

GCSE English Literature



Macbeth Study Guide

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CLASS: _____



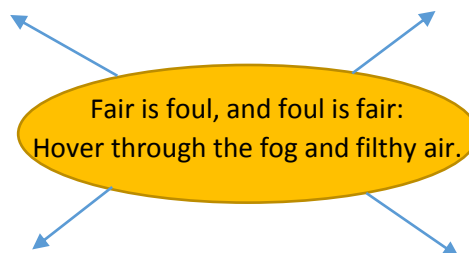
1. While returning from a battle victory, Macbeth, a powerful lord, meets three Witches who predict that he will become King of Scotland.
2. Macbeth tells his wife of the Witches' predictions and she encourages him to murder the current king, Duncan, who is staying with them as a guest.
3. After Macduff discovers the murder, Duncan's sons flee the country, leaving the way clear for Macbeth to become king.
4. Banquo, Macbeth's best friend, becomes suspicious of what his friend has done so Macbeth has him murdered too.
5. Macbeth pays a second visit to the Witches and receives more predictions.
6. In England, Malcolm (Duncan's elder son) and his chief supporter, Macduff, plan to invade Scotland to win back the throne. An enraged Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed; Macduff swears revenge.
7. Lady Macbeth suffers from guilt for what she has done and eventually commits suicide.
8. Malcolm's invasion is successful and Macduff kills Macbeth. Malcolm becomes the new King of Scotland and the country counts the cost of Macbeth's short but bloody reign.

Act One Scene One

The three witches meet in a storm and decide when they will meet up again.

AO1: What does the weather suggest to the audience about these characters?

AO2: Why is the quote important? What does it establish about this play?



- In the modern world we have scientific knowledge to explain why natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods and droughts take place. However in Shakespeare's time there was no such science and so people invented all sorts of explanations to explain why bad things happened. One of the ways they accounted for the unexplained was the idea of witches.
- In Elizabethan England hundreds of thousands of women were tortured and executed in Europe because they were accused of witchcraft.
- King James I became king in 1603. He was particularly superstitious about witches and even wrote a book on the subject. Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* especially to appeal to James – it has witches and is set in Scotland, where he was already king. The three witches in *Macbeth* manipulate the characters into disaster, and cast spells to destroy lives.

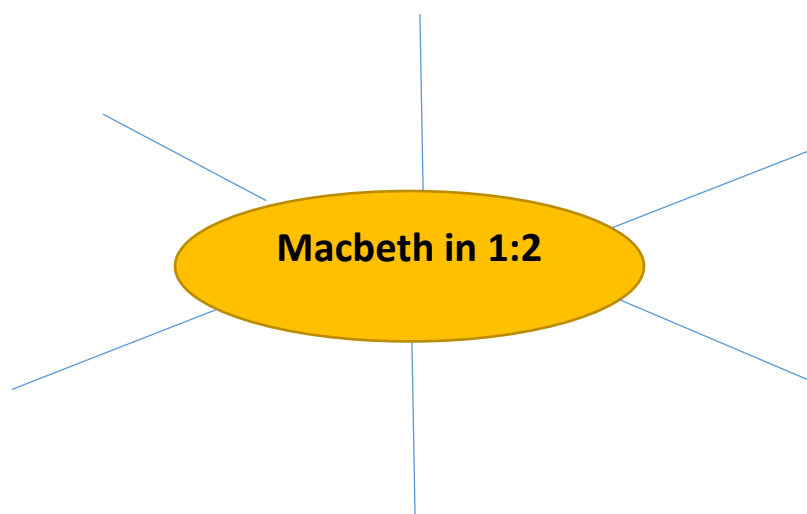
How does Shakespeare present the witches to support Elizabethan ideas about witchcraft?

Act One Scene Two

King Duncan and his son, Malcolm, meet a sergeant, who talks about Macbeth (Thane of Glamis) and what a good warrior he is. Duncan decides to make Macbeth Thane of Cawdor as a reward for killing the traitorous Macdonwald.

Sergeant: Doubtful it stood;
As two spent swimmers, that do cling together
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald--
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villanies of nature 5
Do swarm upon him--from the western isles
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;
And fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,
Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak:
For brave Macbeth--well he deserves that name-- 10
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valour's minion carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him, 15
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

AO1 & AO2: What do we learn about Macbeth in this extract?



Act One Scene Three

The three witches talk about what they've been doing since they last met – it involves 'killing' and 'revenge'. Macbeth and Banquo appear, and the witches hail Macbeth as 'thane of Glamis...thane of Cawdor...that shall be king hereafter'. They also hail Banquo as 'Lesser than Macbeth, but greater...Not so happy, yet much happier...Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.' The witches then disappear, leaving Macbeth and Banquo to ponder their words. Ross and Angus arrive and tell Macbeth he is now thane of Cawdor. Macbeth privately ponders the possibility that he might be king, concluding it is best to let the future unravel by itself.

