

Subject: ENGLISH

Class: English- 50 Marks

Topic: “Tomorrow and Tomorrow”

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“TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW, AND TOMORROW”

ORIGIN

This is one of the more famous speeches written by Shakespeare, and delivered by his famous character, Macbeth, in the play of the same title. He says this to indicate that another day in his life would be just a futile and monotonous crawl towards the inescapable end, “To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day” (*Act-V, Scene-V*). In this soliloquy, Macbeth mourns his meaningless life, and

the time after his wife's death. He states that life is full of events and action, however absurd, and short, and completely meaningless at the end.

MEANING

The meaning of this phrase is that life is meaningless, useless, and empty; and that every day just creeps by like every other day. After his wife dies, time seems to Macbeth an intolerable burden, and the future an overwhelming force that leads him to his destiny. This is directly opposite of the conventional and easy future he had fantasized about having with his wife before murdering King Duncan. After the death of Lady Macbeth, he feels his future is hopelessly tedious, and empty, while life looks ridiculously short.

USAGE

The use of this phrase is common in literary language; however, you can use it in your everyday life. For instance, if a person's loved one dies, then suddenly this tragedy would make his life empty and colorless without the presence of that loved one. He might feel that every day of his life useless and meaningless, like Macbeth. Similarly, a lover who parts with his beloved may also use this phrase to express the meaninglessness of his life without her.

LITERARY SOURCE

Shakespeare has used this phrase in Macbeth's famous soliloquy in Act-V, Scene-V. The repetition of the words, "tomorrow, tomorrow," expresses the growing madness of Macbeth as given below in the speech:

Macbeth:

*To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*

(Macbeth, Act V, Scene V, Lines 19-28)

Macbeth hears the news of his wife's death, and the audience sees the conclusion of his life, devoid of meaning and filled with struggles. He feels days on earth are very short like a "brief candle," and an ignorant move towards a fruitless end. The life of a person is flimsy, similar to the life of an actor playing minor roles in comic and absurd dramas.

LITERARY ANALYSIS

The theme of this line is time, fate, fortune, and war. When Macbeth hears that his wife is dead, he expresses his indifference to the occasion. For him, death is merely a last act of a bad play, and like an idiot's story, full of melodrama and bombast, but meaningless. Killing King Duncan, taking his throne, and now viewing all this as past memory, seems to be the scene of a well-planned script. If human life is a bad play, then it is an illusion – just a shadow spread by a candle, which is perhaps the soul, and hence a prediction for the life of Macbeth is grim.

This soliloquy, from Act 5, Scene 5 of *Macbeth*, is one of the most famous speeches in Shakespeare. In just twelve lines, through the despairing voice of his hero-villain, he grapples with and illuminates perhaps better than any other writer in English the themes of time, acting versus reality, the absurdity of existence, language, and death. Many scholars spar over the soliloquy's meaning but few its importance. Seyton has informed Macbeth that his queen is dead. He turns to the audience and gives a speech musing on his despair.

These words are uttered by Macbeth after he hears of Lady Macbeth's death, in Act 5, scene 5, lines 16–27. Given the great love between them, his response is oddly muted, but it segues quickly into a speech of such pessimism and despair—one of the most famous speeches in all of Shakespeare—that the audience realizes how completely his wife's

passing and the ruin of his power have undone Macbeth. His speech insists that there is no meaning or purpose in life. Rather, life “is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.” One can easily understand how, with his wife dead and armies marching against him, Macbeth succumbs to such pessimism. Yet, there is also a defensive and self-justifying quality to his words. If everything is meaningless, then Macbeth’s awful crimes are somehow made less awful, because, like everything else, they too “signify nothing.”

Macbeth’s statement that “[l]ife’s but a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage” can be read as Shakespeare’s somewhat deflating reminder of the illusionary nature of the theater. After all, Macbeth is only a “player” himself, strutting on an Elizabethan stage. In any play, there is a conspiracy of sorts between the audience and the actors, as both pretend to accept the play’s reality. Macbeth’s comment calls attention to this conspiracy and partially explodes it—his nihilism embraces not only his own life but the entire play. If we take his words to heart, the play, too, can be seen as an event “full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing

The passage is full of meaning and there is so much one can say about it. But we can look at it only for the way Shakespeare uses imagery. If we do that, we are reminded that any idea of the Bard’s not being the greatest user of the English language ever would be absurd.

At this moment Macbeth's suffering is intense and becoming unbearable. His victim's ghost is haunting him, his guilt is torturing him, his enemies are closing in on him, his wife has gone mad and now he's just heard that she's committed suicide. We would expect a response with language that expresses a wild and desperate state of mind. That's what it seems like, with his mind jumping from one idea to the next without any logic. He mentions time, then candles, acting and the theatre, shadows, and a tale told by an idiot.

There is no intellectual logic in the development of the passage but the poetical, imaginative logic makes the piece very tight, and one of the most remarkable achievements one could find in English poetry.

LITERARY DEVICES

- Metaphor: Repetition of tomorrow is a metaphor for meaningless life.
- Repetition: The world tomorrow has been repeated three times to create powerful effects.

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