

Macbeth – The Value of Quotations

Part of effective writing is learning how to be selective of the quotations you use from the text you are studying. While any quote – as long as it proves what it is you are writing about – can be effective, the most valuable quotations are ones that fulfill the following criteria:

1. They help to relate a progression of plot and events in the story.
2. They help to reveal significant aspects of character.
3. They help to reveal or reinforce key elements of theme.
4. They illustrate how dramatic, literary, or figurative elements are used by the author.

Meagre quotes will offer something to say about one or two of the aspects above. Powerful, significant quotations will offer the chance for meaningful discussion of more.

Example:

I,v

...Come you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top full
Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage of remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it!

Speaker and Context:

Lady Macbeth delivers these lines once she reads the letter from Macbeth informing her of his encounter with the witches and subsequent promotion.

This quote shows that:

1. From the context this quote is taken from, the audience understands that it is the death of Duncan that she wants, so that her husband may become King. This quote reveals the possibility that Lady Macbeth will have something to do with the fate of Duncan later in the play.
2. The quotation reveals that Lady MacBeth is ambitious because she is wishing for the strength to commit murder. She has the potential for evil, but in calling on powers to make her ruthless, may not be quite quite so evil yet

3. This quote helps to reinforce the theme of natural vs. supernatural. As is, Lady Macbeth lacks the ruthlessness to commit murder; it is natural that women of the time be incapable of such horrid acts. Instead, Lady Macbeth calls on the forces of the supernatural to help her achieve her aims. The dire, unnatural condition that Duncan - and Scotland - falls into is due in part to evil supernatural forces, but these forces would be insignificant if they did not have a human agent through which to act.

4. Shakespeare's use of apostrophe in this passage helps to show how badly Lady Macbeth wants her husband to have the crown. She is so ambitious that she seeks to enlist the help of evil supernatural forces, and her literal pleading to these forces through the device of apostrophe helps to reveal her ambition and evil.

What we are working towards is a fluid, seamless response that answers all appropriate details in at least a paragraph ;-)

Now for your turn:

Choose **ONE** of the following quotations and do what I have done with the quotation above.

<p>I, iv (11)</p> <p><i>The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap, For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires:</i></p>	<p>I, v (13)</p> <p><i>Your face, my thane, is as a book where men May read strange matters. To beguile the time, Looke like the time; bear welcome in your eye, Your hand, your tounge: look like the innocent flower But be the serpent under't.</i></p>
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Due next day!