

MACBETH REVISION



Name _____

Class teacher _____

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How to use this booklet:

In this booklet you will find character explorations, key quotations, paired quotations, motif quotations, and then lots of extracts from each act.

Each extract has quotations picked out of it and analysed for you.

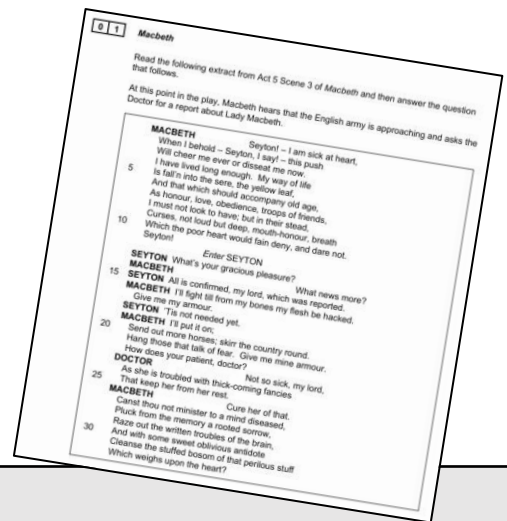
You need to learn quotations, but it is even more important to learn what you actually say about them! Use this booklet as a textbook to help you to make mindmaps, flashcards, lists, practice essays, and any other form of revision you find helpful.

It is better to use the analysis you find in here than the analysis you can find online or in other textbooks.

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IN THE EXAM...

Your **Macbeth** question is section A of your first paper. You will receive an extract for this question but also be expected to memorise parts of the text, as you are asked to talk about the extract **and** the text as a whole.



How many marks do I get for this question?

This is a 30 mark question, with no additional marks for SPAG.

How do I write this response?

You will need a thesis and three paragraphs. The best way of writing this essay is in chronological order, with the extract analysis inserted into the essay wherever it would fall chronologically. **Remember you have a How to Write an Essay booklet too!**

How many times do I refer to the extract?

You must use the extract at least once in your response but you do not need to have a certain percentage of your essay that responds to the extract. Even just one quotation will suffice - you just cannot ignore it completely. The question will say 'starting with this extract' but they just mean in your head, not in your essay!

How many quotations should I learn?

There is no right or wrong answer here – learn more about Macbeth than anybody else. It can be helpful to learn a certain number for each character and theme.

How long should I spend on this question?

The exam is 1hr45 minutes, so it is wise to plan for 5 minutes or so then spend 45 minutes writing your 30-mark response.

How do I revise for this question?

Learn your quotations and what to say about them, mind-maps for characters, learn your key vocabulary, write practice essays and have them marked by your teacher, re-read the text, re-annotate blank extracts, quotation explosions, write a quotation on one side of a flashcard and what you will say about it on the other, avoid Youtube videos!

ALL KEY QUOTATIONS

ACT ONE	ACT TWO	ACT THREE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fair is foul and foul is fair, hover through the fog and filthy air (witches) • Brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name (Captain) • Valiant cousin/worthy gentleman/noble Macbeth (Duncan) • Til he unseamed him from the nave to the chaps, and fixed his head upon our battlements (Captain) • His sword, which smoked with bloody execution (Captain) • So foul and fair a day I have not seen (Macbeth) • The instruments of darkness tell us truths (Banquo) • Why do you dress me in borrowed robes? (Macbeth) • Stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires (Macbeth) • Come you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here (Lady Macbeth) • Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't (Lady Macbeth) • We will proceed no more in this business (Macbeth) • I fear you are too full of the milk of human kindness (Lady Macbeth) • 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 (Lady Macbeth) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a dagger which I see before me, handle towards my hand? (Macbeth) • Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done't (Lady Macbeth) • I have done the deed (Macbeth) • I could not say Amen (Macbeth) • A little water clears us of this deed (Lady Macbeth) • Will all great Neptune's Ocean wash this blood clean from my hand (Macbeth) • 'tis the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil (Lady Macbeth) • My hands are of your colour, but I shame to wear a heart so white (Lady Macbeth) • Where we lay, our chimneys were blown down, and heard in the air strange screams of death (Lennox) • O gentle lady! 'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak (Macduff) • Lest our old robes sit easier than our new (Macduff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be thus is nothing, / But to be safely thus (Macbeth) • Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown • What's done is done (Lady Macbeth) • We have scorched the snake, not killed it (Macbeth) • Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep in the affliction of these terrible dreams that shake us nightly (Macbeth) • O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife (Macbeth) • There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled / Hath nature that in time will venom breed (Macbeth) • Thou can'st not say I did it – never shake / Thy gory locks at me (Macbeth to Banquo's ghost) • Are you a man? (Lady Macbeth) • What man dare, I dare: approach thou like the rugged Russian bear, the armed rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger. Take any shape but that (Macbeth to Banquo's ghost) • Avaunt and quit my sight, let the earth hide thee – / Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold (Macbeth to Banquo's ghost)

ALL KEY QUOTATIONS

ACT FOUR	ACT FIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Something wicked this way comes (Witches about Macbeth) • Though you untie the winds and let them fight against the churches (Macbeth about the Witches) • Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn / The power of man, for none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth (Witches) • Macbeth shall never vanquished be until / Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him (Witches) • The castle of Macduff I will surprise, give to the edge o' the sword his wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls that trace him in his line (Macbeth) • His flight was madness. When our actions do not, our fears do make us traitors (Lady Macduff) • Thou liest – shag haired villain! (Macduff's son to his murderer) • O Scotland, Scotland! (Macduff) • Bleed, bleed, poor country! Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure for goodness dare not check thee (Macduff) • All my pretty chickens (Macduff) • Malcolm: Dispute it like a man. Macduff: I shall do so, but I must also feel it as a man • Front to front. Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself (Macduff) • Be comforted: let's make us medicines of our great revenge, to cure this deadly grief (Malcolm) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out damned spot, out I say! (Lady Macbeth) • What's done, cannot be undone (Lady Macbeth) • Does he feel his title hang loose about him (Angus about Macbeth) • A giant's robe upon a dwarfish thief (A noble lord, about Macbeth) • Honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, I must not look to have (Macbeth) • I have almost forgot the taste of fears (Macbeth) • She should have died hereafter (Macbeth) • Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow (Macbeth) • Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player ... signifying nothing (Macbeth) • Go prick thy face and over-red thy fear thou lily-livered boy (Macbeth to servant) • Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt, but like a man he died (Ross to Siward) • Tyrant, show thy face (Macduff) • Despair thy charm, for Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped (Macduff) • Behold, where stands / Th' usurper's cursed head: the time is free (Macduff) • This dead butcher and his fiend-like queen (Malcolm about Macbeth)

PAIRED QUOTATIONS

Before and after

'Brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name'	'This dead butcher and his fiend like queen'
'Unseamed him from the nave to the chaps, and fixed his head upon our battlements'	'Here comes newer comfort. [Re-enter MACDUFF , with <i>MACBETH's</i> head]'
'Stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires'	'Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow'
'Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?'	'A giant's robe on a dwarfish thief'
'My hands are of your colour but I shame to wear a heart so white'	'Will these hands ever be clean?'
'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?'	'All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand'
'Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it'	'Be innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck'

Good pairings

'Fair is foul and foul is fair' (Witches)	'So fair and foul a day I have not seen' (Macbeth)
'O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife' (Macbeth)	'I have almost forgot the taste of fears' (Macbeth)
'I fear you are too full of the milk of human kindness' (Lady Macbeth)	'I must also feel it as a man' (Macduff)
'In his royalty of nature reigns that which would be fear'd' (about Banquo)	'As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends, I must not look to have' (Macbeth)
[Macbeth's fears] "Would well become a woman's story at a winter's fire" (Lady Macbeth)	'We are men, my liege/Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men' (Macbeth and murderers)
'To win us to our harms the instruments of darkness tell us truths' (Banquo)	'Stay imperfect speakers tell me more' (Macbeth)

KEY MOTIFS

Blood



There's the smell of the blood still (Lady Macbeth act 5)	His silver skin laced with his golden blood (Macbeth about Duncan)	It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood	Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold	I am in blood stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more
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Hands (mentioned 32 times)



The very firstlings of my heart shall be the firstlings of my hand	This is a sorry sight [looking on his hands]	Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand	My hands are of your colour but I shame to wear a heart so white	All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand
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Sleep

'Wicked dreams abuse The curtain'd sleep'	'Sleep no more. Macbeth does murder sleep'.	'Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep In the affliction of these terrible dreams'	'You lack the season of all natures, sleep.' (Lady Macbeth to Macbeth)	'Sleep in spite of thunder.'
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Light

'Stars hide your fires let not light see my black and deep desires'	'Signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine on all deservers' (Duncan)	'The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day' (just before Banquo's death)	'Who did strike out the light' (Murderer following Banquo's death)	'She has a light by her continually'
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Birds

The raven himself is hoarse that croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan	'A falcon, towering in her pride of place, Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd'	'I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry'	All my pretty chickens? (Macduff)	'Light thickens and the crow makes wing to the rooky wood' (Macbeth plots Banquo's murder)
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KEY MOTIFS



Heaven and hell

'I could not say amen'	'It is a knell that summons thee to heaven or to hell'	'Mine eternal jewel given to the common enemy of man' (Macbeth)	'Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell' (Malcolm)	A devil more damn'd / In evils to top Macbeth"	'Hell is murky'
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Masculinity

"Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here"	'Too full of the milk of human kindness' / 'take my milk for gall'	'When you durst do it then you were a man'	[Macbeth's fears] "Would well become a woman's story at a winter's fire" (Lady Macbeth)	'Dispute it like a man' / 'I shall do so but I must also feel it as a man'
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Darkness/blindness

'Come, seeling night, scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day' (Lady Macbeth)	'By the clock, 'tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp" (Ross about Duncan's murder)	'You secret, black, and midnight hags!' (Macbeth about the witches)	'Not heaven peep through the blanket of the dark' (Lady Macbeth)	'You see her eyes are open/ ay but their sense is shut' (About Lady Macbeth when sleepwalking)
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Children/succession

'...while it was smiling in my face have plucked my nipple from its boneless gums and dash'd the brains out"	'Fruitless crown' / 'barren sceptre'	The second apparition is 'a bloody child'	"Give to the edge o' the sword his wife, his babes" (Macbeth about Macduff)	, "He has no children. All my pretty ones? / Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?"
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Kingship

'Duncan hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been so clear in his great office'	'Royalty of nature' (about Banquo)	'Under him my genius is rebuked' (about Banquo)	'Fit to govern, no not fit to live' (Macduff)	'A giants robe upon a dwarfish thief'
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KEY VOCABULARY

<u>Character or concept</u>	<u>Word to describe</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Macbeth	Insatiable	Having a limitless, unstoppable need for something
	Hubristic	Arrogant, proud, self-confident
	Grandiosity (noun)	Having an unrealistic sense of superiority
	Callous	Heartless, emotionless
	Nihilistic	Believing life has no meaning
Lady Macbeth	Ruthless	Cruel, unstoppable
	Duplicitous	Manipulative, lying for own benefit
	Malevolent	Evil in an almost supernatural way
	Plagued	Weighed down by something
The Witches	Equivocation (noun – they use this!)	Using complex words on purpose to obscure meaning
	Transgressive	Going against what society says you should do
	Nefarious	Evil in a supernatural way
Macduff	Noble	Honourable, principled, decent, moral
	Patriotic	Love of country
	Clinical	Doing things without emotion
Banquo	Steadfast	Steady, always reliable (positive word)
	Cynical	Distrustful of others, suspicious
Duncan	Meek	Soft or gentle
	Benevolent	Kind and loving
	Virtuous	Morally good
Other helpful words	Jacobean	The time period when King James was on the throne
	Patriarchal	A society ruled by men
	Regicide	Murder of the King
	Domestic sphere	Relating to things that happen in the home
	Sovereign sphere	Relating to things that happen in the royal courts

