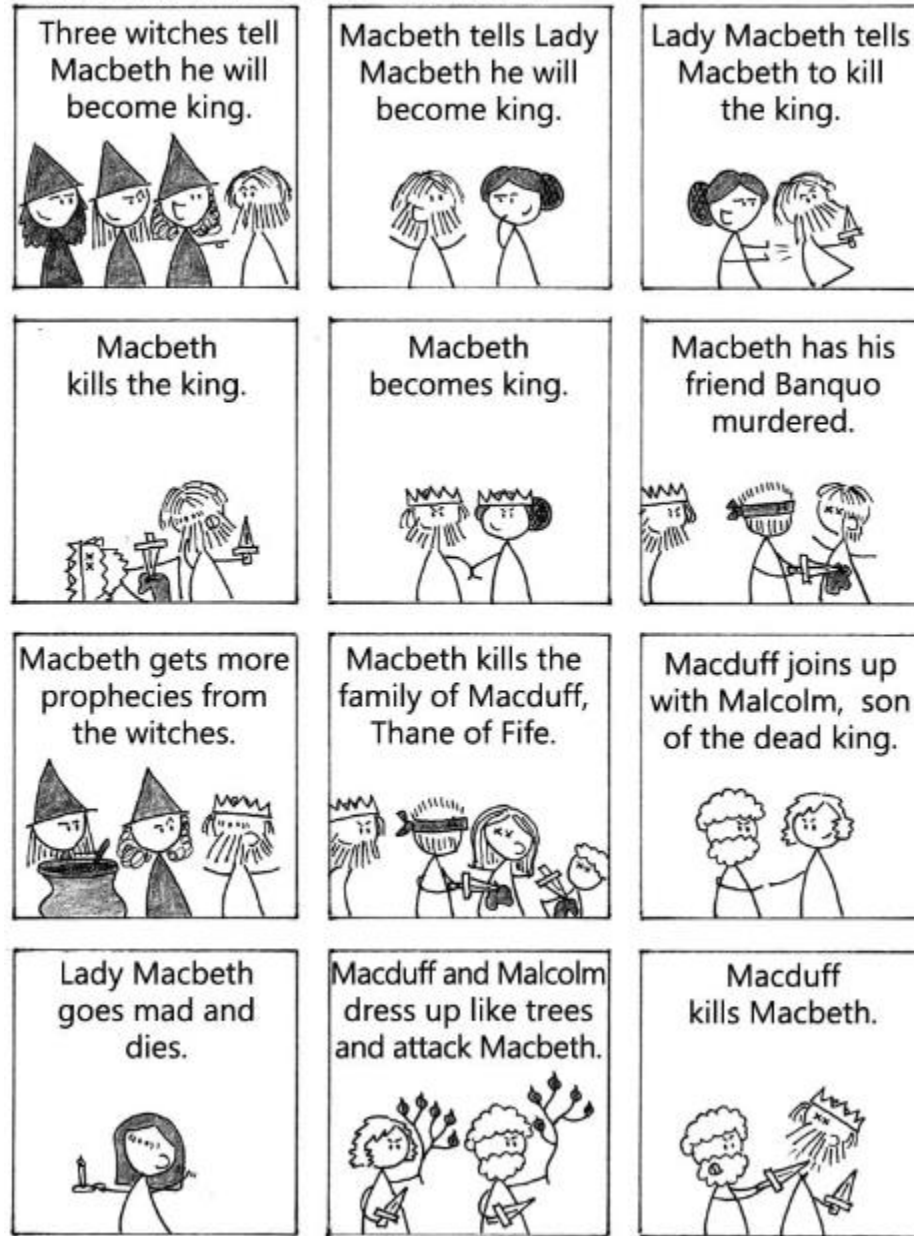


# MACBETH

## MACBETH: ONE PAGE SUMMARY



# GCSE

### Act One Scene One

The three witches plan to meet Macbeth after he has finished fighting, but before the sun sets.

The theme of reality and appearance is started as "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" this sets the scene as the reality of the play will be unfairness and foul play.

### Act One Scene Two

The Scottish army is led by Macbeth. Duncan is impressed with Macbeth and decides to make him Thane of Cawdor.

