

Macbeth

Revision Guide

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Plot summary



1. While returning from a battle victory, Macbeth, a powerful lord, meets three Witches who predict that he will become King of Scotland.
2. Macbeth tells his wife of the Witches' predictions and she encourages him to murder the current king, Duncan, who is staying with them as a guest.
3. After Macduff discovers the murder, Duncan's sons flee the country, leaving the way clear for Macbeth to become king.
4. Banquo, Macbeth's best friend, becomes suspicious of what his friend has done so Macbeth has him murdered too.
5. Macbeth pays a second visit to the Witches and receives more predictions.
6. In England, Malcolm (Duncan's elder son) and his chief supporter, Macduff, plan to invade Scotland to win back the throne. An enraged Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed; Macduff swears revenge.
7. Lady Macbeth suffers from guilt for what she has done and eventually commits suicide.
8. Malcolm's invasion is successful and Macduff kills Macbeth. Malcolm becomes the new King of Scotland and the country counts the cost of Macbeth's short but bloody reign.

Plot summary (with quotations)

1.1	The play opens with the witches discussing Macbeth: <i>“there to meet with Macbeth”</i>
1.2	The Captain describes Macbeth’s bravery to the King: <i>“brave Macbeth”</i> . The king says he will make Macbeth Thane of Cawdor: <i>“stars shine on all deservers”</i>
1.3	The witches meet Macbeth and tell him that he will be Thane of Cawdor and then King. <i>“Thou shall be king”</i> They tell Banquo that his sons will be King: <i>“Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none”</i> Macbeth begins to imagine being King.
1.4	Macbeth is given the title Thane of Cawdor and Banquo comments that the witches’ predictions were true: <i>“can the devil speak true?”</i> Macbeth mentions how Malcolm stands in the way of his desires. <i>“stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires”</i>
1.5	Lady Macbeth reads Macbeth’s letter in which he describes his meeting with the witches; she asks for the spirits to help her persuade Macbeth to do all he needs to become king. <i>“Come ye spirits”</i> <i>“unsex me here”</i> <i>“fill me with direst cruelty”</i> She says she will ask him to <i>“look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it”</i>
1.7	Macbeth decides that he will not kill Duncan: <i>“I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent”</i> <i>“we will proceed no further in this business”</i> but then Lady Macbeth enters the stage to persuade him that he must do it: <i>“plucked out my nipple from its boneless gums and dashed the brains out”</i> She tells him that they will be able to frame Duncan’s guards who: <i>“will bear the guilt of our great quell”</i> Macbeth agrees to the murder: <i>“false face must hide what the false heart doth know”</i>
2.1	Macbeth sees a dagger floating in the air which leads him to Duncan: <i>“is this a dagger I see before me?”</i>
2.2	After murdering King Duncan Macbeth is afraid: he can’t say <i>“amen”</i> and he is worried about the blood on his hands. <i>“Macbeth doth murder sleep”</i> <i>“look on’t again I dare not”</i> Macbeth has brought the daggers with him which Lady Macbeth has to return to Duncan’s chamber as she is not afraid; she tells her husband to not be a coward: <i>“a little water clears us of this deed”</i> <i>“my hands are of your colour but I shame to wear a heart so white”</i>
2.3	Macduff is upset at discovering Duncan’s body. Macbeth kills the two guards as he claims he was so angry with them. Malcolm and Donalbain, the King’s sons, are afraid that they may now be murdered so they run away to England and Ireland: <i>“there’s daggers in men’s smiles”</i>
3.1	Banquo says that he is suspicious about how Macbeth became king: <i>“I fear thou played most foully for it”</i> Macbeth then enters to ask Banquo if he is going riding. After Banquo confirms that he is, Macbeth speaks to two murders and orders them to kill both Banquo and his son, Fleance.
3.2	Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth that he is dealing with Banquo but he doesn’t reveal what he has planned: <i>“be innocent of the knowledge dearest chuck”</i>
3.4	At Macbeth’s banquet, the murders tell him that he killed Banquo but that Fleance escaped. Macbeth is upset that Fleance still lives but is happy that Banquo is dead: <i>“the grown serpent lies”</i> At his banquet, Macbeth is terrified as he sees the ghost of Banquo: <i>“never shake thy gory locks at me”</i> Afraid, the guests worry what is the matter with Macbeth. Once again Lady Macbeth tells him to be a man. Macbeth is concerned that he isn’t safely the king so he tells Lady Macbeth that he will go back to see the witches. <i>“I will to the weird sisters”</i>
3.6	People begin to grow suspicious of Macbeth. Lennox wishes Macduff well as he has gone to England to help form an army against Macbeth.
4.1	Macbeth goes back to visit the witches. Macbeth demands to know if he will remain king. The witches call upon three apparitions which tell him: <i>“beware Macduff”</i> , fear <i>“none of woman born”</i> and fear noting until <i>“Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane”</i> . Once the witches have vanished, Macbeth hears from Lennox who tells him that Macduff has gone to England; Macbeth orders the murder of Macduff’s wife and children.
4.2	Macduff’s wife and children are murdered on the orders of Macbeth.
4.3	Malcolm test Macduff’s loyalty to him and to Scotland. After Macduff proves his loyalty, they prepare to attack Macbeth’s castle.
5.1	Lady Macbeth appears on stage for the final time. She appears disturbed as she asks for her hands to be clear of Duncan’s blood, before revealing her guilty secrets. <i>“out, out damn spot”</i> <i>“who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him”</i>
5.3	Macbeth learns that his thanes are abandoning him and that the English army is approaching.
5.4	As the English army approach Macbeth’s castle, Malcolm gives the order for the soldiers to cut down branches from Birnam Wood and hold it in front of them.
5.5	Macbeth learns that his wife is dead and that the English army is approaching: <i>“she should have died hereafter”</i> Macbeth goes out to meet his fate.
5.7	Macbeth fights Young Siward and kills him
5.8	Macduff and Macbeth do battle. Macbeth says that he can’t be harmed by one of <i>“woman born”</i> but Macduff replies that he was <i>“from his mother’s womb untimely ripp’d”</i> . At first Macbeth is afraid: <i>“I’ll not fight thee”</i> but then says that he will fight him to the death. They fight on and Macduff kills Macbeth. Macduff enters with the head of Macbeth: <i>“the dead butcher and his fiendlike queen”</i> . Malcolm is crowned King of Scotland.

