



# MACBETH

GCSE Revision

# Learning Objectives:

- Recap the main events of the play
- Recap the characters and their role in the play
- Look at themes and motifs in the play
- Find important quotes
- Look at exam questions and how to answer them

# Context

James I had an ancestor called Banquo  
– that's why its important an ancestor  
lived to take the crown



- King James I payed Shakespeare – written in his favour therefore the message is don't kill kings. (Gun powder plot had happened the year before)
- Divine right of kings – Kings are chosen by God and should not be challenged.
- Witches are catalysts (catalyst – event or person causing a change)
- Shakespeare read “The Holinshead Chronicles” (equivalent to Wikipedia) about real people which he based his plays on

# Plot Summary

## Macbeth. Plot Summary

**A1S1** - The three witches meet and discuss Macbeth. They agree to find him after the battle.

**A1S2** – King Duncan waits for news of the battle. A wounded Captain tells him that Macbeth has triumphed and has killed Macdonald, their enemy. Macbeth and his friend Banquo fought the Norwegian troops and were victorious. They captured the Thane of Cawdor and made a peace treaty with the King of Norway. Cawdor is sentenced to death.

**A1S3** – Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches. Before he arrives they are discussing how they can torment someone who has insulted them. They tell Macbeth he will be Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland, Macbeth finds it hard to believe them. The witches tell Banquo that his descendants will be kings but that he himself will not, Banquo is confused by this. Ross, another Thane (Lord), brings news that Macbeth is to be Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth is amazed that the witches were correct. Banquo feels uneasy about the witches predictions but Macbeth already feels hungry for the power he has been promised by the witches.

**A1S4** – King Duncan welcomes Macbeth, his brave and loyal subject. Duncan announces that his son Malcolm shall be king after him. This news distresses Macbeth as he thinks about the witches predictions.

**A1S5** - Lady Macbeth receives a letter from her husband. She too wants him to be king but fears that his character is too weak to do what is necessary – to kill the King! She greets Macbeth and vows to arrange the killing Duncan, warning Macbeth to hide any guilt. Macbeth is unsure and worried.

**A1S6** – Lady Macbeth welcomes the King into her home as a guest. He speaks highly of Macbeth.

**A1S7** – After suffering from guilt Macbeth decides not to kill Duncan. Lady Macbeth persuades him otherwise by calling him a coward and revealing her plans. She will make the bodyguards drunk and blame the murder on them. Macbeth agrees to her plan.

**A2S1** – Macbeth and Banquo talk about the witches' predictions. Macbeth hides his plans from Banquo as he knows Banquo is loyal to the King. When he is alone Macbeth sees a blood stained dagger floating in front of him, a sign of how guilty he feels.

**A2S2** – Macbeth kills Duncan and is distraught but Lady Macbeth advises him to forget about it. She takes the daggers back to the King's room to smear blood on the guards.

**A2S3** – Macduff tells everyone of the murder of King Duncan. Lady Macbeth faints and Macbeth is filled with guilt. Duncan's sons fear for their safety and flee to other countries.

**A2S4** – Macbeth is elected King and is crowned, Macduff does not attend.

**A3S1** - Banquo fears Macbeth has killed Duncan. Macbeth hires murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance.

**A3S2** – Macbeth envies the peace that Duncan now has as he considers the forthcoming murder of Banquo.

**A3S3** – Banquo is killed but Fleance escapes

**A3S4** – The banquet. Macbeth believes he sees the ghost of Banquo. Lady Macbeth tries to calm him. The Lords leave the banquet and Macbeth vows to kill anyone standing in his way.

**A3S5** – Hecate, goddess of witchcraft, promises to use magic to ruin Macbeth.

**A3S6** – Lennox and a Lord discuss Macduff's attempt to gather an army to defeat Macbeth.

**A4S1** – Macbeth meets the witches and demands to know his future. There are three apparitions. First they tell him 'beware Macduff'. Secondly, that no *naturally born* man can kill him. Lastly, that Macbeth will be King until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane. Macbeth vows to kill Macduff's family.

