



# MACBETH: GUILT: MODEL ANSWER

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## MACBETH: GUILT: QUESTION

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Read the following extract from Act 5 Scene 1 of Macbeth and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, the Doctor and Gentlewoman are observing Lady Macbeth sleepwalking.

**Doctor**

What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

**Gentlewoman**

It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

**LADY MACBETH**

Yet here's a spot.

**Doctor**

Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

**LADY MACBETH**

Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two: why, then, 'tis time to do't.--Hell is murky!--Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?--Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.

**Doctor**

Do you mark that?

**LADY MACBETH**

The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?--What, will these hands ne'er be clean?--No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

**Doctor**

Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

Starting with this speech, explore how Shakespeare presents the theme of guilt.





**Write about:**

- how Shakespeare presents the guilt in this extract
- how far Shakespeare presents the guilt in the play as a whole.

[30 marks]  
AO4 [4 marks]





## MACBETH: GUILT: 100% MODEL ANSWER OUTLINE

### *Introduction*

<p>Hook</p> <p>(quote, question, metaphor, shocking fact/statistic)</p>	<p>“Yet who would have thought the old man / To have had so much blood in him?” – Lady Macbeth.</p>
<p>Building sentences (some background/contextual info)</p>	<p>For much of Macbeth we are caught inside the murderer’s world and made to share his crazy, haunted perspective, as when, for instance, we see the ghost of Banquo when none of the guests does. In his earlier tragedies, such as Othello and Hamlet, Shakespeare might be said to be concerned with the causes of particular actions; however, in Macbeth, as in King Lear, the focus is more on consequences than causes. Here, the decisive action – murdering the king - happens early in the play, and the subsequent scenes show how its effects ripple through the playworld. What happens to Macbeth (and his wife) after the murder of Duncan is of more interest in this play than the question of why Macbeth murders Duncan.</p>
<p>Thesis statement</p> <p>(your position on the argument you are presenting)</p>	<p>Therefore, two key scenes that demonstrate the consequences of the Macbeths’ actions are the sleepwalking scene which suggests that guilt can drive one insane, and the ‘tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow’ soliloquy, which illustrates Macbeth’s sense of nihilism resulting from his guilt-ridden conscience.</p>

### *Body paragraph 1*

<p>Topic sentence</p> <p>(introduce what this paragraph is about)</p>	<p>One primary function of the sleepwalking scene seems to be as a reminder to the audience of how we came to this point in the play and how Lady Macbeth has ended up in the psychological turmoil.</p>
<p>Supporting sentences</p>	<p>In Macbeth, sleep is used as a symbol that represents one’s conscience; Therefore, the innocent sleep peacefully at night, while the guilty are tormented by a lack of sleep. The recalled scenes in Lady Macbeth’s somnambulist nightmares together</p>





<p>(your your analytical and contextual evidence)</p>	<p>draw a desperate portrait of Lady Macbeth’s attempts to support her husband through the crime and its aftermath, while coping herself with the trauma. The Sleepwalking scene displays for us Lady Macbeth's imperfectly suppressed memories, reliving the moment of Duncan's death as a kind of primal scene. Even the language appears unable to hold the mental strain Lady Macbeth is suffering; in fact, it is one of Macbeth’s few examples of prose. A case in point is when she says, ‘Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two:’ <b>The complete absence of verse in this passage reflects Lady Macbeth’s loss of control of her mind and body as a result of being tormented by a guilty conscience.</b> Just as Macbeth’s hallucinations of the daggers and Banquo’s ghost may reveal the subconscious that he has had to suppress in order to go through with the ‘deed’, the sleepwalking scene may be designed to expose the subconscious that Lady Macbeth has had to suppress in order to support her husband’s ambitions , and fulfill her own ambitions of being queen. She is now stuck in the same world of wild imaginings Macbeth was. Similar to when Macbeth says ‘Will all great Neptune’s oceans wash this blood / Clean from my hand?’. While he imagines it in a visual sense , Lady Macbeth imagines it in an olfactory sense. She says , In (5.1.36), ‘Here’s the smell of blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand’ offering her own version of Macbeth’s hyperbolic question. She, the one who looked forward and urged Macbeth to look to the future to success and triumph, cannot stop looking back at what they have done, whereas he can do nothing but move forward without learning anything from the past.</p>
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<p>Concluding sentence(s)</p> <p>(final thoughts this paragraph)</p>	<p>Perhaps the sleepwalking can be seen as a pivotal moment of the play’s moral teachings and is therefore a reminder to the audience of the eternal damnation that results from regicide.</p>
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*Body paragraph 2*

