



Macbeth: Introductory guide
Rastrick High School 2019-2020
Year 9
Student name:

Introduction

As part of your GCSE studies, you will be learning “Macbeth” - a play by William Shakespeare.

You will be examined on this at the end of year 11. At Rastrick High School, we first study the play at the end of year 9. This is to give you clear understanding of:

- The characters of the play.
- The plot of the play.
- The main themes in the play.
- Key quotes from the play.

Each week, you will be given a new section of the play to study.

The first few pages of this booklet will explain some key ideas, characters and terminology. Please read this information before you begin looking at the story.

Using this booklet

The key sections of this booklet are:

- 1) Characters
- 2) Context
- 3) Terminology
- 4) Plot- this section will be updated weekly with each new act of the plot.

Throughout the booklet, you will find **blue boxes**. These contain short quizzes for you to complete as you go. The answers to these quizzes are at the back of the booklet. **You should write out your answers to these quizzes as well as your answers to any other key questions throughout the booklet.**

At the end of each act, you are expected to complete a short essay. There is also a model essay to help you.

If you have any questions about the information in this booklet, please e-mail your English teacher.

Now, let's look at the key characters in the play.

Characters



Macbeth

The protagonist (main character) of the play. At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is a Thane (Lord) in Scotland. He rules over the area of Glamis. He is later given control of the area of Cawdor as a reward for his bravery from the king. He is well-respected by other Thanes and highly regarded by the king. He leads the Scottish army as a chief general and is considered a great fighter. However, Macbeth is an ambitious man and develops a hunger for power during the play.

Adjectives to describe Macbeth: Brave, ambitious, flawed, naive, guilt-ridden.



Lady Macbeth

Macbeth's wife. Lady Macbeth is presented as a very unusual woman for the time during which the play is set. Whereas most women at the time were expected to do exactly as they were told by their husbands, Lady Macbeth has a lot of control over her husband. She is presented as manipulative and power hungry. She encourages Macbeth to gain power- whatever the cost.

Adjectives to describe Lady Macbeth: Manipulative, ruthless, dominating, ambitious.



King Duncan

Duncan is the King of Scotland at the start of the play. He is a popular and well-loved King. He is known for being a good and fair leader. However, he has an unfortunate habit of trusting the wrong person.

Adjectives to describe Duncan: moral, just, fair, naïve.



Banquo

Macbeth's best friend. Banquo is also a Scottish nobleman and acts a leader in the Scottish army at the beginning of the play.

Adjectives to describe Banquo: loyal, calm, wise, cynical.



The Witches

Three witches who appear throughout the play. The Witches like nothing more than causing chaos and destruction. They take pleasure in manipulating men to perform evil deeds.

Adjectives to describe the witches: evil, manipulative, supernatural.

**Malcolm**

Duncan's first born son. During the play he is made Prince of Cumberland. He is expected to be King after his father dies. He proves himself to be a fair and brave man.

Adjectives to describe Malcolm: loyal, just, intelligent.

**Donalbain**

Duncan's younger son and Malcolm's younger brother.

**Macduff**

The Thane of Fife. Macduff is a Scottish nobleman who is extremely loyal to his King. He is a fierce warrior and a strong believer in justice. He does not trust Macbeth.

Adjectives to describe Macduff: Loyal, brave, moral.

**Lennox**

A Scottish nobleman.

**Ross**

A Scottish nobleman.

**Fleane**

Banquo's son. He is normally presented as a young child during the play.

	<p>Seyton</p> <p>Macbeth's chief servant.</p>
	<p>Siward</p> <p>The Earl of Northumberland. An English nobleman. He is a well-respected soldier and leads the English army during the play.</p>
	<p>Young Siward</p> <p>Siward's son. A skilled fighter.</p>

Please note: As well as the characters listed here, there are a number of servants and minor characters who appear in individual scenes throughout the play.

Please note: You have been provided with adjectives to describe the main characters only.

Comprehension quiz 1

1. What is a Thane?
2. What is the relationship between Duncan and Malcolm?
3. Why is Lady Macbeth such an unusual woman?

