

# **The John of Gaunt School**

## **AQA English Literature**

### **Paper 1**

## ***Macbeth***



## ***Revision booklet***

## EXAM REMINDER

In the exam, **you will be presented with a short extract** from the play.

**There will only be ONE question on Macbeth – you MUST answer it!**

The question will ask you to focus on the extract (examiners expect to see close language analysis) and then relate it to elsewhere in the play, so you can show your understanding of the whole play.

**You are advised to spend 45 minutes writing your response to Macbeth and then 5 minutes carefully proof-reading it for SPAG accuracy!**

(You then spend the next 50 minutes in this exam writing your response to the question on Stevenson's novella: 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'.)

**SPAG is marked for your Macbeth answer** – so spend 5 minutes checking and correcting any mistakes you might have made when writing against the clock!



## **Macbeth: Some important historical, social and cultural contexts (AO3)**

Up until Henry VIII chose to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, England was a country where people practised the Roman Catholic faith, under the leadership of the Pope in Rome. Henry wanted to divorce Catherine of Aragon for several reasons: mainly, he had not fallen in love with her; in fact, she was supposed to marry Henry's brother, Arthur, but he died. Put simply, when Henry became king of England, he appealed to the Pope in Rome to annul his marriage to Catherine but the Pope refused, saying that marriage was a lifelong contract agreed in church in the presence of God.

Henry decided to divorce himself and the English kingdom from the Catholic church. He established the Church of England and, as the reigning monarch, installed himself as the head of the Church of England. He set about dismantling the abbeys throughout his kingdom, seizing all the precious gold and silver, jewel-encrusted ornaments for himself and his new branch of Christianity became known as Protestantism (because of the protests made to Rome regarding his divorce).

This led to very deep divisions between people throughout England. In your own lifetime, a comparable divide is the recent Brexit campaign and result, which is still on everyone's lips and which remains the cause of some social and political tension, unrest, and disagreement in our society.

The unrest caused by Henry's decision to split from the Catholic church continued long after his own lifetime. When he died, his daughter became Queen Elizabeth I and, like her father, she was a Protestant. During her lifetime there were several assassination attempts and plots to overthrow her by Catholics who wished to return England to the supreme leadership of the Pope in Rome. Some of those plots were led by Elizabeth's own catholic cousin, Mary – Queen of Scots.

Elizabeth grew tired of Mary's plots and eventually agreed to her execution. Following Mary's beheading, her son James became James VI of Scotland and when the childless Elizabeth I grew old and died, James seized the throne of England and became the first King James of England.

### **King James I and the Gunpowder Plot**

Before ascending to the throne of England, James has begun to build a trusting relationship with Elizabeth I, although English Catholics hoped he would show them more tolerance than she had. Despite this, James was as intolerant of Catholics as Elizabeth and consequently, Catholic plots to assassinate King James formed. The most famous of these assassination attempts is known as **The Gunpowder Plot** of 1605. Interestingly, to commemorate King James' lucky escape a medal was commissioned showing a snake concealed by flowers. In the play, when plotting the regicide of King Duncan, Lady Macbeth tells her husband: **"Look like the innocent flower/But be the serpent under't."**



**Above:** the medal issued to commemorate the failed assassination of King James I

Also, one of the men involved in the Gunpowder Plot, Everard Digby, had been a close friend of King James and in the play is probably mirrored by the treasonous thane of Cawdor. No wonder King Duncan says of the thane of Cawdor: **“There’s no art/To find the mind’s construction in the face./He was a gentleman on whom I built/An absolute trust.”** King James, sitting in the audience watching the very first performance of ‘*Macbeth*’, knew only too well the sense of betrayal expressed by King Duncan here.

Lastly, a major theme in the play is that of **equivocation**, which means to tell deliberately misleading half-truths. The witches equivocate in the play because they inform Macbeth that **“No man born of a woman”** can harm him, leading him to imagine himself to be invincible and that he will be unbeaten until Birnam Wood (a forest) moves towards his castle. Importantly, Macbeth’s noble friend, Banquo, does warn Macbeth about the witches and their prophecies when he advises: **“Offentimes, to win us to our harm the instruments of darkness tells us truths, win us with honest trifles, to betray’s in deepest consequence.”**

So, in what way might the theme of equivocation be connected to historical, social and cultural contexts? Well, in 1606 a Catholic priest named Henry Garnet was accused of treason, for the role he played in the Gunpowder Plot. When he was put on trial, he was found guilty of committing a crime called **perjury** (giving false evidence to the court) but he claimed the right to equivocate (to tell deliberately misleading half-truths) in self-defence. So, not only was equivocation a burning issue in England when Shakespeare was writing the play but events which unfold within it perhaps also reflects his personal view of it: namely, people who equivocate are not to be trusted – whether they are witches in 11<sup>th</sup> century Scotland or Catholic priests in 17<sup>th</sup> century England.

### **King James I and Witchcraft**

Belief in witches and witchcraft was widespread across Europe during the 16 and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and during the reign of Elizabeth I, persecution of people accused of witchcraft reached terrifying proportions. Hundreds of people – mostly women – were tortured, convicted and then executed for this crime between 1560 and 1603 in England.

People genuinely believed that witches possessed diabolical powers: it was believed that witches could fly, sail in sieves, create night during the day (we call this a solar eclipse today), cause fogs and storms, disease and even a person or an animal to die because of a curse. A witches curse was believed to have the power to cause infertility or to induce nightmares. Witches were also believed to be able to conjure spirits by concocting a horrible brew, typically made using animal entrails and other nauseating ingredients. When Lady Macbeth conjures evil spirits, the Jacobean audience watching the play would have identified her as a witch inviting spirits to take possession of her body. They would have been horrified that she so willingly condemns her Christian soul to Hell because of her lust for power.

In 1604 when Shakespeare was writing the play, an Act of Parliament decreed that the punishment for those convicted of witchcraft would be execution. Confessions, however, were typically extracted by means of torture, involving the crushing of limbs, the breaking of bones or by applying boiling water or oil to the body of the accused. Others might have believed themselves to be witches, or confessed to being a witch because they suffered from delusions which are recognised today as psychiatric illnesses.

King James himself was just as fascinated by ideas about witches and witchcraft. In 1590 it was alleged that a group of witches had plotted to kill him. One of the accused – Agnes Sampson – claimed during her trial to have sailed out to sea in a sieve whereupon she threw various body parts of a cat into the sea, casting a spell which would raise a storm so ferocious it would sink the king's ship. Shakespeare includes subtle references to this trial in Act 1 scene 3 when the first witch, speaking of a sailor, proclaims: ***“In a sieve I'll thither sail ... Though his bark cannot be lost/Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.”*** King James would, no doubt, have drawn parallels between this and the events of his own life because he personally interrogated one of the people accused, a man named Dr. Fian, before the trial.

So fascinated did he become through his personal involvement in the trial, King James personally investigated other cases of witchcraft. In fact, in 1597 he published a book called ***'Daemonologie'*** (today, we'd spell it ***Demonology*** – meaning, 'the study of demons') and later, when he became King of England, he decreed that the book must be printed.

England during the reign of King James I was a deeply religious place. Despite the deep divisions which existed between Protestants and Catholics, virtually everyone believed in the concept of Heaven and Hell and they lived in fear of eternal damnation. Jacobean audiences would have been very familiar with the 'signs' to look out for in a person suffering demonic possession. These signs feature prominently in the play and would have been much more obvious to a Jacobean audience than to me or you watching the play in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The signs are these:

- **Trance** – “Look how our partner's rapt” or entranced, says Banquo of Macbeth
- **Inability to pray** – “Amen/Stuck in my throat,” says Macbeth to his wife
- **Visions** – “Is this a dagger I see before me?” says Macbeth as he waits to commit regicide
- **Invitations to demonic possession** – “Come, you spirits” invites Lady Macbeth

Shakespeare presents Macbeth and his wife as damned people who invite, and are seized by, demonic possession. Perhaps Shakespeare is also subtly reminding Jacobean audiences of the fate that they, too, can expect if they try to remove their Protestant king, James I, from the throne of England as people had tried – and failed – to do only a year before the play's first performance.



