Macbeth

Journal Ideas/Discussion Topics

The following Journal Ideas/Discussion Topics are suggested activities to be used during or after the study of Macbeth. These journal topics can be used to facilitate discussion during reading, as a personal journal/reading log, or as essay/writing prompts before, during, or after reading Macbeth. Suggestions on when to give prompts have been provided.

After reading the Author Biography (pgs. 10-12):

Discuss/journal what you know about Shakespeare and his time, including any possible fears and apprehension you may have towards Shakespeare and his works, what you know about the way Shakespeare’s plays are written, and/or why his writing is so popular.

During/after reading Act One:

- Journal the typical characteristics of both good and bad leaders. Are leaders born or are they made? List the attributes of your ideal “leader”—how he/she would act, reason, negotiate, follow, etc. Can this leadership be used for evil deeds? How?
- Are people born good or born evil? Can they change? Do they? Or do each of us have a battle of good and evil within us? What might push us over the edge either way?
- What are your personal beliefs about fate or destiny? Do you believe your life is mapped out for you, or do you believe that you decide your life’s path? What about “other” interventions—such as God or the power of suggestion? Explore your feelings and beliefs in the ideas of fate versus free will.

During/after reading Act Two:

- Discuss/journal a time when you wanted something so badly you would do almost anything to get it. What was it? When? What was the result? If you were able to get what you wanted, how did it feel? If you weren’t, how did that feel? Have you ever gone too far to get what you wanted? How did that feel? Have you heard the line, “Be careful what you wish for; you may just get it.” What do you think it means?
- Discuss/journal a time you have done something you deeply regret doing. What made you want to do it in the first place? Were you coerced in any way? Did you ignore your conscience, or did it even occur to you that you might regret your decision? Will the decision have deep or just superficial repercussions? If you had the chance to do it all over again, what would you have done differently?
- Is there someone in your life who is a big influence on you, either in a good or a bad way? What personality characteristics make this person so influential? Why do you think you listen to this person? Do you ever “stand up” to this person? Why or why not? Has this person ever influenced you to do something really great or something really bad? Explain.

During/after reading Act Three:

- Many people believe we all have an “inner voice” or instinct telling us something. Sometimes, we consciously ignore our inner voice and do something we probably should not have done. Sometimes we listen to our inner voice, and it has gotten us
out of trouble or kept us from a dangerous situation. Discuss a time when you ignored or followed your inner voice.

• Everyone has felt jealous at one time or another in his or her life. Discuss a time when you were jealous of someone else. Why were you jealous? How did you feel towards the other person? How did you feel towards yourself? Were you jealous of the person, or were you jealous that he or she had something you really wanted? How did you deal with your jealousy?

• We have all heard some variation of “I told you so!” at one time in our lives. Journal/discuss a time when someone tried to warn, caution, or advise you and you didn’t listen to them. What happened? What was the outcome? Would you do things differently or the same in the future, knowing what you know now?

During/after reading Act Four:

• Do you believe in ghosts or other supernatural creatures such as aliens, vampires, the Boogeyman, witches, fairies, etc.? Why or why not? Have you had any experience with what you believed was the supernatural? Why might people believe in other-worldly creatures and beings? Why might people be interested in hearing stories that include supernatural beings or supernatural events?

• Explore your feelings about trust. Have you ever trusted someone who eventually turned on you? Have you ever not trusted someone and later learned that you should have? Why is trust important in a relationship? There is a saying that it takes years to build up trust, and only seconds to destroy it. Do you agree? Why or why not?

• In most relationships, there is usually a dominant person. Think about your own relationships, either romantic or friendships. Who is the dominant person in your relationships? Are you the dominant person in one type of relationship, but not in another? What personality characteristics does the dominant person have? Do you choose to be the dominant person, or does that role naturally fall into place? Explain.

During/after reading Act Five:

• Discuss the idea of “Fair is foul and foul is fair.” Describe a time when something turned out differently than you expected, or a person seemed to be someone they were not.

• Do you believe in the idea of “an eye for an eye?” In other words, do you believe that people should receive the same punishment they put others through? Why or why not?

• If you had knowledge of what your own future held, how would your actions be affected? Do you think it is wise to know the future? Do you think it would change the person you are or how you live your life? What kinds of things would be different for you?