

**THE KIBWORTH SCHOOL – English Literature GCSE**  
**Macbeth**



| A: Key characters |                     |  |
|-------------------|---------------------|--|
| 1                 | <b>Macbeth</b>      | Eponymous protagonist, ambitious and ruthless                    |
| 2                 | <b>Lady Macbeth</b> | Defies expectations strong and ambitious but goes mad            |
| 3                 | <b>Witches</b>      | Supernatural beings prophesy could represent conscience          |
| 4                 | <b>Banquo</b>       | M's friend, sons prophesied to rule, killed and returns as ghost |
| 5                 | <b>Duncan</b>       | Good king, praises M at start, murdered in Act 2                 |
| 6                 | <b>Macduff</b>      | Wife and children killed; kill M; born by caesarean              |
| 7                 | <b>Malcolm</b>      | Heir to throne, good man, finally crowned                        |
| 8                 | <b>Fleance</b>      | Banquo's son represent innocence and justice                     |

**B: Plot summary**

**Act 1** Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches and are given a prophecy that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor and become king and Banquo will have Kings. Cawdor is executed and Macbeth see the prophecy could come true. Lady Macbeth reads Macbeth's letter, she taunts Macbeth and goads him into action, Duncan arrives.

**Act 2** Despite his doubt, but with the encouragement of his wife, Macbeth kills Duncan. Malcolm and Donaldbain flee. Macbeth is crowned King.

**Act 3** Banquo suspects Macbeth. Macbeth arranges Banquo's murder but Fleance escapes. MACBETH haunted by Banquo's ghost at a banquet.

**Act 4** Witches show Macbeth the future kings but they are sons of Banquo. He hears three warnings, so he has Macduff's family murdered, Malcolm says that he is dishonest to test Macduff's loyalty, but he is seen as the true successor to Duncan.

**Act 5** Lady MACBETH sleepwalks and is overwhelmed by guilt and dies. Macduff's army move Burnhamwood. Macduff is not born of woman and kills Macbeth. Malcolm is restored as King

**Key Ideas**

- C:** **Appearance/reality** Witches: "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (1.1)  
**Macbeth plots his crime** Macbeth: "Stars, hide your fires/Let not light see my black and deep desires" (1.4)  
**Unnatural** Lady M: "Come, you spirits... Unsex me here" (1.5)  
**Hallucination** Macbeth: "Is this a dagger I see before me?" (2.1)  
**Lady M is braver** Lady M: "My hands are of your colour but I shame to wear a heart so white"(2.2)  
**Paranoid** Macbeth: "To be thus is nothing but to be safely thus" (3.1)  
**Guilt** Macbeth: "Full of scorpions is my mind dear wife" (3.2)  
**Macbeth hides information** Macbeth: "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck "(3.2)  
**Cyclical** Macbeth:"Blood will have blood "(3.4)  
**Tragic hero** Malcolm: "This tyrant whose sole name blisters our tongue was once thought honest." (4.3)  
**Guilt/anxiety** Lady M: "All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." (5.1)  
**Existential crisis** Macbeth: "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player" (5.5)

**D:**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Soliloquy</b> One character speaking to audience; M uses to make audience complicit | <b>Hamartia</b> Tragic flaw; M's could be easily influenced/ambition  |
| <b>Motif:</b> a recurring idea in the play   | <b>Peripeteia</b> Sudden reversal of fortune  |
| <b>Iambic Pentameter</b> five feet of unstressed/stressed syllables                    | <b>Hubris</b> excessive pride   |
| <b>Dramatic irony</b> Audience knows more than characters; audience knows D will die   | <b>Catharsis</b> Purgation of pity and fear; happens at the end   |
| <b>Rhyme</b> Used by the witches to create chant-like, supernatural atmosphere         | <b>Anagnorisis</b> a moment in the plot wherein the main character either recognizes or identifies his/her true nature, recognizes the other character's true identity, discovers the true nature of his situation, or that of the others – leading to the resolution of the story. |

