



Macbeth The Effects of Power: Tracing Lady Macbeth's Mental Breakdown

Lady Macbeth starts out the play as a nontraditional female character: she is ruthless, cunning, ambitious, forceful, and intelligent. Lady Macbeth plays a dominant role at the beginning of the play, but as the play progresses and Macbeth becomes more and more consumed by his power, her role diminishes. In fact, Lady Macbeth is not present at all in Act 4, and by the time she appears again in Act 5, she has undergone a major transformation. Use the chart to trace the impact power has on Lady Macbeth.

Column 1 in the chart below lists each act and scene in which Lady Macbeth appears.

In column 2, identify the character(s) with whom she interacts, cite one to four lines of text that illustrate her mental state as depicted in the scene, and briefly summarize the scene.

Then answer the questions in columns 3 through 5.

Act, Scene	Character(s)/Quote/Summary	What motivates Lady Macbeth's behavior in this scene?	What are Lady Macbeth's fears, or what are the other characters afraid of?	How does Shakespeare demonstrate the influence of power on the individual through Lady Macbeth in this scene?
1.5	<p>Characters: <i>Servant, Macbeth</i></p> <p>Quote: "Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be / What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature; / It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way[.]" (1.5.1–5)</p> <p>Summary: <i>Lady Macbeth has just received a letter from</i></p>	<i>Lady Macbeth wants the throne. She sees the witches' prophecies as an excuse to grab power. She is motivated by the promise of becoming queen to convince Macbeth to do whatever needs to be done for them to rule Scotland.</i>	<i>Lady Macbeth fears that her husband is too "noble" and loyal to kill Duncan. She worries his morality will get in the way of them securing power for themselves.</i>	<i>Lady Macbeth is willing to do whatever it takes to gain power. Through Lady Macbeth's actions in this scene, Shakespeare demonstrates the horrific acts people are willing to commit in pursuit of power.</i>

	<p><i>Macbeth describing his encounter with the witches. She calls upon the spirits of the world to make her ruthless and unfeeling so that she and Macbeth can do what needs to be done in order to secure the throne.</i></p>			
1.6	<p>Characters:</p> <p>Quote:</p> <p>Summary:</p>			
1.7	<p>Characters:</p> <p>Quote:</p> <p>Summary:</p>			

2.2	Characters: Quote: Summary:			
2.3	Characters: Quote: Summary:			
3.1	Characters: Quote: Summary:			

3.2	Characters: Quote: Summary:			
3.4	Characters: Quote: Summary:			
5.1	Characters: Quote: Summary:			

5.5	<p>Characters:</p> <p>Quote:</p> <p>Summary:</p>			
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RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.11-12.3 Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).