The purpose of this task is to look closely at a passage from Macbeth and explain its significance to the play.

There are several ways to do this including dividing the passage into sections and analysing each OR analysing the entire passage looking at Context, Character Theme and Language.

**CONTEXT**
- Where does the passage appear in the play (give a context for the passage and a brief statement about its significance)
- What happens before or after? Demonstrate your familiarity with the entire play. Give examples from the passage

**CHARACTER**
- What qualities of the characters are shown? What emotions are expressed?
- What developments are evident? Are there any obvious changes in a character’s mindset?
- Focus on language features that create character/s. Write about the way language informs us of the situation. Give examples from the passage.

**THEMES/ IDEAS**
- Focus on language features that create ideas in the passage. How do these ideas or themes relate to the plot? This is where you return to the main ideas being communicated in the passages and how this is done.
- Think about Shakespeare’s intention, ideas, patterns, comments on human behaviour…
- Give examples from the passage.

**LANGUAGE**
- Now look at the actual words that make up the passage. Turn your focus to the general language features of the passage.
- Comment on things such as the vocabulary, the deliberate choice of words,
the parts of speech (eg adjectives, adverbs, verbs...), repetition, punctuation, tone (include examples from the passage)

- Look for: patterns, contrasts, dramatic irony, foreshadowing, alliteration, allusions figurative language- metaphors, similes, personification, symbolism, antithesis anaphora, antithesis, caesura, epistrophe, etc.

IN SUMMARY

- What is the context of the passage? (What happens before/after) – Paragraph 1
- Examine the reactions of those characters in the passage. – Paragraph 2
- What key concerns of the play are highlighted in this passage? – Paragraph 3
- Comment on Shakespeare’s use of language. – Paragraph 4

WHERE TO BEGIN...
1. Read the passage carefully.
2. Which line do you think is most important and why?
3. Make notes against the 4 areas that you need to discuss:
   a. Context
   b. Character
   c. Theme
   d. Language
4. Your passage should be fully annotated and highlighted before you begin constructing your response.
Act 1 Scene 3 MACBETH

Cannot be ill; cannot be good: if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings:
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical, Shakes so my single state of man that function Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is But what is not.
William Shakespeare’s Macbeth explores the power of prophecy and blind ambition as the future of Scotland lies in balance. This passage, appearing early in the play, explores Macbeth’s reaction to the prophecies of the witches and the promise of what will come. Macbeth has just received news of Duncan bestowing upon him the title of Thane of Cawdor. This validates the witches’ prophecies and Macbeth is left to contemplate what might ensue before he goes to meet Duncan.

Macbeth’s character has been shown so far in the play as one worthy of Duncan’s favor. This monologue gives the audience insight into Macbeth’s frame of mind. It shows him to be a measured and reflective character, one who remains troubled by the intent of what the witches have told him. This moral confusion between “ill” and “good” continues to dominate Macbeth’s thinking until he is finally set on a course to his downfall at the insistence of his wife.

In contemplating the witches’ intent, Shakespeare explores the power of the supernatural. Building on the superstition prevalent at the time, Macbeth is reluctant to cross them but at the same time is conscious of Banquo’s warning that this can be a trap. This passage also hints at a level of instability in Macbeth, who is less frightened by “present fears” and more so by what he imagines might be possible.

Shakespeare begins
The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it! Come to my woman’s breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature’s mischief! Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry 'Hold, hold!'
Act 2 Scene 1, 33 – 64 MACBETH

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one halfworld
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.
[A bell rings]
I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.
Context

- Glamis Castle
- Before Macbeth goes to Kill Duncan
- First hallucination
- Macbeth is still conflicted about killing Duncan
- Lady Macbeth has convinced Macbeth to kill Duncan
- Duncan murdered — daggers brought back — Lady Macbeth framed the groomsmen.

Character

- Conflicted
- Believes in visions — supernatural
- Easily influenced — convince himself that mental stability?
- Conscience — guilty
- Turning point

Themes + Images

- Conscience
- Supernatural
- Good v. Evil
- Death
- Blood
We shall not spend a large expense of time
Before we reckon with your several loves,
And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,
Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland
In such an honour named. What's more to do,
Which would be planted newly with the time,
As calling home our exiled friends abroad
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny;
Producing forth the cruel ministers
Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands
Took off her life; this, and what needful else
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,
We will perform in measure, time and place:
So, thanks to all at once and to each one,
Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.