Shakespeare foreshadows Macbeth's death as "he fixed his (traitors) head upon our battlements" The quote is given because Macbeth beheads a traitor on the battlefield, this is ironic as he dies for been a traitor.

Macbeths, as a character, is rewarded for "Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe" this is ironic as his violence is seen as a flaw which causes the dramatic fall within the tragic hero ladder.

Macbeth is given the title thane of cawdor "and with his former title greet Macbeth"

### Act One Scene Three

Macbeth and Banquo meets with the witches, they predict that Macbeth will be the thane of cawdor and then king. They also predict that Banquo's descendants will become king as well. They then get greeted with Rose and Angus which they greet Macbeth with the title of Thane of Cawdor.

Shakespeare uses dramatic Irony as the second witch says "hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor" we already know this yet Macbeth doesn't.

The recurring theme of Reality and Appearance is present here as Macbeth and Banquo asked repeatedly questions; this shows confusion.

### Act One Scene Four

Duncan thanks Macbeth and Banquo for their services. Duncan makes Malcom heir to the throne. Macbeth considers murdering Duncan so he can become king.

Shakespeare uses the theme of Reality and appearance as Duncan says "there's no art to find the minds construction in the face" this shows that people seem good yet they might not be. This is ironic as he also misjudges Macbeth.

Duncan says he has "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour to make thee full of growing" Plants fight for ground and territory to grow and be successful, therefore it foreshadows a fight between Duncan and Macbeth for hierarchy.

### Act One Scene Five

Lady Macbeth reads the letter that contains what the witches' prophecies. She then begins to plot the murder of the king. Then Macbeth arrives and they plan to kill Duncan that evening.

Macbeth "is too full of 'th'milk of human kindness". The word mild connotes to a child needing their mother to nurture them and look after them. This shows that Lady Macbeth doesn't think that Macbeth will be able to do it without hesitation or on his own.

Shakespeare uses the theme of supernatural to bring power to Lady Macbeth. "Come you spirits" "make thick my blood, stop up th'access and passage my remorse" this means she calls on the spirits to thicken her blood so she can't feel remorse.

Flattery is used to manipulate Macbeth "worthy Cawdor" this is used to change Macbeth ways of thinking so Lady Macbeth can manipulate him to kill Duncan.

The theme reality and appearance "look like th'innocent flower, but be the serpent under't" this is powerful imagery as it shows that contrasts an innocent flower to a poisonous and dangerous serpent.

### Act One Scene Six

Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle, they act very pleasant and welcoming to hide the fact that they plan to murder him.

Shakespeare uses irony as Duncan comments on how "pleasant" their castle is yet that is where they are going to kill him. And "honoured hostess!" backs up the point.

They act like Duncan's "servant" and "every point twice done and then done doubled"

### Act One Scene Seven

Macbeth sees that Duncan is a good man he also doesn't see how he will get away with murdering. Yet Lady Macbeth convinces him to proceed to make it look like the guards have done it.

Shakespeare uses foreshadow to foreshadow the death of Macbeth as he knows "which been taught, return and plague th'inventor" this shows that he knows what will happen if he proceeds this makes his action seem worst to the audience as he knows his wrong doing and the consequences.

"Poisoned chalice" is a great contrast as a chalice is beautiful yet it is bad for you. Macbeth knows this and relates this to his situation. It makes killing the king worst as he knows that it is wrong.

Macbeth realises he is a good king and his "virtues will plead like angels" because he is such a good king.

Macbeth has "no spur to prick the sides of my intent" this shows he has nothing to push him to do this deed yet he will see the dagger later on which he present as a sign to kill Duncan.

Macbeth says he "will proceed no further in this business" yet she says he is "like the poor cat I'th'adage" this means he is like a cat that wants the fish yet doesn't want to get its paw wet. It is just like Macbeth doesn't want to get his hands dirty yet he wants to be king.

Lady Macbeth also uses guilt to manipulate Macbeth, if she promised Macbeth to "dash the brains out" of her baby. This makes him feel guilty him as we can only presume they had a baby that died, this could also be the cause of her acting up in an unsociable way.

