


GCSE Macbeth Vocabulary Lists

Machiavellian	Emasculate	Amoral	Turmoil
Hubris	Didactic	Repentant	Morality
Usurper	Anagnorisis	Equivocator	Catharsis
Revolt	Parental	Iambic pentameter	Foil character
Hamartia	Motif	Comic relief	Tragic hero
Duplicitous	Regicide	Façade	Fate
Heinous	Pathos	Nihilism	Patriarchy
Malevolent	Resolute	Soliloquy	Monologue
Mercurial	Deference	Belittle	Paranoia

Macbeth: Dramatic Methods		and	Genre Terminology
Dramatic Irony	Soliloquy	Hamartia	Hubris
Foreshadow	Forebode	Tragic hero	Catharsis
Allusion	Aside	Anagnorisis	Epiphany
Soliloquy	Monologue	Pathos	Peripeteia
Juxtaposition	Paradox	Exposition	Inciting Force
Rhyming couplet	Iambic pentameter	Crisis	Tragic Force
Foil	Anti-hero	Moment of final suspense	Catastrophe
Protagonist	Antagonist	Restored Order	Resolution

GCSE - Knowledge Organiser – Macbeth (1606)

Social and Historical Context	Characters		Plot Summary	
<p>Macbeth. The plot is partly based on fact. Macbeth was a real 11th Century king who ruled Scotland from 1040-1057. Shakespeare’s version of the story originates from the Chronicles of Holinshed (a well known historian). The play was most likely written in 1606 – the year after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 – and reflects the insecurities of Jacobean politics.</p>	<p>Macbeth</p>	<p><i>The protagonist and tragic hero. Ambition is his tragic flaw that leads to his downfall. He transforms from loyal warrior to paranoid, tyrannical king. Ambitious, ruthless, valiant, tormented, deceitful.</i></p>	<p>Act 1: After a battle in Scotland, Macbeth and his friend Banquo meet three witches, who make three prophecies? - Macbeth will be a thane?, Macbeth will be king and Banquo’s sons will be kings. The witches’ first prophecy comes true and King Duncan makes Macbeth Thane of Cawdor. When King Duncan visits Macbeth’s castle, Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to murder King Duncan in his sleep to make the second prophecy come true.</p>	
	<p>Lady Macbeth</p>	<p><i>A strong, ambitious and manipulative woman, associates herself with evil spirits. Persuasive, ruthless, ambitious, deceitful, controlling.</i></p>		
	<p>The Weird Sisters</p>	<p><i>Supernatural and manipulative beings who seem able to predict the future. Give Macbeth the prophecies that drive the plot. Unearthly and omniscient.</i></p>		
<p>King James I of England (and VI of Scotland) came to the throne in 1603 following the death of Queen Elizabeth I. The play pays homage to the king’s Scottish lineage. The witches’ prophecy that Banquo will found a line of kings is a clear reference to James’ family’s claim to have descended from the historical Banquo. While King of Scotland, James VI became convinced about the reality of witchcraft, and its great danger to him, leading to trials that began in 1591.</p>	<p>Banquo</p>	<p><i>Macbeth’s close friend, prophesied to be father of kings. Macbeth sees him as a threat. Virtuous, insightful and loyal.</i></p>	<p>Act 2: With Lady Macbeth’s help, Macbeth frames King Duncan’s dead servants as the murderers. Duncan’s children, Malcolm and Donalbain, leave Scotland for their own safety.</p>	
	<p>Duncan</p>	<p><i>King of Scotland; a strong, honourable, respected leader.</i></p>	<p>Act 3: Now king, Macbeth worries about the witches’ third prophecy and sends murderers to kill Banquo and his son. At a banquet, Macbeth is haunted by visions of Banquo’s ghost in front of all his guests.</p>	
	<p>Macduff</p>	<p><i>A noble soldier loyal to Duncan and suspicious of Macbeth. Represents the good against Macbeth’s evil. Noble, wise, judicious. His wife represents feminine goodness and innocence in the play.</i></p>		
	<p>Malcolm</p>	<p><i>Duncan’s son and next in line to the throne. Dignified.</i></p>	<p>Act 4: Macbeth visits the witches and they tell him - the only person he needs to beware of is Macduff, no one a woman has given birth to can harm him and he won’t be defeated until Birnam Wood moves. He thinks he’s unbeatable. While Macduff is in England convincing Duncan’s son Malcolm to fight against Macbeth, Macbeth has Macduff’s family murdered.</p>	
<p>Themes</p>				
<p>The Great Chain of Being was a strict religious hierarchical structure of all matter and life which was believed to have been decreed by God and this dominated Jacobean beliefs. The chain starts from God and progresses downward to angels, saints, kings, princes, nobles, commoners and animals from the highest lion to the worm and then rocks and minerals. If this order was disturbed it was believed that the state would erupt into chaos.</p>	<div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Macbeth: THEMES</p>  </div>			<p>Act 5: Macduff and Malcolm arrive in Scotland with an army. On their way to attack Macbeth's castle they cut down branches from the trees in Birnam Wood to use as camouflage. When the wood moves, one of the witches' prophecies come true. Macduff reveals that he was born by a caesarean birth? and kills Macbeth, fulfilling the final prophecy.</p>
<p>The Divine Right of Kings says a monarch is not subject to earthly authority and that they have the right to rule directly from the will of God. It implies that only God can judge an unjust king and that any attempt to depose one runs against the will of God and is a sacrilegious act. The action of killing a king, regicide, was the ultimate sin.</p>				