| BOX E:  | THEMES  |
|---|---|
| <b>The natural order:</b> Transgression against natural order/divine right of kings/sexuality               | <b>Fear</b> Constant uncertainty and risk                         |
| <b>Madness:</b> Lady M and M driven to madness  | <b>Inevitability/Fate/Free Will</b> Doomed from the start; tragic |
| <b>Supernatural:</b> Witches; ghost; hallucinations   | <b>Loyalty and betrayal</b>                                       |
| <b>Violence and blood :</b> Starts with battle; Cawdor's execution; King's & Banquo's murders; final battle | <b>Reality and appearance</b>                                     |
| <b>Desire/Ambition</b> Unnatural desires  | <b>Goodness/honesty &amp; evil/dishonesty</b>                     |
| <b>Setting</b> Darkness; castle; set in the past, gothic  | <b>Bravery</b>  |
| <b>Exploitation/Power</b> Witches exploit Macbeth and trick him, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth                      | <b>Kingship</b> what makes a 'good' king?                         |



## Some key quotes for each Act (but see overleaf as well)

| Act 1              |                                   |  |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1:2:16             | Captain about M                   | For brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name.   |
| 1:2:22             | Captain about M                   | ...He unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps/and fix'd his head upon our battlements.   |
| 1:2:24             | Duncan about M                    | O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman   |
| 1:3:105<br>1:3:123 | Banquo about witches              | What, can the devil speak true?<br>...Instruments of darkness  |
| 1:3:142            | M to himself about killing Duncan | If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me without my stir.  |
| 1:5:15             | LM about M killing Duncan         | ...Yet I do fear thy nature./It is too full of the milk of human kindness/ To catch the nearest way. Thou would'st be great,/ Art not without ambition, but without/ The illness should attend it. |
| 1:5:39             | LM to spirits/herself             | ... Unsex me here/ And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull/ Of direct cruelty.   |
| 1:5:64             | LM to M                           | Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't.   |
| 1:7:25             | M to himself                      | ...I have no spur/ To prick the sides of my intent, but only/ Vaulting ambition...   |
| 1:7:46             | M to LM                           | I dare do all that may become a man; /Who dares do more is none.   |
| 1:7:82             | M to LM                           | False face must hide what the false heart doth know.   |

| Act 2   |                      |   |
|---------|----------------------|---|
| 2:2:36  | LM to M              | These deeds must not be thought/ After these ways; so it will make us mad.  |
| 2:2:39  | M to LM              | Macbeth does murder sleep   |
| 2:2:63  | M to himself         | Will all great Neptune's ocean was this blood/ Clean from my hand? No: this my hand will rather/ The multitudinous seas incarnadine,/ Making the green one red. |
| 2:2:70  | LM to M              | A little water clears us of this deed./ How easy is it then!  |
| 2:3:132 | Malcom to Donaldbain | To show an unfelt sorrow is an office/ Which the false man does easy.   |

| Act 3   |                |   |
|---------|----------------|---|
| 3:1:3   | Banquo about M | I fear thou played'st most foully for't   |
| 3:2:54  | M to LM        | Thou marvell'st at my words, but hold thee still/ Things bad begun, make strong themselves by ill.          |
| 3:4:58  | LM to M        | Are you a man?  |
| 3:4:134 | M to LM        | ... I am in blood/ Stepp'd in so far that should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as to go o'er. |

| Act 4     |                       |  |
|-----------|-----------------------|--|
| 4:1:10... | Witches to each other | Double, double toil and trouble;/ Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.  |
| 4:1:70    | Witches to M          | Beware Macduff... None of woman born shall harm Macbeth...Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him. |
| 4:3:218   | Macduff to Malcolm    | He has no children. All my pretty ones?/ Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?<br>...I must feel it as a man.   |

| Act 5  |                       |   |
|--------|-----------------------|---|
| 5:1:31 | LM to herself         | Out, damned spot! Out, I say!... Will these hands ne'er be clean?   |
| 5:1:63 | Doctor to Gentlewoman | ...Unnatural deeds/ Do breed unnatural troubles...  |
| 5:2:19 | Angus (army)          | Those he commands, move only in command,/ Nothing in love.  |
| 5:3:22 | M to himself          | I have liv'd long enough. My way of life/ Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,/ And that which should accompany old age,/ As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,/ I must not look to have; but in their stead,/ Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour...   |
| 5:3:32 | M to Seyton           | I'll fight till from my bones my flesh be hack'd  |
| 5:5:18 | M to Seyton           | Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow/ 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/ The 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. |