### Act Two Scene One

Banquo and his son, Fleance, are walking together. Macbeth meets with them and they talk about the witches' predictions. When they leave, Macbeth sees a dagger, he sees this as a sign to kill Duncan. At the end of this scene he leaves to kill Duncan.

The theme of reality is again presented here. "My eyes are made the fools o' the other senses" this shows he is aware that this may not be real yet he still kills Duncan showing he is easily manipulated. This makes the dead seem a lot worse.

Contextually, religion plays a big part in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. "Hear it or not, Duncan; for it is a knell that summons thee to heaven or hell" this means if Duncan can hear the bells, it summons him to heaven and hell. This is significant as Macbeth now's the difference between heavens and hell so he knows what he is going to do is wrong consequently he will go to hell.

### Act Two Scene Two

Macbeth has killed Duncan and he's overcome with guilt. In his confusion he returns still holding the daggers. Lady Macbeth takes them back to Duncan's room and smears the servants with blood to make them seem guilty. They end up with blood on their hands.

Lady Macbeth finds courage when people are weak "That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold" This shows she can only have power by preying on the weak.

Lady Macbeth seems like a pure evil character however she does have bounds as we see this as "had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done't" this shows she will struggle to get over the guilt of what she encountered with her father.

Out of anger, Lady Macbeth calls Macbeth "infirm of purpose" the plosive sound shows the anger and the active nature.

Macbeth metaphorically thinks that Neptune's ocean will not wash the blood away from his hand "The multitudinous seas incarnadine making the green one red" this shows how infectious and big impact on other characters and situations, also it foreshadow the mass impact leading to the great fall of Macbeth

### Act Two Scene Three

The scene begins with the porter, who provides some dark comic relief from the body of chaos of the previous scene and before the uproar of the discovery of Duncan's body. Duncan's son Malcom and Donalbain decide to run away because they believe that they will be murdered.

There is a repetition of short sentences to show how tense Macbeth is trying not to give away what happened, this quickens the pace as well as increasing tension for the audience.

The theme of reality and appearance requires here as Macduff doesn't think "Tis not for you to hear what is speak" about Duncan's death. This is ironic as she played a significant part in the murder creating irony.

Lady Macbeth faints to distract everyone from suspecting Macbeth of any suspicious actions. Contextually this is the only way she can have some sort of power in this patriarchal society because there are many powerful men in the room and she can't tell Macbeth what to say so she stops everyone from saying anything at all.

The theme of reality and appearance is also present here when Donalbain says "There's daggers in men's smile" this echoes what "look like the th'innocent flower but be the serpent under't"

### Act Two Scene Four

Ross and an old man discuss what happened since Duncan's death. Macduff comes in and says that Malcom and Donalbain are under suspicion as they have ran away which leaves Macbeth to be king.

Theme of Kingship is present here as the old man has realised that Macbeth may have had something to do with it as "Tis said they eat each other" this means that Duncan's fall and Macbeth's rise have opposite nature therefore it raises suspicion.

### Act Three Scene One

Banquo suspects that Macbeth killed Duncan so Macbeths feels insecure. He decides to kill Banquo and Fleance (Banquo's son) as he is afraid that he will be next to heirs.

The theme of reality is present here as Macbeth flatters Banquo by saying "Here's our chief guest" he then ask if "you ride this afternoon" this is to find out his whereabouts so he can be killed.

The theme of fate is also present here as Macbeth challenges fate as if he can fight it "Rather than so, come fate into the list. And champion me to the utterance"

Shakespeare uses rhyming couplets to emphasise how decisive he is feeling "it is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's fight, if it finds heaven, must find it out tonight"

### Act Three Scene Two

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is feeling insecure in their position as king and queen. Macbeth feels guilty about Duncan's murder however he starts to hint that he is going to kill Banquo.

Lady Macbeth uses rhyming couplets; this is to help her create and emphasise how she is feeling. "Tis safer to be that which we destroy than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy" her voice changes at the end as Macbeth walks in to act strong.

