Macbeth Essays:

You must answer the Lesson Essential Question: How does blind ambition cause a brave soldier to become an evil plotter who will stop at nothing to accomplish his goals? Give specific examples from the text to support your answers!

Then…

Choose any 3 of the following essay questions, and on separate paper, answer them. I will grade them according to the rubric below.

Rubric for Evaluating Essays

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blank paper</td>
<td>Incorrect purpose, mode, audience</td>
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<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>Brief, vague</td>
<td>Some elaboration</td>
<td>Moderately well elaborated</td>
<td>Effective elaboration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illegible, incoherent</td>
<td>Unelaborated</td>
<td>Some details</td>
<td>Clear, effective language</td>
<td>Consistent organization</td>
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<td>Not enough content to score</td>
<td>Rambling</td>
<td>Gaps in organization</td>
<td>Organized (perhaps with brief digressions)</td>
<td>Sense of completeness, fluency</td>
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<td>Lack of language control</td>
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73. It is clear from Acts I and II of *The Tragedy of Macbeth* that Macbeth has a vivid and often quite accurate imagination. Write an essay explaining how Macbeth’s imagination works in Act II. What things does he imagine? How does his imagination affect his actions? Use examples from Act II to support your ideas.

74. The following lines are spoken by Macbeth in *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, Act II, Scene ii:

Methought I heard a voice cry ‘Sleep no more! / Macbeth does murder sleep’—the innocent sleep, / Sleep that knits up the raveled sleave of care, / The death of each day’s life, sore labor’s bath, / Balm of hurt minds, great nature’s second course, / Chief nourisher in life’s feast . . .

In an essay, discuss the meaning of these lines for Macbeth. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to portray Macbeth as so conscience-stricken by his deed? How would the story be different if Macbeth’s actions caused him no moral suffering?

75. Contrast is one of the most effective devices a writer can use to add vividness to the depiction of characters. Write an essay in which you explain how the characterizations of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are enhanced by contrast in the scenes that precede and follow the murder of Duncan in Act II of *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. 
76. In Shakespeare’s plays, soliloquies reveal a character’s true thoughts and feelings and often indicate how circumstances are developing for the character. Write an essay in which you explain what the following soliloquy from *The Tragedy of MacBeth* reveals about Lady Macbeth’s situation and state of mind in Act III, Scene ii.

Nought's had, all's spent, / Where our desire is got without content: / 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy / Than be destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

77. In some ways, the murder of Banquo in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* represents an act of betrayal even more foul than that of Duncan. Write an essay discussing this statement. In what ways are the murders similar? In what ways do they differ? What changes does the plot to murder Banquo reveal in Macbeth?

78. In Act III, Scene ii, Macbeth says that he and his wife must make their faces *vizards,* or masks, to their hearts. *The Tragedy of Macbeth* contains many instances in which the characters mask their thoughts, feelings, or desires. Write an essay about the theme of “masks”—betrayal, falsehood, and concealment—in Act III of the play. Which characters use them? What do they conceal and why? Are the masks necessarily evil? Use examples from the text to illustrate your points.

79. It might be said that with every act in *The Tragedy of Macbeth,* Macbeth becomes more evil. In Act I, Macbeth hears the witches’ prophecies and considers doing evil; in Act II, he kills King Duncan; and in Act III, he kills his comrade Banquo. In an essay, discuss Macbeth’s crime in Act IV. Why does Macbeth commit it? How is it different from the crimes Macbeth commits in the previous acts? Support your points with details from Act IV.

80. In *The Tragedy of Macbeth,* Macbeth appears only in the first of the three scenes in Act IV, yet his presence is strongly felt in Scenes ii and iii. Write an essay explaining how that presence is felt. How are the feelings of Lady Macduff produced by that “felt presence”? How does it affect the meeting between Malcolm and Macduff?

81. Critics sometimes suggest that the fourth acts of Shakespeare’s plays represent a letdown in dramatic tension between the rising action of the earlier acts and the culminating events of the fifth act. Write an essay in which you evaluate each of the three scenes in Act IV of *The Tragedy of Macbeth* for dramatic effectiveness and contribution to plot development.

82. In stories, plays, or films, it is always satisfying when villains get what they deserve in the end. In an essay, discuss whether this is the case with Macbeth and Lady Macbeth or whether they might have gotten off too easily. Do you think their fate would have been the same if they’d committed the same deeds today? Use events in *The Tragedy of Macbeth,* to support your argument.

83. Early in Act V of *The Tragedy of Macbeth,* Lady Macbeth’s doctor says, “Unnatural deeds / Do breed unnatural troubles.” Write an essay in which you explain how this remark may be applied to Lady Macbeth’s condition at this point and to the general situation in Macbeth’s realm.

84. The following excerpt from *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is one of the most quoted passages ever written in the English language.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, / To the last syllable of recorded time; / And all our yesterdays have lighted fools / The way to dusty death. Out, out brief candle! / Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more. It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing.

Write an essay explaining what you think this passage means. How does it relate to Macbeth’s situation? Why do you think it has fascinated readers throughout the centuries?