

PROCESS.

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Mrs. Pincus

English 3

Macbeth Shall Sleep No More!

Kelf { Sleep is defined as the natural periodic suspension of consciousness during which the powers of the body are restored. There are many reasons for why a person sleeps. Some say it is to restore brain function and flush out metabolic wastes. Other say it is to allow the brain to review and consolidate the streams of information gathered while we are awake. Whatever the reason, sleep can be categorized with such bodily necessities as food, water, and sexual intercourse, for when one of them is withheld for a long period of time, one can go crazy. In Shakespeare's play "Macbeth", Macbeth suffers from insomnia, while Lady Macbeth suffers from sleepwalking, two contrasting realities; for one character faces a reality *without* sleep, and the other faces their reality *within* their sleep.

*I will drain him dry as hay.
Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his pent-house lid.
He shall live a man forbid. * I.iii.19-22*

~~The above quote was spoken by the First Witch, who~~ cast a spell upon Macbeth that will take effect once he kills Duncan. This is in fact, the "insomnia" spell which will plague Macbeth through the rest of Shakespeare's play. The Witches or "Weird Sisters" are plotting against Macbeth, even from the beginning of the play when the audience is still not sure of what is going on. In *I.iii.19-22*, the image of sleep is used as something that a person needs in order to function properly. Sleep is a bodily function, and when it is withheld from a person, said person will become weaker and weaker without rest, and

psychologically, they will become unstable. This is evident as we see Macbeth's progression throughout the play.

*¶ Methought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep," – the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve 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. ¶ II.ii.47-52*

At this point in the play, Macbeth has killed Duncan, at which point the Witch's spell takes effect, for from this moment on in the play, Macbeth shall sleep no more. In these lines of the play, the image of sleep is used as a metaphor for things that heal and care for the body, all of which Macbeth will not have, since he will never sleep again. When Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth of the voices he has heard, she dismisses it, and later insults him by calling him a child. Keep this in mind, as Lady Macbeth does not hear the voices that Macbeth hears. Ultimately, is it Macbeth who will suffer from insomnia, and not Lady Macbeth.

*¶ Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly. Better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave.
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well.
Treason has done his worst; nor steel nor poison,
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
Can touch him further. ¶ III.ii.20-26*

Once again, Macbeth is informing his wife about his insomnia. For the first time in the play, we see that Macbeth envies Duncan, who is "sleeping" in his grave. One can see that Macbeth desires to sleep peacefully so much, that he envies a dead man. We begin to notice some of the psychological effects of lack of sleep. It would seem that

Macbeth is beginning to find himself eating his meals in fear, and is describing life as a “fitful fever” of which Duncan needs not face anymore. Notice that as far as we can see, Lady Macbeth has no problem going to sleep. Two scenes later, we notice a huge difference between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. In act 3, scene 4, Macbeth begins to see the ghost of Banquo at his dinner, whom he had just ordered to be killed. Another side effect of lack of sleep is hallucinations, seeing things that are not there. While Macbeth can see Banquo’s ghost, Lady Macbeth cannot. We can assume that at night, she has no problem sleeping. However, while Lady Macbeth *can* fall asleep, it does not mean she is sleeping peacefully in her bed.

*“Since his majesty went into the field, I
have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-
gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper,
fold it, write upon’t, read it, afterwards seal it, and
again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast
sleep.” V.i.4-9*

These lines of the play were spoken by the Gentlewoman to the Doctor.

Apparently, Lady Macbeth is not sleeping as peacefully as we had thought. She is sleepwalking, which is a mysterious, unnatural act, “to receive at once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching.” Lady Macbeth is receiving all the benefits of sleep, while at the same time, regretting killing Duncan, and realizing the horrors of her actions. She is living her life within her sleep. Throughout the play, we can see that she shows no remorse for what she has done. We can only assume that she is enjoying the luxuries royalty. However, in her sleep, she is living a separate life in which she is haunted by stains and scent of blood on her hands which will not wash out.

Quotes Page 1:

1. "I will drain him dry as hay: Sleep shall neither night nor day Hang upon his pent-house lid; He shall live a man forbid"
I.iii.19-22

Context: First Witch to other witches, when they are all together, plotting against Macbeth.

Interpretation: The witches are plotting against Macbeth, and the First Witch has cast a spell on Macbeth, which will forbid him sleeping. In these lines, sleep refers to a bodily function, and a necessity to live healthily.
2. "When Duncan is asleep, — Where to the rather shall his day's hard journey Soundly invite him... What cannot you and I perform upon The unguarded Duncan?"
I.vii.71-80

Context: Lady Macbeth to Macbeth, describing how they cannot fail their plan to kill Duncan, because the guards will be drunk, and Duncan will be asleep.

