

## **The Many Faces of *Macbeth***

One of the great aspects of *Macbeth* is the changes the main characters (Macbeth and Lady Macbeth) go through as the play progresses. Complete the following assignment.

### **“We Wear The Mask”**

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,--  
    This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
    And mouth with myriad subtleties.  
Why should the world be over-wise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
    Nay, let them only see us, while  
        We wear the mask.  
We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries  
    To thee from tortured souls arise.  
    We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
    Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
    But let the world think other-wise,  
We wear the mask! –Paul Lawrence Dunbar

“We Wear the Mask” is probably Dunbar’s most famous piece of poetry. The author is writing about the “mask” that human beings wear in front of other human beings to disguise any pain, sadness, or turmoil that they may be going through at the time. Dunbar is saying that humans often are not honest with those around them about their feelings because it is easier to make them believe everything is okay, and how true he is! He is also stating in the third stanza that we call on God when no one else is looking and we are in pain, but we would rather let the world see us smile. . . . we would rather wear the mask.

**Part One:** In a good paragraph, explain how the poem applies to either Lady Macbeth or Macbeth.

**Part Two:** Use “We Wear the Mask” as a model and write a poem that you believe Lady Macbeth or Macbeth would write to reflect what he/she is thinking at this point in the play.

**Part Three:** Divide a sheet of paper in half and find a graphic way to illustrate your poem and the significance of the mask in your response. Perhaps consider inner vs. outer self. Be creative.