody handed brutality. In Act IV scene iii, Ross informs Malcolm and Macduff of the terrible toll that Macbeth's rule is taking on Scotland. He speaks of how the "**good men's lives | Expire before the flowers in their caps, Dying or ere they sicken**". The awfulness of this image is reinforced by Lennox much later in Act V when describes the rebel army as containing many:

*unrough youths that even now
Protest their first of manhood*

The implication is shockingly clear. Macbeth's tyranny has eliminated an entire generation of Scottish nobles. In fact, as a result of what Macbeth has done, the political landscape of

Scotland is altered for ever. When the forces of good finally win through and Macbeth is beheaded, the country that Duncan once ruled no longer exists. His son Malcolm announces the death of the old Scottish clan system:

*Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland
In such an honour named.*

The political consequences of Macbeth's decision to murder Duncan are matched by a series of frightening supernatural occurrences. Before the murder, Macbeth invokes dark supernatural powers to invest him with the strength he needs to carry out the crime. Furthermore, he calls on the "*Stars*", to "*hide [their] fires*"; so that light will not see his "*black and deep desires*." Then, in the aftermath of the murder, he reiterates this disturbing invocation to evil:

*Come, seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;*

Inexplicably, something answers Macbeth's prayers. The play contains several references to the supernatural consequences of Macbeth's crime. In Act II scene iv, Ross informs us that the "*heavens have become troubled with man's act*". The darkness that Macbeth invoked has resulted in a situation where, "*by the clock, 'tis day, And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp*". Such a strange occurrence is matched by unusual behaviour in the animal world. Responding to what Ross has said, an old man informs us that Duncan's horses became unruly and "*ate each other*". On a personal level, Macbeth becomes haunted by nightmares and visions of evil. His mind is "*full of scorpions*" and he makes continual references to

the venomous creatures of the night. Following the murder of Duncan, the rhythm and the cadence of Macbeth's speech changes until he begins to echo the speech patterns of the Witches:

*ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's
summons The shard-borne beetle with his
drowsy hum*

Although this is a subtle consequence of Macbeth's crime it is nevertheless an interesting one.

The Murder of Duncan has profound and troubling consequences. For Macbeth, it results in his gradual dehumanisation. He ceases to feel emotions and brings fire and sword to Scotland. These actions result in terrible suffering for the people of his country. In the end, Scotland's political order is forever altered and the way of life that Duncan defended is replaced by a foreign system.

(ii) "*Macbeth has all the ingredients of compelling drama.*"

Write a response to this statement, commenting on one or more of the ingredients which, in your opinion, make Macbeth a compelling drama.

Macbeth has all the ingredients of a compelling drama. Over the length of the play's five Acts, Shakespeare presents us with an unforgettable journey that charts the nature and course of one man's downfall. The play's realistically drawn characters, the

intensity of its imagery and its thought provoking presentation of universal themes all add to its enduring appeal.

Perhaps one of the most compelling aspects of "Macbeth" is to be found in Shakespeare's presentation of Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's relationship. When we first meet Lady Macbeth, she is reading a letter from her husband. The letter is a marvellous dramatic device that affords us an insight into their relationship. In the letter, Macbeth shares the news of his encounter with the Witches. It is clear from the tone and the content that Macbeth values his wife's opinion and that he is passionately in love with her. Describing her as his "**dearest partner in greatness**", he outlines his ambitions and hopes for the future. Importantly, it is a shared future that contains the promise of joint "**greatness**". What follows is a compelling portrayal of the disintegration of this once loving and close relationship. The murder of Duncan drives them apart until they each face their separate dooms alone and isolated. The changes that occur in Macbeth's character are seen early on in play. In an eloquent evocation of the horrors that are happening to him, he makes an evil plea for the suppression of any moral scruples he still might have:

*Come seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale!*

This is drama at its most compelling because, in Macbeth's frightening prayer, we witness a level of psychological insight found in few other plays. We see why life, and even his relationship with his wife, ceases to have meaning for him. For her part, Lady Macbeth reacts to her husband's growing violence and distant

behaviour by receding into the shadows of her memories of that dark night. Following Act III scene iv, Lady Macbeth never again appears on stage with her husband. And, when we next see her in Act V scene i, we witness an utterly compelling transformation in her character. She has become a nightmarish parody of the woman she once was:

*Out, damned spot! out, I say!–
[...]**Hell is murky!**[...]
Yet who would have thought the old man
to have had so much blood in him.*