**A4S2** – Murderers kill Macduff's wife and children.

**A4S3** – Macduff hears of the murders and vows to get revenge; he is ready to fight Macbeth.

**A5S1** – Lady Macbeth sleep walks and is trying to wash imagined blood from her hands.

**A5S2** – Malcolm, Macduff and the English army approach Scotland.

**A5S3** – Macbeth vows to fight to the death

**A5S4** – The approaching army use branches to hide themselves so it looks like the wood is moving towards the castle.

**A5S5** – Lady Macbeth is dead. Macbeth hears Birnam Wood is approaching just as the witches predicted.

**A5S6** – Malcolm issues orders for battle.

**A5S7** – Macduff demands to see Macbeth so they can fight.

**A5S8** – Macbeth boasts no naturally born man can kill him, Macduff reveals his own Caesarean birth. Macduff kills Macbeth.

**A5S9** – Macbeth's head is displayed and Malcolm is the new King of Scotland.

# Who kills who?

- In order
- Can you explain why each death happens?

Macbeth kills Duncan



Macbeth kills Guards



Macbeth orders murder of Banquo and Fleance. Fleance escapes.



Macduff's family killed



Lady Macbeth kills herself because of her guilty conscience



Macduff Kills Macbeth



Character	Details
Macbeth	<p>CONTRADICTIONS — ambitious, yet with a conscience</p> <p>FULL OF ANGUISH AND TORMENT-never enjoys the crown</p> <p>BECOMES DESPERATE+PARANOID BY END INFLUENCED BY LADY MACBETH-he seems weak at first, but grows in evil</p> <p>ACTIVE IMAGINATION</p>
Lady Macbeth	<p>AMBITIOUS</p> <p>A STRONG WOMAN</p> <p>KNOWS HER HUSBAND VERY WELL- attacks his manhood and shames him</p> <p>EMPTIES HERSELF OF ALL HUMAN FEELING</p> <p>SINGLENESSE OF PURPOSE</p> <p>FULL OF LIES AND DECEPTIONS</p> <p>SANG-FROID</p> <p>REPRESSES GUILT AND FEAR</p> <p>GOES MAD AT END</p>
Three Witches	<p>SUPERNATURAL POWERS-cause storms ; appear and disappear</p> <p>KNOW THINGS NO MORTAL CAN KNOW-Cawdor's treachery</p> <p>WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF THEIR POWERS?</p> <p>Never lie or order Macbeth to do anything ; trick answers</p> <p>DO THEY MAKE MACBETH DESTROY HIMSELF AND HIS COUNTRY?</p>
King Duncan	<p>GOOD KING AND HONORABLE MAN-"a sainted king"</p> <p>OLD-MUCH WISDOM</p> <p>GRACIOUS</p> <p>GENEROUS-rewards loyalty</p> <p>THERE IS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR DUNCAN'S MURDER</p> <p><b><u>REGICIDE WAS A HEINOUS CRIME</u></b> IN THE MIDDLE AGES BECAUSE IT <b>DISRUPTED THE NATURAL ORDER</b> OF SOCIETY AND OF THE NATION.</p> <p><b><u>WHEN YOU KILL A KING, YOU STRIKE A BLOW AT THE NATION.</u></b></p>
Banquo	<p>MAN OF INTEGRITY</p> <p>BRAVE IN BATTLE YET CAUTIOUS IN HIS ACTIONS</p> <p>SKEPTICAL OF WITCHES</p> <p>HONEST AND TRUSTING NATURE</p> <p>REFUSES TO COMPROMISE HIS HONOR AND INTEGRITY</p> <p>FOIL TO MACBETH</p>
Macduff	<p>MACBETH'S MAJOR ADVERSARY</p> <p>SUSPECTS FOUL PLAY FROM THE BEGINNING</p> <p>DOES NOT PLAY GAMES-NOT HYPOCRITICAL</p> <p>MATURE CODE HERO-reacts to murder of wife and child stoically</p> <p>ABSOLUTELY LOYAL TO THE LEGIT. KING</p> <p>KNOWS RIGHT FROM WRONG</p> <p>KILLS THE TYRANT MACBETH</p>
Malcolm	<p>LEGITIMATE KING - represents the rightful order that Macbeth disturbs</p> <p>WILL BE A GOOD KING</p> <p>YOUNG, SMART AND WISE</p> <p>JUDICIOUS; ABLE TO WAIT TO RECLAIM HIS THRONE</p> <p>TESTS MACDUFF'S LOYALTY—doesn't believe everything everyone tells him</p> <p>REWARDS LOYALTY-GENEROUS TO FRIENDS</p> <p><b>FINAL SPEECH</b>—FULL OF IMAGES OF <u>DIVINE GRACE</u> AND <u>NATURAL ORDER</u></p>

