

Macbeth Key Quotations

Act 1

- "a desolate place ... thunder and lightning" - (threatening atmosphere)
- "hover through the fog and filthy air" - (supernatural)
- "brave Macbeth ... disdaining fortune" "valiant ... worthy" - (positive view of Macbeth)
- "disloyal traitor ... Thane of Cawdor" - (foreshadows treachery)
- "killing swine" - (Jacobean belief of witches)
- "Thane of Cawdor ... Hail Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter" - (supernatural, sparks Macbeth's plot?)
- "speak, I charge you" - (tries to control supernatural)
- "instruments of darkness ... win us with honest trifles, to betray's in deepest consequence" - (treacherous nature of the supernatural)
- "chance may crown me without my stir" - (potential for things to take their course, decides against it)
- "we will establish our estate upon our eldest, Malcolm" - (pushes Macbeth to take action?)
- "stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires, the eye wink at the hand" - (dark and corrupt nature of Lady Macbeth, doesn't want God to see her actions)
- "thy nature it is too full o'h'milk of human kindness" - (critical of Macbeth's good qualities)
- "I may pour my spirits in thine ear with the valour of my tongue" - (corrupting nature of Lady Macbeth)
- "you spirits ... unsex me here and fill me ... of fires cruelty" - (summons the supernatural to aid her, transgresses to male society to commit her deeds)
- "stop up th'access and passage to remorse" - (doesn't want to have any feelings, shows she is human inside and knows it)
- "come to my woman's breasts and take my milk for gall" - (lacking maternal character - transgresses gender boundaries)
- "pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell that my knife see not the wound it makes, nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark" - (doesn't want to be judged by God, still wants heaven - scares audience)
- "look like th'innocent flower, but be the serpent under't" - (Garden of Eden religious imagery of deception)
- "Heaven's breath smells wooingly here" - (ironic)
- "his virtues will plead like angels" - (Duncan is a good king)
- "vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself and falls" - (critical of Macbeth for going too far, can't step out of line past what is in God's plan for him)
- "was the hope drunk ... look so green and pale" - (critical of Macbeth's cowardice but ironic as she won't do what she wants of him herself)
- "dashed the brains out had I so sworn as you have done to this" - (horrific, shocking imagery)
- "false face must hide what the heart doth know" - (deception, innocent flower)

Act 2

- "in Heaven their candles are all out" - (stars hiding fires)
- "is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?" - (supernatural is tempting Macbeth)
- "or art thou but a dagger of the mind ... proceeding from the heat oppressed brain?" - (questions if he is ill, is the murder a product of his own thoughts, not supernatural?)
- "the owl scream[ed] and the crickets cry" - (nature protests the killing of the king - chain of being)
- "hangman's hands"
- "'Amen' stuck in my throat" - (link with God lost - chain of being)
- "Macbeth does murder sleep ... sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care" - (destruction of nature)
- "pluck out mine eyes ... Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" - (terror)
- "wake Duncan with thy knocking: I would thou couldst" - (regret)
- "farmer who hanged himself on expectation of plenty" "could not equivocate to heaven" - (trickery, foreshadows Macbeth's death)
- "there's daggers in men's smiles" - (corruption)
- "dark night strangles the travelling lamp" - (darkness, supernatural imagery in daytime)
- "[the horses] ate each other" - (nature revolting against King being killed)