

Themes and Theories	
Masculine and Feminine Many questions around manhood towards Macbeth and Macduff from their wives because of their decisions. Lady Macbeth challenges stereotypes of that time.	
Power Macbeth deeply desires power. Macbeth abuses his power when he is King to avoid any threats. Lady Macbeth also desires power which is not considered a traditional trait for a woman of this time.	
Ambition Macbeth allows his ambition to overwhelm him and becomes a murderer. LM is affected by the guilt of her actions caused by her ambition.	
Appearance Vs Reality Characters say one thing yet mean something else and use euphemisms to hide reality. Wicked and violent acts such as murder are covered up or the blame is shifted onto someone else.	
Violence Macbeth commits violence from the beginning and continues to do so until violence is all he has left.	
Supernatural The witches are a clear image, as well as Macbeth disrupting the social and political order by killing KD. Also raging storms are presented mirroring Macbeth & LM's acts.	
Fate Macbeth puts himself in the position of having to master fate always and struggles against parts of the witches' prophecies that do not benefit him.	
Kingship It is essential that the audience see the rightful King in power at the end of the play. Duncan/Malcolm show "kingly" attributes Vs Macbeth who is dishonourable.	
Tragedy/Tragic Hero According to Aristotle, tragic heroes start off as great, but they have a fatal flaw (hamartia). This leads to a reversal of fortunes (peripeteia) and the hero's downfall.	

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- *Macbeth* was most likely written in 1606, early in the reign of James I, who had been James VI of Scotland before he succeeded to the English throne in 1603.
- Only a century earlier, England had suffered under the massive disorder of the Wars of the Roses. Civil disorder was now seen as the ultimate disaster, and also as an ungodly state.
- The play pays homage to the king's Scottish lineage. Additionally, the witches' prophecy that Banquo will found a line of kings is a clear nod to James's family's claim to have descended from the historical Banquo.
- The theme of bad versus good kingship, embodied by Macbeth and Duncan, respectively, would have resonated at the royal court, where James was busy developing his English version of the theory of the divine right of kings.
- The play was first performed not long after the Gunpowder Plot. Shakespeare shows the murderers of a king tormented by their own guilt and driven to their doom.
- It was believed that kings were appointed by 'divine right' and were anointed by God. To kill a king was considered the worst sin and a terrible crime.
- *Macbeth* is a tragedy and the character of Macbeth is a tragic hero
- Gender Roles: Women were considered subordinate to men. They took status from men in society, and LM's role as a nobleman's wife was to manage the household and entertain. For men, in Scotland especially, there was a warrior culture where men were seen to be bloodthirsty. Ultimately, women were seen to be weak bodied and men as powerful, dominant beings. It can be argued that Shakespeare uses *Macbeth* to subvert these traditional gender roles.

Key Quotes

'Fair is foul, and foul is fair.'	Foreshadowing that people who are seen as good will turn evil (Macbeth) and situations seen as good will be bad (prophecies). Warns the reader to not trust expectations	Are you a man?	LM questions Macbeth's manhood as he hallucinates as sees Banquo's ghost and then becomes hysterical. This comment contrasts to what women were like at this time
'brave' 'worthy' 'valiant'	Words used by the Captain and Duncan to describe Macbeth at the start of the play.	I am afraid to think what I have done	Represents guilt but also Macbeth's downfall as he continues to kill later in the play. His loyalty for KD and others has been shattered.
'Unsex me here.'	Lady Macbeth wants to be stripped of female weakness and given the strength of man.	Wisdom! To leave his wife, his babes?	Lady Macduff criticizes her husband
'Let not light see my black and deep desires'	Macbeth struggles to hide his desire to kill the king.	Something wicked this way comes'	Witches describe Macbeth's approach.
Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it.	LM tells Macbeth he must appear to be innocent, kind and polite but must deceive the others so he is not suspected. Also has religion connotations to Garden of Eden	Out damned spot! Out I say!	The blood on LM's hands will not wash off. Is a motif as connects to Macbeth saying the ocean could not wash off KD's blood after the murder.
'Is this a dagger which I see before me?'	Macbeth is unsure on whether to murder KD. He begins to hallucinate and comments on the wickedness of the world before being interrupted by the ringing of the bell.	'Life's but a walking shadow'	Macbeth voices his despair about the hopelessness of life
'Wash this blood clean from my hand.'	Foreshadows that LM will be overwhelmed with guilt and see the blood on her hands as Macbeth does here after the murder of KD.	But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn'	Macbeth revels in the belief he cannot be killed.
'Oh, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!'	Macbeth worrying about the threat from Banquo and his son.	'this dead butcher and his fiendlike queen.'	Malcolm's speech – the end of the play.