**Above:** a portrait of King James I, painted in 1611

### **Summarising key points from a text**

**TASK:** You are going to produce **two** summaries, using your own words and some judiciously chosen, brief quotations to embed in your own sentences on the following topics:

- (1) King James and the Gunpowder Plot
- (2) King James and Witchcraft



#### **Here's what to do:**

- 1: Using your highlighter pen, SLASH (or highlight) ONLY the key points made in the notes on context above (the rest will be TRASH)
- 2: List these phrases you have highlighted as a series of bullet points in the box below.
- 3: Now, decide how you will group the bullet points into a couple of paragraphs
- 4: Write your summary. Remember to include **brief, embedded** quotations.
- 5: Repeat steps 1 to 4 for your **second** summary.

King James and the Gunpowder Plot	King James and Witchcraft
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li><li>•</li><li>•</li></ul>

## Context continued...

### Beliefs about ghosts in Elizabethan and Jacobean England

Elizabethan England underwent significant religious upheaval between 1509 and 1558 (Henry VIII's reign to the reign of Elizabeth I). In summary, Henry and his son, Edward VI, worked hard to establish Protestantism in England. However, Mary Tudor returned England to Catholicism before the Protestant Queen, Elizabeth I, ascended to the throne. These pendulum swings from Protestantism to Catholicism and back again created a tense and ambiguous religious atmosphere in 16<sup>th</sup> century England.

Society's relationship to the belief in ghosts was greatly affected by this religious climate. Most significantly, the two different ways the religions viewed the notion of Purgatory influenced how people thought of ghosts.

Catholics believed that after death, souls were sent to Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory. If souls were sent to Purgatory they were to work off their sins until they were allowed in Heaven. To Catholics, ghostly apparitions would be the souls of the dead now wandering earth until they had access to Heaven.

Protestants did not believe in the existence of Purgatory, but they did accept that ghosts existed. However, they believed that these ghostly apparitions were demons, sent from Hell to seduce people into performing crimes or unholy acts. Protestant Thomas Browne writes in *Religio Medici* in 1643:

*"I believe...that these apparitions and ghosts of departed persons are not the wandering souls of men, but the unquiet walks of devils, prompting and suggesting us unto mischief, blood, and villainy; instilling and stealing into our hearts that the blessed spirits are not at rest in their graves, but wander, solicitous of the affairs of the world...and those phantasms appear often."*

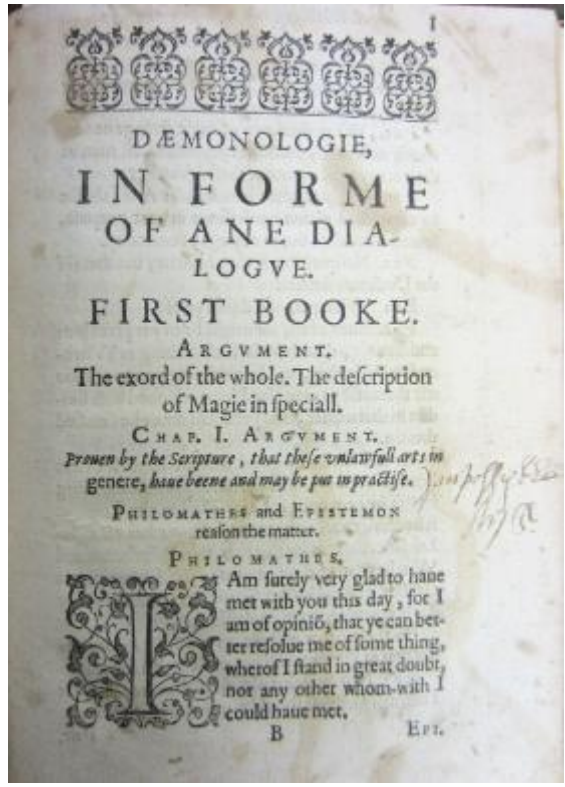
### Banquo's ghost in 'Macbeth':

Given our understanding of the different Catholic and Protestant beliefs in what ghosts were, it would seem unequivocal that Shakespeare's presentation of the ghost of Banquo which haunts Macbeth in Act 3 scene 4 is through the lens of Catholic attitudes to ghosts. Banquo was sent to his death in a most untimely manner, dying before he was able to repent his sins. Consequently, in accordance with Catholic belief in the existence of Purgatory, Banquo's soul could not reach Heaven.

Instead, Banquo's ghost returns to haunt Macbeth: the sinner responsible for his gruesome and untimely death. Shakespeare's stage directions confirm that a ghost is undoubtedly present on the stage but the ghost is visible only to Macbeth. Macbeth himself seems surprised by this fact as he exclaims: **"Prithee! See there! / Behold! Look!"** to his wife who, like all other guests at the feast, is unable to see the ghost. The reason for this is simple: Macbeth alone bears the burden of guilt for this murder because earlier he refused to share the dark details of his plans for Banquo with his wife, instead telling her to: **"Be**



**innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck.**” Little wonder, then, she speaks reproachfully to him at the feast, claiming: **“When all’s done/You look but on a stool”** and suggests that: **“This is the air-drawn dagger which you said/Led you to Duncan.”**



**Above:** The first page of **Daemonologie**, written by King James I

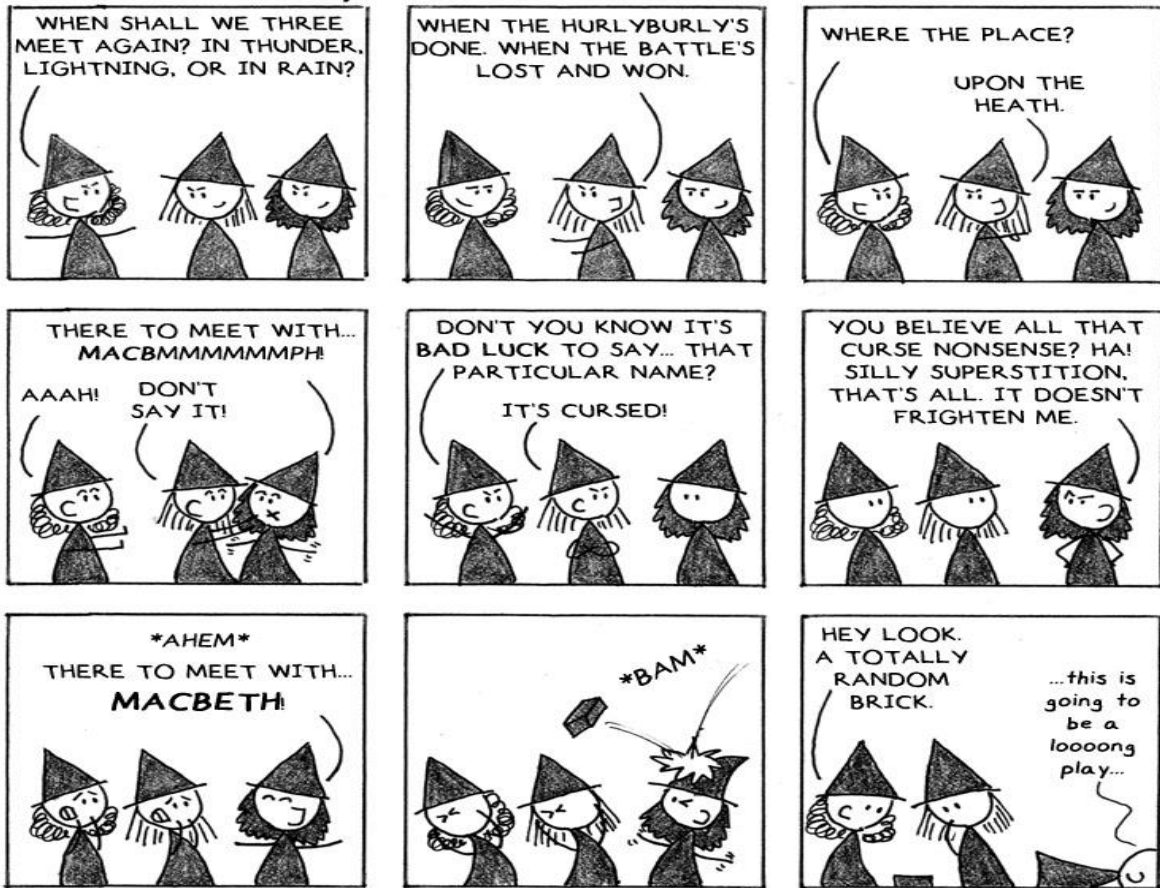
**Task: Answer the questions below**

1. What did the Catholics believe about ghosts? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What did the Protestants believe about ghosts? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How is this context relevant to Macbeth? Write a short summary of why this information is important when thinking about the significance of Banquo’s Ghost.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Macbeth – The Plot**