AO1, AO2 – Annotate this extract, focusing on how Shakespeare presents Macbeth, and how he uses foreshadowing to create a sense of foreboding:

MACBETH

[Aside] Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I amthane of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair 5
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings:
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man that function 10
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not.

Foreboding: a sense that something bad is going to happen.

BANQUO

Look, how our partner's rapt.

MACBETH

[Aside] If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir. 15

BANQUO

New horrors come upon him,
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould
But with the aid of use.

MACBETH

[Aside] Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day. 20

Act One Scene Four

Macbeth and Banquo meet Duncan at the palace. Macbeth is hailed as thane of Cawdor, and continues to consider the tantalising prospect of becoming king.

AO1: Complete this table of Macbeth quotes from the first four scenes of the play.

Key Quote	What we learn about him
'Worthy gentleman!'	
'All hail Macbeth that shalt be king hereafter!'	
'If good, why do I yield to that suggestion?'	

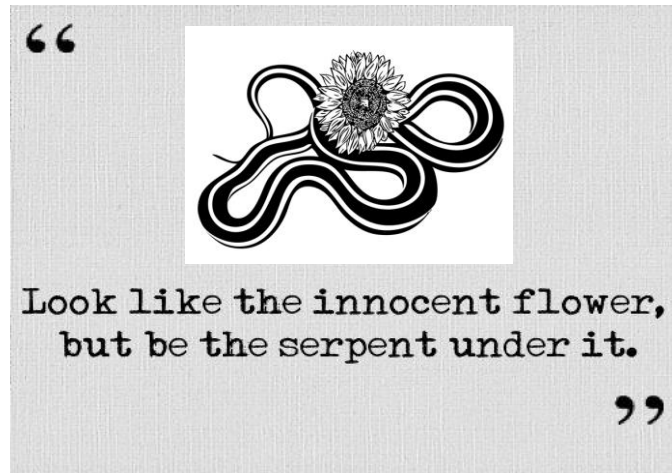


Key Theme: Appearance and Reality

In *Macbeth*, things are seldom quite what they seem. Characters say one thing yet mean something else and use euphemisms to hide reality. Wicked and violent acts such as murder are covered up or the blame is shifted onto someone else.

The Witches mislead Macbeth, or they at least make suggestions which allow him to mislead himself. Ghosts, visions and apparitions occur regularly.

All of these things contribute to the many contrasts which exist in the play; almost nothing is as it should be.



How is the theme of appearances and reality presented in the play?

- Through characters' language - Many of the words the characters use have double meanings, are twisted for a particular purpose or are used to highlight contrasts (eg "So foul and fair a day I have not seen")
- Through characters' thoughts - The Macbeths have evil intentions and even when they seem friendly and welcoming are often actually plotting how they can hold onto their power (eg when Duncan is welcomed into their castle as an honoured guest)
- Through characters' actions - Acts of pure evil are presented as though they are somehow beneficial to others (eg when Macbeth orders Banquo's death, he suggests to the hired murderers that it will be of benefit to them).

Act One Scene Five

We meet Lady Macbeth, who is reading a letter from Macbeth, telling her about the witches' prophecy. She decides that they will kill King Duncan whilst he is a guest at their castle. Macbeth enters and Lady Macbeth sets about convincing him to murder Duncan.

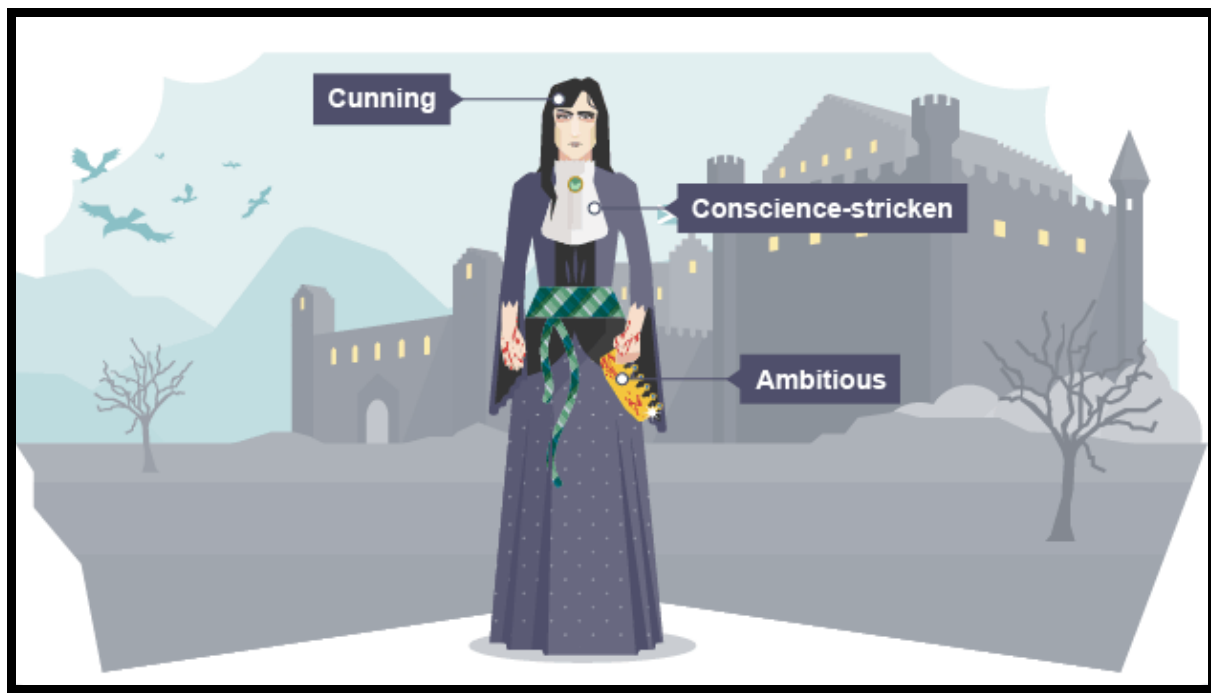
Men assumed a dominant position in **Jacobean** society. It was the man of the house who worked and fetched for food to keep his family alive. Apart from being the sole bread earner of the family, the eldest male member was the head of the house. Everyone had to obey him and do as was being told... Jacobean women continued to live a life that was sub-ordinate to men. They were supposed to obey what was told to them. The main responsibility of married women was to take care of the household matters and raise children.

