

## Module 4: Examining Love, Friendship, and Power

### Topic 5 Content: Themes in *Macbeth*

#### Introduction

### Themes in Macbeth

Masculine Versus ...      Power      Ambition

#### Introduction



Shakespeare's *Macbeth* raises many interesting questions about the themes of masculine versus feminine, power, and ambition. For example, what does it mean to be a man versus a woman? What are the specific characteristics you would associate with a woman, and how are they different from the characteristics you would associate with a man? How should you deal with power, and what are the effects of ambition?

Click each of the folder tabs to examine some themes in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*.

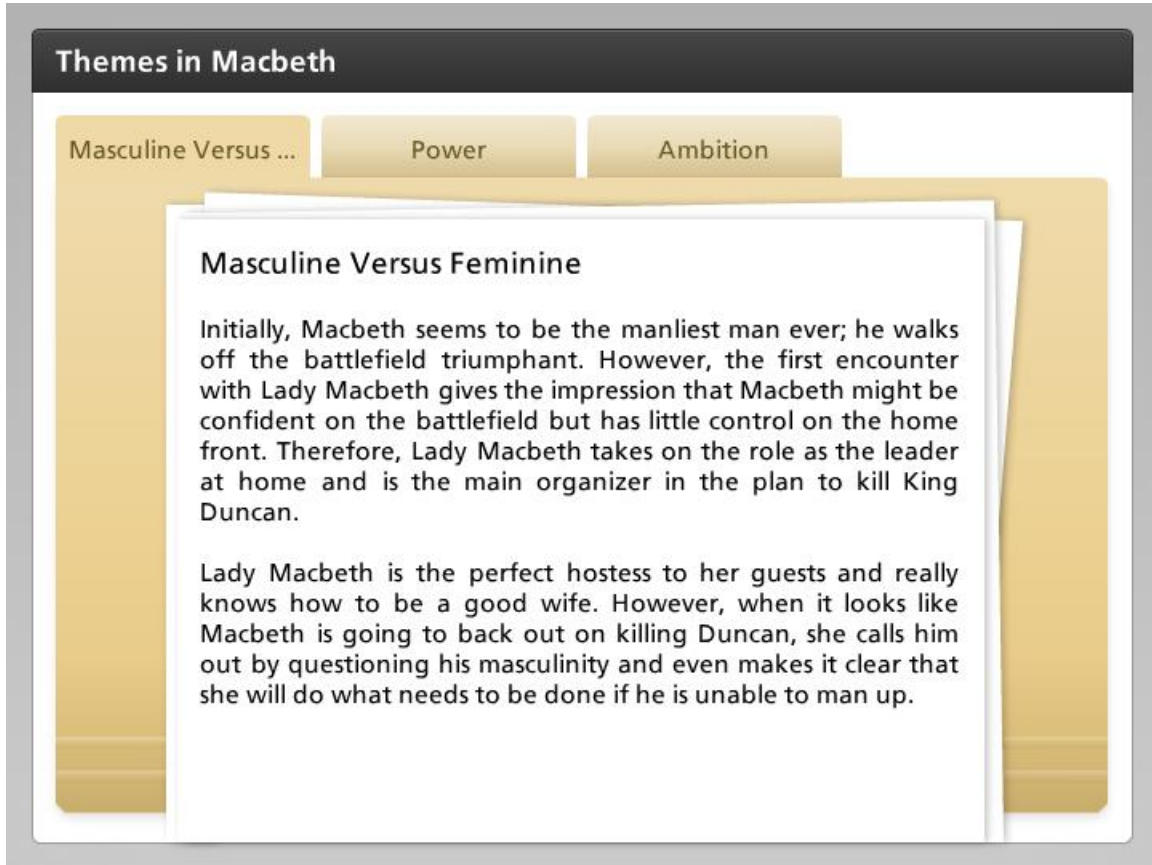
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#### Masculine Versus Feminine



The image shows a digital interface titled "Themes in Macbeth". At the top, there are three tabs: "Masculine Versus ...", "Power", and "Ambition". The "Masculine Versus ..." tab is selected, and a document titled "Masculine Versus Feminine" is displayed. The document contains the following text:

Initially, Macbeth seems to be the manliest man ever; he walks off the battlefield triumphant. However, the first encounter with Lady Macbeth gives the impression that Macbeth might be confident on the battlefield but has little control on the home front. Therefore, Lady Macbeth takes on the role as the leader at home and is the main organizer in the plan to kill King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth is the perfect hostess to her guests and really knows how to be a good wife. However, when it looks like Macbeth is going to back out on killing Duncan, she calls him out by questioning his masculinity and even makes it clear that she will do what needs to be done if he is unable to man up.