MACBETH: Act 1, Scene 1



**Task 1: Using the above as an example map out/ Storyboard the key events from each Act. You may start a plan below.**

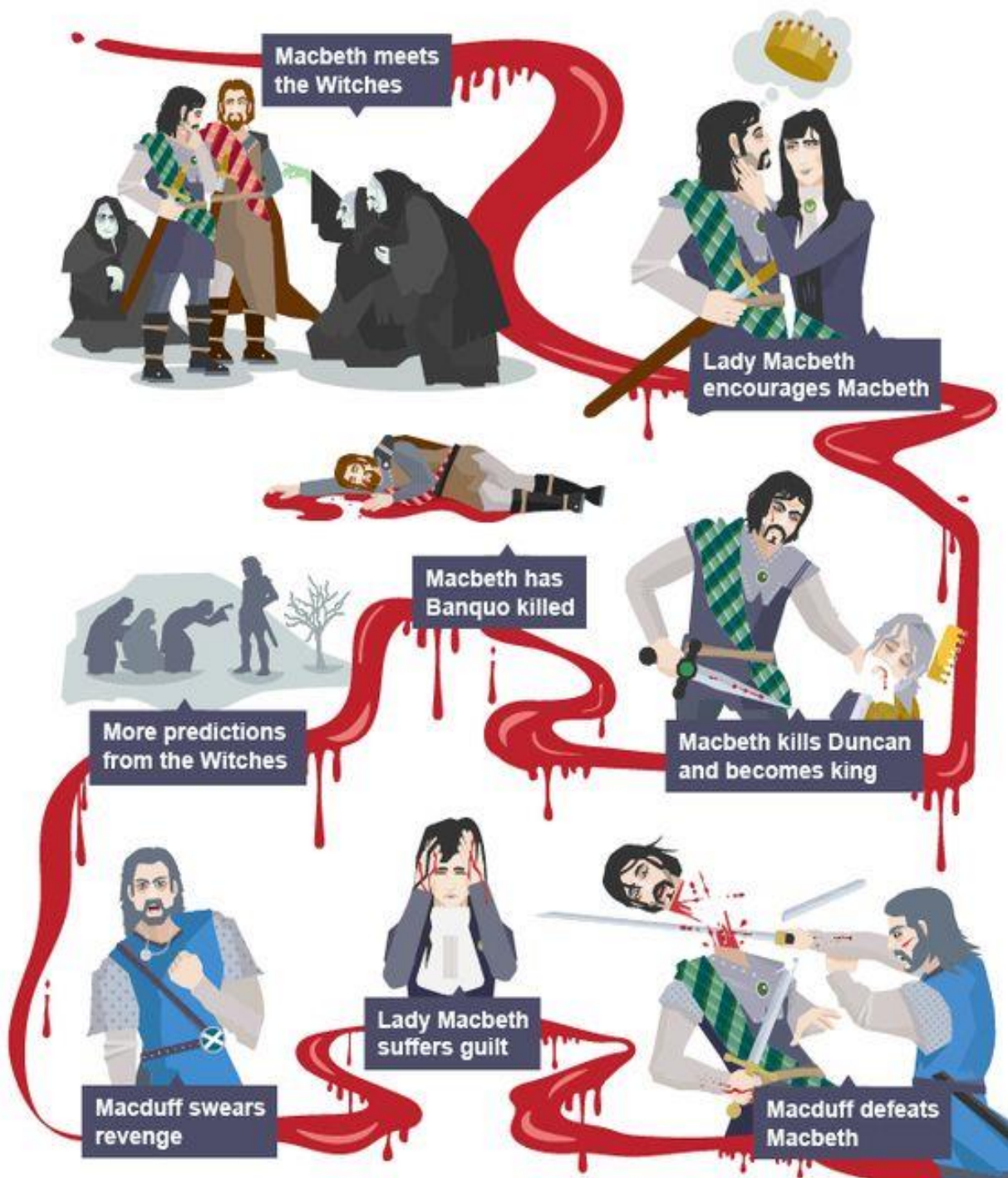
If you need help, you can access a summary of each act through the following links:

- Spark notes: <https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/macbeth/>
- Video summaries: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZwZK8W4mrD2vAieaELolmMaCa7jb8\\_M4](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZwZK8W4mrD2vAieaELolmMaCa7jb8_M4)

Use the box below to remind yourself of the key events in each act before creating your text map.

<u>Act 1-</u>
<u>Act 2-</u>
<u>Act 3-</u>
<u>Act 4-</u>
<u>Act 5-</u>

**Macbeth: 'a chain of events'**



**Extension task: - for each of the events above – add 1-2 quotations**

**Character Analysis: Lady Macbeth**

Lady Macbeth is the deuteragonist (2<sup>nd</sup> most important character to the protagonist) in this drama: the wife of Macbeth, she shares his lust for power. Our initial impressions of Lady Macbeth are that she is, as Malcolm describes her at the close of the play, indeed **“fiend-like”** as, when she learns of Duncan’s visit to Dunsinane her thoughts turn immediately to regicide. Without pause, she summons evil **“spirits”** and commands them to **“make thick my blood”** so that **“no compunctious visitings of Nature”** shake her wicked intention to murder the King.

Interestingly, in this soliloquy Lady Macbeth imagines committing the regicide herself as she asks to be wrapped in the blackest smoke of Hell **“so that my keen knife sees not the wound it makes.”** Later, she privately admits in an aside: **“Had he not looked like my father as he slept, I had done’t,”** suggesting that Lady Macbeth is not as “fiend-like” as is sometimes argued. Certainly, she is not naturally **“fiend-like”** or she would not have sought assistance from the **“murdering ministers”** she conjures when the audience first meet her, even though she willingly submits to their wicked influence.

It is arguable that Lady Macbeth is subconsciously repelled by the thought of regicide because when she is pressuring her husband to commit the deed she avoids using the word “murder”; instead she employs a variety of euphemisms, including: **“this enterprise”**, Duncan being **“provided for”** or merely **“it”**. However, others argue that Shakespeare’s employment of euphemisms here is quite deliberate and serves subtly to convey Lady Macbeth’s wily, artful manipulation of her husband and which, therefore, strengthens the audience impression of her as being truly **“fiend-like”**.

However, once the regicide is committed and Lady Macbeth becomes Queen, the dynamics of her relationship with Macbeth undergoes a dramatic transformation. Despite having fulfilled her ambition to become Queen, in an aside to the audience Lady Macbeth privately admits: **“Nought’s had, all’s spent, where our desire is got without content.”** Ironically, when her husband then enters her own face becomes a mask, disguising what is in her heart as she admonishes Macbeth for entertaining gloomy thoughts which ought to have been buried alongside the body of the dead King Duncan.

As her ability to influence her husband diminishes – he simply ignores her command to halt his murderous plans for Banquo when she demands: **“You must leave this”** – Lady Macbeth becomes an increasingly isolated figure. After the banquet scene at which Macbeth arouses suspicions by his erratic behaviour, Lady Macbeth tells him: **“You lack the season of all natures – sleep.”** Ironically, the audience’s final impressions of her are in Act 5 scene 1 where she is sleepwalking, burdened by guilt.

The bold figure who instructed evil spirits to **“pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell”** is now a pathetic figure, afraid of the dark. Lady Macbeth’s gentlewoman tells the Doctor

observing her sleepwalk: **“She has light by her continually – ‘tis her command.”** The evil she so willingly embraced betrays her – as it betrays Macbeth – and produces only anguish in place of the rewards she had envisioned. On the night of Duncan’s murder, their hands bathed in Duncan’s blood, she boldly claimed: **“A little water clears us of this deed.”** Now, however, she seems unable to rid herself of the stench and spots of blood she imagines cover her hands still. The Doctor fears she is suicidal and claims: **“more needs she the Divine than the physician.”**

**Task 2: What is Lady Macbeth’s purpose in the play? Add a quote and any contextual information.**

**Task 3: Lady Macbeth can be described as a misunderstood character. Explain why you think this is. Use evidence from the text to support your views.**

**Character analysis: Macbeth**

Macbeth is the protagonist in this tragedy: a tragic hero whose hamartia – the fatal flaw in his character - is his ambition, a lust for power shared by his wife. He is aware of the evil his ambition gives rise to but he is unable to overcome the temptation.