GCSE - Knowledge Organiser – Macbeth (1606)

Themes

Ambition

The witches prophecies spur both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to act on their own to fulfil their deepest desires and ambitions. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth want to be great and powerful, and sacrifice their morals to achieve that goal.

Masculinity, femininity and identity

The idea of manhood is questioned throughout the play: does a true man take what he wants no matter what it is? Or does a real man have the strength to restrain his desires? Lady Macbeth challenges Macbeth's when he decides not to kill Duncan, Lady Macduff questions Macduff's decision to go to England and Macbeth uses it to incite Banquo's murderers. Lady Macbeth subverts the expectation of what it is to be a woman; she rejects her womanhood as she associates it with weakness and bargains with darkness for the power she craves.

Order and Disorder

The play subverts the natural order of the world and depicts an anarchy: Macbeth inverts the order of royal succession; his wife inverts the patriarchal hierarchy; the unnatural world disrupts the natural. The disruption underpins the conflict both external and internal.

Links to: The Great Chain of Being and the Divine Right of Kings.

Kingship and tyranny

Duncan is always referred to as a 'king' while Macbeth soon becomes known as the 'tyrant'. In Act 4, scene 3 Malcolm pretends that he would make an even worse king than Macbeth. He tells Macduff of his reproachable qualities—among them a thirst for personal power and a violent temperament. Malcolm says, 'The king-becoming graces / [are] justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness, / Bounty, perseverance, mercy, [and] lowliness" (4.3.92–93)- embodiment of order and justice, but showing comfort and affection. Under him, subjects are rewarded according to their merits, as when Duncan makes Macbeth Thane of Cawdor after Macbeth's victory over the invaders. The king must be loyal to Scotland above his own interests. Macbeth, by contrast, brings only chaos to Scotland—symbolized in the bad weather and bizarre supernatural events—and offers no real justice, murdering those he sees as a threat. As the embodiment of tyranny, he must be overcome by Malcolm so that Scotland can have a true king once more.

Appearance and reality

Appearances are deceptive in the play. Shakespeare repeats the words 'seem', 'false', 'face' and 'hide' to highlight the deception of appearance. Duncan trusts the wrong men with disastrous consequences, Macbeth trusts the witches and Lady Macbeth emphasises the need for 'false face.' This fine line between appearance and reality represents the line between good and evil.

Guilt

Macbeth's guilt about murdering his king, Duncan, and ordering the murder of his friend, Banquo, causes him to have guilty hallucinations. Lady Macbeth also hallucinates and eventually goes insane from guilt over her role in Duncan's death. The fact that both characters suffer torment as a result of their actions suggests neither Macbeth nor his wife is entirely cold-blooded. Although they commit terrible crimes, they know, on some level, that what they've done is wrong. Their guilt prevents them from fully enjoying the power they craved. Lady Macbeth says "What's done/ cannot be undone" in Act Five scene one, but her guilt continues to torment her. While Macbeth's guilt causes him to commit further murders in an attempt to cover up his initial crimes, Lady Macbeth's guilt drives her to insanity, and, finally, suicide.

Children

The loss of children is a complex and intriguing theme in the play. For both Macbeth and Banquo, children represent the idea of the continuation of a family line. Macbeth has Banquo murdered in hopes of thwarting the Witches' prophecy that Banquo will sire a long line of kings. However, Fleance is able to escape being killed, leaving open the possibility he will one day take over the throne. Macbeth and his wife have no heirs, although Lady Macbeth references having been a mother once, saying, "I have given suck, and know / How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me. " This line suggests the Macbeths may have lost a child. Similarly, Macduff mourns the children Macbeth ordered killed and uses their memory to spur him on to victory against their killer; and Siward laments the loss of his son in the play's closing battle, but is proud to have fathered such a brave soldier who fought in a noble cause.

