

‘Macbeth’ – Knowledge Organiser

Context	Key Things to Remember
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ King James I – Macbeth was written in 1606, early in the reign of James I, who succeeded to the English throne in 1603 after being King of Scotland. The play pays homage to the king’s Scottish lineage and hatred of witches. Additionally, the witches’ prophecy that Banquo will found a line of kings is a nod to James’ family’s claim to have descended from the historical Banquo. ▪ The Divine Right of Kings – the idea that kings got their power from God and not from their subject. James I was a believer in this, and the idea meant that any treasonous activity was a crime against God. Only a century earlier, England had suffered under the massive disorder of the Wars of the Roses, so many supported the idea to avoid civil unrest. ▪ Patriarchy – patriarchal societies are those in which men dominate, and inheritance passes through male heirs. ▪ Gender – Macbeth and Lady Macbeth switch between having masculine and feminine characteristics. In the play, gender is often linked to ambition and a willingness to do anything to achieve power. ▪ Women – Women were expected to follow social expectations with their behaviour towards men. They were meant to obey all men, be faithful and respectful, not be violent and be religious. They would have been regarded as a possession, first owned by the father, then given to and owned by the husband. Women were considered the delicate, ‘fairer’ sex and they should be quiet and reserved, always respecting the wishes and opinions of the males in their lives. Lady Macbeth subverts these expectations in the play to manipulate Macbeth in getting what she wants. ▪ Adam, Eve and the serpent – in the bible, Adam and Eve live peacefully in the Garden of Eden until Eve is tempted by the serpent and eats the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge. She convinces Adam to eat as well, and God curses them and banishes them to Earth. The serpent is frequently alluded to in Macbeth. ▪ Witchcraft – in Shakespeare’s time there was no scientific knowledge to explain natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and droughts. One of the ways they accounted for the unexplained was the idea of witches. In Elizabethan England, hundreds of thousands of women were tortured and executed in Europe because they were accused of witchcraft. The King wrote a book on the subject entitled ‘Daemonologie’ and appealed to parliament to pass the following act in 1563 which was still a part of English law until 1951. At the time Shakespeare was writing, many people thought that witches were real, so the weird sisters would have seemed believable and frightening to an audience in the 1600s. ▪ The 5 Acts: Macbeth is a typical tragedy. The first part builds up the turning point (Duncan’s murder), and the second part deal with the consequences of this, which leads to the main character’s downfall. ▪ Tragic Conventions: 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); the character has something the audience can identify with which outweighs their flaws so we care about them. ▪ The Real Macbeth: Macbeth is loosely based on true events in feudal Scotland in the 11th Century and would have been known to King James. King James inherited the throne through his ancestors Banquo and Fleance who appear in the play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The play was written in 1606 but was set in the 11th century (Medieval period). ▪ In the play, King Duncan was a benevolent king and loved by all. In real life he was a weak king. ▪ Banquo is intrigued by the prophecies and does have ambitious thoughts, but he does not choose to act on these thoughts. ▪ There are many similarities between Banquo and Macbeth. They are both soldiers, they are both very patriotic at the start of the play and they are both considered to be brave and noble. ▪ Shakespeare believed the human nature is prone to evil and that people are greedy. He illustrates this in the Macbeths’ desire to become King and Queen. This greed led them to resort to extreme measures such as regicide. In Macbeth’s case, his greed led him to kill others, too. ▪ Macbeth kills Macdonald, Duncan, Duncan’s guards and Young Siward himself. ▪ Macbeth orders the deaths of Lady Macduff, her family and household and Banquo. ▪ Macbeth is the only Shakespearean play set in Scotland. ▪ Macbeth’s castle is in Inverness. The Royal Palace is in Dunsinane. ▪ The Gunpowder Plot occurred in 1605, one year before the play was written.
Characters	
Macbeth	A loyal warrior who becomes duplicitous as he becomes obsessed with the witches’ prophecies of power.
Lady Macbeth	Macbeth’s wife who drives his ambition in the beginning but loses her control by the end.
Banquo	Macbeth’s close friend and ally who also receives prophecies.
Fleance	Banquo’s son who represents innocence and justice.
Duncan	King of Scotland at the beginning of the play - a strong, respected leader.
Malcolm	Duncan’s oldest son and next in line to the throne. Joins the English army to defeat Macbeth at the end of the play.
Donalbain	Duncan’s youngest son disappears (to Ireland) after Duncan’s murder.
Macduff	Macbeth’s antagonist: A brave warrior who is loyal to Duncan and is consistently suspicious of Macbeth.
Themes	
Ambition	The witches’ prophecies spur Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to fulfil their ambitions, but they never <i>make</i> them do anything.
Fate and Free Will	What made it all happen? Fate? The witches? Macbeth’s free will?
Good and Evil	Good and evil are shown through contrasts in the play. Evil is illustrated by the witches, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, the assassins & traitors. Good is shown by Duncan, Malcolm, Banquo, Macduff, Lady Macduff.
The Supernatural	This is shown through the witches & LM calling upon the spirits.
Appearance and Reality	M and LM look innocent but are plotting behind people’s backs.
Light and Darkness	Light links to good, life and God. Darkness links to evil and foreboding.
Guilt	Guilt is shown through M (internal conflict) and LM’s blood imagery.
Gender	LM challenges and controls M. She subverts the gender stereotypes of the time.

