



# **GCSE Revision Cards for *Macbeth***

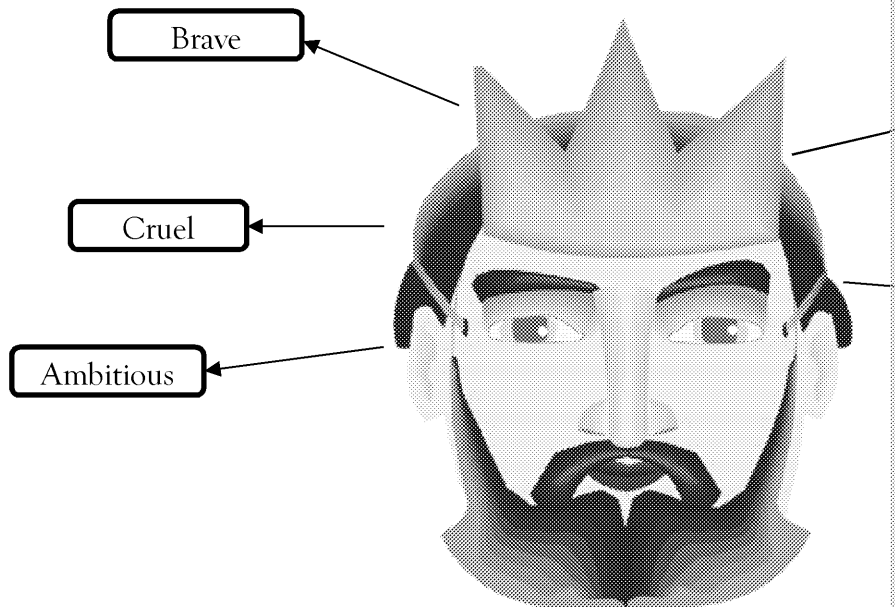
*Part 2 of 2: A4 Master Copies*

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## Card 1: Characters – Macbeth

1. Can you find evidence to demonstrate each of Macbeth's character traits in the diagram below?



2. How do the following statements show how Macbeth was perceived by others in the play? Do you consider their opinions to be an accurate view of Macbeth?
- a) Duncan: *'O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!'*
  - b) Lady Macbeth:  
*'Yet do I fear thy nature:  
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness,'*
  - c) Witch: *'Something wicked this way comes.'*



## LEARNING POINT

Notice how Macbeth changes during the play. At first, he is a noble warrior and more evil. He also changes in other ways – at first he is indecisive and the king and his manhood is often challenged by Lady Macbeth. However, he does not hesitate to kill Banquo and others. Also, his drive and ambition are very different to his view of life at the end.

**Extension Task:** Macbeth is not evil throughout the play. In fact, at first he is a noble figure. Discuss why this makes the play so much more powerful in its impact.

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## Card 1: Characters – Macbeth

1. **Ambitious** – The witches easily convince Macbeth to murder Duncan. prophecy that he will be king, he is obsessed by the idea.

**Cruel** – There are many examples of Macbeth's cruelty. Perhaps the most brutal is the murder of Macduff's wife and child.

*'The castle of Macduff I will surprise;*

*Seize upon Fife; give to th' edge o' th' sword*

*His wife, his babes,'*

**Brave** – For all his faults, Macbeth can be brave. He is made Thane of Cawdor for his bravery in battle; and even at the very end, he is prepared to face death.

*'damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!''*

**Has a conscience** – Both before the murder and afterwards, he is stricken with guilt. Before the murder, he says:

*'We will proceed no further in this business:*

*He hath honour'd me of late:'*

– After Duncan's murder, he asks:

*'But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen"?'*

*I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"*

*Stuck in my throat.'*

**Easily manipulated** – Macbeth is manipulated into committing murder. He is also manipulated by his wife after he decides not to kill the king. Lady Macbeth says:

*'When you durst do it, then you were a man:'*

2. a) Duncan considers Macbeth to be loyal and heroic. He is correct in his assessment of Macbeth's life, this is how Macbeth had behaved.
- b) Lady Macbeth considers Macbeth to be **'too kind'**. No one else would have been so kind to her. What she is really concerned about is that he lacks the cold-heartedness of a king.
- c) The witches have been able to lead Macbeth into carrying out evil deeds because of a flaw in his own personality. They did not make him wicked; rather they brought out what was already within him.

### Extension Task

Points discussed might include:

- This shows a character who follows a tragic fate, falling from a position of power.
- It demonstrates the negative effects that can be caused by excessive ambition.
- Typically, an audience would not sympathise/empathise with a man who commits such crimes, but to some extent we can empathise with Macbeth.

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**Card 2: Characters – Lady Macbeth**

- Both the witches and Lady Macbeth convince Macbeth to murder. How do their attempts to influence Macbeth differ?
- Why does Lady Macbeth cry *'unsex me here'*?
- 'Out, damned spot!'*  
*'will these hands ne'er be clean?'*

What do these two statements reveal about Lady Macbeth's state of mind?

- As Lady Macbeth waits outside while her husband murders Duncan, she says:  
*'Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done't'*

This is a very important statement as it prepares the audience for Macbeth's character. Explain why this is so.

- 'Nought's had, all's spent,  
Where our desire is got without content;  
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,  
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.'*

In your own words, describe Lady Macbeth's feelings as portrayed in this speech.

- The sleepwalking scene at the beginning of Act V is one of the most famous scenes in Shakespeare. How do you feel about Lady Macbeth in this scene?

**LEARNING POINT**

A key aspect of the play concerns the way the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth change during the play. At first, Macbeth is doubtful and indecisive and it is Lady Macbeth who is the driving force behind the murder. Think about how the roles change and how Macbeth becomes a remorseless killer while his wife is driven to madness through guilt.

**Extension Task:** Discuss the changes that take place in the relationship between Lady Macbeth and her husband. Identify key scenes that demonstrate the changing nature of their marriage.

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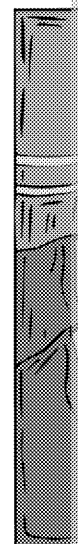
## Card 2: Characters – Lady Macbeth

1. The witches tempt Macbeth into murder. They hold out the prospect of the throne of Scotland. Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, verbally abuses him of being a coward.
2. Women were supposed to be gentle and to be obedient to their husbands. Lady Macbeth wants to be rid of the expectations placed upon her by society. She manipulates his behaviour and controls her husband by manipulating him.
3. Lady Macbeth is overcome by feelings of guilt regarding the murder. Her hands are covered in blood and she cannot wash away the blood with water and she scrubs.
4. Up until this point, we have seen only the fierce side of Lady Macbeth. This scene reveals that she does have another side to her personality; one of remorse. After the murder, we witness Lady Macbeth's descent into being overcome by guilt because of her involvement in the murder.
5. Lady Macbeth realises that, although they have achieved what they wanted – to murder Duncan and win the crown of Scotland – she is not happy. She is filled with fear, and envies Duncan who, being dead, is at peace.
6. Although Lady Macbeth is portrayed as evil (a '**fiend-like Queen**' at the end of the play), it is difficult not to feel some pity for her during the scene. Her own personality in committing the murder, thinking that she lacks compassion or remorse. This scene shows that she was not as strong as she seemed.

### Extension Task

Points might include:

- The relationship becomes increasingly strained as the play progresses
- In Act I, Scene vii, Lady Macbeth questions her husband's manhood when he expresses doubts about murdering Duncan. She seems to be the one in control here.
- During Macbeth's vision of Banquo's ghost (III.iv), Lady Macbeth further mocks his infirmity
- In the aftermath of the murder they spend barely any time together onstage
- After a while, it is Lady Macbeth who becomes fearful of the consequences, and eventually takes her own life in Act V
- Macbeth takes the position of control as he descends further into madness



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### Card 3: Key Events – Macbeth's First Meeting

*'When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?'*

1. The play begins with the gathering of three witches on a foul and an effective way to introduce the play?
2. First Witch: *All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis*  
Second Witch: *All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor*  
Third Witch: *All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be King hereafter*

These are the words with which the witches greet Macbeth.

Why do they have such a powerful effect on Macbeth and how does this affect the play?

3. Why is it important to the play that Banquo is present when Macbeth meets the witches?
4. Would Macbeth have been a good man if it had not been for the witches? What would have happened to him astray?

#### LEARNING POINT

*"Fair is foul, and foul is fair"* – This line, spoken by the witches at the end of Scene i, tells us that not everything is as it seems. In Scene ii, we hear the king and his nobles speak of the brave and noble Macbeth. However, this line by the witches has already warned us that appearances can be deceiving.

**Extension Task:** One of the witches tells Banquo that he is *"Lesser than Macbeth, and greater."* (line 65) What does she mean by this as it applies to the future? Can you think of another sense in which Banquo is *"greater"* than Macbeth?



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### Card 3: Key Events – Macbeth's First Meeting

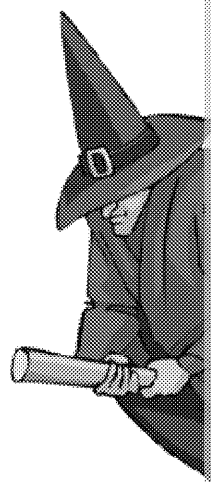
1. Witches are a powerful symbol of the supernatural / other world. From the very beginning, the tone of the whole play is set. The play will be a dark, unsettling tale.

The first statement talks of stormy weather and the second of 'h...'. This gives the audience an indication that the world is falling into chaos and disorder. For the audience, nothing upsets the natural order of the world more than the supernatural.

2. Macbeth is already the Thane of Glamis. He is made Thane of Cawdor. This leads him to believe that the remaining part of the prophecy, the 'king hereafter', will come true. It is this prophecy that sets him on a path of murder and, ultimately, to his own death.
3. Banquo's role is important in three ways:
  - i) Macbeth realises that Banquo knows about the prophecy and that Banquo later in the play. Once Macbeth murders the king, he must further murder. Achieving his aim of becoming king does not mean he can stop there.
  - ii) Macbeth learns that, although the witches' prophecy says that Banquo's descendants who shall rule after him. This warns us that Macbeth is not the happy one for Macbeth and that there may be a tragic end at the end of the play.
  - iii) Banquo's noble character contrasts with Macbeth's evil nature.
4. The prophecy would not have led Macbeth to murder King Duncan if it was not for his heart to begin with. It is Macbeth's ambition and villainy that leads him to murder the king; not the prophecy itself. The witches tell Banquo that his descendants will rule, but this does not tempt Banquo into evil.

#### Extension Task

The main point to draw from this quotation is that, while Macbeth attains greater social status in the course of the play, Banquo dies with a greater moral status. Banquo could also be considered 'greater' in the sense that Macbeth is haunted by Banquo's ghost – even in death, Banquo gains a kind of control over Macbeth.



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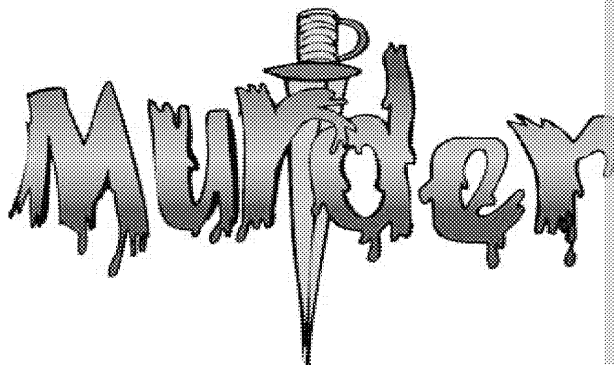
## Card 4: Key Events – The Murder of King Duncan

1. a) In the build up to the murder, what reasons does Macbeth give for killing the king?  
b) How does Lady Macbeth convince the wavering Macbeth to go ahead with the murder?  
king?
2. Read the famous soliloquy beginning:  
*'Is this a dagger, which I see before me'*  
a) Why does Macbeth think this hallucination has appeared?  
b) Explain the line:  
*'That marshall'st me the way that I was going;'*  
c) Find three images in this soliloquy that create a sense of menace.
3. Lady Macbeth convinced her husband to carry out the murder. What does this tell the audience about her?
4. After the murder, Macbeth is concerned that he cannot say the words he wants to tell the audience about his state of mind?
5. *'I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murmur sleep"'*

These words, uttered by Macbeth after the murder, point towards a later scene in the play. Which scene is this and how does it relate to the murder?

