Unit 10 — A Classic Text (Leistungsfach focus) — Teacher copy

Track E · Klasse 11 · Niveau E (Basisfach / Leistungsfach)

Niveau E

1. Reading

Read the text and use it for the activities below.

Reading — three Macbeth soliloquies (extracts)
1.7 (Macbeth): If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly: …
2.1 (Macbeth): Is this a dagger which I see before me, / The handle toward my hand?
5.5 (Macbeth): Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, …

Leistungsfach (advanced course) register
Marks of LF register:

- Sustained close reading of language and rhythm.
- Integrated quotation rather than block-quotes.
- Tracking of one argument over 4-6 paragraphs.
- Confident use of literary vocabulary (*soliloquy, blank verse, iambic pentameter, caesura, syntactic inversion, dramatic irony*).
- Engagement with at least one piece of critical commentary or contextual frame.

2. Practise

Niveau E — controlled

1. Match: soliloquy → speech alone on stage; blank verse → unrhymed iambic pentameter; caesura → mid-line pause.
2. T or F: 1.7 explores moral hesitation; 2.1 stages hallucinated commitment; 5.5 collapses future-tense confidence.

Niveau E — productive

3. Build 3 close-reading sentences using Leistungsfach register on the three soliloquies.

3. Your turn

Literary essay, 450 words (Leistungsfach register). Argue a single complex thesis tracing how Macbeth's relationship to time changes across the three soliloquies. Use 4 integrated quotes + 6 academic discourse markers + 1 cleft.

Sample

Macbeth's three central soliloquies — 1.7, 2.1, and 5.5 — track a deterioration in his relationship to time, and that deterioration is, I shall argue, the most precise way to read his moral collapse. In 1.7, Macbeth approaches the prospective murder as a problem of completion: "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly". The structure of the argument is conditional, and the tense is hypothetical; Macbeth is still inside a world in which an act could be sealed off from its consequences. The repetition of *done* signals, however, an over-confidence the verse itself destabilises by the end of the speech. By contrast, in 2.1 Macbeth has stepped into the present imperative: *"Is this a dagger which I see before me, / The handle toward my hand?"*. The hallucinated dagger is, accordingly, a present-tense object that compels rather than waits. It is precisely the shift from the conditional of 1.7 to the perceptual present of 2.1 that marks Macbeth's loss of deliberative space. Whatever moral hesitation remained in 1.7 is, here, hijacked by an image he neither chose nor can refuse. In 5.5, the deterioration completes itself in the famous *"tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow"* — three futures emptied of force by their own repetition. What had been hypothetical in 1.7 and present-compelling in 2.1 becomes, in 5.5, a *"petty pace from day to day"*: a future that will only ever shuffle into more of itself. More specifically, the verse-rhythm collapses with the meaning: the iambic pentameter loses its drive; the line *"creeps in this petty pace"* enacts the very tedium it describes. Critics have read 5.5 as nihilist; in my reading, it is the structural completion of the arc begun in 1.7. Macbeth's collapse is the collapse of his ability to imagine time as anything other than a ledger of repetition. In this regard, the play stages moral failure not as a single act but as the drying up of the tense-system itself — and the soliloquies do most of that work without the help of any other character.

4. Further reading / listening

- Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* — accessible Shakespeare biography.
- Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language*.

5. Teacher answer key

Controlled. 1. all true.

2. all true.

Productive. 3. Open.