She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word.   
— To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.

**Interpretation #1 from enotes**

In this speech, [Macbeth](https://www.enotes.com/topics/macbeth?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fwhat-macbeth-mean-by-his-tomorrow-tomorrow-1451580%23answer-840776&en_category=internal_campaign) is so low that he is simply resigned to what he has just been told: his wife has died, but his first comment on the matter is that "she should have died hereafter"—that is, she would have died at some point anyway. Then, however, he goes on to lament the fact that time seems to "creep" on from one tomorrow to the next, inexorably and yet with seeming monotonous slowness without anything ever really changing. "All our yesterdays," he says—all the days which seem so important to us—are really just a procession of moments in our march towards death. We are all, in the end, "fools" who care about their lives without thinking about how fragile they are.

[Macbeth](https://www.enotes.com/topics/macbeth/characters/macbeth-character-analysis?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fwhat-macbeth-mean-by-his-tomorrow-tomorrow-1451580%23answer-840776&en_category=internal_campaign) describes human lives as like a "brief candle," no sooner lit than snuffed out. He can see no hope in living anymore, but is almost beyond trying to do anything about it. Life seems like a "shadow" to him, with each person a mere "player" on a stage who is only there long enough to play his turn. Ultimately, while life may be full of huge ups and downs for those living it—"sound and fury"—it actually means nothing and has no ultimate impact on the ongoing passage of time.

**Interpretation #2 from enotes**

This famous speech occurs in Act V, Scene 5, when [Macbeth](https://www.enotes.com/topics/macbeth?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fneed-an-explanation-this-quote-macbeth-378501%23answer-462670&en_category=internal_campaign) is awaiting the battle that will prove his undoing. He has just learned that his wife has committed suicide, consumed by guilt, and his response is a remarkably bleak reflection on life. "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" evokes the relentless, numbing "petty" pace at which the days go by. [Macbeth](https://www.enotes.com/topics/macbeth/characters/macbeth-character-analysis?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fneed-an-explanation-this-quote-macbeth-378501%23answer-462670&en_category=internal_campaign) says that life is simply a march to our deaths, with no more meaning. He compares life first to a play, in which we are just actors that pass briefly upon the stage, and then to a "tale/Told by an idiot" which, for all its "sound and fury" has no deeper or lasting meaning. This is a profoundly bleak view of life, one which is held by a man who has turned his back on his own humanity to fulfill his ambitions, and is about to be destroyed himself.

**Interpretation #3 from enotes**

Illusion is all about things not being as they appear to be *–* something which has been a major theme throughout [*Macbeth*](https://www.enotes.com/topics/macbeth?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fwhat-does-this-excerpt-say-about-illusion-366784%23answer-450836&en_category=internal_campaign).

Fair is foul...

This particular quote, when [Macbeth](https://www.enotes.com/topics/macbeth/characters/macbeth-character-analysis?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fwhat-does-this-excerpt-say-about-illusion-366784%23answer-450836&en_category=internal_campaign) is feeling the pressure, is all about illusion and its impact mainly on Macbeth and [Lady Macbeth](https://www.enotes.com/topics/macbeth/characters/lady-macbeth-character-analysis?en_action=hh_answer_body_click&en_label=%2Fhomework-help%2Fwhat-does-this-excerpt-say-about-illusion-366784%23answer-450836&en_category=internal_campaign). Visual images abound, none less so in this quote where life is compared to a brief candle, indicating his desperation on learning of his wife's death. Everything is meaninglessness, and the reader is left in no doubt as to Macbeth's mood: the existential bleakness. Life is personified as a walking shadow that struts and frets. The illusion is continued as Macbeth suggests it is just a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Macbeth feels that life is now futile, and reality may now be dawning on him, until he is recaptured by the moment and gets back to the task at hand - he is invincible after all!

**Interpretation #4 from enotes**

After hearing that his wife has died, Macbeth takes stock of his own indifference to the event. Death—our return to dust—seems to him merely the last act of a very bad play, an idiot's tale full of bombast and melodrama ("sound and fury"), but without meaning ("signifying nothing"). Murdering King Duncan and seizing his throne in retrospect seem like scenes of a script Macbeth was never suited to play. The idea that "all the world's a stage" is occasionally very depressing to Shakespeare's heroes.

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow" conveys the mechanical beat of time as it carries this poor player-king from scene to scene. "The last syllable of recorded time"—what Macbeth earlier called "the crack of doom"— casts time as a sequence of words, as in a script; history becomes a dramatic record. If life is like a bad play, it is thus an illusion, a mere shadow cast by a "brief candle." The candle is perhaps the soul, and the prospects for Macbeth's soul are grim.