

English 10: Macbeth Essay

Choose one of the following topics, or discuss an alternative topic with me. Write a well-developed essay supporting your thesis about the topic. Use ample quotations to support your claims and your reasoning.

1. Motifs – select at least two different motifs, and trace their occurrence throughout the play. You must connect the motifs to a larger theme that Shakespeare seems to wish to communicate. Try to select a pair of motifs which logically fit together.

Clothing	Gender roles	Disease and medicine
Fair is foul	Growing things	Water/washing
Blood	Natural/unnatural	Darkness and light
2. Is Macbeth a tragic hero or not? Be sure you clearly identify the qualities of a tragic hero before you attempt to prove your thesis. What is his tragic flaw?
3. Discuss the switch in dominance from Lady Macbeth to Macbeth.
4. Who is more responsible for the events in the play – Macbeth or Lady Macbeth?

Reminders of directions for the literary essay:

A literary essay is a formal academic exercise. It is your attempt to demonstrate your understanding of a literary work or works and your mastery of the concepts and language used in analysis of literature. It requires you to demonstrate the highest level of thinking, organizing, supporting an argument, and writing that you are able to do. Therefore, this essay must be developed carefully, with considerable thought, multi drafts, and attention to detail. You are trying to produce an essay that shows the very best work that you are able to do.

In order to develop your argument most effectively, fulfill the following requirements:

- Never write any variation of “In my essay I will...” or “In my essay I have...”
- Develop an introduction in which you introduce the general topic and state your specific thesis – claim – about the work or works. Be sure to mention the titles and authors.
- Pretend you are writing for someone who does not understand the work. Provide a brief explanation of the situation before going on to discuss its meaning or importance.
- Discuss events in a work in chronological order (the order in which they occur in time or in the work) unless there is some compelling reason not to do so.
- Discuss events in the work in the present tense; i.e., characters do and say things, not did and said.
- Always discuss the significance/importance/meaning of the literary devices you discuss within a work; i.e., do not just show that the author has used irony or symbolism, but go on to explain how that irony or symbolism contributes to or helps to reveal the author’s meaning.
- Use quotations as evidence, but follow these rules for quotation use:
 - Always explain the situation in which the line is used before you copy the quotation into your essay;
 - Always identify the speaker of the line if it is spoken by a character rather than being the narrator’s description;
 - Put three quotation marks at either end of a line which is quoted in the work;
 - Quote only as much as is needed to illustrate your point: the bulk of your essay must be your writing and your ideas, not quotations form the work you are supposed to be discussing;
 - Choose quotations which illustrate the point you are trying to prove; just any old line will not do;
 - Follow the quotation with the page number on which it appears, enclosed in parentheses;
 - Always follow the quotation with additional discussion of what it proves; do not expect your reader to figure it out for himself – it is your job to explain how the quote you have cited proves your point.
 - End your essay with a conclusion in which you return to your original thesis but in which you go on to elaborate upon it on the basis of what you have covered in your essay.
 - Never write “In my essay I have shown...” or any other reference such as that to yourself.
- In order to sound authoritative and mature, you must use the following techniques.
 - Do not refer to yourself. Your name on the paper indicates that the essay is your opinion. Referring to yourself in phrases such as “In my opinion” only brings your own credentials into question and also implies that others may disagree. You will sound more authoritative if you simply state your opinions as if they were truths without adding reference to yourself.
 - Do not use the word “you” unless it appears in a line you are quoting. When you casually refer to “you,” you imply a personal relationship with the reader, and your essay takes on a conversational tone. A formal academic exercise is not a casual conversation.
 - If you must refer to your response to the author’s techniques in writing, refer to this as “the reader’s” response.
 - Do not use contractions. Automatically, you will sound more formal, more serious, more intellectual.
 - Do not use slang.