

Imagery

Shakespeare's

[Macbeth]

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"Shakespeare is Imagery, and Imagery  
is Shakespeare."

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1st hour  
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Shakespeare Imagery Essay

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## Essay Plan Page on Imagery in *Macbeth*

Thesis Sentence: Shakespeare adeptly utilizes fair/foul, light/darkness and blood imagery to emphasize Macbeth's gradual psychological disintegration into madness resulting from the domination of his consuming ambition, unhampered by his weakening moral constraints.

Topic Sentence 1: Fair/foul imagery helps to emphasize Macbeth's dwelling ambition. Once Macbeth allows his ambition to dominate his decisions/actions, it is hard to stop and turn back.

Quote 1: "There's no art/To find the mind's construction in the face." (I, iv) Duncan

Quote 2: "To know my deed 'twere best not know myself" (Pg. "I have supped full with horrors." (Pg. 177)

Quote 3: "My way of life / Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf... Which the poor heart would fain deny and dare (5: not." (Macbeth) "daggers in men's smiles"

Topic Sentence 2: Light/darkness or day/night imagery illustrates Macbeth's struggle between light and darkness. His slide toward darkness into eventual depravity.

Quote 1: "Let not night see my black and deep desires..." (I, iv.)

Quote 2: "And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp... That darkness does the face..." (II, iv.) (Ross)

Quote 3: "Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow..." (V, v)

Topic Sentence 3: Blood imagery symbolizes Macbeth's guilt that becomes a permanent stain on Macbeth's conscience.

Blood, accompanied by violence, is everywhere in Macbeth.

Quote 1: "It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood." (III, iv.) "My hands are of your color..." (Pg. 59)

Quote 2: "And wash this filthy witness from your hand." (II, ii) "What, will these hands ne'er be clean?" (5, 1)

Quote 3: "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased..." (V, iii)

Creative Title:



**"Fair is foul, and foul is fair.  
Shakespeare is Imagery, and Imagery is Shakespeare"**

A multifaceted technique, imagery is the use of illustrative and imaginative language to reveal different aspects of an element. Many writers use imagery to convey a picture without saying directly what the image is thus adding depth to a piece of work. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare adeptly utilizes fair/foul, light/darkness, and blood imagery to emphasize Macbeth's gradual psychological disintegration into madness resulting from the domination of his consuming ambition, unhampered by his weakening moral constraints.

Fair/foul imagery helps to emphasize Macbeth's dwelling ambition. Macbeth appears to be a valiant warrior and a gracious host, but is secretly plotting Duncan's death. The problem, the play suggests, is that it is difficult to "find the mind's construction in the face" (I, iv, 14) of anyone, let alone Macbeth. With "daggers in men's smiles" (II, iii, 165), Macbeth gains an almost inhuman strength and courage after the murder of Duncan, his first crime. He becomes more courageous in crime than he has even been in virtuous deed. "[S]upped full with horrors" (V, v, 15), Macbeth acknowledges the ambition he had always harbored. Ambition is what drives him to ever more terrible atrocities His ambition drives him to a point where he can't even recognize himself, when "his way of life [begins] fall'n into the sere" (V, iii, 26-27). Once Macbeth allows his ambition to dominate his decisions and actions, it is difficult to stop and turn back.

Throughout the play, light/darkness or day/night imagery illustrates Macbeth's struggle between light and darkness, good and evil, humility and ambition. The night of Duncan's murder, Macbeth asks for darkness to hide "[his] black and deep desires" (I, iv, 58) and darkness clouds the night of the murder. Darkness is also used to describe the unnatural character of Macbeth's crime in killing the king when Ross remarks

By th' clock 'tis day

And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp.

Is't night's predominance or the day's shame

That darkness does not face of earth entomb

When living light should kiss it? (II, iv, 8-12)

This symbolizes Macbeth's inability to confront his deeds and needs the dark to hide what he is doing. "To know [Macbeth's] deed, 'twere best not know [himself]" (II, ii, 93). He would of preferred being unconscious and naive rather than acknowledging his deed. Duncan represented the light in the first two acts. Therefore at Duncan's death, Macbeth's struggle went in favor of darkness. After his first crime, Macbeth turns to violence and bloodshed to satisfy his growing ambition and guarantee his power. Ironically, as Macbeth slides toward depravity, he guarantees his loss of power when Macduff vows to avenge his family's death and free Scotland of Macbeth's tyranny. Macduff now symbolizing the light, Macbeth's ambition becomes "a walking shadow... [who] struts and frets his hour upon the stage/ And then is heard no more" (V, v, 27-29). As the play nears the end, light and dark must reach a climactic battle, where Macduff faces Macbeth, good confronting evil.