Macbeth envies the escape of Duncan's worries of been a king, "Duncan is in his grave; after life's fitful fever he sleeps well"

Shakespeare also foreshadows the upraise of the English army and Macbeth's rebellion "Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing can touch him further"

The theme of the supernatural is present here as the mention of dark and unpleasant creatures such as "beetles", "scorpions", "crow" "bat" they all connotes to supernatural such as the crow which connotes death.

### Act Three Scene Three

Macbeth sends another murderer to join the first two, they await outside the palace to kill Banquo and Fleance and they kill Banquo but leaves Fleance to escape.

The fact that Macbeth sends a 3<sup>rd</sup> murderer shows how insecure he is.

"Fleance escapes" is set on its own line to emphasise how important and significant as the predictions of the witches still may come true.

### Act Three Scene Four

Macbeth is having a feast with the thanes, one of the first murderers informs Macbeth that Banquo has been killed yet Fleance has escaped. Banquo's spirit visits Macbeth and terrifies him.

Theme of reality is present here; "play the humble host" they think he is humble yet he has set someone to kill one of his guest.

After the murderer has informed Macbeth he feels "cabined, cribbed, and confined" the rule of 3 with alteration shows how trapped he feels. This is because he understands the witches' prophecy is likely to come true.

The stage direction "enter the ghost of Banquo" create suspense as at first Macbeth doesn't notice it.

When Lady Macbeth speaks she uses a lot of imperatives to try take back control of the situation. "Sit...pray...feed"

Lady Macbeth also flatters the thanes "worthy friends...noble friends" this is to try gain the control of the thanes and make Macbeth realise how important that feast is.

Lady Macbeth also mocks his manliness by saying "Are you a man?" "What, quite unmanned in folly" this is to try snap Macbeth out of the ghost appearance.

The theme of the supernatural is present here as "they will rise again" which will disrupt the natural order of life the same way Macbeth has done it by killing everyone in his path.

Macbeth isn't afraid to face his enemies yet he is scared as he can't fight a ghost "take any shape but that and my firm nerves shall never tremble" this means don't stay as a ghost as I can't fight what I can't see.

### Act Three Scene Five

Hecate is annoyed that the witches spoke to Macbeth without consulting her, she tells them to meet her at the pit of Acheron to tell Macbeth his future. She is going to make an evil spell that will destroy him.

"He shall spurn fate" this means he shall reject fate therefore he thinks he can change his destiny. We could say this is his downfall. This also represents the theme of fate and freewill.

### Act Three Scene Six

Lennox suspects Macbeth of being behind the murders of Duncan and Banquo however he doesn't want to say this openly, instead he hints it with sarcastic comments. A lord tells him that Malcolm and Macduff are in England and getting an army together.

Shakespeare uses a rhetorical question to imply that the answer to the question is opposite to what he is suggesting "To kill their gracious father?"

Even small characters such as Lennox and lord hate Macbeth which shows his discontent and how it has affected everyone.

### Act Four Scene One

Macbeth visits the witches where they made 3 different apparitions. One prophecy told Macbeth to be careful of Macduff so he decides to kill Macduff.

Rhyming couplets are used to emphasise how Macbeth has changed from being an honourable hero to "something wicked" ("by the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes")

"An armed head" could foreshadow the beheading of Macbeth in act 5 scene 8

The stage directions of the spirits "descending" could suggest that they are returning to hell.

"From this moment, the very firstlings of my heart shall be the firstling of my hand" this shows he will not hesitate to act which is a contrast from how he hesitated about killing Duncan in act 1 scene 7.

#### Act Four Scene Two

Rosse has come to see lady Macduff and they talk why Macduff has left his family to go to England. After Rosse leaves the murderers break in and kill lady Macduff and her children

"How will you do for a husband?" "Why, I can buy me twenty at any market" the jokes at such a dull time shows how they contrast to lady Macbeth "dashing the brains out" of her own child.

"Young fry of treachery" shows how young they are, it makes Macbeth's decision seem more shocking

#### Act Four Scene Three

Macduff is in England to see Malcom and to persuade him to come back to Scotland. Malcom thinks that Macduff might be a spy so he tests Macduff's loyalty by saying terrible things about himself. Rosse enters and tells Macduff that his family has been murdered

"Angels are bright still though the brightest fell" this means that it is hard to tell who is good and who is bad, this echoes Duncan in act 1 scene 4.