KEY TERMINOLOGY

<u>Key term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Allusion	Referencing another book in a text e.g. a biblical allusion is a reference to the bible
Caricature	An exaggerated version of a character e.g. Macbeth is a caricature of an evil tyrant by the end
Dramatic Irony	Where you know something the character on stage doesn't know
Dichotomy	A difference between two entirely opposite ideas e.g. the dichotomy between good and evil is blurred
Foil character	A character that has the opposite qualities of the main character
Foreshadowing	A hint in a text to something that will happen later on
Fricatives	Repetition of 'f' sounds like 'fair is foul and foul is fair'
Imperative verb	A verb used to command – 'go', 'look', 'do'
Juxtaposition	Contrasting ideas
Mirroring	Where words or sentences repeat or are similar in pattern e.g. 'fair is foul' and 'so fair and foul a day'
Oxymoron	Two opposing words directly next to each other like - 'dark heaven'
Religious Imagery	Using an image from religion as a metaphor like 'look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it'
Sibilance	Repetition of 's' sounds like 'we have sc oth'd the s nake'
Symbolism	Using a noun to represent a wider idea e.g. the 'mousing owl' symbolises Macbeth and the 'falcon' symbolises Duncan

THE PLOT

1



Three witches meet and discuss Macbeth's fate



Macbeth meets the witches, who give him prophecies



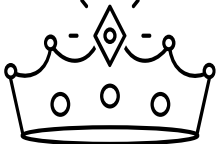
Lady Macbeth receives a letter from Macbeth and vows to help him become King



Macbeth plots the murder of Duncan



Macduff discovers Duncan's body



Macbeth crowned King

3



A Captain tells King Duncan about a recent battle in which Macbeth fought bravely



Duncan names Macbeth the Thane of Cawdor



The Macbeths prepare for Duncan's visit



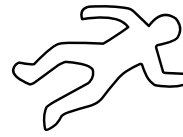
Duncan is murdered



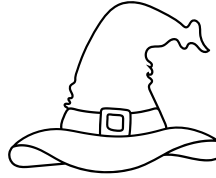
Malcolm and Donaldbain (Duncan's sons) flee the scene and are accused of the murder



Macbeth arranges for Banquo and Fleance's murder



Banquo is killed, Fleance survives



Macbeth seeks out the witches himself



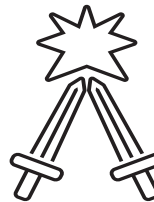
Lady Macduff and her son are murdered



Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty



Lady Macbeth has succumbed to madness



Macduff executes Macbeth, bringing his head to Malcolm

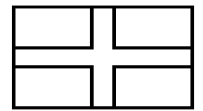


Banquo's ghost appears to Macbeth at a banquet

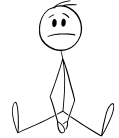
4



They give three more prophecies



Macduff goes to England to seek assistance from Malcolm

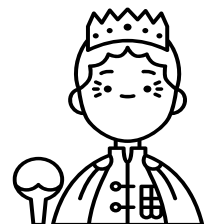


Macduff discovers the murder of his family

5



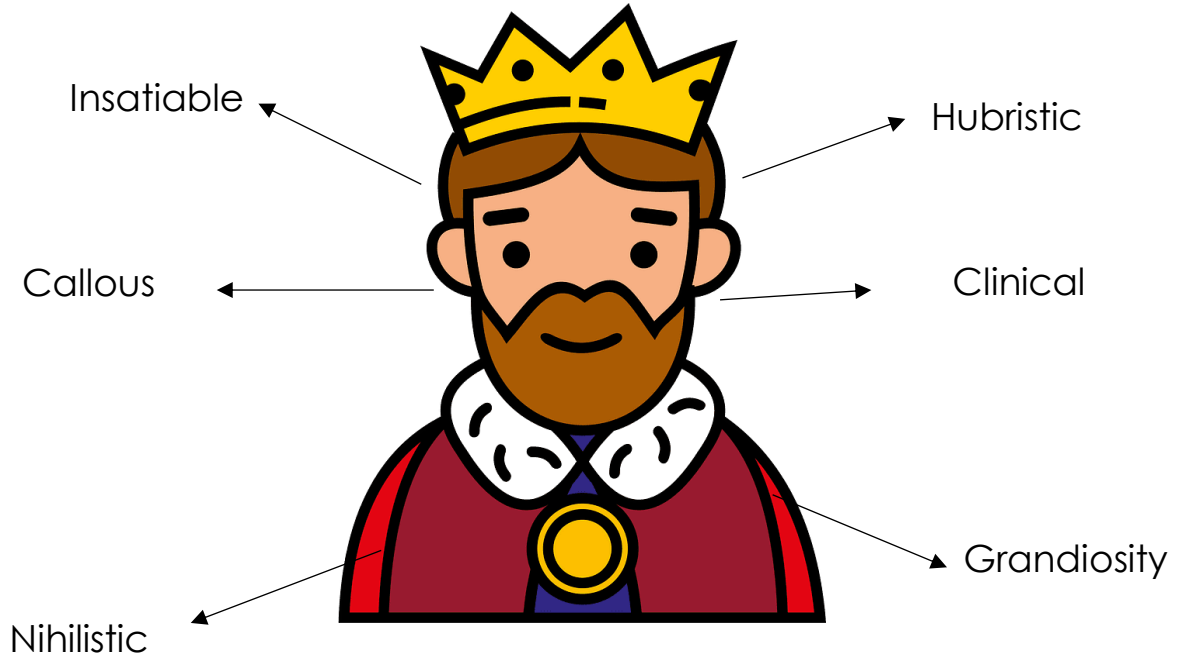
Macbeth does not care about his wife's death



Malcolm crowned King

MACBETH

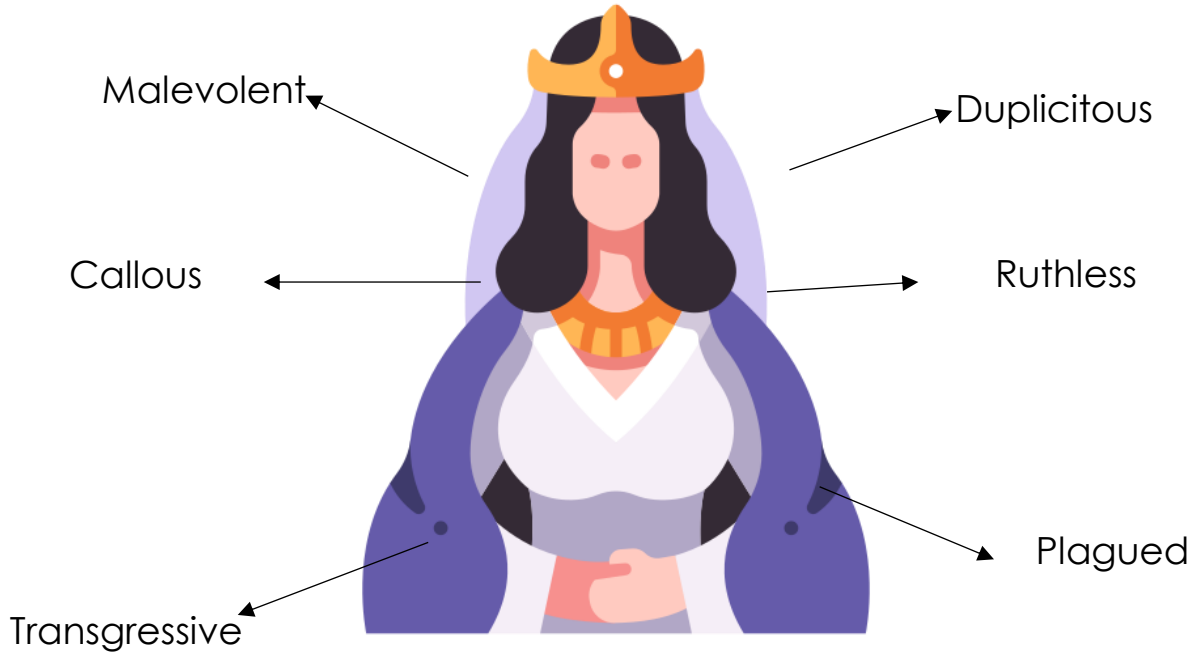
Macbeth represents the insatiably power-driven noblemen in Jacobean society who will stop at nothing to advance themselves



"Brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name"	"His sword which smoked with bloody execution"	"So fair and foul a day I have not seen"	"Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?"
"Stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires"	"I have done the deed"	"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?"	"I could not say amen"
"O full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife"	"Something wicked this way comes"	"Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in this petty pace from day to day"	"This dead butcher"

LADY MACBETH

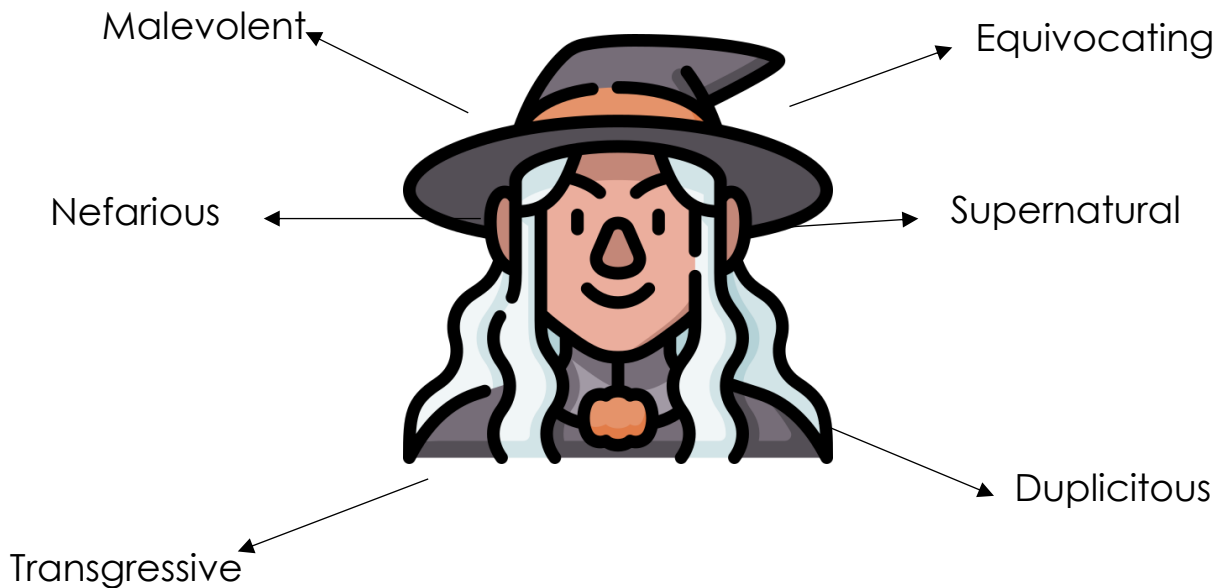
Lady Macbeth represents powerless women with aspiration in the sovereign sphere, who must act through their husbands to succeed.



