

Plot (Acts)	Character	Context (Written 1606)	
<p>1</p> <p>The three Weird Sisters meet in a storm: 'fair is foul'. A war is taking place between Scotland and Norway and Scotland is victorious due to the valiant efforts of Macbeth. The traitorous Thane of Cawdor is captured and executed and King Duncan decides to reward Macbeth with the title of Thane of Cawdor. Before he is given the title, the three Weird Sisters tell Macbeth that he will become Thane of Cawdor and eventually king, and that Banquo's children will become kings. Macbeth learns of his new title which fulfils part of the prophecy and sends a letter to his wife. Lady Macbeth receives the news that King Duncan will be staying the night at their castle and immediately plots his death so her husband will be king. Macbeth doubts that this is the right thing to do, but Lady Macbeth manipulates him into following her plans by challenging his manhood and he reluctantly agrees to murder Duncan. By the end of Act 1, Macbeth is determined to follow through with the plan: 'I am settled'.</p>	<p><b>Macbeth</b></p>	<p><i>The protagonist and tragic hero. Ambition is his tragic flaw that leads to his downfall. He transforms from loyal warrior to paranoid, tyrannical king. Ambitious, ruthless, valiant, tormented, deceitful.</i></p>	<p><b>Macbeth.</b> The plot is partly based on fact. Macbeth was a real 11<sup>th</sup> Century king who ruled Scotland from 1040-1057. Shakespeare's version of the story originates from the Chronicles of Holinshed (a well known historian). The play was most likely written in 1606 – the year after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 – and reflects the insecurities of Jacobean politics.</p> <p><b>King James I of England (and VI of Scotland)</b> came to the throne in 1603 following the death of Queen Elizabeth I. The play pays homage to the king's Scottish lineage. The witches' prophecy that Banquo will found a line of kings is a clear reference to James' family's claim to have descended from the historical Banquo. While King of Scotland, James VI became convinced about the reality of witchcraft, and its great danger to him, leading to trials that began in 1591.</p>
	<p><b>Lady Macbeth</b></p>	<p><i>A strong, ambitious and manipulative woman, associates herself with evil spirits. Persuasive, ruthless, ambitious, deceitful, controlling.</i></p>	
	<p><b>The Weird Sisters</b></p>	<p><i>Supernatural and manipulative beings who seem able to predict the future. Give Macbeth the prophecies that drive the plot. Unearthly and omniscient.</i></p>	
	<p><b>Banquo</b></p>	<p><i>Macbeth's close friend, prophesied to be father of kings. Macbeth sees him as a threat. Virtuous, insightful and loyal.</i></p>	
	<p><b>Duncan</b></p>	<p><i>King of Scotland; a strong, honourable, respected leader.</i></p>	
<p>2</p> <p>His evil state of mind is shown when Macbeth hallucinates before he commits the murder. His immediate guilt means that he cannot say 'Amen' or return to the scene, so Lady Macbeth wipes blood on the drunk guards. The next morning, Macduff and Lennox arrive and Macduff discovers the dead body of King Duncan. The guards are immediately suspects and Macbeth kills them. Malcolm and Donaldbain, the King's sons, flee the castle because they are afraid that they will be blamed for the murder of their father.</p>	<p><b>Macduff</b></p>	<p><i>A noble soldier loyal to Duncan and suspicious of Macbeth. Represents the good against Macbeth's evil. Noble, wise, judicious. His wife resents feminine goodness and innocence in the play.</i></p>	<p>Only a century before <i>Macbeth</i> was written, England had suffered under the massive disorder of the <b>Wars of the Roses</b>. Civil disorder was now seen as the ultimate disaster and also an ungodly state.</p>
	<p><b>Malcolm</b></p>	<p><i>Duncan's son and next in line to the throne. Dignified.</i></p>	
<p>3</p> <p>Banquo suspects Macbeth of the murder of King Duncan; Macbeth worries that Banquo will reveal this so sends men to murder Banquo and his son, Fleance, but Fleance escapes. Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Lennox, Ross and other lords attend a banquet. The ghost of Banquo appears to Macbeth three times and he loses control. Lady Macbeth tries to cover up the situation by saying that Macbeth is prone to fits. Macduff has not attended the banquet as he has gone to England looking for help because he is suspicious of Macbeth. Macbeth states his intention to visit the weird sisters again.</p>	<p><b>Themes</b></p>		<p><b>The Great Chain of Being</b> was a strict religious hierarchical structure of all matter and life which was believed to have been decreed by God and this dominated Jacobean beliefs. The chain starts from God and progresses downward to angels, saints, kings, princes, nobles, commoners and animals from the highest lion to the worm and then rocks and minerals. If this order was disturbed it was believed that the state would erupt into chaos.</p>
