



## KS5 COMPARISON TASK

### MACBETH AND THE WINTER'S TALE

Up the challenge and encourage students to practise their comparison skills with this resource based on *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale*, our current YouTube offerings.

**'Nothing is but what is not'**

*Macbeth*, Act IV, scene 3

**'Nor nothing have these nothings,  
If this be nothing.'**

*The Winter's Tale*, Act I, scene 2

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#### TASK

This task compares the theme of 'minds under stress' in *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale*.

Read the two extracts from Act I of each play, which can be found at the end of this resource. Annotate these with your immediate impressions of Macbeth and Leontes, and how they are similar and different.

Then, use the prompts below to extend your thinking around how these two dramatic extracts from *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale* compare.

You can capture your responses and ideas using any format that you wish: a chart; a mind map; a collage of images and / or references; a video, etc.

This task assumes prior knowledge of the plot of both plays. To support you with this task, you might therefore want to use the [Globe's resources](#) to watch a version of each production before beginning the task. For those who have prior knowledge, we would still encourage you to watch each production to see how the text is realised on stage, particularly both of the extract scenes.

## PROMPTS FOR COMPARISON

### In the extracts:

1. What do both Macbeth and Leontes say that reveal their minds are under stress?
2. What (or who) has caused Macbeth and Leontes' angst? Try to be really exact here.
3. Which phrases make Macbeth and Leontes appear: vulnerable / powerful; sympathetic / unsympathetic?
4. How are asides used? How are questions used?
5. How are the concepts of truth and falsehood / fiction explored?
6. How does the theme of appearance versus reality reveal itself?
7. How does the structure of each extract create tension?

### Now consider the comparisons across the plays as a whole:

1. What decisions do Macbeth and Leontes make whilst under the influence of these stresses? What are the consequences of these decisions?
2. How do Macbeth and Leontes' courts and / or subjects react to their decisions? Does this change across each play?
3. What role do Lady Macbeth and Hermione play in their husbands' states of mind?
4. Some critics suggest that both plays explore tyranny. To what extent do you agree? Make notes to explain your answer.
5. What is the relationship between the genre of each play and Macbeth and Leontes' states' of mind?

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### *The Winter's Tale*

#### LEONTES

[Aside] Too hot, too hot!  
To mingle friendship far is mingling bloods.  
I have tremor cordis on me: my heart dances;  
But not for joy; not joy. This entertainment  
May a free face put on, derive a liberty  
From heartiness, from bounty, fertile bosom,  
And well become the agent; 't may, I grant;  
But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers,  
As now they are, and making practised smiles,  
As in a looking-glass, and then to sigh, as 'twere  
The mort o' the deer; O, that is entertainment  
My bosom likes not, nor my brows! Mamillius,  
Art thou my boy?

#### MAMILLIUS

Ay, my good lord.

#### LEONTES

I' fecks!  
Why, that's my bawcock. What, hast  
smutch'd thy nose?  
They say it is a copy out of mine. Come, captain,  
We must be neat; not neat, but cleanly, captain:  
And yet the steer, the heifer and the calf  
Are all call'd neat.--Still virginalling  
Upon his palm!--How now, you wanton calf!  
Art thou my calf?

### *Macbeth*

#### MACBETH

[Aside] Two truths are told,  
As happy prologues to the swelling act  
Of the imperial theme.--I thank you, gentlemen.

#### Aside

This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of nature? Present fears  
Are less than horrible imaginings:  
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is  
But what is not.

#### BANQUO

Look, how our partner's rapt.

#### MACBETH

[Aside] If chance will have me king, why, chance may  
crown me,  
Without my stir.

## ***The Winter's Tale (cont...)***

### **MAMILLIUS**

Yes, if you will, my lord.

### **LEONTES**

Thou want'st a rough pash and the shoots that I have,  
To be full like me: yet they say we are  
Almost as like as eggs; women say so,  
That will say anything but were they false  
As o'er-dyed blacks, as wind, as waters, false  
As dice are to be wish'd by one that fixes  
No bourn 'twixt his and mine, yet were it true  
To say this boy were like me. Come, sir page,  
Look on me with your welkin eye: sweet villain!  
Most dear'st! my collop! Can thy dam?--may't be?--  
Affection! thy intention stabs the centre:  
Thou dost make possible things not so held,  
Communicatest with dreams;--how can this be?--  
With what's unreal thou coactive art,  
And fellow'st nothing: then 'tis very credent  
Thou mayst co-join with something; and thou dost,  
And that beyond commission, and I find it,  
And that to the infection of my brains  
And hardening of my brows.

### **POLIXENES**

What means Sicilia?

### **HERMIONE**

He something seems unsettled.

### **POLIXENES**

How, my lord!

What cheer? how is't with you, best brother?

### **HERMIONE**

You look as if you held a brow of much distraction  
Are you moved, my lord?

### **LEONTES**

No, in good earnest.  
How sometimes nature will betray its folly,  
Its tenderness, and make itself a pastime  
To harder bosoms!

## ***Macbeth (cont...)***

### **BANQUO**

New horrors come upon him,  
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould  
But with the aid of use.

### **MACBETH**

[Aside] Come what come may,  
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

### **BANQUO**

Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

### **MACBETH**

Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought  
With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains  
Are register'd where every day I turn  
The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.  
Think upon what hath chanced, and, at more time,  
The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak  
Our free hearts each to other.

### **BANQUO**

Very gladly.

### **MACBETH**

Till then, enough. Come, friends.

Exeunt