<p>“Too full of the milk of human kindness”</p>	<p>“Pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums, and dash’d the brains out”</p>	<p>“Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it”</p>	<p>“My hands are of your colour but I shame to wear a heart so white”</p>
<p>“O gentle lady, tis not for you to hear what I can speak”</p>	<p>“She has light by her continually”</p>	<p>“All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand, O, O, O”</p>	<p>“His fiend-like Queen”</p>

THE WITCHES

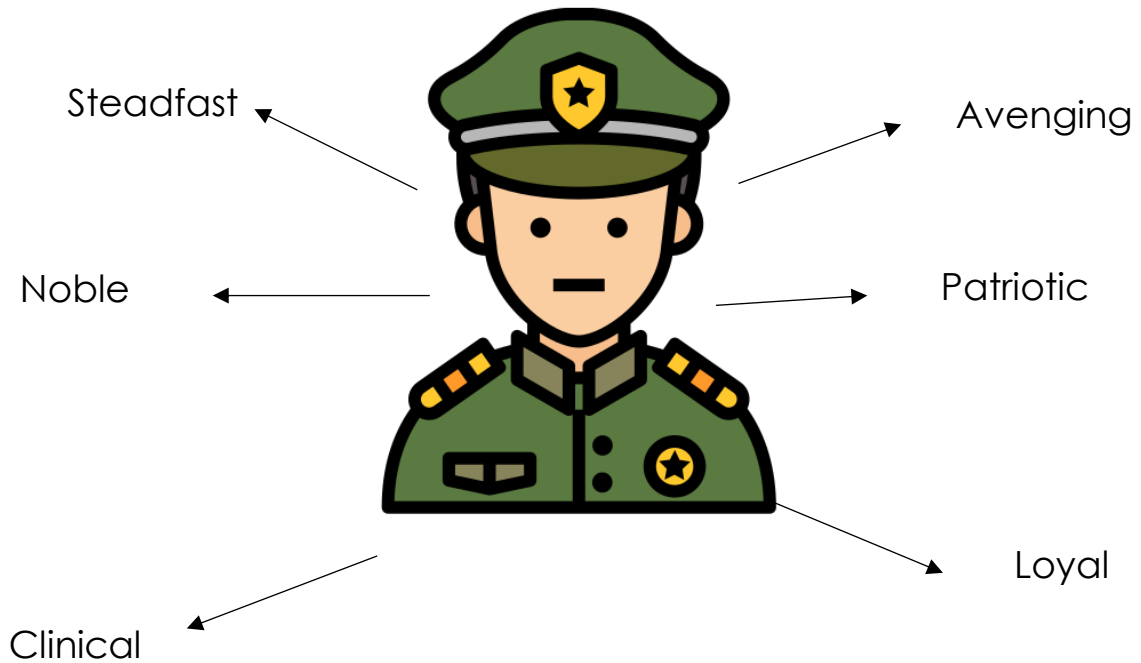
The Witches represent both the concept of the supernatural, but also transgressive women of the Jacobean era who did not fit into society.



"Fair is foul and foul is fair"	"In thunder, lightening or in rain"	"Hover through the fog and filthy air"	"Where hast thou been sister? / Killing swine"
If you can look into the seeds of time and say which grain will grow and which will not, speak then to me	"You secret black and midnight hags"	"Though you untie the winds and let them fight against the churches"	"Seek to know no more"

MACDUFF

Macduff is Macbeth's foil character, and represents the good, loyal and true noblemen whose priority is the good of the country, not the self



"O gentle lady, tis not for you to hear"	"Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight With a new Gorgon: do not bid me speak"	"O Scotland, Scotland"	"Fit to govern? Not fit to live"
"I must also feel it as a man"	"All my pretty chickens – did you say all?"	"Not in the legions Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd In evils to top Macbeth."	"Turn, hell- hound"

BANQUO

Banquo represents noblemen who, though tempted by ambition, remain steadfast and full of integrity.



"Oftentimes, to win us to our harms, the instruments of darkness tell us truths"	"If you can look into the seeds of time, and say which grain will grow and which will not, Speak then to me"	"Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all, ... and, I fear, Thou play'dst most foully for't"	"He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour To act in safety"
"There is none but he Whose being I do fear: and, under him, My Genius is rebuked"	"Who did strike out the light"	"Never shake thy gory locks at me!"	"Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear, the arm'd rhinoceros, the Hyrcan tiger, take any shape but that"

DUNCAN

Duncan represents those with a God-given right to govern, but perhaps also leaders who are meek and mild, who are easy to take advantage of



"What bloody man is that?"	"O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman"	"Is the execution done on Cawdor?"	"There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face"
"I have begun to plant thee and will labour to make thee full of growing"	"Duncan Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been So clear in his great office"	"His virtues will plead like angels"	"Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight With a new Gorgon"

ACT ONE SCENE ONE

WITCHES

Thunder, lightening or in rain – Shakespeare uses pathetic fallacy in the witches first moments here to communicate their power. Thunder and lightening have connotations of anger and violence. These women are also happiest to meet under cover – suggesting their secretive natures.

Ere the set of sun – sunset has many connotations; it suggests the end of something, and implies the onset of darkness. The next time we see them meet is to deliver the prophecies, setting into motion the metaphorical darkness that falls over Macbeth through the rest of the play. Sunset can also represent the end of the old regime of King Duncan, and the ushering in of the reign of chaos to come.

Upon the heath – these women meet in the wilderness, away from polite and refined Jacobean society. They are linked to nature and the Earth, implying that they are transgressive and go against what is expected of womankind, but also that they are perhaps more at one with the Earth than the rest of society. They meet in desolate places – suggesting their need to be apart from the rest of the world.

When the battle's lost and won – the witches have a significant amount of foreknowledge of the events of this play. They seem able to control and manipulate the future, or at least know of its outcomes before they occur. There is equivocation here too – they speak in riddles and oxymorons. A battle being lost and won is paradoxical. The play is about appearance vs reality, fact vs fiction, and this foreshadows this idea.

FIRST WITCH

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

SECOND WITCH

When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

THIRD WITCH

That will be ere the set of sun.

FIRST WITCH

Where the place?

SECOND WITCH Upon the heath.

THIRD WITCH

There to meet with Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH

I come, Graymalkin.

SECOND WITCH Paddock calls.

THIRD WITCH

Anon.

ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair;
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Hover through the fog and filthy air

– they are designed to be unsettling. They are ugly, dirty, almost animalistic. They 'hover' like an insect might, in a way unnatural for human beings. They delight in 'filth' and exist in the 'fog' to suggest their need for cover and secrecy. They are mysterious and designed to unsettle. They are transgressive – women are often expected to be clean, soft, calm, open. These women are everything that society does not expect them to be. They disgust the audience but they also intrigue – they are powerful in their ability to step away from societal expectations.

Witches in Jacobean

England: Macbeth was written 90 years before the Salem Witch trials, but Jacobean society was obsessed with the idea that witches existed. They usually accused poorer, unmarried women who did not fit societal standards of beauty. Often these were women who could fend for themselves, or who were argumentative. King James paid money for witch-hunters. He sewed seeds of fear about witches to justify his own agenda. 90% of people who were murdered in witch trials were women.

Fair is foul and foul is fair

– they say this in unison. It seems almost like a spell or incantation; the fricatives heighten this sense that a spell is being cast. Literally, this phrase means 'good is bad and bad is good' – they reverse the moral order of society. They wish for chaos and disorder and to disturb and disrupt societal order. It unsettles us, but it also foreshadows what is to come – the fair will become foul.

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

CAPTAIN'S REPORT

Doubtful it stood – Duncan is so far removed from battle, and so clueless as to the fate of his army, that he has to ask the captain for a full report. There is a lack of knowledge of tactics here – and the captain tells us they almost lost. He relies on his soldiers, not his mind.

Smoked with bloody execution – Macbeth slaughters enemies at a rate that defies what is possible. He has a relentless speed. His skills are hyperbolised and he becomes an almost mythic figure. It is interesting that this is before we meet him – our first account of him is favourable, because he is fighting for patriotic purposes.

Unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps – there is an extreme skill to this. He flaunts his innate savagery – he shows off. 'Seams' are associated with clothing and sewing, suggesting that he sees the people in front of him as hardly human. There is a precision and skill to the way he fights – he is a genuinely talented soldier. However, an audience must ask how sound his mind can be – he is a brutal, relentless monster on the battlefield, who gives not a second thought to murdering others.

Fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling – fortune was against Macbeth and his army here, but his skill and talent on the battlefield allows him to defy these odds. Some argue that at this moment, Macbeth ought to have died, and by 'distaining fortune' and winning the battle, thus saving his own life, Macbeth is a life owed to God. Thus, the events of the play unfold towards the only natural conclusion – his death. Fortune wins in the end.

SERGEANT

Doubtful it stood;
As two spent swimmers, that do
cling together
And choke their art. The
merciless Macdonald –
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villanies of nature
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 –
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,
Till he unseam'd him from the
nave to the chaps,
And fix'd his head upon our
battlements.

DUNCAN

O valiant cousin! worthy
gentleman!

All's too weak for brave Macbeth – he is very well-respected in the sovereign realm. The epithet 'brave Macbeth' is a far cry from the 'dead butcher' he ends as – but in our minds Macbeth is set up as the ultimate noble, heroic warrior.

Like valour's minion – Macbeth is bravery personified. His valour and bravery are the reason they win this battle, and this description from the Captain makes him seem brave and fearsome, delighting in the battle.

Fix'd his head upon our battlements – this acts as a warning to all others who may challenge Macbeth. He flaunts his victory and warns others not to cross him, or else they will receive a similar fate. It is ironic that this is ultimately what happens to Macbeth too – all traitors meet the same end. At the hands of the patriotic and brave.

Valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman! – Duncan praises him, and praise from the King is the highest possible sort of praise. However, we perhaps see Duncan's naivete here – he cannot see the truth of Macbeth and believes him to be good and pure

ACT ONE SCENE THREE

PROPHECIES

So fair and foul a day I have not seen – Macbeth mirrors the witches here. It suggests perhaps that Macbeth has been influenced before we ever meet him – he has no agency whatsoever and his fate is already decided. He is already speaking paradoxically and confusion has taken hold of him

Cannot be ill, cannot be good – again, he is speaking in paradoxes here too. He is confused and struggling, torn between what is right and what he truly wants. He speaks like a witch already – further suggesting their influence over him.

So wither'd and wild in their attire – the witches do not fit into society. They do not dress like women 'should', and are dirty and unkempt. They are designed to frighten. 'Wild' suggests an animalistic nature – a lack of human refinement.

Look into the seeds of time and say which grain will grow – Banquo desires an insight into his life too. He is not completely disinterested. The semantic field of nature and trees here suggests growth, but almost uncontrollable growth that he has no control over. He realises his fate is not his to control.

Why do you dress me in borrowed robes? – Macbeth has shown an awareness that he has been promoted above his station – a status that he is undeserving of, that he is not suited to. This is contrasted late to the 'giant's robe on a dwarfish thief', and suggests to us that he has never been deserving of the role. He is aware that his position is unearned.

'So fair and foul a day I have not seen'

'Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?'

'Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more'

'Cannot be ill, cannot be good'

'That suggestion
Whose horrid image doth
unfix my hair
And make my seated
heart knock at my ribs'

'What are these
So wither'd and so wild in
their attire'

'If you can look into the
seeds of time,
And say which grain will
grow and which will not,
Speak then to me'

'Offentimes, to win us to
our harm,
The instruments of
darkness tell us truths'

Stay you imperfect speakers, tell me more – his imperative verbs here show he feels he has power over them. They should bend to his will. He shows his desperation too, to know more about his fate. He consorts with witches – making him immoral.

