

# English Literature- Macbeth

Year 8, Spring Term.



<p><b>Key Moments:</b></p> <p><b>Act 1 Scene 1</b> – The witches meet Macbeth for the first time</p> <p><b>Act 1 Scene 5</b> – Lady Macbeth learns of the witches’ prophesy</p> <p><b>Act 1 Scene 7</b> – Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to kill Duncan</p> <p><b>Act 2 Scene 1</b> – Macbeth’s soliloquy</p> <p><b>Act 2 Scene 2</b> – The murder of Duncan</p> <p><b>Act 3 Scene 4</b> – Banquo’s ghost appears at the banquet</p> <p><b>Act 4 Scene 1</b> – Macbeth returns to see the witches</p> <p><b>Act 5 Scene 1</b>- Lady Macbeth sleepwalks</p> <p><b>Act 5 Scene 5</b> – Macbeth’s final soliloquy</p>	<p><b>Key Characters</b></p> <p><b>The three witches</b></p> <p><b>Macbeth</b>- Thane of Glamis and General to the King</p> <p><b>Lady Macbeth</b>- wife of Macbeth</p> <p><b>Banquo</b>- General to King Duncan</p> <p><b>King Duncan</b>- King of Scotland</p> <p><b>Malcolm and Donalbain</b>- King Duncan’s sons</p> <p><b>Macduff</b>- Thane of Fife</p> <p><b>Lady Macduff</b> – Macduff’s wife</p>	<p><b>Key Themes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The fall of man</li><li>- Fortune, fate and freewill</li><li>- Kingship and natural order</li><li>- Disruption of nature</li><li>- Gender roles and masculinity</li><li>- Reason v passion</li></ul> <p><b>Context</b></p> <p>Written in the <b>Jacobean</b> era (1605-1606), <i>Macbeth</i> was first performed for King James I of England less than a year after the infamous Gunpowder plot. James I was descended from Scottish ancestors, the Stuarts, so a play concerning the early kings of Scotland was bound to appeal to him. James I also had a keen interest in witchcraft and the <b>supernatural</b>.</p>
<p><b>Key Quotes</b></p> <p><b>Witches:</b> ‘All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Glamis/Thane of Cawdor/that shalt be king hereafter.’</p> <p><b>Lady Macbeth:</b> ‘look like th’innocent flower,/But be the serpent under’t.’</p> <p><b>Macbeth:</b> ‘Is this a dagger which I see before me?’</p> <p><b>Macbeth:</b> ‘Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood/Clean from my hand?’</p> <p><b>Lady Macbeth:</b> ‘Out, damned spot.’</p> <p><b>Witches:</b> ‘Macbeth shall never vanquished be until Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane Hill Shall come against him.’</p>	<p><b>Structure</b></p> <p>The structure of the play is <b>chronological</b>. This is where events are revealed to the audience/reader in the order in which they have happened. Sometimes events are described rather than shown (for example Macbeth becoming king). Others happen <b>offstage</b> (out of sight of the audience) Duncan’s murder, for example. Macbeth speaks directly to the audience during his <b>soliloquies</b>. These give us an insight into his thoughts, feelings and <b>tragic flaws</b>.</p> <p>The witches set the scene at the start of the play and their influence is seen as they reappear in the second half the importance of this moment is reflected through the use of <b>trochaic tetrameter</b>. The play is written in <b>five acts</b>. Act 3 is therefore halfway through the play and reaches a <b>climax</b> when Macbeth sees Banquo’s ghost. The play is a <b>tragedy</b> and therefore follows Macbeth’s rise to, then <b>descent</b> from power.</p>	<p><b>Key words</b></p> <p><b>Thane</b> - a man who held land granted by the king; a noble title</p> <p><b>Aside</b> - speech in a play that is intended to be heard by the audience but is supposed to be unheard by the other characters in the play</p> <p><b>Dramatic Irony</b> – a technique used when the audience are aware of information that the characters in the play do not know.</p> <p><b>Soliloquy</b> – When a character speaks their thoughts aloud and only the audience can hear them</p> <p><b>Tragedy</b> – a play with an unhappy ending involving the downfall of the main character</p> <p><b>Epithet</b>- adjective or phrase expressing a quality or attribute of a character- ‘brave Macbeth’</p> <p><b>Example Exam Questions</b></p> <p><b>‘Lady Macbeth is presented as an evil woman’.</b> How far do you agree?</p> <p>What role do the witches play in Macbeth’s downfall?</p> <p>How is the theme of ‘masculinity’ presented throughout the play?</p>