6. *'A little water clears us of this deed:'*

Why is Lady Macbeth wrong and how does this statement contrast with what happens later in the play?



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## Card 4: Key Events – The Murder of King Duncan

1. a) Macbeth fully understands the enormity of the crime he is about to commit. He knows that he should not kill the man who is both his king and his guest.  
*'First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
 Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
 Not bear the knife myself.'*
- b) She appeals to his manhood:  
*'When you durst do it, then you were a man;'  
 and not to  
 'live a coward in thine own esteem,'*
2. a) He thinks that his mind is playing tricks due to stress:  
*'art thou but  
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?'*
- b) The imaginary dagger is pointing towards Duncan's chamber, thus directing Macbeth to the murder.
- c) Examples are the blood on the knife; the reference to witchcraft; the reference to a ghost.
3. Lady Macbeth cannot kill the king as he reminds her of her father.  
*'Had he not resembled  
 My father as he slept, I had done't'*  
 This reveals that Lady Macbeth is not completely without feelings. Her guilt-ridden madness is not totally unexpected.
4. Macbeth feels guilty about the murder. He is questioning why he is cursed now that he has committed such a terrible deed.
5. The words point towards Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking. The 'sleep' is the Macbeths' peace of mind.
6. Lady Macbeth thinks that washing the blood from her hands will remove any sign of the murder. She does not realise that the murder is on her mind. Later in the play, she exclaims:  
*'What, will these hands ne'er be clean?'*

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## Card 5: Key Events – The Appearance of 1

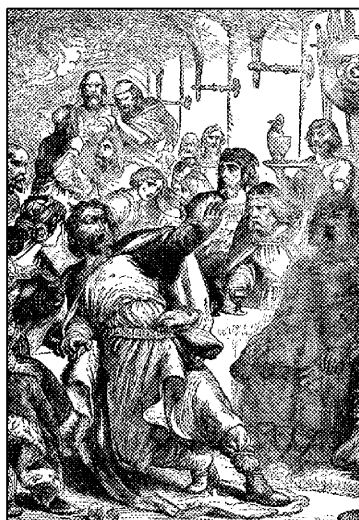


### LEARNING POINT

Banquo acts as a “foil” to Macbeth. A foil is a character who contrasts with another character to show aspects of their personality more clearly. Banquo doubts the witches and tries to guide his actions (remember that the prophecy also involves the future of his children). He remains loyal to the king. His behaviour highlights the evil of Macbeth’s treason.

1. The play could be performed with an actor playing Banquo’s ghost. The audience could see the ghost of Banquo or it could be performed so that it appears as if the ghost and Macbeth talks to any empty chair. What difference does this make to the audience understands the scene?
2. *‘Here had we now our country’s honour roof’d,  
Were the grac’d person of our Banquo present;’*  
  
Why are these lines of Macbeth ironic?
3. What role does Lady Macbeth play during the ghost’s appearance and how does this change later in the play?
4. As Macbeth is obviously terrified by the apparition, Lady Macbeth tries to be brave and act like a man; as she did when she persuaded him to murder Duncan. How does this affect her doing this during the appearance of the phantom.
5. The scene ends with Macbeth saying to his wife:  
*‘We are yet but young in deed.’*

What does he mean by this?



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**Card 5: Key Events – The Appearance of 13**

1. The audience does not know whether Banquo's ghost is real or not. If the audience knows Banquo's role, then the audience would share Macbeth's experience and reaction. However, if the audience does not see the ghost, it could be more convincing for the audience to think the ghost to be no more than a manifestation of Macbeth's guilty conscience.
2. The lines convey the opposite meaning to what Macbeth really means. Banquo has been killed and is pleased that he is dead. Further irony is that the ghost appears immediately after this statement; the last thing Macbeth wants is for the ghost to appear. Also dramatic irony in the fact that the audience shares with Macbeth that he has killed Banquo; whereas the other guests do not.
3. Lady Macbeth tries to explain away Macbeth's strange behaviour and attempts to calm Macbeth. Up to this point in the play, Lady Macbeth is the stronger of the two. Later, she deteriorates and becomes the weaker of the two, eventually committing suicide while Macbeth himself stands his ground.
4. *'Are you a man?'*  
  
*'O! These flaws and starts  
(Impostors to true fear), would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authoris'd by her grandma. Shame itself!'*  
  
*'What! Quite unmann'd in folly?'*
5. Although terrified by the sight of the ghost, he regains his composure. His final statement implies that, although he has now committed the first murder, this is the beginning of his murderous campaign to ensure he keeps the throne.

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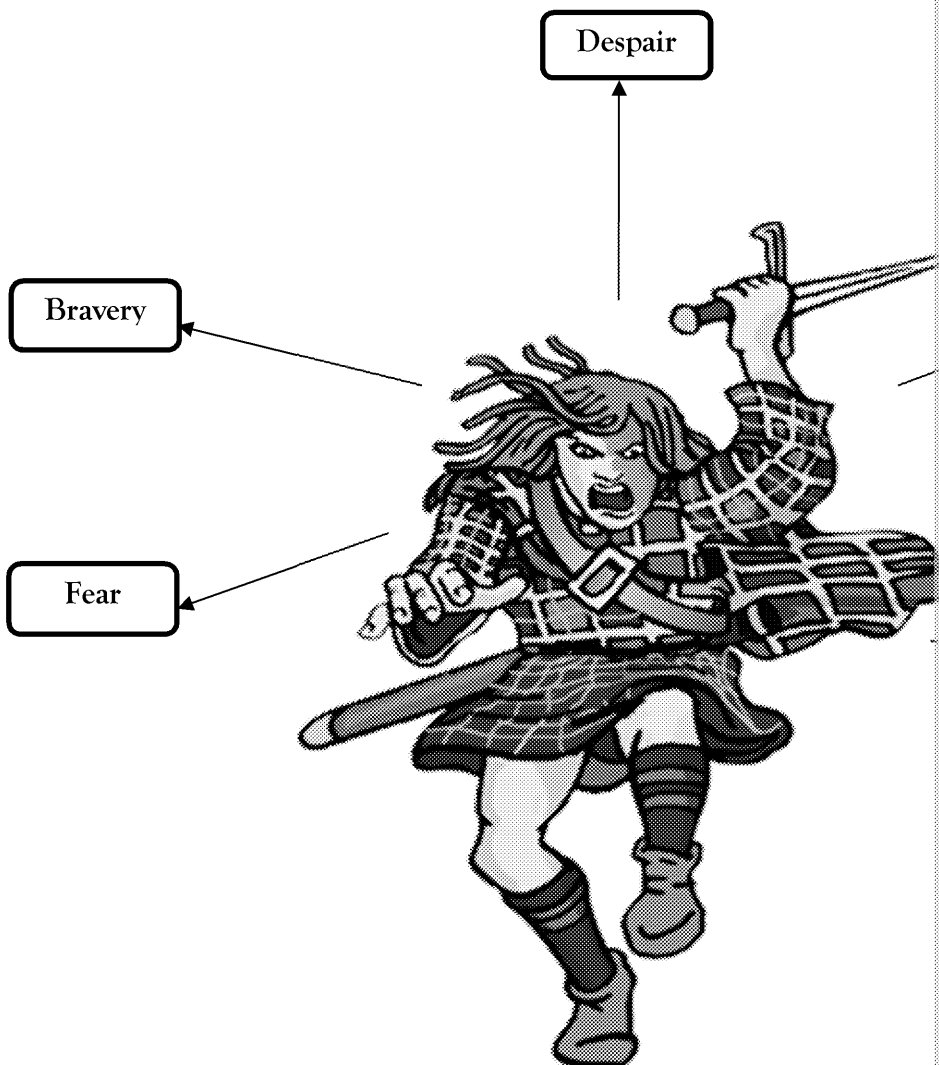
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**Card 6: Key Events – The Final Battle**

1. As Macbeth readies himself for battle, he is full of boasting. Explain how the witches lead him into a false sense of security by the witches.
2. In Act V, Scene ii, both Cathness and Angus use clothing imagery to describe Macbeth. Identify these comparisons and explain their meaning.
3. In Act V, Scene ii, 13–14, Cathness says of Macbeth:  
*'Some say he's mad; others, that lesser hate him,  
Do call it valiant fury'*

Do you think that Macbeth enters and fights the battle in a state of fear or bravery? Explain your point of view.

4. Macbeth goes through a range of emotions in the final act of the play. Identify and demonstrate his experiencing the feelings shown.



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## Card 6: Key Events – The Final Battle

1. Although a huge army approaches, Macbeth is comforted by the witches until Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane and that he cannot be harmed by a woman:

*'Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:  
Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,  
I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm?  
Was he not born of woman?'*

2. *'He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause  
Within the belt of rule.'*

Cathness uses the image of being unable to buckle a belt to describe Macbeth's inability to control his kingdom.

*'now does he feel his title  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.'*

Angus is saying that Macbeth is too small and insignificant to hold a kingdom, like a dwarf trying to wear a giant's clothes.

3. It could be argued that Macbeth has been driven mad by guilt over the crimes he has committed; by seeing everything he has fought for collapse and by the witches' prophecy. Alternatively, at the beginning of the play, Macbeth has a reputation as a brave warrior. It may also be the case that, having been led astray by ambition, he is now in a new arena he knows and understands. He may not be a confident king, but he is a confident soldier.

4. **Arrogance:** *'''Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman  
Shall e'er have power upon thee.'''*

Macbeth thinks he is invincible because of the witches' prophecy.

**Resignation:** *'I have liv'd long enough.'*

Macbeth is resigned to his fate and does not seek to avoid it.

**Bravery:** *'I'll fight, till from my bones my flesh be hack'd.  
Give me my armour.'*

**Despair:** The soliloquy in Act V, Scene v, 17–28 is one of literature's most powerful expressions of despair.

**Fear:** *'Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,  
For it hath cow'd my better part of man!'*

When Macbeth discovers that Macduff was not *'of woman born'*, he is shocked. He first, refuses to fight him.

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## Card 7: Themes – Ambition



## LEARNING POINT

A theme is a central idea that runs throughout a narrative. Macbeth has several themes. Those we will consider in Section 3 are ambition, guilt, love, and power.

1. *'The Prince of Cumberland! – That is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!  
Let not light see my black and deep desires;'*
  - a) Explain what Macbeth means by the first two lines above.
  - b) What do the last two lines reveal to the audience?
2. Duncan has made Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor in return for his service. Is this not enough for Macbeth and why has it made him even more ambitious for the crown?
3. After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth succeeds in his ambition to become king. What does he mean by the line below and why does this mean that he is not satisfied with his position in gaining the crown?  
*'To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus.'*
4. In Act V, Scene iii, Macbeth complains that all he is given is '*mouth-honour*'.
  - a) What does he mean by this statement?
  - b) Early in the play, Duncan says of Macbeth:  
*'O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!'*  
(Act I, Scene ii, 24)

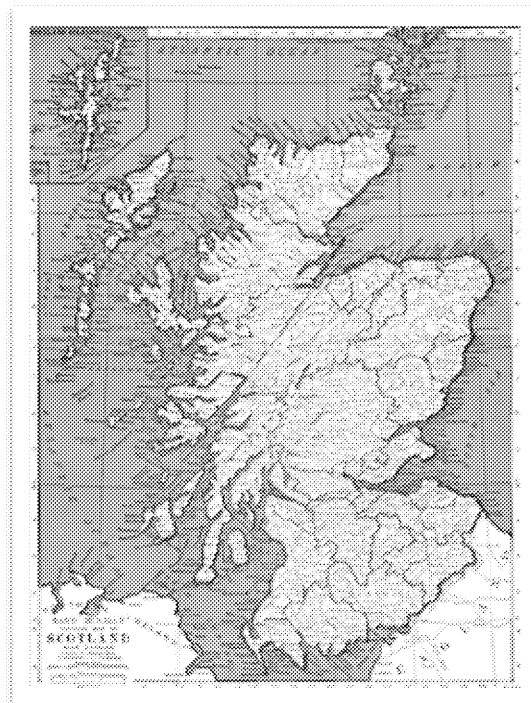
Contrast this statement with the term '*mouth-honour*' to explain the difference in how Macbeth is regarded at the end of the play and what it has cost him to follow his ambition to win the crown.

