

unguarded Duncan?" Shakespeare makes Lady Macbeth say this to show that she can manipulate her husband in calmer ways and bribe him to do her bidding if he feels in a secure and confident state of mind. Shakespeare uses a rhetorical question in this previous quotation to show Lady Macbeth's assuring tone towards Macbeth by making him think nothing can go wrong. This quotation also foreshadows the earlier point later in the play when Lady Macbeth says she is unable to kill King Duncan.

After King Duncan's murder Lady Macbeth begins to lose power over her husband and relevance in the play. Shakespeare does this to show Macbeth's tyrannical behaviour becoming stronger which means Lady Macbeth no longer needs to assist him. This subsequently leads to Lady Macbeth's change in attitude from a powerful and manipulative woman to a powerless and weak woman who feels the guilt of her actions by despairing "will these hands ne'er be clean?"

WWW: knowledge of plot, characters and context

EBI: more terminology, quotations and a strong conclusion

Level 9

In this extract from Act 1, scene 7, Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as very much the dominant figure in her relationship with her husband. This is demonstrated through her constant emasculation of him, especially in the earlier part of the extract. For example, her insistence to him "to be more than what you were, you would be so much more the man" is a clear attempt to demean him. By stating that he would be "so much more a man" the use of the comparative "more" implies that he is not 'manly' at that moment hence Lady Macbeth loses respect for her battle-hero husband, the once "Brave Macbeth" of Act 1, scene 2. It is important to note that this scene occurs before the regicide of King Duncan has occurred. Lady Macbeth's attitude towards Macbeth changes as the play proceeds and as Macbeth metamorphoses from hero to guilt-ridden monarch and then into an insecure and barbarous, bellicose zealot.

Lady Macbeth's dominance over Macbeth in the first Act, and in the banquet scene of Act 3 scene 4 demonstrates a dynamic of her effectively filling the role of the 'the man of the house' (or of Dunsinane) – a very unusual role reversal in the Jacobean era. In the 17th century (and in the 11th century in which the play was set) women were expected to be submissive to their husbands, hence Shakespeare, by presenting a role reversal such as this, demonstrates that the Macbeth family is not as it seems and is possibly quite dangerous, 'unnatural' and (in a Jacobean period rife with supernatural fear) possibly evil due to the skewed power dynamic.

Additionally, Lady Macbeth is also presented as desiring masculinity in Act 1, scene 5, where the audience see an interesting perspective on masculine ideals from Shakespeare when Lady Macbeth calls upon the spirits to "unsex me here and fill me from the crown to the toe top full of direst cruelty," Shakespeare is demonstrating a perceived connection between masculinity and "cruelty". By presenting a masculine woman he is further amplifying the notability of this connection. Jacobean society would perceive a masculine woman as very unusual and would have a heightened sense of noticing when a woman is not acting 'like a woman' in the expectations of the era. As a result, Shakespeare's exposure of the crueller sides of masculinity through a woman no less, are far more noticeable than through a man. This request for masculinity relatively early in the play, straight