Blood, accompanied by violence, is omnipresent in *Macbeth*. Blood imagery comes to symbolize Macbeth's guilt that becomes a permanent stain on Macbeth's conscience. Macbeth cries after the murder is committed, even as Lady Macbeth scolds him and claims a little water will "wash this filthy witness from [his] hand[s]" (II, ii, 61). But "blood will have blood" (III, iv, 151) and Macbeth will continue to use violence as a means of disposing threats. The physical

stain of blood becomes a mental one as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth continue to bear the burden of their guilt. They cannot answer the question of whether their hands will ever be clean and therefore cannot answer the emptying void inside themselves. Unable to bear the guilt, Lady Macbeth takes her own life, leaving Macbeth to ask the doctor whether he can "minister to a mind diseased" (V, iii, 50). But the doctor solemnly replies that one with such a disease "must minister to himself" (V, iv, 57).

Shakespeare uses fair/foul, light/darkness, and blood imagery to reveal things that cannot be seen to the reader such as Macbeth's psychological state, deepening ambition, and residing guilt. Therefore, imagery allows Macbeth to become a character characterized by internal conflictions rather than external appearances. As Macbeth continues to acknowledge the coaxing of his ambition, he nears the edge of total madness, the brink of mental deterioration. Macbeth literally becomes a "walking shadow" (V, v, 27) of corruption, moral unbalance, and hopeless desperation.



## IMAGERY

Several dominant images are found in Macbeth -- blood, animals, day/night, fair/foul, clothing, etc. Record references (Act, scene, partial quote, speaker) Record references to them as you read the play.

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### BLOOD

- 1, 2 "...Disdaining fortune which smoked with bloody execution?" (Captain)  
1, 5 "Make thick my blood." (Lady Macbeth)  
1, 7 "Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return to plague th' inventor." (Macbeth)  
1, 7 "When we have marked with blood those sleepy two..." (Macbeth)  
2, 4 "There's daggers in men's smiles. The hearth in blood, The hearer bloody." (Donalbain)  
3, 4 "It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood." (Macbeth)  
3, 4 "The secret'st man of blood. — What is the night?" (Macbeth)  
3, 3 "And with thy bloody and invisible hand..." (Macbeth)  
3, 4 "Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more... tedious as go o'er." (Macbeth)
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### DAY/NIGHT, LIGHT/DARKNESS

- 1, 5 "Stars, hide your fires!" (Macbeth)  
1, 3 "The instruments of darkness tell us truths..." (Banquo)  
1, 4 "Let not light see my black and deep desires...." (Macbeth)  
Duncan's murder happens at night.  
2, 3 "The night has been unruly." (Lennox)  
2, 4 "And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp... That darkness does the face of earth entomb / When living light should kiss it?" (Ross)  
3, 3 "Good things of day begin to droop and drowse, / While night's black agents to their preys do rouse." (Macbeth)
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### ANIMALS

- 1, 5 "The raven himself is hoarse." (Lady Macbeth)  
1, 2 "...as sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion." (Captain)  
1, 5 "Look like th' innocent flower, But be the serpent under't." (Lady Macbeth)  
2, 2 "It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman..." (Lady Macbeth)  
1, 5 "The raven himself is hoarse..." (Lady Macbeth)  
2, 4 "A falcon... Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed." (Old Man)  
"And Duncan's horses..." (Ross)  
3, 1 "Ay, in the catalogue you go for men, as hounds and greyhounds... are clept / All by the name of dogs." (Macbeth)  
3, 2 "We have scorched the snake, not killed it." (Macbeth)  
3, 2 "O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!" (Macbeth)  
3, 4 "There the grown serpent lies. The worm that's fled / Hath nature that in time will venom breed..." (Macbeth)  
3, 4 "...rugged Russian bear / The armed rhinoceros..." (Macbeth)  
4, 2 "...for the poor when (The most diminutive of birds) will fight, / Her young ones in her nest, against the owl." (Lady Macduff)