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## Card 7: Themes – Ambition

1. a) Duncan has made his son, Malcolm, the Prince of Cumberland, who will inherit the throne. Macbeth realises that Malcolm stands in the way of becoming king. By suggesting he might '*o'erleap*' Malcolm, Macbeth is entertaining the idea of taking the crown by force.
- b) These lines reveal that the idea of gaining the throne is Macbeth's darkest desire, calling it a black desire and wishing to keep it hidden, Macbeth's true aims are.
2. By making Macbeth Thane of Cawdor, the king has fed his ambition, making it worse. More importantly, perhaps, it has shown Macbeth that the witches told him and he therefore begins to believe that he will become king.
3. Macbeth realises that becoming king has not brought him happiness, that he is not secure in his kingship. However, this will never be the case as he has come to the crown unlawfully and will always be suspicious of those around him. As he has the crown, he is also aware that it could, in turn, be taken from him.
4. a) By the term '*mouth-honour*', Macbeth is complaining that no one truly honours him; they merely pretend to out of fear.
- b) At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is highly regarded by others as brave, noble and loyal. The great tragedy of the play lies in how he is willing to do anything in order to achieve his aim of winning the crown.



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## Card 8: Themes – Guilt

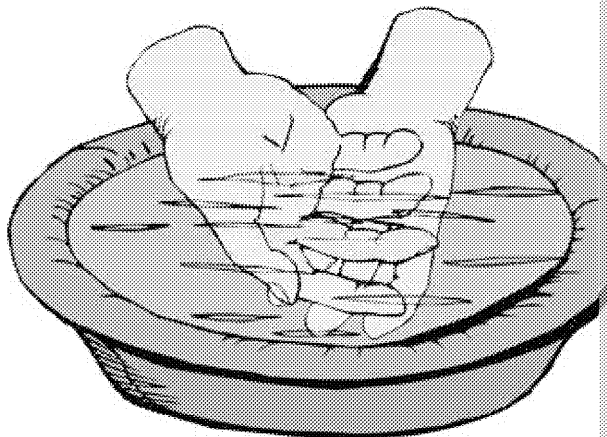
1. In Act II, Scene ii, Lady Macbeth says:  
*'A little water clears us of the deed.  
 How easy it is then.'*

However, in Act V, Scene i, she says:  
*'all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.'*

Explain the change in Lady Macbeth's state of mind from one quote to the other.

2. a) In Act V, Scene i Lady Macbeth is observed sleepwalking and which events do the following two statements refer:
- 'Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood?'*
  - 'The Thane of Fife had a wife; where is she now?'*
- b) Why might Shakespeare have used sleepwalking as a means of expressing her guilt?
3. Both guilt and the supernatural are major themes in the play. How does Shakespeare use supernatural happenings to show Macbeth's feelings of guilt?
4. *'He's here in double trust;  
 First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
 Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
 Not bear the knife myself.'*

This speech tells us that Macbeth feels guilty before the murder of King Duncan. Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, goes through with the deed. After the murder, Lady Macbeth is more concerned about the appearance of the king's body than Macbeth is. Bearing this difference in mind, which of the two is more evil and why?



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**Card 8: Themes – Guilt**

1. Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth to murder Duncan. She thinks it is straightforward and that, once committed, they can simply wash it away and forget about what they have done. However, she cannot escape her guilt. Eventually, her guilt drives her to madness and suicide. She realises that even though she often cleans and perfumes herself she cannot wash away her guilt.
2.
  - a)
    - i) Lady Macbeth is referring to the murder of Duncan. The murder is mentioned repeatedly in the play to emphasise the violence and evil of the deed.
    - ii) She is referring to the murder of Macduff's wife. Unable to live with her senseless slaughter, she slaughters his wife and child.
  - b) By having Lady Macbeth's guilt surface during her sleep, Shakespeare shows that she cannot escape the consequences of her deed. While her unconscious mind brings her guilt to the fore.
3. Macbeth sees a dagger in front of him and is unsure whether it is real or a hallucination. The dagger is bloody and Macbeth, in clutching it, is taking the fate of Duncan upon himself. From this point on, there is no going back and Macbeth is fully embarked upon a course of evil. After the murder of Banquo, Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo at the feast; an apparition that only he can see. He loses his self-control and speaks wildly to the ghost. The audience is now aware of Macbeth's guilt by guilt and is no longer the strong warrior he was when he first appeared.
4. Both views could be argued. Macbeth could be considered the more responsible as he fully comprehends that what he is about to do is evil and yet he goes ahead anyway. He understands right from wrong and makes a deliberate choice. On the other hand, one could argue that Lady Macbeth was the more responsible as she was at all about the murder. She wanted Macbeth to murder Duncan and saw this as a perfectly reasonable action as Duncan was in the wrong. It was only later that her conscience awakened.

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## Card 9: Themes – Loyalty

1. *'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 everything  
Safe toward your love and honour.'*

In your own words, explain what Macbeth is saying to Duncan.

2. Macbeth:  
*'Better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy.'*

Why is this statement key to the play, to the theme of loyalty and of Macbeth and his wife?

3. Why, and how, does Malcolm test Macduff's loyalty in Act IV, Scene ii?
4. Banquo remains loyal to Duncan. How does the plot show that such loyalty to the throne?
5. Macbeth:  
*'Send out moe horses, skirr the country round;  
Hang those that talk of fear.'*

Malcolm:  
*'We shall not spend a large expense of time,  
Before we reckon with your several loves,  
And make us even with you.'*

Compare Macbeth and Malcolm's statements to show how they understand a king's role.



## LEARNING POINT

In Act I, Scene ii, 65–67, Duncan says:  
*"No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive  
Our bosom interest. Go pronounce his present death,  
And with his former title greet Macbeth."*

This quotation shows that Duncan values Macbeth's loyalty. Later in Act I, Duncan will hear Macbeth plotting treason and see that the new Thane of Cawdor is even more disloyal as the previous holder of the title.

**Extension Task:** Read Macbeth's speech beginning *"Two truths are told" (Scene iii, 127–142)* and explain how this moment can be seen as the beginning of Macbeth's disloyalty.

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**Card 9: Themes – Loyalty**

1. Macbeth is telling Duncan that serving him is reward enough and his loyalty. He then says that Duncan's role is to accept his loyalty to the king to the loyalty of children to their parents or to the king. In doing everything he can for the king, he is only doing what he should.
2. Macbeth has won the throne through treachery and is now frightened through treachery. He no longer trusts anyone. He has spoken of the murder of his former friend, Banquo, and he will go on to murder that, as a traitor himself, he sees treason in those around him and in the king.
3. Macduff has fled to England leaving his family behind. This makes Macduff loyal to Macbeth. Malcolm explains that he is, in fact, to be king. When Macduff agrees that Malcolm would be an unfit king, that Macduff is a good man and not in the employ of Macbeth.
4. Although Banquo is brutally murdered by Macbeth's assassins, we inherit the throne. Thus, the play clearly demonstrates that loyalty is punished.
5. Macbeth is a tyrant who rules through violence and fear. Malcolm, Macbeth and is to be king, recognises that a king does not just do to subjects, but also shows loyalty to them.

**Extension Task**

Points might include:

- Macbeth's reference to the 'swelling act / Of the imperial theme' might suggest the inevitability of what he is about to do.
- In his mind, Macbeth suggests that the idea of murder is 'yet but fantastical' – this foreshadows the later murder of Duncan.
- He also suggests that his 'single state of man' is shaken; in other words, that his visions of violence are corrupting the harmony of his mind.

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## Card 10: Themes – Evil

1. At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is shown as a brave general. How does this make the story more powerful and give the ending of the play more impact?
2. In Act II, Scene ii we witness Macbeth's state of mind immediately after the murder of Duncan. He is obviously terrified but the terror is not that of being caught for his crime but of his fear and explain how the following three quotations illustrate this.
  - a) *'But wherefore could I not pronounce 'Amen'?  
I had most need of blessing and 'Amen'  
Stuck in my throat.'*
  - b) *'Methought, I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murmur Sleep,' – the innocent sleep;'*
  - c) *'Wake Duncan with thy knocking: I wouldst thou couldst!'*
3. *'I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far, that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.'*

What does Macbeth mean by this statement? What does it tell you about his attitude to his crimes?

4. Explain the difference in Macbeth's attitude to the murders of Duncan and the Macduff family.
5. *'this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen.'*

In what way is the **'fiend-like'** Lady Macbeth as evil as the unnatural and fiendish witches and in what ways does she differ?

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**Card 10: Themes – Evil**

1. The play's tragedy lies in seeing Macbeth's fall from being a good comrade, to being alone and despised by everyone. By showing the tale also emphasises what he has lost in trying to win the crown. It also shows how the witches were able to tempt him into evil, rather than encouraging an already evil human being.
2. Macbeth is terrified because he thinks that he is now damned. He is shocked and frightened of his conscience.
  - a) Macbeth's evil act has cut him off from God and he can no longer pray.
  - b) Macbeth, in killing the sleeping king, has murdered innocent people and lost a calm state of mind. He realises that his conscience will place a burden on his dreadful act.
  - c) This final line in the scene shows that Macbeth immediately regrets his act as if it could be undone and yet realises that it cannot.
3. Macbeth has gained the crown but does not feel that he holds it rightfully. He knows his crime, he believes he needs to carry on with the slaughter in order to secure what he has fought for. This statement also implies that he feels trapped.
4. The first murder is that of Duncan. Macbeth is tempted by the witches to commit the murder and has to be persuaded by his wife. He has no such hesitation with Banquo and does not even tell his wife about the murder until after the slaughter of Macduff's wife and children. Thus, we see Macbeth become more corrupt as the play progresses.
5. At the start of the play, Lady Macbeth plays a similar role to the witches, leading Macbeth into the evil act of murdering the king. She recognises his weakness and tries to lead him to murder:
 

*'Thou wouldst be great;  
Art not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it:'*

Her harsh, violent language also reminds us of the witches.

However, she differs from the witches in important ways. She can feel remorse for herself, which shows she does have a conscience and, as the play progresses, she punishes her for her involvement in the crime.

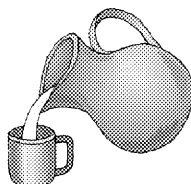
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## Card 11: Themes – Appearance and

The difference between how things appear and how they are in reality is a key theme in *Macbeth*. Below are eight quotations, each spoken by a different person, which relate to the theme of appearance and reality:

1. Duncan: *'There's no art  
To find the mind's construction in the face:  
He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust.'*
2. Lady Macbeth: *'look like th' innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under't.'*
3. Porter: *'this place is too cold for Hell.'*
4. Macbeth: *'Who could refrain,  
That had a heart of love, and in that heart  
Courage to make's love known?'*
5. Macduff: *'Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's two sons  
Are stol'n away and fled; which puts upon them  
Suspicion of the deed.'*
6. Third Apparition: *'Macbeth shall never vanquished be until  
Great Birnam wood to Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him.'*
7. Son: *'Then the liars and murderers are fools; for the liars  
and swearers enow to beat the honest men and hang up them.'*
8. Malcolm: *'Nay, had I power, I should  
Pour the sweet milk of concord into Hell,'*



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**Card 11: Themes – Appearance and**

1. Duncan is saying that one cannot tell what someone is thinking but is talking about the treacherous Thane of Cawdor. This is a power shift. Immediately after this utterance, Macbeth enters. The audience has just been made the new Thane of Cawdor.
2. Lady Macbeth and Macbeth are plotting murder while also ensuring suspicion as to their guilt.
3. The Porter says that the cold, Scottish home of Macbeth is too cold for what it has become with the king lying brutally murdered.
4. After Macbeth kills Duncan, his wife smears the sleeping guards with blood to appear as though they have carried out the terrible crime. Macbeth tells the guards so that they cannot protest their innocence and explains that he acted out of love for the king. He is displaying an outward show of grief, making it look like the murder was committed by others.
5. Duncan's sons have fled for their own safety. However, this has led to the murder.
6. Nothing the witches tell Macbeth can be taken at face value. Her apparition who gives a prophecy to Macbeth that leads him to the forest. However, the impossibility of the forest moving becomes reality as the soldiers carry branches before them to disguise the size of the army.
7. Macduff's son is talking to his mother just before they are both murdered. He points out that there are more liars than honest men in the world.
8. Malcolm does not trust Macduff and thinks he may be working for Macbeth to be as bad as Macbeth to test where Macduff's loyalties lie. When Malcolm's supposed vices, he passes the test and Malcolm reveals that he accepts Macduff as an ally.

