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| **Plot summary**1.1 The three witches gather to in a thunder storm to meet Macbeth1.2 Duncan hears reports of the battle in which Macbeth proves himself a hero and also of the treachery of the Thane of Cawdor.1.3 Macbeth & Banquo meet the witches and hear the predictions that he will be Thane of Cawdor and the next king. Ross arrives to confirm that Macbeth is the new Thane of Cawdor.1.4 Duncan decides to make his son Malcolm the heir to his throne and tells Macbeth that he will visit his castle.1.5 Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband about the events so far, invokes evil and determines to murder Duncan.1.6 Duncan arrives at Macbeth’s castle and is welcomed by Lady Macbeth.1.7 Macbeth decides he cannot go through with the murder; Lady Macbeth persuades him to change his mind.2.1 Banquo feels uneasy about what might happen in the night. Macbeth heads to Duncan’s room to kill him and sees a ghostly dagger floating in the air before him.2.2 Macbeth forgets to leave the bloody daggers in Duncan’s room after the murder and Lady Macbeth takes charge and puts them back.2.3 Duncan’s body is discovered by Macduff; Macbeth conveniently kills the servants in pretend rage; Duncan’s sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, flee the castle.2.4 Macduff reports that suspicion for the murder has fallen on the king’s sons; Macbeth has travelled to Scone to be crowned.3.1 Macbeth is now king, but Banquo is suspicious about how the witches’ predications have come true. Macbeth arranges his murder.3.2 Lady Macbeth tries to get her husband to talk to her about his plans but he refuses. | 3.3 Banquo is murdered but his son, Fleance, escapes.3.4 At a feast that night, Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo. Lady Macbeth tries to calm him down but when this fails cancels the feast and sends the courtiers away.3.5 The witches discuss events so far; Hecate, the ruler of the witches, predicts his downfall.3.6 Suspicion of Macbeth is growing; Macduff has left for England to create support against him.4.1 The witches tell Macbeth he cannot be harmed by anyone “born of a woman” and that he will be safe until Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane. Macbeth decides to murder Macduff’s family.4.2 Macbeth’s murderers kill Lady Macduff and her children.4.3 Malcolm thinks he is not virtuous enough to be king; he changes his mind. Macduff hears of his family’s murder and, with Malcolm, leads an army to attack Macbeth.5.1Lady Macbeth is sleep walking and trying to wash an imaginary blood spot from her hands.5.2 Malcolm’s army is at Birnam Wood and hear reports that Macbeth’s supporters are deserting him.5.3 Macbeth is besieged but puts his trust in the witches’ prophesy.5.4 Malcolm orders his army to cut down branches from Birnam Wood to disguise the number of soldiers.5.5 Macbeth is told of his wife’s death and about the news that Birnam Wood seems to be approaching. He resolves to die fighting.5.6 The combined forces advance on Macbeth5.7 Macbeth kills young Siward5.8 Macbeth is killed by Macduff (who reveals he was delivered by caesarean and so not properly ‘born’).5.9 Malcolm becomes the new king of Scotland and order is restored. |

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| **Key Characters** | **Key Themes** | **Key vocabulary (genre specific and text specific)** | **Context** |
| **Macbeth** Thane of Glamis**Lady Macbeth** his wife**Banquo** Macbeth’s comrade**Fleance** Banquo’s son**Duncan** King of Scotland**Malcolm** Duncan’s eldest son**Macduff** Thane of Fife**Lady Macduff** his wifeMinor Characters**Donalbain** Duncan’s younger son**Ross, Lennox, Angus** Scottish thanes**The witches** – supernatural beings who predict events in the play.**Hecate** ruler of the witches | **Ambition:** seen as a purely negative quality; it is Macbeth’s fatal flaw**Guilt** - the play shows the terrible consequences of murdering a king. **Kingship vs tyranny** – Duncan and Macbeth embody the qualities of a good king and a tyrant respectively.**Order vs chaos** Natural order is disrupted then re-established.**Fate:** Macbeth’s fate is known in advance by the witches, and used to trick him**Masculinity/femininity** Lady Macbeth asks to lose her feminine characteristics, and displays unusual amounts of power and strength.**Appearance and Reality:** Surface appearance is shown to be untrustworthy in many ways. Disguise, falseness and lies permeate the play. Things are not what they seem.**Violence:** Violence runs throughout the play, starting with a war; it has both evil and good outcomes**The Supernatural:** belief in witchcraft was widespread and Shakespeare uses prophesy, hallucinations, ghosts and magic to give the play a menacing, unnatural feel. | Metaphor – to describe something in terms of something elsePersonification – metaphor which describes something in terms of a type of personSimile – to compare something to something elseOxymoron –a contradiction Pathetic fallacy –events echoed by weatherAlliteration – repetition of consonants Blank verse – non rhyming lines written iniambic pentameter Iamb – an unstressed followed by an stressed syllableTrochee – a stressed followed by an unstressed syllableSoliloquy – where a character on stage alone speaks their thoughts aloud to the audienceDramatic irony – when the audience knows more than a character or characters doHubris – excessive pride or self-confidenceHamartia – the fatal flaw that leads to a tragic hero’s downfall | * *Macbeth* was written in 1606. James I (VI of Scotland) had succeeded to the English throne in 1603. James I was obsessed with witches and witchcraft.