The theme of loyalty and betrayal is present here as Malcom tests Macduff's loyalty. He claims that he will be a terrible king and Scotland will be wrong under his rule.

Kingship is presented here as Malcom describes the bad traits of a king "deceitful, malicious, false" and the good traits "mercy, courage, patience"

Shakespeare builds tension as Rosse has to bring Macduff the news of the death "why, well." Without getting straight to the point.

Macduff repeats questions which shows his confusion and is shocked "all my pretty one, did you say all"

#### Act Five Scene One

A woman and a doctor observe Lady Macbeth sleepwalking. She dreams about the night where they murdered Duncan.

Lady Macbeth is not dominant any more, she is scared of the dark so "she has light by her continually. 'Tis her command" this shows how weak she is, she is even scared of the dark.

She dreams that she can't get out "the damned spot" of blood. Even a small spot is affecting her.

#### Act Five Scene Two

The Scottish thanes are talking about the arrival of the English army. They don't like Macbeth. They plan to meet the English army at Birnam wood.

### **Act Five Scene Three**

Macbeth hears about the army coming to attack him but he isn't afraid because he remembers the prophecies made by the apportions. Macbeth also speaks to the doctor and he says he can't cure Lady Macbeth's disease.

Even though Macbeth is confident he still has some doubts as he said he "has lived long enough" this shows he knows the end is soon.

The repetition of the call for Seyton shows that Macbeth isn't in control and that the atmosphere is panic and there is disorder in the castle.

Macbeth is nervous as he asks "put my armour on" and then asks "Pull't off, I say" This shows he is also anxious and troubled.

### **Act Five Scene Four**

This English army organises itself for battle- Malcom tells everyone to cut down a branch to hide behind. Malcom, Macduff and Siward talk about the rumours of Macbeth's soldier abandoning him.

Lennox and Rosse who was originally at the banquet scene are on the other side. This shows how everyone has deserted Macbeth.

### **Act Five Scene Five**

Macbeth is waiting for the English army to attack his castle yet he is still not scared. He then finds out that Lady Macbeth is dead. He decides to fight against his enemy.

After Macbeth is informed of Lady Macbeth's death he starts to change his attitude. He starts to talk sad and cynical.

Macbeth is tired "of the sun" he doesn't seem to care if he lives or dies.

### **Act Five Scene Six**

Malcolm orders the soldiers to throw down their branches and reveal themselves. He then begins the attack on Macbeth's castle.

Shakespeare uses short sentences in this scene to quicken the pace and build tension.

### **Act Five Scene Seven**

Macbeth fights and kills young Siward, before he exists. Macduff enters looking for Macbeth, he is determined to be the one who kills him.

The stage direction "they fight" reminds us that Macbeth is a great warrior as we see in act one scene two.

The repetition of "exit" and "enter" stage directions creates confusion and shows how much is happening.

### **Act Five Scene Eight**

Macbeth and Macduff meet face to face. Macbeth finds out that Macduff wasn't born of a woman as she had a C-section but Macbeths fights him anyway.



Macduff is a warrior as his "voice is my sword" this shows that he is a soldier and lets his sword do all the talking.

Macbeth is presented at the end as the brave hero which reminds us of what he was like at the beginning of the play. He will fight because he will not "kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet." This shows that he would rather die than be humiliated.

### **Act Five Scene Nine**

Siward finds out that Macbeth has killed his son, but he is happy that his son died bravely. Macduff enters with Macbeth's head. Malcolm becomes king and he rewards everyone who fought with him.

At the start of the play we see Macbeth behead a traitor on the battle field. This is ironic as that is how Macbeth dies too.

At the end things are how they should be. The king is "graced by grace" showing that he is not evil.

Now let's start to practise responding to character based questions. Here is our first practice extract, taken from Act 3 Scene 4.

**MACBETH**

Here had we now our country's honour roofed,  
Were the graced person of our Banquo present,  
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness  
Than pity for mischance.

**ROSS**

His absence, sir,  
Lays blame upon his promise. Please 't your highness  
To grace us with your royal company?