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BLOOD

- 1,2 "...Disdaining fortune which smoked with bloody execution?" (Captain)  
4,3 "It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash/Is added to her wounds." (Malcolm)  
5,1 "Out, damned spot, out I say!... Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" (Lady Macbeth)  
5,1 "What, will these hands ne'er be clean?" (Lady Macbeth)  
5,1 "Here's the smell of the blood still." (Lady Macbeth)  
2,2 "Go get some water/And wash this filthy witness from your hand."  
(Lady Macbeth)
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DAY/NIGHT, LIGHT/DARKNESS

- 1,5 "Stars, hide your fires!" (Macbeth)  
4,3 "The night is long that never finds the day." (Malcolm)  
5,1 "She has light by her continually. 'Tis her command." (Gentlewoman)  
5,5 "Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow..." (Macbeth)
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ANIMALS

- 1,5 "The raven himself is hoarse." (Lady Macbeth)  
4,3 "Esteem him as a lamb..." (Malcolm)  
5,7 "I cannot fly./But, bear-like, I must fight the course." (Macbeth)



FAIR/FOUL

- 1, 1 "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." (Witches)  
 1, 3 "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." (Macbeth)  
 2, 4 "That would make good of bad and friends of foes." (Old Man)  
 3, 3 "Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill." (Macbeth)  
 2, 3 "O horror, horror, horror!" (Macduff)  
 1, 3 "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill, cannot be good." (Macbeth)  
 4, 2 "But I remember how / I am in this earthly world, where to do harm /  
 Is often laudable, to do good sometime / Accounted dangerous folly." (Lady Macduff)

CLOTHING

- 1, 3 "...why do you dress me in borrowed robes?" (Macbeth)  
 1, 4 "Like our strange garments... but with the aid of use." (Banquo)  
 1, 7 "Golden opinions... woth now in their newest gloss..." (Macbeth)  
 1, 7 "Was the hope drunk wherein you dressed yourself?" (L. Macbeth)  
 2, 4 "Lest our old robes sit easier than our new." (Macduff)  
 3, 1 "Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown / And put a barren scepter  
 in my grip..." (Macbeth)  
 5, 2 "Now does he feel his title / Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe /  
 Upon a dwarfish thief." (Angus)

While not exactly major images, the following ideas also reveal much about the underlying themes of the play. You should also keep track of any references to:

## 1. WEATHER

- "In thunder, lightning, or in rain?" Three Witches accompany their  
 "Hover through the fog and filthy air." Act One appearances.  
 "Our chimneys were blown down... strange screams..." (Lennox) (65)  
 "And overcome us like a summer's cloud..." (Macbeth) (107)

## 2. CHILDREN

- Act 1, sc. 7 "And pity, like a naked newborn babe..." (Macbeth)  
 Act 1, sc. 7 "Bring forth men-children only..." (Macbeth)  
 Act 2, sc. 2 "'Tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil." (Lady Macbeth)

## 3. NATURE/NATURAL/SUPERNATURAL

- Act 1, sc. 3 "That look not like inhabitants o' the earth..." (Banquo)  
 "Stay, you imperfect speakers." (Macbeth) "What, can the devil speak  
 true." (Banquo) "This supernatural soliciting..." (Macbeth)  
 "...against the use of nature?" (Macbeth)  
 Act 1, sc. 5 "That no compunctions visitings of nature..." (L. Macbeth)  
 Act 1, sc. 7 "Their drenched natures lie as in a death..." (L. Macbeth)  
 "...a... hunt minds great nature's second course..."



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FAIR/FOUL

1,1 "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." (Witches)

4,3 "Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace, / Yet grace must still look so." (Malcolm)

5,3 "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased..." (Macbeth)

1,4 "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face." (Duncan)

5,6 "fiendlike queen"

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CLOTHING

1,3 "...why do you dress me in borrowed robes?" (Macbeth)

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While not exactly major images, the following ideas also reveal much about the underlying themes of the play. You should also keep track of any references to:

1. WEATHER

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2. CHILDREN

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3. NATURE/NATURAL, SUPERNATURAL

3,4 "The least a death to nature." (Murderer)

4,3 "A good and virtuous nature may recoil / In an imperial charge." (Malcolm)

4,3 "Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell." (Malcolm)

5,1 "Unnatural deeds / Do breed unnatural troubles." (Doctor)

5,4 "...cast / The water of my land, find her disease..." (Macbeth) idea of  
fisher-king