Themes:



# Ambition

- Perhaps the most obvious subject or theme in *Macbeth* is **ambition** and we see this with both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. They are tempted by the idea that Macbeth will become king.
- Macbeth is not sure what to do but his wife is ruthless in getting what she wants - she views her husband as a coward and appears ready to do anything.
- Ambition leads to **evil** - it makes Macbeth stronger and more determined, but then destroys his wife - she goes mad. And ambition eventually kills him as well, because he becomes a tyrant and so loses the support of his friends.



# Supernatural

- Another major theme is the **supernatural** - the idea that there are mysterious forces controlling what is happening in our lives. The very first characters we meet are the three witches, and their prophecies are what drives the story forward.
- In Shakespeare's time belief in witchcraft was very strong and many so-called witches were burnt at the stake. It is not surprising that his audience would have taken these ideas seriously and felt that Macbeth was somehow possessed. There are lots of references to this - he is unable to say 'Amen', he has visions, he is disturbed and even thinks no-one can kill him.
- The final battle scene also contains many elements of the supernatural. Macbeth believes he is invincible because many of the witches' prophecies appear impossible to fulfil - and yet just as the witches predicted Birnam Wood does indeed move to Dunsinane, and Macbeth is killed by Macduff because he is not 'of woman born'.

# Reality & Appearance

- The contrast between what is **real** and the **appearance** of something is also used by Shakespeare. The classic dagger scene, when Macbeth is not sure if he can trust his eyes, is only one of many references to this theme. For instance, he sees Banquo's ghost at the banquet and Lady Macbeth imagines blood on her hands.
- The contrast between reality and appearance is also shown with all the references to **thoughts**, **dreams** and **actions**. Banquo talks about the 'cursed thoughts' he has had and his dreams of the witches. Macbeth talks of the world of thought and dreams and sometimes is stuck there. For instance, Lady Macbeth is critical of Macbeth's 'foolish thoughts' and talks of him being 'lost' because of this.
- **Sleep** is another theme associated with reality, because characters view it as vital to life, but like death or being in another world. Macbeth is told he has murdered sleep and will 'sleep no more' whilst Lady Macbeth thinks of sleep as death, calling it the sternest 'goodnight'.

# Loyalty

- **Loyalty** and guilt are also strong themes in *Macbeth*. Duncan clearly values loyalty - he has the first Thane of Cawdor executed and rewards Macbeth by making him the new Thane. Shakespeare cleverly uses loyalty as a dramatic device as well - Duncan is in the middle of talking about 'absolute trust' when Macbeth walks in - we know he's already thought about killing Duncan, but for the moment he talks about 'the loyalty I owe' and his 'duties' to Duncan.
- Loyalty is also very important to Banquo - he will not desert Duncan. Macbeth, however, has an odd idea of loyalty - he knows he is doing the wrong thing, but he still goes ahead. Early on in the play perhaps it is his wife who is manipulating him, but later on it is Macbeth who makes the decisions. And later on he also starts to show he hates disloyalty, threatening his messengers and servants.

# Guilt

- Macbeth also shows his **guilt** - he is unsure before the murder and regrets it immediately after.
- Lady Macbeth is the opposite - she seems to show no guilt at the time and even talks about how 'a little water' cleans away the blood. Her increasing madness later on is a sign of her guilt and she imagines her hands to be stained with blood. Her guilty conscience eventually leads her to suicide in act 5.

## Other Brief Themes:

Destruction

Violence

Tyranny



**What will  
the exam  
look like?**

**Remember you will  
not have the play  
in front of you.**

**AQA will print a  
small extract out  
for you – like this  
one.**

**You have to spend some of  
the time exploring THIS  
specific extract – pull out  
approximately 3 specific  
phrases that you feel are  
WORTH analysing.**

**Remember to use  
subject  
terminology.**

### **Macbeth**

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 5 of *Macbeth* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Lady Macbeth is speaking. She has just received the news that King Duncan will be spending the night at her castle.

5      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 topfull  
        Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,  
        Stop up th'access and passage to remorse  
        That no compunctious visitings of nature  
        Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between  
10      Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,  
        And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,  
        Wherever in your sightless substances  
        You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,  
        And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell,  
15      That my keen knife see not the wound it makes  
        Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
        To cry 'Hold, hold!'

