



# MACBETH THE WITCHES

The witches are a really important part of the play. Not only do they play a big role in action by tempting Macbeth, but they are really important in terms of context. In this exam, you get marks for demonstrating your understanding of context (and you can't access any of the higher range of marks if you forget to include any). Understanding and feeling confident in this key topic and knowing how to include it in your essays will give your grades a real boost.

*Before we get started - where's your confidence at with this topic?*

*Where would you put yourself on the line?*

*just beginning*

*really confident!*

*Step 1. Brainstorm. How much do you already know?*

*The witches play a really important role in the play, especially at the beginning. Fill this box with as much information as you can. Who did they meet? Where? Why? What did they say? What happened next?*

*Bonus points if you can remember any quotes!*

# THE WITCHES



*Step 2. Make some notes!*

*General Background*

# THE WITCHES



Step 2. Make some notes!

*The First Scene*

*Quotes - what do they mean and what can you say about them?*

*'When the hurly-burly's done, when the battle's lost and won'*

*'there to meet with Macbeth'*

*'fair is foul and foul is fair'*

# THE WITCHES



Step 2. Make some notes!

Act one, scene three - 'where have you been?' 'killing swine'  
what is the purpose of this first section of the scene?

Quotes - what do they mean and what can you say about them?

'killing swine'

'give me, quoth I'

'here I have a pilot's thumb, wrecked as homewards he did come'

# THE WITCHES



Step 2. Make some notes!

*Act one, scene three - Macbeth meets the witches*

*Quotes - what do they mean and what can you say about them?*

*'so fair and foul a day I have not seen'*

*'all hail Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter'*

*'stay you imperfect speakers'*

*'what, can the devil speak true' 'instruments of darkness'*

# THE WITCHES



## Review: A few key facts

Being able to reference these details in essays is really good!

he was crowned in...

Macbeth was written...

## Last step

Choose five bits of information you want to remember from today's session



How do you feel after today's session

just beginning

really confident!

Answers: King James I, 1603, 1606, The Daemonologie, his patron

# THE WITCHES



*What steps could you take next?*

*Which of these have you tried?*

- *Visit websites (sparknotes, cliffsnotes, BBC bitesized)*
- *Watch videos on YouTube*
- *Buy a revision guide*
- *Read/Re-read the text*

*Now - think - how long did today's activity take?*

*What might happen if you worked with me a bit more and you didn't have to do it alone?*

- *More knowledge*
- *More confidence*
- *Understand how to use knowledge*
- *Exam skills*

*If you're serious about wanting to improve your grades and are interested to know I can help, please contact me to book a free call.*

[robyn@straightforwardlyenglish.com](mailto:robyn@straightforwardlyenglish.com)

*Now, turn over and find my witches quote bank.*

# THE WITCHES



## Some Key Quotes

In their own words.

*'There to meet with Macbeth'*

This is probably the most important Witches quote. We never know why they target Macbeth, but it is clearly stated in the first scene that they are planning to meet him after the battle.

*'Foul is fair and foul is fair'*

Not only do the witches see everything as inverse to normal, but this quote tells us they corrupt - they take what is fair and make it foul - and they will do so to Macbeth.

*'All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!'*

Of the three prophecies - the first two are statements of fact, this is the only one that predicts the future.

*'By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes.'*

By the time Macbeth comes to find them in the 4th act his has been altered hugely. He is recognised as wicked by the witches - evil recognises evil!

What do others say?

*'So foul and fair a day I have not seen'*

Macbeth's first line - its telling he echoes the words of the witches. You can interpret it in a number of ways, but it certainly foreshadows the effect they will have on him.

*The 'weird sisters'*

Macbeth never calls them witches - they are the 'weird sisters'. This comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'wyrd' meaning 'controlling human destiny'.

*'instruments of darkness' 'what, can the devil speak true?'*

Despite Banquo's enthusiasm to talk to them in the first act, it is tempered by his comments to Macbeth after his prophecies. He clearly knows they are evil and tries to warn Macbeth.