

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Macbeth: Tracing a Motif

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

A motif is any recurring element in a work of art (literature, film, music, etc.) that, by its repetition, attains symbolic significance. Tracing a motif throughout a work (or collection of works) and analyzing its significance often points to thematic elements. Using the exponential approach to literary criticism (exponent—sign of a theme; in this case, your motif), you will be noting every reference to your team’s given motif—the “what.”

Once you’ve gathered all your specific details, you and your team will then interpret and organize the collective data and draw conclusions that will reveal the “Big So What” (theme—a message about life/the human experience that the work as a whole communicates to the reader through the exponents of your motif). Your ultimate goal is to write a scholarly essay, analyzing the overall thematic significance of your given topic’s recurring references throughout the play to present to the rest of the class.

**Directions:** In the chart below, identify all references to your team’s assigned motif/topic.

- **Quote** the passage exactly as it appears in the text. (If you use two-three lines, use a forward slash / to indicate when one line breaks and another begins. If you need to quote four or more lines of a passage, write them exactly as they appear with line breaks in the text—no forward slashes.)
- **Document** act, scene, and line number/s for each passage. *Example:* (1.7.58-60) refers to act 1, scene 7, lines 58 through 60.
- **Identify the speaker.**
- **Explain the context** of the passage: to whom is the speaker talking? What’s going on in the play at the time?  
**Analyze:** discuss its **significance**. What does it mean? What purpose does it serve? What effects does it have? etc.

**Motif:** \_\_\_\_\_

Passage—direct quotation	Doc.	Speaker	Context/Explanation/Significance
<i>Example</i> (water/blood motif): “A little water clears us of this deed.”	2.2.66	Lady Macbeth	to Macbeth after the murder. Reference to water as a cleansing agent is symbolic (archetype—purification and redemption) and ironic (will literally clean physical traces of blood but not spiritual and emotional consequences of murder)

