

## ***Macbeth***

### **List of Allusions**

#### **Act One**

**“cat i’ th’ adage”**: Lady Macbeth is referring to an old adage in which a cat wants to eat fish, but doesn’t want to get her hands wet in the process. She is saying that Macbeth is being a coward by wanting to murder Duncan, but doesn’t want to really be involved in the doing.

**“I have begun to plant thee”**: biblical reference to Psalms 92: 12, 13, “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree...” or Jeremiah 12:2, “You have planted them, and they will grow and bear fruit...”

**“If it were done when ‘tis done, then ‘twere well / It were done quickly”**: refers to John 13: 27, Jesus told Judas, “What you are about to do, do quickly,” sensing Judas’s betrayal.

**“insane root”**: possibly refers to hemlock, which, when eaten, causes madness

**Aleppo**: a city in Syria

**Bellona’s bridegroom**: Bellona was the goddess of war

**Golgotha**: the biblical name for the place where Jesus was crucified

**Graymalkin**: a gray cat called upon in spell-making

**kerns and galloglasses**: Irish soldiers

**limbeck**: (also *alembeck*) a device used in the distillation of liquor; in this case, it is being used metaphorically, memory is being distilled—the guards will be so drunk, they will not be able to think straight

**paddock**: a toad used for spells

**Saint Colme’s Inch**: an island near Edinburgh, Scotland

**Tiger**: the name of the husband’s ship

**Western Isles**: Ireland

#### **Act Two**

**“The Lord’s anointed temple...stole thence the life o’ th’ building”**: reference to 1 Corinthians 3:17 “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”

**“the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire”**: to be led down the “primrose way” is to be led astray or to be deceived by someone who is a hypocrite; the “everlasting bonfire” is a reference to hell.

**Beelzebub**: commonly translated as “the lord of the flies,” the Philistine god Beelzebub is known as the prince of demons

**equivocator**: reference to Jesuit Henry Garnet, who was executed for his role in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605; wrote the “Treatise on Equivocation,” which encouraged Catholics to speak ambiguously or, “equivocate” when they were being questioned by Protestant inquisitors so they wouldn’t be persecuted for their religious beliefs.

**farmer**: well-known alias for Father Garnet of the Gunpowder Plot

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

**Gorgon:** a female supernatural creature, usually referring to any of three sisters who had hair made of venomous snakes

**Hecate:** the goddess of witchcraft

**Neptune:** the god of water and the sea in Roman mythology

**Tarquin:** the Roman Emperor Lucius Tarquinius Superbus was known for his tyranny over his empire, but was later successfully overthrown.

### Act Three

**“blood will have blood”:** a reference to Genesis 9:6, the story of Cain and Abel “Who so sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God hath he made man.”

**Caesar:** Gaius Julius Caesar (July 13, 100 BC – March 15, 44 BC), Dictator of the Roman Republic, assassinated by his own senators

**Mark Antony:** a Roman philosopher and general; huge supporter and faithful friend of Julius Caesar

### Act Four

**“To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb, T’ appease an angry god”:** the practice of sacrifice of an animal has been in existence for thousands of years, often in an attempt to please one of the gods of mythology

**adder’s fork:** the forked tongue of a poisonous snake

**blindworm:** a legless lizard, with the body of a snake

**eye of newt:** the eye of a type of salamander

**fillet of fenny:** a slice of a type of swamp snake

**gall of goat:** the gallbladder of a goat

**maw and gulf of ravined salt-sea shark:** the jaw and stomach of a hungry saltwater shark

**owlet’s wing:** the wing of a baby owl

**tiger’s chaudron:** a tiger’s intestines

### Act Five

**“Seyton! –I am sick at heart, / When I behold—Seyton, I say!”:** commonly believed to be a reference to Satan, as Macbeth has completely invoked the power of the devil to his purpose.

**“Why should I play the Roman fool, and die / On mine own sword?”:** reference to the idea of Roman soldiers killing themselves with their own swords rather than facing defeat.