

***Macbeth's Niece* Questions for students**

Below are five sets of questions:

25 Reading Check Questions, to assure that students are reading the material;

25 Comprehension Questions, to allow thought about the book and show understanding;

15 Application Questions, which allow discussion or writing about issues in the story;

5 Research Questions that encourage further study, and

5 Comparison and Contrast Questions for those who read both *Macbeth* by Shakespeare and *Macbeth's Niece*.

Reading check: Choose the BEST answer for each question.

1. Tessa is an unsuitable candidate for a wife according to her mother. What traits contribute to this conclusion?
 - a. she's a tomboy, outspoken,
 - b. she's a snob, unwilling to get dirty
 - c. she's too shy to speak in public
 - d. she often gets in fights with other girls
2. On the journey to Macbeth's castle, Tessa meets three witches. What is the first prediction for her?
 - a. she will be married soon
 - b. she will go to England
 - c. she will be the mother of the next king
 - d. she will be unhappy at Macbeth's castle
3. Macbeth's wife Gruoch has admirable qualities despite her rather aloof manner. For example:
 - a. she's loved by the people of the village
 - b. she's an expert swordswoman and can defend the castle
 - c. she's an excellent household manager
 - d. she's pious and goes to chapel every day
4. Why is Tessa's first impression of Jeffrey Brixton negative?
 - a. he tells what a great soldier he is
 - b. he is clumsy and trips over her feet as they are dancing
 - c. he sings a song that is inappropriate for mixed company
 - d. he simpers, brags, and in general acts like a buffoon
5. Jeffrey is reluctant to take Tessa to England with him. Why must he do so?
 - a. she begs him to get her away from Scotland
 - b. she overhears him plotting against the king
 - c. she is sent away by her uncle for misbehavior
 - d. he is in love with her and can't stand to be parted from her
6. What does Tessa learn about Brixton on the ship that takes them to England?
 - a. he is unhappy with England's disorganized state
 - b. he loves Tessa
 - c. he wants to be king of Scotland
 - d. he wants to be king of England
7. Why does Tessa at first distrust Eleanor Brixton?
 - a. she knows Eleanor is a spy
 - b. Eleanor tricks her into revealing her love for Jeffrey
 - c. she knows there is a thief in Jeffrey's home
 - d. she believes Eleanor and Jeffrey are in love

8. Aidan is an enigmatic character. What does Tessa observe about him that makes her uneasy?
 - a. he hates his brother Jeffrey
 - b. he drinks too much and turns nasty when he does
 - c. he wants to take her home to Scotland and become Macbeth's heir
 - d. he is in love with Maddy
9. How does Eleanor help Tessa understand that she is not the hopeless case her mother considered her?
 - a. she reveals that as a girl she had the same problems Tessa had
 - b. she tells Tessa that her mother was a spiteful, evil woman
 - c. she forces Jeffrey to reveal that he loves Tessa
 - d. she arranges for Tessa's engagement to Aidan
10. Which is NOT an event that led Tessa to agree to marry Cedric?
 - a. Eleanor arranging for the girls to be introduced into London society
 - b. Eleanor's death
 - c. the news of Jeffrey's death
 - d. Cedric's proposal that he could make her queen of Scotland
11. When Tessa returns to Scotland, what is the climate at Macbeth's castle?
 - a. fearful and gloomy
 - b. cheerful and hopeful
 - c. concerned about the ongoing war
 - d. relieved that Macbeth's forces had created peace in Scotland
12. Who is Ian Hawick?
 - a. an English businessman who deals with Macbeth
 - b. a Scottish outlaw who preys on passers-by
 - c. a spy Jeffrey uses to find out what Macbeth is up to
 - d. a family servant who accompanies Tessa through the countryside
13. How does Tessa escape Hawick?
 - a. she dresses as a servant and slips out the gate
 - b. she climbs down the castle wall and swims the moat
 - c. Banaugh pays a guard to let her out a secret door
 - d. Jeffrey takes her to Banaugh, who smuggles her out in a barrow
14. Why do Tessa and Banaugh travel north after leaving Hawick's castle?
 - a. Tessa wants to warn Macbeth that he is the target of an assassination plot
 - b. Tessa wants to see her uncle once more before he is executed
 - c. Banaugh needs to return home and see to the safety of his family
 - d. England is not safe for them and they must avoid going there
15. What does Macbeth do that indicates he has not completely lost his humanity?
 - a. he arranges for Tessa to be taken to England and made a ward of the king
 - b. he arranges a boat to take Tessa out of danger
 - c. he cries for his dead wife
 - d. he promises God that if he lives he will right the wrongs he's done
16. What is a crannog?
 - a. a Scottish outlaw
 - b. a house built on a hill
 - c. a soldier who switches sides
 - d. a castle that sits on a lake's surface
17. How is Tessa captured by English troops?
 - a. Jeffrey tells them where she is
 - b. Banaugh leads her into an ambush
 - c. she blunders into a hunting party
 - d. she tries to assassinate Malcolm and fails