Context

Before we study a text, it is important we understand the ideas and environment that influenced the writer. This is called **context**. For example, a story written during the First World War may have been influenced by the context of the war.

So, in this section, we are going to look at a number of historical details which influenced William Shakespeare when he wrote “Macbeth”.

The Jacobean era- This is a phrase you will hear a lot when studying Macbeth. Basically, it means the years 1603-1625. This was the period when James I was the King of England. “Macbeth” was written in 1606, very early in the reign of James I.

James I- James I was the first Scottish King to rule England. He became King after his cousin, Elizabeth I (the last Tudor monarch), died. James I’s last name was Stuart and his descendants would rule England until 1714.

However, he initially wasn’t a very popular King with certain people in England. One reason behind this was because he was Scottish and the English and Scottish had traditionally been enemies. Another reason was because he was a strict Protestant and disliked Catholics. A group of Catholics even tried blowing him up in 1605- this became known as the Gun Powder Plot. It is important to remember that the vast majority of people during the Jacobean era were Christians. Religion was a very important part of life and Christian beliefs shaped a lot of the society’s values.

James I was used to having absolute power in Scotland, whereas in England the King had to have the support of Parliament in order to make laws. Some people think that Shakespeare wrote “Macbeth” in order to show James I what the English expected of a good King.

The Supernatural- During James I’s reign, there was a great deal of interest in the supernatural. In particular, people became interested in witches. The Jacobeans believed that witches existed and that they were servants of the Devil. Witches were often put on trial and burned to death. Unfortunately, we now know that these were just

ordinary women who were normally innocent of any crime. James I was so obsessed with witches that he wrote a book on the subject, "Daemonologie".

Theatre- During this period in history, theatre was a very popular form of entertainment. Shakespeare was the most popular playwright of his day. He was so popular in fact that his theatre company (the group of actors he worked with most often) was sponsored by King James, they became known as The King's Men. Many people think that Shakespeare wrote "Macbeth" because he knew the King would like it and he wanted to impress his new boss.

Scotland- There was a lot of interest in Scotland in the Jacobean period as the new King of England was Scottish. The play "Macbeth" was actually based on a book of Scottish history called "Holinshed's Chronicles" which mentioned a real life Scottish King called Macbeth who ruled in the 11th Century. Shakespeare's play is set at the same time but he made up most of the details.

Natural order- The Jacobeans firmly believed in the idea of "natural order". This basically means that everything has a natural place in the world as chosen by God. So, if you were born poor, God had chosen you to be poor. This meant that the King was chosen by God and so if you challenged the King then you were going against God. This is called the "divine right of kings" meaning that kings can do what they want because they are chosen by God.

Comprehension quiz 2

1. Which country was James I from?
2. Did the Jacobeans believe in witches?
3. What year was Macbeth written?
4. When did the historical Macbeth rule as King in Scotland?
5. What does "the divine right of kings" mean?

Themes

A theme is a main idea or message within a piece of writing or other creative work. For example, if you think back to studying A Christmas Carol in year 7, one of the main themes in this novel was charity.

The main themes you need to be aware of in “Macbeth” are:

Ambition- Throughout the play, Shakespeare shows how Macbeth’s ambition causes problems for himself and others.

Chaos and Order- The witches are characters that cause chaos and this leads to death and violence. On the other hand, a good King is shown to create a sense of order and peace.

Duty- This is an idea closely linked to order. Shakespeare shows how failing in your duty to the King and your country can have disastrous consequences.

Greed- Some people think this play’s main message is about the impact of being greedy for power.

Honour- Throughout the play, Shakespeare shows how the characters who have a strict sense of honour are rewarded.

Leadership- Shakespeare contrasts the leadership style of several characters throughout “Macbeth”. One of the main questions he asks in the play is: what makes an effective King?

Madness- Several characters show signs of madness in the play. This is linked to the chaos caused by the witches’ influence.

The Supernatural- As shown by the disruption caused by the witches.

Trust- Many of the problems in the play are caused by characters betraying the trust of others or appearing to be trustworthy but actually lying.

Violence- Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most violent plays. There are two full battles in the play and several murders.