Make my seated heart knock at my ribs – Macbeth's duality is evident here; he is struggling with his fear of regicide coupled with his desire to progress. His heart is beating too fast and having a physiological stress response, despite being wholly unafraid on the battlefield earlier. This is what scares him.

Instruments of darkness tell us truths – Banquo warns Macbeth here; he reminds him that supernatural forces manipulate us. He is the morally decent voice of reason and he reassures the audience that he has not lost his senses. He relates the witches to the devil, calling them 'instruments', suggesting that the devil speaks through them. It is a reminder that Macbeth should not be drawn in by the witches false words.

ACT ONE SCENE FOUR

STARS HIDE YOUR FIRES

My plenteous joys, wanton in fullness –

Duncan is pleased with the work that has been done to defend Scotland. He feels indulgent, carefree, unconstrained – confident in his reign and the strength of his Kingdom. There is a dramatic irony here – he is content whilst Macbeth plots his murder. He is naïve and unaware of the plot against his life because he is too pure and wholesome to see it.

You whose places are the nearest know –

Duncan surrounds himself with his closest allies, and it is interesting that Macbeth is not one of them. This comes as a surprise to Macbeth – it suggests Macbeth is nowhere near the top of Scottish leadership, and is not privy to the inner workings of the highest office. He does not know what it takes to be King and is completely unqualified for the job he thinks he so deserves.

Signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine on all deservers

- 'stars' in the play represent fate and heaven, but also moral purity and goodness. Nobleness makes people 'shine', he says, suggesting that those like the traitor are not pure of heart. Again, dramatic irony to remind Macbeth of his impure thoughts.

A step on which I must fall down or else over leap – he refers to Malcolm as a 'step', something in his way. He does not see him as a human being, or a leader, but merely a step that is preventing him from achieving his ambition. Already he is losing his humanity, lacking human empathy. He realises how many steps must be taken to achieve his ambition and here we see him realise how complex it is likely to be.

DUNCAN My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fullness, seek to hide
themselves
In drops of sorrow.—
Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
And you whose places are the
nearest, know
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we n
ame hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland; which
honor must
Not unaccompanied invest him
only,
But signs of nobleness, like stars, s
hall shine
On all deservers.—
From hence to Inverness
And bind us further to you.

MACBETH

The rest is labor which is not used
for you.
I'll be myself the harbinger and
make joyful
The hearing of my wife with your
approach.
So humbly take my leave.

DUNCAN My worthy Cawdor.

MACBETH, [↑] *aside* [↓]

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 yo
ur fires;
Let not light see my black and d
eep desires.
The eye wink at the hand, yet let
that be
Which the eye fears, when it is do
ne, to see.

Stars hide your fires let not light see my black and deep desires

– 'stars' here represent heaven and God. He fears God's judgement. He is aware that his ambition is 'black', suggesting a moral impurity or evilness. He is afraid of being seen by God, and uses imperative verbs to command the starts – 'hide', 'let not' – suggesting that he believes he is powerful enough to command fate itself. It is interesting that this has actually been the case already in the play – we learned he was 'distaining fortune' in the battle. He feels powerful enough to command fate.

The eye wink at the hand

– this suggests secrecy and concealment, a sort of wilful blindness where the eye overlooks what the hand does – as though he is not in control of his actions himself. He understands regicide is a great sin, but he tries to avoid recognising that he is considering it to escape responsibility.

ACT ONE SCENE FIVE

LADY MACBETH

The raven himself his hoarse – Ravens are symbols of death. Lady Macbeth is almost suggesting that Duncan's death is predestined, and something they have no control over. It is decided by fate.

Unsex me here – Lady Macbeth orders the removal of her femininity. It is important to note that she does not 'want to be a man', she just wants her feminine qualities of empathy, physical weakness etc. to be removed and replaced with masculine qualities. She sees that the world positions women as weaker and feels frustrated by our patriarchal society.

Come thick night and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell – both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth seek darkness and concealment. They want to act in secrecy and not be seen committing their evil deeds. This, in itself, is an awareness that they are doing something morally abhorrent. 'Smoke of hell' has supernatural connotations too, and suggests, again, that Lady Macbeth aspires to the same supernatural freedoms and powers that witches have.

Under my battlements- Lady Macbeth considers her home 'her battlements'. The domestic sphere is where she is powerful and has control because she is a woman – it is where she 'does battle'.

LADY MACBETH

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. 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!
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!'

Stop up the access and passage to remorse – she admits here that she does feel remorse, and is capable of normal human emotions. She is more feminine than she wants to be. This almost foreshadows the ending for her, where she is driven mad by her guilt and grief. She tells us this is what will happen – and it does.

Come you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts – she uses imperative verbs to command spirits – she wants to be supernatural. Her behaviour is like that of a witch – but she is not powerful enough to be magical. It suggests her moral depravity however – she is willing to consort with spirits to advance her own power.

Take my milk for gall- milk is associated with femininity. Women produce milk to nurture babies and help them to grow, so it has connotations of motherliness and womanhood. Replacing it with 'gall' (poison) suggests that she sees her femininity as a weakness and the thing that prevents her from achieving her ambitions. She places her success above all.

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark - – just like Macbeth, she is aware that she is committing a grave sin here, and she hopes to not be perceived by God. She has some sense of morality, and knows the consequences of her crimes will be dire. She is multi-faceted, and is not just purely evil all the time.

ACT ONE SCENE FIVE

LADY MACBETH

My dearest love, Duncan comes here tonight – the Macbeths act together in the beginning. He shares everything with his wife, and their plotting and scheming is equal at this point in the play. There is a childish excitement to their conversation here – he is almost uncontrollable

Look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it – Lady Macbeth encourages her husband to be more deceptive and manipulative: to look one way and behave in another. 'Serpents' have biblical connotations of deception; the devil appears in the form of a snake in the garden of Eden, and tempts Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, with the promise that it will make her like God. Lady Macbeth is the temptress here – she is the devil. She tempts Macbeth to do that which is forbidden (regicide) to become the most powerful person in the Kingdom. She is the epitome of sin, tempting her husband to damn his soul. There is often fear surrounding powerful women, that they may corrupt their husbands, in exactly the way Lady Macbeth is doing. She confirms the fears of men in the audience.

O never shall sun that morrow see! Lady Macbeth hopes Duncan will not see sunrise – an interesting parallel with 'ere the set of sun' from the witches in Act 1 Scene 1. It is a suggestion that Duncan is the 'sun' – the light and hope of the world, as the god-chosen King – and that his murder will bring about darkness. The sun not rising is also showing the corruption, chaos and disorder that the murder will bring to the natural world. All of it shows her ruthlessness.

MACBETH My dearest love,
Duncan comes here tonight.
LADY MACBETH And when goes hence?
MACBETH
Tomorrow, as he purposes.
LADY MACBETH O, never
Shall sun that morrow see!
Your face, my thane, is as a
book where men
May read strange matters. To be
guile the time,
Look like the time. Bear welcome
in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue. Look like
th' innocent
flower,
But be the serpent under 't. He
that's coming
Must be provided for; and you sh
all put
This night's great business into my
dispatch,
Which shall to all our nights and
days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and
masterdom.
MACBETH
We will speak further.
LADY MACBETH Only look up
clear.
To alter favor ever is to fear.
Leave all the rest to me.

Put this great night's business into my dispatch- Lady Macbeth is willing to take charge here. She wants to be allowed to control the situation. She is clever and manipulative – more intelligent than her husband, and capable of making the plans. Macbeth is her blunt instrument.

Your face, my thane, is a book where men may read strange matters- Lady Macbeth worries that Macbeth's feelings are plain to see on his face. He does not have the skills of manipulation, as Lady Macbeth does, to hide his emotions from others. He is much too easy to read, like an open book, to fool anyone. She urges Macbeth to understand the power of deception.

Leave all the rest to me – she is powerful when she is at home. The only thing Lady Macbeth cannot commit is the murder itself, but within the domestic realm she is powerful enough to do the rest. Physical strength seems to be all she lacks. Her drive to achieve her ambition makes her seem almost reckless, happy to engage in any kind of sin to succeed.

ACT ONE SCENE SEVEN

MACBETH RECONSIDERS

If it were done when 'tis done – Macbeth begins to explore the morality and immorality of regicide. His language is separating himself from the act, as though the 'it' is not something he is doing himself. He does not say murder.

This is a **soliloquy** (where a character appears alone on stage) and this is the first time Macbeth has been alone with his thoughts with no external influences. The fact he tries to talk himself out of it shows us his hesitancy.

Who should against his murderer shut the door – Macbeth reminds himself that it is his duty to serve and protect his King. He seems sincere here, and genuinely devoted to Duncan. He is familiar with him, calls him his 'kinsman' which refers to the fact that their relationship is as close as family. We know he is being genuine because he is alone and has no reason to be false or deceive. The modal verb 'should' is telling here though, as it tells us how aware Macbeth is of his moral obligations to his King, but shows his internal turmoil – he is genuinely unsure.

Duncan hath borne his faculties so meek – Macbeth recognises that Duncan is a good and moral leader. He is humble and kind. He is clearly a dutiful, uncorrupted soul and despite his flaws as King, Macbeth sees that this is something to celebrate in a leader. However, it could also be a reference to the fact that Duncan is vulnerable and easy to take power from due to his naiveté.

MACBETH

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
 It were done quickly. If th' 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 th' ingredience 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;
 And pity, like a naked newborn babe
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin 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
 Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
 And falls on th' other—

His virtues will plead like angels – the heavenly imagery here is in direct contrast to the devilish and hellish imagery that surrounds Macbeth later in the play to show that moral, pious leadership allows us into heaven – corrupt leadership to hell.

I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition – We are seeing his fatal flaw – ambition – emerge here. He sees that there is no justifying this crime. There is a horse-riding metaphor here, with 'spur' and 'vaulting'. He compares his ambition to a wild horse – unstoppable, uncontrolled, unreasoned. That he has 'no spur' suggests he has no external motivation, no real reason or legitimate excuse to commit the murder – just ambition, nothing more.

ACT ONE SCENE SEVEN

LADY MACBETH'S MANIPULATION

We will proceed no further in this business-

Macbeth has entirely made up his mind here and he seems decisive. He has attempted to regain control over his situation as he tells his wife in no uncertain terms that they both ('we') will put an end to their plotting. We see a rare moment of authority over his wife. As always, Macbeth talks of the murder in euphemisms rather than saying the word aloud.

Look so green and pale – she continues to mock her husband, relentlessly criticising him and breaking him down. She calls him a coward here – suggesting that his reluctance makes him look sickly and weak. She mocks him and questions his masculinity.

I dare do all that may become a man.

Who dares do more is none – Macbeth begins to defend himself, reminding her that masculinity can also be equated to being moral and ethical. Lady Macbeth sees masculinity in very simple, polarised terms – she thinks men are brave and therefore should be able to commit acts of violence. In a rare moment of clarity, Macbeth reminds us that this is not so.

He hath honoured me of late –

This explanation almost undermines his decisiveness. Having to explain himself suggests that his word alone is not enough to stop his wife behaving this way. It is interesting that his reasons are not to do with regicide being sinful, or going against God, or committing murder – but are all personal, and individual to him.