<p>Topic sentence</p> <p>(introduce what this paragraph is about)</p>	<p>While Lady Macbeth’s Sleepwalking scene illustrates clearly the psychological instability that results from guilt, Macbeth’s ‘tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow’ soliloquy Macbeth’s last soliloquy, where he is mourning the meaningless of life after his wife’s death, is the last time he shares his experiences with us before his own inevitable death.</p>
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<p>Supporting sentences</p> <p>(your your analytical and contextual evidence)</p>	<p>Seyton says: “The queen, my lord, is dead” . Macbeth responds with: “she should have died hereafter” - a short line, indicating, perhaps, that there should be a pause before proceeding to the next line. The pause may give the audience a chance to contemplate the significance of the previous lines by Macbeth and Seyton. The word “hereafter” introduces the future as an element of time. It is also echoed by the Witches, Duncan and Lady Macbeth at various points throughout the play. In fact, the word ‘hereafter’ forms part of Lady Macbeth’s first words to Macbeth and echoes the third Witch’s prophecy in scene one act three. In all previous iterations of the word ‘hereafter’, it is a reference or taken to be a reference to a future that</p>
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	is greater than the present; something to look forward to, however, contrastingly now, it is a reference to bleak and meaningless future; it is a future that has been destroyed by foolish ambitions of the past and is now irrecoverable. Another example is the line 'tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow', which has a feminine ending, emphasising Macbeth's conflict with the future. The pace of the reading has also slowed down dramatically, just as time may feel like it is slowing down for Macbeth as it draws to a close for him. Additionally, the repetition renders 'tomorrow' a nonsense word and it begins to reflect the lack of meaning that Macbeth detects in his own life.
Concluding sentence(s)  (final thoughts this paragraph)	To crudely summarise, this is a description of total blackness and despair that life is finite; Macbeth is expressing a sense of desolation of meaningless. Shakespeare may not be telling us that life is meaningless but he is showing the sense of meaningless that can come to someone who has betrayed himself, especially one who has betrayed his better self.

*Body paragraph 3 (OPTIONAL)*

Topic sentence  (introduce what this paragraph is about)	
Supporting sentences  (your your analytical and contextual evidence)	
Concluding sentence(s)  (final thoughts this paragraph)	

*Conclusion*

Restated thesis  (your position of the argument you are presenting)	In conclusion, the Sleepwalking scene and the 'tomorrow and tomorrow' soliloquy demonstrate that guilt can drive one insane, and create a sense of nihilism resulting from his guilt-ridden conscience.
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<p>Summary of controlling concept</p> <p>(central theme)</p>	<p>However, it should be noted that despite the mistakes the protagonists make, historically, the tragic plot structure does not simply lay all the blame at the feet of the protagonists or fate, such as being controlled by supernatural powers.</p> <p>For example, in Renaissance England, Sir Philip Sidney suggested that tragedy is a didactic form that lays bare the corruption that rulers and statesmen may attempt to conceal, while the tragic plot structure has also often been used to criticise the values of the societies in which the protagonists live, such as violence, war (civil war in this case), kingship, extreme masculine ideals and honour. Therefore, although the protagonists must take responsibility for the decisions they make, tragedies encourage us to pity these fallen heroes because they are essentially trapped in a society whose values are almost impossible to attain or live up to. The plot of Macbeth reflects the values of Early Modern Society in which, in the words of Niccolo Machiavelli, 'the highest good to aim for was honour and glory'.</p>
<p>Author's purpose</p> <p>(why the author wrote the text)</p>	<p>This incessant pursuit of honour, which appears to be the root of Macbeth's faults, was reflected in many of the tragedies of the period, where the male characters struggle to live up to their society's standards of masculinity or carried them to the extreme, and so destroy themselves as well as others. Yet, it is these very same extreme masculine values that Duncan and the other thanes praise in Macbeth at the beginning of the play as 'worthy', 'good' and 'valiant', because he defeats the rebel Macdonwald as well as the invading Norwegian army. Duncan's valourising of violence brings us back full circle to the Witches' concluding couplet in act 1, scene 1: 'fair is foul and foul is fair / hover though the fog and filthy air'; the play appears to be a warning not only to individuals but to entire societies to be careful of the values we expound, and to be weary of what we wish for, because the very things we think are worthy', 'good' and 'valiant' may well be the very same things that destroy us.</p>
<p>Final thought</p> <p>(What key idea(s) do we learn?)</p>	<p>Perhaps Shakespeare is implying that, instead, we should fight against corruption and aim for higher ideals such as truth.</p>