The play contains many other moments of heightened and unforgettable dramatic tension that make for compelling reading. On the night of the murder, Shakespeare presents us with a carefully orchestrated series of dramatic vignettes that centre on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's reaction to the events as they are unfolding. As Macbeth walks towards his King's bedchamber, the enormity of what he is about to undertake weighs heavily on his imagination. A "**dagger**" marshals in the way that he "**was going**" and on its blade he sees the "**dudgeon gouts of blood**" that will later stain his soul. The rhythm and cadence of his speech, is audibly altered as he imagines:

*wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace.
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost.*

This incredibly dramatic and evocative depiction of Macbeth's inner thoughts is punctuated by the sound of a ringing bell. It is difficult

to imagine a more dramatic scene. Then, in real time, Shakespeare takes us to Lady Macbeth. The literalness of her mind is in sharp contrast to her husband's fevered imaginings. She hears an owl for what it is and is more concerned with the practicality of the deed than any implications it may hold for her mortal soul. By employing elision Shakespeare denies us access to Duncan's bedchamber, and in so doing, he heightens the drama of this scene even further. As Macbeth stands before us, visibly shaken and covered in blood, we are forced to imagine the horror that he has just experienced.

Shakespeare's language contributes greatly to creation of the highly dramatic atmosphere of evil and violence which pervades "Macbeth". The play contains a number of carefully worked out imagery patterns that capture the full intensity of the horrors that are happening to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. One of the most disturbing, yet at the same time compelling, patterns of imagery to be found is that associated with children and breast feeding. Their first appearance is seen in Lady Macbeth's invocation to the evil spirits to take ownership of her:

*Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall,
you murd'ring ministers,*

The image reinserts itself into the language of play when she incites her husband to the murder of Duncan. In a disturbing moment of compelling drama, she tells Macbeth that she has "**given suck, and know[s] | How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks**" her. In unforgettable terms, she assures her husband that she would have plucked her baby from her nipple while it was smiling in her face:

And dash'd the brains out, had [she] so sworn

The shocking nature of these lines takes us directly to the drama, tension and horror of what they are contemplating. Then, on his own in soliloquy, Macbeth admits that if he kills Duncan, "***Pity like a naked new-born babe [...] Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye, That tears shall drown the wind!***" This image of a vulnerable child captures the reader's imagination and compels us to see, in Macbeth's vision of a whole world weeping at the inhumanity of innocence betrayed and honour violated, just how disturbing this crime is. While the image also provides us with a dramatic foreshadowing of Macbeth's final fate at the hands of a man who was ripped from this mother's womb, it is the insights it affords us into his soul that are most compelling. Macbeth fears the judgement of the wider community and so, in this single image, we glimpse his early realisation that the murder of Duncan will result in his dehumanisation; that it will condemn him to a life of despair and take from him everything human beings need in order to be happy — sleep, friendship, warmth and love.

The play relies on many other compelling and highly dramatic imagery patterns. In many respects, Macbeth is steeped in blood from beginning to end. Blood imagery forms an essential part of the play's dramatic fabric; from the appearance of the bloody sergeant in the second scene of the play, to Macbeth's eventual beheading, we have a continual and utterly compelling vision of blood. Macbeth's sword in the battle smokes '***with bloody execution***' and he is aided in his struggle against the Norwegian King by Banquo who, is seen in Act I scene ii, to '***bathe in reeking wounds***'. Of course, the story of their bloody exploits is narrated to us by a man whose "***gashes cry for help***". As we switch location to the Witches, we learn that one of their number has come from the bloody task of killing swine. And, as the play progresses, images of blood continue to set the tone and mood of Macbeth. On the night of the murder, Macbeth

envisions his guilt as a type of indelible bloody stain that will never be washed clean:

*Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas in incarnadine,
Making the green one red.*

The enormity of what Macbeth has done is underscored by frequent references to Duncan's blood. Donalbain is told that "**the fountain of [his] blood is stopped**" and Macbeth himself emphasises both the nobility of his victim and the horror of his crime when he describes Duncan's "**silver skin laced with his golden blood**". It is difficult not to be at once captivated and shocked by these images. In the second half of the play, as Macbeth's crimes intensify, Shakespeare continues to rely on blood imagery. Banquo's gruesome fate is related to us in a series of compelling and almost forensic images. The "**twenty trenched gashes on his head; The least a death to nature**" are later apposed with the unforgettable image of Banquo's ghost whose "**gory locks**" remind Macbeth of just how far he has descended into evil.

In its depiction of a man who murders his king and kinsman in order to gain the crown, only to lose everything that we seem to need in order to be happy—sleep, nourishment, friends, love—Shakespeare's "*Macbeth*" has all the ingredients of compelling drama.