MACBETH

We will proceed no further in this business.

He hath honored 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 dressed 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
afraid

To be the same in thine own act
and valor

As thou art in desire? Wouldst
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 Prithee, peace.

I dare do all that may become
a man.

Who dares do more is none.

Art thou afeared? / Live a coward in thine own esteem

– Lady Macbeth launches a barbed attack on Macbeth's masculinity here, knowing that this is the thing that he cannot abide. His worth and value as a soldier comes from his bravery on the battlefield, and it is this that has afforded him so much praise so far. To suggest he is not truly brave is to suggest he has been undeserving of the image he has built of himself.

Like the poor cat in the adage?

– an adage is a tale with a moral meaning. In this adage, the cat who loves fish does not like to get their paws wet. It suggests that Macbeth wants to be King but does not want to do the hard work to achieve it. When Macbeth was on his own, he weighed the breach of ethics involved in killing Duncan against the possible gain and found that it was not worth wetting his paws for. Lady Macbeth, however, equates this with cowardice, implying that he will not kill Duncan because he is afraid of doing so. It is ironic that Lady Macbeth is more the cat here – she wants the crown but will not act for it herself.

ACT ONE SCENE SEVEN

LADY MACBETH'S MANIPULATION

What beast was it then, that made you break this enterprise to me? - Lady Macbeth has stripped him of his masculinity already, so now she strips his humanity too, calling him a 'beast' – something wild, untameable. She suggests he has manipulated her in some way – that he cannot be trusted – when it is she who has done this to him.

If we should fail --? – Macbeth tries to provide other reasons to escape his fate here, and he presents as quite anxious. He is literally interrupted by her as he forms this thought – as though she is one step ahead of him and has already formed her counterargument. She is quick and intelligent – she knows her husband and the sorts of things he would say, and the best way to manipulate him. Macbeth is vulnerable to manipulation.

False face must hide what the false heart doth know – Macbeth, once more, speaks using equivocation here. He sounds like one of the weird sisters. He repeats the word 'false' – he is promising to be more deceptive, more intelligent, more manipulative, as his wife suggested he should try to be. He talks of 'hiding', of secrecy and concealment. He is learning the wily habits of his wife.

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. Nor time nor place Did then adhere, and yet you would make both. They have made themselves, and that their fitness Now Does unmake you. 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 so sworn as you Have done to this.

MACBETH If we should fail—

LADY MACBETH We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking place And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep. Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey Soundly invite him), his two chamberlains Will I with wine and wassail so convince That memory, the warder of the brain, Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep Their drenchèd natures lies as in a death, What cannot you and I perform upon Th' unguarded Duncan? What not put upon His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt Of our great quell?

MACBETH Bring forth men-children only, For thy undaunted mettle should compose Nothing but males. Will it not be received,

When we have markd with blood those sleepy two Of his own chamber and used their very daggers, That they have done 't?

LADY MACBETH Who dares receive it other, As we shall make our griefs and clamor roar Upon his death?

MACBETH I am settled and bend up Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. Away, and mock the time with fairest show. False face must hide what the false heart doth know

Screw your courage to the sticking place – she commands her husband to find his mettle and bravery. She convinces him that their only route to failure would simply be if he was not brave enough. It is manipulative and suggests that he holds the power to control their destiny if only he is brave enough.

I would, while it was smiling in my face, Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums And dashed the brains out – here she brazenly admits that she would kill her own child. Infanticide is the epitome of evil and wickedness. These words are graphic and explicit, By killing a child, she is willing to sacrifice her maternal instinct. In fact, she is willing to sacrifice her moral imperative, for the sake of the advancement of their power. She forces her husband to feel guilty for not doing the same.

The lengths of Lady Macbeth's responses here are really telling. Macbeth hardly responds at all, and Lady Macbeth's diatribes are long tirades, railing against Macbeth's supposed cowardice. She holds the power in the conversation, even though we started this scene with Macbeth being decisive and attempting to be powerful.

ACT TWO SCENE ONE

THE DAGGER SCENE

Is this a dagger which I see before me? – we struggle as an audience to decide here whether Macbeth has free will or whether he is controlled or his fate predestined. We assume this is a hallucination – his sight and perceptions are unreliable. He questions his own senses and can no longer rely on them to tell him the truth.

A false creation, proceeding from the head oppressed brain? – he recognises that what he sees is not real and a result of his senses being clouded by guilt. He feels overwhelmed – and the 'heat' here suggests his mental agitation and turmoil he feels. The fact he knows it is not real suggests to us that – actually – he has made a choice here. He knows that what he sees is not real but chooses to do it anyway.

Wicked dreams abuse the curtained sleep – both of them struggle to sleep after the murder; this foreshadows this idea. The inability to sleep is unnatural, emphasising the evil of what he is about to do. He calls them 'wicked', which undoubtedly has connotations of witchcraft and incantation. It suggests perhaps that he feels he will be haunted by his crime – but it also foreshadows the 'something wicked' Macbeth will become.

MACBETH:

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?
Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false
creation,
Proceeding from the heat-
oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I
was going; And such an instrument I
was to use.

Mine eyes are made the fools o' the
other senses,

Or else worth all the rest; I see thee
still, And on thy blade and
dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no
such thing:

It is the bloody business which
informs Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er
the one halfworld Nature seems
dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft
celebrates

Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd
murder, Alarum'd by his sentinel, the
wolf, Who howls his watch, thus with
his stealthy pace.

With Tarquin's ravishing strides,
towards his design

Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and
firm-set earth,

Hear not my steps, which way they
walk, for fear

Thy very stones prate of my
whereabout,

And take the present horror from
the time,

Which now suits with it. Whiles I
threat, he lives:

Words to the heat of deeds too cold
breath gives.

A bell rings

I go, and it is done; the bell invites
me. Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a
knell That summons thee to heaven
or to hell.

Exit

Tarquin's ravishing strides – Tarquin, a famous Roman general, raped a woman named Lucrecia and ultimately overthrew the monarchy – but Tarquin was ultimately murdered in revenge for his crimes. His story is very similar to Macbeth's and it suggests he was doomed from the moment of his first crimes.

The wolf who howls his watch – Macbeth is talking about death itself here; it is as though death stalks the stage. 'Wolves' are wild and untameable. It almost suggests that he has no control over Duncan's death – as though it is simply inevitable. It removes the sense of free will from Macbeth and suggests it would happen either way, absolving him of responsibility.

Hear it not Duncan for it is a knell that summons thee to heaven or to hell – death knells signify the moment after someone has died. It shows us that Macbeth has already killed him in his mind – he has decided. Duncan should go to heaven – as God's representative on Earth – but Macbeth questions whether or not he will. He does not pass his own judgement.

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

THE FALLOUT

This is a sorry sight – there is immediate regret here. He feels deeply sorrowful in a way that he does not when he kills for patriotic reasons. He is haunted by his mistake and the sibilant sounds in the line emphasises the palpable regret he feels. The statement is a declarative – he does not wish for Lady Macbeth to argue with him. He knows it for a fact.

A foolish thought to say a sorry sight – she seems to scold him for feeling remorse, determined to see their plan through to the bitter end. Lady Macbeth attempts to bring him to his senses – but by doing so she seems callous and clinical. She refuses to let him think on his crimes.

I could not say amen – Macbeth feels his God will have abandoned him. He feels deep, Christian shame at having committed the ultimate sin. Macbeth comes at the end of a prayer, and translates to 'so be it' – but here he cannot talk to his God about the act he has committed. He cannot ask for forgiveness. Already he is haunted by his actions. He realises he removed God's spokesperson on Earth and he cannot bring himself to ask for forgiveness.

Sleep, balm of day's life, sore labour's bath – He seems childishly vulnerable here, almost looking to Lady Macbeth to mother him. He wants to sleep, like a baby might, and he craves 'balm' and a 'bath', all things associated with childishness. He is vulnerable.

MACBETH This is a sorry sight.

[Looking on his hands]

LADY MACBETH A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!' That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them: But they did say their prayers, and address'd them. Again to sleep.

LADY MACBETH There are two lodged together.

MACBETH One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other; As they had seen me with these hangman's hands. Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,' When they did say 'God bless us!'

LADY MACBETH Consider it not so deeply.

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

LADY MACBETH These deeds must not be thought After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

MACBETH Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep, Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care, The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath, Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, Chief nourisher in life's feast,-

-
LADY MACBETH What do you mean?

MACBETH Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house: 'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

They had seen me with these hangman's hands- this shows his guilt and paranoia again, but the 'hangman's hands' are the most stark metaphor for his moral downfall. He is no longer a noble thane that serves his King, but a blunt instrument. A hangman does not hold the same honour and prestige as the noble warrior he once was

Consider it not so deeply – easy for Lady Macbeth to say, when she has not committed the crime herself. We feel a little frustration at her here. She has pressured her husband into committing this crime and then refuses to empathise with him in the fallout. She truly lacks all sense of a moral compass.

Macbeth does murder sleep –his fear consumes him. He is plagued by unease. He believes he has heard a voice utter these words but there is no clarity as to whether this is true of if it is in his head. He expresses an almost childlike helplessness. He is in the grip of paranoia and fear – showing the audience in no uncertain terms that the consequence of regicide is madness.

ACT TWO SCENE TWO

NEPTUNE'S OCEAN

I'll go no more – he is unusually decisive here after seeming so vulnerable and helpless. His firm refusal indicates the traumatic nature of the idea of returning to the scene of the crime. He physically could not return. He knows his limits here and is refusing out of a deep-seated fear.

What hands are these? – he does not recognise or know himself. He cannot comprehend that the same person he once was would commit such evil deeds of treason and treachery. His confusion and discombobulation show us the destruction of the mind caused by such a heinous crime. He feels as though his hands have acted without his own permission – like his mind and body are disconnected

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? – Macbeth feels he will never be sane again, consumed by his guilt. When Lady Macbeth says 'a little water clears them of this deed', Macbeth needs the depths of a whole ocean. 'Neptune', the Roman God of the Sea, is a Pagan God, not a Christian one. Again, Macbeth has lost his faith that God would care for him. He turns to another God instead for comfort, knowing that he has destroyed the relationship between himself and his own God.

Infirm of purpose! Give me the daggers – Lady Macbeth takes charge here, using her imperative verbs again ('give') to take control. She is, once more, the dominant one in the situation. When she is in her own home, in the domestic realm, she is able to take control. She chides him in frustration, like a mother might to a child, and takes on an almost parental role to 'fix' the situation.

MACBETH

I'll go no more:
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;

For it must seem their guilt.
Exit. Knocking within

MACBETH

Whence is that knocking?
How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas in incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Re-enter LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH

My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white

'Tis the eye of childhood that fears a painted devil – Lady Macbeth calls her husband a child, as though his fears are unjustified. It is ironic that later, she becomes a child, needing 'light by her continually' – her fear is there still, it is just concealed, to rear its head later. For now, she acts as though she is unmoved by their crime.

How is it with me when every noise appals me?

– a knock at the door has frightened Macbeth. It acts as an intrusion into the secretive world of Macbeth and reminds him of the existence of the outside world. He seems disoriented. He knows this though, and he is self-aware enough to see that he cannot control himself, and is not acting rationally.

My hands are of your colour but I shame to wear a heart so white

– Lady Macbeth continues to manipulate Macbeth even now, questioning his bravery, calling him a coward. 'White' has connotations of surrender, so she is suggesting that he is weak. There is a frustration from the audience here too – she is not actually as culpable as he is. He committed the act – she simply manipulated him to do so on her behalf. So her hands are not of his colour, and she cannot understand how he feels.

