

1. Characterisation	
1. Macbeth	Initially brave and courageous; plagued by self-doubt and indecision ; becomes a ruthless tyrant . Obsession with ambition (his hamartia) destroys his noble characteristics. Archetypal tragic hero : 'brave' in A1 to 'dead butcher' in A5.
2. Lady Macbeth	Drives Macbeth's ambition in A1; takes control after Duncan murder and banquet scene but loses control by end; Devious and manipulative ; destructive guilt represented by blood and sleepwalking. Rejects conventional femininity and maternal instincts. Ambition also a fatal flaw.
3. Banquo	Macbeth's close friend and ally; also receives prophecies from the witches; perceptive and cautious – does not immediately believe prophecies. Noble and wise. Dramatic foil to Macbeth; 'Banquo' was an ancestor of King James I – represents the "right" way to respond to the supernatural
4. Duncan	King of Scotland at the beginning of the play; respected and benevolent leader. Trusting and nurturing towards his nobles. Represents the divine right of kings. Too trusting and is therefore betrayed.
5. Malcolm	Duncan's eldest son and next in line to the throne. Joins the English army to defeat Macbeth at the end of the play. Honest and wise . Becomes a strong leader. Final speech in A5 represents restored order .
6. The Three Witches	Supernatural beings who predict events in the play; conjure sinister spells by chanting ; gruesome and malevolent ; disturbing and unsettling for Jacobean audience; symbolic of disruption of the natural order.
7. Macduff	Thane of Fife; honest, sincere and loyal ; determined to avenge his family's slaughter; a more tender masculinity , represents goodness and hope; ends Macbeth's tyranny and restores natural order at end.
8. Other characters	Fleance : Banquo's son who escapes murder; may come to rule Scotland, fulfilling Witches' prophecy. Lady Macduff : slaughtered cruelly by Macbeth in A4; traditional maternal role juxtaposed with Lady Macbeth. Donalbain : younger son to Duncan; flees to Ireland for refuge after father's murder in A2.

2. Literary Techniques and Methods	
1. Symbolism	blood/bloody hands = guilt ; light and dark = good and evil ; sleep = innocence and peace reversal of nature = disruption of the natural order and the Great Chain of Being
2. Soliloquy and aside	character speaks thoughts and feelings out loud, to audience; e.g. <i>Macbeth in A1 S3</i> ; <i>Lady Macbeth in A1 S5</i> ; makes audience aware of Macbeth's hubris and Lady Macbeth's malevolent intentions .
3. Dramatic Irony	Where the audience know something the characters do not: We know he is Thane of Cawdor before the Witches prophesise it; Duncan describes M castle as 'pleasant' whilst M and LM plot his murder; Macduff receives news of his family's slaughter in A4 when we know already;; Doctor and Nurse cannot understand LM's behaviour during sleepwalking scene in A5.
4. Metaphor	Powerful imagery used throughout the play. E.g. 'the milk of human kindness'; stars hide your fires; full of scorpions is my mind; there's daggers in men's smiles.
5. Contrast + juxtaposition	Macbeth (violently ambitious) – Banquo (honest and noble) Lady Macbeth (devious and cruel) – Lady Macduff (maternal and loyal); Macbeth at the start and end: A1, s2 'brave Macbeth' – A5, s1v 'the dead butcher

QR Codes:

Key Words

Essays

3. Themes and Ideas		
1. Ambition		Ambition motivates Macbeth to commit terrible deeds; ambition is the tragic hero's hamartia - his 'fatal flaw'; Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth by appealing to his pride and ambition; Banquo demonstrates that ambition can be balanced with by morals and reason. <i>Shakespeare warns against the corrosive power of unchecked ambition.</i>
2. Fate versus free will		M first line 'so foul and fair a day' hints that Witches already in control; Witches use prophecies to determine Macbeth's future and eventual downfall ; Ambition and LM also affect Macbeth's free will . M is controlled by prophecies- Banquo is not.
3. Order vs chaos		Witches associated with ' disorder ' and chaos; disorder in nature reflects disorder of Scotland after Duncan's murder; Great Chain of Being : Macbeth's actions subvert the 'natural order'; disorder with Banquo's ghost. Malcolm's monologue in A5 is glimpse of new 'restored order.'
4. Appearance and reality		Hallucinations (dagger, blood, Banquo's ghost) represent fear and guilt of characters; M and LM hide their true intentions from Duncan in A1 "look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under't"; Witches use equivocal language: 'Fair is foul' to deceive and confuse.
5. The Supernatural		Witches are a supernatural force and <i>would have been frightening and believable to a 1600s audience</i> ; the Witches' prophecies drive the action of the play; 'strange' inversions of nature are referenced throughout play; make Macbeth believes he is ' invincible ' in Act 5. <i>King James I was fascinated by the supernatural.</i>
6. Good versus evil		Macbeth transforms from 'noble' and respected in A1 to a 'dead butcher' in A5 - good can become evil. Evil represented by the Witches; Duncan exemplifies a good and benevolent King; Evil linked to gender : LM loses her femininity to become more cruel and ruthless.
7. Loyalty and betrayal		Macbeth betrays his loyalty to King Duncan to follow selfish desires; Macbeth rewarded for loyalty in A1 (Thane of Cawdor) whilst betrayal punished - Cawdor executed; Macduff and Malcolm demonstrate loyalty to Scotland; <i>Gunpowder Plot (1605): Shakespeare uses Macbeth's downfall to demonstrate that treason and disloyalty to the King will be punished severely.</i>

Authorial intention and Tragic Structure

1. Context

1606- Jacobean Britain- James I has ascended to throne in 1603 after death of Elizabeth I. **Witchcraft** widely believed and feared- play can be read as a tribute to James' fascination with the supernatural. **Gender**- LM subverts societal expectations of women. **Gunpowder plot in 1605**- Shakespeare writes Macbeth as a cautionary tale about the consequences of **civil disobedience** and **treason**.

2. Tragic Structure

Tragic structure elements

Plot

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