Comprehension quiz 3

1. Which characters are linked to chaos in the play?
2. What question does the play ask about leadership?

Terminology

In this section, I will explain some key words and phrases which you need to understand before studying the play. If there are any other words you are unsure of, please check a dictionary online or ask your English teacher.

Dramatic terms

Act- A large section of a play. There are 5 acts in a play. The 3rd act of a play acts as a turning point in the action of the play. Each act is made up of several scenes.

Scene-A section of an act based in one location with no break in time. There are several scenes within one act of a play.

Dialogue- Spoken words exchanged by two or more characters.

Soliloquy- A speech where one character expresses their thoughts and feelings to the audience, alone on stage.

Aside- A break in dialogue where a character speaks to the audience. The other characters on stage cannot hear them.

Lines- The unit of measurement of a character's dialogue.

Verse- A line written in poetry. Most of the lines in Shakespeare's plays are written in verse. They have a regular rhythm.

Prose- Any form of language that is not poetry. When a character speaks in prose during a Shakespearean play, it means that they are either working class or their state of mind has changed.

Dramatic irony- When the audience knows or realises something which the characters do not.

Tragic genre

Tragedy- A play about unpleasant events with an unhappy ending. "Macbeth" is a tragedy.

Tragic hero- The main character of a tragedy.

Hamartia- A flaw in the tragic hero's personality. This leads to their downfall and tragic ending at the end of the play. Macbeth's hamartia is his ambition.

Catharsis- The moment when a tragic hero's experiences leads to a release of feelings of pity.

Anagnorisis- The moment when the tragic hero realises what problems their actions have caused.

Peripeteia- A turning point during the play.

English specific terms

Pathetic Fallacy- The use of weather and setting to show the feelings of humans within a text.

Metaphor- A word or phrase which is non-literal/symbolic of something else.

Imagery- Visually descriptive language.

Motif- An idea or symbol which continually appears in a text.

Symbol- an object which is used to represent an idea.

Characterisation- The way a character is presented.

Foreshadowing - A warning or hint that something is going to happen in the future.

Meter- The rhythm in a line of poetry. Most of “Macbeth” is written in iambic pentameter (which means there are 10 beats per line). The exception is the witches who speak in trochaic tetrameter (which means there 8 syllables per line).

Juxtaposition- Placing two things next to each other in order to highlight the contrasts and differences between them.

Inciting incident- The moment in a story when the character is placed into the main drama or narrative.

Callback- When a reference is made to an event or phrase earlier in the story.

Comprehension quiz 4

1. Are Shakespeare’s plays written in mainly verse or prose?
2. What is a scene?
3. What does hamartia mean?
4. What is a motif?
5. What is an inciting incident?

Plot

We will provide you with the notes for each act in the play. Key quotes for each act scene are in bold. Remember to complete your quizzes for each scene and the final essay question.

<u>Methods</u>	<u>Act 1 scene 1</u>	<u>Context</u>
<p>Pathetic fallacy-</p> <p>The play opens with a storm which arguably foreshadows the chaos and violence which will occur in the play.</p> <p>Juxtaposition-</p> <p>“Fair” (goodness) is juxtaposed with “foul” (ugliness).</p>	<p>The play opens with the three witches. They are gathered in a deserted place in the middle of a storm. They discuss when they should next meet and decide they will meet on “the heath” after a battle (“hurlyburly”) has finished, “there to meet Macbeth”. At the end of the scene, the witches chant about how the world is confused and upside down- in their own words “fair is foul and foul is fair.”</p>	<p>The supernatural-</p> <p>The Jacobean audience had a genuine fear of the supernatural and believed in witches. This opening scene would therefore have had a major impact on the audience when the play was first performed.</p>
<p><u>Key questions</u></p> <p>Why do you think Shakespeare opens the play with the witches instead of Macbeth?</p> <p>What is the significance of the phrase “fair is foul and foul is fair”? How does it link to the theme of chaos and order?</p>		

Comprehension quiz 5

1. What does the storm foreshadow about the play?
2. What method is shown in the quote “fair is foul and foul is fair”?
3. Where is Macbeth at the beginning of the play?