ACT TWO SCENE THREE

DUNCAN'S BODY

The night has been unruly where we lay – pathetic fallacy is used here in the form of a storm, suggesting that nature is angry with Macbeth for committing the most unnatural of deeds. However, witches were widely supposed to be able to conjure storms, suggesting a supernatural influence over the nights' events.

The Earth was feverous and did shake – There is the sense that the balance of order and disorder has been disrupted through the regicide. The Earthquake here feels like a reference to God's wrath, because Macbeth has subverted the Divine Right of Kings. God so disapproves of Macbeth's behaviour that his anger has reflected back onto the whole world. Macbeth has shaken the very foundations of life in Scotland.

O horror horror horror! Tongue nor heart cannot conceive or name thee! – Macduff, noble and true to the throne, patriotic and loyal, cannot comprehend what he is seeing when he discovers the body. The fact 'horror' is repeated twice is interesting – with the number 'three' often linking to witchcraft in the play. There are three witches, always three prophecies, three apparitions, three key scenes with witches in – it links the murder to the supernatural.

'Twas a rough night – Macbeth replies very briefly, but he seems to downplay the awful weather. This is at odds with what Lennox is saying. Macbeth equivocates a little here, and his words have a double meaning. The weather was rough, but the audience also know that his night was 'rough' too in his own way.

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 with accents terrible Of dire combustion and confused events New hatch'd to the woeful time: the obscure bird Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth Was feverous and did shake.

MACBETH 'Twas a rough night.

LENNOX My young remembrance cannot parallel A fellow to it.

Re-enter MACDUFF

MACDUFF O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart Cannot conceive nor name thee!

MACBETH What's the matter.

MACDUFF Confusion now hath made his masterpiece! Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence The life o' the building!

MACBETH What is 't you say? the life? **LENNOX** Mean you his majesty? **MACDUFF** Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight With a new Gorgon: do not bid me speak; See, and then speak yourselves.

Exeunt MACBETH and LENNOX
MACDUFF Awake, awake! Ring the alarum-bell. Murder and treason! Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake! Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit, And look on death itself! up, up, and see The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo! As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites, To countenance this horror!

The Divine Right of Kings – this was the idea that the King was God's appointed spokesperson on Earth, and that whoever was King was chosen by God himself. This murder, therefore, has not only murdered the King, but has murdered God's representative – and is therefore not only treasonous, but sacrilegious.

Sacrilegious murder hath broke ope the Lord's anointed temple – Macduff compares Duncan's body to a church that has been destroyed and desecrated. Macduff here shows his awareness of Kingship as something holy and ordained by God, reminding us that he is the foil character to Macbeth. He is the one who truly understands his position in Scotland and who treats Kingship with the holy reverence it deserves. He calls the murder 'sacrilegious', reminding us of the truly depraved nature of regicide.

Destroy your sight with a new gorgon – a Gorgon turns people to stone, suggesting that the King's dead body is so terrifying it will stun the viewer. He sees it as a monster so horrible that it hardly seems real – the metaphor of 'Gorgon' shows us the unnaturalness of the death – so unnatural it seems mythological.

ACT TWO SCENE FOUR

THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

The heavens, as troubled with man's act, threaten his bloody stage – the heavens often represented divine will and cosmic order, thought to reflect human actions. If something goes wrong on Earth it was believed the heavens would mirror the chaos and violence on earth. God is 'troubled', Ross suggests, and is threatening to punish Earth.

'Tis unnatural, even like the deed that's done – when Macbeth kills Duncan, it is not just the King that is killed, it is the natural order of the realm. He has undermined the natural and divine order. Nobody in Scotland can say 'murder' – the word 'deed' is a euphemism here because they do not wish to say aloud the crime. Unlike Macbeth, though, here it is because of deep sadness, not guilt.

A falcon, towering in her pride of place, was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed – The 'mousing owl' here is a metaphor for Macbeth, and the falcon a metaphor for Duncan. Mousing owls are much weaker and less powerful than 'falcons' and this suggests that the natural order of power has been disrupted in Scotland. The description 'towering in her pride of place' suggests that Duncan had almighty strength, stolen unnaturally.

'Tis day and yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp – this literally means that it is dark outside when it should be daytime. This is a metaphor for the unnaturally dark deeds that have taken place in Scotland. 'Strangles' is a deeply violent verb, and the 'travelling lamp' is a metaphor for the sun. There has been a forceful and violent removal of the natural order – and a removal of all hope and light and life in Scotland. The world as they know it is gone.

ROSS Ah, good father, Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act, Threaten his bloody stage: 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?

Old Man

'Tis unnatural, Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last, A falcon, towering in her pride of place, Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

ROSS And Duncan's horses--a thing most strange and certain--Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race, Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out, Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make War with mankind.

Old Man 'Tis said they eat each other.

ROSS They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes That look'd upon't. Here comes the good Macduff.

The Great Chain of Being – this is the idea that our world has a hierarchical structure of all matter and life. It was thought by medieval Christianity to have been decreed by God. The chain begins with God and descends through angels, humans, animals and plants to minerals.

Duncan's horses...turned wild in nature...Tis said they eat each other

- again we can see the natural order of things has been disrupted. The horses turn to cannibalism. They mirror the state of human affairs. The horses, known for their nobility and grace, symbolise balance. It shows us that the normal laws of nature have been violated and this unnaturally violence behaviour from the usually temperate animals signals the chaos unleashed by the crime. The image of cannibalism is brutal and horrific, suggesting the breakdown of human morality and the violent consequences of Macbeth's unchecked ambition.

ACT THREE SCENE ONE TO BE THUS IS NOTHING

Our fears in Banquo stick deep – His desire for power has become obsession. He uses the pronoun 'our' instead of 'my' to denote his royal status, as this is how royalty would refer to themselves. They 'stick deep' into him – are deeply lodged and difficult to remove.

Under him my genius is rebuked – a 'genius' is a guardian angel; Macbeth does not mean 'his intelligence' here. He believes that Banquo has the power to overcome Macbeth, and that when Banquo is around, Macbeth is vulnerable to harm. His relationship with him has broken down.

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown and put a barren sceptre in my grip – this makes it clear that he is not here to govern, but for power only. The connotations of 'barren' and 'fruitless' are of having children. He feels his Kingship holds no meaning without security through lineage – something Macbeth does not have. He feels emasculated by his lack of an heir, and feels insecure as a result.

To be thus is nothing but to be safely thus – there is a petulant childishness to this. It is not enough for him to have robbed Scotland of its rightful King, or have committed the worst imaginable crime. It is not enough for him to be King if he does not feel secure in his Kingship – and he does not feel safe because he knows that the Kingship is not truly his. He says it is 'nothing' without security. He of course also refers to his lack of a lineage to pass the crown onto – which Banquo does have.

MACBETH

To be thus is nothing;
But to be safely thus.--Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis
much he dares;
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his
valour
To act in safety. There is none but he
Whose being I do fear: and, under him,
My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid
the sisters
When first they put the name of king
upon me,
And bade them speak to him: then
prophet-like
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:
Upon my head they placed a fruitless
crown,
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
Thence to be wrench'd 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
murder'd;
Put rancours 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 the utterance!
Who's there!
Re-enter Attendant, with two Murderers
Now go to the door, and stay there till we
call.

He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour – Here we see Macbeth reflect on his inability to govern. Macbeth lacks the intelligence needed to be King. He was great as a soldier on the battlefield – noble and well-respected for his fighting. But his ability to strategize and be intelligent about his actions is lacking. He does not have the qualities of a good King.

Mark Antony's was by Caesar – Macbeth is worried that Banquo is stronger and more capable a leader than he will be. Macbeth sees Banquo as a threat, much like Antony was a threat to those who opposed Caesar, due to his noble nature, his potential for greatness, and the prophecy that Banquo's descendants will inherit the throne

Mine eternal jewel given to the common enemy of man – 'eternal jewel' here refers to his soul. He has condemned himself to damnation. The 'common enemy of man' is the devil – he fears he will have given his soul to the devil for eternity, for no reason other than temporary power that he will ultimately give up to Banquo's sons.

ACT THREE SCENE TWO

O FULL OF SCORPIONS

Things without all remedy should be without regard

– Lady Macbeth's statement reflects a pragmatic, even fatalistic outlook. She implies that the only way to move forward after committing an irreversible act is to focus on what can be controlled and not dwell on the past. She attempts to block out her guilt – and believes simply not thinking about it will be enough. It is quite naive.

We have scotch'd the snake not kill'd it-

'scotch'd' means slashed or wounded – it means 'notch', 'slash', 'hack', 'cut'. Snakes, of course, represent lies and deceit – and he now views his potential enemies as snakes. He acknowledges that further violence will be needed to secure his power and authority. There is a dissonant element to the snake metaphor too – the 'snake' is the devil in biblical allusion, but he views his fellow noblemen as 'snakes' now. It suggests his sense of right and wrong is confused. He has forgotten that his behaviour is sinful, and his moral compass has left him entirely.

Be bright and jovial among your guests tonight

– as always, Lady Macbeth's advice is to conceal the reality of Macbeth's feelings. She asks him to lie and to act differently in front of others. She is skilled in the act of concealment.

LADY MACBETH

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.

Enter MACBETH

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone, Of sorriest fancies your companions making, Using those thoughts which should indeed have died With them they think on? Things without all remedy Should be without regard: what's done is done.

MACBETH

We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it: She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice Remains in danger of her former tooth. But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer, Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep In the affliction of these terrible dreams That shake us nightly: 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. Duncan is in his grave; After life's fitful fever he sleeps well; Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison, Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing, Can touch him further.

LADY MACBETH

Come on; Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks; Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

MACBETH So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you: Let your remembrance apply to Banquo; Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue: Unsafe the while, that we Must lave our honours in these flattering streams, And make our faces vizards to our hearts, Disguising what they are

LADY MACBETH You must leave this.

MACBETH O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife! Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

Nought's had, all's spent

– Lady Macbeth speaks in riddles, equivocating like a witch might, on stage alone without Macbeth. She acts secretively. Here, she acknowledges their achievements have offered them nothing in the way of harmony.

O full of scorpions is my mind dear wife

– this is an ugly, grotesque image – one of infestation and corruption. Scorpions are repulsive creatures, a reflection of the thoughts he now holds. Scorpions are dangerous adversaries, full of poison. Macbeth cannot challenge his thoughts – he must succumb to them. Scorpions, when trapped or in danger, have a tendency to self destruct – perhaps foreshadowing Macbeth's self destructive thoughts. He is in physical pain in his mind – he is plagued by these poisonous thoughts.

Duncan is in his grave after life's fitful fever he sleeps well

Macbeth is almost jealous of Duncan in his death. He believes Duncan is more at peace than he is himself. There is a deep sadness here – Macbeth would rather be dead than stuck with his current guilt.

ACT THREE SCENE THREE

BANQUO'S MURDER

A light a light! – Banquo represents all light and moral goodness left in Scotland. The murderers identify him by his 'light', suggesting that his moral purity is obvious even to the impure and the criminal. The fact that they say they 'strike out the light' when they murder him further suggests that the removal of Banquo from the sovereign realm signifies the last of the goodness leaving.

We have lost best half of our affair – the murder fails because Macbeth has confused the plan. He has sent a third murderer, who was not invited first, in a moment of fear and instability. This has confused the plan and meant that they have failed because of Macbeth's paranoia.