	<p>Ambition</p>	<p>The witches prophecies spur both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to act on their own to fulfil their deepest desires and ambitions. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth want to be great and powerful, and sacrifice their morals to achieve that goal.</p>	
	<p>Order and Disorder</p>	<p>The play subverts the natural order of the world and depicts an anarchy: Macbeth inverts the order of royal succession; his wife inverts the patriarchal hierarchy; the unnatural world disrupts the natural. The disruption underpins the conflict both external and internal.</p>	
<p>4</p> <p>Macbeth confronts the three Weird Sisters and they show him three visions that lead him to believe he cannot be killed by any man, which gives him a false sense of security. Told by the witches to 'Beware Macduff', he sends murderers to the castle of Macduff to kill his family. Meanwhile, Macduff is in England begging Malcolm to return to Scotland to seize the throne from Macbeth who has become a tyrant. Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty to Scotland and himself; once satisfied with Macduff's responses he agrees to wage war against Macbeth. Malcolm's uncle, Siward, will also help in the attack.</p>	<p>Masculinity, femininity and identity</p>	<p>The idea of manhood is questioned throughout the play: does a true man take what he wants no matter what it is? Or does a real man have the strength to restrain his desires? Lady Macbeth challenges Macbeth's when he decides not to kill Duncan, Lady Macduff questions Macduff's decision to go to England and Macbeth uses it to incite Banquo's murderers. Lady Macbeth subverts the expectation of what it is to be a woman; she rejects her womanhood and bargains with darkness.</p>	<p><b>The Divine Right of Kings</b> says a monarch is not subject to earthly authority and that they have the right to rule directly from the will of God. It implies that only God can judge an unjust king and that any attempt to depose one runs against the will of God and is a sacrilegious act. The action of killing a king, regicide, was the ultimate sin.</p>
	<p>Kingship and tyranny</p>	<p>Duncan is always referred to as a 'king' while Macbeth soon becomes known as the 'tyrant'. In Act 4, scene 3 Malcolm pretends that he would make an even worse king than Macbeth. He tells Macduff of his reproachable qualities—among them a thirst for personal power and a violent temperament. Malcolm says, "The king-becoming graces / [are] justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness, / Bounty, perseverance, mercy, [and] lowliness" (4.3.92–93)-embodiment of order and justice, but showing comfort and affection. Under him, subjects are rewarded according to their merits, as when Duncan makes Macbeth Thane of Cawdor after Macbeth's victory over the invaders. The king must be loyal to Scotland above his own interests. Macbeth, by contrast, brings only chaos to Scotland—symbolized in the bad weather and bizarre supernatural events—and offers no real justice, murdering those he sees as a threat. As the embodiment of tyranny, he must be overcome by Malcolm so that Scotland can have a true king once more.</p>	
<p>5</p> <p>Lady Macbeth has gone mad with guilt over the murders. The once strong and ruthless woman becomes an hysterical sleepwalker and doctors are unable to help her. Some of the Scottish lords discuss Macbeth's state of mind and come to the conclusion that they will help Malcolm and Macduff fight against Macbeth. Macbeth isn't really concerned because he believes the prophecy ensures that he cannot be killed by any man born of woman. When he's confronted by Macduff at Dunsinane Macbeth learns that Macduff was ripped from his mother and not born naturally and realises that he has been tricked by the witches. Macduff kills Macbeth in a fight and Malcolm is proclaimed the new King of Scotland.</p>	<p>Appearance and reality</p>	<p>Appearances are deceptive in the play. Shakespeare repeats the words 'seem', 'false', 'face' and 'hide' to highlight the deception of appearance. Duncan trusts the wrong men with disastrous consequences, Macbeth trusts the witches and Lady Macbeth emphasises the need for 'false face.' This fine line between appearance and reality represents the line between good and evil.</p>	<p><b>Shakespearean Tragedy.</b> Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's tragedies and follows specific conventions. The climax must end in a tremendous catastrophe involving the death of the main character; the character's death is caused by their own flaw(s) (hamartia) yet the character has something the audience can identify with.</p>