Often, Lady Macbeth is wrongly accused of inviting Macbeth to contemplate regicide. In fact, after his encounter with the witches in Act 1 scene 3, Macbeth himself considers regicide when he reflects on their prophecy and admits:

**“If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of nature?”**

He is here acknowledging that the thing he is contemplating – usurping King Duncan's crown - is **“against the use of nature.”**

Wracked by doubts, in Act 1 scene 7 as he contemplates the regicide, Macbeth wavers and informs his wife: **“We will proceed no further in this business.”** Unlike his wife's wily, artful avoidance of the word “murder” during this conversation, it is clear that Macbeth uses a euphemism here because the very thought of murder frightens him, let alone the deed. Even when criticised and challenged by Lady Macbeth, he retains the moral sensibility to declare: **“I dare do all may become a man. / Who dares do more is none.”**

Having submitted to his wife's artful persuasion, Macbeth kills Duncan but is immediately plagued by his conscience. He tells how he **“could not say Amen”** and of a voice that foretold sleeplessness as punishment for such a heinous act.

Though Macbeth is influenced by both the witches and his wife, Macbeth is not controlled by them. His story is one of moral choice and the consequences of that choice. Once Duncan is murdered, Macbeth withdraws from Lady Macbeth and all subsequent murders in this play are the products of Macbeth's own paranoia and desperate desire to cling to power **“on this bank and shoal of time”** here on Earth, knowing he has been condemned to an eternity in Hell for killing God's anointed representative on Earth.

Having murdered Banquo and Macduff's family, Macbeth's paranoia gives way to a more fundamental disorder. In Act 5 we watch as he prepares to defend his kingdom – reduced to his castle at Dunsinane – and he swings violently between fits of rage and despair. Evidently, he has lost any emotional connection to his fellow men, declares that he is **“sick at heart”** and has **“lived long enough”**. When informed of his wife's death, he is completely unmoved and instead reflects on the meaninglessness of life itself. Macbeth is a

tragic hero precisely because he does not accept his evil callously; he suffers for it. In his own words: **“To know my deed, ’twere best not know myself.”**

**Task 4: Shakespeare presents Macbeth as being heroic at the start of the play. Explain why Shakespeare may have done this.**

**Task 5: Explain what happens in the text which shows Macbeth’s hamartia.**

**Task 6: Complete 5 quote explosions for the character of Macbeth. What techniques have been used? What are the connotations? What contextual links can you make and what is Shakespeare’s purpose in each one?**

Ideally chose a quotation from each act.

### ***Character Analysis: Banquo***

Banquo might best be described as a minor character in the tragedy of Macbeth. Nevertheless, he has an important function in the play and is considered by many to be

an effective dramatic foil for Macbeth. It is through Banquo's interactions with Macbeth and his own motivations that the audience – through contrast – gain insights into Macbeth's nature also.

Alike in many ways, Banquo and Macbeth are equals as the play begins: both are Scottish **“captains”** defending Duncan's realm against the marauding Norwegians led by Sweno. They fight honourably and are heroic warriors, risking their lives in defence of Duncan's kingdom. However, after the battle when they encounter the **“weird sisters”** on the **“blasted heath”**, Banquo's dramatic function is to demonstrate to an audience that the temptations of the witches may be successfully resisted and that Macbeth therefore acts from free will. Banquo expresses unshakeable moral principles and warns his friend that the witches may well be **“instruments of darkness”** who **“tell us truths”** in order to **“win us to our harm”** and to **“betray us in deepest consequence.”** Banquo's concern contrasts strikingly with Macbeth's own susceptibility to the witches.

Banquo's resistance to the influence of evil serves to highlight Macbeth's failure to resist and foregrounds his tendency towards evil, stimulated by ambition - the flaw that makes the tragedy possible.

Prompted by paranoid insecurity, when Macbeth decides to murder Banquo he acknowledges Banquo's endearing qualities: his **“royalty of nature”**, his **“wisdom”** and his **“dauntless”** or fearless nature. This resentment of Banquo's natural superiority, together with jealousy of his destiny as a **“father to a line of kings”**, motivates Macbeth to commit further wicked murders in the second half of the play, commencing with Banquo's and the attempted murder of his son and heir, Fleance.

Banquo's fate is determined by his virtue, just as Macbeth's is determined by his villainy.

#### **Task 7: Explain the purpose of Banquo in the play**

#### ***Character Analysis: The Weird Sisters (Witches)***

The weird sisters are an unholy trinity, a trio of malevolent, supernatural characters whose function in the drama is to encourage Macbeth in his evil inclinations.



Though their appearances in the play are brief, they have an important function. Shakespeare establishes the supernatural theme via their association with disorder in Nature: they appear amid thunder and lightning in a grim meeting on a **“blasted heath”** which contributes greatly to the tone of mysterious evil which pervades the play.

Likewise, the supernatural world they represent is terrifying to an audience because it is beyond human control and in the play it is symbolic of the unpredictable force of human desire, such as Macbeth's ruthless ambition to become King.

At their first appearance, the weird sisters state an ambiguity that Shakespeare weaves through the play: **“Fair is foul, and foul is fair.”** Indeed, the witches' relationship with Macbeth is so entwined that the first line he speaks in the play is an echo of this riddle. He says: **“So fair and foul a day I have not seen.”**

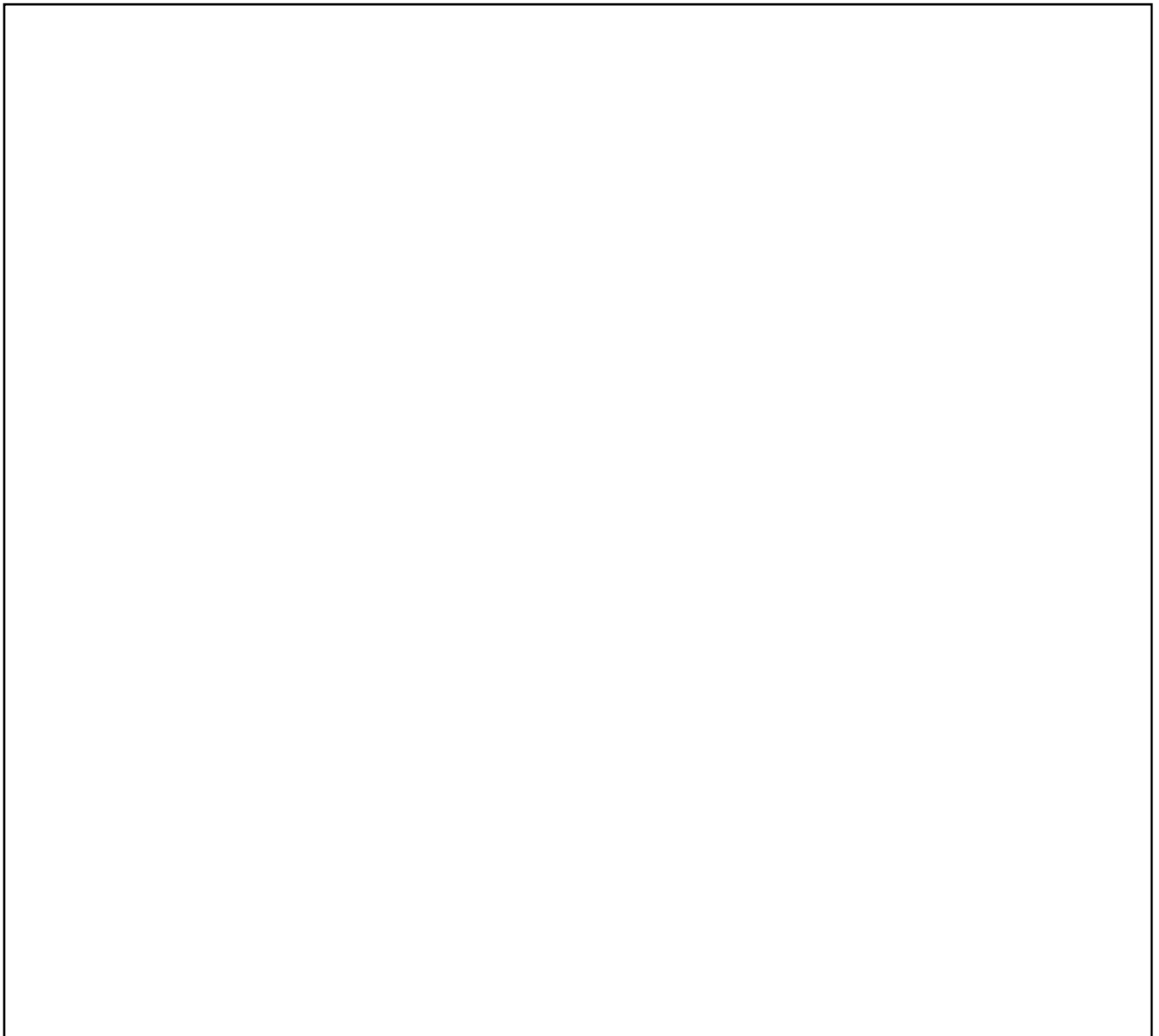
The deceptive pictures of the future – in their initial prediction of Macbeth becoming King and later in the riddles given by the Apparitions which rise from the cauldron when Macbeth visits the witches for a second time – encourage in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth a false sense of what is desirable and possible. The magic of the witches, then, is their ability to create moral disruption which, in Macbeth's case, leads to his death and subsequent damnation.