#### MAKE SURE YOUR ESSAY CONTAINS ALL OF THESE QUALITIES

Tick these off when you have added them to your essay

- Methods - author's techniques
- Context
- Effects of the author's methods on the audience/reader
- Link to another part of the text - talk about the meaning of the connection
- Symbolism
- Themes
- Author's purpose

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## MACBETH: GUILT: 100% MODEL ANSWER

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### **HOW DOES SHAKESPEARE PRESENT THE THEME OF GUILT?**

Yet who would have thought the old man / To have had so much blood in him?" – Lady Macbeth. For much of Macbeth we are caught inside the murderer's world and made to share his crazy, haunted perspective, as when, for instance, we see the ghost of Banquo when none of the guests does. In his earlier tragedies, such as Othello and Hamlet, Shakespeare might be said to be concerned with the causes of particular actions; however, in Macbeth, as in King Lear, the focus is more on consequences than causes. Here, the decisive action – murdering the king - happens early in the play, and the subsequent scenes show how its effects ripple through the playworld. What happens to Macbeth (and his wife) after the murder of Duncan is of more interest in this play than the question of why Macbeth murders Duncan. Therefore, two key scenes that demonstrate the consequences of the Macbeths' actions are the sleepwalking scene which suggests that guilt can drive one insane, and the 'tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' soliloquy, which illustrates Macbeth's sense of nihilism resulting from his guilt-ridden conscience.

One primary function of the sleepwalking scene seems to be as a reminder to the audience of how we came to this point in the play and how Lady Macbeth has ended up in the psychological turmoil. In Macbeth, sleep is used as a symbol that represents one's conscience; Therefore, the innocent sleep peacefully at night, while the guilty are tormented by a lack of sleep. The recalled scenes in Lady Macbeth's somnambulist nightmares together draw a desperate portrait of Lady Macbeth's attempts to support her husband through the crime and its aftermath, while coping herself with the trauma. The Sleepwalking scene displays for us Lady Macbeth's imperfectly suppressed memories, reliving the moment of Duncan's death as a kind of primal scene. Even the language appears unable to hold the mental strain Lady Macbeth is suffering; in fact, it is one of Macbeth's few examples of prose. A case in point is when she says, 'Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two:' The complete absence of verse in this passage reflects Lady Macbeth's loss of control of her mind and body as a result of being tormented by a guilty conscience. Just as Macbeth's hallucinations of the daggers and Banquo's ghost may reveal the subconscious that he has had to suppress in order to go through with the 'deed', the sleepwalking scene may be designed to expose the subconscious that Lady Macbeth has had to suppress in order to support her husband's ambitions, and fulfill her own ambitions of being queen. She is now stuck in the same world of wild imaginings Macbeth was. Similar to when Macbeth says 'Will all great Neptune's oceans wash this blood / Clean from my hand?'. While he imagines it in a visual sense, Lady Macbeth imagines it in an olfactory sense. She says, In (5.1.36), 'Here's the smell of blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand' offering her own version of Macbeth's hyperbolic question. She, the one who looked forward and urged Macbeth to look to the future to success and triumph, cannot stop looking back at what they have done, whereas he can do nothing but move forward without learning anything from the past. Perhaps the sleepwalking can be seen as a pivotal moment of the play's moral teachings and is therefore a reminder to the audience of the eternal damnation that results from regicide.

