

# Macbeth – Knowledge Organiser

## Plot summary

Act I scene i – The three witches gather to in a thunder storm to meet Macbeth

Act I scene ii – Duncan hears reports of the battle in which Macbeth proves himself a hero and also of the treachery of the Thane of Cawdor.

Act I scene iii – Macbeth & Banquo meet the witches and hear the predictions that he will be Thane of Cawdor and the next king. Ross arrives to confirm that Macbeth is the new Thane of Cawdor.

Act I scene iv – Duncan decides to make his son Malcolm the heir to his throne and tells Macbeth that he will visit his castle.

Act I scene v – Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband about the events so far and makes up her mind to murder Duncan.

Act I scene vi – Duncan arrives at Macbeth’s castle and is welcomed by Lady Macbeth.

Act I scene vii – Macbeth decides he cannot go through with the plot but Lady Macbeth persuades him to change his mind.

Act II scene i – Banquo feels uneasy about what might happen in the night. Macbeth makes his way to Duncan’s room to kill him and sees a ghostly dagger floating in the air before him.

Act II scene ii – Macbeth forgets to leave the bloody daggers in Duncan’s room after the murder and Lady Macbeth is forced to take charge and put them back.

Act II scene iii – The next morning Duncan’s body is discovered by Macduff; Macbeth conveniently kills the servants in pretend rage; Duncan’s sons, Malcolm & Donalbain, flee the castle.

Act II scene iv – Macduff reports that suspicion for the murder has fallen on the king’s sons; Macbeth has travelled to Scone to be crowned.

Act III scene i – Macbeth is now king, but Banquo is suspicious about how the witch’s predications have come true. Macbeth arranges to have him murdered.

Act III scene ii – Lady Macbeth tries to get her husband to talk to her about his plans but he refuses.

Act III scene iii – Banquo is murdered but his son, Fleance, escapes.

Act III scene iv – At a feast that night, Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo. Lady Macbeth tries to calm him down but when this fails cancels the feasts and sends the courtiers away.

Act III scene v – The witches discuss events so far; Hecate, the ruler of the witches, predicts his downfall.

Act III scene vi – suspicion of Macbeth is growing; Macduff has left for England to rouse support against him.

Act IV scene i – The witches tell Macbeth he cannot be harmed by anyone ‘born of a woman’ and that he will be safe until Birnam Wood moves to the castle at Dunsinane. Macbeth decides to murder Macduff’s family.

Act IV scene ii – Macbeth’s murderers kill Lady Macduff and her children.

Act IV scene iii – Macduff discovers his family’s murder and, with Malcolm, leads an army to attack Macbeth.

Act V scene i – Lady Macbeth is sleep walking and trying to wash an imaginary blood spot from her hands.

Act V scene ii – Malcolm’s army is at Birnam Wood and hear reports that Macbeth’s supporters are deserting him.

Act V scene iii – Macbeth is besieged but puts his trust in the witches’ prophecy.

Act V scene iv – Malcolm orders his army to cut down branches from Birnam Wood to disguise the number of soldiers.

Act V scene v – Macbeth is told of his wife’s death and about the news that Birnam Wood seems to be approaching. He resolves to die fighting.

Act V scene vi - ix – Macbeth is killed by Macduff (who reveals he was delivered by caesarean and so not properly ‘born’). Malcolm becomes the new king of Scotland and order is restored.

Key characters	Key themes	Historical context	Stylistic features and symbols
<p><b>Macbeth</b> Thane of Glamis  <b>Lady Macbeth</b> his wife  <b>Banquo</b> Macbeth’s best friend  <b>Fleance</b> Banquo’s son  <b>Duncan</b> King of Scotland  <b>Malcolm</b> Duncan’s eldest son  <b>Macduff</b> – Thane of Fife  <b>Lady Macduff</b> his wife  <b>Donalbain</b> Duncan’s younger son  <b>Ross, Lennox, Angus</b> Scottish nobles  <b>The witches</b> – supernatural beings who predict events in the play.  <b>Hecate</b> ruler of the witches</p>	<p><b>Ambition</b> seen as a purely negative quality.  <b>Guilt</b> - the play shows the terrible consequences of murdering a king.  <b>Kingship vs tyranny</b> – Duncan and Macbeth embody the qualities of a good king and a tyrant respectively.  <b>Order vs chaos</b> Natural order is disrupted then re-established.  <b>Fate</b>  <b>Masculinity/femininity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Macbeth</i> was most likely written in 1606, early in the reign of James I, who had been James VI of Scotland before he succeeded to the English throne in 1603.</li> <li>• Only a century earlier, 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 as an ungodly state.</li> <li>• The play pays homage to the king’s Scottish lineage. Additionally, the witches’ prophecy that Banquo will found a line of kings is a clear nod to James’s family’s claim to have descended from the historical Banquo.</li> <li>• The theme of bad versus good kingship, embodied by Macbeth and Duncan, respectively, would have resonated at the royal court, where James was busy developing his English version of the theory of the <b>divine right of kings</b>.</li> <li>• The play was first performed not long after the <b>Gunpowder Plot</b>. Shakespeare shows the murderers of a king tormented by their own guilt and driven to their doom.</li> <li>• It was believed that kings were appointed by ‘divine right’ and were anointed by God. To kill a king was considered the worst sin and a terrible crime.</li> <li>• <i>Macbeth</i> is a <b>tragedy</b> and the character of Macbeth is a <b>tragic hero</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Blood</b> – a symbol of guilt and violence  <b>The supernatural</b> – belief in witchcraft was widespread and Shakespeare uses prophecy, hallucinations, ghosts and magic to give the play a menacing, unnatural feel.  <b>Oxymoron</b> – opposites &amp; contradiction recur throughout the play  <b>Pathetic fallacy</b> – unnatural events are usually echoed by unnatural weather  Alliteration  <b>Blank verse</b> – non rhyming lines written in <b>iambic pentameter</b> (iam= a beat <i>du duh</i>; pent = five)  <b>Soliloquy</b> – where a character speaks their thoughts aloud to the audience  <b>Monologue</b> – a long speech by a single character  <b>Dramatic irony</b> – when the audience knows more than a character or characters do</p>

