

MASTERING MACBETH



How to take a step forward.

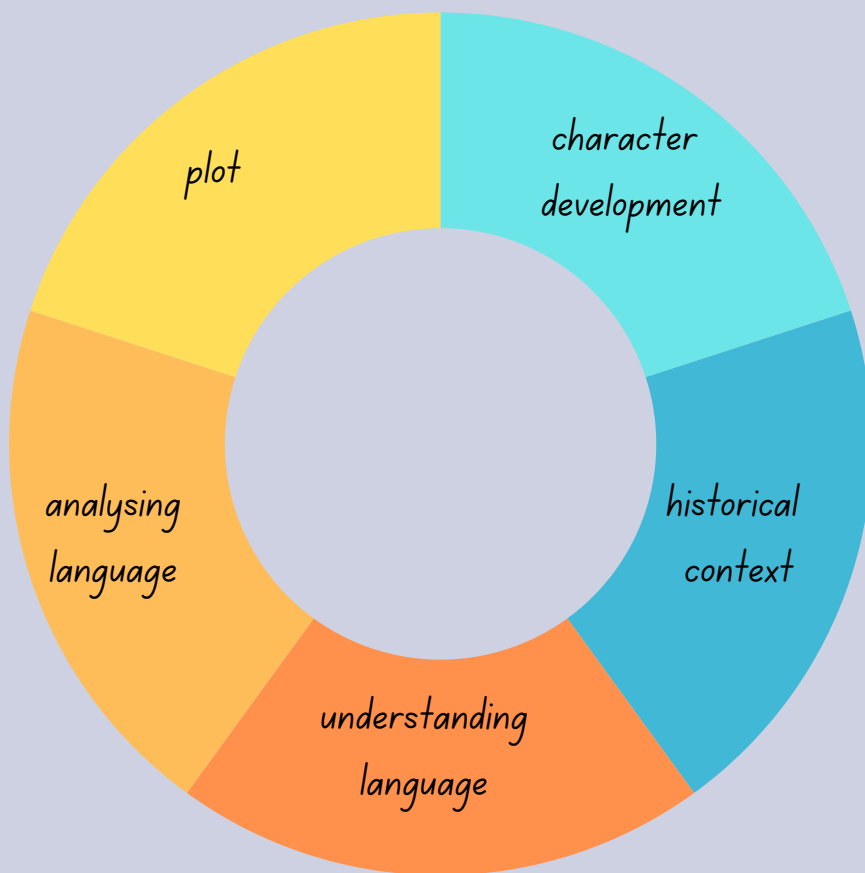
Macbeth is a challenging text and lots of students struggle with it. It can feel like a mission to understand the play, let alone be confident analysing the language as well as remembering to talk about the context. It might seem like no matter how hard you try you can't quite make the step to the next level and you're starting to feel discouraged.

It's a problem you can't afford to ignore - getting a good mark in this section of the paper will make a huge difference to your GCSE grade. Let me show you it isn't a mountain you can't climb, you just need a path to follow.

Take a moment to review



It can help to break the problem down. There are a number of skills you need, but you'll be surprised by how quickly you can make a difference if you tackle one bit at a time. Honestly, a big part of the Macbeth problem is confidence - once you make the decision to tackle the problem head on rather than burying your head in the sand - you'll realise it's not as hard as you thought.



Give yourself a mark out of 10 for each of the sections:
9-10 = super confident
6-8 = some gaps
3-5 = a bit wobbly
0-2 = really need some help

Be honest with yourself.

I am aiming for a grade ____

I am currently on ____

Things that are holding me back:

1.

2.

3.



Hi, I'm Robyn - I know Macbeth really well and I can help you come up with a plan to get to grips with this tricky text.

If you're really stuck and feel you need some help straight away, email me a copy of your review and book a free call and I'll help you come up a plan to get you moving.

The rest of this pack has a guide to the character of Macbeth and a challenge for you to see how much you know about Lady Macbeth. If you can, work through it and email it to me with your knowledge review - you might surprise yourself with how much you already know.

BOOK A FREE CALL

MACBETH

FROM NOBLE WARRIOR TO LOATHED TYRANT

The title character is a good place to start. He changes throughout the play and this can be seen in four key stages. Over the next few pages I'll lay out all the information you need to know about his character development.

Drop some of these terms into your essays to elevate your writing and impress your examiner!

MACBETH



NOBLE WARRIOR

DESCRIPTION

This is Macbeth at the start of the play. The first time he is mentioned in the play it is as 'brave Macbeth' - it's clear he's well respected. Macbeth is a pretty terrifying warrior - he cuts his way through the battlefield before killing Macdonald. He then continues to fight in the second uprising, undaunted by the reinforcements.

Malcolm is hugely impressed with him and rewards him with a new title of Thane of Cawdor at which point Macbeth professes loyalty to the king.