It is important to remember that while the witches may have **“more in them than mortal knowledge”**, they do **not** control Macbeth. They merely put ideas into his mind on which he then decides for himself. He is the master of his own destiny and acts out of free will.

**Task 8: What is the significance of the witches in the play? Why?**

**Task 9: Explain where there are elements of the supernatural in the play:**

**Task 10: List 5 quotations which link to the theme of the supernatural and explode them.**



**Extension task – Create a mind-map/series of revision cards on each of the key characters listed above – include quotations and relevant context.**

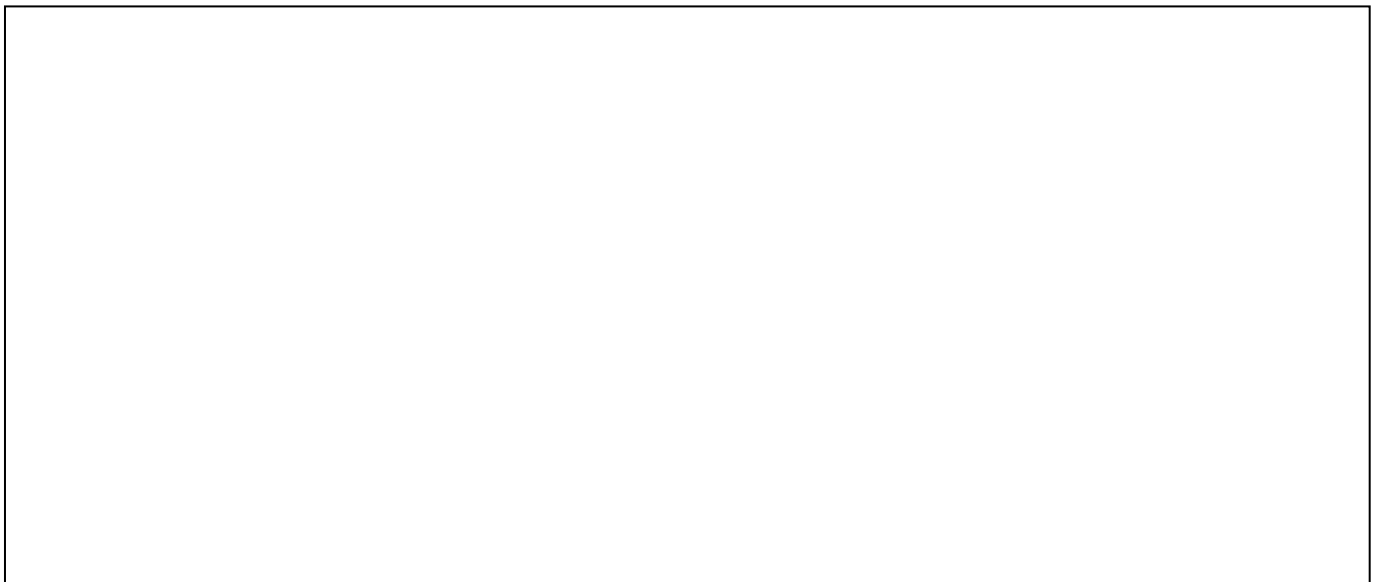
**Task 11 -Now look at the other characters in the play and create revision cards for these as well. Who are they, what do they do, what is their function in the play? Include quotations**

*Use the boxes below to make notes*

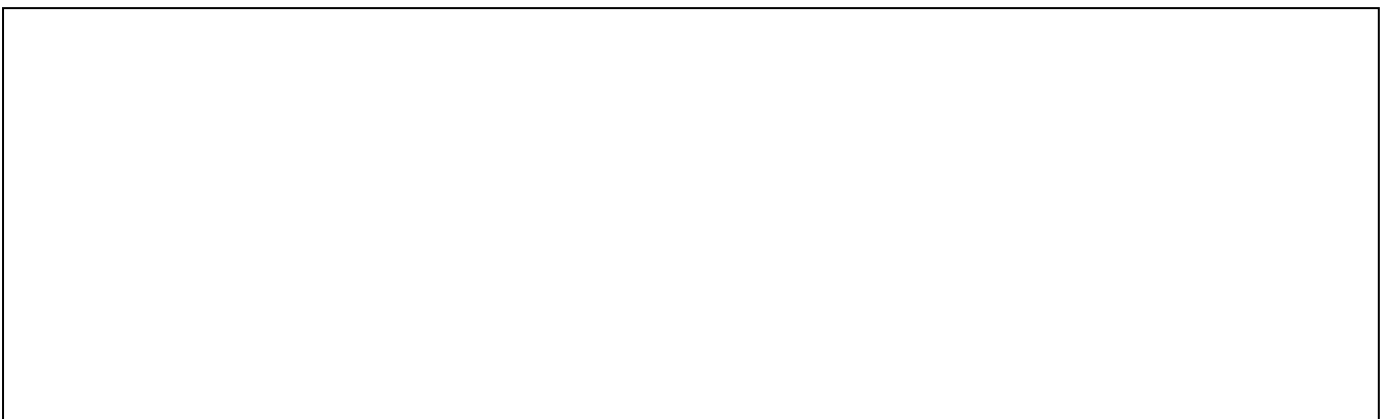
**1. King Duncan**



**2. Macduff**



**3. Malcolm**



**4. Donalbain**

**5. Macduff's son**

**6. Fleance**

**7. Young Siward**

You can use the following link to help you

- Spark notes: <https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/macbeth/characters/>

## Improving your vocabulary

### **TASK 12**

**TIER 2 VOCABULARY:** Look at the list of tier 2 vocabulary below. Define each term and make a quick note of how they link to 'Macbeth'. One has been done for you.

<b>'MACBETH' – TIER 2 VOCABULARY LIST</b>		
<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Link to 'Macbeth'</b>
hubris		
hamartia		
duplicitous		
heinous		
malevolent		
mercurial	Subject to sudden or unpredictable changes of mood or mind.	Macbeth becomes increasingly mercurial as his guilt begins to overwhelm him. An example of this is when he sees Banquo's ghost.
regicide		

**KEY WORD VOCABULARY:** Task 13 ensure you know the meanings of the words below. Then write a series of sentences about the play using these words.

soliloquy     *audience*     impression     *initial*     admission     *ambitious*

fiendish     *determined*     callous     *ironic*     significant     *aside*

**TASK 14**



1) **MISCONCEPTIONS:** The following statements are incorrect. Explain why around the outside of the grid or in the box below.

