

'Macbeth'

Literature Paper 1

1 hour 45 minutes

On Literature Paper 1 you have 2 extract to essays,
this can be done in the following options:

Option 1

Extract

Extract

Essay

Essay

Option 2

Essay

Essay

Essay

Extract

Option 3

Extract

Extract

Extract

Essay

YOU HAVE TO USE THE EXTRACT AND IDEAS FROM ELSEWHERE!

You have 50 minutes to complete the extract to essay.
60 minutes with extra time.

Read the following extract from Act 1, Scene 7 and then answer the question that follows.
At this point in the play Macbeth is on stage alone and considering whether or not to kill Duncan.

MACBETH

*If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th' inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
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
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;*

Starting with this extract, explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a man who struggles with a guilty conscience. Write about:

- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth in this extract
- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth in the play as a whole.



Macbeth

	The GOLD – critical theory	How to embed into your response:
Gender	 Toxic Masculinity - the presentation that men need to be strong and dominant, in order to fulfil their gender role in society.	Macbeth demonstrates toxic masculinity through his violent response to potential threats. As the play progresses, his paranoia leads him to assert his dominance with increasing brutality.
	 Subversion of gender roles. Lady Macbeth becomes a masculine figure through her dominance and aggression. There is a dichotomy of women within the play, from Lady Macbeth who subverts her gender role to Lady Macduff who maintains to be a traditional woman of the time.	Lady Macbeth subverts stereotypical gender roles when she emasculates her husband and asserts her dominance over him.
	 Power - Kingship and how Lady Macbeth takes that role. Lady Macbeth becomes powerful as Queen but the witches also show that power, as they hold the prophecies. The corrupting power of women and how they were seen as not deserving of power and ambition.	Lady Macbeth's fascination with power ultimately drives her ambition to become Queen.
	 Modern/progressive man. Macduff juxtaposes Macbeth as he presents feminine traits but still retains his heroic reputation throughout the play.	Shakespeare constructs the character of Macduff to represent a new form of progressive masculinity, whereby a man can be both emotional and yet heroic.

Psycho-analysis	 Perils of ambition- Aristotle explores the implications of 'healthy' ambition – honour, justice, temperance, with the dangers of 'unhealthy ambition' – carelessness, irrationality, myopic desire.	Through the character of Macbeth, Shakespeare warns of the dangers that accompany overly ambitious thinking; as Aristotle explores, this 'unhealthy' ambition can lead to irrationality and carelessness.
	 Dark Triad - narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism as a mechanism to display the horror and a critique of leadership and those willing to abuse positions of power for their own gain.	Macbeth's leadership over Scotland increasingly echoes Machiavellianism as the play progresses, as he prioritises fear and threat over democracy.
	 Freud's theories Personality - The human psyche has three parts: The id - with us from birth. It wishes to satisfy every urge immediately, regardless of the consequences. The ego - the decision-making part of our psyche and works by reason and strategy. The superego - reflects the values and morals of society which are learned from our parents and others. It is our conscience and means that we experience guilt	Lady Macbeth's strategic and methodical planning during the exposition of the play conveys her lack of morality; according to Freud's personality theory, this denotes a lack of Superego or conscience.
	 Dream theory – dreams are the reflection of our pains or desires. The subconscious mind uses the dream state as a way of communicating man's deepest fears.	Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's ability to sleep and rest is permanently destroyed as a direct result of the regicide.
 Repeated motif of madness/psychological decline – psychological detachment from consequences. Madness as an external manifestation of internal grief and guilt. "blood" "knife" Banquo's ghost.	As the play progresses, the psychological state of both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth significantly deteriorates.	