GCSE - Knowledge Organiser – Macbeth and Tragedy

Definition of Shakespearean Tragedy: A *Shakespearean tragedy* is a play in which a character (usually a good and noble person of high rank) is brought to a disastrous end in his or her confrontation with a superior force (fortune, the gods, social forces, universal values), but also comes to understand the meaning of his or her deeds and to accept an appropriate punishment.

Typical genre features:	Archetypal characters:	Typical structure:
Most of the tragedies written by Shakespeare are revenge and ambition tragedies. Othello, Hamlet, King Lear and Macbeth are dark tragedies showing revenge and ambition.	Tragic heroes tend to respond with strong, overpowering emotions--pride, lust, grief, rage. This often results in risky attitudes and reactions.	1. Exposition – Usually takes place in the first and second act. The audience learns about the general setting, the characters and their traits, problems of the play, major conflicts and the tragic hero’s flaw.
Romeo and Juliet is a romantic tragedy , where there is a death of two lovers.	The Shakespearean tragedies often focus on the fall of a nobleman. By presenting the audience with a man with excessive wealth or power, his eventual downfall is all the more tragic.	2. Rising action – Extends up to the third and fourth act. The plot gathers momentum and action increases. The plot reaches a crisis and where the hero makes a decision that changes the course of the play, sealing the hero’s fate
All Shakespearean tragedies have a tragic hero, who is a main character cursed by fate and possessing a tragic flaw.	Shakespeare’s tragic heroes are all fundamentally flawed. It is this weakness that ultimately leads to their downfall.	3. Falling action – Begins in the fourth act. The opposite force becomes active and begins to resist. They start plotting the removal of the hero. The power of the tragic hero starts declining.
Shakespearean tragedies play out the struggle between good and evil.	Shakespeare’s tragic heroes often fall victim to external pressures. Fate, evil spirits and manipulative characters all play a hand in the hero’s downfall.	4. Resolution – The last and final act. The opposite forces reach full power and defeat the tragic hero. This is the time when the hero recognises his faults, yet cannot do anything about it.

Social and Historical Context	The elements of a Shakespearean Tragedy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The word tragedy was derived from the Greek word <i>tragoidia</i>, meaning ‘the song of the goat,’ because in ancient Greece the theatre performers used to wear goatskin costumes. Shakespearean tragedies are highly influenced by Greek drama and Aristotle’s notion of Tragedy. It was Aristotle who had first described the genre in his ‘Poetics.’ 	<p>Tragic waste: The hero usually dies along with this opponent. When good is lost along with evil, the unnecessary loss is known as tragic waste.</p> <p>Conflict: This may be external, such as a problem or a person, or internal, such as a struggle the hero engages in with his or her fatal flaw.</p> <p>Catharsis: This refers to the cleansing of the audience’s emotions; you may feel pity, fear for characters and empathise with their hardships.</p> <p>Supernatural elements: They create an atmosphere of wonder and fear and are used to advance the story.</p> <p>Absence of poetic justice: In Shakespeare’s tragedies, there is a lack of poetic justice as it is not realistic that good deeds are always rewarded and evil is punished. There is partial justice in his tragedies.</p> <p>Comic relief: Shakespeare wanted to relieve the tension for the audience and lighten up the mood in particular scenes. An audience would normally find these types of scenes after a tragic event.</p>

Notable Shakespearean tragedies (in chronological order)

Titus Andronicus 1591	Romeo and Juliet 1595	Hamlet 1601	Toilus and Cressida 1602	Othello 1604	King Lear 1605	Antony and Cleopatra 1606	Macbeth 1606	Timon of Athens 1606	Coriolanus 1608	Cymbeline 1611
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Macbeth Test 1

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What was the story of 'Macbeth' based upon?
2. What was the name of Banquo's son?
3. How many times does the ghost of Banquo appear to Macbeth?
4. Give two adjectives that could describe the weird sisters.
5. How does Lady Macbeth learn about the weird sisters' prophecies?
6. Who was King of England when Macbeth was written?
7. Give two examples of when trust is misplaced in the play.
8. What is Macbeth's tragic flaw?
9. What can Macbeth not say after murdering Duncan?
10. Who escapes from their murderers?

Macbeth Test 2

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What is the weather at the start of the play?
2. What was the Divine right of kings?
3. Who were Duncan's sons?
4. What did Lady Macbeth do to complete her murder plan?
5. What adjective would you use to describe Macbeth as King?
6. What is an anarchy?
7. Is 'Macbeth' a romance, comedy, tragedy or history?
8. How does Lady Macbeth try to cover up for Macbeth's losing control at the sight of Banquo's ghost?
9. What does the line between appearance and reality represent?
10. Why did Macduff go to England?