AO2, AO3 – How does Lady Macbeth follow the traditional model of a Jacobean woman? Annotate the following extracts, thinking about how Shakespeare is using language to present her to the audience:

Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear

Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief!

look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't.



Act One Scene Six

Duncan, his sons (Malcolm and Donalbain) and Banquo arrive at Macbeth's castle. They are greeted by Lady Macbeth, who personifies her lines from the previous scene: 'look like the innocent flower,/But be the serpent under't.'

SPOILER ALERT: Both Duncan and Banquo are murdered whilst staying at Macbeth's castle.

Dramatic irony: When the audience know something that characters don't.

AO1, AO2: Why are the lines below ironic?

DUNCAN

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

BANQUO

This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve, 5
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed, 10
The air is delicate.

Act One Scene Seven

The scene opens with a SOLILOQUY (a speech that only the audience hears, revealing a character's inner thoughts and feelings) from Macbeth, in which he is wrestling with his conscience: should he kill Duncan or not? Lady Macbeth enters, and Macbeth tells her he will not go through with it. Lady Macbeth questions her husband, and once again convinces him to murder the king.

*****SPOILER ALERT – Macbeth murders A LOT of people besides Duncan, before he is murdered at the end of the play*****

AO1: Why does Shakespeare allow us to hear Macbeth's thoughts and feelings at this point in the play? Annotate the extract below, focusing on what is going through Macbeth's mind:

Macbeth:

But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice 5
To our own lips. 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. Besides, this Duncan 10
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked new-born babe, 15
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only 20
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other.

Act One Scene Seven

AO1, AO2, AO3: How does Lady Macbeth convince Macbeth to go through with the murder?

Strategy	Quote	Why it's effective (refer to CONTEXT where relevant)
Getting angry with Macbeth	Was the hope drunk Wherein you dressed yourself?	
Questioning Macbeth's masculinity	'Like the poor cat'	
Questioning his courage	'Screw your courage to the sticking place'	
Questioning his integrity and using violent imagery	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 plucked my nipple from his boneless gums And dashed the brains out, had I sworn As you have done to this	

Act Two Scene One

Banquo tells his son, Fleance, that he cannot sleep even though he feels tired. Banquo and Macbeth talk; Macbeth lies to Banquo and says he 'think[s] not of' the witches and their prophecy. Macbeth performs his second soliloquy, claiming to see 'a dagger' floating in the air before him and leading him to perform the murder of Duncan.

AO2 – At the start of this scene, the atmosphere is much changed. How is this apparent in the extract below?

BANQUO

Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heaven;
Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.
A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
And yet I would not sleep: merciful powers,
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
Gives way to in repose!

Enter MACBETH, and a Servant with a torch

Give me my sword.
Who's there?



Banquo is aware that the Witches' predictions may be tricking Macbeth into evil actions and is the first to suspect Macbeth of murder. He dies while protecting his son, Fleance, and comes back as a ghost to haunt Macbeth.

King James I traced his ancestry back to Banquo (see The Show of Eight Kings in IV.i) which specifically says James is Banquo's descendant: one reason Fleance has to survive the play, and why Banquo is so good and noble.

Act Two Scene Two

Lady Macbeth is waiting for news from Macbeth about the murder. Macbeth arrives and tells her he has done it, but he feels guilty. Lady Macbeth tells him not to be weak. They hear a knocking; Macbeth says he wishes it would bring Duncan back to life.

AO1, AO2 – Complete the table below, focusing on the ways Macbeth and Lady Macbeth react to the ‘deed’.

