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| **Which of the following is a definition of the word ‘context’? Highlight the correct answer.** |
| **Context is a synonym of history – it means to look back at what happened** |
| **Context helps us to understand the circumstances of something that happens** |
| **Context is related to the structure of an entire text** |
| **Context can be defined as the comparison of two or more texts by the same writer** |
| **Context is when someone collects a range of evidence for analysis** |
| **Here is some helpful context and advice for you. Answer the questions below the information.** |
| **Social Context - ‘The Great Chain of Being’**  **It was believed that God had set out an order for everything in the universe. This was a social order where God chose where you belonged in the chain. From God at the top to plants and minerals at the bottom, this was seen as the natural order.**  **This order was also related to spirits, and so humans were seen as in the middle of the chain. The human order was therefore ordered, from Kings and Queens at the top to peasants at the bottom.**  **Historical Context - King James I**   * **Play was staged during the Jacobean era (when King James I was the king of England)** * **The ‘Gunpowder Plot’ aimed to kill King James I – he felt vulnerable as a king** * **Many questioned his legitimacy to be the king – he was the first king to reign over the whole of the British Isles** * **He was a patron for Shakespeare’s theatre company, meaning he influenced the play** * **He tried to prove witchcraft existed and even wrote a book about it (Daemonologie)**   **Biographical Context - William Shakespeare**   * **Some of the most dominant themes in his plays were war, love, madness and power** * **His early plays were mainly comedies and histories, before moving into the 17th Century by writing tragedies: Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello and King Lear** * **Often used blank verse in his plays (unrhymed lines but following a pattern of syllables per line) – this was almost always in iambic pentameter (five pairs of syllables per line, where every second syllable would be stressed)**   **Textual Context – Macbeth: The Play**  **This is not about the external contexts of the play (Shakespeare as a playwright, King James I, etc.) – textual contexts are in the play.**  **Remember – context means the circumstances that lead to something happening and help us to understood why it happens.**  **For this, you will need to discuss the play itself: what led to key situations in the play and how they influence other moments…**   1. **What is ‘The Great Chain of Being’?** 2. **Is it followed in the play ‘Macbeth’, or is it broken?** 3. **What messages and ideas from the play would have pleased King James I?** 4. **Are there any moments from the play where it might be useful to discuss King James I?** 5. **Does the play ‘Macbeth’ seem to link with his other plays in terms of the themes?** 6. **What do you think the characters Macbeth, Othello, King Lear and Hamlet have in common?** 7. **Would the character of Macbeth be classed as a hero, a tragic hero or a villain?** 8. **Why would different members of the audience view Macbeth’s decisions in different ways?**   **Now write at least three sentences below about the play ‘Macbeth’ that use the word ‘context’.** |
| **Read the following extract from Act 3, Scene 1 and answer the questions at the bottom of this page.**  **In this scene, Macbeth is alone on stage. He is now king and thinking about the witches, their prophecies and Banquo.** |
| ***He chid the sisters***  ***When first they put the name of king upon me***  ***And bade them speak to him. Then, prophetlike,***  ***They hailed him father to a line of kings.***  ***Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown***  ***And put a barren scepter in my grip,***  ***Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,***  ***No son of mine succeeding. If ’t be so,***  ***For Banquo’s issue have I filed my mind;***  ***For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered;***  ***Put rancors in the vessel of my peace***  ***Only for them; and mine eternal jewel***  ***Given to the common enemy of man,***  ***To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!***  ***Rather than so, come fate into the list,***  ***And champion me to th' utterance.*** |
| **How does Shakespeare present ambition in this scene?**  **Which evidence from this scene is relevant to your argument?**  **What methods have been used by Shakespeare in this scene?**  **What does the evidence suggest about ambition in this scene?**  **What context is relevant when considering this scene and why?** |
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