English

Lady Macbeth

Play: *Macbeth*



Favourite quotes:

Fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty!
(I want to be full of cruelty.)

In this quote, Lady Macbeth is saying she wants to be full of cruelty, so that she is able to do the terrible deed of killing the king.

Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it.
(Look like an innocent flower, but really you must be like a snake.)

Lady Macbeth tells her husband that he should try to look innocent, so that no one suspects him of killing the King. But she says that he must secretly be as clever and scary as a serpent (or snake).

Screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail.
(Be courageous and brave, and we won't fail.)

Lady Macbeth is speaking to her husband. She says that if they are brave and courageous, they will not fail in their quest to kill the King.

Out, damned spot! out, I say! What, will these hands ne'er be clean?
(Get this spot of blood off my hand! Will my hands never be clean again?)

Lady Macbeth feels so guilty for what she and Macbeth have done, that she starts to go mad. She sleepwalks at night and says that she is sure her hands are covered in blood. She wants to get the spots of blood off, but she feels like she cannot get her hands clean.

Appearance

I am dressed as a Scottish noble lady. Once my dear Macbeth becomes King, I dress as a Queen. After Duncan's murder, my hands are covered in blood.

The last time you see me, I am sleepwalking. I am dressed in my nightgown. I look desperate and haunted at what I have done. You see less and less of me throughout the play, and I eventually die off stage.

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What am I like?

I am a woman of action. I want to get things done. I get frustrated with my husband when he won't take action.

I am very organised, and in control of my household.

I am ambitious and driven. I would have killed King Duncan myself… except he looked too much like my father.

I am a very good actress. I pretend to welcome Duncan into my home, when really I want to kill him. I pretend to faint when they tell me he has been murdered. I do this to distract everyone from my husband, as he nearly gives the game away!

I am very calm under pressure. I keep my cool, even when my husband is panicking, even when he thinks he has seen a ghost!

Even though I am tough and ambitious, I am not actually as strong and heartless as I pretend to be. I begin to feel very guilty for what I have done, and the guilt takes over me.

What happens to me in the play?

I receive a letter from my husband, Macbeth, saying that he has been made the Thane of Cawdor. This is wonderful news. He also says that he has met some 'weird sisters' who have told him that he will become King. I see an opportunity here. I try to convince my husband to kill King Duncan, so that he can take his place. Macbeth is reluctant.

King Duncan comes to stay at our house that night. I persuade… or bully… Macbeth into murdering Duncan and his guards. I don't kill anyone myself, but I do cover the guards' hands in blood, so that it looks like they are the murderers! Macbeth and I start to worry that we will be found out. Macbeth realises that his friend Banquo was with him when he met the Weird Sisters. Macbeth is worried Banquo will tell everyone about this prophesy, so he secretly kills Banquo.

At a banquet, Banquo's ghost appears to Macbeth. I can't see it, so I desperately try to pretend that nothing is wrong… though I can see that Macbeth is terrified. Macbeth keeps killing anyone who gets in his way. I keep hiding the truth about Duncan's death, but I start to feel too guilty. I start walking and talking in my sleep, and imagining I have blood all over my hands. I am losing control.

Macbeth is away fighting a battle. A messenger comes to him and tells him that I have died. It is not clear how, but at the end of the play, King Malcolm tells everyone that I took my own life.

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The problem or dilemma I have to face

I want my husband to be the king more than anything. I have to find a way to persuade him to kill Duncan.

Once the murder has happened, I have to find a way to keep it a secret from everybody.

How do I find peace when my guilt is so strong?

How do I change over time?

At the start of the play, I am strong and ambitious. I will do anything to become Queen. I take control of the situation, and make my husband do as I say.

Throughout the play, I lose control over the situation, and over my own mind. I cannot cope with the guilt I feel. I don't feel so strong any more, and I cannot live with what I have done.

How does my personality affect my actions?

It is my ambitious nature that gets us all into this mess! I really want Macbeth to be king, and am willing to do anything to make that happen. I am a woman of action. Perhaps if I was less determined and quick to act, none of this would have happened.

What I'm interested in

I am interested in power. Once I hear the witches' prophecy, that is all I can think of. I want Macbeth to be king, so that I can be queen. I am afraid of being found out. From the moment Duncan is murdered, I spend the rest of my life pretending and lying. I am scared of what will happen to me, and to my husband, if the truth is revealed. I am also scared of myself… and of what I have done. I feel so much guilt that I cannot live with myself.

Who do I get on with?

I love my husband, Macbeth. We both want the same thing - power. At the beginning of the play we work together. I persuade him to kill Duncan, so that we can rule together. Throughout the play I stand by him, keeping his secret, no matter what he does.

Who do I clash with?

I clash with anyone who stands between me and the throne. I will do whatever it takes to become queen. Anyone that gets in my way is my enemy.

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What am I most proud of?

At first I am proud of myself, for persuading my husband to do what needs to be done for us to take the throne. As the play goes on, my pride turns to guilt.

How have I been portrayed?



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