Character	Thoughts and feelings	Quote	What this shows – focus on language and structure in your analysis
Macbeth	Becoming paranoid		
		“Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood Clean from my hand?”	
Lady Macbeth	Frustrated with Macbeth		
		“Had he not resembled My father as he slept, I had done't.”	

Act Two Scene Three

The porter (one of the servants at Macbeth's castle) is complaining about the banging at the gates, comparing himself to a doorman at the gates of hell. Macduff enters and asks to see the king. Macbeth tells him he's still asleep. Whilst Macduff goes to see Duncan, Lennox tells Macbeth about a terrible storm the previous night. Macduff returns, telling them the king is dead. Macbeth and Lennox go to see the king, and Duncan's sons (Donalbain and Malcolm) appear. Macbeth comes back and tells them he has killed the servants, which Macduff questions. Lady Macbeth arrives, and promptly faints. Macduff, Banquo, Macbeth and the other lords agree to assemble in the hall shortly. Malcolm and Donalbain, fearing for their own lives, flee to England and Ireland respectively.

AO2 – A lot happens in this scene, which starts off humorously and ends with significant plot developments.

1) Why do you think Shakespeare decided to include a comic scene at this point in the play?

2) Why do you think we are introduced to Macduff at this point in the play?

AO3 – In Jacobean England, people still largely believed in the **divine right of kings** – the belief that God put the king on the throne, and therefore only God could remove him. An attack on the king was an attack on God Himself, which is a belief that the Stuart kings such as James I promoted in order to validate their claim to the throne.

How would Shakespeare's audience have reacted to the murder of King Duncan? Why? (REGICIDE = murder of a king – use this word in your response).

Act Two Scene Four

Ross discusses the ominous events of the past few days with an old man. Macduff arrives and provides exposition: Donalbain and Malcolm are suspected murderers as they have run away; Macbeth is going to be declared king.

Pathetic fallacy = when the weather reflects the mood or coming events in a text.

AO1, AO2 – Shakespeare uses pathetic fallacy a lot in this play, and the start of Act Two Scene Four is no exception. What do the following lines allude to?

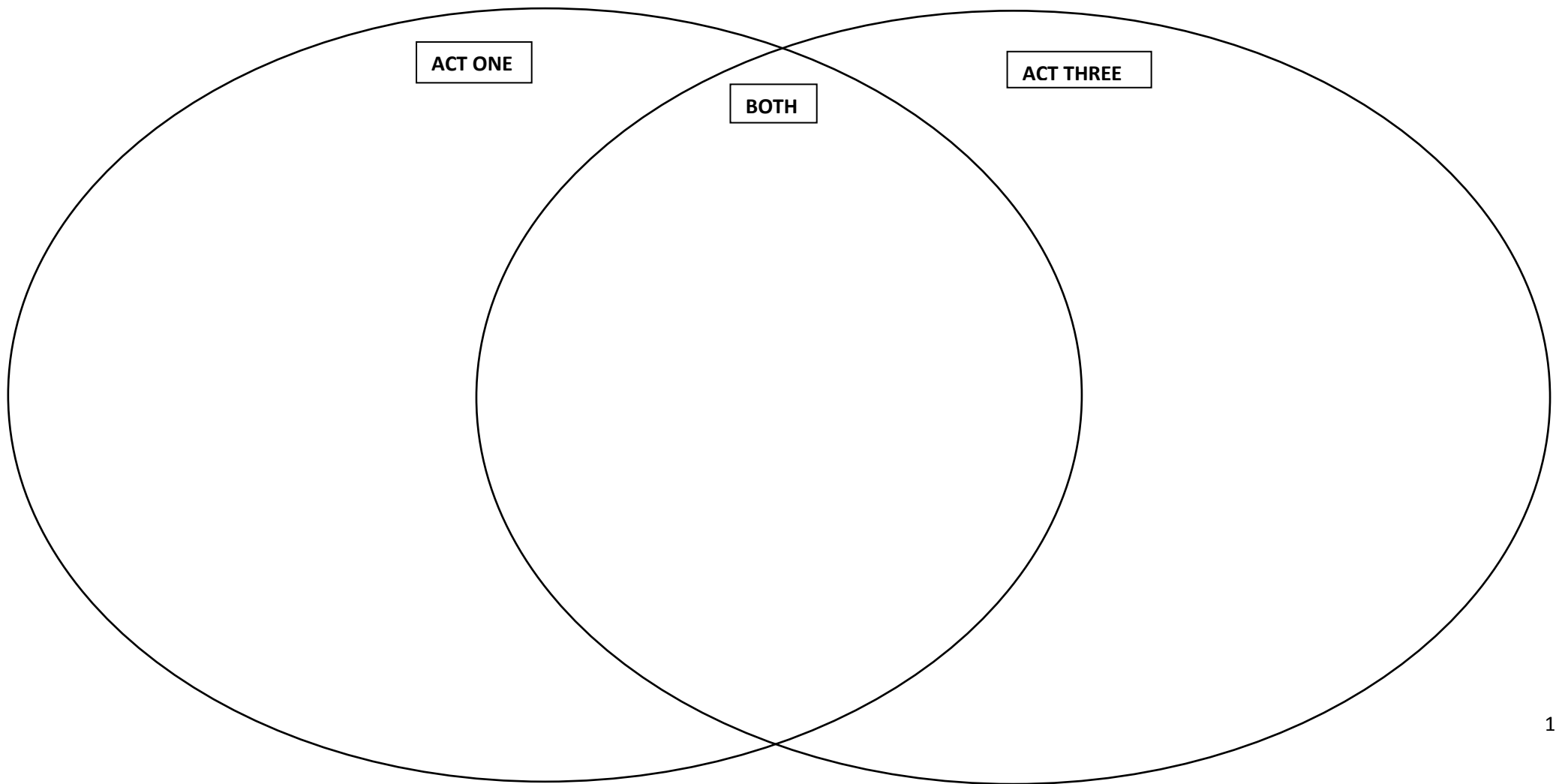
by the clock, 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp:
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,
When living light should kiss it?