While Lady Macbeth's Sleepwalking scene illustrates clearly the psychological instability that results from guilt, Macbeth's 'tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' soliloquy Macbeth's last soliloquy, where he is mourning the meaningless of life after his wife's death, is the last time he shares his experiences with us before his own inevitable death. Seyton says: "The queen, my lord, is dead". Macbeth responds with: "she should have died hereafter" - a short line, indicating, perhaps, that there should be a pause before proceeding to the next line. The pause may give the audience a chance to contemplate the significance of the previous lines by Macbeth and Seyton. The word "hereafter" introduces the future as an element of time. It is also echoed by the Witches, Duncan and Lady Macbeth at various points throughout the play. In fact, the word 'hereafter' forms part of Lady Macbeth's first words to Macbeth and echoes the third Witch's prophecy in scene one act three. In all previous iterations of the word 'hereafter', it is a reference or taken to be a reference to a future that is greater than the present; something to look forward to, however, contrastingly now, it is a reference to bleak and meaningless future; it is a future that has been destroyed





by foolish ambitions of the past and is now irrecoverable. Another example is the line 'tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow', which has a feminine ending, emphasising Macbeth's conflict with the future. The pace of the reading has also slowed down dramatically, just as time may feel like it is slowing down for Macbeth as it draws to a close for him. Additionally, the repetition renders 'tomorrow' a nonsense word and it begins to reflect the lack of meaning that Macbeth detects in his own life. To crudely summarise, this is a description of total blackness and despair that life is finite; Macbeth is expressing a sense of desolation of meaningless. Shakespeare may not be telling us that life is meaningless but he is showing the sense of meaningless that can come to someone who has betrayed himself, especially one who has betrayed his better self.

In conclusion, the Sleepwalking scene and the 'tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' soliloquy demonstrate that guilt can drive one insane, and create a sense of nihilism resulting from his guilt-ridden conscience. However, it should be noted that despite the mistakes the protagonists make, historically, the tragic plot structure does not simply lay all the blame at the feet of the protagonists or fate, such as being controlled by supernatural powers. For example, in Renaissance England, Sir Philip Sidney suggested that tragedy is a didactic form that lays bare the corruption that rulers and statesmen may attempt to conceal, while the tragic plot structure has also often been used to criticise the values of the societies in which the protagonists live, such as violence, war (civil war in this case), kingship, extreme masculine ideals and honour. Therefore, although the protagonists must take responsibility for the decisions they make, tragedies encourage us to pity these fallen heroes because they are essentially trapped in a society whose values are almost impossible to attain or live up to. The plot of Macbeth reflects the values of Early Modern Society in which, in the words of Niccolo Machiavelli, 'the highest good to aim for was honour and glory'. This incessant pursuit of honour, which appears to be the root of Macbeth's faults, was reflected in many of the tragedies of the period, where the male characters struggle to live up to their society's standards of masculinity or carried them to the extreme, and so destroy themselves as well as others. Yet, it is these very same extreme masculine values that Duncan and the other thanes praise in Macbeth at the beginning of the play as 'worthy', 'good' and 'valiant', because he defeats the rebel Macdonwald as well as the invading Norwegian army. Duncan's valourising of violence brings us back full circle to the Witches' concluding couplet in act 1, scene 1: 'fair is foul and foul is fair / hover though the fog and filthy air'; the play appears to be a warning not only to individuals but to entire societies to be careful of the values we expound, and to be weary of what we wish for, because the very things we think are worthy, 'good' and 'valiant' may well be the very same things that destroy us. Perhaps Shakespeare is implying that, instead, we should fight against corruption and aim for higher ideals such as truth.