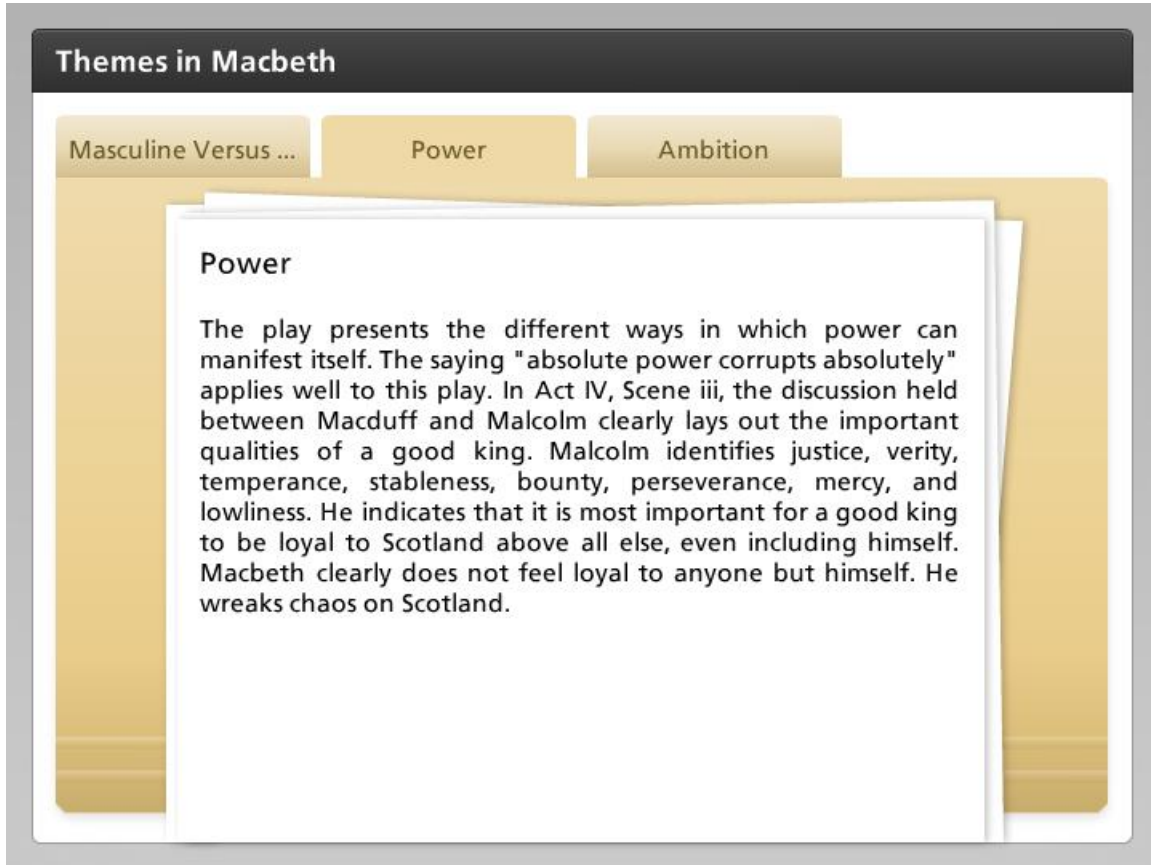
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#### Power



The screenshot shows a digital interface titled "Themes in Macbeth". At the top, there are three tabs: "Masculine Versus ...", "Power", and "Ambition". The "Power" tab is selected, and a document is displayed with the following text:

**Power**

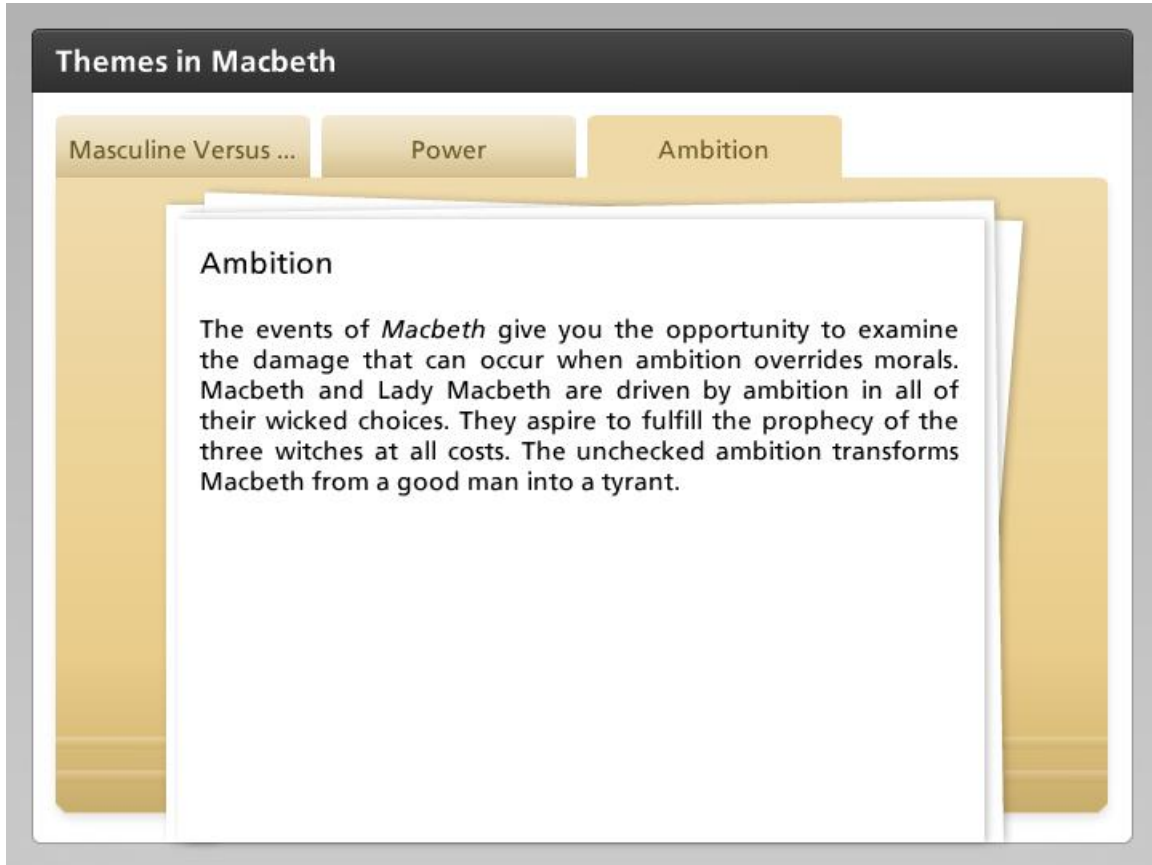
The play presents the different ways in which power can manifest itself. The saying "absolute power corrupts absolutely" applies well to this play. In Act IV, Scene iii, the discussion held between Macduff and Malcolm clearly lays out the important qualities of a good king. Malcolm identifies justice, verity, temperance, stableness, bounty, perseverance, mercy, and lowliness. He indicates that it is most important for a good king to be loyal to Scotland above all else, even including himself. Macbeth clearly does not feel loyal to anyone but himself. He wreaks chaos on Scotland.

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#### Ambition



**Themes in Macbeth**

Masculine Versus ...    Power    **Ambition**

**Ambition**

The events of *Macbeth* give you the opportunity to examine the damage that can occur when ambition overrides morals. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are driven by ambition in all of their wicked choices. They aspire to fulfill the prophecy of the three witches at all costs. The unchecked ambition transforms Macbeth from a good man into a tyrant.

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