* Only a century earlier, England had suffered with the **Wars of the Roses**. Civil disorder was now seen as the ultimate disaster, and also as an ungodly state.
* The play pays homage to the king’s Scottish lineage. Additionally, the witches’ prophecy that Banquo will found a line of kings is a clear nod to James’s family’s claim to have descended from the historical Banquo.
* The theme of bad versus good kingship, embodied by Macbeth and Duncan, respectively, would have resonated at the royal court, where James was busy developing his English version of the theory of the **divine right of kings**.
* The play was first performed not long after the **Gunpowder Plot**. Shakespeare shows the murderers of a king tormented by their own guilt and driven to their doom.
* It was believed that kings were appointed by ‘divine right’ and were anointed by God. To kill a king was considered the worst sin and a terrible crime.
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| **Key Quotations**  |
| The witches: Fair is foul, and foul is fair, Hover through the fog and filthy air. (1.1)The witches: When the battle's lost and won. (1.1)Captain: For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name— Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel, Which smoked with bloody execution, Like valour’s minion carved out his passage (1.2)Captain: As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion. (1.2)Macbeth: So foul and fair a day I have not seen (1.3)Banquo: And oftentimes, to win us to our harm, the instruments of darkness tell us truths (1.3)Macbeth: If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me. (1.3)Macbeth: Stars hide your fires let not light see my black and deep desires. (1.4)Lady Macbeth: Yet do I fear thy nature; It is too full o' the milk of human kindness. (1.5)Lady Macbeth: Come, you spirits Tat tend on mortal thoughts, un-sex me here And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull Of direst cruelty (1.5)Lady Macbeth: Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't. (1.5)Duncan: This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself Unto our gentle senses. (1.6)Macbeth: If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well It were done quickly. (1.7)Macbeth: I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only Vaulting ambition which o’erleaps itself And falls on th’other. (1.7)Macbeth: I dare do all that may become a man; Who dares do more is none. (1.7)Lady Macbeth: Screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we’ll not fail. (1.7)Macbeth: False face must hide what the false heart doth know. (1.7)Macbeth: Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand? (2.1)Macbeth: Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red. (2.2)Lady Macbeth: A little water clears us of this deed: (2.2)Donalbain: Where we are there's daggers in men's smiles. (2.3)Banquo: Thou hast it now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all., as the weird sisters promis’d, and I fear Thou hast play’d most foully for’t (3.1)Macbeth: Only for them, and mine eternal jewel Given to the common enemy of man, To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings! (3.1)Lady Macbeth: What’s done is done. Macbeth: We have scorch’d the snake, not kill’d it. (3.2)Macbeth: O full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife! (3.2)Macbeth: Duncan is in his grave; After life's fitful fever he sleeps well (3.3)Macbeth: I am cabin’d, cribb’d, confin’d, bound in saucy doubts and fears. (3.4)Macbeth: Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me! (3.4)Macbeth: For mine own good, All causes shall give way (Act III, Scene iv)Macbeth: We are yet but young in deed(3.4)Lennox: This our suffering country (3.6)Macbeth: Sweet bodements, good. (4.1)Lady Macbeth: Out, damned spot! out, I say! (5.1).Lady Macbeth: Here’s the smell of blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. (5.1)Macbeth: I have lived long enough. (5.3)Macbeth: She should have died hereafter. Life's.. a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing. (5.5)Macduff: Macduff was from his mother’s womb untimely ripp’d. (5.8)Malcolm: Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen (5.9) |