ACTIONS

- Macbeth's bravery in battle against the rebels, where he kills the Thane of Cawdor and defeats Macdonald.
- King Duncan's praise and gratitude towards Macbeth.

KEY QUOTES

'brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name'
'his brandish'd steel, which smoked with bloody execution'
'he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps'

MACBETH



THE SEED OF AMBITION

DESCRIPTION

The seed of ambition is planted by the witches. Macbeth shows his strength of character through his initial ability to resist the temptation. When he first hears the prophecies from the witches he refuses to believe them - it is not until he is given the title of Cawdor he starts to believe and is struck with a sudden flash of desire to become king.

Lady Macbeth is the one who waters the seed of ambition and encourages it to grow. Macbeth has a soliloquy challenging his own motives before telling Lady Macbeth he will not kill Duncan, but Lady Macbeth will not accept this and goads him into doing it. Once Duncan has been killed, there is no way to go back.

ACTIONS

- Macbeth's encounter with the three witches and their prophecies.
- Lady Macbeth's manipulation and persuasion of Macbeth to seize the throne and kill Duncan.
- Macbeth's internal struggle as he wrestles with his decision to kill Duncan.

KEY QUOTES

'To be king stands not within the prospect of belief'
(Lady Macbeth) *'Hie thee hither, that I may pour my spirits in thine ear'*
'I have no spurs to prick the sides of my intent'
(Lady Macbeth) *'Was hope drunk?'*

MACBETH



LOATHED TYRANT

DESCRIPTION

As soon as he gets the crown, Macbeth fears losing it. His first action is to have Banquo killed. After this, Macbeth takes a very dark turn, he is obsessed with maintaining his hold on power and decides after his second meeting with the witches that he will act without consideration. This leads to the brutal murders of Lady Macduff and her family. Whilst we are given no more specific details of murders, Macduff tells Malcolm that “each new morn, new widows howl” which suggest the brutality of Macbeth’s reign. He is also never referred to as the King by anyone, rather he is always called ‘tyrant’ or ‘usurper’.

ACTIONS

- Macbeth's murder of King Duncan
- The murder of Banquo (and attempt to kill Banquo’s son Fleance) to eliminate any threats to his crown.
- The murder of Macduff’s entire family.

KEY QUOTES

'Something wicked this way comes'
'The very firstling of my heart shall be the firstlings of my hand.'

MACBETH



TRAGIC FALL

DESCRIPTION

Macbeth is reflective at the end of the play as Malcolm's army draws near. Whilst he shows aggression towards his soldiers as a bluster to hide his fear, he also reflects on how much he has lost. He knows no one remains loyal to him, Lady Macbeth dies ("out, out brief candle") and feels like life is meaningless. He will not, however, surrender. There is a little of the Macbeth the Warrior left from the opening act and he goes out to fight to the end.

RELEVANT ACTIONS

- Macbeth's guilt following Duncan and Banquo's murders is seen in his inability to sleep and the appearance of Banquo's ghost.
- The rebellion against Macbeth's rule, led by Malcolm and Macduff, signaling the unraveling of his power.
- Macbeth's final battle with Macduff, where he is defeated and killed.

KEY QUOTES

'I have lived long enough, my way of life has fallen into the sere.'

'We'll die with the harness on our back.'

HOW TO USE THIS IN AN ESSAY?

Use this for any question on Macbeth - note what stage of his character development he is in your extract. Then, make reference to other stages when you address the wider text portion of the question.

LADY MACBETH



AN AMBITIOUS MANIPULATOR AND THE FOURTH WITCH

Lady Macbeth has her own character arc - it is cut off much more abruptly than Macbeth's, but it is still important to look at how she changes and what prompts it.

YOUR TURN: Just like Macbeth, we can give titles to some of her stages and qualities. What information can you add to each stage? Can you think of any quotes to add? Once you've had a go, email me a copy of your sheet and I'll get back to you with some feedback.

**AMBITIOUS
MANIPULATOR**

As soon as she receives the letter from Macbeth, Lady Macbeth...

Quotes:

LADY MACBETH



THE FOURTH WITCH

Lady Macbeth has an important speech where she calls out to the spirits to...

Quotes:

THE SIDELINED QUEEN

Once Macbeth takes the crown, Lady Macbeth's role changes...

Quotes:

DESCENT INTO MADNESS



Lady Macbeth is overcome with guilt...

Quotes:

WHAT TO DO NEXT



Email me your work on Lady Macbeth, I will review it and give you some feedback.

EMAIL ME AT

robyn@straightforwardlyenglish.com

Book a free 20 minute call with me and we'll come up with a plan to remove some of the roadblocks that are getting in the way of your progress.

BOOK A FREE CALL

'I've experienced many tutors before and Robyn's definitely one I would recommend, and I do on a regular basis.' Sati, parent.