18. Who helps Tessa escape Malcolm's prison?
 - a. Jeffrey
 - b. Jeffrey's brother Ethelbert
 - c. Hawick
 - d. Malcolm himself
19. Once back in England, how does Banaugh contribute to their survival?
 - a. he steals purses
 - b. he gets a job as a butler to a rich family
 - c. he goes to Jeffrey and asks for money
 - d. he gets a job in a tavern
20. When Aidan offers to help Tessa get an annulment, what is her reaction?
 - a. she gratefully accepts
 - b. she tells him she must remain married to Cedric
 - c. she asks why he can't just leave her alone
 - d. she notices that he speaks of her as his possession, not his wife
21. In London, what revelation angers Jeffrey and causes him to reject Tessa?
 - a. that she married Lord Acton
 - b. that she plans to marry Banaugh
 - c. that she is already married to Hawick
 - d. that she wants to return to Scotland and claim her uncle's throne
22. What is Aidan's plan for becoming Lord Brixton?
 - a. he will frame Jeffrey for embezzlement and for killing Lord Acton
 - b. he will marry Tessa and use her influence to gain the property
 - c. he will seize the manor by force
 - d. he will bribe the king to give it to him rather than Jeffrey
23. How does Mairie help Aidan?
 - a. she kills Lord Acton
 - b. she claims that she saw Jeffrey kill Lord Acton
 - c. she flirts with Jeffrey and gets him to meet her in the stables and be found with the body
 - d. she bribes Lord Acton so that he accuses Jeffrey of treason
24. How is Tessa rescued from Hawick's clutches?
 - a. Mairie has a change of heart and arranges her escape
 - b. Hawick's man falls in love with her and lets her go
 - c. Jeffrey sends a troop of soldiers to save her
 - d. Jeffrey attacks Hawick's men and Aidan stops Hawick from killing Tessa
25. What does Tessa decide in the end about her relationship to Jeffrey, now Lord Brixton?
 - a. their social positions don't matter, since they love each other
 - b. she should marry him because she will always be wealthy as Lady Brixton
 - c. he isn't good enough for her because she is of Scotland's royal family
 - d. she isn't good enough for him because her uncle was a bad king

Comprehension guide: Give a one- or two-SENTENCE answer to each question. (Hint: Use words from the question to make your response a complete sentence. For example in #1: "A good wife should be ...")

1. What would a good candidate for a wife be in this time period, according to the story?
2. How do the witches' predictions draw the reader into the story?