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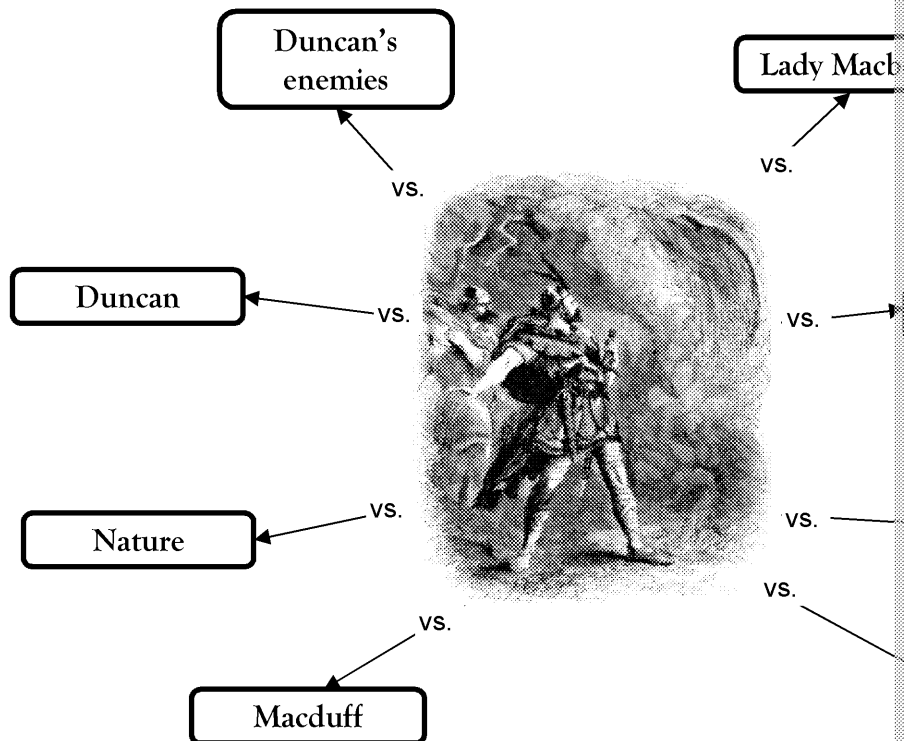
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## Card 18: Themes – Conflict

Conflict is central to the play. For each of the conflicts shown in the diagram, write a short quotation that shows the nature of the struggle Macbeth is involved in. The struggle between Macbeth and Banquo has been completed below.

Macbeth versus...



**Macbeth vs Banquo:** Macbeth's conflict with Banquo arises out of the prophecy that Banquo's heirs, not Macbeth's, will be kings. Macbeth's feelings of jealousy outweigh his feelings of loyalty.

Macbeth:

*'They hail'd him father to a line of kings:  
Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,'*

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## Card 18: Themes – Conflict

### Macbeth vs Duncan's enemies:

At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is shown as a loyal soldier in Duncan's army.

Duncan: *'O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!'*

### Macbeth vs Lady Macbeth:

Macbeth wants to be king but lacks the will to kill Duncan until his wife

Macbeth: *'If we should fail?*

Lady Macbeth: *We fail?*

*But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we'll not fail.'*

### Macbeth vs Duncan:

The conflict between Macbeth and Duncan is one between Macbeth's loyalty to the king.

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'*

### Macbeth vs Macduff:

Macbeth's disloyalty to the king is contrasted with Macduff's loyalty to the rightful heir, Malcolm.

Macbeth: *'The castle of Macduff I will surprise;  
Seize upon Fife; give th'edge o' th' sword  
His wife, his babes'*

### Macbeth vs God:

Macbeth has usurped the throne and killed God's appointed monarch in the sin of murder.

Macbeth: *'But wherefore could I not pronounce 'Amen'?  
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen,'  
Stuck in my throat.'*

### Macbeth vs nature:

In murdering his king, the treasonous subject, Macbeth, has overturned the natural world.

Rosse: *'Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,  
Threatens his bloody stage: by th' clock 'tis day,  
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.'*

### Macbeth vs Malcolm's army:

The final conflict takes place when Macbeth faces Malcolm's army and his own kingship.

Cathness: *'Well; march we on,  
To give obedience where 'tis truly ow'd.'*

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**Card 19: Themes – Inner Conflict**

Card 18 identifies the various forms of conflict involving Macbeth. However, one of the main themes of this play is the conflict that Macbeth has with himself and that Lady Macbeth has with herself. The power and tragedy of the play lie in the destruction of the Macbeths as a result of their crime.

1. The quotations below show that Macbeth is a brave warrior at the beginning of the play. He can also be seen as displaying bravery on the battlefield at the end of the play. What does the Captain say about Macbeth? *'For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name)'*

Macbeth: *'before my body*

*I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff:*

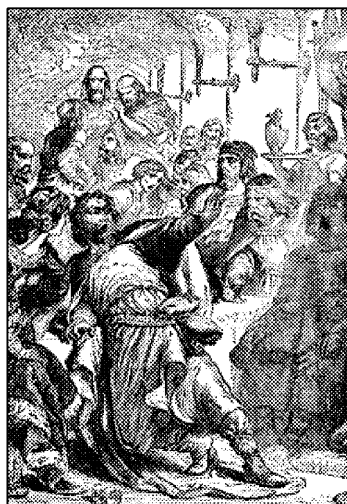
*And damn'd be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"'*

- a) How does Macbeth's state of mind differ in his first and last battle?
- b) How do each of these quotations by Macbeth show his inner conflict?
  - i) *'He's here in double trust'*
  - ii) *'Thou canst not say, I did it: never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.'*
  - iii) *'I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,'*

2. The quotations below show a dramatic change in Lady Macbeth's attitude towards Duncan. In what way does her inner conflict differ from that of Macbeth?

Lady Macbeth: *'A little water clears us of this deed:'*

Lady Macbeth: *'What, will these hands ne'er be clean?'*



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**Card 19: Themes – Inner Conf**

1. a) Although his outward behaviour may appear similar, Macbeth in the final battle. At the beginning of the play, he is a soldier with bravery and honour. At the end, he is a hated figure who because he has nowhere else to go – his defiance is due to his bravery.
  - b) i) Macbeth wrestles with his conscience before killing Duncan, the wickedness of what he is about to do in killing a man who is a guest.
  - ii) Macbeth arranges the murder of his friend Banquo without showing in murdering Duncan. However, he stills feels a bit of guilt by his response to seeing Banquo's ghost at the feast.
  - iii) Here, Macbeth shows that his heart is no longer in the struggle for life.
2. From the very beginning, Macbeth knows that what he is doing is wrong. As he murders the king, there are consequences as he suffers immediate horror.

Lady Macbeth's attitude differs in that she suppresses her feelings about the deed. She denies that she will feel any guilt and sees the murder as leaving no mark other than a bit of blood that can be washed away. She is seen in Act III, at the feast when Banquo's ghost appears. However, she sees that her attempts to suppress her feelings are in vain and she goes on to madness and suicide.



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## Card 20: Language – Imagery

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## LEARNING POINT

A “simile” compares one thing to another – usually by using the word “like” or “as”. For example, in Act V, Scene ii, 21–22 Angus says Macbeth’s title of king is *dwarfish thief*. With just one simile, Angus emphasises that the title is not fitting for Macbeth and that it does not suit him.

1. Identify two similes in the following passage, spoken by Macbeth, and explain why they are effective.

*‘this Duncan*

*Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu’d, against  
The deep damnation of his taking-off;  
And Pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven’s Cherubins, hors’d  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye’*



## LEARNING POINT

Sometimes, rather than using “as” or “like”, a writer will say something is “as” or “like” something else. This is called a “metaphor”.

2. Explain the meaning and effectiveness of these two metaphors:
  - a) Donalbain: *‘There’s daggers in men’s smiles’*
  - b) Macbeth: *‘O! full of scorpions is my mind’*



## LEARNING POINT

“Personification” is a use of imagery that gives human qualities to non-human objects or animals.

3. The quotation below contains three examples of personification. Identify them and explain why they are effective.

Lady Macbeth:

*‘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!”’*

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## Card 20: Language – Imagery

1. *'his virtues/Will plead like angels'* – By saying Duncan's virtues Macbeth emphasises the king's goodness. The comparison also suggests that Duncan was appointed by God and so the heavens would rise up against him.

*'Pity, like a naked new-born babe'* – Macbeth compares pity to a baby of the act he is considering with a baby's innocence. Later in the play when she that she would have taken her own baby *'and dash'd the brains out'* of words, she chooses to destroy pity and harden her heart.

2. a) The king's sons plan to flee Scotland as they don't know who to trust. This illustrates how untrustworthy people are and that it is impossible to judge people by thinking from their faces. This reminds us of Duncan's earlier words *'There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face'*

It also reminds us of the image seen by Macbeth prior to the murder of Duncan *'Is this a dagger, which I see before me,'*

A dagger is a fitting murder weapon as it is a symbol of treachery and of being 'stabbed in the back' when we are let down by someone we trust.

- b) Macbeth plans to murder of Banquo and his son. The image of Banquo and his son's existence annoying him because the Scottish crown would go to Banquo's descendents or it could mean that his own line would end. This metaphor is also effective as it reminds us of the 'seed' of Macbeth causes for himself through his actions.

Read through this short scene and notice the use of animal imagery, referring to a *'snake'*, a *'bat'*, and a *'crow'*.

3. By calling on night (*'Come, thick Night'*) Lady Macbeth reminds us of the powers of darkness. A major theme of the play is Lady Macbeth's guilty feelings and here she admits the evil of her deed by asking the darkness what it does (*'my keen knife see not'*) and that the darkness even *'Heaven peep'*) from seeing what happens.

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## Card 21: Language – Symbols and



### LEARNING POINT

A symbol is something that represents something else. Often, a symbol can represent an idea.

1. The following symbols all occur repeatedly in *Macbeth*. Match the symbols to the ideas they represent:

Symbol	Idea
Blood	Evil
Sleep	Disorder
Storms	Peace of mind
Darkness	Guilt

2. For each symbol, find two quotations to show examples of where the symbol is used in the play.



### LEARNING POINT

A motif is a repeated object, event or idea in a play. The themes of the play are motifs as these are ideas that run throughout the play. Two motifs discussed below are sleep and violence.

3. There are three key scenes where visions are seen. These are:
- the dagger (*Act II, Scene i*)
  - Banquo's ghost (*Act III, Scene iv*)
  - the bloodstains seen by Lady Macbeth (*Act V, Scene i*)

For each vision, explain why it appears and what the vision represents.

4. Violence is another of the play's motifs. Give three examples of violence in the play, identifying whether they are shown to the audience or not. Do you think the off-stage violence has less effect on the audience than the on-stage violence? Give your answer.

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**Card 21: Language – Symbols and**

1. Blood/guilt; sleep/peace of mind; storms/disorder; darkness/evil
2. Macbeth: *'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand?'* **(blood)**
  - L. Macbeth: *'Here's the smell of the blood still: all the  
perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little house.'*  
**(blood)**
  - Macbeth: *'Methought, I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!"*  
**(sleep)**
  - L. Macbeth: *'You lack the season of all natures, sleep.'*  
**(sleep)**
  - Witch: *'When shall we three meet again?  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?'* **(storms)**
  - Lennox: *'The night has been unruly: where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,  
Lamentings heard i' the air; strange screams of death,  
And prophesying that horrible dire events.'*  
**(storms)**
  - Macbeth: *'Light thickens; and the crow  
Makes wing to th' rooky wood;  
Good things of Day begin to droop and drowse,  
Whiles Night's black agents to their preys do roar.'*  
**(darkness)**
  - Macbeth: *'How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!'*  
**(darkness)**
3.
  - i) The dagger – this hallucination shows how the stress of what is affecting Macbeth's state of mind.
  - ii) Banquo's ghost – the vision may be a real ghost or an hallucination of Macbeth's guilt.
  - iii) The bloodstains seen by Lady Macbeth – this hallucination symbolises her guilt.
4. Examples include the murder of Malcolm, the slaying of Macduff's family, and Lady Macbeth. Malcolm's murder and the suicide occur off-stage, so the audience is able to imagine these horrible events while also being able to witness the reactions of the characters.

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## Card 22: Language – Pathetic Fallacy



## LEARNING POINT

Pathetic fallacy is a literary technique that involves giving human emotions to non-human objects. For example, in *Macbeth*, weather is used to heighten the characters' emotions and create suspense.

## 1. The Weather

- a) Macbeth first meets the witches during a storm (Act I, Scene i). How do the weather have in setting the play's atmosphere?