**0 1**

Starting with this speech, explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth in this speech
- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth in the play as a whole.

**[30 marks]  
AO4 [4 marks]**

**You then spend the rest of the essay referring to 1  
or 2 moments that you remember from elsewhere  
in the play– you SHOULD HAVE memorised some  
quotations that should help with this.**

**AQA tell you  
what scene  
the extract is  
from.**

**30 marks are  
available.**

**4 marks are  
available for  
SPAG**

# Exam Question:

- Look at the exam question
- Try to answer this question using the copy of the play as little as possible
- Your exam is closed book so try to avoid using it
- Look at the list of important quotes and see if that can prompt you

## Act 1

- **Fair is foul, and foul is fair** – *The Witches (Act 1, Scene 1)*
- **If you can look into the seeds of time, And say which grain will grow, and which will not, speak.** – *Banquo (Act 1, Scene 3)*
- **And oftentimes, to win us to our harm, The instruments of darkness tell us truths, Win us with honest trifles, to betray's In deepest consequence.** – *Banquo (Act 1, Scene 3)*
- **If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me.** – *Macbeth (Act 1, Scene 3)*
- **There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face.** – *Duncan (Act 1, Scene 4)*
- **Stars, hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires.** – *Macbeth (Act 1, Scene 4)*
- **Come, you spirits That tend on moral thoughts! unsex me here, And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full Of direst cruelty** – *Lady Macbeth (Act 1, Scene 5)*
- **Look like the innocent flower, But be the serpent under it.** – *Lady Macbeth (Act 1, Scene 5)*
- **I dare do all that my become a man; Who dares do more, is none.** – *Macbeth (Act 1, Scene 7)*
- **I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn  
As you have done to this.**  
– *Lady Macbeth (Act 1, Scene 7)*
- **Screw your courage to the sticking-place.** – *Lady Macbeth (Act 1, Scene 7)*

## Act 2

- 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? – *Macbeth (Act 2, Scene 1)*
- The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees is left this vault to brag of. – *Macbeth (Act 2, Scene 1)*
- To show an unfelt sorrow is an office which the false man does easy. – *Malcolm (Act 2, Scene 2)*
- There's daggers in men's smiles. – *Donalbain (Act 2, Scene 3)*

## Act 3

- I am in blood stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er. – *Macbeth (Act 3, Scene 4)*

## Act 4

- Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble. – *Witches (Act 4, Scene 1)*
- When our actions do not, Our fears do make us traitors. – *Lady Macduff (Act 4, Scene 2)*
- Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell; though all things foul would wear the brows of grace, yet grace must still look so. – *Malcolm (Act 4, Scene 3)*
- Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break. – *Malcolm (Act 4, Scene 3)*

## Act 5

- Out, damned spot! out, I say! – *Lady Macbeth (Act 5, Scene 1)*
- Those he commands move only in command, Nothing in love: now does he feel his title hand loose about him, like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief. – *Angus (Act 5, Scene 2)*
- I have supp'd full with horrors; direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts cannot once start me. – *Macbeth (Act 5, Scene 5)*
- Life's 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 talk told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. – *Macbeth (Act 5, Scene 5)*

Mark	AO	Typical features
<b>Level 6</b>  <i>Convincing, critical analysis and exploration</i>  <b>26–30 marks</b>	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical, exploratory, conceptualised response to task and whole text</li> <li>• Judicious use of precise references to support interpretation(s)</li> </ul>
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of writer's methods with subject terminology used judiciously</li> <li>• Exploration of effects of writer's methods on reader</li> </ul>
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of ideas/perspectives/contextual factors shown by specific, detailed links between context/text/task</li> </ul>
<b>Level 5</b>  <i>Thoughtful, developed consideration</i>  <b>21–25 marks</b>	AO1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughtful, developed response to task and whole text</li> <li>• Apt references integrated into interpretation(s)</li> </ul>
	AO2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination of writer's methods with subject terminology used effectively to support consideration of methods</li> <li>• Examination of effects of writer's methods on reader</li> </ul>
	AO3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughtful consideration of ideas/perspectives/contextual factors shown by examination of detailed links between context/text/task</li> </ul>

**A/A\***

**B**

# Review:

How did you do?

