

Why are we studying this play?

It forms part of your GCSE in English Literature – Paper 1
Shakespeare is an important part of our literary heritage. His plays are important and universal: they explore a lot about what it means to be a human being. His plays are ‘canonical’ which means it is believed he is an important writer to study.

Knowledge Organiser for Macbeth

Year 11 September – December 2022

Why now?

Use your knowledge of how to analyse Literature (Y10)
Use your knowledge of how plays are written, structured and performed from AIC (Y10)
Develop your analysis of analysing an older text, with more archaic language, just like you did in A.C.C (Y10)
Develop your knowledge of a Shakespeare play in depth

Key Words / Allusions

Patrilineal (pa-truh-li-nee-uhl)



Descent through the father's bloodline

Patriarchal (pay-tree-aa-kl)



A society where men are more dominant than women

Regicide (reh-ju-side)



The murder of a monarch

Divine Right of Kings



The idea the monarch is God's representative on earth

Jacobean (ja-kuh-bee-un)



Refers to the time James I was king

Prophecy (pro-fuh-see)



A prediction

Apparition (a-puh-ri-shn)



Something from the supernatural – a ghostly vision

Infanticide



The murder of a child

Tragedy



A genre – where the hero is someone who dies

Subversive



Challenging the natural order of things

Tarquin (tar-kwin)



An ancient king of Rome said to have murdered his wife and brother for the crown

Neptune



Roman god of the sea

Mars



The Roman god of War

Duplicitous (dew-pliss-i-tuss)



Means to be two-faced

Act 1 Key Events

- Witches meet Macbeth & Banquo. They predict Macbeth will be king. Banquo will be the father of kings
- Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth to murder Duncan.
- After some doubt, Macbeth agrees.

Act 2 Key Events

- Lady Macbeth is anxious for Macbeth to return from murdering Duncan. When he does, he is traumatised and feels guilty.
- A porter at the door to the castle is drunk, and gives a commentary on peoples' sinful nature.
- Duncan's body is discovered.

Act 3 Key Events

- Macbeth is king. Banquo is suspicious that Macbeth killed Duncan.
- Macbeth plots to have Banquo and Fleance killed. He is worried they are a threat to him. Hitmen kill Banquo, but Fleance escapes.
- The Ghost of Banquo haunts Macbeth at a state banquet

Act 4 Key Events

- Macbeth is worried so goes to the witches. They say he is safe: until Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane, and no man of woman born can harm Macbeth. They warn him of Macduff though.
- Meanwhile, Macduff has gone to Malcolm (King Duncan's son) to ask him to return to Scotland with an army.
- Macbeth has Macduff's family killed.

Act 5 Key Events

- Lady Macbeth goes mad with guilt and paranoia.
- Macbeth has fully succumbed to tyranny.
- Lady Macbeth commits suicide (off stage)
- The army advance in camouflage from Birnam wood.
- Macduff confront and battles Macbeth. He says he was born of caesarean (therefore not born the 'natural' way). He kills Macbeth
- Malcolm becomes king of Scotland.

Core Literary Term

Definition

Soliloquy

A speech revealing the thoughts and feelings of a character.

Metaphor

Using one thing to represent something else.

Foreshadowing

A suggestion or hint of something to come.

Dramatic gap

A detail or event that the writer chooses not to include, leaving the reader/ audience to imagine

Allegory

A piece of literature that is rich in symbolism, that has a moral point to it.

Imagery

The words, phrases writers use to put a picture in the mind of the reader or audience.

Some questions

Shakespeare asks:


- Are all humans capable of terrible things?
- Does good always overcome evil?
- Are we in control of our own destiny or are there other forces at play?
- What does it mean to be a man, or manly?
- What are the qualities of good leadership/monarchs

Macbeth Scotland Map



Key characters


Macbeth
A loyal general in King Duncan's army, he is transformed by the words of the witches and his own ambition into a murdering traitor.



King Duncan
A good, kind King whose country is attacked by foreign enemies and betrayed by traitors. He is murdered by Macbeth, his cousin and general.



