

Critical Analysis: Soliloquies in *Macbeth*

A soliloquy is a speech delivered by a character that reveals his or her innermost thoughts and feelings. It is unvarnished truth because the character is alone in his or her head.

Soliloquies are central to the play because in them there is only truth. There is no deception as there might be when speaking to other characters.

Soliloquies contain the most powerful emotion and imagery in the play.

Soliloquies are extremely important in revealing character, and are only spoken by the most important characters in the play

Act I.v	“The raven is hoarse....”	LADY MACBETH
Act I.vii	“If it were done...”	MACBETH
Act II.i	“Is this a dagger which I see before me?”	MACBETH
Act III.i	“To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus...”	MACBETH
Act V.v	“She should have died hereafter...”	MACBETH

PART A: SOLILOQUY ANNOTATION

Choose one of the soliloquies listed above AND ANNOTATE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Identify and explain AT LEAST TWO OF the dramatic purposes of the soliloquy:

- to advance the plot: to start the conflict; depict the victories and defeats of the protagonist; depict incidents or decisions that will precipitate further events in the conflict;
- to indicate setting or provide required background information;
- to develop character: to reveal the nature of a person;
- to create atmosphere and impart mood;
- to develop theme(s);
- to create suspense (a state of anxious uncertainty);
- to create dramatic irony (also heightening tension)
- to provide dramatic relief (to break tension after a particularly dramatic or tense scene);
- to provide comic relief (a type of dramatic relief, it specifically provokes laughter from the audience to relieve tension);
- to provide foreshadowing;
- To arouse the emotions of the audience: to deliberately make the audience's sympathies lie where the dramatists wants them to lie.

2. Identify any/all themes evident in the soliloquy: consider the themes of Macbeth:

Blind ambition leads to tyranny

Are we guided by fate or free will?

Unless you are a man, your destiny is not your own

Manipulation is dangerous, but very effective

Which one(s) are present in the soliloquy you are analyzing?

3. Identify all literary and rhetorical devices present in the soliloquy and the effect of each device on the soliloquy and their purposes.

This means you not only identify a literary device, it means you explain how that device makes an impact on the text. Why did Shakespeare choose to use it?

PART B: CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

Using your annotations, you will write a critical analysis of the soliloquy. Develop an argument about one of the dramatic purposes of the play. Why is this character speaking these words now? This goes to dramatic purpose. Once you have decided what you will prove, you are ready to write a thesis statement and prove your argument.

Show how one of the themes is being furthered. Explain how literary and rhetorical devices are being utilized in the soliloquy. Nothing is placed in accidentally, and all work together for maximum impact.

1. Thesis statement
2. Well written essay identifying and analyzing the dramatic purpose and its importance to the work as a whole.
3. Literary/rhetorical devices – how are they being used to yield important information about the dramatic purpose?
4. An introductory and concluding paragraph
5. Grammar and conventions (MLA, correct punctuation and spelling, and a title for your paper).

ALL WRITING IS DONE IN ACES PARAGRAPH FORMAT – THIS MEANS THREE PIECES OF EVIDENCE PER PARAGRAPH AND AT LEAST THREE PIECES OF COMMENTARY PER PIECE OF EVIDENCE.