Biblical	 Divine Right of Kings As a form of flattery to King James this play explores what makes a benevolent and worthy leader of men : and the consequences of disrupting the Divine Right of Kings and usurping the monarch.	When Macbeth commits regicide, he disrupts the Divine Rights of Kings, thus directly opposing God's will. This sin is ultimately punished with the downfall of Macbeth at the end of the play.
	 Garden of Eden - Much like Adam and Eve, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth are tempted by evil. Lady Macbeth fully embraces this and she references that Macbeth should be the "serpent" that manipulates in the play in order to achieve his "vaulting ambition". The Garden of Eden also links to the image of fertility.	Echoing Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are tempted by evil, as they are drawn to the darkness.
	 Alignment with the Devil Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, through their vaulting ambition, desire for power and greed align themselves with the devil and Shakespeare proves to a religious audience that disturbing natural order will only lead to their demise. God will prevail through all evil.	Shakespeare aligns the Macbeths with the devil, to convey to his religious audience that God will starkly punish those who side with evil.

Macbeth Act 1

Quotation	Analysis
<p>“fair is foul and foul is fair”</p>	<p>The Witches. Act 1 Scene 1 when discussing how the plan to meet with Macbeth</p> <p>Paradox – suggests that the boundaries between good and evil (morality) are blurred and things are not what they seem. The witches cause distortion, and therefore what seems as though it might be good news for Macbeth in fact foreshadows his downfall.</p> <p>Fricative alliteration /f/ emphasises the sinister intentions of the witches, aligning them with sin.</p> <p>Their name “the wyrd sisters” symbolises their ability to control destiny, and evokes notions of fatalism. Fate is embodied by the witches, who are already dictating Macbeth’s future destiny.</p>
<p>“unseamed him from the nave to the chaps”</p> <p>“brave Macbeth”</p> <p>“valiant cousin”</p>	<p>The sergeant talks about Macbeth’s triumph in battle.</p> <p>Act 1 Scene 2</p> <p>Violent imagery – metaphorical use of the verb ‘unseamed’ emphasises Macbeth’s brutality. Grotesque description glorifies Macbeth’s violent behaviour and evokes notions of toxic masculinity. Macbeth is praised and celebrated for his savagery in battle as part of the king’s army. Irony – it is this savagery and propensity for violence that causes his fall into sin (murder of Duncan).</p> <p>Address terms create a semantic field of respect: “brave”, “valiant”. This is the second time Macbeth is mentioned on stage before we meet him – he becomes an enigmatic and powerful character in the audience’s mind. Semantic shift from bravery to hatred ‘dead butcher’</p>
<p>“so fair and foul a day I have not seen”</p>	<p>Macbeth’s first appearance on stage – spoken aloud to Banquo.</p> <p>Act 1 Scene 3</p> <p>Repetition of the witches’ paradox from the opening of the play. Shows the symbiotic (unbreakable) connection between Macbeth and the witches and their supernatural control of his destiny</p> <p>Reinforces the battle for morality raging within Macbeth. The use of pathetic fallacy “fair and foul a day” foreshadows his downfall at the hands of the witches and his own ambition.</p>
<p>“(aside) if chance will have me king, chance will crown me”</p>	<p>Macbeth submits to the prophecy – he believes it is in his destiny, as the first prophecy (that he will be Thane of Cawdor) has already come true. Act 1 Scene 3</p> <p>Repetition of the word “chance” evokes notions of fatalism. Macbeth believes the witches prophecy. There are the first signs of Macbeth’s egotism and desire for power, and his hubris (pride) which becomes his fatal flaw.</p> <p>His response to the witches prophecy is in direct contrast to the response of Banquo, who appears sceptical about the prophecy – Macbeth is seduced by the promise of power. As such, they are binary oppositions of one another. He speaks this as an aside to show the secretive nature of his forbidden thoughts.</p> <p>In attempting to usurp the throne by supernatural means, Macbeth subverts the divine right of Kings (the idea that Kings derive their authority and right to rule directly from God).</p>

