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**Centre for Open and Lifelong Learning**

## **FEEDBACK TUTORIAL LETTER**

**1<sup>ST</sup> SEMESTER 2023**

**ASSIGNMENT 2**

**THEORY AND PRACTICE OF WORLD POETRY 2A**

**TPP611S**

## **TUTORIAL FEEDBACK LETTER LITERARY DRAMA ASSIGNMENT 1 2023**

Dear students

A brief feedback on your first assignment.

Some students still seem confused about the course they are taking. It is called Literary Drama. (..of or concerning literature)

Some sad souls are calling the course Literally Drama . Literal means” exact” or “following the usual meaning of the words ,without any additional meanings” (Longmans Dictionary of Contemporary English)

Any student calling the course “Literally English” from now on will automatically be penalised -10 marks.

The same applies to Literary Prose next semester.

Now to the feedback on the questions!

### **QUESTION 1 (35 MARKS)**

\_Discuss the following statement in an essay format. Your answer should be 400-450 words long.

***“Macbeth has a weak character and is easily influenced by his dominant wife ,Lady Macbeth”.***

Sadly, it seems, many students have not read the play. Any reading of the play will show that Macbeth does not have a “weak” character, full stop/period.

As with all great tragic heroes (we saw this with *Oedipus* in your first year) he is a complex character with both good and bad characteristics. The definition of tragedy according to Aristotle (also from your first year) is that a good character comes to a fall because of “*hamartia*”, a flaw in his character.

So too with Macbeth. He is a noble and brave soldier serving his king, Duncan. He loves and respects Duncan. His “weakness’ is latent ambition. He would in all probability never have murdered Duncan if he had not met the witches and received their prophecy. Being supernatural beings they stand outside the realm of normal mortal existence. No man, however brave, is proof

against their malicious plans. They even know of Macbeth's arrival before he comes to them .

Third Witch:

"A drum! A drum!

Macbeth doth come." (i.3 | 30)

Even a morally upright person like Banquo (who is a sharp contrast to Macbeth) is affected by their prophecies, and despite warning Macbeth

"But 'tis strange;

And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,

The instruments of darkness tell us truths;

Win us with honest trifles, to betray's

In deepest consequence.(i.3 | 120)

he also is "tempted" to think of how he can benefit from their prophecy when he speaks to Macbeth shortly before the murder of Duncan;

"I dreamt last night of the three Weird Sisters. To you they showed some truth. (ii.i | 20) He then continues showing his moral strength saying he loses no sleep over the prophecy but will remain loyal "...but still I keep

My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,

I shall be counselled. (ii.i | 26)

This serves to show that Banquo has an exceptionally "strong" character, yet it does not mean Macbeth has a "weak" character. We see that he doubts if he should kill Duncan to get the throne and is still only vaguely contemplating the idea .He loves his wife, Lady Macbeth dearly , and like any faithful and worthy husband listens to her counsel. This does not make him a weak character. We are shown how lady Macbeth makes a pact with the "spirits/That tend on mortal thoughts" (i.5 | 40) to remove all remorse from her and take away her natural woman's character. In modern terms she has "made a pact with the devil".

Macbeth , a mere mortal, now has two "supernatural" forces to deal with- the witches and his "unsexed" and evil wife.

His wife now manipulates his sense of duty and loyalty to Duncan by telling him ;

"...look like the innocent flower,

But be the serpent under't."(i.5 | 63)

When he doubts about the actual killing of Duncan shortly before the murder his wife questions his manhood. No “real” man would be able to suffer such an insult without taking action. Because he has doubts and has ambitions to be king (awoken by the witches prophecy) he does not silence/discipline his wife but takes action to gain credibility in her eyes. This culminates in his murdering Duncan .

All these factors, beyond his control as a mortal man, force Macbeth to commit the terrible crime of murdering his king to usurp the throne and please his wife. He has a strong character but also has weaknesses that are exploited by forces beyond his control and the person whom he loves the most, his wife.

As you can see from this impromptu essay I have just written , I am trying to practice what I preach. I have not used any references from the internet or elsewhere. If I had, I would have included the reference IN THE TEXT, as well as the reference list. I would not have copied it directly, but would have paraphrased. I would still have added an IN TEXT reference, since the idea is not my own.

I have read the play many, many times, as would be expected of a person teaching the play. Even as a university student I had read the play twice before the exams as well as all accompanying class notes and library sources. This was before the days of “Professor Google”. Some students still seem to not have read the play!

A thorough study of the play will reveal that Macbeth does NOT have a weak character, despite what some references from the internet and elsewhere show.

I have been at pains to prove this in my essay. I am willing to defend my position against any scholar/critic/expert based on my considered analysis -having read the play. Can you say that based on your reading?

At second-year level you are expected to be firm in your opinion and not write ill considered rubbish, based on a poor reading of a prescribed work. You should also not be “bullied” by some internet reference. Remember you have your OWN brain. Be lead by sources but not be bullied by them .I chose not to use sources for this essay as I feel confident in my opinion.

I use frequent textual references/quotes to support my argument AND I include the references to acts ,scenes and lines. In an essay on a novel use page references.

I could have used more references/quotes showing how Lady Macbeth questions Macbeth's manhood- i.7 ll 36-57. This is a possible shortcoming in my essay!

Before putting pen (keyboard 😊) to paper I spent some time THINKING about the statement and my OWN knowledge of the play. Even in the exam I do this, as should you. (Some sad creatures still think it is a book or novel/story).

Remember statements about literature should be questioned. Most students simply agree with the statement. It is ok if you agreed, but then you still have to follow the processes I am showing you. Argue your point with textual evidence. You were not punished for agreeing with the statement, but in this case it shows a poor understanding of the play.

My thought processes showed me that; 1) Macbeth is a strong character with flaws

2) He is a truly tragic "hero" like *Oedipus*. Because I attended classes and have a brain I remember work covered last year ! One sad case told me she only learns to pass and does not remember anything from previous years. Heaven forbid that she ever ends up driving on a public road!

A "good" character who falls due to "*hamartia*" is what constitutes a tragedy. The full title of the play is *The Tragedy of Macbeth*.

3) Macbeth, a mortal man, was unable to stand up against supernatural forces (the witches) and forces of evil (the "unsexed" Lady Macbeth). Any man would fall (excluding Banquo 😊)

Now I make a spider diagramme- yes the same one taught to you when you first learnt to write an essay!

Now my essay starts its torturous journey from fertilisation to birth.

## QUESTION 2 (35 MARKS)

**What are the lessons we take away from the play , *The Crucible*, by Arthur Miller?**

Your answer must be in the form of a well-considered essay, using numerous references from the text and should be 400-450 words long.





