

***Macbeth* Tracing Assignment - C block**

To focus your study of *Macbeth* and practice your critical reading skills, you will trace a character(s) or a motif as we read the play. First, you will take notes and draft your analysis on a “Macbeth Tracing Assignment” document in your Google portfolio. Then, you will publish your final analysis of character or motif to a [class](#) spreadsheet for each act of the play.

I. Tracing Character

The analysis of your chosen character should be at least a **well written paragraph** that addresses some or all of the **questions** below AND that **includes key lines** of or about your character in that act.

General character question: How is your character important to this act?

More specific questions:

- What new information did you learn about your character?
- What is his/her motivation or objective? How do you know?
- How does your character affect the events of the act?
- How does your character respond and/or feel about the events of the act? How do you know?
- How do other characters feel about your character? How do you know?
- What questions or confusions are raised by your character’s words, actions, etc.?

Characters (6)

- Macbeth- Gabi G
- Lady Macbeth- Gabi C
- Banquo/ Malcolm and Donalbain - Marcos
- Three Witches - Iza
- Duncan/ The Porter - Tony

- Macduff- Manu

(Extras:

Lennox & Ross-

Fleance -)

(See student model below.)

II. Tracing Motif

A motif is a recurring word, phrase, image, object, idea or action in a work of literature. Motifs function as unifying devices and usually relate directly to one or more of the themes of the text.

The analysis of your chosen motif should present the **most important references** to your motif in the act (quotations!) and its **significance** in a **well written paragraph** (or more).

Motifs (9)

- blood- Andre
- sleep- Laura
- light/dark- Malu
- animals/nature - Nicolas
- madness/ disease - Emilio
- bells/knocking- Rebecca
- manhood/womanhood- Julia
- clothing- Omar
- water- Tuca

(Extra: order/disorder-)

(See student model below.)

III. Student Models

Character Tracing - Emilia in Othello

Act V

Emilia: Oh fie upon thee, strumpet!

Bianca: I am no strumpet, but of life as honest as you that thus abuse me .

Emilia: As I? Fie upon thee! (V.i.121-123)

Emilia: Do thy worst. This dead of thine is no more worthy heaven than thou wast worthy her. (V.ii.156-158)

Emilia: 'Twill out, 'twill out! I peace? No, I will speak as liberal as the north. Let heaven and men and devils, let them all, All, all, cry shame against me, yet I'll speak.

Iago: Be wise, and get you home

Emilia: I will not. (V.ii.217-220)

Emilia: O thou dull Moor, that handkerchief thou speakest of I found by fortune, and did give my husband; For often with a solemn earnestness...he begged me to steal't. (V.ii.222-225)

Since Shakespeare's plays were often watched by Queen Elizabeth, who was a strong female figure herself, perhaps Emilia serves to fill the role of the "strong female character" onstage as Desdemona becomes unavailable for the part.

As Desdemona had to be portrayed as undoubtedly innocent in order for the play to appear more tragic, Emilia had to replace her as the strong female.

More obviously, however, Emilia serves to foil Desdemona. In order for Desdemona's innocence to be blatantly clear, it is juxtaposed against Emilia's ambiguous morals. Emilia's ever-fluctuating morals are exemplified by the way she shuns Bianca for being a "strumpet"(V.i.121-123) even though she makes some progressive statements about women's sexuality in Act IV. This is contrasted with Desdemona's constant innocence on the subject of sexuality—she cannot even fathom adultery against Othello.

Other than highlighting Desdemona's innocence, Emilia serves to make this play more tragic by bringing about Othello's anagnorisis. Because of her intrepid nature, Emilia does not hold back in revealing her husband's plot to Othello (V.ii.217-225). In addition to this, she blatantly blames him and states that he was not "worthy of [Desdemona]"(V.ii.156-158). Emilia's explanation of Iago's plot eventually causes Othello to come to the same conclusion as she did about his worthiness of such a committed wife. It is because of Emilia that Othello is able to understand how mistaken he was to be jealous. This realization is what ultimately leads him to commit suicide, thus bringing about the end of the play.

Final thoughts:

Whether Shakespeare intended to showcase Emilia as a strong female or not is debatable. Although she stands up for what is right at the end of the act, her morals are questionable throughout the play. Furthermore, she does not exemplify the generally accepted standards of courtly love or the perfect woman. She serves mostly as a catalyst for the plot—essential to the tragedy, but perhaps not essential to Shakespeare's message. This is further supported by the fact that she simply dies after she sets in motion the denouement of the play. All in all she is more functional than she is symbolic or philosophical.

Motif Tracing - Sight in Othello

ACT II TRACING

Her eye must be fed. And what delight shall she have to look on the devil? (II.i.224-225)

Iago makes the observation that Desdemona, like every other human being, appreciates beauty. The motif of sight continues in the same lane of Othello's appearance being to unseemly and unnatural for anyone to delight in. Iago's observation, while cynical, is definitely true and if Othello's appearance really is unseemly than Desdemona's certainly open-minded enough to look past appearances. Iago declares that everything is superficial and that human being search for aesthetic beauty on a surface level, "feeding" their eyes. This line serves to establish the importance of visual input in the human being endeavor to understand those around them. The fact that appearances are treasured and valued by everyone indicates their important contribution to making opinions about things and believing certain things over other. Sight is an important tool for judgment. Iago's observations on Desdemona must be true to an extent; Cassio is quite handsome and Desdemona's not blind. Appearances, therefore, might help Iago convince Othello of Desdemona's treachery.

A slipper and subtle knave, and a finder of occasion, that has an eye can stamp and counterfeit advantages (II.i.241-243).

This is basically Iago calling Cassio an opportunist, which is slightly ironic. In trying to convince Roderigo that Cassio has dishonourable intentions towards Desdemona and was not being merely courteous, Iago presents this opinion of Cassio, that he has an “eye” for locating the best possible advantages and opportunities he can avail. Sight, therefore, continues the previous pattern of selective vision (i.e seeing something, disregarding others and interpreting seen things in a certain way) and really seeing instead of being a simple bystander. This comment reveals more about Iago than it does about Cassio; Iago sees opportunities for what they are and avails them heartlessly. He has a sharp eye for other people’s feelings, insecurities and ambitions and knows exactly what might set them off, and exactly how to ally himself with them. This way, he uses people as mere pawns, as opportunities.

Perhaps he sees it not, or his good nature prizes the virtue that appears in Cassio and looks not on his evils.(II.iii.129-132)

Othello is too trusting and will see the best in everyone. Here Montano remarks that perhaps Othello’s good nature causes him to simply blind himself to Cassio vices (his alleged drinking problem). In fact, this is somewhat true as Othello isn’t the best judge of character, the cast in point being Iago. This means that perhaps he will misjudge Desdemona and Cassio relationship as well.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

- Othello trusts people too much, this is probably because he is blind to their fault and too self-obsessed.
- Cassio “sees” the best opportunities, and can make people see things differently.
- Appearances can be deceiving.
- Given that this is a tragedy, the characters will see all the wrong things only to realize they were wrong when it’s too late.