<p><b>Macbeth kills Banquo because he is concerned about his friends' jealousy.</b></p>	<p><b>We see all of the prophecies come true in the play.</b></p>
<p><b>Ambition is seen as irrelevant and unimportant.</b></p>	<p><b>Hope does not exist in the play.</b></p>
<p><b>Lady Macbeth feigns madness to avoid suspicion.</b></p>	<p><b>Macbeth never acts of his own accord. Lady Macbeth and/or the witches are behind his every action.</b></p>

## Themes in Macbeth

**Task 15 – For each of the themes detailed below create revision mind-maps/revision cards. Remember to include quotations.**



### Ambition



<b>Key points</b>	<b>Key quotes</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambition is shown as powerful and potentially very dangerous for the individual and society.</li> <li>• Macbeth describes his own fear about his ambition. He calls his ambition “vaulting”, suggesting it is too extreme. Shakespeare shows this extreme ambition leads to murder and madness for the individual and tyranny for the whole country.</li> <li>• Lady Macbeth shares this extreme ambition (and perhaps even exceeds it). She encourages Macbeth to do whatever it takes to become king.</li> <li>• Lady Macbeth is so certain in her evil ambition that she even persuades Macbeth to carry out Duncan's murder when he has doubts.</li> <li>• Shakespeare does show some positive ambition, as long as it remains inside the natural order or looks to restore it. Macduff and Malcolm, for example, are driven by the ambition to rid Scotland of Macbeth and restore the legitimate bloodline to the throne.</li> <li>• Overall Shakespeare suggests that some ambition is good. Medieval nobles were right to strive to be strong warriors and to maintain power. Extreme ambition outside the natural order, however, is shown to be terrible for everyone.</li> <li>• Macbeth's overwhelming ambition is one of the “fatal flaws” of his tragic character. The ‘fatal flaw’ is the fundamental problem in a character's personality that leads to his/her downfall.</li> </ul>	<p>Macbeth: <i>“I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself”</i></p> <p>Macbeth: <i>“Two truths are told, as happy prologues to the swelling act of the imperial theme.”</i></p> <p>Lady Macbeth: <i>“Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be what thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature: it is too full o' the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great; art not without ambition, but without the illness should attend it”</i></p> <p>Lady Macbeth: <i>“Hie thee hither, that I may pour my spirits in thine ear; and chastise with the valour of my tongue all that impedes thee from the golden round“</i></p> <p>Lady Macbeth: <i>“Wouldst thou have that which thou esteem'st the ornament of life and live a coward in thine own esteem, letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would', like the poor cat i' the adage?“</i></p> <p>Lady Macbeth: <i>“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... 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.“</i></p> <p>Malcolm: <i>“our power is ready; our lack is nothing but our leave; Macbeth is ripe for shaking, and the powers above put on their instruments“</i></p>

### The Supernatural

- The supernatural is a driving force in the play.
- The witches' prophecies push Macbeth into taking action and murdering King Duncan.
- We should not, however, absolve Macbeth of responsibility. Ultimately it is his actions that lead to the turmoil of the play.
- As with any tragedy, wider forces influence the protagonist, but ultimately it is his fatal flaws that lead to his downfall.
- Lady Macbeth and Macbeth both try to command and use the supernatural to achieve their ambitions. In the first quotation here, Lady Macbeth uses the imperative to command the supernatural to do as she wishes.
- Macbeth tries several times to command the witches. Firstly, he wants to know more when the witches reveal their prophecies. Then later Macbeth demands the witches tell him more as he tries to prevent Banquo's descendants becoming Kings. In reality though, the supernatural cannot be commanded. They influence human characters, not the other way around.
- The audience sees different reactions to the supernatural. Macbeth is initially curious, then driven by the supernatural and then desperate for more help. Lady Macbeth tries to control the supernatural. Both of these responses are self-destructive. Banquo has the most positive reaction. He is sceptical and dismissive of the witches. Banquo tries to explain the reality to Macbeth, but he won't listen.
- Context is crucial here. Shakespearean audiences believed in the existence of supernatural forces. They would have thought of Macbeth as a cautionary tale. People also believed in the natural order on Earth (as in heaven). This was a belief in a sort of pyramid of existence, with the King at the top, followed by nobles, then knights and merchants and finally peasants at the bottom. The supernatural aimed to undermine this by creating mischief. Subverting the natural order would lead to terrible problems for everyone, which Macduff alludes to late in the play.

Lady Macbeth: *"Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, and fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty!"*  
 The witches: *"Fair is foul, and foul is fair."*

Macbeth: *"Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more... say from whence you owe this strange intelligence? Or why upon this blasted heath you stop our way with such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you."*

Macbeth: *"I will be satisfied: deny me this, and an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know."*

Lady Macbeth: *"Out, damned spot! Out, I say!"*

Banquo: *"That trusted home might yet enkindle you unto the crown, besides the thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange: and oftentimes, to win us to our harm, the instruments of darkness tell us truths, win us with honest trifles, to betray's in deepest consequence."*

Macduff: *"each new morn new widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike heaven on the face, that it resounds as if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out like syllable of dolour."*

### Order Vs Disorder



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The opposing forces of order and disorder run throughout Macbeth. We see Shakespearean and medieval views of an ordered society vs chaos.</li> <li>• At a basic level, a legitimate king and loyal subjects provide order. At the very beginning of the play order is restored when Macbeth and Banquo lead Duncan's victorious armies against the Scottish rebels and the Norwegian invaders. The legitimate king is kept in place, he rewards his loyal subjects and all seems like it could be well in the kingdom.</li> <li>• The witches very quickly undermine this order, as the supernatural forces do their work to create disorder and chaos.</li> <li>• Earlier in this post I explained the concept of the natural order of the world, which a contemporary audience would have believed in and desired. The forces of the supernatural – represented by the witches in the play – are consistently trying to subvert and undermine this natural order. They prey on weak, flawed characters like Macbeth to sow chaos.</li> <li>• As the unnatural disorder starts to take hold under Macbeth's reign, Scotland starts to sink into a tyrannical mess. Banquo and Macduff's family are murdered, Fleance just escapes with his life and Malcolm and Donalbain have to flee the country. We also hear about terrible problems affecting every aspect of life in the kingdom. Disorder in the structure of society creates chaos everywhere.</li> <li>• The audience is shown how brave characters like Macduff and later Malcolm stand up to this tyranny and take on Macbeth's disorder, ultimately restoring the natural order of things as Malcolm takes the crown back to its legitimate home.</li> </ul>	<p>Duncan: "O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!"</p> <p>Duncan: "No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive our bosom interest: go pronounce his present death, and with his former title greet Macbeth."</p> <p>Duncan: "What he hath lost noble Macbeth hath won."</p> <p>Macbeth: "The service and the loyalty I owe, in doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part is to receive our duties; and our duties are to your throne and state children and servants, which do but what they should, by doing every thing safe toward your love and honour."</p> <p>Macduff: "each new morn new widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike heaven on the face, that it resounds as if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out like syllable of dolour"</p> <p>Macduff: "Bleed, bleed, poor country! Great tyranny!"</p> <p>Ross: "Alas, poor country! almost afraid to know itself. It cannot be call'd our mother, but our grave"</p> <p>Macduff: "Hail, king! For so though art: behold, where stands the usurper's cursed head: the time is free: I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl, that speak my salutation in their minds; whose voices I desire aloud with mine: hail, King of Scotland!"</p>
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## Power – Kingship Vs Tyranny

