

Macbeth Revision Booklet

Plot

1. While returning from a battle victory, Macbeth, a powerful lord, meets three Witches who predict that he will become King of Scotland.
2. Macbeth tells his wife of the Witches' predictions, and she encourages him to murder the current king, Duncan, who is staying with them as a guest.
3. After Macduff discovers the murder, Duncan's sons flee the country, leaving the way clear for Macbeth to become king.
4. Banquo, Macbeth's best friend, becomes suspicious of what his friend has done so Macbeth has him murdered too.
5. Macbeth pays a second visit to the Witches and receives more predictions.
6. In England, Malcolm (Duncan's elder son) and his chief supporter, Macduff, plan to invade Scotland to win back the throne.
7. An enraged Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed; Macduff swears revenge.
8. Lady Macbeth suffers from guilt for what she has done and eventually commits suicide.
9. Malcolm's invasion is successful and Macduff kills Macbeth.
10. Malcolm becomes the new King of Scotland and the country counts the cost of Macbeth's short but bloody reign.

Key Characters

- Macbeth
- Lady Macbeth
- Macduff
- Banquo
- Witches
- Duncan
- (Malcolm)

Key characteristics (Clear Focus)

Macbeth	Loyal to Duncan at first, warrior, ambitious, tyrannical, ruthless, brutal, hubristic, conflicted
Lady Macbeth	Manipulative, determined, ambitious, emasculating, controlling, wicked, vulnerable at the end
Macduff	Aggressive, loyal, passionate, vengeful, patriotic, Foil to Macbeth
Banquo	Loyal, virtuous, steadfast, valiant, ghastly/hideous/terrifying as ghost
Witches	Malevolent, prophetic, sinister, devious, evil/supernatural, cunning
Duncan	Paternal, honourable, generous, Kingly, humble
Malcolm	Virtuous, cautious, fearful to courageous, trustworthy

Writer's Intentions

To highlight the political instability of the Jacobean period and to solidify King James' reign

- In 1605, there was a famous attempt to commit regicide kill King James. This was the Gunpowder plot.
- Power struggles in monarchy
- Supernatural and religious beliefs
- Good vs Evil (witchcraft)

To explore and challenge gender expectations in Jacobean England

- A Jacobean woman was: expected to have children, be loving, nurturing, caring, submissive to men, obedient and defer to their husband in all things

To highlight the consequences of unchecked ambition

- Power and its effects – good and bad

To support the belief in the Divine Right of Kings

The Great Chain of Being

- Jacobeans believed that God set out an order for everything in the universe. God created a social order for everybody and chose where you belonged. In other words, the king or queen was in charge because God put them there and they were only answerable to God (the Divine Right of Kings). According to this law, only God can judge a king. The rule implies that any attempt to remove the king from authority or to restrict his powers goes against the will of God.
- Dangers of going against the natural order

Tragedy: *Tragic protagonist:* the main character who meets a tragic end (a person of high status).

Fatal flaw: a fault within the protagonist's personality that sets off a chain of events leading to their downfall

Fate: a power that sets the course of events in a character's life

Key Words

Kingship

Hubris

Hamartia

Fatal Flaw

Stereotypical masculinity/femininity

Jacobean

Chain of Being

supernatural

Regicide

Patriarchy

Tyrant/Tyrannical

Shakespeare

Traitor

Duplicitous

nihilistic

Key Quotations

1. Fair is foul and foul is fair'
2. 'Brandished steel smoked with bloody execution'
3. Bellona's bridegroom'
4. Stay you imperfect speakers. Tell me more!'
5. 'The instruments of darkness tell us truths, Win us with honest trifles, to betray's'
6. 'Let not light see my black and deep desires'
7. 'Chastise with the valour of my tongue all that impedes thee from the golden round'
8. 'Come, you spirits...unsex me here'
9. 'His virtues will plead like angels against the deep damnation of his taking off'
10. 'I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent but vaulting ambition.'
11. When you durst do it then, you were a man.'
12. 'I would, while it was smiling in my face, have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums, and dash'd the brains out'
13. 'Is this the dagger I see before me, the handle toward my hand?'
14. 'My hands are of your colour, but I shame to wear a heart so white.'
15. Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?'
16. 'Look to the lady'
17. 'Tis said they ate each other'
18. 'I fear he played most foully for it'
19. 'Upon my head, they placed a fruitless crown'
20. 'O full of scorpions is my mind'
21. Be innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck til thou applaud the deed'
22. 'Blood will have blood'
23. 'By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes'
24. 'Bleed, bleed poor country! Great tyranny!'
25. 'Out, damned spot! Out, I say!'
26. 'Will these hands ne'er be clean?'
27. 'His title hangs loose about him like a giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief.'
28. 'Give me my armour'
29. 'Life is but a walking shadow'
30. 'At least we'll die with harness on our back'
31. 'Bear-like I must fight the course'
32. 'These juggling fiends be no more believed'
33. 'Dead butcher and his fiend-like queen'

