

## Folder H

### Literary Heritage Text Coursework

**How does Shakespeare present the theme of control in *Macbeth*? You must consider language, form and structure and refer to the context of the play.**

Shakespeare presents the theme of control through the characters in the play by giving each character a different perspective of power and control. Throughout the play, each character has different levels of control, the witches, Macbeth, and Lady Macbeth. For example, Macbeth presents control when he becomes Thane of Cawdor, Lady Macbeth presents power when she controls Macbeth and the power she has on him and the witches appear to possess control over all the characters.

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Firstly, Shakespeare uses the witches to demonstrate supernatural control throughout the play as they influence the characters to act in certain ways. This is shown in act 1 when the witches state 'Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none. So all hail Macbeth and Banquo'. In this quote the witches suggest that Macbeth will never be king, Macbeth asks the witches to explain what is meant by this however they vanish into thin air. The use of witches is culturally significant as it would play into the superstitions of the audience and King James I who was fascinated by witchcraft during the 1600s when witchcraft was blamed for causing everything from illness to death. Those accused of witchcraft during the 1600s were often sentenced to death, thus highlighting the power and control they had as they were able to inject that level of fear into society. Therefore, Shakespeare has used this fear to present the witches power in the play. Furthermore, the witches ability to make such prophecies and then immediately vanish into thin air shows the power and control they hold as they aren't required to explain themselves to anyone and they can come and go as they please, suggesting they owe no one an explanation. Therefore Shakespeare has used their supernatural ability to present the theme of control and how they possess it in the play. Moreover, the repeated paradox of 'Fair is foul, foul is fair' throughout the play, shows the level of confusion the witches sew and the chanting tone of the actors would create a supernatural atmosphere for the audience, therefore Shakespeare is highlighting the level of control the witches have over the other characters as they can create confusion for them.

Secondly, Shakespeare uses the setting of 'On 'the heath' to further highlight control. The witches predict that Macbeth will be 'king hereafter' during their first meeting. Their other prophecies of Macbeth becoming Thane of Glamis and Cawdor

A02 foreshadow the event of when he does become these titles, which would imply that he is soon to be King, thus highlighting the control Shakespeare has given them by allowing the witches to make such predictions which further come true. This mischief-making is part of the control that the witches have over Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Moreover, Shakespeare always presents the witches 'in thunder, lightning, or in rain' and on 'the heath', a desolate and lonely place, using pathetic fallacy, we are led into a sense of insecurity and uncertainty. This demonstrates how isolated they were from society, setting them apart from the rest of the characters in the play which automatically suggests to the audience they are different and may contain more power and control as they are to be feared by the other characters. Banquo quoted, when he warned Macbeth about the witches and their prophecies, 'Oftentimes, to win us to our harm, the instruments of darkness tell us truths...to betray us...'. The use of the metaphor, 'instruments of darkness' emphasizes the supernatural element of the witches and their higher power, it also shows Macbeth is being controlled by a higher force. Banquo warns that it may be just a supernatural trick to lure people into making the wrong decisions. Overall, Shakespeare has presented the witches with a vast amount of control over the other characters through the prophecies they make and the way they are feared by the other characters.

A04 Furthermore, Macbeth is presented as the brave, fearless warrior by King Duncan; 'o valiant cousin, worthy gentleman' and as 'Thane of Cawdor' by Lady Macbeth. 'I know am Thane of Glamis, but how of Cawdor?'. All these titles emphasize an immediate sense of power Macbeth holds. However, Macbeth's reaction is portrayed as confused and he questions the witches about his position. An audience at the time would understand the belief of the Divine Right of a King to rule, this means that the position he is in is decided by God, and the people must believe in it. Therefore, suggesting Macbeth holds a level of control due to his position in society. Macbeth realizes he only has 'vaulting ambition' to direct his course so Shakespeare needs a stronger person to direct him towards the 'golden round'. The introduction of Lady Macbeth as a controlling influence over Macbeth supports the belief that a woman has to be loyal to her husband, which would have been accepted during the Elizabethan era, but Shakespeare gives her more influence which contrasts views surrounding gender at the time of the play, perhaps appealing to a more modern audience. Lady Macbeth is introduced in act 1 scene 5 as a powerful, controlling, Wicked Lady. Society's expectations of a woman's role are altered when Lady Macbeth tells the audience she wants to become un-ladylike in order to kill and become more manly: 'unsex me here'. Lady Macbeth knows she must control Macbeth and persuade him to kill Duncan because her role as a woman prevents her from taking part in the murder. The ability for Lady Macbeth to challenge societal gender roles highlights the level of control Shakespeare has given her as she goes against the gender norms during the Elizabethan era. Therefore, Shakespeare is

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suggesting that women can hold as much ambition and desire as men, however, only men have the power and control to carry out such ambitions.

Ultimately, Shakespeare has highlighted Lady Macbeth's control in the play through her ability to control Macbeth to kill Duncan. Macbeth's many titles show the level of control he has within society. However, Shakespeare has presented the supernatural control of the witches as the most significant in the play through the fear they hold over society, both in the play and 1600 Britain, and their prophesying and mischief-making.

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