Write a paragraph about how the weather has been important in the play so far. You should refer to other parts of the play as well as this scene.

Act Three Scene One

Banquo thinks about the fact that the witches' prophecy has come true for Macbeth, and wonders whether it will come true for him as well. Macbeth enters and asks Banquo if he is going riding that afternoon, and if he is taking his son with him. Macbeth performs a soliloquy, explaining that he feels threatened by Banquo. He meets with three murderers, and arranges to have Banquo and Fleance murdered.

AO1 – How is the Macbeth of Act Three different to the Macbeth of Act One? Do they share any common traits at all?



Act Three Scene Two

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth talk. Lady Macbeth thinks Macbeth should be happy now he's king; Macbeth says they have not finished yet, as Banquo is still alive. Lady Macbeth tells him to leave it, but Macbeth will not be placated. When Lady Macbeth asks what will happen, Macbeth refuses to let her in on the plan.

AO1: In this scene, we really start to see Macbeth changing – he and his wife have almost swapped places. Referring to Act One Scene Five, find quotes where Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are echoing the sentiments in this scene – but in reverse:

Act One Scene Five	Act Three Scene Two	What it shows
Lady Macbeth: “look like the innocent flower, But be the serpent under't”	Macbeth:	
Lady Macbeth:	Macbeth: “Come, seeling night, Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;”	

AO2: Macbeth makes lots of references to animals in this scene. Why do you think he refers to these animals? What do they symbolise?

“We have scorched the **snake**, not killed it”: _____

“O, full of **scorpions** is my mind, dear wife!”: _____

“ere the **bat** hath flown/His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons/The shard-borne **beetle** with his drowsy hums/Hath rung night's yawning peal”: _____

Act Three Scene Three

The three murderers lie in wait for Banquo and Fleance. They murder Banquo, but Fleance escapes.

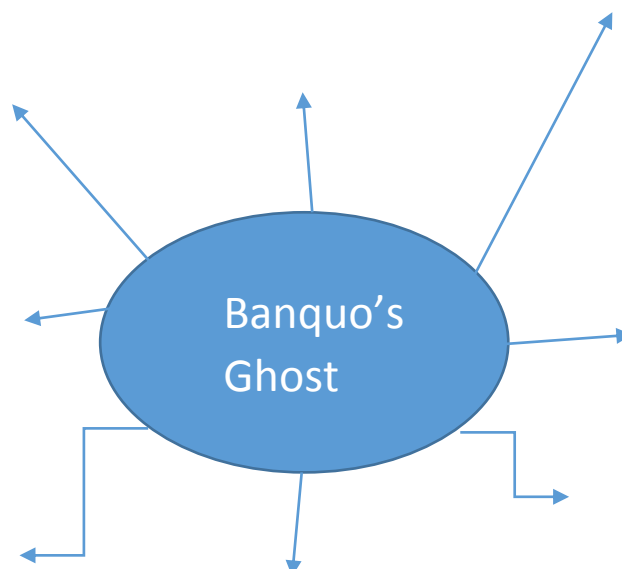
AO2/AO3: King Duncan is murdered offstage, as are the king's chamberlains; this is the first time we see any violence onstage. Why do think Shakespeare chooses to have Banquo murdered onstage?

Act Three Scene Four

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth hold a banquet. The murderers come in and tell Macbeth that Banquo is dead but his son Fleance escaped. Ross asks Macbeth to join them at the table, but Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost seated in his place. The ghost disappears, Lady Macbeth calms Macbeth down, and the ghost appears again. Macbeth shouts at it again, and it disappears. Lady Macbeth asks the lords to leave. Macbeth asks Lady Macbeth why Macduff wasn't at the banquet, and says he will speak to the three witches again.

AO1, AO2: Why do you think Macbeth sees the ghost? Think about:

- Has Macbeth seen things before in the play?
- Why doesn't the ghost speak to Macbeth?
- Why does the ghost appear when he does?
- What does Macbeth say to the ghost?
- What might the ghost symbolise?