<p><u>Methods</u></p> <p>Foreshadowing- The betrayal of the Thane of Cawdor, a man whom King Duncan trusted foreshadows the betrayal of Macbeth later on in the text.</p>	<p><u>Act 1 scene 2</u></p> <p>This scene takes place in the King’s camp near where Macbeth and Banquo have been leading the Scottish army. King Duncan is in the tent with Malcolm, Donalbain and Lennox. They are waiting anxiously for reports about the battle. Macbeth and Banquo are leading an army against the Norwegians who have tried to invade Scotland. The Norwegians have been helped by the Thane of Cawdor, who has betrayed the King.</p> <p>A Captain from the army arrives and tells them how “brave Macbeth” has won the battle against the odds. Duncan is delighted by this news and describes Macbeth as a “worthy gentlemen.”</p> <p>Ross then arrives and explains that the traitor, the Thane of Cawdor has been defeated. Duncan orders Ross to go and “greet” Macbeth with the news that he is now the Thane of Cawdor as a reward for his role in winning the battle.</p>	<p><u>Context</u></p> <p>Titles-Macbeth is already the Thane of Glamis and in this scene he is rewarded by also being made the Thane of Cawdor. This is important within the world in the play as it makes Macbeth the most powerful Thane in Scotland.</p>
<p><u>Key questions</u></p> <p>Why do you think the other characters are so impressed by Macbeth’s violent actions?</p> <p>We have not actually met the character Macbeth yet. We have only heard of him from other characters. Why do you think Shakespeare has done this?</p>		

Comprehension quiz 6

1. Who has betrayed King Duncan?
2. Which country has tried to invade Scotland?
3. Which adjective does the captain use to describe Macbeth?

<u>Methods</u>	<u>Act 1 scene 3</u>	<u>Context</u>
<p>Callback- Macbeth's opening line is similar to the witches' line "fair is foul and foul is fair" from act 1 scene 1. Many people have argued that this shows Macbeth is already being controlled by the witches and that he is under a spell. Alternatively, it could suggest that he is evil in the same way as them.</p> <p>Juxtaposition- This is shown when Macbeth says "cannot be good, cannot be ill" which shows his confused state of mind as he cannot decide how he feels about the</p>	<p>This scene opens with the three witches upon a heath (moor). They share stories of the chaos they have been causing lately including a story about torturing a sailor as punishment for his wife being rude to one of the witches.</p> <p>Macbeth and Banquo then arrive on their way back from the battle. Macbeth's opening line is "so foul and fair a day I have not seen" implying that this is a "fair" day because they have won the battle but is also "foul" because of the weather and the death they have seen. Banquo then sees the witches and Macbeth commands them to speak. The witches say "all hail Macbeth! Hail to thee, the Thane of Glamis!", "all hail Macbeth, hail to thee Thane of Cawdor!" and "all hail Macbeth, thou shalt be King hereafter!"</p> <p>Macbeth is shocked as the witches have told him he is Thane of Cawdor (which is true but he doesn't know it</p>	<p>The supernatural- The Jacobean believed that witches had the power of prophecy (that they could predict the future) and so when the prophecy about Macbeth becoming King would have been taken seriously.</p> <p>Natural order- Macbeth is so horrified at the thought of replacing Duncan because this would mean breaking</p>

<p>news the witches have delivered to him. This is an idea which reappears throughout the text.</p> <p>Personification- Macbeth describes “chance” as a person in this scene. This can be read as Macbeth refusing to take responsibility for his own actions and thoughts, preferring instead to leave it up to chance.</p>	<p>yet) and that he will be King. Banquo commands the witches to tell him his own future and they tell him that he will “get kings” meaning that his children will be kings but he will not. Macbeth shouts at the witches and demands to know more but they disappear into thin air.</p> <p>Macbeth and Banquo begin to discuss the strange things they have just heard when Ross arrives with Angus, another Scottish noble. Ross greets Macbeth and tells him that he is now the Thane of Cawdor.</p> <p>Macbeth is shocked as “two truths are told”- meaning that two of the things the witches have told him have come true. He begins to wonder if the third thing may also be true but the thought of becoming King makes him feel confused and he says as an aside to the audience that these thoughts “cannot be good, cannot be ill”. For him to become King, something would have to happen to Duncan and these thoughts are “horrible imaginings”.</p> <p>Macbeth decides that “if chance will have me King, why chance may crown me” meaning that he is going to leave the future up to “chance”. Macbeth and Banquo then join Ross in going back to see Duncan.</p>	<p>natural order and so going against God’s will. Macbeth knows he would go to hell if he tried to replace the King.</p>
<p><u>Key questions</u></p> <p>1) Why do you think the witches have made these prophecies about Macbeth?</p>		

2) Why is it strange or interesting that Macbeth will become King but then Banquo's children will become kings?

