

# Significant Quotations

ELA 10-1/20-1/30-1

Mrs. T. Tomlinson

A quotation may be significant or important because it:

- a) Furthers the plot
- b) Reveals Character
- c) Develops a contrast or similarity
- d) Echoes a Motif or Symbol
- e) Marks a major decision or turning point
- f) Helps to develop or restate the theme
- g) Emphasizes an irony (dramatic, verbal, situational)

When reading a play, novel or short story, note quotations that you consider significant. For each quotation:

1. Identify the speaker and his or her dominant emotions at a time
2. Citation (Act, Scene, Lines) 1.3.55
3. Clarify the context (What is happening or has just happened)
4. Explain the meaning of the passage
5. Identify and discuss the dramatic significance or importance of the quotation.  
(See a-g above)

Example:

“Fair is foul and foul is fair.”

Act: 1 Scene: 1 Lines: 11-12	
Speaker: The Witches	Spoken to: Each other
<p>Context/Meaning:</p> <p>This is the witches’ chant in the opening scene and one of the main themes of the play – the confusion between good and evil, or between appearance and reality. Things that seem to be fair (good) are sometimes foul (evil), and vice versa. This motif is present</p> <p>When Macbeth takes the witches predictions as fact, he is confusing foul with fair.</p> <p>He and lady Macbeth use the same technique on Duncan and their other victims. They pretend to be good, while they plan evil deeds.</p>	
<p>Significance:</p> <p>This quote reflects one of the main themes/motifs of the play. Appearance vs Reality</p>	

## ACT I SIGNIFICANT QUOTES

***“What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.”***

Act: 1 Scene: 2 Lines: 77	
Speaker: <b>Duncan</b>	Spoken to: <b>Ross</b>
<p>Context/Meaning:</p> <p><i>This line summarizes Act I - Everything that belonged to the previous <b>Thane of Cawdor</b>, including his title, now belongs to <b>Macbeth</b>. This shows the king's perception of Macbeth at the beginning of the play.</i></p> <p><i>The Thane of Cawdor was traitor to the throne, which foreshadows what Macbeth will become. Noble: showing fine personal qualities</i></p>	
<p>Significance:</p> <p><i>Reveals Macbeth's character at the beginning of the play and spurs the action of the play. It also shows a contrast to Macbeth's personality/actions later on.</i></p>	

***“So foul and fair a day I have not seen”***

Act: 1 Scene: 3 Lines: 39	
Speaker: Macbeth	Spoken to: Banquo
<p>Context/Meaning:</p> <p><i>For Macbeth, the day is both “foul” and “fair” because it has brought a bloody battle on the one hand, and a Scottish victory (and personal glory) on the other. He may also be referring to the fair outcome of the battle versus the foul weather on the heath.</i></p> <p><i>Though Macbeth doesn't know it, this day will also be “foul and fair” in the sense that it both makes and breaks him.</i></p> <p><i>By comparing the witches' comment “Fair is foul, and foul is fair.” Macbeth's similar expression suggests a mysterious subconscious linkage between him and the Witches. Unusual weather events frequently appear in Shakespeare as signs of some underlying disturbance in the social order.</i></p>	
<p>Significance:</p> <p><i>It echoes the motif of paradox that runs throughout Macbeth. “Fair is Foul”</i></p>	

***“If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me.”***

Act: 1 Scene: 3 Lines: 61-64	
Speaker: Banquo	Spoken to: The Witches
Context/Meaning:  <i>After the witches predict that Macbeth will become king, Banquo asks them to predict his future. The image of grain growing from a seed is the first of many growth and fertility images associated with Banquo. This image relates directly to the witches’ response to his question—his children will be kings. It also contrasts him sharply with the childless and barren Macbeths.</i>	
Significance:  <i>Develops a contrast between Macbeth and Banquo and establishes a theme/motif throughout</i>	

***“And oftentimes, to win us our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray us  
In deepest consequence”***

Act: 1 Scene: 3 Lines: 132-135	
Speaker: Banquo	Spoken to: Macbeth
Context/Meaning:  Banquo is much more cautious than Macbeth—he has realized the witches are probably trying to trick Macbeth. Banquo suspects the Witches are using manipulative tactics to lure Macbeth into evil & betrayal.	
Significance:  Reveals Banquo’s character – His levelheadedness.	

**“He was a gentleman on whom I built an absolute trust”**

Act: 1 Scene: 3 Lines: 15-16	
Speaker: Duncan	Spoken to: Malcolm
Context/Meaning:  Duncan laments the fact of not knowing who to trust. He trusted in the Thane of Cawdor, but he turned out to be a traitor. This is ironic, considering that Duncan will be deceived once again by the next Thane of Cawdor (Macbeth).	
Significance:  Emphasizes an Irony in the play	

***“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.”***

Act: 1 Scene: 5 Lines: 44-46	
Speaker: Lady Macbeth	Spoken to: Evil Spirits
Context/Meaning:  <i>Lady Macbeth is mentally preparing for the killing of King Duncan and calling to the spirits of darkness to make her strong.. She doesn't want gentle, soft, sweet-tempered-qualities stereotypically associated with her sex (all the more so in the Elizabethan period). She wants to lose such qualities in favor of bloodlust and warrior-like toughness. “Make thick my blood” means she wants to be cold-hearted, wants her wounds to heal over quickly before she feels any pain.</i>	
Significance:  <i>Reveals Lady Macbeth's character and her own ambitions</i>	

***“I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'er leaps itself***

***And falls on the other.”***

Act: 1 Scene: 7 Lines: 25-28	
Speaker: Macbeth	Spoken to: Himself
<p>Context/Meaning:</p> <p>This shows how Macbeth recognizes his own vaulting ambition. He recognizes that his ambition could overleap what he could possibly control and end in disaster. He is also presented as Machiavellian because he admits that the only reason for committing the murder is ‘ambition’</p> <p>Machiavellian: Cunning / Duplicity (Machiavelli) Better to be ruthless, than nice.</p>	
<p>Significance:</p> <p>Reveals character/theme</p>	

***“Away, and mock the time with fairest show:  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.”***

Act: 1 Scene: 7 Lines: 91-92	
Speaker: Macbeth	Spoken to: Lady Macbeth
<p>Context/Meaning:</p> <p><i>Shows the idea of duplicity again. With these lines, it is clear that Macbeth is back on board with killing Duncan. He must fake being a “noble” kinsman so that his fake (evil) heart can go through with the murder.</i></p>	
<p>Significance:</p> <p><i>Motif: Appearance vs. Reality, “Fair is Foul”</i></p> <p><i>Macbeth’s character – Easily swayed by his wife. He recognizes that what he is doing is wrong.</i></p>	