Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 12

Answer Key

Macbeth's "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow"

Context: Near the end of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (Act 5, Scene 5), Macbeth, who murdered his way to the throne of Scotland, prepares for a battle he is likely to lose. As enemy armies approach his castle, a servant brings news that his wife, Lady Macbeth, is dead. Macbeth responds with this soliloquy.

MACBETH:
She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Glossary: *hereafter*: at a later time · *petty*: small, trivial · *player*: actor · *struts and frets*: walks proudly and worries anxiously · *signifying*: meaning

Part A: Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer.

1. What news prompts Macbeth's soliloquy?

Answer: b) Lady Macbeth has died.

2. What does the line "Creeps in this petty pace from day to day" suggest about time?

Answer: b) Time moves slowly and pointlessly.

3. Which comparison does Macbeth NOT use for life?

Answer: d) A journey across the sea

4. Which word best describes the overall tone of the soliloquy?

Answer: b) Despairing

Part B: True or False

Write T for true or F for false.

5. Macbeth openly weeps and expresses deep love for his wife.

Answer: False

6. The soliloquy compares life to an actor on a stage.

Answer: True

7. The final line suggests that life has no meaning.

Answer: True

Part C: Soliloquy and Extended Metaphor

A soliloquy is a speech in which a character, often alone on stage, reveals private thoughts. Shakespeare builds meaning through metaphor, imagery, and repetition.

8. Identify two metaphors Macbeth uses for life. Explain what one of them reveals about his state of mind.

Sample answer: Life is "a walking shadow" and "a poor player" who "struts and frets his hour upon the stage." The actor metaphor shows that Macbeth now sees life as a brief, empty performance that ends without lasting meaning, revealing his hopelessness.

9. What is the effect of repeating "To-morrow" three times at the start of the third line?

The repetition creates a slow, heavy rhythm that mirrors the dull, endless passing of days. It emphasizes Macbeth's exhaustion and his sense that the future holds nothing but more of the same.

Part D: Think and Explain

10. How does this soliloquy show the consequences of Macbeth's ambition? Use the context and the language of the speech in your answer.

Sample answer: Macbeth killed to gain the crown, but now, with his wife dead and his enemies closing in, he finds the power he fought for worthless. Even her death barely moves him ("She should have died hereafter"). His conclusion that life is "full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" shows that his ambition has emptied his life of meaning.