



Read the following paired passages: a poem by Robert Frost entitled 'Out, Out—' and an excerpt from William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Then, in a well-developed essay, compare how the two pieces explore the meaning of life. You may wish to consider such elements as structure, tone, epiphany, and allusion.

*In the following lines from Act V.v, Macbeth is reflecting on news he just heard: his wife committed suicide. Furthermore, there are armies marching to overtake his kingdom—a kingdom he usurped from a benevolent and honorable ruler.*

### MACBETH

[19] Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
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's but a walking shadow, a poor player

[25] 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.

### 'Out, Out—' BY ROBERT FROST

The buzz saw snarled and rattled in the yard  
And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,  
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.  
And from there those that lifted eyes could count  
[5] Five mountain ranges one behind the other  
Under the sunset far into Vermont.

And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,  
As it ran light, or had to bear a load.  
And nothing happened: day was all but done.

[10] Call it a day, I wish they might have said  
To please the boy by giving him the half hour  
That a boy counts so much when saved from work.  
His sister stood beside him in her apron  
To tell them 'Supper.' At the word, the saw,

[15] As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,  
Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap—  
He must have given the hand. However it was,  
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!

The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,  
[20] As he swung toward them holding up the  
    hand

Half in appeal, but half as if to keep  
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—  
Since he was old enough to know, big boy  
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—

[25] He saw all spoiled. 'Don't let him cut my  
    hand off—

The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!  
So. But the hand was gone already.

The doctor put him in the dark of ether.  
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.

[30] And then—the watcher at his pulse took  
    fright.

No one believed. They listened at his heart.  
Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it.  
No more to build on there. And they, since they  
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.