Blood As An Image In Macbeth Essay, Research Paper

Shakespeare uses the symbol of blood in MacBeth to represent treason, guilt, murder and death. These ideas are constant throughout the book. There are many examples of blood representing these three ideas in the book.

Blood is mentioned throughout the play and mainly in reference to murder or treason. The first reference to blood is in MacBeth’s soliloquy in Act 2, Scene 1, Lines 33-61, when Macbeth sees the bloody dagger floating in the air before him. Also in this soliloquy on line 46 he sees “on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood”, this means that there is blood on the handle and spots of blood on the handle. This is implying that the dagger was viciously and maliciously used on someone. Shakespeare most likely put this in as premonition of murder and death to come later in the story.

The next reference, although indirect, in Act 2, Scene 2, Lines 5-11 is when Lady MacBeth talks about smearing the blood from the dagger on the faces and hands of the servants that she drugged. In Act 2, Scene 2, Lines 11-12, “I laid their daggers ready; He could not miss them”. Notice how she said THEIR daggers. She is setting up the innocent servants of the king, making it look like they committed treason. Also in this scene is the first reference of blood pertaining to guilt. MacBeth says this in Act 2, Scene 3, Line 60, “Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?” This is an example of blood representing guilt, because MacBeth wishes he could just wash his guilt away.

Again, blood is referred to again when in Act 2, Scene 3, Lines 123-134 Malcolm and Donaldbain are discussing what to do and Malcolm says in Line 128, “There’s daggers in men’s smiles, the nearer in blood, the nearer bloody.” Meaning that their closest relatives are likely to kill them. Again, blood is being used to describe treason, murder and death.

Act 5, Scene 1 is the famous sleepwalking scene. While Lady MacBeth is sleepwalking she makes many references to the evil deeds that Macbeth and herself have committed, most of which include references to blood. In Act 5, Scene 1, Line 31, She goes through the motions of washing her hands saying “Out damned spot! Out, I say” in reference to the blood that stained her hands after smearing it all over the servants after assisting MacBeth in the treasonous murder of MacBeth. This also represents her guilt of the murder. In Act 5, Scene 1, Line 38 she makes another reference to the guilt saying, “What, will these hands ne’er be clean?” The last reference she makes to the blood being on her hands representing her guilt is in Act 5, Scene 1, Lines 44-45, “Here’s the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this hand.” All these references are to murder, death, treason, and guilt.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare effectively conveys theme of death, murder, treason, and guilt through the symbol of blood. Normally, the word blood makes us think about injury and being an essential part of life. The symbol of blood was effectively used in the play. In the context that it is used, it is a perfect example for death, murder, treason, and guilt. Blood was used as an effective symbol in MacBeth.