# Know your Macbeth! 1

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What was the story of 'Macbeth' based upon?
2. What was the name of Banquo's son?
3. How many times does the ghost of Banquo appear to Macbeth?
4. Give two adjectives that could describe the weird sisters.
5. How does Lady Macbeth learn about the weird sisters' prophecies?
6. Who was King of England when Macbeth was written?
7. Give two examples of when trust is misplaced in the play.
8. What is Macbeth's tragic flaw?
9. What can Macbeth not say after murdering Duncan?
10. Who escapes from their murderers?

# Know your Macbeth! 2

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What is the weather at the start of the play?
2. What was the Divine right of kings?
3. Who were Duncan's sons?
4. What did Lady Macbeth do to complete her murder plan?
5. What adjective would you use to describe Macbeth as King?
6. What is an anarchy?
7. Is 'Macbeth' a romance, comedy, tragedy or history?
8. How does Lady Macbeth try to cover up for Macbeth's losing control at the sight of Banquo's ghost?
9. What does the line between appearance and reality represent?
10. Why did Macduff go to England?

# Know your Macbeth! 3

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. Why did Malcolm and Donaldbain leave Macbeth's castle?
2. Which two countries were at war at the start of the play?
3. Who was the traitor to Duncan in the war?
4. How does Lady Macbeth manipulate Macbeth into committing murder?
5. What riddle do the weird sisters chant at the end of the first scene?
6. What does Macbeth recognise is his only reason for murdering King Duncan?
7. What, at the time this was written, was considered to be the ultimate sin?
8. Why did Macduff not attend the banquet at Macbeth's castle?
9. Name three attributes that Malcolm says a king should have.
10. What action does Lady Macbeth repeat whilst sleepwalking?

# Know your Macbeth! 4

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. How does Lady Macbeth subvert the expectations of womanhood?
2. Why does Macbeth see Banquo as a threat?
3. Name three reasons that Macbeth gives as reasons why he should not kill King Duncan.
4. How does Shakespeare show he recognises the line of kings that James 1 descends from?
5. Why did Macbeth not fear Macduff?
6. When Macduff hears his family have been slaughtered he says 'But I must also feel it as a man.' How does this contrast with Macbeth?
7. Why does Malcolm suggest to Macduff that he will be a bad king?
8. What must a king put before his own interests?
9. Which three adjectives would best describe Lady Macbeth at the start of the play?
10. Which two adjectives would best describe Lady Macbeth at the end of the play?

# Know your Macbeth! 5

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What is hamartia?
2. What are the three apparitions that the weird sisters show to Macbeth?
3. What happens that makes Macbeth realise he's been tricked by the weird sisters?
4. How must a Shakespearean tragedy end?
5. Who is crowned King of Scotland after Macbeth?
6. Who is immediately suspected of killing Duncan?
7. Why is Lady Macduff angry with her husband?
8. How does Lady Macduff contrast with Lady Macbeth?
9. Give two adjectives that could describe the weird sisters.

# Know your Macbeth! 6

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. At which castle does Macduff fight Macbeth?
2. What did the weird sisters prophecy for Banquo?
3. What title does King Duncan reward Macbeth with?
4. When Macbeth is hallucinating, what does he see?
5. Why is Lady Macbeth's constant rubbing her hands ironic?
6. What did James 1 believe was a danger to him?
7. How does Macbeth persuade the murderers to kill Banquo?
8. What did the Jacobean believe would result from Macbeth killing a king?
9. Why did they believe this would happen?
10. Who did the weird sisters tell Macbeth to beware of?