Act Three Scene Five

The three witches meet with Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft. She is annoyed with them for meddling with Macbeth's future without consulting her first. She declares that, when Macbeth meets with them tomorrow, they should fill him with a false sense of security and show him confusing visions.

AO1, AO2: Do you think Hecate's description of Macbeth is a fair one? Why?

a wayward son,
Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do,
Loves for his own ends, not for you.

AO1: In Greek mythology, Acheron was one of the five rivers that ran through the underworld. It was known as the "river of woe." What does this tell us about Hecate's plans for Macbeth?

Act Three Scene Six

Lennox and a lord are at Forres. Lennox is questioning the recent events in the kingdom. Fleance has been blamed for Banquo's death, as he has fled. However, both suspect Macbeth was involved in the murder of Duncan and Banquo. The lord explains that Macduff has gone to England, to join with Malcolm. This has led Macbeth to prepare for war. Both Lennox and the lord hope that Macduff and Malcolm can save Scotland from Macbeth.

AO1 –The end of Act Three signifies a change in fortune for Macbeth – he has gone from being a respected thane to a ‘tyrant’. Complete the table below, indicating how perceptions of Macbeth have changed since Act One. Remember, you are focusing on what people say about him, rather than what he says.

Act	Character Speaking	What they say about Macbeth (quotation)	What we learn about Macbeth
One			
Two			
Three			

Key Theme: The Supernatural



In Shakespeare's time, the powers of evil were thought to be absolutely real; to most people Hell was an actual place and the Devil a constant threat to their souls.

In tragedies like Macbeth, one disordered and evil act (in this case, the regicide of King Duncan) tends to unleash disorder in nature and evil generally.

In particular there was a fascination with witches and witchcraft. Hundreds of innocent people (mostly women) were executed as suspected witches.

The interest came from the very top, led by King James I himself who published a book on the subject called *Demonology*. When Shakespeare came to write his play, he knew that his audience would find the theme of evil and the supernatural very interesting indeed.

Act Four Scene One

The three witches meet on the heath and cast spells. They predict the arrival of Macbeth by declaring “something wicked this way comes.” Macbeth asks to be shown some predictions of what the future holds. The witches show Macbeth a series of apparitions: A floating head tells him to “beware Macduff”; a bloody child tells him that “none of woman born/ Shall harm Macbeth”; a crowned child, with a tree in his hand, tells him that no harm will come to him until Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane Hill. These predictions fill Macbeth with confidence. Finally, Macbeth is shown a procession of 8 kings, the last one carrying a mirror. Banquo’s ghost walks behind the final king. Macbeth asks what the vision means, but the witches disappear. Lennox enters and tells Macbeth that Macduff has gone to England to unite with Malcolm. Macbeth resolves to send murderers to Macduff’s castle to capture it and kill Macduff’s wife and children.

James I believed that he was a descendant of Banquo; the presentation of Banquo and Macbeth in the play is clearly designed to flatter the king (who was a patron of Shakespeare’s plays). When crowned, James held two orbs (representing England and Scotland) – there is a reference to this in the play.

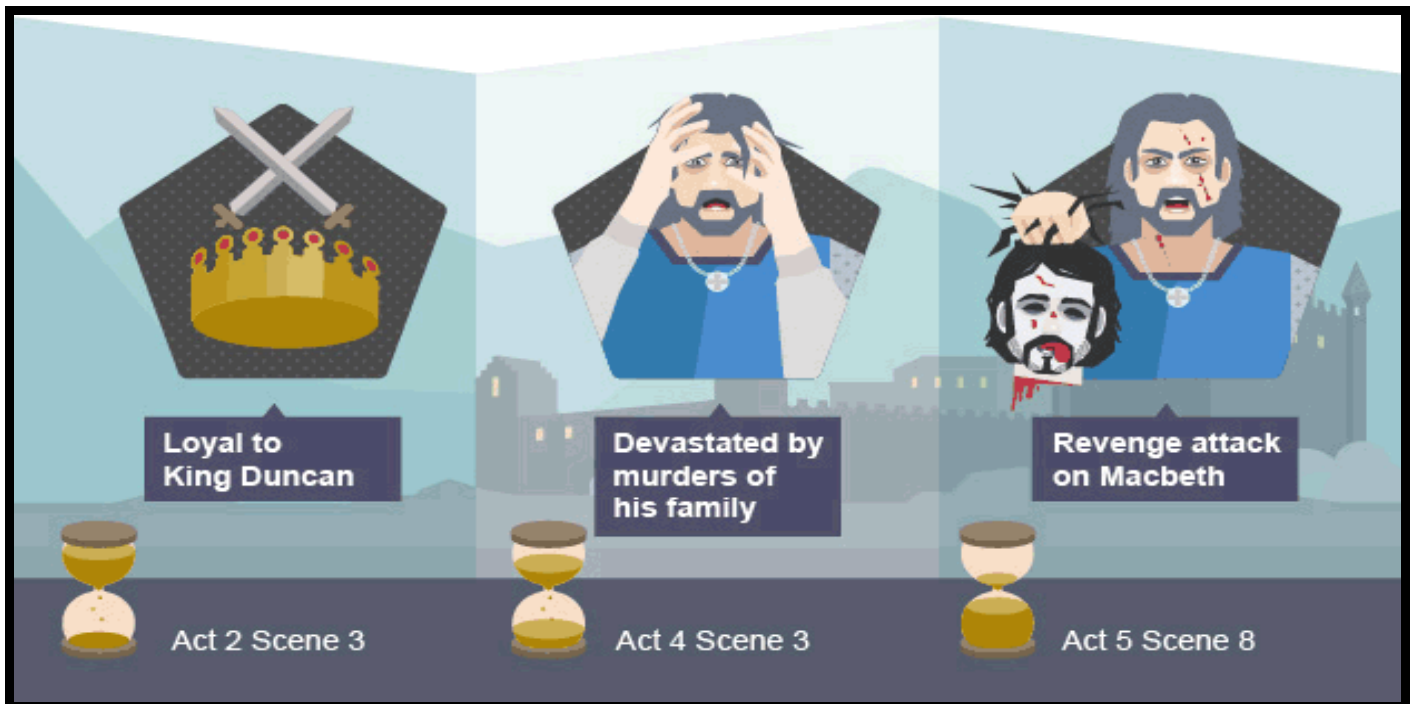
What do the visions mean, and how can we interpret them differently to the way Macbeth does?

