

## Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: Envelope Close Reading Activity\*



**Directions:** Each of you will be given an envelope with one close reading topic on it. Throughout your reading of the play, you are to copy passages onto index cards and put them in your envelope.

You will meet periodically in groups to share the contents of your envelope and discuss why the passage was selected and the effect of the quoted passage on the meaning of the work as a whole. Some days you will be placed into groups of students with the same topic and on others you will be placed with a group with different topics. Envelope contents may also be used to guide discussion in Socratic seminar and as quiz grades. Write legibly on the cards as some days the envelopes will be swapped and your classmates might write an analysis of the excerpts in your envelope.

**Envelope 1:** The state of Scotland shifts from health to sickness. Look for passages that demonstrate this change.

**Envelope 2:** A conflict exists between fate and free will in the play. Look for passages that represent this conflict.

**Envelope 3:** Children and not having children is a recurring motif in the play. Look for quotes/passages that illustrate this motif.

**Envelope 4:** Shakespeare frequently juxtaposes dark and light symbolism frequently in the play. Light stands for good while black stands for evils. Look for quotes / passages that stress light and/ or dark

**Envelope 5:** Shakespeare references witchcraft and prophesy in the play. Look for passages with these references that could define the role of witchcraft in the play.

**Envelope 6:** A paradox is a statement of conclusion that seems self-contradictory or absurd but is really true. Look for paradoxes in the play that might illustrate why things are happening the way they are.

**Envelope 7:** The effects of guilt are profound in this play. Look for passages that indicate the effect of guilt on the major characters in the play

**Envelope 8:** People in this play have trouble sleeping. Why is this happening? Look for quotes that show the effects of sleeplessness.

**Envelope 9:** Many people feel that Macbeth is a tragic hero. What then is his tragic flaw? Look for quotes within the play that demonstrate it.

**Envelope 10:** Although blood is a major symbol in the play, it shifts its meaning. Look for quotes that demonstrate the symbolism of the blood throughout the play and especially those that show a shift or change

**Envelope 11:** Macbeth's killing of Duncan disrupts nature. Look for quotes that illustrate that disruption.

**Envelope 12:** Things are not what they appear in Scotland. Look for quotes that demonstrate appearance versus reality.

**Envelope 13:** Do we control our own destiny or does fate intervene? Does Macbeth have free will? Find quotes that support which side Shakespeare is on.

**Envelope 14:** Do the Macbeths love each other? Find quotes that illustrate the love Macbeth has for Lady Macbeth or the love Lady Macbeth has for him.

\*Developed by Marcie Belgard, adapting an activity by Letitia Hughes.