

Macbeth: Vocabulary Master List

Word	Dictionary Definition	Impact in the Text Connotation
languished	slowly dying	Daedalus is slowing dying in the labyrinth which makes the reader feel desperate.
foreclosed	shut out, exclude	Daedalus' feelings of desperation change to hope when he realizes, though the Minos owns the sea, he doesn't own the air.
cunning	skilled, crafty, smart (usually in a wicked way)	The reader knows that Daedalus is smart and will devise a plan.
impertinently	Intrusive, rude	This provides a description of Icarus' character and clues the reader into what may happen to him.
ekphrastic	poetry that is written about specific works of art	
pageantry	spectacular display	It seems very formal and traditional; very detailed.
martyrdom	extreme suffering or torment, often by choice and for a specific cause	It makes the reader feel the pain of suffering and reminds the reader that the suffering is a result of human failure.
reverently	deeply respectful	It reminds the reader about the sanctity of life- and the way some people disregard it.
forsaken	forgotten, abandoned	This word is also connected to the bible and to religion. It makes the reader feel the bitterness that comes with abandonment.
virtuous	morally excellent; principled	Aristotle is describing the qualities of characters in a great tragedy. This helps the reader begin to empathize with the character

unmerited	undeserving, unjust, unearned	The reader can begin to feel the unjustness of the misfortune, provoking pity.
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depravity	morally bad, evil, corrupt	This word has an extremely negative connotation and prevents the reader from feeling pity.
hubris	excessive pride or arrogance	
wretched	characterized by misery or sorrow	The reader feels deep empathy for Oedipus, even though he has caused much of his own fate.
laments	to feel sorrow or regret	The reader feels a deep pity- as does the Chorus- for Oedipus' plight.
inversion	a writing process of inverting the normal order of a subject and verb in a sentence	
stage action	an instruction written into a play that tells what actors are doing on the stage	
elizabethan	relating to the period of Queen Elizabeth I in England; approximately 1558-1603	
valor/valiant	noble, brave, courageous	This shows the King's respect for both the captain and Macbeth, revealing Macbeth's virtuous beginning.
weird	strange, of another world	Describes the three witches
harbinger	a person or thing that signals the approach of another	Macbeth goes ahead, supposedly to announce Duncan's arrival to Lady Macbeth, but in actuality to plot the King's death with her. The word has an ominous, foreboding connotation, provoking suspense in the reader

palpable	able to be touched or felt	Macbeth describes the illusive dagger as “palpable” which makes the reader to be able to feel what Macbeth is feeling.
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infirm	not physically or mentally strong	Lady Macbeth uses this term to describe Macbeth after he returns with the daggers. It reveals her manipulation of him by questioning his masculinity.
gild	cover thinly with gold	Lady Macbeth describes how she will frame the guards for the King’s murder. The word bears an eerie similarity to “guilt” which prompts the reader to feel angst and contempt for the Macbeths.
parallel structure	the technique of balancing sentences by using an established grammatical pattern	
sacrilegious	blasphemous, sinful, irreverent	Macduff’s description of Duncan’s murder reveals the reverence and respect for the King, painting him as almost God-like.
posterity	future generations of people	Banquo knows, according to the witches, that his descendants jeopardize Macbeth’s claim to throne. This is the central reason that Macbeth comes to want Banquo dead.
treachery	betrayal, deception	Banquo screams “treachery” as he is murdered and the reader can infer that he knows Macbeth is responsible
malevolence	the desire to do evil against others	A lord uses this word to describe Malcolm’s misfortune but it could easily be applied to Macbeth, who is now being called a “tyrant.”

blaspheming	speaking disgracefully about God or sacred things	The witches use this term as an epithet against Jewish people when brewing their spell in scene i and Macduff uses the word against Malcolm in scene iii. Both words could be used to describe Macbeth, given his actions.
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avarice	extreme greed	As Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty, he describes himself as afflicted with a litany of sins, many of which will remind the reader of Macbeth.
interdiction	a military tactic to prevent or delay	Macduff feels all is lost when, like a military tactic, Macduff's confession prevents him from claiming his birthright. It is almost as if he is defeated before it's begun.
perilous	full of danger and risk	Macbeth describes Lady Macbeth's affliction as perilous, possibly because he knows that without her, his power and plan are crumbling.
purgative	a cleansing medicine	Macbeth is begging for Lady Macbeth to be cleansed of her affliction, and of their mutual guilt.
sneer	a mocking smile	The speaker describes Ozymandias' smile as mocking, prompting feelings of offense or hostility.