

Macbeth

OXFORD SCHOOL SHAKESPEARE

MACBETH



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

One extract question
One essay question

These questions will help you understand what is going on when in *Macbeth* and what it all means. Your answers to the Quick Questions shouldn't be much longer than a sentence, but the answers to the In-depth Questions should be about a paragraph. Make sure you refuel with tea and biscuits before having a go at the Exam-style Questions on the next page.

Quick Questions

- 1) In Act One, what do the three Witches predict Macbeth will become?
- 2) What do the Witches predict will happen to Banquo's descendants?
- 3) What supernatural thing does Macbeth see in Act 2, Scene 1?
- 4) Why do Malcolm and Donalbain run away after Duncan's murdered?
- 5) Whose son escapes from the murderers in Act Three?
- 6) Pick one of the apparitions and describe briefly what it looks like and what it predicts.
- 7) Where has Malcolm run away to when Macduff finds him in Act Four?
- 8) What does Lady Macbeth try to wash off her hands in Act Five?
- 9) Who kills Macbeth?

In-depth Questions

- 1) In Act 1, Scene 3 Banquo says of the Witches' predictions:
 "The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
 Win us with honest trifles – to betray's" (124-125)
 Do you think Banquo is right? Use evidence from the play to support your answer.
- 2) "Macbeth never shows any remorse for what he has done."
 Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.
- 3) Do you think that Macbeth would have become King even if he hadn't killed anyone?
 Explain your answer.

HOW TO REVISE

1. Complete the activities on these page.
2. Remember to use index cards to write down key quotations to learn.
3. Plan/write answers to the questions at the back of this back.

Characters you need to revise

- Macbeth
- Lady Macbeth
- Banquo
- The Witches
- Macduff
- Lady Macduff
- Duncan, Malcolm, Donaldbain

Themes you need to revise

- Ambition
- Supernatural/witchcraft
- Leadership/Kingship/tyranny
- Masculinity
- Femininity
- Guilt
- Bravery/Courage

For each character:

1. Consider why they are important in the play. **Why do you think Shakespeare included this character?**
2. Consider how the character changes in the play. **How does this character develop as the play progresses?**
3. Identify the key moments for this character. **Which scenes do they play an important part in?**
4. Look at your notes about the different themes in the play. **Does thinking about a theme develop your understanding of a character?**
5. Look at your notes about the historical context of the play. **Does this develop your understanding of the character?**
6. Pick at least **three quotations for each character** (2 each for the Macduffs). Annotate them to consider how Shakespeare has used language to tell us something about the characters.

For each theme:

1. Consider why they are important in the play. **Why do you think Shakespeare wants the audience to think about this issue?**
2. Consider how the theme changes in the play. **How does this theme develop as the play progresses?**
3. Identify the key moments for this theme. **Which scenes do they play an important part in?**
4. Look at your notes about the different characters in the play. **Does thinking about a character develop your understanding of a theme?**
5. Look at your notes about the historical context of the play. **Does this develop your understanding of the theme?**
6. Pick at least **three quotations for each theme**. Annotate them to consider how Shakespeare has used language to tell us something.

CHALLENGE Research different productions of the play. Watch the play on stage or on film. Look at photographs on Google Images. How have different productions presented the characters in different ways?

In this extract, how does Lady Macbeth use language to manipulate her husband in the play?

MACBETH

We will proceed no further in this business.
He hath honoured me of late, and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.

LADY MACBETH

Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?
And wakes it now to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time,
Such I account thy love. Art thou afraid
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting I dare not wait upon I would,
Like the poor cat i'th'adage?

MACBETH

Prithee, peace.
I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more is none.

LADY MACBETH

What beast was't then
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man.
And to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both.
They have made themselves and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. I have given suck and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.

MACBETH

If we should fail?

LADY MACBETH

We fail?

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
And we'll not fail.