- b) In Act II, Scene iii, 53–60, Lennox says:  
*'The night has been unruly: where we lay,  
 Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,  
 Lamentings heard i' th' air; strange screams of death,  
 And, prophesying with accents terrible  
 Of dire combustion, and confus'd events,  
 New hatch'd to th' woeful time, the obscure bird  
 Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth  
 Was feverous, and did shake.'*

How does the use of pathetic fallacy increase the scene's power?

- c) Find two other examples of pathetic fallacy being applied to the weather to increase the dramatic impact of the play.

## 2. Animals

- a) In Act II, Scene ii, Lady Macbeth is startled by a sound:  
*'It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,'*

Why is this an effective use of pathetic fallacy?

- b) *'A falcon towering in her pride of place,  
 Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at, and kill'd.'*

How does this use of pathetic fallacy reflect the nature of Duncan?

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## Card 22: Language – Pathetic Fallacy

1. a) The storm emphasises the danger of the witches (notice how modern horror films to increase the sense of fear). It also sets a sense of chaos and disorder are in the air. The reader senses that terrible things are about to happen.
- b) Lennox is speaking with Macbeth. He does not know Macbeth's secret but the audience does. This use of dramatic irony increases the tension. The language emphasises that the whole world is horror-struck. 'The air and the earth itself is sick with fever.'

- c) In Act II, Scene iv, 5–9, an old man says:  
*'Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,  
 Threatens his bloody stage: by th'clock 'tis day,  
 And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.  
 Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,  
 That darkness does the face of earth entomb,  
 When living light should kiss it?'*

The use of the word '**heavens**' for the sky implies the sinfulness of the act. Words such as '**strangles**' and '**entomb**' echo the violence of the murder. The darkness across the land is an indication of the effect Macbeth's rule will have on the world.

Another example is Act III, Scene ii, 52–53, just before Banquo and Macbeth say:

*'Good things of Day begin to droop and drowse,  
 Whiles Night's black agents to their preys do rouse.'*

In Act III, Scene v, the witches appear, accompanied by a storm. Thunder is heard as the apparitions appear.

2. a) The owl warns the reader that something dreadful has happened. When Macbeth enters and the audience discovers he has murdered Duncan, the language emphasises how unnatural it is to murder a king, as even nature is shocked.
- b) The murder of a powerful falcon by a mere '**mousing owl**' is a reversal of the natural order; just as the murder of a noble king by one of his subjects is a reversal of the order of society.

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## Card 23: Language – Ambiguity



## LEARNING POINT

Ambiguity is where words are open to more than one interpretation. It can arise accidentally, it is also used deliberately by writers in literature. Shakespeare uses it throughout *Macbeth*.

1. *First Witch: 'Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.'*  
*Second Witch: 'Not so happy, yet much happier.'*  
*Third Witch: 'Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none'*

How do these statements by the witches help to hasten Macbeth's downfall?

2. *Banquo: '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.'*

How does this statement of Banquo hint at Macbeth's downfall and the ambiguity in his downfall?



## LEARNING POINT

**Learning Point:** Read Question 3, and the answer, on revision card 24. The ambiguity in the witches' later prophecies leads Macbeth to misinterpret them.

3. Much of the ambiguity of the play lies in the nature of the plot and the witches' statements. However, Shakespeare also uses ambiguity in other settings. Explain the nature of the ambiguity in the following lines spoken by Lady Macbeth:
  - a) *'He that's coming  
Must be provided for'*
  - b) *'Why did you bring these daggers from the place?  
They must lie there'*

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**Card 23: Language – Ambiguity**

1. These lines make Macbeth suspect Banquo. At this point in the play, Banquo is Macbeth's friend. However, after the murder of Duncan, Macbeth arranges to have Banquo killed. This shows how he becomes more evil as the play progresses.
2. Banquo is referring to the prophecies of the witches and warning Macbeth that they may be a trap to lead Macbeth into danger. Banquo is aware of the prophecies, but he warns that the prophecies may seem to promise good fortune, but they are actually a trap. It should be noted that Banquo warns Macbeth of this, but his warning is ignored. It is not the case that Macbeth is simply tricked; he believes what they tell him because he wants to.
3. a) Duncan is on his way to stay with the Macbeths. Lady Macbeth says 'provided for'. This term could be used by a hostess to say that a guest is provided for; but here has another meaning in that she is planning to have Duncan murdered.  
b) Macbeth has taken the daggers away from the murder scene and has left them with the guards so that they are falsely believed to have been left there. Thus, the daggers should 'lie' (i.e. be placed) with the guards.



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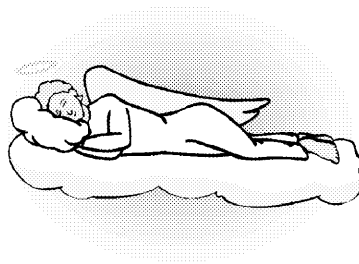
**Card 24: Language – Repetition**

Shakespeare uses repetition throughout the play. Explain how the use of repetition creates a dramatic effect of each of the following quotations:

1. Witches: *'Fair is foul, and foul is fair'*  
Macbeth: *'So foul and fair a day I have not seen.'*
  
2. a) Macbeth:  
*'Methought, I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murmur Sleep,' – the innocent Sleep;  
Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,'*

and

*'Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house:  
"Glamis hath murdered Sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more!"'*



- b) Find at least two references to sleep in Act III and explain the effect of each.
  
3. Lady Macbeth  
*'To bed, to bed: there's knocking at the gate.  
Come, come, come, come, give me your hand.  
What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed.'*
  
4. Doctor: *'Unnatural deeds  
Do breed unnatural troubles'*

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## Card 24: Language – Repetition

1. Macbeth's very first line in the play repeats the use 'foul' and 'fair' in the incantation. This links Macbeth with the witches; hinting that he shares their evil intentions.
  
2. a) Sleep is an important image in *Macbeth* and is mentioned at the end of the play. Here it represents the peace of mind that Macbeth has lost after he has committed murder. This is further shown later in the play when Lady Macbeth sleepwalks while her guilt surfaces during her sleep.
  - b) Examples include:
    - i) Macbeth envies the peacefulness of death and says of Duncan:
 

*'After life's fitful fever he sleeps well'*
    - ii) Macbeth tells his wife that he is prepared to do anything to achieve his goal:
 

*'Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep  
In the affliction of these terrible dreams,  
That shake us nightly'*

This shows his desperation as he can no longer sleep peacefully.
    - iii) After Macbeth is unsettled by the appearance of Banquo's ghost, he says to himself:
 

*'You lack the season of all natures, sleep'* (Act III, Scene 4)

It is this lack of sleep that is causing her husband's mental anguish.
  
3. These are the very last lines spoken by Lady Macbeth. When the audience finds out it is to learn that she has committed suicide. The repetitions of 'O' and 'sister' illustrate the fact that she has been driven to madness.
  
4. The use of the word '*unnatural*' to describe the actions and their consequences and effect as the doctor explains Lady Macbeth's madness in terms of the unnatural events that have been carried out. This statement also reminds the audience that the tragedy that has befallen the Macbeths and Scotland are as a result of the '*unnatural*' actions.

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## Card 25: Form and Structure – Drama



## LEARNING POINT

Dramatic irony is a technique that allows the audience to know more about characters and events than the characters in the play. Dramatic irony can be used to create a range of effects but it is chiefly used to increase the sense of foreboding and tension.

The quotations below are examples of the use of dramatic irony. Explain each example.

1. Second Witch: *'All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor'*  
Macbeth: *'But how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives,'*
2. Duncan: *'This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses,'*
3. Macduff: *'O gentle lady,  
'tis not for you to hear what I can speak:  
The repetition in a woman's ear,  
Would murder as it fell.'*
4. Macbeth: *'Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had liv'd a blessed time; for, from this instant,  
There's nothing serious in mortality,'*
5. Macduff: *'each new morn  
New widows howl, new orphans cry,'*



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**Card 25: Form and Structure – Drama**

1. The audience already knows that Duncan has sentenced the Thane of Cawdor to death. The fact that the audience is aware that the prophecy is true before Macbeth is (the fact that the Thane of Cawdor was sentenced to death for treachery creates a different type of irony) creates a different type of irony when we later realise that the next Thane of Cawdor will also be Macbeth.
2. The king utters these words immediately after the audience has been discussing the king's murder. The vicious language of Lady Macbeth contrasts with Duncan's trusting nature and use of words such as '*pleasant*', '*sweet*'.
3. Macduff does not want to tell Lady Macbeth about Duncan's murder. However, the audience knows she was involved in the murder. The words that contrast with Macduff's concern for her gentle female nature are: '*Come to my woman's breasts, And take my milk for gall,*'
4. Macbeth is feigning horror at the news that Duncan has been murdered. The audience knows that he is the murderer. This hypocrisy adds to the horror of the deed. Again, there is also an element of situational irony as it is much better for Macbeth if he had died before committing the murder. This reflects his famous soliloquy in Act V, Scene v, where he talks of life as a tale told by an idiot! And signifying nothing'.
5. Macduff speaks these words at the beginning of Scene iii. At the beginning of the scene the audience sees his wife and child being slaughtered on Macbeth's orders. In Scene iii, Macduff learns of their murder. So, it is not his wife and child who become a widow and fatherless children; rather it is he who has lost his family to savagery. This adds to the audience's sense of horror at the murder.

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## Card 26: Form and Structure – R



## LEARNING POINT

Most of Macbeth is written in what is called “blank verse”. This is verse (or beat) but which does not rhyme. Most of the play is written in a metre; this consists of lines which have 10 syllables, five of which are stressed with five unstressed.

*“Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen”*

1. a) Although most of the play is in blank verse, some lines are written in rhyme. Explain why the example below might have been written in rhyme.

Witches: *‘Double, double toil and trouble  
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.’*

- b) Read Act IV, Scene i, 1–38 and decide whether the use of rhyme has a significant impact upon the audience.

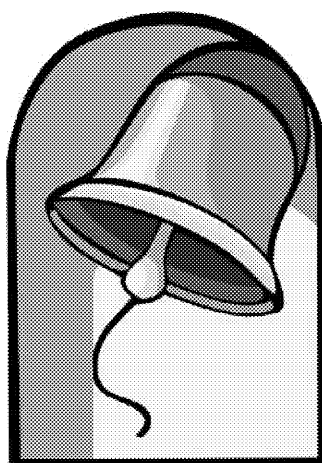
2. Lady Macbeth: *‘The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now?’*

What effect does this rhyming of *‘Fife’* and *‘wife’* have upon the audience?

3. a) The following two rhyming couplets are both used for the same purpose in Macbeth: *‘Away, and mock the time with fairest show:  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.’*

Macbeth: *‘Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.’*

- b) Find at least two other examples of this use of rhyming couplets in the play.



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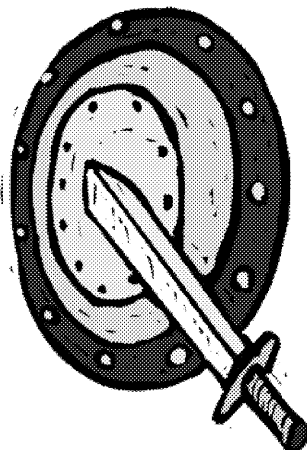
**Card 26: Form and Structure – R**

1. a) The witches speak in rhyme for two reasons. The first is when they use incantations, which are usually in rhyme. The second is to show that these creatures with unnatural speech.
- b) To a modern audience, the rhymes might sound silly as the witches don't belong in a children's fairy story. For example:  
*'Eye of newt, and toe of frog,  
 Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,'*

However, the strange, other-worldly sounds of the rhyme would have appealed to a Shakespearian audience with a firm belief in the real existence of magic.

2. This is a very powerful sentence where Lady Macbeth refers to the death of Macduff's family. However, she does so using a childish rhyme that is more appropriate to a child's language. In fact the line sounds almost like a child's riddle. This use of rhyme and simple structure to explain a despicable, violent action highlights both the horror and the madness of the act.
3. a) Shakespeare often finishes a scene with a rhyming couplet. At the end of a blank verse, this use of rhyme signals the end of the scene to the audience. It is useful as there was much less sophisticated use of scenery at the time, so the rhyme and exit of the characters helped to inform the audience that the scene was at an end.
- b) There are many scenes that end in these rhyming couplets. For example, the following lines by Macbeth:  
*'It is concluded: Banquo, thy soul's flight,  
 If it find Heaven, must find it out to-night.'*

*'I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff;  
 And damn'd be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"'*



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**Card 27: Form and Structure – Soliloquies**

Shakespeare often used soliloquies. These are speeches where a character speaks to herself so that the audience can hear his or her thoughts but the other characters are not. They are useful for understanding a character, as the speaker tells the truth. There are a number of soliloquies throughout the play.