Character List

Macbeth

Macbeth is a complex character who changes throughout the course of the play. He is clearly a brave warrior and leader at the start of the drama but he falls victim to the Witches' predictions. It is unclear whether they plant ideas in his mind or whether they simply highlight thoughts that he has already had. He repeatedly questions himself about his motives for killing the King but is eventually persuaded to continue by his forceful wife.

Having committed murder he finds himself caught in a spiral of evil from which he can see no escape. His actions become less heroic and more cowardly as he continues to murder and terrorise others (Banquo and Macduff's family) in order to hold on to his power. Towards the end of the play, when he realises that he is doomed, he briefly returns to his old heroic self.

Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth is even more ambitious and ruthless than her husband. As soon as an opportunity to gain power presents itself, she has a plan in mind. She uses her influence to persuade Macbeth that they are taking the right course of action and even takes part in the crime herself.

For a while she is able to suppress her actions but eventually she becomes unable to deal with the guilt of what she has done. She becomes unable to sleep, and mentally unstable, eventually dying in tragic circumstances.

Banquo

Banquo is another general in King Duncan's army and Macbeth's best friend. While both men have ambitious thoughts, Banquo is more cautious and does not resort to murder to get what he wants.

Banquo is aware that the Witches' predictions may be tricking Macbeth into evil actions and is the first to suspect Macbeth of murder. He dies while protecting his son, Fleance, and comes back as a ghost to haunt Macbeth.

Macduff

Macduff, the Thane of Fife, is Macbeth's deadly enemy. He discovers Duncan's body and becomes Malcolm's chief supporter, following him to England to support him in raising an army against Macbeth. When he learns of the murders of his wife and family, Macduff feels guilty about leaving them and driven by a need for revenge.

According to the Witches' prediction, Macduff is the only one who can stop Macbeth. The two men meet face-to-face on the battlefield and Macduff kills Macbeth.

The witches

Although there is clearly more than one of them, the Witches may be seen as seem as a single character; they are often referred to as "The Weird Sisters".

Their predictions drive matters forward though they never actually suggest direct action. Rather, they plant ideas in Macbeth's mind and let his ambition do the rest. Many of their predictions are ambiguous.

