Soliloquies in *Macbeth*

**Soliloquies reveal character, advance plot and create atmosphere.** They can also help us understand how characters change when they deliver soliloquies throughout the play. What do Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s soliloquies reveal about their characters?

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| Macbeth | 1.3.128-42  Macbeth is thinking about the witches’ prophecies – good or bad?  He imagines killing Duncan but describes it as a “horrid image” that “unfix[es] [his] hair.” | 1.7.1-28  Macbeth gives reasons why he shouldn’t kill Duncan: he is Duncan’s kinsman and host, and Duncan is well liked, virtuous king. Only reason to kill Duncan is ambition which may lead to his demise. | 2.1.33-64  Macbeth sees a floating that “marshall[s] [him] the way [he] was going.” He follows the dagger and kills Duncan.  Is the dagger real or a figment of his imagination? | 3.1.48-72  Macbeth has the crown but doesn’t feel safe. He fears not only Banquo but also the prophecy that says Banquo’s descendants will become kings. He decides to kill Banquo and Fleance. | 5.3.19-29  Macbeth thinks his life in a state of decline. He says he won’t enjoy the things that come with old age: friends, love, and honour. Instead, he has curses. | 5.5.17-28  Macbeth regards death as inevitable. He says the past and future are futile. He compares life to a brief candle and a poor player who “frets” upon the stage and then is gone. He delivers a bleak vision of the meaningless of life. |
| Lady Macbeth | 1.5.15-30  Lady Macbeth thinks her husband is ambitious but not cruel enough to become king. Therefore, she will be cruel and push towards the murder of the Duncan. | 1.5.38-54  Lady Macbeth says, “Unsex me here.” She invokes the spirits to fill her with “direst cruelty.” |  | 3.2.4-7  Lady Macbeth lives in “doubtful joy”; in other words, she is not enjoying the crown they stole from Duncan. Is it better to be destroyed than live in doubt? |  |  |