Comprehension quiz 7

1. What do the witches tell Macbeth?
2. What do the witches tell Banquo?
3. How does Macbeth feel about the witches prophecies?

<u>Methods</u>	<u>Act 1 scene 4</u>	<u>Context</u>
<p>Metaphor-</p> <p>Macbeth describes Malcolm as a "step" in this scene. This implies he is becoming ambitious and wishes to climb up in society.</p> <p>When Macbeth asks the "stars" to "hide" their "fires" this can be seen as a metaphor for God as God is associated with light. It is implied that Macbeth doesn't want God to see his</p>	<p>Ross, Macbeth and Banquo arrive back with Duncan's party and Duncan greets them warmly. They all pay their respects to the King and Duncan announces that his son Malcolm is now "Prince of Cumberland" and is officially the heir to the throne.</p> <p>In an aside to the audience, Macbeth describes Malcolm as a "step" which he must jump over or "fall down" on. He then says "stars, hide your fires/let not light see black and deep desires" implying that he is beginning to think about being King but feels guilty about it.</p>	<p>The role of Kings- It was considered important for a King to provide an heir in order to create a peaceful kingdom and stop people fighting for power. This means that Duncan declaring Malcolm his official heir is a very important moment.</p>

<p>“black” and evil thoughts about becoming King.</p>	<p>The group plan to go to Macbeth’s castle in order to celebrate his success.</p>	
<p><u>Key questions</u></p> <p>How has Macbeth’s character already begun to change?</p>		

Comprehension quiz 8

1. What is Malcolm’s new title?
2. How does Macbeth feel about Malcolm’s promotion?

<u>Methods</u>	<u>Act 1 scene 5</u>	<u>Context</u>
<p>Metaphors- “Too full of the milk of human kindness” implies that Macbeth is too womanly and gentle.</p> <p>“Fill me from the crown to the toe top full of direst cruelty” This shows how Lady Macbeth wants to nothing but “cruelty”.</p> <p>“Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it”. This is a complex metaphor. Essentially, Lady Macbeth is telling her husband to try</p>	<p>The action of the play now moves to Macbeth’s castle. We see Lady Macbeth for the first time. She enters the stage while reading a letter from her husband. The letter explains the witches’ prophecy. Lady Macbeth is immediately excited about the idea of her husband becoming King and begins to imagine he is there and speaks to him. She says “I do fear thy nature, it is too full of the milk of human kindness” which means that she thinks Macbeth is too gentle and kind to seize power.</p> <p>She decides she will need to manipulate him in order to get what she wants and asks supernatural “spirits” to “unsex me here and fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of</p>	<p>The supernatural- In this scene Lady Macbeth addresses “spirits” and asks them to possess her. This would be incredibly shocking to a Jacobean audience. She is essentially selling her soul to the devil.</p> <p>Medieval medicine- People used to believe that bodily fluids could change a person’s personality. For example, having too much blood</p>

and trick the king by appearing nice and actually betraying him. This is also reinforced by the symbolism of “**serpents**” which are a symbol for the devil because it was the devil who turned into a serpent and persuaded Eve to eat an apple in the Garden of Eden.

direst cruelty” meaning that she wants the spirits to take away all of her feminine kindness and make her a cruel person. This means she will be ruthless enough to encourage her husband to kill the King.

Macbeth then arrives back at the castle and Lady Macbeth immediately begins trying to persuade him to kill the King. She is delighted about the King coming to the their and tells her husband to “**look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it**” which means that he should look pleasant and friendly but be ready to strike and betray the King.