Writer's Methods

Fair is foul and foul is fair'

- Paradox suggesting what is good is actually evil
- This introduces an atmosphere of deception and immediately suggests that in the play things are not how they appear to be
- It also establishes the witches as agents of this deception

'Brandished steel smoked with bloody execution'

- The metaphorical 'smoked' suggests that Macbeth's sword is dripping with blood and establishes Macbeth as a skilled soldier
- Here, 'bloody' is synonymous with masculine violence and valour
- The term 'execution' suggests Macbeth's killings at this point are sanctioned and not ungodly

'Bellona's bridegroom'

- Bellona is the goddess of war. Macbeth is being likened to her groom Mars reinforcing his almost godly valour
- However, Shakespeare does not outwardly identify Macbeth as 'Mars' but instead calls him 'Bellona's bridegroom' foregrounding the woman and perhaps foreshadowing Lady Macbeth's role in the violence to come.

Stay you imperfect speakers. Tell me more!

- The urgent exclamation suggests Macbeth's desire to know more of the witches 'prophetic greetings' and reveals his temptation by the supernatural.

'The instruments of darkness tell us truths, Win us with honest trifles, to betray's'

- Witches manipulate by telling the truth so they seem honest and their lies are therefore believed
- Metaphor presents the witches as agents of Satan/evil

'Let not light see my black and deep desires'

- an aside after the Duncan names Malcolm heir and reveals the beginnings of Macbeth's duplicity
- Light imagery is used to denote purity and truth whereas dark imagery is used to denote evil
- Through his murderous thoughts, Macbeth inhabits the metaphorical darkness and goes against the natural order

'Chastise with the valour of my tongue all that impedes thee from the golden round'

- Lady Macbeth's Machiavellian nature is revealed as she plans to manipulate Macbeth
- She plans to do this using feminine rather than masculine actions. Lady Macbeth's weapon is not a sword, her weapon is her words or 'tongue.'
- Moreover, the noun 'valour' clearly attributes bravery to her words

'Come, you spirits...unsex me here'

- The soliloquy reveals Lady Macbeth's ruthless ambitions
- This imperative reveals Lady Macbeth as atypical as she rejects Jacobean expectations of femininity as these impede her from committing acts of violence
- This alludes to Queen Elizabeth I who also had to 'unsex' herself and said she had the 'heart of a king' to be seen as powerful

'His virtues will plead like angels against the deep damnation of his taking off'

- The simile comparing Duncan's 'virtues' to 'angels' emphasises Duncan's divinity and reminds the reader that any act against Duncan would be sacrilegious
- The noun 'damnation' which is associated with Duncan's murder reinforces this idea suggesting that anyone who hurt the king would be 'damned' and therefore doomed to hell
- 'Taking off' is a euphemism to describe Duncan's murder suggesting Macbeth is too fearful or guilty to formulate the word murder

'I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent but vaulting ambition.'

- The horse riding metaphor here suggests that Macbeth's 'spur' to kill Duncan is purely his 'vaulting ambition'
- The adjective 'vaulting' indicates that Macbeth's ambition is unchecked and will therefore result in disaster. This is Macbeth's fatal flaw.

'When you durst do it then, you were a man.'

- 'Daring' and action denotes masculinity whereas passivity is feminine
- Lady Macbeth uses this Jacobean expectation of masculinity to emasculate Macbeth therefore persuading him into committing regicide

'I would, while it was smiling in my face, have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums, and dash'd the brains out'

- a mother who would have brutally killed her own child before she would abandon a plan to seize power, Lady Macbeth disrupts the typical idea of what women and mothers are like – nurturing, maternal, compassionate. She uses this image to make her husband feel that he is being unmanly by doubting their scheme
- She's manipulating him by suggesting he's betraying her

'Is this the dagger I see before me, the handle toward my hand?'

- The dagger is symbolic of Macbeth's murderous intent. His weapon has changed from an honourable sword to a sneaky, deceptive dagger.
- The hallucination shows his mental disturbance that fear, guilt and uncertainty has created.

'My hands are of your colour, but I shame to wear a heart so white.'

- Lady Macbeth, at this point, is unrepentant
- She dismisses the stain of 'colour' or blood and instead deems Macbeth a coward with his 'white' heart
- Her strength is further reinforced when she commands 'Give me the daggers and takes on the active, masculine role

'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?'

