

# Writing As Witness: Essay And Talk

## Macbeth Imagery: Blood

In the play Macbeth by William Shakespeare, there are numerous references to blood, in fact the word blood appears forty-two times throughout the entire transcript. The allusion to blood is used to indicate a variety of things, but often it is used to identify pain or death.

One of the first references to blood appears in Act I scene one, when a Sergeant is talking to Duncan about battle going on. The Sergeant makes a remark about Macbeth: "Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel, Which smok'd with bloody execution, Like valour's minion carved out his passage". By this he meant, how great of a swordsman Macbeth was by being brave and courageous. That in the middle of the battlefield Macbeth manages to carve his way to the traitor so fast that it blood was boiling off his blade due to his speed, which is a hyperbole.

The next mention of blood is right before Macbeth comes home to his wife, in Act I scene five. Lady Macbeth is asking the devil to empower her so that she could kill Duncan. During her plea she states "And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood. Stop up the access and passage to remorse,". Lady Macbeth knows that she and her husband are about to commit a great sin, for this she needs to feel no remorse or painful sensations because then she will not be able to live with herself. She wants to be filled head to toe with cruelty to be immune to the suffering that this might cause her, so she would have a clean conscience.

Another important reference to blood in Macbeth is in Act II scene two, right after King Duncan is murdered by Macbeth. He referred to his hands as "hangman's hands" because he had acted as an executioner and the blood on his hands is stain on his soul that he believes will never be removed. The savagery of the act of regicide frightens Macbeth causing him to panic, his wife try to calm him down. Near the end of this scene Macbeth says "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood from my hands?", because Macbeth thinks that the embedded blood stain is so deep that nothing can wash it away, since a sin cannot be undone. The allusion to Neptune, the god of the seas, is a hyperbole which furthermore suggests that he is a sinner and always will be one. That indicates that he regrets his actions and wishes that he had not killed the king. At this moment Macbeth probably wants to turn back the clock to undo what had been done because he is still a good person with a heart at least for now. Later he turns into a ruthless tyrant without morals caring for no one, but himself.

Much further into the play, Act IV scene three when Macduff had fled to England and is talking to Malcolm, the son of king Duncan, he makes a bold statement. He says "Fit to govern! No, not to live. O nation miserable, With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd," referring to Macbeth and how he had achieved kingship through bloody ways of murder. Macbeth had killed the king and spilled his blood, so blood on the scepter is referring to how unjust Macbeth's actions were. Macduff is also stating that Macbeth is unfit to live because he has become a very malevolent character.

Throughout the play the allusions to blood change in meaning. At first blood was used to symbolize honor and bravery. Later on it had become a symbol of treachery, when Lady Macbeth asked for "thick blood". Then it became the ultimate sigh of evil.

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