Macbeth Act 1- Gold

Quotation	Analysis
<p>“stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires”</p>	<p>Macbeth wants his secret yearning for the throne to remain hidden. He tries to resist fate. Act 1 Scene 4</p> <p>Use of celestial imagery “stars” evokes notions of fatalism and the power of destiny and prophecy in driving Macbeth’s behaviour. cannot resist his desire for the throne. The hellish imagery “fires” symbolises Macbeth’s fall into sin, but also his passionate desire for power. The binary opposition of “light” and “black” evokes notions of the battle for morality raging within Macbeth. The alliteration of deep desires shows his wish to keep the shameful truth hidden.</p> <p><i>Continued...</i></p> <p>Macbeth begins to accept his destiny, and considers committing regicide (killing the king), the greatest treason of all. Allegorical reference to the Gunpowder plot, and allegorical warning about the dangers of ambition and dissent.</p>
<p>“too full of the milk of human kindness” – <i>About Macbeth</i></p> <p>“take my milk for gall” <i>About Lady Macbeth</i></p>	<p>Lady Macbeth questions her husband’s ruthlessness and ability to carry out the plan. Act 1 Scene 5</p> <p>Lady Macbeth uses the metaphor “milk of human kindness” to emphasise Macbeth’s sensitivity. She feels he is too full of empathy and kindness to carry out the brutal killing of Duncan. The imagery of fertility “milk” emasculates Macbeth by using imagery commonly associated with females and maternal care. This evokes notions of toxic masculinity and need to maintain a normatively masculine appearance, as Lady Macbeth uses this language to question Macbeth’s strength and power. The repetition of the imagery of fertility “milk” in Lady M’s speech about herself shows symbiotic relationship between Lady M and Macbeth. She influences and manipulates him – represents the toxicity of their relationship and corrupting power of women. Subversions of feminine gender ideology – Lady Macbeth wishes to reject her female, maternal identity.</p>
<p>“like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it”</p>	<p>Lady Macbeth persuades her husband to follow through with the plan when he begins having second thoughts. Act 1 Scene 5</p> <p>Biblical imagery evokes notions of the fall of man and original sin. Lady Macbeth is the architect of the plan, and manipulates her husband. The biblical allusion to the “serpent” symbolises temptation, and shows how Lady Macbeth tempts Macbeth into sin. She emboldens him to be sly and sinister and behave in an immoral way. The juxtaposition of the “innocent flower” against the “serpent” emphasises how Macbeth will hide his sins and deceive those around him (just as the snake deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden). “flower” is imagery of femininity – Lady Macbeth emasculates her husband with feminine images, but contrasts these against images of strength and sin. Feminist reading of the text – Lady Macbeth assumes the masculine role in the play by dominating and controlling her husband. The corrupting power of females.</p>

Macbeth Act 2 - Gold

Quotation	Analysis
<p>'Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand?'</p>	<p>Macbeth hallucinates a dagger guiding him towards Duncan's bedchamber. There seems to be an element of desperation in his actions, as if he is wishing for a sign from god that his actions are justified and pre-destined.</p> <p>The noun 'dagger' is a masculine symbol of his violence and power – a typically male weapon emphasising his prominence as a warrior; murder with a dagger means face to face physicality and therefore Macbeth must confront his crime as he commits the regicide.</p> <p>This is positioned in a soliloquy, as Macbeth questions his own sanity and state of mind, he is aware he might be going mad as a result of his lust for ephemeral power and 'vaulting' ambition: yet is willing to sacrifice his soul regardless showing the depth of his desire for Machiavellian power.</p>
<p>"That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold, What hath quenched them hath given me fire."</p>	<p>Lady Macbeth's quote covers the themes of madness, dreams, repentance, and prayers. She is proclaiming that the drugs she has used on the guards to sedate them has made her brave and bold 'fire' – masculine in attitude. However, it also reveals a deeper weakness as she was unable to commit regicide of Duncan herself, and needed 'pot courage' (alcohol) to even set up the crime scene.</p> <p>Both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth have betrayed the ancient Greek tradition of Xenia which dictates respect from hosts to guests. Hosts must be hospitable to guests and provide them with a bath, food, drink, gifts, and safe escort to their next destination. In ancient Greek tradition this results in dire, fatal consequences from the universe.</p>
<p>"Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep'"</p>	<p>Sleep as a repeated motif – alluding to the healing of the mind and psyche.</p> <p>Scientifically a lack of sleep results in madness and death. The concept that Macbeth will 'sleep no more' indicates his mind will never heal from his crimes and he has accepted his soul's damnation. However, at this point he feels the guilt and shame of his actions, whereas in act 5 he becomes nihilistic.</p> <p>The roles of sleep and madness as reversed by act 5 when Lady Macbeth is unable to have a restful sleep.</p>
<p>"Will all the great Neptune's ocean wash this blood/ Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather/ The multitudinous sees incarnadine/ Making the green one red"</p>	<p>Blood as a repeated motif – This quotation describes Macbeth's reaction to his bloody hands after his murder of Duncan, he feels his hands are so bloody they would turn the ocean red.</p> <p>The noun 'blood' is used over 200 times in the play and becomes a metaphor for guilt. The physical blood is a sign of their guilt.</p> <p>Allusions to Roman mythology which aligns with Shakespeare's repeated use of roman tragedies – Macbeth sees himself as a doomed Caesar which clearly outlines his perception of his power and ego.</p>

