

# Macbeth (1606)

Characters	
Macbeth	He is considered a hero at the beginning of the play. Gets promoted from Thane of Glamis to Thane of Cawdor and eventually King. Is ambitious and manipulated by his wife.
Lady Macbeth (LM)	She is manipulative and does not follow the stereotypical Jacobean woman of this time. She is presented as strong at the beginning of the text and weak at the end when she becomes insane because of how guilty she feels.
King Duncan (KD)	He is the King of Scotland at the beginning of the play. He is murdered by Macbeth after Lady Macbeth persuades him to so, so that he can get the throne.
Banquo	Macbeth's best friend. Macbeth orders him to be killed as he poses as a threat to his chances of becoming King. Macbeth loses trust in Banquo because he was present when Macbeth saw the witches. Appears as a ghost at the banquet after his murder.
Fleance	Banquo's son. Ordered to be killed by Macbeth as he is a threat to Macbeth becoming King, however, Fleance escapes from the murderers. Foreshadowed that Fleance is a light for Scotland and Fleance will be the first King (in the witches' predictions) who will start the line of descendants.
Macduff	Soldier, Thane of Fife and Macbeth's rival. Grows suspicious of Macbeth after KD's murder. Forms an army with Malcolm in England and kills Macbeth at the end; a figure of mortality.
Lady Macduff	Macduff's wife. She is murdered along with her children after Macduff flees.
Donalbain	King Duncan's son who flees to Ireland after King Duncan is killed.
Malcolm	King Duncan's other son. Flees to England after he is killed. Represents order and once that is restored at the end of the play, he becomes King.
The Witches	The three witches open the play and later meet Macbeth with prophecies, which impacts Macbeth's life. The witches guide Macbeth on the path of his own destruction.
Hecate	Known as the Head Witch or Goddess of Witchcraft; Hecate is in charge of the three witches. She is angry at the three witches but also hints at Macbeth's downfall at the end of the scene she appears in.
Ross and Lennox	Ross is Macbeth's cousin who, with Lennox, is a Scottish noble. Lennox questions Macbeth and Ross eventually turns his back on Macbeth and sides with Malcolm and Macduff.
Macdonwald	Leader of rebel forces at the beginning of the play and is killed by Macbeth. Macbeth is praised when Macdonwald is defeated.
Siward	King Duncan's brother and leads the English army against Macbeth. His army disguises itself as Birnam Wood. He is a proud father and declares his approval when his son dies in battle.

Themes	
Ambition	Macbeth allows his ambition to overwhelm him and becomes a murderer. LM is affected by the guilt of her actions caused by her ambition. This is Macbeth's tragic flaw/hamartia.
Fate	Macbeth puts himself in the position of having to master fate and struggles against parts of the witches' prophecies that do not benefit him.
Guilt	Macbeth feels guilt early on whilst LM becomes guilty later on which leads to her increasing lack of sanity. Blood and hallucinations are symbols of guilt.
Violence	Macbeth commits violence from the beginning and continues to do so until violence is all he has left.
Power	Macbeth deeply desires power. Macbeth abuses his power when he is King to avoid any threats. Lady Macbeth also desires power which is not considered a traditional trait for a woman of this time.
The Supernatural	The witches are a clear image, as well as Macbeth disrupting the social and political order by killing KD. Also raging storms are presented mirroring Macbeth& LM's acts.
Masculinity vs Femininity	Many questions around manhood towards Macbeth and Macduff from their wives because of their decisions.
Loyalty	Macbeth is loyal to KD at the beginning and those who were loyal to Macbeth change side later in the play.

Context	
Witchcraft	People believed in witches and bad events were blamed on women who were considered to be witches. They were also tested in this time and King James was superstitious about them.
King James I	Ordered huge witch hunts (bigger than ever seen before) in Scotland. He also survived an assassination attempt.
Monarchy	His mother was known as an incompetent ruler and King James was constantly worried, when he became King of England, that people would rebel and overthrow him.

Key Terminology	
Hubris	Excessive pride or self-confidence. Seen in the character of Macbeth especially when the witches give the last prophecies.
Equivocation	The use of ambiguous language to conceal the truth or to avoid committing oneself
Hamartia	Fatal flaw. Macbeth's is unchecked ambition (also Lady Macbeth) as well as desire for power and position, as well as King.
Betrayal	Being disloyal to a person/ group/ one's country.
Tyrant	A cruel and oppressive ruler. Macbeth becomes this by the end of the play.
Treason	The crime of betraying one's country, especially by attempting to kill/overthrow the monarchy or Government.