Vision	What the apparition says	What Macbeth thinks (quote)	What this means	How we can interpret this differently
<i>First Apparition: an armed Head</i>				
<i>Second Apparition: A bloody Child</i>				
<i>Third Apparition: a Child crowned, with a tree in his hand</i>				
<i>A show of Eight Kings, the last with a glass in his hand; GHOST OF BANQUO following</i>				

Act Four Scene Two

At Macduff's castle, Lady Macduff talks to Ross about how her husband is a "traitor" and has abandoned her and their children in Scotland. Ross leaves, and Lady Macduff tells her son that his father is dead. Her son argues that he is not. A messenger arrives and warns Lady Macduff to leave, but she argues that she has done no harm. The murderers enter, and call Macduff a "traitor." Macduff's son calls them liars, and is murdered. Lady Macduff runs offstage, pursued by the murderers.

This is an incredibly violent scene – how has the violence escalated as the play has progressed?



Act Four Scene Three

Malcolm tests Macduff to make sure he is loyal to him (and Scotland) rather than to Macbeth. Ross enters and initially tells Macduff his wife and children are well, before breaking down and telling him they have been murdered. Macduff swears revenge on Macbeth.

AO1 - How has Macbeth brought about his own death?

Event in the play	How it brings about his death
Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches	The witches' prophecy puts the idea of being king into Macbeth's head. His initial scepticism is knocked when he is made Thane of Cawdor
Macbeth writes to his wife, telling her about the witches' prophecy	
Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children murdered	

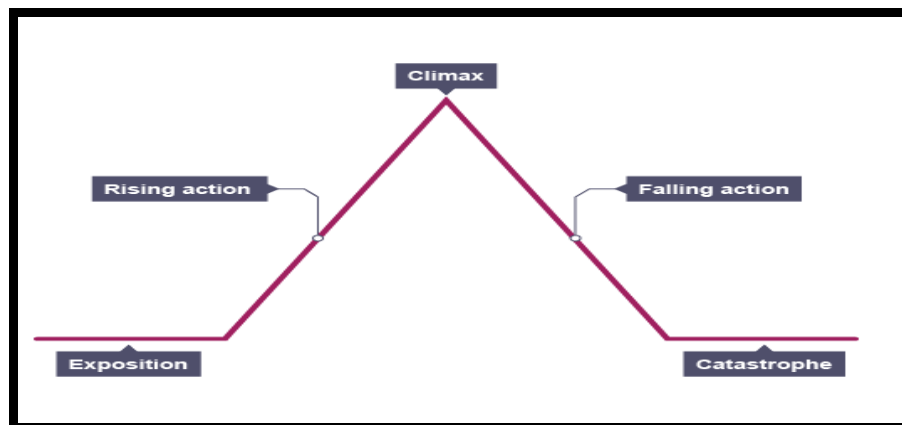
Key Theme: Ambition

Scotland in *Macbeth* is presented as a wild and savage place ruled over by an aging King (Duncan) who relies on his warrior thanes to keep control. However, through the character of Macbeth, Shakespeare goes on to show that having too much ambition and total control of power is just as bad. By the end of the play Malcolm has become King and it seems likely that he will be much fairer and treat his people justly.

Who is more ambitious, Macbeth or Lady Macbeth?

