

THEME:

BLACK AND DEEP DESIRES

The seed of temptation, once planted, becomes irresistible for some. Macbeth explores the slippery slope that leads to evil, the process by which a good person, making bad choices, can be the cause of their own destruction.

**“If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me
Without my stir.”
- Macbeth**

As the prophecies of the witches regarding his ascension appear to be coming true, Macbeth is initially horrified by the prospect of becoming king through treason. He will resist temptation and let nature take its course.

DISCUSS:

There are many sayings regarding fate: (“Good things come to those who wait.” “God helps those that help themselves.” Can you think of others?) Do you believe in destiny or fate? Do you think that destiny or action plays a stronger role in your life?

Have you ever been witness to an unlikely prediction that strangely came true? A horoscope? A fortune cookie?

**“What thou would'st highly,
That would'st thou holily; would'st not play false,
And yet would'st wrongly win.”
- Lady Macbeth**

As news arrives of her husband's early success, Lady Macbeth worries that he won't have the nerve to follow through on the prophecies. Perhaps his ambition isn't keen enough to drive him all the way.

WRITE:

Is something gained through honest means worth more than something gotten dishonestly? Or does it have the same value, no matter what?

How far would you be willing to go to get something that you want? Would you cheat to get a better grade? Steal something that you couldn't afford to buy? Where would you draw the line?

Is it worth it, sometimes, to achieve our goals by underhanded means? Do the ends justify the means?

**“I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more is none.”
- Macbeth**

As Macbeth and his wife argue the merits of murdering the king, he defends his courage against her insinuations that he lacks resolve.

DISCUSS:

What does Macbeth mean when he says “I dare do all that may become a man”? Is there more than one shade of meaning to the line? The surface implication is that he is a strong, courageous male. But perhaps he also implies that in committing regicide, he will damage his humanity. It is not human to murder a trusting king.

Have you ever done something you knew was wrong because of pressure from someone else? How did you feel afterward? How did it affect your relationship with the other person?

Conversely, can you think of a time when you (or someone else) dared to stand up for what was right, even in the face of adversity or ridicule?

**“Merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose.”
- Banquo**

Banquo has been told by the witches that his family will one day ascend to the throne; he is honest and dutiful toward the king, but there are hints in the play that thoughts of that future are never far from his mind. Here, he prays for freedom from such thoughts as he sleeps.

DISCUSS:

Banquo prays for strength to resist temptation. Brainstorm a list of other ways we find encouragement to do the right thing. Family, being raised right, tradition, religion, peer pressure, fear of being caught, threat of punishment, sense of personal honour, pride, the law etc. Then rank these, for yourself, from most to least important. What inspires you to behave honourably? What keeps you from behaving badly?