LADY MACBETH

Key features · development · paired evidence

THE BIG IDEA

Lady Macbeth tries to make conscience and compassion disappear. The return of blood and hand imagery exposes the limits of that imagined control.

FOLLOW THE CHARACTER

1 Invokes cruelty › **2** Directs the plan › **3** Loses private control › **4** Dies offstage

WATER FAILS TO ERASE GUILT

“A little water clears us of this deed”

Lady Macbeth, 2.2

PAIRED WITH

“Out, damned spot!”

Lady Macbeth, 5.1

METHOD → MEANING

Early declarative certainty makes guilt sound washable. The later imperative cannot command imagined blood to leave. Her sleepwalking turns a claimed practical solution into a repeated sign of distress.

GENDER AS A WEAPON

“unsex me here”

Lady Macbeth, 1.5

PAIRED WITH

“When you durst do it, then you were a man”

Lady Macbeth, 1.7

METHOD → MEANING

The first appeal rejects qualities she associates with femininity; the later conditional turns masculinity into a test Macbeth must pass. These are her manipulative definitions, not rules the play asks us to accept.

PUSH THE ARGUMENT

She is influential in Duncan’s murder but increasingly excluded from Macbeth’s later plans. Do not claim she orders Banquo’s or the Macduff family’s deaths.

COVER THE SHEET. CAN YOU EXPLAIN…?

Why is the sleepwalking scene a reversal of her earlier authority?