Macbeth Act 3 - Gold

Quotation	Analysis
<p data-bbox="0 217 268 389">‘To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus’ A3S1</p> <p data-bbox="0 445 268 673">‘Naught's had, all's spent, where our desire is got without content’ LM</p>	<p data-bbox="268 134 1423 424">Macbeth expresses his fear of Banquo here, indicating that the crown, his ambitions, and the fleeting ephemeral power it brings means nothing without two things: security and an heir. Banquo, as Macbeth's dramatic foil, has both of these things, an heir in Fleance and the trust and love of the Thanes. The static verb phrase 'stick deep' implies his fears are immovable within his psyche, and unwavering, foreshadowing his later order to have Banquo, and his lineage, murdered in a desperate attempt to bring him the peace he desires.</p> <p data-bbox="268 424 1423 756">The lack of fulfilment and security brought by the ascension to the throne is echoed by Lady Macbeth in the same act: despite having vaulted beyond their natural order within society to intoxicating positions of power, Lady Macbeth's moment of peripetia implies that power is nothing without happiness, alluding to the perils of unhealth ambition. The verb 'spent' suggests a moral sacrifice, alluding to the Faustian legend of selling your soul to the devil for fleeting power – but at what cost? The irony is that both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are full of regret at their ‘vaulting ambition’ yet have these revelations in private, perhaps alluding to their shame.</p>
<p data-bbox="0 911 268 1025">‘Oh full of scorpions is my mind dear wife’</p> <p data-bbox="0 1077 268 1232">‘Be innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck’ A3S2</p>	<p data-bbox="268 828 1423 1025">As the play progress Macbeth's psyche becomes more tortured by his regicide and hubris, he seems unable to prevent dark thoughts entering his mind. The noun ‘scorpion’ evokes connotations of toxic poison and within occult circles they are associated with ruthless destruction; Macbeth seems to be waiting for the next attack on his power and fragile ego, reinforcing the dangers of vaulting ambition.</p> <p data-bbox="268 1077 1423 1315">Although he expresses his fears to his wife he begins to withhold information from her, emphasising the degeneration of their partner[ship] from act 1. Perhaps due to the damage inflicted by lady Macbeth subverting traditional gender roles. Although he still uses terms of affection, these are now diminutive and dismissive 'dear wife', 'chuck', perhaps in an attempt to assert his dominance and masculinity in a more traditional manner, as subversion of this has caused the psychological trauma.</p>
<p data-bbox="0 1657 268 1792">‘Which of you has done this?’ A3S4</p>	<p data-bbox="268 1522 1423 1605">At this point the ghost of Banquo has entered the feasting hall, settling his bloody form in Macbeth's seat – usurping his position with his supernatural influence.</p> <p data-bbox="268 1647 1423 1813">Macbeth uses the interrogative phrase to indicate he has no trust within his thanes, implying one of them has created this cruel image of Banquo to torture him. As no one can see the ghost the thanes being to understand his declining mental state – and therefore declining ability to rule.</p> <p data-bbox="268 1854 1423 1937">Where this feast was meant to be an illustration of Macbeth's overt situational power, it has started his public downfall</p>

