

MACBETH

Plot

Act 1	Macbeth and Banquo meet witches who give them predictions. Cawdor executed. Lady Macbeth reads letter. She taunts Macbeth and Duncan arrives.
Act 2	Macbeth sees a dagger reflecting his doubts about the murder- but kills Duncan with Lady Macbeth's help. Malcolm flees and Macbeth chosen to be king.
Act 3	Banquo suspects Macbeth – Macbeth murders Banquo but his son Fleance escapes. Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost.
Act 4	Witches second predictions. Macbeth orders the killing of Macduff's family. Macduff and Malcolm agree to invade Scotland.
Act 5	Lady Macbeth's mental state deteriorates eventually committing suicide. Malcolm's army invades through Burnham wood and eventually Macbeth killed by Macduff. Malcolm is proclaimed king.
Lines per character	Macbeth 715 Lady Macbeth 259 Malcolm 211 Macduff 180 Ross 135 Banquo 113

Themes

Ambition	Children	Natural world
Kingship	Blood	Gender
Fate and free will	Sleep	Light/dark
Appearance and reality	Visions	Manhood

Assessment Objectives

AO1 12 marks	Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response use textual references, and quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations.
AO2 12 marks	Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate.
AO3 6 marks	Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.
AO4 4 marks	Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

Character

Macbeth	A loyal warrior who becomes duplicitous as he becomes obsessed with the witches' prophecies of power
Lady Macbeth	Macbeth's wife who drives his ambition in the beginning but loses her control by the end.
Banquo	Macbeth's close friend and ally who also receives prophecies from the witches
Fleance	Banquo's son
Duncan King of Scotland	Portrayed as a strong and respected leader at the start of the play.
Macduff	A brave warrior who is loyal to Duncan and is consistently suspicious of Macbeth.
Malcolm	Duncan's son and next in line to the throne.
The Three Witches	(Weird Sisters) – Portrayed as forces of nature who seem to know the future (is this true?) They fascinate Macbeth.

How far is lady Macbeth portrayed as a strong and manipulative woman in this soliloquy? (Act 1 Scene 5 lines 12-27)
 Lady Macbeth is *contemplating* the predictions Macbeth revealed in his letter in the previous scene. She *echoes* the words of the witches *linking* her directly with the *supernatural* world and evil. *Although* she acknowledges he has achieved two of the predictions, she fears his "nature is too full of the milk of human kindness". The *intensifier* "too" *implies* that she believes this is an element of his character that will prevent him killing Duncan. The reference to milk and its goodness is in direct *contrast* to the "bitter gall" she wanted to turn her nurturing milk into. She knows his weakness but also how to manipulate him. She knows "he is not without ambition" but doesn't have the evil "illness" with which he will be able to see through the murder. The *reference* to illness *foreshadows* the inevitable consequence of their actions.

Vocabulary

Meter
Blank verse
Rhymed verse
Prose
Iambic pentameter
Trochaic Tetrameter
Heroic couplets
soliloquy
Dramatic irony
Concealment
Gender
Stichomythia
Tragedy
Hamartia
Prophecy
Imagery
Symbols
Metaphor
Regicide

Stretch yourself

- Whilst analysing the extract, quickly refer out to other parts of the play.
- Watch different performances of key scenes to provide you with 'ammunition' when discussing form.

Context

Macbeth is loosely based on true events in **feudal Scotland** in the **11th Century** and would have been known to King James. **King James** inherited the throne through his ancestors Banquo and Fleance who appear in the play.

This violent period in Scotland's history ended with stronger links with England much like **the union of the crowns** that took place when King James became King of England as well as Scotland.

King James was fascinated by **witchcraft** and it is likely that the witches were included to please him as Shakespeare wanted his approval.

King James also believed in **The Divine Right of Kings** meaning that any attempt to depose a king went directly against God and would be judged harshly. This is reflected in Macbeth's failure as a king.

Both King James' parents were killed in politically motivated moves to secure power and an attempt was made on his life through the gunpowder plot. Shakespeare echoes this interest in **usurpation** in the murders in the play.

There is a **direct reference to King James** in the play in Act 4 Scene 1 when Macbeth sees a vision of kings stemming from Banquo's sons

Form

Shakespeare uses **soliloquy** to allow the characters to communicate their true thoughts to the audience.

Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's **Tragedies** and follows specific **conventions**. The **climax** must end in a tremendous catastrophe involving the death of the main character; the character's death is caused by their own **flaw(s) (hamartia)**; the character has something the audience can identify with which outweighs their flaws so we care about them.