Plot	Key Quotations	Key Terminology			
<p>Act 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 3 witches gather to meet Macbeth and Banquo. Duncan hears the Thane of Cawdor has betrayed him. Macbeth is seen as a hero. Macbeth and Banquo hear the predictions. Duncan decides that Malcolm will be heir to the throne. Duncan plans to visit Macbeth. Lady Macbeth reads Macbeth's letter. <p>Act 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Macbeth has doubts and sees a vision of a floating dagger. He follows through with Duncan's murder. LM has to finish the job by wiping blood on the drunk guards. Macduff discovers Duncan's body. The guards are the likely suspects. Macbeth kills the guards. Malcolm and Donalbain flee the castle because they are afraid. <p>Act 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banquo suspects Macbeth for the murder of King Duncan. Macbeth sends murderers to kill Banquo. Banquo is murdered but Fleance escapes. The ghost of Banquo is at the banquet. Macbeth rants and raves. LM tries to cover up the situation. Macduff didn't attend the banquet as he is suspicious of Macbeth. <p>Act 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Macbeth visits the 3 witches and they show him more visions. He believes he can't be killed by any man. Macbeth sends murderers to Macduff's castle to kill his family. In England, Macduff begs Malcolm to return to the throne. Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty then agrees to the war against Macbeth. <p>Act 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LM has gone mad with guilt. She sleepwalks and tries to clean blood from her hands. She commits suicide. Many of Macbeth's supporters decide to help Malcolm. Macbeth isn't worried as he believes the prophecies. Macbeth confronts Macduff and learns that he was not born naturally but by caesarean section. Macbeth and Macduff fight and natural order is restored when Macbeth is killed and Malcolm is crowned king. 	<p>Act 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1) Witches "For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name" (1.2) The Captain "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" (1.3) Macbeth "Stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires" (1.4) Macbeth "Come you spirits...unsex me here and fill me from the crown to the toe top full of direst cruelty." (1.5) Lady Macbeth "Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under'it" (1.6) Lady Macbeth "When you durst do it, then you were a man" (1.7) Lady Macbeth "But screw your courage to the sticking place and we'll not fail." (1.7) Lady Macbeth <p>Act 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Is this a dagger I see before me, the handle towards my hand?"(2.1) Macbeth "Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead are but as pictures" (2.2) Lady Macbeth "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" (2.2) Macbeth "A little water clears us of this deed" (2.2) Lady Macbeth "Wake Duncan with thy knocking, I would thou couldst." (2.2) Macbeth "Oh horror! Horror! Horror! Tongue nor heart cannot conceive, nor name thee" (2.3) Macduff "There's daggers in men's smiles" (2.3) Donaldbain <p>Act 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Thou has it all now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all, as the weird sisters promised, and I fear though play'st most foully for't." (3.1) Banquo "To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo stick deep" (3.1) Macbeth "Of full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife" (3.2) Macbeth "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, till thou applaud the deed" (3.2) Macbeth "Thou canst not say I did it; never shake they gory locks at me" (3.4) Macbeth " My lord is often thus, and hath been from his youth" (3.4) Lady Macbeth "I am in blood stepp'd so far, that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o' ver" (3.4) Macbeth <p>Act 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Something wicked this way comes" (4.1) Witches "Speak, I charge you" (4.1) Macbeth "From this moment, the very firstlings of my heart shall be the firstling of my hand" (4.1) Macbeth "The castle of Macduff I will surprise; seize upon Fife." (4.1) Macbeth "Let grieve convert to anger. Blunt not the heart, enrage it" (4.3) Malcolm "Macbeth is ripe for shaking, and the powers above put on their instrument" (4.3) Malcolm <p>Act 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Out, damned spot! Out, I say!... Will these hand ne'er be clean?" (5.1) Lady Macbeth "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (5.1) Lady Macbeth "My name's Macbeth" (5.7) Macbeth "Turn, hell-hound, turn...I have no words; my sword is my voice" (5.8) Macduff "I bear a charmed life which must not yield to one of woman born" (5.8) Macbeth "Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd" (5.8) Macduff "I will to yield to kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet" (5.8) Macbeth "Behold where stands the usurper's head" (5.9) Macduff "His fiend-like queen who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands took off her life" (5.9) Malcolm. 	<p>Antithesis</p> <p>Opposite / Contrast</p> <p>Aside</p> <p>A remark heard only by the audience.</p> <p>Dramatic Irony</p> <p>When the audience knows things that the characters don't.</p> <p>Iambic Pentameter</p> <p>A line of verse, with 5 metrical feet, each with one unstressed syllable followed by one stressed syllable.</p> <p>Juxtaposition</p> <p>Two things closely placed with contrasting effect.</p> <p>Monologue</p> <p>A long speech by one actor.</p> <p>Motifs</p> <p>A dominant / recurring idea.</p> <p>Paradox</p> <p>A person/thing with contradictory features or qualities.</p> <p>Semantic field</p> <p>A group of words, which relate to a common theme or motif.</p> <p>Soliloquy</p> <p>Speaking one's thoughts aloud.</p>			
		Key Vocabulary		Ambition	Strong desire to achieve something.
		Apparitions	A ghost/ghost-like image of a person.	Betrayal	Being disloyal.
		Catholics	A person belonging to the Christian church.	Fatal Flaw	A defect / weakness in character.
		Hallucination	Apparent vision of something not present.	Invincible	Feeling too powerful to be defeated.
		Jacobean	Relating to the reign of King James I.	Kinsman	A relative / blood relation.
		Masculinity	Qualities considered to be of a man.	Noble	Belonging to aristocracy.
		Protestant	A member of the Western Christian church.	Regicide	The action of killing a king.
		Remorseless	Without guilt or regret.	Scepticism	Doubts the truth of things.
		Thane	A man with land granted by the king.	Tragedy	A play with tragic events.
		Traitor	A person who betrays someone.	Treason	Betraying one's country.
		Virtuous	Having high moral standards.		