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Symbolism and Motifs in Macbeth Example

In any story the use of symbolism helps create meaning and emotion to convey the message behind that story while a motif is any recurring element that has symbolic significance in a story. William Shakespeare, the author of Macbeth, uses an array of symbolism and motifs in Macbeth. However, blood is one of the most prominent and well used motifs in the play. As blood is usually the symbol for violence or death in real life, it is used in addition, as a different type of symbol in Macbeth. Blood will not only convey the idea of death and murder but also the idea of guilt. Shakespeare also used blood to symbolize the characters Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and the guilt they suffered. The first glimpse of Macbeth makes reference to him being a killer who takes others' lives for personal gain, many see this as a foreshadowing of the bloodier things to come in the rest of the story. The placement and location of blood juxtaposes where Macbeth and Lady Macbeth would like to place the blame for the murders and where the responsibility is actually confined. The appearance of blood makes allusions to the text to reveal their uncontrollable, self consuming guilt.

Blood plays a key role for the foundation of Macbeth as it is mentioned in every act of the play. The use of blood in Act I appeared in a conversation between Duncan and the Captain which was a foreshadowing to Macbeth's

bloodthirsty nature and his ruthlessness in committing murder. Blood makes their conversation more serious because blood represents fight or war. This mention of blood shows Macbeth and his willingness to kill, which then hints at the future of the play. It also represents the captain's bravery even in the current state he was in. Not only did it signify bravery but it gave presence to Macbeth's heroic qualities. The allusions to blood don't take away from the actual purpose of blood, which is a source of life and places a vital role in keeping us alive. As displayed, in order for blood to be a motif it has to be introduced and then continue to escalate in the play. Shakespeare makes sure he uses the motif, blood, not only to convey one central idea but several. Even though we see blood as an image of death, the use of blood in the first seen is used to balance out the negative connotations of blood that are still to come in the next four acts.

The images of blood portrayed in the second act can be taken in a literal and figurative sense. The first use of blood appears in the soliloquy in scene one. Macbeth questions himself on the fact if the dagger is an image of his mind or a false creation. A bell is rung at the end of the scene and is a reminder to him that the things he is about to commit will either take him into heaven or hell. Lady Macbeth's role comes into fruition in scene two when she states that she would have the courage to kill Duncan but she did not because she resembled her father while she was sleeping. After Macbeth killed Duncan, per her request, he appeared in front of Lady Macbeth with bloody hands and is instructed to wash it with water and put the evidence at the servants pillows so that they would take the blame for killing Duncan. For Macbeth and Lady Macbeth the blood represents their crime, and they can not escape the sin of their actions. Macbeth knows what he has done has been to a good king and he may not be able to live up to the expectations. In time Macbeth comes to a realization that he will get what he deserves. However he can not rid himself of guilt anymore and admits himself that all the water in the ocean could not cleanse his hands. Macbeth believes his actions from the murder will stain the ocean red, because of the blood spilt on his behalf. In scene three Macbeth notices Donalbain has a pale face because the fountain of your blood is stopped and Lennox reports the imagery of blood in the hands and faces of the servants. Still in Act two Macbeth feels no guilt because he is still putting his servants at blame. Banquo refers to Duncan's murder as the most bloody piece of work. In the end of the act Macbeth, Malcom, and Donalbain are suspicious of the killing of Duncan because of how ambitious and were bribed.

Act three has limited allusions of blood but it still gets the point of guilt across. With the use of blood in scene one Macbeth refers to Banquo. "Bloody distance" is used to show that Macbeth considers Banquo a threat, but it also represents the danger that is yet to come. The next blood appearance does not come until scene four. Blood is used as a foreshadowing for a tragedy that might continue to happen. When they said "blood will have blood" it means that the people they have killed will have their revenge. Although there are only two uses of blood in Act III it plays a larger role.

Just like act three act four is limited in the mentions of blood, but deep with its meanings. During Act IV Macbeth is plagued with different types of apparitions, at this point Macbeth can feel the guilt. The witches make the apparitions to give Macbeth a glimpse into his future. The second apparition of the bloody child is to inform Macbeth that no one who was born from a woman can hurt him. This shows that blood represents badness and sadness. Foreshadowing comes into play again when Shakespeare continues to foreshadow the bad mood that will continue to loom over into the next few scenes and acts. During the second apparition blood is mentioned again to tell Macbeth to be cruel and cold blooded which lets the audience know that Macbeth will also act cruel. The last mention of blood comes between Macduff and Malcolm discuss Macbeth. The sentence about blood means that they agree that Macbeth is a brutal person. Shakespeare will continue to point out how brutal Macbeth really is. Again with the dual uses of blood, Shakespeare adds a little tension to the scene because blood always seems to be connected to bad things. Despite the little uses of blood, it gives readers an insight on what will happen next.