

'SLEEP NO MORE'



CLARIFYING VOCABULARY

renowned – Known or talked about by many people

insomniac – A person who is regularly unable to sleep

genesis – The original or beginning of something

citizenry – The citizens of a place regarded collectively

perpetuating – To make something keep on going

behest – A person's order or command

1. Why is Macbeth unable to sleep?

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2. What are the implications of 'murdering sleep'? What will this lead to? What will the consequences be?

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Macbeth is Shakespeare's most **renowned insomniac**, perhaps because his sleeplessness is of the character's own making. Macbeth does not merely lose sleep, he murders it along with Duncan. It seems logical that the **genesis** of Macbeth's sleeplessness is the gruesome crime committed against Duncan but closer inspection shows that Macbeth is far from the only character experiencing sleeplessness in the play. Banquo, Malcolm, Ross, and Lennox all describe their own threatened or disrupted sleep—in some instances expressing the general sleeplessness of the Scottish **citizenry** under Macbeth's reign. The play shows Lady Macbeth's doctor and gentlewoman awake in the night, witnessing their lady's disturbed sleep in the sleepwalking scene. The three murderers, of course, are awake through the night **perpetrating** their crimes at Macbeth's **behest**. The drunken sleep of Duncan's grooms is interrupted in the night. In fact, throughout *Macbeth*, only Duncan is described as sleeping soundly—a sleep so sound that it allows for his murder.

3. Why does Shakespeare suggest a connection between Macbeth's reign and his subjects' inability to sleep?

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5. How is sleep presented negatively in the play?

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4. How is sleep presented positively in the play?

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