Macbeth Act 5 - Gold

Quotation	Analysis
<p>'what's done cannot be undone' A5</p> <p>/A3 S2 'what's done is done'</p>	<p>'What's done is done' is an idiom that expressed finality, and that the consequences of a situation are now out of your control.</p> <p>Within acts 2 and 3 Lady Macbeth uses this idiom to dismiss her husband's concerns about Duncan's murder and the consequences – that they should accept their Machiavellian evils and enjoy the fruits of the unhealthy ambition.</p> <p>However, by act 5, her psychological decline fuelled by guilt makes her switch the idiom to 'cannot be undone'. This structural progression reinforces her regret, exemplifying the dangers of ambition and perils of subverting society's gender roles.</p> <p>Her sleepwalking habit seems to be a flashback to the traumatic night of Duncan's regicide, implying she is plagued by the guilt and memory of this. The scene is littered with Lady Macbeth's subconscious paranoia, alluding to Freud's dream theory: our dreams reflect our subconscious desires, fears and thoughts. This therefore implies that in Act 2, her confidence was false, mere bravado to sooth her feeble husband, in reality her feminine fragility has been her undoing.</p>
<p>'She should have died hereafter'</p> <p>'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.'</p>	<p>Macbeth reflects on Lady Macbeth's suicide (self-murder) – the natural end to her unnatural life after interfering with the supernatural. The total detachment and callous disintegration of their relationship is evident through his address of her through the impersonal pronoun 'she'.</p> <p>Here, Macbeth's nihilistic attitude embodies Sartre's principles of existentialism – he reflects on the meaningless of life and fleeting power without legacy, while accepting that everyone and everything must die 'hereafter'.</p> <p>The imperative 'out out brief candle' metaphorically compares Lady Macbeth to a source of light –usually associated with hope, life and joy. Juxtaposed with the attributive adjective 'brief' implies Macbeth feels her life has been cut short: unfulfilled and tragic. Perhaps a sentimental reflection of their once powerful and unusual partnership, maybe a reflection that his future has suddenly been illuminated to him: and it's nothing more than emptiness and death, or possibly a reflection that all mortal lives are too short to truly fulfil their potential,</p>

Knowledge Organiser

Macbeth – Literature Paper 2 – 30 marks – 4 marks AO4

Plot summary: AO1

- After a battle in **Scotland**, Macbeth and his friend Banquo meet **three witches**, who make **three prophecies** - Macbeth will be a thane, Macbeth will be king and **Banquo's sons will be kings**.
- The witches' **first prophecy** comes **true** and King Duncan makes Macbeth the **Thane of Cawdor**
- When King Duncan visits Macbeth's castle, Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to **murder King Duncan in his sleep (regicide)** to make the second prophecy come true.
- With Lady Macbeth's help, Macbeth frames King Duncan's dead servants as the murderers. Duncan's children, Malcolm and Donalbain, **leave Scotland for their own safety**.
- Now **king, Macbeth** worries about the witches' third prophecy and sends murderers to **kill Banquo and his son, Fleance**.
- At a banquet, Macbeth is **haunted by visions of Banquo's ghost** in front of all his guests.
- Macbeth visits the witches and they tell him - the only person he needs to beware of is Macduff, no one a woman has given birth to can harm him and he won't be defeated until Birnam Wood moves. He thinks he's **unassailable and invincible**.
- While Macduff is in England convincing **Duncan's son Malcolm to fight against Macbeth**, Macbeth has **Macduff's family murdered**.
- **Macduff and Malcolm** arrive in **Scotland with an army**. On their way to attack Macbeth's castle they cut down branches from the trees in Birnam Wood to use as camouflage. When the wood moves, one of the witches' prophecies come true.
- Macduff reveals that he was born by a **caesarean birth** and kills Macbeth, fulfilling the final prophecy.
- **Malcolm is crowned** the King of Scotland and order is **restored**.

AO3 Social/ Historical Context

Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* during the Jacobean era (this refers to the period of time that King James I was on the throne).