## Key Quotations

The witches: Fair is foul, and foul is fair, Hover through the fog an filthy air. *(Act I, Scene i)*

The witches: When the battle's lost and won. *(Act I, Scene i)*

The witches: When shall we three meet again in thunder, lightning, or in rain? When the hurlyburly 's done, When the battle 's lost and won. *(Act I, Scene i)*

Captain: For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name— Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel, Which smoked with bloody execution, Like valour's minion carved out his passage *(Act I, Scene ii)*

Macbeth: So foul and fair a day I have not seen *(Act I, Scene III)*

Banquo: And oftentimes, to win us to our harm, the instruments of darkness tell us truths *(Act I scene iii)*

Macbeth: If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me. *(Act I, Scene III)*

Malcolm: Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it; he died as one that had been studied in his death to throw away the dearest thing he owed, as 't were a careless trifle. *(Act I, Scene IV)*

Macbeth: Stars hide your fires let not light see my black and deep desires. *(Act I, Scene IV)*

Lady Macbeth: Yet do I fear thy nature; It is too full o' the milk of human kindness. *(Act I, Scene V)*

Lady Macbeth: Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't. *(Act I, Scene V)*

Lady Macbeth: Come, you spirits That tend on mortal thoughts, un-sex me here And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull Of direst cruelty *(Act I, Scene v)*

Duncan: This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself Unto our gentle senses. *(Act I, Scene vi)*

Macbeth: If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well It were done quickly. *(Act I, Scene vii)*

Macbeth: I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself And falls on th'other. *(Act I, Scene vii)*

Macbeth: I dare do all that may become a man; Who dares do more is none. *(Act I, Scene vii)*

Lady Macbeth: Screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail. *(Act I, Scene vii)*

Macbeth: False face must hide what the false heart doth know. *(Act I, scene vii)*

Macbeth: I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself, and falls on the other. *(Act I, Scene vii)*

Macbeth: Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand? *(Act II, Scene I)*

Macbeth: Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red. *(Act II, Scene ii)*

Donalbain: Where we are there's daggers in men's smiles. The near in blood, The nearer bloody. *(Act II, Scene iii)*

Banquo: Thou hast it now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all., as the weird sisters promis'd, and I fear Thou hast play'd most foully for't *(Act III scene i)*

Macbeth: Only for them, and mine eternal jewel Given to the common enemy of man, To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings! *(Act III, Scene i)*

Lady Macbeth: What's done is done. Macbeth: We have scorch'd the snake, not kill'd it. *(Act III, Scene ii)*

Macbeth: O full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife! *(Act III, Scene ii)*

Macbeth: Duncan is in his grave; After life's fitful fever he sleeps well *(Act III, Scene lii)*

Macbeth: I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in saucy doubts and fears. *(Act III, scene Iv)*

Macbeth: Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me! *(Act III, scene Iv)*

The witches: By the pricking of my thumbs, Something wicked this way comes. *(Act IV, Scene i)*

The witches: Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble. *(Act IV, Scene i)*

Malcolm: Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell. Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace, Yet grace must still look so. *(Act IV, Scene iii)*

Lady Macbeth: Out, damned spot! out, I say! *(Act V, Scene i).*

Lady Macbeth: Here's the smell of blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. *(Act V, Scene i)*

Macbeth: I have lived long enough. My way of life Is fallen into the sear, the yellow leaf, And that which should accompany old age, As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, I must not look to have; but in their stead Curses, not loud but deep *(Act V, Scene iii)*

Macbeth: To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, Creeps in this petty pace from day to day, To the last syllable of recorded time; And all our yesterdays have lighted fools The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, And then is heard no more. It is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing. *(Act V, Scene v)*

Macbeth: I bear a charmed life which must not yield To one of woman born. Macduff: Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd. *(Act V, Scene viii)*

Malcolm: Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen *(Act V, Scene ix)*