For example, Macbeth considers whether to kill Duncan in Act I, Scene 7. He says:  
*'If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
 It were done quickly...'*

In Act II, Scene i, lines 40–71 (beginning *'Is this a dagger which I see before me'*), the dagger appears after he has decided to murder Duncan.

The soliloquy in Act V, Scene v, lines 19–28 takes place as Macbeth awaits his execution. The first two lines refer to the fact that he has just been told that his wife

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*She should have died hereafter:  
 There would have been a time for such a word. –  
 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.*

1. Identify all the metaphors Macbeth uses to describe life and explain what they are showing us Macbeth's views.
2. What technique is used in the third line and what effect does it have?
3. Do you think that Macbeth regards life as pointless because his wife has died?

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## Card 27: Form and Structure – Soliloquy

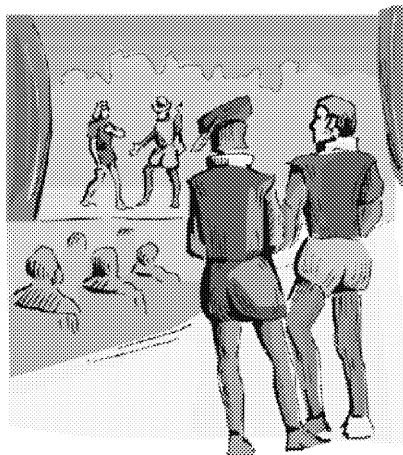
1. *She should have died hereafter:  
There would have been a time for such a word. –  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief 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.*

By comparing life to a brief candle, Macbeth is referring to the brevity and insubstantiality. It is no more than a flickering flame. This is reinforced by the metaphor of a shadow; something that lacks substance and has no impact upon the world.

The third metaphor compares life to an actor on the stage ('*a poor player*') who puts on a show of effort but is soon gone and forgotten. Finally, Macbeth compares life to a tale that may be loud and full of action, but which lacks any point when it is over.

Overall, the soliloquy shows Macbeth's utter despair at the pointlessness of life.

2. The repetition of the word '*tomorrow*' adds to the sense of life being a long and tedious journey through day after day.
3. It is doubtful his words are due to being grief-stricken. In the phrase '*should have died hereafter*', which is a way of saying that she would have died anyway. It is an off-hand statement that does not imply grief. He is simply stating that life is pointless as he is seeing everything that he has striven for coming to nothing.



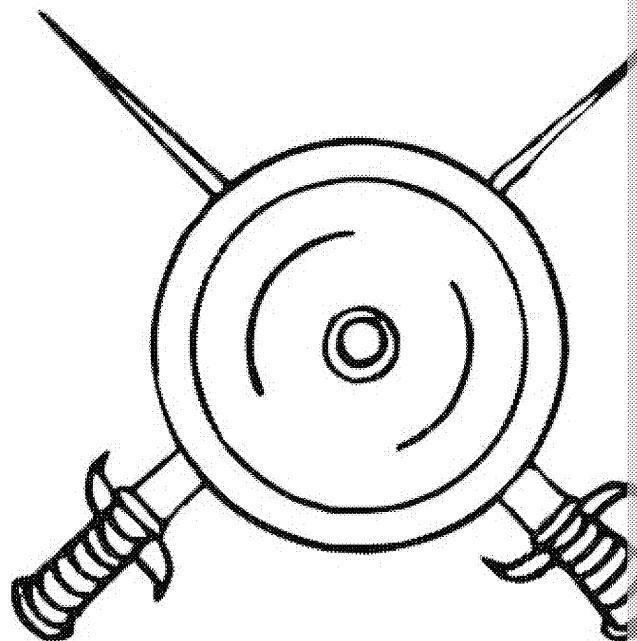
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**Card 28: Form and Structure – The Timing of**

*'I have done the deed.'*

1. The pivotal scene of the play is the murder of Duncan. However, this act and this murder takes place early in Act II. Why is this and how does it affect the play?
2. Explain how the following details in Act II, Scene ii foreshadow further developments in the play.
  - a) Lady Macbeth hears an owl scream.
  - b) Lady Macbeth tells her husband not to dwell on the act:  
*'These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways: so, it will make us mad.'*
  - c) Macbeth cries: *'Macbeth shall sleep no more!'*
  - d) Macbeth murders Duncan's guards and frames them for the murder.
  - e) Lady Macbeth tells her husband that:  
*'A little water clears us of this deed'*
3. In Act II, Scene iii, Donalbain and Malcolm decide to flee England. How does this affect the play's development?



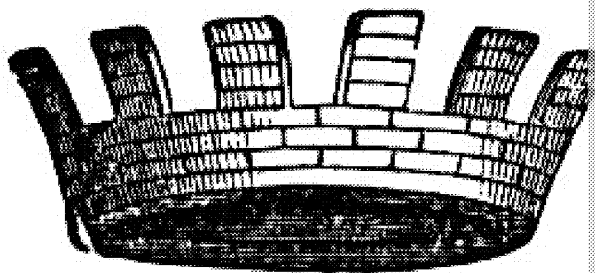
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**Card 28: Form and Structure – The Timing of**

1. The play's main focus is not the build-up to the murder or the guilt Macbeth will actually carry out the deed. The play's interest lies in the aftermath in terms of the effect it has on those who were involved in slaying the king and his wife.
2.
  - a) Nature recoils at the murder. This forewarns us that the murder will have repercussions throughout the kingdom now that the king has been slain and the throne is empty.
  - b) These words introduce the idea of the crime leading to madness, which is exactly what happens to Lady Macbeth.
  - c) These words apply to Macbeth losing his peace of mind after the murder, which foreshadow Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking.
  - d) We immediately see that this is a crime that necessitates further action. After the slaying of Duncan and the guards, Macbeth then goes on to kill the other nobles and his family.
  - e) This statement contrasts with Lady Macbeth trying to clean her conscience in the sleepwalking scene in Act V.
3. After the murder, Macbeth does not reign securely. His crown is not on his rightful heirs, leaving Macbeth feeling threatened and insecure in his position.



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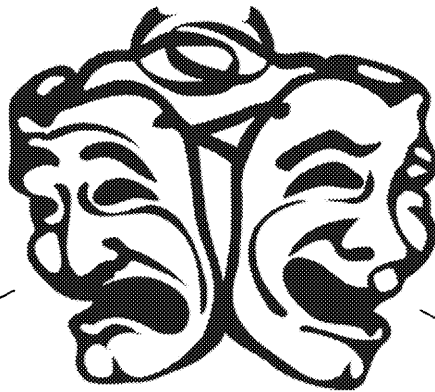
**Card 29: Context – The Tragic Hero**

Shakespeare wrote a number of tragedies. Among the most famous are *Lear* and *Othello*. The tragedies focus on a central character placed in a situation that leads to a terrible, and usually fatal, conclusion with the death of the main characters.

The central character is called the 'tragic hero' and Shakespeare's tragedies have a number of common features. These are shown below. Decide which of these features *Macbeth* has and justify your decision.

The tragic hero has a "tragic flaw" – a personality trait that leads to the hero's downfall.

The tragic hero's downfall is the direct result of his own actions.



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**LEARNING POINT**

Shakespeare's plays are divided into three categories. As well as tragedies, he wrote comedies such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. "Comedy" does not mean the same as modern comedy. They are called comedies because they have happy endings. He also wrote historical plays about England such as *Richard III*.

**Extension Task:** Read revision card 33 to discover why *Macbeth* is not a historical play, despite there being an historical Macbeth.

The film, *Braveheart*, about another major Scottish historical figure – was a huge box office success but was criticised for being historically inaccurate. Do you think it is important for writers and film-makers to ensure factual accuracy?

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**Card 29: Context – The Tragic Hero**

All of the five points listed are true of Macbeth.

**Tragic flaw** – Macbeth's tragic flaw is his ambition. It is this that drives him. When the witches put the idea of kingship into his mind, he becomes obsessed.

*'I have no spur*

*To prick the sides of my intent, but only*

*Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself,*

*And falls on th'other'*

**High status** – At first, Macbeth is one of the king's generals and then becomes king. Nowadays, drama often focuses on the lives of 'ordinary' people. But the fall of a king or noble would have been considered much more tragic than what happens to the common man.

**Feeling pity** – Shakespeare did not create a comic-book, two-dimensional villain. Although Macbeth's evil actions, the audience do pity his situation. We are shown that he is being tortured by guilt while everything he has striven for collapses.

**Suffering** – Although Macbeth is tortured by his guilt and suffering, he gains an increasing self-awareness as he comes to understand that there is a price for his actions.

**The result of his own actions** – This is a key point to consider when discussing his downfall. Although he is led into temptation by the witches and manipulated, Macbeth always has free choice. Nobody forces him to kill Duncan and he could wait for any time. Likewise, his descent into further brutality after the first murder. Even after the murder, he could have chosen a different path, but he chooses not to.

*'I am in blood*

*Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,*

*Returning were as tedious as go o'er.'*

**Extension Task**

Responses to this question are very dependent on students' personal views. They might want to consider the following factors:

- Are narratives more important for representing specific events, or for exploring themes and ideas?
- Would factual accuracy lead to disinterest from a number of viewers?
- In the case of *Macbeth* particularly, is there a need to bend the truth in order to fit the features of tragedy?

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**Card 30: Context – Witchcraft**

1. The play begins with a scene showing the three witches and, in turn, Macbeth. Witches are also popular in modern literature; however, how would witches have a much more powerful effect upon an audience?
2. Witches were regarded as servants of the devil who tempted people. How do they manage to lead Macbeth towards committing murder?
3. Belief in the power of prophecy was widespread at the time the play was written. How do the following prophecies come true and in what way is the outcome different from which Macbeth expected?
  - a) *'Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn  
The power of man, for none of woman born  
Shall harm Macbeth.'*
  - b) *'Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him.'*
4. Act IV, Scene i begins as follows:  
First Witch:  
*'When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?'*

Second Witch:

*'When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.'*

What type of verse do the witches speak in and why do you think they use this form?

**LEARNING POINT**

King James I was on the throne at the time the play was first performed. He was very concerned about witchcraft in the kingdom and had written a book (Demonology), about witchcraft and demonic rites. Shakespeare might have written the play to cater to the king's interest in the subject.

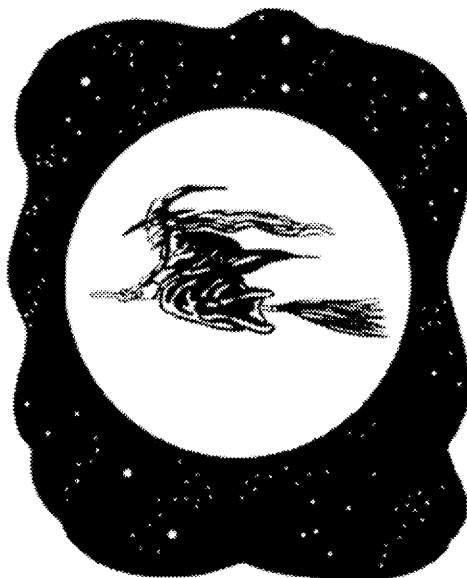
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**Card 30: Context – Witchcraft**

1. Belief in witchcraft was widespread at the time, so the audience was responsive to the witches' presence. A modern audience thinks witches can only exist in the imagination, but being led astray, hurt or destroyed was a real threat to a seventeenth-century audience. The play was written at a time when and three witches huddled around a cauldron would have been a terrifying sight to an audience.
2. The witches corrupt Macbeth by recognising his great weakness – his ambition – and exploit this against him by prophesying that he will become king. They encourage his murders by telling him Banquo's heirs will inherit the kingdom and that Macduff is the only one who can kill Macduff. However, the key point to note is that they never *force* Macbeth to act. He chooses to act as he does with his own free will after being tempted by the Weird Sisters.
3. Both of the prophecies seem impossible and yet both come true. The witches made them up in order to make Macbeth think he was invincible as he was the only man born of a woman or until a forest actually got up and moved.
  - a) Macbeth learns that Macduff was '*untimely ripped*' from his mother's womb. We don't know for sure, but this may mean that he was born prematurely and died.
  - b) The soldiers advancing towards Macbeth carry branches from the forest to disguise the size of the army. So, in a sense, the wood does move.
4. The witches are speaking in rhyming couplets. Most of the other characters speak in iambic pentameter. By using rhyming couplets, Shakespeare is showing the witches to be different from the others. They are unnatural and inhuman.



