Macbeth Assessment Requirements

Choose one of the following topics and write a thoughtful response. Your essay will be graded on a writing rubric that includes the following requirements:

- Debatable thesis statement
- Apt examples and quotes from at least two primary documents, including Macbeth
- MLA formatted citations
- Evidence of close reading of primary and secondary documents related to Shakespeare and the early modern period
- Deep understanding historical, cultural context of Shakespeare’s writing
- Skilled control of writing elements

Response Topics

1. At the conclusion of a tragedy, Aristotle argues that there needs to be a moment when the tragic hero, such as Macbeth, recognizes his own faults. Write an essay in which you decide if Macbeth is a true tragic hero, causing spectators to feel compassion or empathy.

2. Write an essay in which you explore Macbeth as a man of action. Decide whether his lack of thought attached to his actions is the major reason for his downfall.

3. Macbeth is destroyed by better men, as his wife is tortured and driven to death by her own guilt. What separates Macbeth from humanity is that he crosses into the world of evil and never looks back. Write an essay in which you explore the moment Macbeth’s ambition drives him to “inhuman” lengths.

4. Shakespeare must have known that tales of violence and superstition played well with Jacobean audiences, especially because of their newly crowned Scottish King James. Write an essay in which you explore at least one historical cultural issue that may have been influential when Shakespeare wrote his Scottish play.

5. Unlike the traditional system of passing on inheritance and titles through primogeniture, the laws of 11th century Scotland were based on tanistry or the “appointed one.” Write an essay in which you explore the importance of tanistry in the play Macbeth.

6. According to Emma Smith, an Oxford scholar, Macbeth is about agency, or the exploration of who has the real power in the play. She asks, “Does Macbeth have the real power or do the witches? Write an essay in which you explore the issue of agency and propose which character or characters own the power of the play.

7. Write an essay in which you explore the idea of messengers, those characters who deliver information to or about characters. Decide the importance of “telling” or sharing information in Macbeth.

8. Macbeth is filled with color – from red blood to black Macbeth – to give shape to the violent world of Scotland. Choose a color and in a well developed essay, follow its path through the play and its effect on characters.

9. Write an essay in which you discuss how regicide is a sin against nature in Macbeth.

10. Teachers generally use a specific approach (close reading, performance, reader response, or document) to Shakespeare’s plays they believe works the best for a specific grade or genre. Write an essay in which you explore the importance of the teaching approach in understanding Macbeth.
Assessment Rubric

Essays receiving top scores focus on a specific, debatable issue, drawing on evidence from primary and secondary documents, including *Macbeth*. An essay of this caliber is formatted according to MLA standards, including a thesis, in-text citations, and illuminates a deep understanding of the historical, cultural context of Shakespeare’s writing. The thesis is concise, debatable, and cogent and is supported with apt evidence from authentic sources and relevant examples from *Macbeth*. Evidence of balance between sources and analytical discussion validates the student’s ability to navigate an insightful response. Using an organic, persuasive format, the student demonstrates proficiency in the synthesis and analysis of sources, which demonstrates critical understanding. The academic tone and elevated vocabulary serve to establish sophisticated style and thought-provoking detail. The essay has evidence of thorough proofreading and revision and attends to mechanics, requirements, and content, employing consistent control over elements of effective writing.

7-8-9 90-100%

Essays in the B range focus on a debatable issue, drawing on evidence from primary and secondary documents, including *Macbeth*. Response essays of this description are formatted according to MLA standards but have errors in the in-text citations, and supports a general understanding of the historical, cultural context of Shakespeare’s writing. Thesis statements are somewhat debatable but are supported with evidence from either primary or secondary sources and obvious examples from *Macbeth*. The balance between sources and relevant observations is compromised because the writing focuses too much on one or the other. Essays in this range may employ obvious organization and style without insight or sophistication, incorporating vague support and obvious conclusions. Tone may be inconsistent, based on general word choice. Some areas of concern include lack of proofreading and revision, or attention to requirements, which have an effect on the overall quality of the composition.

6 80-89%

Essays in the C range are considered to be average quality and do not qualify as academic writing evidenced by consistent control over elements of mechanics and content. The thesis may be superficial or obvious, rendering it difficult to effectively support with authentic sources and relevant observations. MLA guidelines are minimally followed, and the student-selected format focuses heavily on summary. A student’s essay in this range relies predominantly on either primary or secondary sources or limited observations without thorough analysis or commentary. The tone in this essay is erratic based on questionable word choice and inconsistent writing control. The overall quality of the essay is marred by surface errors that distract the reader from the intended message.

5 70-79%

Essays in the D or F range are considered to be ineffective examples of research and composition and do not adhere to MLA standards or effective writing. Little attention is given to reliable and viable sources; the essay is further marred by errors in mechanics and flaws in logic. Neither appropriate planning nor academic tone is evident.

3-4 50-69%
Essays in the lowest failing range are those that do not address one of the required topics or, if they do, the essay is incomplete.

1-2  0-49%

Planning Page