The motif of light – light in the play always signifies purity and moral goodness. In this scene alone, the word light is mentioned nine times. It suggests that Banquo was the epitome of purity and moral goodness. Macbeth, on the other hand, is surrounded by images of darkness, suggesting his moral impurity.

It will be rain tonight – there is foreshadowing here. Banquo seems almost preternaturally aware of his own fate. The dramatic irony makes us feel sympathy for Banquo's plight. He has no idea what is coming for him, and this naiveté makes him vulnerable. The modal verb 'will' shows the certainty of his demise, and once more suggests that everything in this play has been predetermined by a higher power – suggesting that there is no element of free will.

Who did strike out the light? – Again, there is confusion here. They question each other because all three of them had a different version of the plan to each other. This is because Macbeth is a poor leader, and cannot strategize. It shows us again that Macbeth might be a good fighter, but he falls down in his ability to plan and organise – a key role of Kingship. This failure comes at a strategic level and Macbeth is to blame.

Second Murderer A light, a light!
Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch

Third Murderer 'Tis he.

First Murderer Stand to't.

BANQUO It will be rain to-night.

First Murderer Let it come down.

They set upon BANQUO

BANQUO O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly! Thou mayst revenge. O slave! [Dies]

FLEANCE escapes

Third Murderer Who did strike out the light?

First Murderer Wast not the way?

Third Murderer There's but one down; the son is fled.

Second Murderer We have lost Best half of our affair.

First Murderer Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

Exeunt

ACT THREE SCENE FOUR

BANQUO'S GHOST

Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold – Macbeth is coming to terms with the murder of his friend, and the certainty he has with the verbs he chooses – ‘are’ and ‘is’ – suggest that he knows in his heart that this ghost is not real. He tries to remind himself of this, like a child might do. He talks to himself as if he is having a nightmare, reminding himself of reality. It is hard not to feel some sympathy for him here – he is losing his grip on reality to an extreme degree. Before this he has tried to use his command with imperative verbs ‘avaunt’, ‘quit’, ‘let’ – to no avail. The supernatural will not be commanded.

Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear – Macbeth wishes that he would be able to fight, physically, against his demons. His fighting stance returns, and we are reminded that his skills are on the battlefield. Fighting does not frighten him, but this does. It reminds us once more that Macbeth is not right to be King. He is a blunt instrument – a fighting machine designed to win battles, not to strategize or lead. The animals he uses – ‘bear’, ‘rhinoceros’ etc. are all very powerful beasts – predators – and Macbeth is more scared of this ghost than any of them, suggesting the fear he has of the guilt he feels.

Think of this good peers but as a thing of custom – Lady Macbeth aims to regain control of the situation. She is the master of manipulation, and thinks quickly in the moment. She informs the Lords that this is Macbeth’s norm, and that he is unwell. This is her mantra in practice – she looks one way and thinks another. This is her power – she is able to control well when the power lies with her. She is intelligent and duplicitous.

MACBETH

Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with!

LADY MACBETH

Think of this, good peers,
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

MACBETH

What man dare, I dare:
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble: or be alive again,
And dare me to the desert with thy sword;
If trembling I inhabit then, protest me
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!
Unreal mockery, hence!
GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes
Why, so: being gone,
I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

LADY MACBETH

You have displaced the mirth,
broke the good meeting,
With most admired disorder.

Dare me to the desert with my sword – He would much rather fight with Banquo than see his ghost, but it is interesting that he did not choose to do this in reality. He hired murderers to do it. It suggests perhaps this is all bluster – and actually, he truly was too afraid to fight Banquo himself, owing to the guilt he felt.

Why so being gone, I am a man again

– Macbeth thinks of bravery as masculine and fear as feminine. This contrasts well with Macduff later, who reminds us that we can also ‘feel as a man’. There is a sense that Shakespeare vaguely criticises the idea that fear is feminine here. When the fear is removed he becomes a man again. He did not fight the fear, he waited until it was over. There was nothing brave in this.

You have displaced the mirth

– as usual, Lady Macbeth chides her husband as if he was her child. She tells him off for ruining her party in a way that is quite at odds with what has just happened to Macbeth. It seems so insignificant, but it is important to Lady Macbeth because to her, maintaining appearances is important – vital even – to their success as King and Queen. Macbeth does not quite see this.

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

NEW PROPHECIES

You secret black and midnight hags – the way he describes the witches implies his distaste for them, and mirrors 'black and deep desires'. The darkness that surrounds the witches permeates the whole play. They are ugly and evil – and he still wishes to consort with them.

Though you untie the winds and let them fight against the churches – this awareness of their destruction of society, and of moral Christian values, and their reluctance to conform to society's standards, suggests that Macbeth is aware he is very much doing the wrong thing. He is aware of the chaos they reign, and their unnatural existence literally destroys the order in nature ('unties the winds'). Yet, Macbeth is still willing to talk to them if they will help advance his power. He is morally depraved.

Speak / demand / we'll answer – the witches take pure delight in toying with Macbeth. They tell us that they want to 'trade and traffic with Macbeth', and this eagerness they show, all talking over one another excitedly, suggests they actively enjoy the chaos they create in playing with Macbeth's ambitious nature.

Howe'er you come to know it, answer me – Macbeth uses imperative verbs still here, suggesting he feels he can control and command the witches. He challenges them, as if he could overpower them, suggesting his grandiose ideas of his own capabilities. He does not care about the origins of the knowledge – or that they are devilish.

SECOND WITCH

By the pricking of my thumbs
Something wicked this way comes

Open locks

Whoever knocks!

MACBETH How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags! What is't you do?

ALL A deed without a name.

MACBETH I conjure you, by that which you profess, Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:
Though you untie the winds and let them fight Against the churches; though the yesty waves Confound and swallow navigation up; Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down; Though castles topple on their warders' heads; Though palaces and pyramids do slope Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure Of nature's germens tumble all together, Even till destruction sicken;
answer me To what I ask you.

First Witch Speak

Second Witch Demand.

Third Witch We'll answer

First Witch Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths, Or from our masters?

MACBETH Call 'em; let me see 'em.

Something wicked this way comes – the fact that it is witches who call Macbeth 'wicked' suggests the moral downfall of our once noble hero. He has been truly debased by his crimes. He is not human anymore, he is 'something', suggesting his lack of humanity. They also foresee his arrival, showing their omniscient power. By this time, the audience feel Macbeth is fully lost, if even devilish, supernatural forces think of his character as wicked.

A deed without a name- 'deed' is interesting'. Macbeth calls the murder a 'deed', as does Lennox. The word is used euphemistically throughout the text to suggest that the speaker does not wish to speak aloud the act they have committed. It is usually used in shame or guilt. Here, however, it is used secretly to keep Macbeth out, to conceal the inner circle activities that the witches were conducting. It presents the witches as a secretive, clandestine group, who do not wish to reveal what they get up to. It is purposefully vague, not out of guilt and shame, but instead out of a desire to protect the sanctity of their practices.

ACT FOUR SCENE ONE

THE APPARITIONS

An armored head - the first ghost appears this way to foreshadow Macbeth's beheading. Armour reminds us of the battlefield, and it reminds us too that Macbeth will likely die a soldier and nothing more. He has not progressed or achieved the respect needed to be King, and is a soldier only. He is not suited to the Kingship.

A bloody child - this could represent several things. First, it reminds us of Fleance, the child Macbeth has had murdered, will shortly suggest the murder of Macduff's son, and reminds us again of Macbeth's lack of lineage. Children are his downfall in this play, because it is the thing he cannot have, no matter how calculating or power-hungry he is. In the end, he is killed by a man who was 'untimely ripped' from his mother's 'womb', a reference to his childhood. Children bring about his demise and this is foreshadowed here.

A crowned child holding a tree - these apparitions continue to represent Macbeth's deepest fears. This apparition foreshadows Malcolm's later commanding of Birnam wood. Malcolm is the child of Duncan, and the rightful heir to the throne as decided in Act One. Macbeth is therefore reminded here that it is not natural for him to claim the throne, with the tree brand representing nature.



An armored head



A bloody child



A crowned child holding a tree

A show of Eight Kings, the last with a glass in his hand; GHOST OF BANQUO following - the fourth apparition takes the shape of the ghosts of Macbeth's predecessors. Again, this whole scene is about lineage, and these ghosts remind Macbeth that he has not only betrayed Duncan, but the whole history of Scotland itself. It is vital that he sees this - because Kingship is not simply about one man. It is an honour given to only people who deserve it - and Macbeth does not. He is not the rightful heir, and his lack of children make it impossible for him to continue the line here. He is a failure.

Seek to know no more - the witches reinstate their power and control here. Where Macbeth thought he was getting what he wanted, using his imperative verbs, believing he had the witches at his command, we are reminded that they absolutely never answer to him. We feel uneasy for Macbeth, and the dramatic irony is that we know that they have only shown him what they want him to see. His naïveté means that he believes them implicitly, and once more we are reminded that no man so weak-minded should be in charge of a country.

ACT FOUR SCENE TWO

MACDUFF'S FAMILY

Hence with your little ones – the messenger has cared enough about Lady Macduff's well-being to forewarn her that the murderers approach. It suggests that she is loved, and that those around her want to protect her. They call her 'fair dame' and 'bless' her, and even though the man does not know her, he tries to save her. There is goodness here, and it reminds us that not everybody in the Kingdom is evil.

I have done no harm – Lady Macduff highlights the sheer injustice of Macbeth's actions. She truly has done nothing wrong, and does not deserve for a moment the treatment she is about to receive. Her confusion draws our sympathy – she cannot comprehend such evil.

To do harm is often laudable, to do good sometime accounted dangerous folly – this is the culmination of 'fair being foul and foul being fair' in this play. Macbeth is rewarded (so far!) for his evil, and the good, pure, innocent people in Scotland are murdered despite having done nothing wrong. It is unfair. This is a very cynical, almost fatalistic view and suggests to us that hope has left even the purest of heart – Macbeth has destroyed all hope.

Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain! – Macduff's son defends him in death. Not only would this be heart-wrenching on stage, as he would be a small child, but it reminds us that this is what Macbeth lacks. Macbeth has no son to defend his honour – and it helps us to see Macduff as the noble foil character to evil Macbeth.

Messenger

Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known, Though in your state of honour I am perfect. I doubt some danger does approach you nearly: If you will take a homely man's advice, Be not found here; hence, with your little ones. To fright you thus, methinks, I am too savage; To do worse to you were fell cruelty, Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you! I dare abide no longer. *Exit*

LADY MACDUFF Whither should I fly? I have done no harm. But I remember now I am in this earthly world; where to do harm is often laudable, to do good sometime Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas, Do I put up that womanly defence, To say I have done no harm? Enter Murderers What are these faces? **First Murderer**

Where is your husband?

LADY MACDUFF I hope, in no place so unsanctified Where such as thou mayst find him.

First Murderer He's a traitor.

Son Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain!

First Murderer What, you egg!

Stabbing him Young fry of treachery!

Son

He has kill'd me, mother: Run away, I pray you!

Dies *Exit* LADY MACDUFF, crying 'Murder!' *Exeunt* Murderers, following her

ACT FOUR SCENE THREE

MACDUFF FINDS OUT

Your wife and babes savagely slaughter'd – the sibilance here emphasises the evilness of the deed. It is incomprehensible that a man would kill the family of another man, all in the name of power. We see Macbeth's complete debasement here

Sinful Macduff, they were all struck for thee! – Macduff blames himself, even though the audience know it is not his fault. Macbeth blames himself for nothing, take no responsibility whatsoever for his own demise, and this contrast adds to the idea that Macduff is intended as Macbeth's foil. He chastises himself and we feel deep sympathy with him.

