

Folder D

With reference to the context, how does Shakespeare use language and structure to present Lady Macbeth as evil?

Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as evil in Macbeth by using structure, form and language. We first see Lady Macbeth in her home reading a letter from Macbeth talking about his experience of meeting with the witches and the prophecies of Macbeth being king and Banquo's children being kings to. When she reads the letter Shakespeare makes it so Lady Macbeth speaks in Macbeth's words. In other words she is seen speaking in a more masculine tone at this time it would have shown her as a more powerful individual but then later, in her soliloquy, she asks the spirits to take all feminine attributes and convert them to more masculine strengths and powers. She commands the spirits to "unsex me here, and fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty". She also demands that her 'milk' is replaced with 'gall' (poison). Her 'milk' suggests she wants to take away her mothering attributes therefore dismissing her motherly side removing all Lady Macbeth's caring and loving nature and replacing it with poison. This might have offended Shakespeare's audience who believed in the natural order and this is a woman defying God's given role of being a mother in order to commit regicide: two crimes sins against their religious beliefs.

A02

A04

A02

A04

However, there is a suggestion that Lady Macbeth might not be as evil the audience might have seen her. Shakespeare has Lady Macbeth also make the command for the spirits to "make thick [her] blood" and "stop up [her] passage to remorse". Blood was seen as the way in which feelings travel around the body so here Lady Macbeth wants to stop any feelings of regret or guilt from affecting her. This suggests she is a moral person as only someone with morals would feel guilt. It is also Shakespeare foreshadowing Lady Macbeth's suicide.

A02/4

A01

Lady Macbeth's emotional side is also seen in Act II scene ii when she says "had he not resembled my father as he slept I had done't" when the audience witnessed this the first thought is there is still hope for Lady Macbeth, she isn't completely evil she has human judgement for right and wrong. But if you take a second glance she would still kill this innocent king if he did not have a family resemblance and she is fine with her husband Macbeth with doing this completely evil deed in the audience's eyes.

A01

Later on in Act II scene ii the audience see Lady Macbeth take control, in the imperative 'go carry them and smear The sleepy grooms with blood' we see Lady Macbeth take control over the situation because of Macbeth's emotional instability, showing us a more masculine approach to the situation from her. Lady Macbeth then goes on to insult Macbeth, because of this, in the simile 'The sleeping and the dead

A02

are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood That fears a painted devil.' through this Lady Macbeth suggests that Macbeth is behaving like a child by not being able to control his own emotions and decisions. Some people of a Shakespearean audience would be seen this as a wife overstepping her boundaries, but other members of the audience might of seen this as a sin, suggesting Lady Macbeth as being against the goodness of God therefore an evil person.

AG2

AG4

The audience's final view of Lady Macbeth is in Act V scene i where she is seen sleep-walking and reflecting on both her own sins and those of Macbeth. The gentlewoman comments on Lady Macbeth acting as though she is washing her hands and Lady Macbeth says "Out, damned spot! Out I say!" The blood that she 'sees' on her hands is a symbol of her guilt, her attempt to remove it again and again without success suggests she can not rid herself of the guilt. This is ironic, as in Act II scene ii Lady Macbeth says 'a little water clears us of this deed'. Further on in the scene she speaks to herself in rhyme 'The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now? What hands ne'er be clean?' what Lady Macbeth is doing is speaking in a riddle making the subjects of her speech skip showing the broken nature of her mind through her use of prose to show her mind cannot structure her thoughts into verse. It is shortly after this scene that Lady Macbeth commits suicide off-stage.

AG2

Literature in Shakespearean times would tend to be in a moral guideline, in that a audience of the time would see Lady Macbeth as evil for committing a deadly sin, like murder, whether or not if it was a misguided decision, or a clouded vision of right from wrong. But a small minority of the audience might feel sympathy for Lady Macbeth because we see that Lady Macbeth does still have a knowledge of right from wrong explaining her want to remove the guilt from inside of her. Meaning some of the audience still had hope believing she does not deserve the punishment for her crime and requires help instead.



Agreed.