

What do we learn about Lady Macbeth?

- After she receives Macbeth's letter about the **witches' predictions**, Lady Macbeth is determined that Macbeth will become **king**.
- She calls on **spirits of darkness** and **manipulates** Macbeth emotionally to **murder** King Duncan.
- She **takes control** of the arrangements for Duncan's murder and **covers up** the crime afterwards.
- She **criticises** Macbeth for his distress over killing Duncan and for his **terror** of **Banquo's ghost**.
- She becomes **isolated** as Macbeth stops **confiding** in her.
- In Acts I–III she seems to feel **little guilt**, but by Act V her **conscience** catches up with her and she **sleepwalks**. It seems that her **guilt** drives her to **suicide**.



Q Three key questions

1. How does Shakespeare present Lady Macbeth at the start of the play?
2. How does her relationship with Macbeth change throughout the play?
3. How does her character change near the end of the play?

Answers

1. Lady Macbeth is presented as being as ambitious as Macbeth. Her appeal to dark spirits associates her with the witches and their evil ways.
2. Early in the play she seems to have a close relationship with her husband and has a strong influence over him, but later she becomes isolated as he stops confiding in her.
3. Her guilt catches up with her in Act V, when she sleepwalks and then dies (possibly commits suicide).

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. Calling on evil spirits: **'Come, you spirits/That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here'** (I.5.39–40)
2. Clearing her conscience of Duncan's murder: **'A little water clears us of this deed'** (II.2.70)
3. On murdering Duncan: **'Had he not resembled/ My father as He slept, I had done't'** (II.2.12–13)

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Lady Macbeth shows vulnerability when she is unable to kill Duncan because

How does Shakespeare present betrayal and revenge?

- Betrayal and revenge are closely linked since **those who are betrayed seek revenge**.
- When the first **Thane of Cawdor** betrays King Duncan, this **foreshadows** Macbeth's betrayal.
- When Macbeth betrays King Duncan by murdering him, he sets in motion the **chain of events** which together form the tragedy.
- Macbeth betrays **Banquo** by having him murdered and attempting to have his son, **Fleance**, murdered. He then believes that Banquo's ghost haunts him in revenge.
- Shakespeare suggests that Macbeth's cruel leadership **betrays Scotland**.
- When Malcolm attacks Macbeth's castle he believes that his revenge for his father, Duncan, will **heal Scotland**.
- When Macduff **avenges** his family's **murders** by killing Macbeth, this fulfils the **witches' prophecies**.



Q **Three key questions**

1. Who seeks revenge for the murder of King Duncan?
2. How does Macbeth betray Banquo and what are the consequences of this?
3. How is Macduff betrayed and how does he react?

Answers

1. Duncan's son and heir, Malcolm, seeks revenge for his murder.
2. Macbeth betrays Banquo by arranging his murder. He believes Banquo's ghost haunts him in revenge.
3. Macbeth betrays Macduff by hiring murderers to kill his family, and Macduff kills Macbeth to avenge them.

Learn

Now learn these key quotations to enhance your skills.

1. King Duncan on the first Thane of Cawdor: **'No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive/Our bosom interest. Go pronounce his present death'** (I.2.63–4)
2. Macbeth, after seeing Banquo's ghost: **'They say: blood will have blood'** (III.4.122)
3. Macduff to Macbeth: **'If thou be'st slain, and with no stroke of mine,/My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still'** (V.7.16–17)

Think

How could you use one of the quotations above to complete this paragraph?

Macbeth believes that Banquo's ghost is seeking revenge. This is apparent when