

## Lady Macbeth – How to Study her Character

Questions about Lady Macbeth tend to focus on whether or not we think she is evil, or a villain, or a victim of circumstances. Is she responsible for Macbeth's downfall? Is she a character for whom we can have any sympathy? Does our opinion of her change as the play progresses? If you ask yourself these questions as you read / prepare notes on Lady you will be in a strong position to write an essay about her in the exam.

Remember, when structuring your answer, to think of the five questions we ask ourselves about each character:

1. How is the character **introduced** and what is our first impression of him or her? *(Worth noting that almost everything we learn about Lady Macbeth is from her own words and actions, unlike Macbeth who is referred to by others on a regular basis. You must also note the imagery associated with Lady Macbeth as this is significant too.)*
2. Does the character have to face any **challenges**, and if so, how does he or she react to them?
3. Does the character have to deal with a **major crisis** at a turning point in the play?
4. How is the crisis **resolved** and what role (if any) does the character play in the resolution?
5. What is our **final impression** of the character and is it different from our initial impression?

Happily for us, Lady Macbeth appears in only **nine scenes** in the entire play. This makes it wonderfully easy to plan an essay, focusing on the following in each of the nine scenes:

- Act 1 Scene v: Receives the letter, greets Macbeth.
- Act 1 Scene vi: Greets Duncan.
- Act 1 Scene vii: Convinces Macbeth to murder Duncan
- Act 2 Scene ii: The murder and its immediate aftermath
- Act 2 Scene iii: Reacts to 'news' of the murder.
- Act 3 Scene i: Greets Banquo, does nothing else.
- Act 3 Scene ii: Sends for Macbeth, asks why he is staying away from her.
- Act 3 Scene iv: The Banquet Scene
- Act 5 Scene i: The Sleepwalking Scene

What do we learn about her/think of her in each scene, and does she/our opinion of her change as the play progresses?