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## Card 31: Context – Kingship

- At the time the play was written, there was belief in 'the divine right of kings' that kings were placed on the throne by God and ruled with his blessing. Find examples in the play that show that Macbeth's rebellion against the king is a rebellion against God?
- Although Duncan does not have many lines to speak in the play, he is a good character as he represents a lawful king.
  - What 'kingly' qualities does Duncan display in the few scenes he appears in?
  - In what way does Duncan's goodness lead to his own downfall?
- Find a quotation showing that Macbeth recognises Duncan's nobility.
- Read Act IV, Scene iii where Malcolm and Macduff discuss the qualities of a king. Macbeth. During the discussion, Malcolm lists Macbeth's qualities as *'king-becoming graces'*. Put the qualities below under the correct heading.

<b>Avaricious</b>	<b>Sudden</b>	<b>Stableness</b>
<b>Bloody</b>	<b>False</b>	<b>Justice</b>
<b>Patience</b>	<b>Fortitude</b>	<b>Perseverance</b>
<b>Verity</b>	<b>Courage</b>	<b>Devotion</b>
<b>Malicious</b>	<b>Lowliness</b>	

<b>Macbeth's Qualities</b>	<b>King's Qualities</b>

- Does Macbeth have any of the kingly qualities listed?



### LEARNING POINT

One example that demonstrates the belief in kings being appointed by God is the power of the king to cure people of the King's Evil (a disease called scrofula). This is referred to in Act IV when a doctor refers to England's King Edward as 'the good King'

"there are a crew of wretched souls,  
That stay his cure: their malady convinces  
The Great assay of art; but at his touch,  
Such sanctity hath Heaven given his hand,  
They presently amend."

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**Card 31: Context – Kingship**

1. In Act I, Macbeth meets the witches during a storm. The weather symbolise chaos and the upsetting of the natural order. The witches represent unnatural evil involved in overthrowing the king; God's appointed king.

Once Macbeth is on the throne, evil spreads throughout the kingdom. The idea of being a good king as he is not the rightful king.

This unnaturalness is reflected in nature. Read Act II, Scene iv, which is set against Duncan's murder with the sky darkening and animals behaving strangely. The mental illness of Lady Macbeth is also symbolic of the destruction of Macbeth's haunting by the ghost of Banquo.

2. a) Duncan defends his people against the attacking Norwegians who rewards loyalty (e.g. making Macbeth Thane of Cawdor); he is quick to praise those who have done well.  
b) Duncan is very trusting. He is shocked by Cawdor's treason:  
*'He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust'*

It is this same trusting nature that leads Duncan to trust Macbeth to sleep in his castle.

3. In Act I, Scene vii, lines 16–20, Macbeth says:  
*'this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against  
The deep damnation of his taking off;'*

4. a) *'I grant him bloody,  
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,  
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin'*

*'Justice, Verity, Temp'rance, Stableness,  
Beauty, Perseverance, Mercy, Lowliness,  
Devotion, Patience, Courage, Fortitude'*

- b) It could be argued that Macbeth has courage, e.g. the way he takes part in the play and faces death at the end.

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## Card 32: Context – Women and Their Positions

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## LEARNING POINT

The idea of equality between the sexes did not exist at the time the woman's role was to look after the home and be obedient to her husband. Women were expected to play any role in the world beyond caring for their family.

**Extension Task:** This is a play full of violence. Discuss how the violence of the witches differs from that of the male characters.

1. The idea of disorder is a key theme of the play. Macbeth murders the natural order of society as the king was considered to be divinely appointed with an unquestionable right to rule. How does the behaviour of Lady Macbeth show a sense of a society in disorder?
2. *'unsex me here,  
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty!'*  
  
Why does Lady Macbeth use the phrase *'unsex me here'*?
3. Find at least one other quotation from Lady Macbeth that shows her rejection of the traditional female role.
4. Explain whether you agree with the view that Lady Macbeth is suppressing her natural instincts. Use evidence from the play to support your point.
5. Would you agree with the statement that Lady Macbeth is successful in manipulating her husband so that he carries out her wishes? Remember to refer to the text.
6. *'you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.'*

Banquo's words reveal that the witches have beards. What does this tell us about the Weird Sisters?

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**Card 32: Context – Women and Their Position**

1. Lady Macbeth dominates her husband in the early stages of the play. This is against the natural order by the audience in Shakespeare's time. As a woman, she has no involvement in Macbeth's professional affairs and should have been at home.
2. Lady Macbeth wishes to lose the traditional female qualities of gentleness and denies her gender in order to be able to have the cruelty to murder the king, who is a guest in her home and for whom she should be caring.
3. *'Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall,'*

Lady Macbeth wishes to be rid of her mother's milk, a symbol of nurture.

*'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.'*

This is a shocking statement from Lady Macbeth and a complete reversal of what is expected of a woman.

4. No matter how determined she is to suppress her feelings, Lady Macbeth's emotions are surfacing. The fact that her guilt surfaces during her sleep shows the power of her natural feelings even surface before the murder, as she admits she cannot kill and resembles her father.
5. At first, Lady Macbeth successfully manipulates Macbeth into killing Duncan by advising him not to murder the king by appealing to his manhood. After this, however, she ignores his advice and she becomes a lonely figure grappling with her guilt.
6. The witches' beards inform us that the witches are not behaving as women. They have power and influence events and, in so doing, take on the male role.

**Extension Task**

- Violence on the part of men is far more physical, such as Macbeth's murder of Duncan.
- Women, on the other hand, are shown to be more subtle and crafty.
- Lady Macbeth and the witches use violence to manipulate men and achieve their goals.
- This reflects on the limited opportunities for women to exert control in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

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**Card 33: Context – The Play and Its****LEARNING POINT**

Macbeth was a real, historical figure who ruled as the Scottish king in the eleventh century after deposing King Duncan. However, Shakespeare wrote the play as a history. In fact, the real Macbeth was considered to be a

1. *Macbeth* is presumed to have been written in 1606. The famous Gunpowder Plot of Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators tried to blow up the king and failed in 1605. How might the theme of the play have been influenced by this event?
2. Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603. King James VI of Scotland was crowned and became King James I of England. How might this fact have influenced Shakespeare's decision to write the play?
3. Banquo did not really exist in history. However, the Stuart family claim descent from him. How might this have influenced Shakespeare?
4. The facts below show the historical details known concerning the king who was deposed. How has Shakespeare changed these details in the play and explain why he changed them.

a) King Duncan is a weak ruler.

c) After becoming king, Macbeth rules for many years.



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**Card 33: Context – The Play and Its**

1. The play shows that terrible events befall a kingdom when the king is overthrown, and that harsh punishment awaits those who rebel. This is seen as a warning to any other potential rebels.
2. The play is set in Scotland and could be seen to be encouraging the king to be interested in the Scottish royal family. This would appeal to the king as a distant relative to Queen Elizabeth I and not everyone agreed that she was a good queen.
3. Banquo is shown as a good man and a loyal soldier. This would help the king who was sure to have seen the play. In fact, King James was a patron of the theatre company. Also, the play reveals that Banquo's descendant helps to strengthen King James' claim to the throne.
4.
  - a) In the play, King Duncan is shown as a good man and wise ruler. This helps Duncan's goodness with Macbeth's evil.
  - b) Macbeth murders Duncan in his sleep while he is a guest in his castle. Macbeth behaving in a cowardly and treacherous manner.
  - c) Macbeth's reign is short. This helps the structure of the play as it is an action-filled performance.
  - d) Although Lady Macbeth makes reference to her children early on, this is a feature in the play. This serves to further emphasise Macbeth's downfall and turns against him.

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## Card 34: Reception over Time – The Death



### LEARNING POINT

The *denouement* is the part of the play after the climax when the resolution of the plot takes place. In *Macbeth*, the denouement is the death of the two main characters, Macbeth and his wife.

**Extension Task:** Both the climax (the murder of Duncan) and the denouement are preceded by Macbeth meeting the witches. Discuss the effect this has on these events.

1. Although Macbeth commits murder, it is possible to feel sorry for him. What reasons might the audience have for pitying him?
2. What reasons could the audience have for pitying the '*fiend-like*' Lady Macbeth after she hears of her death?
3. Macbeth is killed by Macduff. In what way is this a fitting end?
4. Lady Macbeth commits suicide. In doing so, she does not have to face the consequences of her crime. Does this mean that she escapes justice?
5. The death of the Macbeths helps to ensure the audience understands the play's message. How would you sum up this key message in one statement?
6. *'I will not yield,  
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,  
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.'*

So says Macbeth as he goes into his final battle with Macduff. Do you think this demonstrates Macbeth's bravery?

7. How do you think the audience's view of the play's ending might have changed in the early days of the play's production?



### LEARNING POINT

Lady Macbeth dies off-stage; allowing the audience to focus on Macbeth's isolation and desperation as he is beset by bad news. In the previous scene, Macduff's enemies are marching towards him and, in the following scene, Macduff's army is coming to Dunsinane to fulfill the prophecy. Compare this to the death of Duncan, which also happens offstage, allowing the audience to focus on the nervous waiting.

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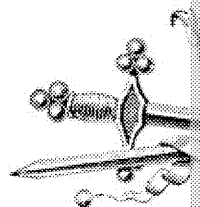


**Card 34: Reception over Time – The Death**

1. Reasons the readers could feel sorry for Macbeth include the fact that he is a brave soldier; that he faces up to his death bravely; and that he is alone at the end. Although Macbeth must take responsibility for his actions, he argued that he was manipulated by the witches and by his wife.
2. Reasons for pitying Lady Macbeth could include the fact that she is a woman in a man's world; that she commits the desperate act of suicide; and that – after the death of her husband – she is increasingly isolated and alone.
3. Macbeth has Macduff's family slaughtered, so it is fitting that one of his own people is the person who ends his life.
4. Lady Macbeth denies her own feelings in killing Duncan, thinking that she is strong without feeling remorse. However, her true feelings come to the surface when she does not escape justice but has to answer to herself for her crime.
5. Answers could include: 'He who lives by the sword will die by the sword', 'You can't lie to yourself', or 'You will pay the ultimate price for your ultimate crime'. There are a number of other suitable answers but all show that Macbeths are punished for what they have done.
6. These words could show Macbeth's bravery in that he does not flinch as he rushes headlong to his doom. However, they may also be a sign of his weakness as he rushes into battle because he has nowhere else to go. It could also show that Macbeth actually welcomes the thought of death as a relief from his current situation, or it could also show Macbeth's arrogance; he would prefer death to being taken alive.
7. Points might include:
  - Older audiences might have detected a sense of honour in Macbeth's actions.
  - We might have less sympathy now, since accolades and titles are less relevant in this day and age.
  - Modern audiences might be more inclined to sympathise/empathise with her independence as a woman opposes the constrained role of women at the time of writing.

**Extension Task**

- The witches effectively foreshadow the key events of the play.
- In the first instance, Macbeth's meeting with the witches confuses him and introduces the prospect of using violence to attain power.
- In the second instance, the witches mislead Macbeth to the extent that he believes he is essentially invincible – and this arrogance leads to his demise.



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## Card 35: Key Quotations – ‘Fair is foul, and foul is fair’

*“Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.”*  
(Act I, Scene i, 11–12)

The scene is set in a dark, stormy night with witches; creating an immediate sense of evil.

The first scene takes place during a storm, giving a sense of chaos and disorder that is reflected in the play.

The scene is a dramatic couplet, as seen in many other scenes in *Macbeth*.

1. ‘*Fair is foul, and foul is fair*’ – Why might Shakespeare have placed this at the beginning of the play?
2. How might the statement ‘*Fair is foul, and foul is fair*’ be said to relate to the witches?
3. How might the statement ‘*Fair is foul, and foul is fair*’ be said to relate to the storm?
4. How might the statement ‘*Fair is foul, and foul is fair*’ be said to relate to Macbeth?
5. What linguistic/structural techniques can you detect in this statement and what effect do they have on the message conveyed?
6. In Act III, Lady Macbeth says:  
*‘Nought’s had, all’s spent,  
Where our desire is got without content:’*

How does the witches’ statement that ‘*Fair is foul*’ apply to the rest of the play?