- Blood serves as a symbol of Macbeth's penitence
- Macbeth questions if Neptune (the God of the Sea) will wash the blood or guilt away
- Macbeth uses dramatic language to conclude that the blood will 'turn the green one red' meaning it will stain all of the world's ocean revealing the permanence of this sacrilegious act

'Look to the lady'

- Lady Macbeth is Machiavellian and duplicitous as she pretends to faint using Jacobean expectations of women's fragility to deflect guilt away from her and her husband.
- Macduff further shows these expectations when he says 'gentle lady tis not for you to hear'

'Tis said they ate each other'

- After the murder of Duncan, nature begins to behave strangely to demonstrate the disruption of the natural order which has taken place
- The brutal image of horses eating each other reveals the chaos and savagery which is now taking place in Scotland

'I fear he played most foully for it'

- Under Macbeth's tyrannical reign, the honorable Banquo expresses his suspicions in a soliloquy
- Banquo concludes that Macbeth played for it 'foully' which suggests evil and disruption of the natural order which evokes fear in Banquo

'Upon my head, they placed a fruitless crown'

- Shakespeare again uses plant imagery to show that Macbeth's dynasty will not 'grow' as he has no heirs.
- The crown the witches have given him is 'fruitless' and will pass to another, presumably Banquo's children, which is why Macbeth fears Banquo at this point in the play

'O full of scorpions is my mind'

- Macbeth speaks in metaphor to Lady Macbeth to communicate to her that he is losing his sanity because Banquo and Fleance still live.
- 'Scorpions' connote danger and death and the threat that Banquo poses to Macbeth

'Be innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck til thou applaud the deed'

- Macbeth now excludes Lady Macbeth from his plans to murder Banquo.
- She is now passive and begins to conform to the submissive or 'innocent' expectations of women who will 'applaud' men
- Lady Macbeth is no longer 'partner' but the dismissive 'chuck'

'Blood will have blood'

- This suggests that blood shed through violence seeks more blood in revenge
- The motif of blood here suggests that the 'poisoned chalice' Macbeth feared before regicide has indeed come to 'plague him'
- Macbeth feels trapped in this cycle of bloodshed

'By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes'

- Macbeth now seeks the witches out demonstrating his descent into villainy and 'wickedness'

'Bleed, bleed poor country! Great tyranny!'

- The personification of Scotland suggests it is victim to Macbeth's tyranny
- The repetition of 'bleed' emphasises the savagery and violence of Macbeth's rule
- The exclamation reveals Macduff's despair demonstrating his patriotism rather than self-interest

‘Out, damned spot! Out, I say!’

- As Lady Macbeth descends into madness, her speech becomes more frenetic emphasised through the use of fragmented sentences, repetition and exclamations
- The motif of blood suggests she now realises the permanence of her guilt.
- The adjective ‘damned’ suggests she is in a hellish state as a result of her sacrilegious actions

‘Will these hands ne’er be clean?’

- The motif of blood reveals Lady Macbeth’s remorse which she now stains her conscience and cannot be cleared by a ‘little water’
- Lady Macbeth now speaks in prose to denote her madness and fall from nobility

‘His title hangs loose about him like a giant’s robe upon a dwarfish thief.’

- The clothing metaphor is used to show Macbeth’s inadequacies as king. The title is ‘loose’ to show that it is too great for him.
- This is emphasised by the simile ‘like a giant’s robe upon a dwarfish thief’ which reinforces the idea that Macbeth is too small for the ‘giant’ title of king
- ‘Thief’ suggests that Macbeth has stolen or usurped the title which is why he will never be worthy

‘Give me my armour’

- The change in clothing to ‘armour’ shows that Macbeth is returning to his true identity of a soldier
- This is also cyclical as Macbeth begins and ends the play in battle however at the start of the play he is ‘valiant’ and at the end a ‘tyrant’

‘Life is but a walking shadow’

- Metaphor – realisation of the futility of his actions
- ‘shadow’ signifies how he is pursued by his tyrannical actions and he cannot escape his fate

‘At least we’ll die with harness on our back’

- Macbeth dies as a tragic hero – we are reminded of his bravery and courage that we saw at the beginning of the play BUT his fatal flaw (unchecked ambition) and hamartia (killing of the king) have caused him to lose his good qualities and become a tyrant who must die

‘Bear-like I must fight the course’

- Shakespeare uses animal imagery to reveal Macbeth’s character at this point in the play
- His ferocity is revealed through the bear comparison
- However, this is also a reference to bear baiting and just like the ‘bear’ Macbeth, trapped at Dunsinane, must wait for and fight those who are hunting him