Macbeth ends the conversation as the King is about to arrive.

could make a person angry. Milk was believed to make people soft and gentle because it was associated with women. So when Lady Macbeth describes her husband as being “**too full of the milk of human kindness**” she is saying that he is too much like a woman.

Key questions

- 1) How is the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth presented in this scene?
- 2) In this scene, Lady Macbeth asks for help from supernatural spirits. Which other characters does this remind you of? Why might Shakespeare have done this?

Comprehension quiz 9

1. Why is Lady Macbeth worried about Macbeth?
2. Who does Lady Macbeth ask to “unsex me here”?
3. What is a “serpent” a symbol of?

<p><u>Methods</u></p> <p>Dramatic irony-</p> <p>The audience knows that Lady Macbeth is actually planning to have Duncan killed whereas he is unaware. So when she is pretending to be welcoming to the King, the audience would view her as a villainous character.</p>	<p><u>Act 1 scene 6</u></p> <p>Duncan, the Scottish lords, and their attendants arrive outside Macbeth's castle. Duncan praises the castle's pleasant environment, and he thanks Lady Macbeth, who has emerged to greet him, for her hospitality calling her an "honoured hostess". She replies that it is her duty to be hospitable since she and her husband owe so much to their king. Duncan then asks to be taken inside to Macbeth, whom he professes to love dearly.</p>	<p><u>Context</u></p> <p>Role of Kings-</p> <p>It was considered a great honour for a Lord to host the King in their castle. This highlights how much Duncan values Macbeth.</p>
<p><u>Key questions</u></p> <p>How is Lady Macbeth presented as an untrustworthy character during this scene?</p>		

<p><u>Comprehension quiz 10</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does dramatic irony mean? 2. How does Duncan feel about Macbeth?
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<p><u>Methods</u></p> <p>Metaphor/imagery-</p> <p>Spur- Here Macbeth uses imagery from horse-riding. A spur is a spike that a rider wears on the back of</p>	<p><u>Act 1 scene 7</u></p> <p>As we begin "Macbeth" Act 1, Scene 7, we find Macbeth pacing by himself as the servants set the dinner table. He's having a few problems with</p>	<p><u>Context</u></p> <p>The role of the host-</p> <p>It was the duty of a host to protect the people staying in their home. This</p>
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their boots in order to make a horse run faster. Here Macbeth uses the image to describe how he has no valid reason for moving forward in killing the King.

“Screw your courage to the sticking place”- Here Lady Macbeth is telling her husband to wind up all his courage like turning a screw until it is as tight as possible. This can be read as an attack on his masculinity as she is saying he needs encouragement to be brave enough to kill the King.

killing King Duncan, and is reconsidering his plan.

The first problem Macbeth has with killing the king is that he knows that such actions have a habit of coming back to haunt the people who do them. He says, **"But in these cases We still have judgement here; that we but teach Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return To plague the inventor."**

Macbeth also has some other, more disturbing problems with killing King Duncan. The first is his kinship, or common bond, and his loyalty to the King. **"I am his kinsman and his subject, strong both against the deed."** As one of King Duncan's loyal generals, Macbeth cannot see himself killing the king.

Macbeth is also King Duncan's host, and that in itself gives him certain responsibility. **"Then, as his host, Who should against his murderer shut the door, Not bear the knife myself."**

Macbeth also considers the fact that King Duncan is very well liked, and that he is a virtuous, or a good and ethical, ruler. Other than his own **“vaulting ambition”**, Macbeth realizes that he has **“no spur”** for killing King Duncan and decides against taking this course of action.

is why Macbeth uses this as a reason against killing the King.

Regicide-

This is the word used for killing a King. It was considered a great sin as it went against natural order and so was a crime against God. Macbeth is therefore fearing for his in this extract.

However, Lady Macbeth then appears and any such fears are dismissed by his wife in the same practical tone that she used in Act I. He is worried that they may **“fail”** but she tells him to **“screw his courage to the sticking place”** and they will not fail. She then reveals her plan for Macbeth to kill Duncan in his sleep after she has made Duncan’s guards drunk so that they fall asleep.