<p>King James I</p> 	<p>King James I (who ruled England and Scotland from 1603-1625) was Shakespeare's patron (he provided him with financial support in exchange for him writing plays) so the attitudes in the play are thought to have been heavily influenced by the King. King James I published "Demonology" in 1605, this book was about the dangers of the supernatural and witchcraft. The King was a supporter of the witch trials and even took part in the North Berwick witch trials in Scotland.</p>
<p>Supernatural and witchcraft</p>  	<p>In England and Scotland, up until the 1700s, there was a very strong belief witches and witchcraft. It was believed that 'witches' could be found within every community and that they could inflict diseases on people, spoil crops, bring about bad weather, and perform unspeakable and detestable acts of devil's work. The North Berwick witch trials took place in 1590 in Scotland, when a number of people from East Lothian were accused of witchcraft. They ran for two years and implicated seventy people. This was the first major witchcraft persecution in Scotland.</p>
<p>Divine Right of Kings</p> 	<p>The Divine Right of Kings originated in the Middle Ages. Any attempt to remove the king was thought to be the worst of crimes: it was believed that to kill a king was to go against God and was therefore sacrilegious, and against the natural order.</p>
<p>The Gunpowder Plot</p> 	<p>In 1605, a group of Catholic conspirators plotted to assassinate King James I planting explosives in the House of Lords during the opening of parliament. They hid kegs full of gunpowder in the cellars beneath the chamber where the king and the rest of the political elite would assemble. Enough powder was stored to completely destroy the building and kill everyone present. One of the conspirators, Guy Fawkes, was tasked with igniting this huge bomb. The plot was uncovered just 12 hours before parliament was due to open. However, the plot meant that King James I was keen to ward off any further attempts to take his throne.</p>
<p>Attitudes toward women</p>   	<p>In the Jacobean era, women belonged to their fathers (or their brothers if their father died), and then to their husbands. Women could not own property of their own. Women had very few rights and were viewed as subservient to men: they were only provided with a very basic education and often this was centred on mastering tasks within the home. Women were not given the opportunity to work and they were not allowed on the stage. All the female parts in plays at the time were played by boys whose voices hadn't broken yet – the apprentices, therefore the portrayal of women is widely regarded as being very limited.</p>

Terminology AO2	Definition
Tragic hero	A seemingly noble character whose actions lead to their downfall.
Peripeteia	The tragic hero's reversal of fortune/downfall.
Soliloquy	A speech given by a character whilst alone to express their thoughts to the audience (not the other characters).
Hubris	Excessive pride which leads to a downfall.
Tragedy	A genre of play that focuses on the downfall of the main character.
Anagnorisis	A tragic hero's realisation that they have fallen.
Machiavellian	Actions that are evil, but that character does anyway to achieve power
Hamartia	A fatal flaw that leads to tragic hero's downfall.
Motif	A recurring idea/ image throughout a text.
Pathetic fallacy	A type of personification where emotions are given to a setting, an object or the weather.
Symbolism	When an object represents an idea that is much deeper and more significant.
Personification	Describing an inanimate object as having human feelings.
Metaphor	A descriptive technique that names a person, thing or action as something else.
Simile	A descriptive technique that compares one thing with another, usually using 'as' or 'like'.
Foreshadowing	When the writer hints what is going to happen later on in the text.
Superlative	An adjective/ adverb that indicates the most of something.
Intensifier	A word, especially an adverb or adjective, that is used to add emphasis to another adjective, verb, or adverb i.e so, very, really.
Minimiser	A word or phrase that is used to make another adjective, verb or adverb sound lesser i.e. a bit, some.
Imperative	A sentence that is a command.
Exclamatory	A sentence that expresses a heightened emotion. They end with an exclamation mark
Listing	When the writer includes several words/ phrases/ ideas, one after the other.
Repetition	When a word/ phrase is noticeably repeated throughout a sentence/ paragraph/ whole text.
Imagery	A technique in which the author appeals to the senses i.e. seeing, hearing, touching.
Foil	A character that exaggerates the opposing qualities of another character.