- Macbeth has natural ambition but this is reinforced by his meeting with the Witches and by his wife's persuasive powers.
- Lady Macbeth is ambitious for herself but also on her husband's behalf.
- For Duncan's murder, most of the plan's details are created by Lady Macbeth. Macbeth carries out the actual murder but Lady Macbeth deals with the cover up.
- The Macbeths act very much as a single unit, though their ambitious natures and their shared guilt eventually tear their marriage apart. Macbeth is amazed by his wife's willingness to kill Duncan in the early scenes, in the later ones Lady Macbeth is traumatized by thinking about Macbeth's slaughter of Macduff's family.
- Shakespeare leaves the audience to decide who is more ambitious.

The Structure of the Play



Stages	What?	When?
Exposition	Introduces the characters, setting, events and key ideas.	Act 1: Main characters are introduced; the Witches make their predictions; thoughts of murder start to form.
Rising action	A series of related events occur leading up to the key moment in the plot.	Act 2: Macbeth keeps changing his mind; Lady Macbeth takes control; King Duncan's murder (key moment).
Climax	Marks the turning point of the play. Up to this point things have gone well for the main character – now things will go rapidly downhill.	Act 3: Macbeth becomes King; Banquo is murdered and Fleance escapes; Macduff joins Malcolm in England.
Falling action	The main conflict between the protagonist (the central character – Macbeth) and the antagonist (his opposite – Macduff) is established.	Act 4: Macbeth returns to the Witches; Macduff's family is slaughtered; Malcolm and Macduff plan their invasion.
Catastrophe	The protagonist is defeated by the antagonist and events return to a state of normality.	Act 5: The invasion is carried out and Malcolm becomes King; the Witches' predictions come true in unexpected ways; both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth die.

Act Five Scene One

In Dunsinane Castle, a doctor and gentlewoman discuss the changes in Lady Macbeth, who has been sleepwalking. She enters, sleepwalking, speaking to herself about the blood that she cannot remove from her hands.

AO1, AO2 – This is the first time we have seen Lady Macbeth onstage since Act Three Scene Four. How has she changed? Focus your ideas around the extract below, annotating it and drawing comparisons with her role in the rest of the play. Consider how some of her words can be seen as metaphorical as well as literal:

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.

AO1, AO2 - This is Lady Macbeth's last scene – her death is reported to us later in the play. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to include this scene in the play?

Act Five Scene Two-Five

A group of lords discuss the plans for the battle – Macduff and Malcolm march north, and will unite with the Scottish army who oppose Macbeth.

Macbeth is preparing for battle in Dunsinane Castle, brimming with confidence after the prophecies from the witches. He is told that the opposing army consists of ten thousand soldiers, and asks for his armour, even though the battle is still a long way off. The doctor tells Macbeth that his wife is sick; Macbeth orders the doctor to cure her.

Malcolm discusses Macbeth's position with Siward; they decide to cut down branches from Birnam Wood in order to protect them as they approach the castle.

Macbeth hears "a cry of women"; Seyton returns to tell him Lady Macbeth is dead. Macbeth is stunned by this news. He then hears that the trees of Birnam Wood are moving towards his castle. He declares he is 'weary of the sun' and will die in battle.

AO2 – There are a lot of short scenes in this act, alternating between Macbeth and the opposing army. What effect does this create?

One of the most famous speeches in 'Macbeth' is delivered by Macbeth after he hears of his wife's death. What does Macbeth mean? What is he saying about life, and the decisions he has made?

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

Act Five Scene Six-Eleven

Malcolm, Siward and Macduff advance on Macbeth's castle with tree boughs as their shields. They leave the stage.

Macbeth repeats the witches' prophecy that he cannot be killed by someone 'of woman born.' Young Siward approaches and fights Macbeth, and is killed. Macbeth leaves.

Macduff, enters, searching for the 'tyrant' Macbeth. He leaves.

Siward and Malcolm enter, heading for Macbeth's castle. They leave the stage.

Macbeth enters, declaring he will not kill himself. Macduff enters and they fight. Macbeth declares he cannot be killed 'by one of woman born'. Macduff replies that he was 'from his mother's womb untimely ripped.' Macbeth says he will not fight him. Macduff tells him to yield and they will put him on show. Macbeth says he doesn't want to live to see Malcolm become king. They leave the stage fighting.

Malcolm, Siward and Ross enter. Ross tells Siward his son is dead; Siward is glad to hear he died as a hero. Macduff returns to the stage with Macbeth's head. He declares Malcolm king. He declares Macduff, Siward and Ross the first earls of Scotland, and recalls his brother to Scotland.

Why is it important that Macbeth dies fighting?

AO2 – After Macbeth's death, the play ends abruptly, with a short speech from Malcolm vowing to address the wrongs done to Scotland by 'this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen'. Why do you think the play ends here?

AO1 – Macbeth is called many things in the play – which words best describe him in your mind?

brave	valiant	worthy	gentleman	noble	partner	worthiest
cousin	peerless	kinsman	great	coward	ban	good lord
royal	highness	wayward	spiteful	wrathful	wicked	treacherous
traitor	devilish	sinful	fiend	villain	usurper	butcher