**Key Points for Consideration**

**ELA 3201 Macbeth Question #1**

Be sure that you always:

* Understand WHAT the question is asking
* Answer all components of that question
* Use direct quotes whenever possible
* Use full sentences, appropriate punctuation, proper grammar (i.e. when creating appropriate thematic statements) and strong word choice to explain your ideas

**How are theme and atmosphere developed in the first scene? Explain.**

When discussing atmosphere, it is critical that you:

* Find an appropriate and descriptive word to captivate the overall feeling of the scene/moment (good, bad, happy, sad, bad, angry, nice, etc…are VERY vague and not appropriate)
* Beyond this, you have to use other literary elements to convey how this atmosphere exists. The general ‘go-to’ elements to help with this are conflict, setting, and the diction/word choice used in the section – but you are also not limited to these

In this scene, you could consider the following descriptive words, based on your interpretation of the opening scene:

- Gloomy

- Sinister

- Dark

- Uneasy

- Tense

- Eerie

- Morbid

**There are many others as well. Again, it’s key that you connect appropriate quotes or ideas to whichever you pick. The quotes are NOT interchangeable with the terms.**

To help “prove” this atmosphere exists, you must now actually prove it through the use of OTHER devices employed by Shakespeare.

Conflict:

* The raging battle in the distance
* The ‘appearance’ of the witches and corruptive influence on nature (external)

Setting:

* Thunder and Lightning
* Rain
* The fog and filthy air (all caused by the witches’ appearance)
* A disruption of the natural order

Foreshadowing:

* That they will meet later with Macbeth and that “fair will be foul”, implying a sinister/meddlesome influence OR that Macbeth is already in collusion with the weird sisters

Diction:

* That the battle will be both ”lost and won” (paradox – but how?)
* That they will meet later in a barren “heath”
* Discussion of the “hurlyburly” (war)
* The calling out of a paddock (toad) and Graymalkin (cat) which are both “familiars” of demons and witches
* The “fair is foul and foul is fair” antithesis (and theme) which helps to create that dark and uncertain atmosphere through paradoxes, unfulfilled (yet) promises of evil, and double meanings
* The suggestion therefore that Macbeth’s world is one where the moral order has been reversed and where it is difficult to tell the difference between “right and wrong”
* That the witches speak in incantations and rhythmic grotesque chanting rather than blank verse
* This then ties into THEME

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With theme, remember that as Level III students you must successfully transition/alter/modify a theme into a thematic statement before having a full discussion. For example:

“Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair” is a major theme in this play. However, it is not a thematic statement. On its own, without further analysis it is simply an antithesis.

It is a quote spoken by the witches which permeates throughout the play, but nothing more.

A theme you can develop from this might be:

- The theme of deception OR

- That good is bad and bad is good

- Appearance vs. Reality

But these are still not thematic STATEMENTS

A statement might be:

- Appearances can be deceptive

- Things are often not what they seem

- Nothing is as it seems

- Most people see what they wish to see, not what is really there

- When you are practicing to deceive, things often do not turn out how you expected.

- But whatever you DO choose, you have to put it into your own words and context or it ends up being grammatically awkward in your writing. A poor way to write this might be:

“One way in which ‘Nothing is as it seems’ occurs in this play Macbeth by William Shakespeare is when….”

As opposed to….

The re-occurrence of deception and it’s impact on the natural world can be found when the witches discuss….