The Porter
The keeper of Macbeth's castle. He is a witty, comic character who eases the tension after the murder with his humorous drunken comments.



Malcolm
King Duncan's son - a clever honourable young man who, sensing danger, flees to England to raise an army and returns to Scotland to claim his rightful place as King.




Fleance
Banquo's young son who escapes death thanks to his father's bravery and will be father to a line of Scottish Kings, fulfilling the Witches' last prophecy.




The Witches
Evil creatures who speak in riddles, use foul magic potions and aim to destroy all goodness in Scotland. They are defeated by the power of good and true people.



Lady Macbeth
The wife of Macbeth whose ambition makes her drive her husband to murder the King but who is then destroyed by her own guilt.




Banquo
A great soldier and a loyal lord, he is a friend of Macbeth but a threat to him by his goodness and knowledge. He is murdered on Macbeth's orders.



The Murderers
Ordinary men fallen on hard times, they are tricked by Macbeth into murdering Banquo and Macduff's family.




Macduff
A loyal, brave and clever lord, he is suspicious of Macbeth. He flees to England too late to save his family from murder. He returns to claim vengeance by killing Macbeth.



Macduff's Family
Murdered by Macbeth's followers even though they were good, innocent and posed no threat to the evil Macbeth.



Siward
The leader of the English army who sends a ten-thousand-strong army to defeat Macbeth. He loses his son, Young Siward, to Macbeth in the battle.



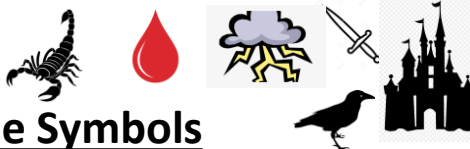
SOME CONTEXTS

- James I was fascinated by witches and witchcraft.
- The Gunpowder Plot, an attempt to blow up parliament and assassinate King James, was discovered in 1605.
- The play was written in **1606**, but is set in **1040**. In 1606, the dominant religion was Christianity. There was a firm belief in God.
- The play is a tragedy.
- The play is set in Scotland

Advanced Literary Terminology

FLAW A character trait that leads to the character's downfall
ANAGNOROSIS The moment of realisation for the hero: they see the error they made – but it is too late (an-ag-noro-sis)
PERIPITEIA This is the change in fortune the tragic hero experiences (pe-rip-i-tay-a)
EQUIVOCATION This is 'coded' language, language with hidden meaning. It is important in the play in the context of plotting, and trying to keep plans for murder hidden. (e-kwiv-a-kay-shun)
HAMARTIA This is a word that means the hero's 'flaw' (ham-ar-shar)
HUBRIS is excessive levels of pride – that borders the arrogant. This contributes to their downfall (hew-bris)
A PARADOX is a contradicting idea
FOIL are contrasts: contrasting characters, values or ideas. Banquo is the moral foil, to Macbeth
EUPHEMISM is when language is used in a softer way, to make something seem less harsh
ANTITHESIS is opposites. 'On' / 'off'. Antithesis to 'boy' is 'girl'
A SYMBOL Something that represents a bigger idea
CATHARSIS A release of emotions from the audience – usually aroused by pity and fear

Some Symbols



Key Quotations

Fair is foul and foul is fair (The Witches, Act 1)	Is this a dagger which I see before me? (Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 1)
Brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name (Captain, Act 1)	Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? (Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2)
I do fear thy nature; it is too full of the milk of human kindness (Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5)	My hands are of your colour (Lady Macbeth Act 2 Scene 2)
Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it (Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5)	Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown and a barren sceptre in my gripe (Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 2)
Unsex me here! Fill me...full of direst cruelty (Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5)	We have scorched the snake not killed it (Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 2)
I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition which overleaps itself (Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7)	O full of scorpions is my mind (Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 2)
I have given suck and know how tender tis to love the babe that milks me (Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7)	None of woman born shall harm Macbeth (Witches, Act 4 Scene 1)
Out damned spot! (Lady Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 1)	Out, out brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow (Lady Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 5)
Life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. (Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 5)	Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped (Macduff, Act 5 Scene 8)