**Macbeth: a** captain in Duncan's army, later the Thane (Lord) of Glamis and Cawdor. When Three Witches predict that he will one day be king of Scotland, he takes his fate into his own hands, allowing his ambition and that of his wife to overcome his better judgement. His bloody reign culminates in a battle against Malcolm and the English forces.

**Lady Macbeth: t**he devilish wife of Macbeth, whose ambition helps to drive her husband toward the desperate act of murder. Subsequently, her husband's cruelty and her own guilt recoil on her, sending her into a madness from which she never recovers.

**Banquo: a** fellow-captain and companion of Macbeth, who also receives a prophecy from the Witches: that his children will one day succeed to the throne of Scotland. This information is sufficient to spell his death at the hands of the resentful Macbeth, who is later haunted by Banquo's ghost.

**Duncan King of Scotland**: his victories against rebellious kinsmen and the Norwegians have made him a popular and honoured king. His decision to pass the kingdom to his son Malcolm provokes his untimely death at the hands of Macbeth.

**Fleance Banquo's son**, who, by escaping Macbeth's plot on his life, will go on to be father to a line of kings.

**Donalbain and Malcolm Duncan's two sons:** fearful of implication in their father's murder, they flee Scotland, Donalbain to Ireland and Malcolm to England, where he raises a large army with the intention of toppling the tyrant Macbeth.

**Macduff A thane (nobleman) of Scotland** who discovers the murdered King Duncan. Suspecting Macbeth and eventually turning against him, Macduff later flees to England to join Malcolm. When Macbeth arranges the murder of his wife and children, Macduff swears personal revenge.

**Lennox, Ross, Menteth, Angus, Caithness Thanes of Scotland,** all of whom eventually turn against the tyrannical Macbeth.

**The Porter, the Old Man, the Doctors Three commentators on events**, all of whom have a certain degree of wisdom and foresight. The Porter hints at the Hell-like nature of Macbeth's castle; the Old Man associates the murder of King Duncan with the instability of the natural world; the Doctors recognize disease and disorder even though they cannot cure it.

**The Witches**: three agents of Fate who reveal the truth (or part of it) to Macbeth and Banquo and who later appear to confirm the downfall and tragic destiny of the tyrannical Macbeth.