Key Quotes			
Fair is foul, and foul is fair. (I,i)	Foreshadowing that people who are seen as good will turn evil (Macbeth) and situations seen as good will be bad (prophecies). Warns the reader to not trust expectations.	(looking at his hands) this is a sorry sight. (II,ii)	Macbeth shows guilt and remorse for his actions. LM only finds this comment from Macbeth 'foolish'.
All hail Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter! (I,iii)	The witches predict that Macbeth will become King. This starts Macbeth's downfall and ambition for the throne.	Wash this blood clean from my hand. (II,ii)	Foreshadows that LM will be overwhelmed with guilt and see the blood on her hands as Macbeth does here after the murder of KD.
Unsex me here. (I,v)	Lady Macbeth wants to be stripped of female weakness and given the strength of man.	Never shake thy gory locks at me. (III,iv)	Shows the true mental state Macbeth is in. Also shows guilt and remorse for Banquo's murder
Is this a dagger which I see before me? (II, i)	Macbeth is unsure on whether to murder Duncan. He begins to hallucinate a bloody dagger (both symbols of guilts) and comments on the wickedness of the world.	Are you a man? (III,iv)	LM questions Macbeth's manhood as he hallucinates as sees Banquo's ghost and then becomes hysterical. This comment contrasts to what women were like at this time.
Look like th' innocent flower but be the serpent under't. (I,v)	LM tells Macbeth he must appear to be innocent, kind and polite but must deceive the others so he is not suspected. Also has religious connotations to Garden of Eden.	Out damned spot! Out I say! (V,i)	The blood on LM's hands will not wash off. It is a motif as connects to Macbeth saying the ocean could not wash off Duncan's blood after the murder.
I am afraid to think what I have done. (II,ii)	Represents guilt but also Macbeth's downfall as he continues to kill later in the play. His loyalty for KD and others has been shattered.	His mother's womb untimely ripped (V,viii)	Means Macduff can kill Macbeth based on the prophecy as he was born by c-section.

Plot	
Act 1	The play opens with the three witches gathering and planning to meet Macbeth. Meanwhile, a wounded captain tells King Duncan about how brave Macbeth has been and has been victorious in the fight against the rebel forces led by Macdonwald. The rebellious Thane of Cawdor has been captured and is sentenced to death- KD decides Macbeth will be Thane of Cawdor. The witches meet again and tell Macbeth's future- he will become Thane of Cawdor and then King. They tell Banquo that his children will be kings. Macbeth demands to know more but the witches vanish and Ross and Angus arrive to tell Macbeth his new title. He then realises that in order to become king, King Duncan must die. KD announces Malcolm will inherit the throne when he dies- this plants the first seed in Macbeth's mind about how to become King. LM reads a letter from Macbeth about his encounter with the witches but she fears he is too kind to get the throne; when Macbeth comes home they hatch a plan. KD later arrives at Macbeth's castle and that night Lady Macbeth continues to goad and persuade Macbeth into killing the King.
Act 2	The night of the murder, Banquo and Fleance unexpectedly meet Macbeth. They are surprised to see him and Banquo gives Macbeth a diamond from King Duncan for Lady Macbeth to thank her for her hospitality. Banquo tells Macbeth he dreamt of the 3 witches but Macbeth lies and says he hasn't even thought of them. Alone, Macbeth hallucinates and sees a vision of a bloody dagger. He hears a bell ring and goes off to kill KD. Lady Macbeth waits for Macbeth to return and reassures herself that she drugged the guard's wine so they will not wake up. Macbeth returns and is alarmed - he has heard a noise. Lady Macbeth realises that he has brought the daggers back and when Macbeth insists he can't go back to plant the knives on the guards, she goes instead. Whilst she is gone, Macbeth hears knocking and when she comes back, she scolds him for his cowardice and insists they go to bed. The porter opens the door to Macduff and Lennox who are to meet with King Duncan. Macbeth takes Macduff to the chambers and they discover King Duncan is dead. They scream murder, which wakes the rest of the household. Macbeth explains that he killed the guards in anger and when Macduff questions him Lady Macbeth faints as a distraction.
Act 3	Macbeth grows concerned about Banquo as the witches' prophecy said that Banquo's descendants will be Kings. Macbeth hires two murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance. Lady Macbeth is unaware of these plans. The murderers kill Banquo but Fleance escapes. At the celebratory banquet, Macbeth hallucinates and sees Banquo's ghost sending him into a frenzy of terror. Lady Macbeth tries to cover up his odd behaviour but the banquet comes to a premature end and guests begin to question Macbeth's sanity. Macbeth then decides he must revisit the witches to look into the future once more. Meanwhile, Macbeth's thanes begin to turn against him and Macduff meets Malcolm in England to form an army against Macbeth.
Act 4	The witches show Macbeth three apparitions. The first warns him against Macduff; the second tells him to fear no man born of woman and the third says he will fall only when Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane. Macbeth believes he is almost untouchable but when he asks the witches if Banquo's prophecy will come true they show him a procession of eight kings, all of whom look like Banquo. Meanwhile, Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty and they strategise against Macbeth. Back in Scotland, Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children murdered.
Act 5	Lady Macbeth is suffering from sleepwalking and a doctor comes to observe her symptoms. She unwittingly reveals her guilt as she says she can't wash her hands clean of bloodstains. Macbeth is too busy dealing with battle preparations to pay much heed to her dreams and expresses anger when the doctor says he can't cure her. As the English army approaches, Lady Macbeth commits suicide. When Macbeth hears of this, he says she should have died at a future date. Macbeth still believes, because of the witches, that he is impregnable to the army but Malcolm has instructed each soldier to cut a tree brand from Birnam wood and hold it up as disguise. Therefore, Macbeth's servant reports that Birnam wood is moving to the castle and Macbeth becomes worried but still engages the oncoming army. In the battle, Macbeth kills Young Siward and then battles Macduff where Macduff tells Macbeth he is not born of woman and kills Macbeth and decapitates him. Malcolm is then proclaimed the new king of Scotland.