**MACBETH**

The table's full.

**LENNOX**

Here is a place reserved, sir.

**MACBETH**

Where?

**LENNOX**

Here, my good lord. What is 't that moves your highness?

**MACBETH**

Which of you have done this?

**LORDS**

What, my good lord?

**MACBETH**

(to **GHOST**) Thou canst not say I did it.  
Never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.

**ROSS**

Gentlemen, rise. His highness is not well.

**LADY MACBETH**

Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus  
And hath been from his youth. Pray you, keep seat  
The fit is momentary; upon a though  
He will again be well. If much you note him,  
You shall offend him and extend his passion.  
Feed and regard him not (*aside to **MACBETH***) Are you a man?

**MACBETH**

Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
Which might appall the devil.

**LADY MACBETH**

O proper stuff!  
This is the very painting of your fear.  
This is the air-drawn dagger which you said  
Led you to Duncan. Oh, these flaws and starts,  
Imposters to true fear, would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authorized by her grandma. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all's done,  
You look but on a stool.

**MACBETH**

Prithee, see there! Behold! Look! Lo!  
How say you?  
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.  
If charnel houses and our graves must send  
Those that we bury back, our monuments  
Shall be the maws of kites.

*Exit GHOST*

**LADY MACBETH**

What, quite unmanned in folly?

**MACBETH**

If I stand here, I saw him.

**LADY MACBETH**

Fie, for shame!

Here is the associated question:

(a) Explain how Shakespeare presents the character of Lady Macbeth

- Consider how she is presented in this extract.
- Consider how she is presented in the play.
- 

Use **evidence** from the extract to support your answer.

Here are some of the points the examiners expect you to make:

- ✓ Lady Macbeth takes control and tries to reassure
- ✓ She tries to keep guests calm 'sit worth friends'
- ✓ She excuses Macbeth's behaviour to the guests 'my lord is often thus'
- ✓ She responds quickly to the situation 'if much you note him you shall offend him'
- ✓ She is unsympathetic to Macbeth 'o proper stuff!'
- ✓ She tries to shame him to bring him back to reality 'are you a man'
- ✓ Her reference to Duncan shows she is conscious of the precarious position Macbeth is in after the murder.

Make notes on how each of the following theme is seen in the play.

	Notes about how it is presented in Macbeth
Ambition	
Masculinity	
Kingship and power	

**Supernatural**

**Violence –  
murder**

**Guilt and fears**

**Prophecies**

## **Extract 2 – Act 3 Scene 1**

**Enter Banquo**

**BANQUO**

Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
As the weird women promised, and I fear  
Thou played'st most foully for 't. Yet it was said  
It should not stand in thy posterity,  
But that myself should be the root and father  
Of many kings. If there come truth from them—  
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—  
Why, by the verities on thee made good,  
May they not be my oracles as well,  
And set me up in hope? But hush, no more.

In this extract, Banquo talks of the witches prophecies.

Explore the significance of the prophecies in the part of the play. You should comment on

- How prophecies are presented in this extract.
- How prophecies are presented across the whole play.

## Extract 3 – Act 3 Scene 1

**MACBETH**

Well then, now  
Have you considered of my speeches? Know  
That it was he, in the times past, which held you  
So under fortune, which you thought had been  
Our innocent self. This I made good to you  
In our last conference, passed in probation with you,  
How you were borne in hand, how crossed, the instruments,  
Who wrought with them, and all things else that might  
To half a soul and to a notion crazed  
Say, "Thus, Banquo."

**FIRST MURDERER**

You made it known to us.

**MACBETH**

I did so, and went further, which is now  
Our point of second meeting. Do you find  
Your patience so predominant in your nature  
That you can let this go? Are you so gospelled  
To pray for this good man and for his issue,  
Whose heavy hand hath bowed you to the grave  
And beggared yours forever?

**FIRST MURDERER**

We are men, my liege.

(b) In this extract, Macbeth talks with the murderers about his ambition to murder Banquo

Explore the significance of ambition in the play. You should comment on

- How ambition is presented in this extract.
- How ambition is presented to influence characters throughout the play.