Ideas you could explore:

- (1) **'Was the hope drunk / Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since? / And wakes it now to look so green and pale / At what it did so freely?'** - Lady Macbeth immediately goes on the attack by firing three rhetorical questions at Macbeth. She does not give him time to think or reply. She then goes on to pose several other questions which would play on his emotions.
- (2) **'love'** - Lady Macbeth reminds her husband of the bond between them and suggests that if he does not carry out the murder then he clearly does not love her anymore. She is emotionally blackmailing him.
- (3) **'coward'** - Macbeth's bravery and courage are called into question. This would hurt his pride.
- (4) **'When you durst do it, then you were a man. / And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man.'** - Now she attacks his masculinity. This would hurt his pride even more.
- (5) **'They have made themselves'** - She points out that the time for action could not be better and that he needs to seize the opportunity.
- (6) **'dashed the brains out'** - Lady Macbeth demonstrates the difference between herself and her husband by stating that she would be prepared to kill her own child – a truly shocking idea for any mother to admit to.
- (7) **'sworn'** - Lady Macbeth reminds her husband that he has made a vow to carry out Duncan's murder.
- (8) **'We fail?'** - Lady Macbeth picks up her husband's concern and dismisses it.
- (9) **'we'll not fail'** - She is absolutely convinced that they will succeed - as long as Macbeth does not back down.

Preparing your answer

1. Introduction - what the Macbeths have planned to do and what we know of their characters so far. What has happened to Macbeth to make him change his mind about killing Duncan?
2. How Lady Macbeth uses her powers of persuasion to change his mind back again.
3. How her arguments affect Macbeth and the audience.
4. Conclusion - what happens as a result of Lady Macbeth persuading her husband.

Sample answer 1

In this scene, Macbeth wants to stop the murder and says "We will proceed no further". Lady Macbeth makes sure that Macbeth will do exactly as she tells him. She has strong ambitions to be Queen and uses different arguments to make sure that he does do what she wants him to do. She uses a comparison to call him a coward but he tells her that he is a real man. I think that she is

right about him at this point. She also says he does not love her if he does not carry out the murder. Macbeth's biggest worry is about what will happen to them if they fail. Lady Macbeth says "We'll not fail" which just dismisses the idea. By the end of the scene she has persuaded him back again and the audience thinks that she is a stronger character than her husband.

Feedback comments – Not bad but room for improvement!

- This answer shows a reasonable level of understanding of the text and a development of a personal response. However, there is not enough supportive evidence quoted or analysis of the language attempted.
- There is a limited attempt to analyse key vocabulary or literary devices. The use of a simile is noted but it is not explained what it is, what it means or why it is being used.
- There is a reference to the effect on an audience but this needs development.
- Sentences are correctly constructed and punctuated but not always phrased well.

Sample answer 2

Macbeth starts this scene in a decisive mood but by the end of it has given in to his wife's powers of persuasion. She asks him lots of questions but does not give him time to answer; this would unsettle him and make the audience aware of just how ambitious she is. Lady Macbeth uses emotional blackmail when she says "From this time, / Such I account thy love." She also calls him a coward using a simile to compare him to a cat who would like to get hold of some fish but which does not want to get its paws wet; this is an example of one of the many animal images used in the play. I think her biggest insult is to say that he is not acting like a man: "When you durst do it, then you were a man." The key opposites used here are "when" and "then". For a woman to say this to a man in Shakespeare's time would have been totally unacceptable and the original audience would probably have been shocked by it.

Feedback comments – Much better!

- There is strong evidence here of a very good understanding of the text and an informed personal response to Shakespeare's writing. References are skilfully woven into the answer and are linked to the wider text as a whole.
- There is clear evidence of language analysis and ability to use correct terminology (simile, images). There could have been some comment on line structure to further improve the answer.
- There is a good attempt to recognise the effect of the scene on an audience.
- A well-written answer which uses correct spelling, grammar and punctuation and which aims to develop complex written sentences and use advanced vocabulary.

Have a go at writing a response to this question.