Themes

Ambition: Macbeth's ruthless seeking of power, **Machiavellianism and hubris** is presented as his ultimate flaw (**hamartia**). Shakespeare presents ambition as the gateway to deceit and evil. Shakespeare suggests that ambition can manifest itself in different ways: it can make a person ruthless and violent but it can also result in them becoming practical and detached.

Deception (reality vs appearance): Shakespeare presents deception (lying) as one of the products of ambition and uses it as a signal for further moral decline. Shakespeare also suggests that everyone is capable of deception but that those in power are particularly vulnerable.

Nature and the supernatural: Shakespeare uses the **supernatural** to help the audience to understand the characters' secret ambitions. Shakespeare also uses the supernatural encourage the characters to make irresponsible decisions, but also acting as a **warning to the groundlings** watching the play to avoid the supernatural no matter how tempting it may be.

Violence: Shakespeare's portrayal of violence is often **contradictory**; in Act 1 it is seen as part of a man's duty, combined with **honour** – it aids Duncan to keep his throne after **rebellion**. In act 2, violence is seen as **dishonourable** through the lens of **regicide**. By Act 5, Macduff's violence against Macbeth is **justifiable**, destroying the **usurper** and returning the throne to the rightful king.

Guilt: Shakespeare suggests that ambition ultimately leads to guilt and that this eventually results in inner-torment and madness. Guilt is often represented through the **repeated motif of blood**.

Fate and destiny: Shakespeare suggests that Macbeth becomes so consumed with his own '**fate**' that he fails to predict the consequences of his ruthless actions. Shakespeare suggests that the supernatural use '**fate**' to manipulate Macbeth. The audience are left wondering how much **free will**

Masculinity and aspects of gender: Shakespeare suggests that the social construct of '**masculinity**' can encourage violent and reckless behaviour and that ideas surrounding gender can be used as tools for manipulation. Women were treated as '**the second sex**' but we see the dangers of subverting these gender roles through the dominance and downfall of Lady Macbeth.

Loyalty: Much of the hierarchy of England and Scotland relied on loyalty to the crown and concept of the Divine Right of Kings. Shakespeare suggests that loyalty is diluted and ultimately lost as a result of ambition. Shakespeare highlights the importance of being loyal to the king and country, as well as being loyal to peers – this is part of his **flattery towards King James**



Main Themes for Macbeth (AQA GCSE)

1. Ambition

“How is ambition presented in Macbeth?”

“How does Shakespeare present the dangers of ambition?”

2. Power / Kingship

“How does Shakespeare present ideas about kingship?”

“How is power shown in the play?”

3. The Supernatural

“How does Shakespeare present the supernatural?”

“What role do the witches play?”

4. Guilt

“How is guilt shown in Macbeth?”

“How do characters react to guilt?”

5. Violence

“How does Shakespeare present violence in the play?”

“How does violence affect the characters?”

6. Fate vs Free Will

“Are the characters controlled by fate?”

“How does Shakespeare show the influence of fate?”

7. Appearance vs Reality

“Things are not what they seem – how is this presented?”

8. Masculinity / Gender

“How does Shakespeare present ideas about masculinity?”

9. Loyalty and Betrayal

“How is loyalty shown in Macbeth?”

“How is betrayal presented?”

Main Character Questions

Macbeth

“How does Shakespeare present Macbeth as a tragic hero?”

“How does Macbeth change during the play?”

Lady Macbeth

“How is Lady Macbeth presented as a powerful woman?”

“How does Lady Macbeth change throughout the play?”

The Witches

“How are the witches presented as powerful?”

“How do the witches influence events?”

Banquo

“How is Banquo presented as a contrast to Macbeth?”

Macduff

“How is Macduff presented as a hero?”

King Duncan

“How does Shakespeare present Duncan as a good king?”

Malcolm

“How does Malcolm represent good leadership?”

Less Common But Possible Characters

Sometimes AQA uses smaller characters in the extract:

- Macduff
- Banquo
- Malcolm
- Duncan
- The Porter