Interpretation: When Macbeth starts to back out of the plan, Lady Macbeth tries to convince him that it could not fail, because Duncan would be asleep and unguarded. In these lines, sleep refers to vulnerability.
3. "A heavy summons lies like lead upon me, And yet I would not sleep:—merciful powers, Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature Gives way to in repose!—Give me my sword."
II.i.8-11

Context: Banquo to Fleance, at night, talking about how he cannot sleep during the lunar eclipse.

Interpretation:
4. "Now o'er the one half-world Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse The curtain'd sleep;"
II.i.61-63

Context: Macbeth to himself, when he hallucinates about the dagger in front of him.

Interpretation:
5. "There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried, "Murder!" That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them: But they did say their prayers, and address'd them Again to sleep."
II.ii.30-35

Context: Macbeth to Lady Macbeth, describing what the guards said as they saw Macbeth kill Duncan.

Interpretation: After Macbeth has killed Duncan, the guards have woken up. One cried "Murder" and the other laughed. Then, they said their prayers, and went back to sleep. In these lines, sleep is a bodily function.
6. "Methought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep,"—the innocent sleep; Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care, The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath, Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, Chief nourisher in life's feast."
II.ii.47-52

Context: Macbeth to Lady Macbeth, describing the voices he heard after he killed Duncan.

Interpretation: After killing Duncan, the witch's spell takes place. Macbeth hears a voice, condemning him never to sleep again, for he has murdered sleep. In these lines, sleep is an object, which can be killed, and thus, Macbeth shall not sleep. In these lines, sleep refers to innocence, and other metaphors describing sleep, such as the end of the day and the healer of minds.

Quotes Page 2:

1. "Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house: "Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor Shall sleep no more,— Macbeth shall sleep no more!"
II.ii.54-57

Context: Macbeth to Lady Macbeth, having just killed Duncan, describes a voice that he thinks he heard as he killed the King.

Interpretation: Macbeth talks again about the voice he heard. Once again, in these lines, sleep refers to an object, something that can be murdered, something that can not exist anymore. *Macbeth cannot sleep.*
2. "Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood That fears a painted devil."
II.ii.69-71

Context: Lady Macbeth to Macbeth, taking the daggers herself to place next to the guards, when Macbeth dares not to do it.

Interpretation: Lady Macbeth is insulting Macbeth when he is too scared to go back into Duncan's room. In these lines, sleep is an adjective, describing those which are still and inanimate.
3. "Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine."
II.iii.29

Context: Porter to Macduff, after opening the door and explaining why he was still up so late.

Interpretation: This is the Porter's response to Macduff when Macduff asks the 3 things that drink provokes. In this line, sleep is a product of alcohol and drinking.
4. "Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit, And look on death itself!"
II.iii.88-89

Context: Macduff to all, after finding Duncan murdered.

Interpretation: In these lines, sleep refers to fake death, or counterfeit death, for in death and sleep, both appear to be the other.
5. "Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep In the affliction of these terrible dreams That shake us nightly: better be with the dead, Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace, Than on the torture of the mind to lie In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave; After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;"
III.ii.20-26

Context: Macbeth to Lady Macbeth, telling her how he feels about killing Duncan, and makes a reference to his insomnia.

Interpretation: When Macbeth describes his insomnia, he makes a reference to sleep afflicted with terrible dreams, presumably dreams about killing Duncan. In these lines, sleep refers to Macbeth's bad dreams that he faces each night, causing his insomnia. Sleep also refers to death, as Duncan is dead, and sleeps well in his grave. Macbeth envies Duncan, for his troubles are over, and he has nothing to worry about, whereas Macbeth cannot sleep.
6. "You lack the season of all natures, sleep."
III.iv.173

Context: Lady Macbeth to Macbeth, after Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost at the dinner.

Interpretation: In these lines, sleep is again used as a metaphor, for something common among everything, for everything sleeps.
7. "Since his majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon it, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep." *V.i.4-9*

Context: Gentlewoman to Doctor, describing what she has seen Lady Macbeth do in her sleepwalking.

Interpretation: In these lines, sleep is the state Lady Macbeth is in, as she does all of these actions. She is unconscious, while her subconscious is doing all the work. Sleep in a sense, is when the body is unconscious, and when the mind is not.
8. "A great perturbation in nature,—to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching"
V.i.10-12

Context: Doctor to Gentlewoman, after hearing her accounts of Lady Macbeth.

Interpretation: In these lines, sleep refers to something one can benefit from.