Her taunting of her husband's weakness, coupled with the efficiency of her own plan, convince Macbeth that he should take on the **"horrid deed."**

Key questions

How has Macbeth’s character changed since the start of the act?

Who is most responsible for the King’s murder?

Comprehension quiz 11

1. Give 3 reasons why Macbeth does not want to kill the King.
2. What is Lady Macbeth’s plan?

Formative mini- assessment

How does Shakespeare present the character of Macbeth in Act One of the play?

Model:

At the beginning of the play, Shakespeare presents Macbeth as being easily manipulated by the witches. This is shown by how quickly he begins to think about being King. For example, he is told he will be “King hereafter” in act 1 scene 2 and Shakespeare shows how quickly this leads Macbeth to “black and deep desires”. The imagery used to describe his “desires” shows that Macbeth knows he is wrong and evil to want to be King because he describes them as “black” which has connotations of evil but he still pursues his wishes. This arguably shows how easily he becomes convinced by the supernatural which Shakespeare may have done to show how evil and troublesome the supernatural could be. This was particularly interesting at the time of the text because the Jacobean had a genuine fear of witches.

Use the following structure to help you as you write your own answer to the question above:

What is Macbeth presented as?

How does Shakespeare show this through the text?

Why might Shakespeare have chosen to present Macbeth this way?

You should aim to write at least 3 full paragraphs.

Quiz answers

See below for the answers to the blue box quizzes throughout this booklet. Please only check your answers for quizzes you have completed.

Comprehension quiz 1

1. What is a Thane? **A Scottish Lord.**
2. What is the relationship between Duncan and Malcolm?
Duncan is Malcolm's father.
3. Why is Lady Macbeth such an unusual woman?
She is controlling of her husband.

Comprehension quiz 2

1. Which country was James I from? **Scotland.**
2. Did the Jacobean believe in witches? **Yes.**
3. What year was Macbeth written? **1606**
4. When did the historical Macbeth rule as King in Scotland? **The 11th Century.**
5. What does "the divine right of kings" mean? **Kings have been chosen by God to rule.**

Comprehension quiz 3

1. Which characters are linked to chaos in the play? **The witches.**
2. What question does the play ask about leadership? **What makes an effective leader.**

Comprehension quiz 4

1. Are Shakespeare's plays written in mainly verse or prose? **Verse.**
2. What is a scene? **A section of an act.**
3. What does hamartia mean? **A flaw in the tragic hero's personality.**
4. What is a motif? **A symbol which reappears throughout a text.**
5. What is an inciting incident? **The moment in a story which pushes the main character into the plot.**

Comprehension quiz 5

1. What does the storm foreshadow about the play? **Chaos and violence.**
2. What method is shown in the quote "fair is foul and foul is fair"?
Juxtaposition.
3. Where is Macbeth at the beginning of the play? **In a battle.**

Comprehension quiz 6

1. Who has betrayed King Duncan? **The Thane of Cawdor**
2. Which country has tried to invade Scotland? **Norway**
3. Which adjective does the captain use to describe Macbeth? **Brave**

Comprehension quiz 7

1. What do the witches tell Macbeth? **That he will be King**
2. What do the witches tell Banquo? **That his children will be Kings.**
3. How does Macbeth feel about the witches prophecies? **Confused/uneasy.**

Comprehension quiz 8

1. What is Malcolm's new title? **The Prince of Cumberland**
2. How does Macbeth feel about Malcolm's promotion? **He sees Malcolm as a challenge/threat to his own ambitions**

Comprehension quiz 9

1. Why is Lady Macbeth worried about Macbeth? **She is concerned he is too gentle.**
2. Who does Lady Macbeth speak to when she is alone? **Spirits.**
3. What is a "serpent" a symbol of? **The devil.**

Comprehension quiz 10

1. What does dramatic irony mean? **It is when the audience knows something which the character doesn't.**
2. How does Duncan feel about Macbeth? **He loves him dearly.**

Comprehension quiz 11

1. Give 3 reasons why Macbeth does not want to kill the King.
He is the King's host, he is the King's general, the King is a kind man.
2. What is Lady Macbeth's plan?
To get the King's guards drunk so that Macbeth can kill the King in his sleep.