## LEARNING POINT

This famous quotation is an example of a paradox. A paradox is a statement that is contradictory and impossible but which may nevertheless be true. ‘*Fair is foul, and foul is fair*’ does not seem to make sense. However, as we follow the play, we learn the truth about what the witches mean by this statement.

**Extension Task:** Macbeth says of the witches’ prophecies that they “*are good*” (Act I, Scene iii, 131). Explain what he means by this paradoxical statement.

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## Card 35: Key Quotations – 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair'

1. This statement has been placed at the beginning of the play as it introduces the idea of the play – the idea that all is not as it seems and that those who may seem good are in fact, evil. This is reflected throughout the first act; for example, Duncan calls Macbeth a *'Fair and noble hostess'* (Act I, Scene vi, 69) and calls Lady Macbeth a *'Fair and noble hostess'* (Act I, Scene vi, 69).
2. In the very next scene, the audience hears Duncan praising Macbeth for his bravery. However, the audience has been forewarned that *'Fair is foul'* and we soon learn that Macbeth has evil intentions.
3. The statement explains that the witches believe that everything people see is not what it is and they only value that which is generally regarded as *'foul'*. In other words, good is evil. Macbeth is a good man who is corrupted by his ambition and Lady Macbeth is a bad woman with a conscience. The witches, however, have no human qualities and reveal the truth.
4. The witches tell Macbeth that he will be king. This strikes him as an extremely cursed prophecy as it will bring about his destruction and the destruction of his family. The later prophecies that he will not be defeated by one *'of woman born'* or that he will be safe until *'Birnam wood'* comes to *'high Dunsinane hill'* sound wonderful to Macbeth but are in fact the signs of his doom.
5. Points might include:
  - The use of an oxymoron makes the statement more memorable and striking.
  - Alliteration strengthens the ominous tone of the message.
  - Images of 'fog' and 'filthy air' signify the uncertainty of the future.
6. Macbeth and his wife both think that gaining the crown will bring them happiness and power, but that this is not the case. Achieving their ambition proves to be their downfall.

### Extension Task

- This statement demonstrates Macbeth's utter confusion at this stage of the play, and his disordered state of mind.
- He suggests that any good that comes with the prophecy also brings bad, and vice versa.
- This makes sense later in the play, when Macbeth attains a position of great power which is also the source of his downfall.



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**Card 36: Key Quotations – ‘Is this a dagger, wh**

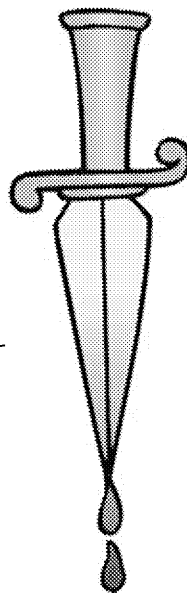
*‘Is this a dagger, which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand?’*

1. To whom is Macbeth speaking when he utters these lines?
2. a) Give examples of supernatural happenings in the play.  
b) How does this appearance of the dagger differ from these su
3. Macbeth asks if the dagger is **‘A dagger of the mind, a false creation** tell the audience about his mental state upon seeing the dagger?
4. He goes on to notice that there are **‘gouts of blood’** on the knife. about Macbeth’s state of mind?
5. This famous soliloquy ends with the ringing of a bell. What is the bell?

**LEARNING POINT: WHAT THE DAGGER SYMBOLISES**

It is a symbol of his decision to kill. The handle is extended towards Macbeth. He chooses to grasp it.

A dagger is a powerful symbol of treason.

**LEARNING POINT**

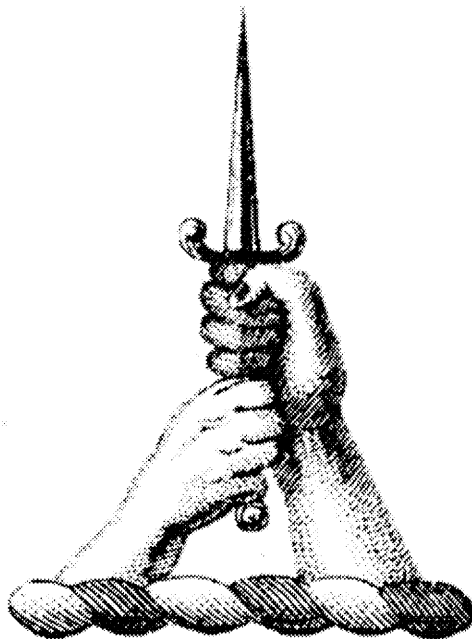
Always look out for lines in the play that echo previous events. In Act 1, Donalbain sums up the danger of daggers in men’s smiles” (line 138). This reinforces the idea of a dagger as

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**Card 36: Key Quotations – ‘Is this a dagger which I see before me?’**

1. He is alone on the stage and speaking to the dagger; although in his mind he is talking to himself. This is one of Macbeth's soliloquies. It is an important soliloquy as it shows the audience Macbeth's state of mind immediately before the murder of Duncan.
2. a) The play is full of supernatural events. These include:
  - the appearances of the witches
  - the witches' prophecies
  - the witches' summoning of apparitions
  - the appearance of Banquo's ghost at the feast
  - the strange phenomena that occur after Macbeth slays Duncan
- b) The appearance of the dagger differs because Macbeth realises that he has created this hallucination; it is not a supernatural event. It contrasts with Banquo's appearance as Banquo's appearance is a figment of Macbeth's imagination and he does not see it as such.
3. Macbeth is aware that the dagger may be a creation of his own mind. He has already sensed that the stress and guilt over what he is about to do is perhaps driving him towards madness.
4. The fact that he sees a knife that is dripping with blood reveals that he has committed the murder before he carries it out.
5. The ringing is the death knell for Duncan. It tells us that Macbeth has made his decision and is now going to carry out the murder. The next time Macbeth kills is when he killed the king.

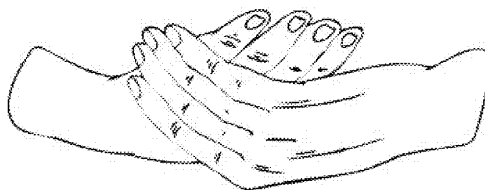


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## Card 37: Key Quotations – ‘Out, damned spot!’

Lady Macbeth: *‘Out, damned spot! out, I say! — One; two: why, then ‘tis time to do’t. — Hell is murky. — Fie, my Lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? — What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? — Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?’*



1. What is the '**spot**' and why cannot Lady Macbeth clean it away?
2. a) Read Act II, Scene ii. Macbeth has just murdered Duncan. For how long has he been washing away of blood. How do these quotations show the crime by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth?
- b) How do the quotations from Act II, Scene ii contrast with the Scene I above?
3. Compare the different emotions expressed by the last two quotations above.
4. What is the significance of these words being spoken while Lady Macbeth is washing her hands?
5. Lady Macbeth is hallucinating and seeing blood on her hands. Consider the symbolism here with the bloody hallucination seen by her husband (Card 26).
6. Lady Macbeth's speech is overheard by a doctor, who says: *'More needs she the divine than the physician.'*

What does the doctor mean by this statement?

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## Card 37: Key Quotations – ‘Out, damned spot!’

- The spot is Duncan’s blood. While sleepwalking, she imagines a spot of blood. However, the spot is the stain upon her conscience caused by the murder. The spot cannot be removed.
- Lady Macbeth: *‘go, get some water,  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand’*

Macbeth: *‘Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand?’*

Lady Macbeth: *‘A little water clears us of this deed’*

Lady Macbeth thinks that they can easily rid themselves of the blood. Macbeth, however, recognises that they will never be rid of the blood that they have done.
  - By Act V, Scene i, Lady Macbeth has learned that one cannot simply walk away and forget about it. She now realises that she has the guilt she feels.
- In the first of the two questions, Lady Macbeth asks why they need anyone discovering their crime. She and her husband now rule the world. They need to fear anyone. This shows a level of arrogance and perhaps a lack of conscience. However, the final question shows that she is being consumed by the need to plan a murder but actually to carry it through and see the blood-spattered matter.
- Unlike her husband, Lady Macbeth has consistently refused to feel guilt for the murder. However, she has no control over her mind when she is sleepwalking. Her feelings rise to the surface.
- Macbeth sees a blood-covered dagger. This hallucination occurs because of his guilt. A key difference between the two characters. Macbeth feels guilt before the crime whereas Lady Macbeth’s guilt only appears after the crime.
- The doctor is saying that Lady Macbeth needs a priest, not a doctor. The sleepwalking is the result of a guilty conscience. It is her soul that is being punished.

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## Card 38: Practice Essay Questions

1. Describe how the character of Macbeth changes throughout the play.
2. Does Macbeth act out of free will or do the witches decide his fate?
3. How important is the theme of ambition in the play?

4. *'Eye of newt, and toe of frog,  
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,'*

Do you think that Shakespeare portrays the witches as frightening? Give reasons for your answer.

5. Referring to the passage, explain how Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to murder. Who do you consider the more evil of the pair, Macbeth or Lady Macbeth? Give reasons for your answer.

Macbeth:

*'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.'*

Lady Macbeth:

*'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? Would'st 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' th' adage?'*

Macbeth:

*'Pr'ythee, peace!  
I dare do all that may become a man;  
Who dares do more, is none.'*

Lady Macbeth:

*'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.'*

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## Card 38: Practice Essay Questions

Plan your essay carefully before you begin writing so that you know what to write and how you will structure your essay. Key points to mention relating to the question are given below:

1.
  - a) Macbeth's introduction as a brave and loyal soldier.
  - b) His worsening character: he murders the king after some hesitation; slaughters the Macduffs.
  - c) At first, he is dominated by his wife but later acts on his own.
  - d) His descent into evil affects the kingdom as he is a cruel ruler.
  - e) At the end, all that is left is his soldier's courage as he faces death.
2.
  - a) The witches could be the goddesses of destiny weaving men's fates.
  - b) Shakespeare probably wished to show Macbeth acting with free will.
  - c) Banquo is also given a prophecy but **chooses** not to act upon it.
  - d) The audience listens as Macbeth **decides** whether to slay the king.
  - e) After the murder, Macbeth rules as a tyrant. The witches' prophecy is fulfilled; he could have chosen to be a good ruler.
3.
  - a) Ambition is Macbeth's main character flaw.
  - b) Uncontrollable ambition leads him to treason and murder.
  - c) The witches recognise his flaw and turn his ambition against him.
  - d) Prior to his meeting the witches, he was a loyal subject.
  - e) Ambition drives Lady Macbeth to convince Macbeth to kill Duncan.
4.
  - a) The play was written over 400 years ago when people believed in the supernatural; the audience would have found the witches horrific.
  - b) This is a dark play full of evil and the supernatural elements such as witches and hallucinations add to the atmosphere.
  - c) '**Eye of newt, and toe of frog**' sound silly to a modern audience; the witches are seen as seeing witches as comedic figures.
5.
  - a) Lady Macbeth accuses her husband of not loving her.
  - b) She also questions his manhood.
  - c) Arguments for Macbeth being more evil (his conscience tells him he is the king's general and supposed to be loyal to him; he kills innocent people).
  - d) Arguments for Lady Macbeth (she has no hesitation in killing her husband into murder, causing his downfall; she uses violence to reveal her true nature).
  - e) Remember to justify your decision in the conclusion.

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## Card 39: Grading Responses

On this card, we have provided details about how responses will be assessed. These notes can be used to support any self-assessment and peer-assessment during your revision.

### Grade 8

In relation to a range of texts, to achieve grade 8, candidates will be expected to:

- sustain a **convincing, informed personal** response to explicit arguments
- sustain a **perceptive critical analysis** of the ways in which writers use language **and** structure
- use judicious and **well-integrated** textual references to develop responses
- show **perceptive understanding** of how contexts **shape** texts and responses

### Grade 5

In relation to a range of texts, to achieve grade 5, candidates will be expected to:

- develop a **generally coherent and engaged** response to explicit arguments
- develop a **clear understanding** of the ways in which writers use language
- use **apt textual references** to support responses
- use **understanding** of contexts to **inform responses** to texts

### Grade 2

In relation to a range of texts, to achieve grade 2, candidates will be expected to:

- make **straightforward comments** about **explicit** meanings of texts
- describe **straightforward aspects** of language, form **or** structure
- make **general references** to **obvious** details of texts
- show **awareness** that texts are **related** to contexts

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