He has no children. All my pretty ones? Did you say all? All my pretty chickens? – This could mean two things; Macbeth has no children, so finds it easy to take them from others, not understanding the love between a father and his children, oblivious to the bonds formed in familial love. Or, he might suggest here that there is nothing comparable that Macduff could take from Macbeth, because Macbeth has nothing in the world as precious as Macduff's children were to him. Either way, we see his extreme grief.

ROSS
Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes Savagely slaughter'd: to relate the manner, Were, on the quarry of these murder'd deer, To add the death of you.

MALCOLM
Merciful heaven! What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows; Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.

MACDUFF
My children too?
ROSS Wife, children, servants, all That could be found.

MACDUFF
And I must be from thence! My wife kill'd too?

ROSS
I have said.
MALCOLM
Be comforted: Let's make us medicines of our great revenge, To cure this deadly grief

MACDUFF He has no children. All my pretty ones? Did you say all? O hell-kite! All? What, all my pretty chickens and their dam At one fell swoop?

MALCOLM
Dispute it like a man.

MACDUFF I shall do so; But I must also feel it as a man: I cannot but remember such things were, That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on, And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff, They were all struck for thee! naught that I am, Not for their own demerits, but for mine, Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

Dispute it like a man – Malcolm offers us a traditional view of masculinity here, aligning himself with the sorts of views that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have had so far of masculine strength. He tries to rally Macduff to use his sadness in battle, and turn his misery into anger instead. He encourages violence to overcome Macduff's huge amounts of grief.

I shall do so but I must also feel it as a man – Macduff offers us a less traditional view of masculinity here, presenting him as relatively progressive. He reminds us that we can feel compassion and love and still be strong and brave. He fundamentally challenges every depiction of masculinity we have seen so far in the play and Shakespeare rejects the idea that men cannot be sensitive. He wants to experience his grief before he enacts his revenge – and we find him endearing for this.

Did heaven look on and would not take their part? – Macduff questions his faith in God. He cannot believe that God would allow something so horrible and terrible to happen to innocent people. There is another nice contrast to Macbeth here – Macbeth loses faith because he has committed the worst sin imaginable. Macduff loses faith because of the evil he suffers at the hands of others.

ACT FIVE SCENE ONE

LADY MACBETH'S DECLINE

To seem thus washing her hands – The metaphorical blood on her hands feels biblical – in Matthew 27:24 when Pontius Pilate took water and washed his hands before a crowd saying "I am innocent of this man's blood," it mirrors Lady Macbeth's attempts to rid herself of guilt. It is not working though – they say it is 'an accustomed action'. She feels endless guilt she cannot be rid of.

Out damned spot! Out I say! – her panic is symptomatic of the guilt she feels. She attempts to use her imperative verbs again but this time she fails. Her guilt cannot be commanded. It is causing her mental decline instead, and there does not seem to be a cure

Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? – her thoughts are very fragmented and she seems to be overcome by madness. One reading of this line could be that, in Jacobean times, people believed that blood dried up the older you got, and Duncan being so full of blood shows he was not as old as an 'old man' might have been. It shows his reign was cut short, and reminds us of the unnatural time of his death. The guilt of this is clearly at the forefront of her mind, even as she sleeps, and is driving her to madness.

Doctor

What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

Gentlewoman

It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

LADY MACBETH

Yet here's a spot.

Doctor Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly

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 afeared? 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.

Doctor Do you mark that?

LADY MACBETH

The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?-- What, will these hands ne'er be clean?--No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

Doctor

Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

Gentlewoman

She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known

LADY MACBETH

Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. O O O!

Hell is murky – fie my lord, fie, a soldier and afeared? – she feels she is in hell. It is 'murky' because she is half asleep here, but her internal torment is enough to make her life feel hellish. She is reliving again the night of Duncan's murder. She speaks in fragments in a way that is almost haunting. She asks questions she would have asked Macbeth, and she clearly feels trapped in the eternal torment of her memories of that night.

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand – O O O- the mirroring here of 'Neptune's ocean' is not accidental, and the contrast with her earlier statement that 'a little water clears us of this deed' could not seem less true. Both of them have asked for something strong to remove their guilt. It is interesting that she starts to infantilise herself here, calling herself 'little'. Before she wanted to be strong and masculine, now she feels vulnerable and weak. Her entire persona has altered.

The Thane of Fife had a wife – where is she now? – the destruction of the only other named woman in the whole play has clearly had one of the biggest impacts on Lady Macbeth. The Thane of Fife's wife was Lady Macduff. It has clearly upset Lady Macbeth – as in her madness, Lady Macduff is the only named person in Lady Macbeth's rantings. The murder of an innocent woman was too much to handle for her.

ACT FIVE SCENE TWO - FOUR

MACBETH BECOMES A TYRANT

His title hands loose about him like a giant's robe on a dwarfish thief – this description of Macbeth suggests that the role of Kingship was too difficult for him, and that he was undeserving of the crown. The mirroring with 'why do you dress me in borrowed robes' suggests that Macbeth has always known himself to be unfit for the role, but tried to accomplish it anyway. 'Dwarfish thief' is belittling – they make him seem comically evil, and therefore easily beatable. They remind themselves that they are trying to defeat Macbeth for the good of Scotland. It contrasts greatly with the 'brave Macbeth' we met in Act one.

I have lived long enough: my way of life is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf – Macbeth's nihilism begins to set in here. 'Yellow' has connotations of illness and disease. It suggests his life has been infected or corrupted by ambition – and perhaps also by supernatural forces. 'Leaves' have connotations of growth and life, and it suggests that Macbeth's natural ability to grow and better himself has disappeared. He feels he has 'fallen' – and that his life as he knew it is over. He becomes reflective and almost regretful..

ANGUS:

His title hands loose about him like a giant's robe on a dwarfish thief

MACBETH

Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,
Thou lily-liver'd boy.

MACBETH

I have lived long enough:
my way of life is fall'n into
the sear, the yellow leaf

MACBETH

that which should
accompany old age,
As honour, love,
obedience, troops of
friends,
I must not look to have

MACBETH

I have almost forgot the
taste of fears

That which should accompany old age, As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends I must not look to have – here he reflects on all of the things he has given up to achieve his awful ambitions. As an audience we reflect upon his choices, and we are reminded that no amount of power, status, money etc. is worth giving up the things that make human lives worth living. He knows nobody will love him now, and he almost convinces himself this is okay.

Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear, Thou lily-liver'd boy – he lacks empathy with children, and demands that a frightened young man goes and gets ready for battle. He calls him a coward and demands he overcome his fears through force.

I have almost forgot the taste of fears - he has desensitised himself to fear, and committed so many evil deeds that he no longer really feels anything at all. He has entirely lost his humanity.

Tyrant – Lennox first gives Macbeth the epithet of a tyrant in Act Four, but all of the opposition continue to call him a tyrant for the remainder of the play. In fact, towards the end, nobody will utter Macbeth's name at all. They will call him a tyrant, a hell-hound, a butcher – but none will call him by his name. This suggests that the person who Macbeth once was has gone – replaced with an unrecognisable figure that nobody knows anymore.

ACT FIVE SCENE FIVE

MACBETH'S NIHILISM

She should have died

hereafter – Lady Macbeth's death is completely inconsequential to him. This statement is cruel and callous – and his love for his wife has vanished along with his humanity. She has gone from his 'dearest partner of greatness', his 'love', his 'chuck', to somebody he simply does not care about. He has lost all feeling.

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow creeps in its petty

pace- Macbeth feels that life is futile. His nihilism and disappointment with life suggests he feels like just living is a burden. His life feels like it is filled with endless drudgery. He does not appreciate the things he has done or accomplished, but instead finally realises that all of his crimes have been for nothing.

Out, out brief candle –

'light' returns, briefly, to Macbeth here in the form of a candle. He has a rare moment of clarity in this scene where he perceives all of the consequences of his actions. He is aware that his life is a 'brief candle' now – not everlasting or memorable.

Life is but a walking shadow – comparing his life to a shadow is interesting. Shadows are imitations of things, but not the things themselves. It suggests he almost feels his life is not real, that he himself is not concrete. He starts to see through the façade he has constructed for himself, and begins to understand that the life he has made was never really his to live. He was an imitation of a King, not a real one.

A poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage – Macbeth suggests that he has always been an actor. He has always performed a role in society that he does not feel truly represent him. It suggests a lack of autonomy and freedom – an actor is told what to do and say by a script. This reminds us that many things in Macbeth's life have seemed predetermined, as though he has not had free will.

It is a tale told by an idiot – this is the culmination of Macbeth's actions in the whole play. He has lost everything, and has – in this moment of failure, at the moment of his wife's demise – he finally reaches a moment of realisation. He has realised his life has no meaning. There is also some dramatic irony here – Macbeth literally is a tale – it is a fictitious play, and the 'idiot' in question telling the tale is Shakespeare himself!

Full of sound and fury – this draws sympathy from us in a way – we can see that Macbeth has known nothing in his life but violence. This is the consequence of raising a man to be a soldier. He seems to have never known peace, only anger.

SEYTON

The queen, my lord, is dead.

MACBETH

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.

ACT FIVE SCENE FIVE

MACBETH'S DEMISE

Turn hell hound – hell-hounds are mythical creatures thought in Ancient Greece to guard the gates of hell. Obviously, a hound is a dog, suggesting Macbeth's decline into moral depravity and something more resembling an animal

I have no words. My voice is in my sword – Macduff reminds us that the skill both of these men have is fighting. They are both natural-born killers, and talented soldiers. Macduff knows this about himself, and does not aspire to more. It reminds Macbeth that – had he stayed in the sphere he was supposed to – he would have been better off.

I bear a charmed life – the arrogance and hubris of this is astounding. Despite the absolute knowledge of the audience that Macduff is there to murder Macbeth for his crimes, Macbeth still cannot comprehend it. The word 'charmed' has connotations of magic and the supernatural, and here again we see that Macbeth's life has not been his own. His life has literally been charmed, a spell or enchantment placed upon it – that Macbeth has mistaken for good fortune, but that actually has killed him.

MACDUFF:
Turn hell hound

MACDUFF
I have no words. My voice is in my sword.

MACBETH
I bear a charmed life

LADY MACBETH
Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen

[Re-enter Macduff with Macbeth's head]

Re-enter Macduff with Macbeth's head – the cyclical structure of this play is evidence that traitors always lose. Macbeth had beheaded a traitor at the beginning of the play, and been rewarded greatly. Here, Macbeth has turned traitor, and has been beheaded in turn. It suggests that nobody can survive such traitorous behaviour, and that actions will always have consequences.

This dead butcher and his fiend like queen – these final epithets for the Macbeths are very telling. Macbeth was once 'brave' Macbeth, 'gracious', 'worthy' etc. and now he is nothing but a butcher. A butcher kills thoughtlessly, without real skill. It is an image of real savagery, and the bluntness and simplicity of it reduces the complexity of Macbeth's character to nothing more than a thoughtless murderer. 'His' Queen is interesting too – the idea that Lady Macbeth has reigned over and had control over Macbeth is acknowledged here. Some people read it as her having survived in her reputation, and people not fully understanding the role that she played in the events of the play, but others see this as an ironic title. It suggests that – for all her secretive and duplicitous ways – in the end, everybody could see through her.