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We've touched on this theme when discussing all of the others. The Shakespearean audience had two concepts of leadership, stemming from medieval kings.</li> <li>• Firstly, noble kingship would be based on a legitimate king who derived loyalty from his subjects. He would rule well and in the interests of the kingdom and his subjects.</li> <li>• In contrast, a tyrant would be a leader like Macbeth. Possibly illegitimate and definitely ruling in his own selfish interests. A tyrant would not think twice about murdering, stealing or being corrupt simply to stay in power and promote his interests. A tyrant would create disorder and chaos throughout his kingdom. No element of society would function properly under a tyrant.</li> <li>• Shakespeare presents some examples of both types of leadership. Duncan, Malcolm (and in the future Banquo's descendants) will rule justly and maintain order.</li> <li>• Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and shown to become cruel tyrants, driven to the extreme by overriding ambition and the influence of the supernatural.</li> </ul>	<p>Duncan: <i>"O worthiest cousin! the sin of my ingratitude even now was heavy on me"</i></p> <p>Macbeth: <i>"The service and the loyalty I owe, in doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part is to receive our duties; and our duties are to your throne and state children and servants, which do but what they should, by doing every thing safe toward your love and honour."</i></p> <p>Ross: <i>"Alas, poor country! almost afraid to know itself. It cannot be call'd our mother, but our grave"</i></p> <p>Angus: <i>"Those he commands move only in command, nothing in love: now does he feel his title hand loose about him, like a giants robe upon a dwarfish thief."</i></p>
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**Guilt**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From driving ambition and the supernatural come murders, exile, fear and terror. The impact of their crimes is</li> </ul>	<p>Macbeth: <i>"If good, why do I yield to that suggestion whose horrid image doth unfix my hair and make my</i></p>
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<p>not lost on Macbeth or even Lady Macbeth. Both characters are shown to feel and deal with guilt at different points in the play.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macbeth initially feels guilty for considering murder and then for actually killing Duncan.</li> <li>• He is then consumed by guilt following the second murder of Banquo. At a banquet Macbeth hallucinates with visions of Banquo's ghost sitting in his place.</li> <li>• It is Lady Macbeth who remains calm and in control up to this point.</li> <li>• The mental states of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth trade paces in the final stages of the play. Macbeth regains control over his guilt and his sanity, while becoming a much darker, more brutal character.</li> <li>• Lady Macbeth, however, loses control as the play continues. She descends into madness and dies alone, seemingly consumed by guilt for her crimes.</li> </ul>	<p><i>seated heart knock at my ribs, against the use of nature?"</i></p> <p>Macbeth: <i>"Prithee, see there! Behold! Look! Lo! ...If charnel-houses and our graves must send those that we bury back, our monuments shall be the maws of kites."</i></p> <p>Macbeth: <i>"To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done: the castle of Macduff I will surprise; seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword his wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls that trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool; this deed I'll do before this purpose cool. "</i></p> <p>Macbeth: <i>"I am in blood stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er.</i>  Lady Macbeth: <i>"Out, damned spot! Out, I say!"</i></p>
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### **Example exam questions and planning**

At this point in the play, Banquo and Macbeth have just met the witches. The witches have just told Macbeth he will one day be the King of Scotland.

<p><b>BANQUO</b>          Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear          Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,          Are ye fantastical, or that indeed          Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner          You greet with present grace and great prediction          Of noble having and of royal hope,          That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not.          If you can look into the seeds of time,          And say which grain will grow and which will not,          Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear          Your favours nor your hate.</p> <p><b>First Witch</b>          Hail!</p> <p><b>Second Witch</b>          Hail!</p> <p><b>Third Witch</b>          Hail!</p> <p><b>First Witch</b>          Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.</p> <p><b>Second Witch</b>          Not so happy, yet much happier.</p> <p><b>Third Witch</b>          Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:          So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!</p> <p><b>First Witch</b>          Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!</p> <p><b>MACBETH</b>          Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:          By Sinel's death I know I am thane of Glamis;          But how of Cawdor? The thane of Cawdor lives,          A prosperous gentleman; and to be king          Stands not within the prospect of belief,          No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence          You owe this strange intelligence? or why          Upon this blasted heath you stop our way          With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.</p> <p><b>(The Witches vanish)</b></p>	<p>5</p> <p>10</p> <p>15</p> <p>20</p> <p>25</p>
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Starting

Q1: with this conversation, explain how far Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a character who believes in the **supernatural power of the witches**.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth's reaction to the witches here
- How Shakespeare presents his beliefs in them elsewhere in the play.

**Things to read / think / write about:**

**READ the character analysis of the Witches**

- Macbeth's dramatic reaction to the predictions delivered by the **"weird sisters"**. It is so striking that Banquo observes Macbeth's facial expression and addresses him directly (see lines 1 – 2).
- Banquo's remark to the witches about Macbeth being **"rapt withal"**. Discuss the significance of this in the context of Macbeth's belief in the **supernatural**.
- Shakespeare's choice of **imperative verbs** when Macbeth commands the weird sisters (twice on line 20 and again on line 28).
- The significance of a series of questions addressed directly to the witches and Shakespeare's choice of **diction** in Macbeth's opinion that the witches possess **"strange intelligence"**. What does this series of questions convey to an **audience** about Macbeth's belief in, and attitude towards, the **supernatural**?
- Consider the use of **dramatic irony** here, too. The **audience** is aware that Duncan has decreed the title Thane of Cawdor is to pass to Macbeth for his bravery in battle. Is Shakespeare trying to shape the audience's opinion of belief in the **supernatural**?
- Consider Macbeth's aside shortly after the first prediction is realised when Ross brings news that Duncan has bestowed the title Thane of Cawdor on Macbeth. In an **aside**, Macbeth reflects on the encounter and remarks: **"This supernatural soliciting/ Cannot be good, cannot be ill."** Discuss the significance of Macbeth's uncertainty about the **supernatural** being good or evil here.
- Contrast this with Banquo's very different reaction to the witches and the advice he gives to Macbeth: **"And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's  
In deepest consequence."**
- Macbeth's ignorance of Banquo's advice and later visit to the witches. Explain what motivates him to visit them and what this conveys to an audience about his belief in their abilities, given his later bold claim that he bears **"a charmed life"** which **"must not yield / To one of woman born."**
- The futility and **irony** of Macbeth's final comment in the play, to Macduff: **"damned be he who first cries, 'Hold – enough!'"** in the context of having already surrendered his soul to the devil for committing the act of regicide.

**PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE:** Explore how Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a character who believes in the supernatural power of the witches.

<p><b>Explain ONE aspect of Shakespeare's presentation of character / theme / setting</b></p> <p><i>Shakespeare presents ... as ...</i></p>	
<p><b>Provide some evidence in the form of a quotation or reference to the text.</b></p> <p><i>(Don't limit yourself to one quotation or reference!)</i></p>	
<p><b>ZOOM IN to the quotation.</b></p> <p><i>(Try to show your understanding of Shakespeare's deliberate use of language to achieve certain effects. Use <u>connectives</u> to develop the layers of your analysis.)</i></p>	
<p><b>ZOOM OUT to one or more of the following, as appropriate:</b></p> <p><i>Link your close analysis to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The rest of the play</i></li> <li>• <i>A key theme</i></li> <li>• <i>Social, historical or cultural contexts</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Conclude:</b></p> <p><i>by linking back to your opening point, making a deeper comment about the character / theme / setting, based on your analysis and exploration.</i></p>	

**Macbeth**

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 5 of Macbeth and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Lady Macbeth is speaking. She has just received the news that King Duncan will be spending the night at her castle.

The raven himself is hoarse That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan Under my battlements. Come, you spirits That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood; Stop up the access and passage to remorse, That no compunctious visitings of nature Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts, And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers, Wherever in your sightless substances You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night, And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, That my keen knife see not the wound it makes, Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark, To cry 'Hold, hold!'	<b>5</b>  <b>10</b>  <b>15</b>
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Q1: Starting with this speech, explain how far you think Shakespeare presents

Lady Macbeth as a **powerful woman**.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth in this speech
- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth in the play as a whole. [30 marks]

SPAG [4 marks]

**Things you might write about:**

- The **connotations** of the “*raven*” and her use of the adjective “*fatal*” to describe Duncan’s entrance to Dunsinane castle. What does it convey about her immediate thoughts and reactions to Macbeth’s letter?
- Summoning evil spirits. Explain clearly **what** Lady Macbeth invites the “*murdering ministers*” to do to her body and **why** she requests their assistance.
- The fact she imagines committing the regicide **herself** in this **soliloquy**: she refers to the weapon as “*my keen knife*”. However, she does not later commit the crime herself. What reason does she give for not doing so, in an **aside** to the audience in Act 2 scene 2, lines 15 – 16? Explain what impressions this **private admission** conveys about Lady Macbeth’s character to the audience.
- Think now about **Act 3 scene 2**, where we first see Lady Macbeth as Queen. In an **aside** to the audience at the opening of this scene, explain what feelings she **privately** admits to, now that her **ambition** to be queen has been fulfilled.
- Now think about our **final impressions** of Lady Macbeth, in **Act 5 scene 1**. Write about the significance of having “*light by her continually*” and how this links to her desire to be wrapped in “*the dunnest smoke of Hell*” when first contemplating Duncan’s murder. Explain also the **irony** of her constantly rubbing her hands, given her comment to Macbeth on the night of Duncan’s murder: “*A little water clears us of this deed.*”

**KEY WORD VOCABULARY:** try to use these words in your response. Check spelling of key terms.

**soliloquy      audience      impression      initial      admission      ambitious**

**fiendish      determined      callous      ironic      significant      aside**



PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE: Explain how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as a powerful woman.