Tier 2 Vocabulary:			
Asyndeton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a list of phrases which do not have an "and" before the end of the list. It gives a sense of endlessness as if the list will continue. The sense that the list will not end (there is no 'and' to signify the end) highlights the confidence of the speaker that there is much more to be said. 	Manipulation (noun) Manipulative (adjective) To manipulate (verb)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> controlling someone or something to your own advantage, often unfairly or dishonestly
Anagnorisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the point in a play in which a principal character recognises or discovers the true nature of their own circumstances: 	Nihilism (noun) Nihilistic (adj)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a belief that nothing has value and that existence is useless
apparition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a ghost or ghostlike image of a person. 	Paranoia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> feeling fear, anxiety and distrust without having evidence to support these feelings.
aside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a remark not intended to be heard by everyone present. 	paradox	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A paradox is a statement that may seem contradictory but can be true (or at least make sense).
Allegiance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loyalty or commitment to a superior or to a group or cause. 	patriarchal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> that men were considered to be the leaders and women their inferiors.
Ambition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a strong desire to do or achieve something. 	Prophecy, Prophecies Prophetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a prediction of what will happen in the future.
To Avenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To inflict harm in return for an injury or wrong done to oneself or another. 	Patron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A patron is a wealthy person who will pay artists to create art
contrast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the state of being strikingly different from something else - in juxtaposition one being different from another 	regicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the killing of a king (or queen)
Dramatic irony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dramatic Irony occurs when the audience (of a drama, film, play, etc.) understands something about a character's actions or an event but the characters do not. 	resolute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> purposeful, determined, dauntless, unlikely to change your mind, or your opinion.
Epithet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Epithet is the literary term for the application of a word or phrase to someone that describes that person's attributes or qualities. Often, this word or phrase, used to describe the person, becomes synonymous with the person and can be used as part of his/her name or in place of his/her name. 	sovereign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sovereign - the ruler of King/queen of the country
Equivocation (noun)- To equivocate (verb)- Equivocal (adj)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> half truth, vague and unclear words to use language which is unclear and deliberately misleading used to describe language which is tricky and misleading 	Suspicion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a feeling or belief that someone is guilty of an illegal, dishonest, or unpleasant action
Foreboding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> =A feeling that something bad will happen 	Symbols and symbolism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symbolism is when something can represent something else.
Guilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a feeling of having committed wrong or failed in an obligation. 	Tragic hero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A great or noble character who is destined or fated to fall from grace.
Heinous (adj)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wicked, evil, sinful. 	Tyrant Tyranny Tyrannous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a cruel and oppressive ruler - dictators, or tyrants ruled with tyranny and through fear. They maintained power immorally through creating terror and fear. cruel and oppressive government or rule. showing power in a cruel way
Irrational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not logical or reasonable 		
Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving or showing firm and constant support or allegiance to a person or institution. Faithful. 	Valour (noun) Valiant (adjective)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> courage and noble actions in battle

PLOT

ACT 1 The play opens with the three witches gathering and planning to meet Macbeth. Meanwhile, a wounded captain tells King Duncan about how brave Macbeth has been and has been victorious in the fight against the rebel forces led by Macdonwald. The rebellious Thane of Cawdor has been captured and is sentenced to death- KD decides Macbeth will be Thane of Cawdor. The witches meet again and tell Macbeth's future- he will become Thane of Cawdor and then King. They tell Banquo that his children will be kings. Macbeth demands to know more but the witches vanish and Ross and Angus arrive to tell Macbeth his new title. He then realises that in order to become king, King Duncan has to die. KD announces Malcolm will inherit the throne when he dies- this plants the first seed into Macbeth's head about how to become King. Macbeth writes a letter from Macbeth about his encounter with the witches but she fears he is too kind to get the throne; when Macbeth comes home they hatch a plan. KD later arrives at Macbeth's castle and that night Lady Macbeth continues to goad and persuade Macbeth into killing the King

ACT 2 The night of the murder, Banquo and Fleance unexpectedly meet Macbeth. They are surprised to see him and Banquo gives Macbeth a diamond from King Duncan for Lady Macbeth to thank her for her hospitality. Banquo tells Macbeth he dreamt of the 3 witches but Macbeth lies and says he hasn't even thought of them. Alone, Macbeth hallucinates and sees a vision of a bloody dagger. He hears a bell ring and goes off to kill KD. Lady Macbeth waits for Macbeth to return and reassures herself that she drugged the guard's wine so they will not wake up. Macbeth returns and is alarmed - he has heard a noise. Lady Macbeth realises that he has brought the daggers back and when Macbeth insists he can't go back to plant the knives on the guards, she goes instead. Whilst she is gone, Macbeth hears knocking and when she comes back, she scolds him for his cowardice and insists they go to bed. The porter opens the door to Macduff and Lennox who are to meet with King Duncan. Macbeth takes Macduff to the chambers and they discover King Duncan is dead. They scream murder, which wakes the rest of the household. Macbeth explains that he killed the guards in anger and when Macduff questions him Lady Macbeth faints as a distraction