‘These juggling fiends be no more believed’

- ‘Juggling’ shows how the witches have deliberately deceived Macbeth to manipulate fate
- Macbeth’s eventual rejection of the witches’ trickery is essential for him to die with some honour and therefore be a tragic hero

‘Dead butcher and his fiend-like queen’

- ‘Butcher’ refers to the violence and savagery of Macbeth’s rule and the consequent ‘butchering’ of Scotland
- ‘Fiend’ refers to an evil spirit as portrays Lady Macbeth as malevolent and witch-like
- ‘Butcher’ is a demotion from the ‘valiant’ Macbeth from Act 1 – both use weapons well and profit from death, but the status attributed to a warrior is stripped away by the term ‘butcher’

Exam:

1. Read question and underline key words
2. Plan what you’ll say about the wider text/overall argument
3. Annotate extract
4. Thesis Statement – 3 line answer to question (your argument)
5. Write about extract – analyse quotations
6. Write about wider text – paragraph topic sentences/analyse quotations

Exam Essay Style:

CF,E,WM,WI

Start with the extract:

In the extract, Shakespeare presents Macbeth as fearing Banquo’s “*royalty of nature*” and “*dauntless temper*” which suggests him as a foil to Macbeth as he is loyal, honest and valiant – all the qualities that Macbeth has lost now he’s committed regicide. The metaphor suggests Banquo has kingly characteristics better suiting him to the throne than Macbeth. Furthermore, he fears the witches prophecies that “*hailed*

him father to a line of kings” suggesting future kingship is in Banquo’s family and solidifies Macbeth’s paranoia as he unswervingly trusts the witches – which leads to his tyrannical actions. The fact Macbeth wishes to murder Banquo challenges the Jacobean views of a noble and honourable king – Macbeth’s hubris and ambition is his downfall. He has already killed Duncan and is now protecting his throne by killing a loyal friend, ironically in the same way he protected Duncan by defeating the Thane of Cawdor. Like him, Macbeth is also a traitor foreshadowing his future death.

Then go onto the wider play:

Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a duplicitous character as he appears to love King Duncan because he’s fought and won the battle for him yet when he’s promised kingship he commands the witches to “stay you imperfect speakers, tell me more”. This suggests he is tempted by the deceitful prophecy beginning to manipulate his fatal flaw – ambition, which will lead him to his committing regicide. Furthermore, the imperative verb shows he is used to being obeyed. This could indicate Shakespeare’s main intention is to support the Jacobean natural order and the belief in the Divine Right of Kings.

Read the following extract from Act 3 Scene 1 of Macbeth and then answer the question that follows. At this point in the play, Macbeth is thinking of his feelings about Banquo.

MACBETH	
	To be thus is nothing, But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature Reigns that which would be feared. 'Tis much he dares, 5 And to that dauntless temper of his mind, He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour To act in safety. There is none but he, Whose being I do fear; and under him My genius is rebuked, as it is said 10 Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters When first they put the name of king upon me And bade them speak to him. Then prophet-like, They hailed him father to a line of kings. Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown 15 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe, Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand, No son of mine succeeding. If't be so, For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind; For them, the gracious Duncan have I murdered, 20 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace Only for them, and mine eternal jewel Given to the common enemy of man, To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings. Rather than so, come Fate into the list, 25 And champion me to th'utterance. Who's there?

Starting with this speech, explore how Shakespeare presents Macbeth's fears.
Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth's fears in this speech
- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth's fears in the play as a whole.

[30 marks]
AO4 [4 marks]

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Shakespeare: Macbeth

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 2 and answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, the Scottish army, led by Macbeth and Banquo are fighting a Norwegian invasion and a rebel army led by Macdonald.

Sergeant

Doubtful it stood;

As two spent swimmers, that do cling together
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald--

Worthy to be a rebel, for to that

The multiplying villanies of nature

Do swarm upon him--from the western isles

Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;

And fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,

Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak:

For brave Macbeth--well he deserves that name--

Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,

Which smoked with bloody execution,

Like valour's minion carved out his passage

Till he faced the slave;

Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,

Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,

And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN

O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

Starting with this extract, how does Shakespeare present Macbeth as a powerful character?

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a powerful character in this extract
- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a powerful character in the play as a whole

[30 marks]

[AO4 4 marks]

Shakespeare: Macbeth

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 7 and answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are considering whether to kill Duncan.

LADY MACBETH

What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness
now
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.

MACBETH

If we should fail?

LADY MACBETH

We fail!
But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
And we'll not fail

Starting with this extract, how does Shakespeare present Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman?

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman in this extract
- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman in the play as a whole

[30 marks]

[AO4 4 marks]
