

## Themes

What are the main themes?

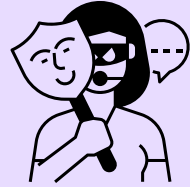
Morality



Kingship



Deception



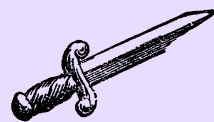
Power



Gender



Violence



## Characters in *Macbeth*

Who are the main characters in 'Macbeth'?

**Macbeth**

Valiant  
Corrupt  
Ambitious  
Flawed  
Indecisive  
Tyrannical  
Deceptive

**Lady Macbeth**

Manipulative  
Dominant  
Emasculating  
Calculating  
Machiavellian  
Controlling

**Duncan**

Honourable  
Benevolent  
Weak  
Naive  
Ignorant  
Respected

**Banquo**

Cautious  
Virtuous  
Sceptical  
Moral  
Diplomatic  
Paternal  
Honourable

**Macduff**

Reckless  
Passionate  
Virtuous  
Neglectful  
Honest  
Emotive

**Witches**

Supernatural  
Cunning  
Prophetic  
Sinister  
Calculating  
Manipulative

**Malcolm**

Virtuous  
Moral  
Cautious  
Noble  
Righteous  
Sincere

## Techniques

What techniques does Shakespeare use?

**Motifs and Symbols**

Motifs (reoccurring images) such as light and dark, blood and symbols such as the serpent are used to reinforce the play's themes

**Soliloquies**

Many of the characters give a soliloquy which allows us to hear their deep and personal thoughts - particularly secretive thoughts about regicide

**Dramatic Irony**

The audience are aware of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's guilt which helps us understand their actions and to see how they continue to deceive others.

**Forshadowing**

Shakespeare uses the witches cryptic language and prophecies to hint at the turmoil Macbeth will face and his eventual demise

## Author's Intent

Why did Shakespeare write the play?

Supernatural elements of the play seek to please King James I's interest in witchcraft

The play acts as a warning to those who might consider usurping James I

The inclusion of 'Banquo' a man who in real life is believed to be a distant relative of James I helps to cement James I's legitimacy

The play promotes the message that a greed for power will not go unpunished

## Plot Summary

What happens in 'Macbeth'?



**ACT 1**

After fighting for Duncan in battle, Macbeth and Banquo are given prophecies about their futures which cause Macbeth to consider regicide. He is encouraged by his wife who manipulates him, questioning his masculinity as she does so.

**ACT 2**

Macbeth murders Duncan but is filled with regret. Lady Macbeth chastises him for this and plants the dagger on Duncan's guards, framing them for the King's death. Malcolm and Donaldbain flee Scotland believing they will be the next targets.

**ACT 3**

Macbeth is king and Banquo begins to suspect him of murder. Macbeth becomes suspicious of him in return due to the Witches' prophecies and arranges Banquo and Fleance's murders. Macbeth begins to hallucinate seeing Banquo's ghost.

**ACT 4**

Macbeth is obsessed with maintaining his power and asks the witches for more prophecies. They tell him to be fearful of Macduff but reassure him that he is in no danger. Macbeth orders the death of Macduff's family and Macduff begs Malcolm to defeat Macbeth.

**ACT 5**

Lady Macbeth is driven mad by her guilt. The Scottish lords side with Macduff and wage war upon Macbeth's castle. Macduff is revealed to have been born from a caesarian and therefore exempt from the witches' prophecy meaning he can kill Macbeth. Malcolm is crowned king.

## Context

What was going on in society at the time?

James I wrote a book on witchcraft titled 'demonologie'. He also introduced laws which made witchcraft a capital offence.

Tudor women were expected to be subservient to men and fulfil the role of housewife with no complaint. It was in fact legal for men to punish their wives if they were not doing a sufficient job!

State religion had changed repeatedly between the Catholic and Protestant faith under the Tudor Family's rule. Many saw James I's Protestant views as damning, despite him being fairer to Catholics than Elizabeth I

On November 5th 1605 an assassination attempt on James I's life took place. This is now commonly known as the 'Gunpowder plot'.