ACT 3 Macbeth grows concerned about Banquo as the witches' prophecy said that Banquo's descendants will be Kings. Macbeth hires two murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance. Lady Macbeth is unaware of these plans. The murderers kill Banquo but Fleance escapes. At the celebratory banquet, Macbeth hallucinates and sees Banquo's ghost sending him into a frenzy of terror. Lady Macbeth tries to cover up his odd behaviour but the banquet comes to a premature end and guests begin to question Macbeth's sanity. Macbeth then decides he must revisit the witches to look into the future once more. Meanwhile, Macbeth's thanes begin to turn against him and Macduff meets Malcolm in England to form an army against Macbeth.

ACT 4 The witches show Macbeth three apparitions. The first warns him against Macduff, the second tell him to fear no man born of woman and the third says he will fall only when Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane castle. Macbeth believes he is almost untouchable but when he asks the witches if Banquo's prophecy will come true they show him a procession of eight kinds, all of whom look like Banquo. Meanwhile, Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty and the two strategise against Macbeth. Back in Scotland, Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children murdered.

ACT 5 Lady Macbeth is suffering from sleepwalking and a doctor comes to observe her symptoms. She unwittingly reveals her guilt as she says she can't wash her hands clean of bloodstains. Macbeth is too busy dealing with battle preparations to pay much heed to her dreams and expresses anger when the doctor says he can't cure her. As the English army approaches, Lady Macbeth commits suicide. When Macbeth hears of this, he says she should have died at a future date. Macbeth still believes, because of the witches, that he is impregnable to the army but Malcolm has instructed each soldier to cut a tree branch from Birnam wood and hold it up as disguise. Therefore, Macbeth's servant reports that Birnam wood is moving to the castle and Macbeth becomes worried but still engages the oncoming army. In the battle, Macbeth kills Young Siward and then battles Macduff where Macduff tells Macbeth he is not born of woman and kills Macbeth and decapitates him. Malcolm is then proclaimed the new king of Scotland



Knowledge Organiser



Characters

Macbeth	Is considered a hero at the beginning of the play. Gets promoted from Thane of Glamis to Thane of Cawdor and eventually King. Is ambitious and manipulated by his wife.
Lady Macbeth	Is manipulative and does not follow the stereotypical Jacobean woman of this time. Is presented as strong at the beginning of the text and weak at the end when she becomes insane because of how guilty she feels.
King Duncan	Is the King of Scotland at the beginning of the play. Is murdered by Macbeth after Lady Macbeth persuades him to so he can get the throne.
Banquo	Macbeth's best friend. Is ordered to be and is murdered by Macbeth as he poses as a threat to Macbeth's chances of becoming King. Macbeth loses trust in Banquo because he was present when Macbeth saw the witches. Appears as a ghost at the banquet after his murder.
Fleance	Banquo's son. Ordered to be killed by Macbeth as he is a threat to Macbeth becoming King, however, Fleance escapes from the murderers. Foreshadowed that Fleance is a light for Scotland and Fleance will be the first King (in the witches' predictions) who will start the line of descendants.
Macduff	Soldier, Thane of Fife and Macbeth's rival. Grows suspicious of Macbeth after KD's murder. Forms an army with Malcolm in England and kills Macbeth at the end; a figure of mortality.
Lady Macduff	Macduff's wife. Is murdered along with her son after Macduff flees.
Malcolm	King Duncan's son. Flees to England after he is killed. Represents order and once that is restored at the end of the play, he becomes King.
Donalbain	King Duncan's other son who flees to Ireland after King Duncan is killed.
The Witches	The three witches open the play and later meet Macbeth with prophecies, which impacts Macbeth's life. The witches guide Macbeth on the path of his own destruction.
Hecate	Known as the Head Witch or Goddess of Witchcraft; Hecate is in charge of the three witches. She is angry at the three witches but also hints at Macbeth's downfall at the end of the scene she appears in.
Ross and Lennox	Ross is Macbeth's cousin who, with Lennox, is a Scottish noble. Lennox questions Macbeth and Ross eventually turns his back on Macbeth and sides with Malcolm and Macduff.
Macdonwald	Leader of rebel forces and is killed by Macbeth. Macbeth is praised when Macdonwald is defeated.
Siward	King Duncan's brother and leads the English army against Macbeth. His army distinguishes itself at Birnam Wood. He is a proud father and declares his approval when his son dies in battle.