3. How does Lady Macbeth appear as a character?
4. At first Jeffrey irritates Tessa. What might that signal to the alert reader?
5. What does Jeffrey's decision to take Tessa with him rather than kill her tell us about him?
6. How does the trip to England give a different impression of Jeffrey than the reader first thought?
7. What are the reader's initial impressions of Eleanor?
8. What do we learn about Aidan's background that might explain his occasional lapses in proper behavior?
9. What role does Eleanor play in Tessa's life?
10. Why does Tessa choose to marry Cedric?
11. At Macbeth's castle, what is the apparent mood of the inhabitants? Why are they in this mood?
12. Describe the motivations of Hawick and his sister Mairie.
13. Explain Tessa's confusion at trying to understand Jeffrey's behavior at Hawick's castle.
14. What motivates Tessa to ride north to warn Macbeth? Give at least two possibilities.
15. What might be Macbeth's reason for assuring Tessa's escape from his final battle?
16. What does the reader learn from the crannog episode that adds to his understanding of Macbeth?
17. What do you think is Malcolm's impression of Hawick?
18. How does Ethelbert help not only Tessa, but also Malcolm when he arranges Tessa's escape?
19. Tessa returns to London. Give three reasons, conscious or subconscious, for her return?
20. At Tessa's return, what mistakes does Aidan make that reveal his true character?
21. Why is Tessa's revelation that she married Cedric such a blow to Jeffrey?
22. How does Aidan's involvement with Hawick indicate long-term dissatisfaction with his lot, and where do you think that dissatisfaction comes from?
23. What motivates Mairie to help Aidan frame Jeffrey?
24. Does Aidan's final act change Tessa's opinion of him?
25. How did the witches' predictions for Tessa come true? Did they make any difference to the outcome?

Application guide: These are questions for discussion or for longer responses. Answers will reflect differing opinions and viewpoints.

1. How has the definition of a “good” wife changed since the eleventh century?
2. The witches are a device Shakespeare used to add interest to the play *Macbeth*. Did you enjoy the inclusion of the same three witches in Tessa’s story? Why or why not?
3. Compare Gruoch with the Lady Macbeth of Shakespeare’s play. In what ways are they alike or different?
4. How could Tessa have handled her distaste for Jeffrey in a more acceptable way at their first meeting? How does her action indicate her character at the time?
5. How might your reaction have differed from Tessa’s at the prospect of being taken forcibly from home?
6. How does a diary entry add to our understanding of a character in a unique way?
7. What do the activities at Brixton Manor reveal about life at the time?
8. Aidan and Jeffrey both exhibit anger that upsets Tessa. As we come to know people, we accept some behaviors and not others. Why do you think this is so?
9. Is it essential for every young person to learn that she is not so different from other people?
10. Why might a woman of this time agree to a loveless marriage?
11. How does the mood in a house reflect the mood of those who live there?
12. Scotland at this time was full of “outlaws,” men who did pretty much as they pleased in their own territory. Does anything similar exist today?
13. Is family loyalty a reason to support someone who may be corrupt?
14. Cedric’s insistence that Tessa be re-established as his wife has more to do with pride than anything else. What other stories can you cite where pride causes problems for the characters?
15. The overlying theme of all romances is that love wins out. How does this story demonstrate that?

Further Research-Here are some enrichment questions that allow research into subjects suggested by *Macbeth’s Niece*.

1. How might living conditions in eleventh-century Scotland contribute to the idea that a king should be the strongest man, even if he killed his predecessor?
2. Jeffrey has to agree with Tessa when she says that England’s government is in no better shape than Scotland’s. Why is that?
3. The Scots and English traded actively. Name some items Scots might have sent south.

4. Malcolm needs the support of Hawick, although he probably knows that man is corrupt. Name similar situations from history or the present and give reasons for the “strange bedfellows.”

5. As political storms swirl around them, ordinary people cope with whatever government they have. Give three examples of tyrants who were tolerated by their people and three examples of tyrants who were overthrown. What factors might have caused different results?

To accompany the play: *Macbeth* and *Macbeth's Niece*, for discussion or essay-writing.

1. Macbeth and Tessa each meet the three witches. List the witches' predictions for each of them and tell how the reactions of the two characters to the messages differ.

2. Compare Tessa's view of her uncle with the view Shakespeare presents in the play. What are some similarities? Differences?

3. At the end of his life, Macbeth knows he has lost everything. What evidence can you give from *Macbeth's Niece* that he has not completely lost his humanity? From the play?

4. Tessa and her uncle both want more from life than those around them. Explain some similarities and difference in their approach to bettering themselves.

5. Point of view is important to any story. Compare the differing points of view in *Macbeth* and *Macbeth's Niece*. How are we influenced by the viewpoint in each?