<p><b>Explain ONE aspect of Shakespeare's presentation of character / theme / setting</b></p> <p><i>Shakespeare presents ... as ...</i></p>	
<p><b>Provide some evidence in the form of a quotation or reference to the text.</b></p> <p><i>(Don't limit yourself to one quotation or reference!)</i></p>	
<p><b>ZOOM IN to the quotation.</b></p> <p><i>(Try to show your understanding of Shakespeare's deliberate use of language to achieve certain effects. Use <u>connectives</u> to develop the layers of your analysis.)</i></p>	
<p><b>ZOOM OUT to one or more of the following, as appropriate:</b></p> <p><i>Link your close analysis to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The rest of the play</i></li> <li>• <i>A key theme</i></li> <li>• <i>Social, historical or cultural contexts</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Conclude:</b></p> <p><i>by linking back to your opening point, making a deeper comment about the character / theme / setting, based on your analysis and exploration.</i></p>	

At this point in the play, Macbeth has decided he will **not** kill King Duncan. He is just about to share this news with his wife, Lady Macbeth.

<p><b>MACBETH</b>          We will proceed no further in this business:          He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought          Golden opinions from all sorts of people,          Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,          Not cast aside so soon.</p>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>LADY MACBETH</b>          Was the hope drunk          Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?          And wakes it now, to look so green and pale          At what it did so freely? From this time          Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard          To be the same in thine own act and valour          As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that          Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,          And live a coward in thine own esteem,          Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'          Like the poor cat i' the adage?</p>	<b>10</b>
<p><b>MACBETH</b>          Prithee, peace:          I dare do all that may become a man;          Who dares do more is none.</p>	<b>15</b>
<p><b>LADY MACBETH</b>          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.</p>	<b>20</b>

Q1: Starting with this conversation, explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as the **dominant partner** in this relationship.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth in this speech
- how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth elsewhere in the play. [30 marks]

SPAG [4 marks]

**Things to think and write about:**

**FIRST – Read the character analysis of Lady Macbeth.** Highlight useful points and consider where you might synthesise them into your response.

- Comment on Lady Macbeth's violent emotional reaction to Macbeth's decision. Comment on **Shakespeare's choice of imagery** here, where Macbeth's "**hope**" is **personified** by Lady Macbeth in a scathing criticism of his cowardice (see lines 6 to 9).
- Comment on Macbeth's attempt to assert **his dominance** in this exchange (see lines 17 to 19). Is it successful? What is Macbeth's view of murder here? How is it different from hers?
- Her use of **euphemisms** (on lines 21 and 22) to cleverly avoid having to use the word "murder", given Macbeth's announcement in this exchange that he will **not** commit the deed. How does this show **her dominance** in their relationship?
- Explain how the **dynamics** of their relationship changes once Macbeth usurps Duncan's throne. Consider their disagreement over Macbeth's plans for Banquo in Act 3 scene 2. How does Lady Macbeth try to assert **her dominance** in that conversation (see Act 3 Scene 2, lines 25 to 40)? Is she successful?
- Our **final impressions** of her: a pitiable, tragic and troubled woman, frightened of the "**dunest smoke of Hell**" she so willingly asked to be wrapped in at the beginning of the play.

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE: Explain how far Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as the dominant partner in this relationship.

<p><b>Explain ONE aspect of Shakespeare's presentation of character / theme / setting</b></p> <p><i>Shakespeare presents ... as ...</i></p>	
<p><b>Provide some evidence in the form of a quotation or reference to the text.</b></p> <p><i>(Don't limit yourself to one quotation or reference!)</i></p>	
<p><b>ZOOM IN to the quotation.</b></p> <p><i>(Try to show your understanding of Shakespeare's deliberate use of language to achieve certain effects. Use <u>connectives</u> to develop the layers of your analysis.)</i></p>	
<p><b>ZOOM OUT to one or more of the following, as appropriate:</b></p> <p><i>Link your close analysis to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The rest of the play</i></li> <li>• <i>A key theme</i></li> <li>• <i>Social, historical or cultural contexts</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Conclude:</b></p> <p><i>by linking back to your opening point, making a deeper comment about the character / theme / setting, based on your analysis and exploration.</i></p>	

### **Banquo and Macbeth**

This is from Act 3 scene 1 of the play. At this point in the play, Macbeth is now king of Scotland. His friend Banquo expresses his private fears that Macbeth was involved in the murder of King Duncan.

<p><b>BANQUO</b>          Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,          As the weird women promised, and, I fear,          Thou play'dst 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.</p>	<p><b>5</b></p>
<p><b>Enter MACBETH, as king, LADY MACBETH, as queen, LENNOX, ROSS, Lords, Ladies, and Attendants</b></p>	
<p><b>MACBETH</b>          Here's our chief guest.</p> <p><b>LADY MACBETH</b>          If he had been forgotten,          It had been as a gap in our great feast,          And all-thing unbecoming.</p> <p><b>MACBETH</b>          To-night we hold a solemn supper sir,          And I'll request your presence.</p>	<p><b>10</b></p>
<p><b>BANQUO</b>          Let your highness          Command upon me; to the which my duties          Are with a most indissoluble tie          For ever knit.</p>	<p><b>15</b></p>
	<p><b>20</b></p>

**Q1:**

Starting with this conversation, explain how Shakespeare presents the **relationship between Banquo and Macbeth**.

Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents their relationship in this conversation
- how Shakespeare presents the relationship elsewhere in the play.

**Things to think and write about:**

**FIRST – Read the character analysis of Banquo.** Highlight any useful points.

Think about where and how you might synthesise these points in your response.

The relationship presented in this extract is one of **mutual - but unspoken - mistrust**. Look closely at **Banquo's aside**, where he reflects on Macbeth's recent gains. Explain what emotion Banquo privately expresses here and what this conveys to the **audience** about the reality of their relationship as friends at this point in the play.

- Macbeth's reference to Banquo as the "**chief guest**" at the "**solemn supper**" to be held later the same evening – an **ironic** comment given Macbeth's **soliloquy** immediately after this conversation when he admits that his "**fears in Banquo stick deep**", followed by a plot to murder him.
- Explain **Banquo's function** in the play. Discuss the qualities that Banquo and Macbeth have in common. (*Look at the first five lines of Macbeth's soliloquy, Act 3 scene 1 lines 50 to 55, where Macbeth explains what those qualities are!*) Explain why Shakespeare presents these two characters as being so similar in many ways.
- Now, explain the major difference between them and in what way Banquo's **virtue** shapes the **audience's** opinion of Macbeth's **vice**. *You might refer to the way the two men react differently to the witches and their predictions in Act 1 scene 3 to illustrate how they are dissimilar in one very significant way.*
- You might discuss the **significance** and the **irony** of Banquo's ghost honouring Macbeth's request, delivered in this extract: "**To-night we hold a solemn supper sir, / And I'll request your presence.**" Plagued by a guilty conscience, the betrayer is tormented by the ghost of his innocent victim. None of the guests yet know Banquo is dead. Ironically, the guests assume that Macbeth is being haunted by the ghost of someone else, perhaps Duncan. Macbeth's seemingly bizarre conversation with "**a stool**" incriminate him in a murder and so Banquo's initial suspicion in this extract, that Macbeth "**play'dst most foully**" for Duncan's crown is a suspicion now entertained by all the guests at this supposedly "**solemn supper.**"

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE: Explain how Shakespeare presents the relationship between Macbeth and Banquo.

Explain ONE aspect of Shakespeare's presentation of character / theme / setting	
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<p><i>Shakespeare presents ... as ...</i></p>	
<p><b>Provide some evidence in the form of a quotation or reference to the text.</b></p> <p><i>(Don't limit yourself to one quotation or reference!)</i></p>	
<p><b>ZOOM IN to the quotation.</b></p> <p><i>(Try to show your understanding of Shakespeare's deliberate use of language to achieve certain effects. Use <u>connectives</u> to develop the layers of your analysis.)</i></p>	
<p><b>ZOOM OUT to one or more of the following, as appropriate:</b></p> <p><i>Link your close analysis to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The rest of the play</i></li> <li>• <i>A key theme</i></li> <li>• <i>Social, historical or cultural contexts</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Conclude:</b></p> <p><i>by linking back to your opening point, making a deeper comment about the character / theme / setting, based on your analysis and exploration.</i></p>	