Macbeth Test 3

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. Why did Malcolm and Donalbain leave Macbeth's castle?
2. Which two countries were at war at the start of the play?
3. Who was the traitor to Duncan in the war?
4. How does Lady Macbeth manipulate Macbeth into committing murder?
5. What riddle do the weird sisters chant at the end of the first scene?
6. What does Macbeth recognise is his only reason for murdering King Duncan?
7. What, at the time this was written, was considered to be the ultimate sin?
8. Why did Macduff not attend the banquet at Macbeth's castle?
9. Name three attributes that Malcolm says a king should have.
10. What action does Lady Macbeth repeat whilst sleepwalking?

Macbeth Test 4

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. How does Lady Macbeth subvert the expectations of womanhood?
2. Why does Macbeth see Banquo as a threat?
3. Name three reasons that Macbeth gives as reasons why he should not kill King Duncan.
4. How does Shakespeare show he recognises the line of kings that James 1 descends from?
5. Why did Macbeth not fear Macduff?
6. When Macduff hears his family have been slaughtered he says 'But I must also feel it as a man.' How does this contrast with Macbeth?
7. Why does Malcolm suggest to Macduff that he will be a bad king?
8. What must a king put before his own interests?
9. Which three adjectives would best describe Lady Macbeth at the start of the play?
10. Which two adjectives would best describe Lady Macbeth at the end of the play?

Macbeth Test 5

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What is hamartia?
2. What are the three apparitions that the weird sisters show to Macbeth?
3. What happens that makes Macbeth realise he's been tricked by the weird sisters?
4. How must a Shakespearean tragedy end?
5. Who is crowned King of Scotland after Macbeth?
6. Who is immediately suspected of killing Duncan?
7. Why is Lady Macduff angry with her husband?
8. How does Lady Macduff contrast with Lady Macbeth?
9. Give two adjectives that could describe the weird sisters.

Macbeth Test 6

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. At which castle does Macduff fight Macbeth?
2. What did the weird sisters prophecy for Banquo?
3. What title does King Duncan reward Macbeth with?
4. When Macbeth is hallucinating, what does he see?
5. Why is Lady Macbeth's constant rubbing her hands ironic?
6. What did James 1 believe was a danger to him?
7. How does Macbeth persuade the murderers to kill Banquo?
8. What did the Jacobean believe would result from Macbeth killing a king?
9. Why did they believe this would happen?
10. Who did the weird sisters tell Macbeth to beware of?

Shakespearean Tragedy Test 1

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. Shakespearean tragedies focus on the fall of who?
2. Where in a play is the 'resolution'?
3. What is the definition of tragic waste?
4. What does the Greek word 'tragoidia' mean?
5. What is the name of the text where Aristotle first described the genre of tragedy?
6. What three things play a hand in a hero's downfall?

Shakespearean Tragedy Test 2

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What are examples of an external conflict?
2. When does 'falling action' begin?
3. Shakespearean tragedies play out a struggle between what two things?
4. What are examples of Shakespeare's dark tragedies?
5. What is the definition of 'catharsis'?
6. In what year was 'Othello' written?
7. What did performers in Ancient Greece wear?

Shakespearean Tragedy Test 3

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What does a plot reach in 'rising action'?
2. What leads to the downfall of a tragic hero?
3. What type of character do all Shakespearean tragedies contain?
4. Give two examples of a superior force.
5. What does the term 'comic relief' mean?
6. In what acts does the 'exposition' take place?

Shakespearean Tragedy Test 4

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What seals the hero's fate in 'rising action'?
2. What is an example of internal conflict?
3. What is the definition of tragic waste?
4. In what year did Shakespeare write 'King Lear'?
5. What happens in the 'rising action' section of a Shakespearean tragedy?
6. Name one overpowering emotion to which tragic heroes tend to respond.
7. What does a tragic hero come to understand at the end of a play?

Shakespearean Tragedy Test 5

You must write all your answer in full sentences in your books.

1. What is there an absence of in a Shakespearean tragedy?
2. What were Shakespearean tragedies highly influenced by?
3. What is the first part of the typical structure called in a Shakespearean tragedy?
4. What element of a Shakespearean tragedy relieves the mood after a tragic scene?
5. When did Shakespeare write 'Macbeth'?
6. What term is used when referring to the 'cleansing of emotions'?
7. Name two characteristics that a tragic hero normally portrays.