King Duncan

The good King of Scotland whom Macbeth, in his ambition for the crown, murders. Duncan is the model of a virtuous, compassionate, and farsighted ruler. His death symbolizes the destruction of an order in Scotland that can be restored only when Duncan's line, in the person of Malcolm, once more occupies the throne.

Malcolm

The son of Duncan, whose restoration to the throne signals Scotland's return to order following Macbeth's reign of terror. Malcolm becomes a serious challenge to Macbeth with Macduff's aid (and the support of England). Prior to this, he appears weak and uncertain of his own power, as when he and Donalbain flee Scotland after their father's murder.

Themes

Ambition, power and greed

- After the witches' predictions, Macbeth's ambition is contrasted to Banquo's loyalty
- Macbeth demands that the witches speak to him
- As soon as Macbeth speaks to the witches he thinks about becoming King
- Lady Macbeth wants to be Queen and her husband to be King
- Macbeth says that ambition is his only reason to kill King Duncan
- Macbeth kills King Duncan because he wants to be the King
- Banquo recognises Macbeth's ambition and worries he might have killed King Duncan
- Macbeth orders the murder of Banquo and his son as he is afraid he will lose his power
- Again, worried about his power, Macbeth goes back to the witches
- Consumed with power, he orders the murder of Macduff's wife and children
- Believing that he is invincible, Macbeth waits in his castle for the English army
- Lady Macbeth, no longer powerful, dies off stage
- With the death of Macbeth, rightful power is restored at the end of the play

Loyalty and kingship

- The Thane of Cawdor is executed for betraying King Duncan
- Macbeth is given that title for being loyal to King Duncan. Macbeth says he fights for "loyalty"
- Macbeth decides that he cannot kill King Duncan as he wants to be loyal to him
- Macbeth betrays King Duncan and murders him
- Out of loyalty to King Duncan, Macduff does not attend Macduff's coronation
- Macbeth doesn't think that Banquo is loyal to him and so has him killed
- Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty to him and King Duncan – he passes this test
- Macduff kills Macbeth as he wants the true King on the throne
- Malcolm, the rightful heir, is King at the end of the play

Guilt

- Macbeth thinks about killing King Duncan but recognises that it is wrong
- Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to kill King Duncan as the guard will "bear the guilt" of the murder
- After murdering King Duncan, Macbeth is consumed with guilt
- Lady Macbeth tells Macbeth not to think about the death as the guards will be blamed
- Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost – suggesting that he feels guilty about his murder
- Lady Macbeth sleepwalks seeing blood on her hands – suggesting she feels guilty
- Consumed with guilt, Lady Macbeth commits suicide offstage
- At the end of the play, Macbeth does not seem concerned with the death of King Duncan or Banquo

Death, violence and conflict

- Violence is celebrated at the start of the play – because Macbeth and Banquo have won the battle
- King Duncan and the Captain describe Macbeth's violent fighting
- Macbeth and Lady Macbeth argue about killing King Duncan
- Macbeth suffers internal conflict of conscience
- Macbeth murders King Duncan
- Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are covered in King Duncan's blood
- Macbeth orders the death of Banquo and Fleance – he celebrates Banquo's murder
- Conflicted, Lady Macbeth dies
- Macduff kills Macbeth
- Macbeth's death is celebrated

Light and dark

- In the play, light represents good and the dark represents evil
- The play opens with thunder and lightning – it introduces a dark atmosphere
- King Duncan says it's difficult to know what people are thinking – “no art to find the mind's construction in the face”
- He also describes the light “shining on deservers”
- Macbeth asks the “stars to hide their fires” so people don't know his “desires”
- He later says that he will have a “false face” to hide his “false heart”
- Duncan is murdered in his “innocent sleep”
- Following Duncan's death the sun doesn't rise as the world is in chaos “night strangles light”
- Before Banquo's murder, his torch goes out
- Malcolm tells Macduff that even the “brightest angel fell” – meaning that all are capable of evil
- At the end of the play, Lady Macbeth had to have a light by her side
- Macbeth reacts to Lady Macbeth's death by saying “out brief candle” – showing he felt she brought light

Blood and water

- At the start of the play, the Captain describes the bloody battle
- Macbeth sees visions of a blood covered dagger
- Macbeth is scared by Duncan's blood – he says it would turn all of the seas red
- Lady Macbeth says that they can wash the blood away
- Macbeth celebrates Banquo's blood being on the murderer's face
- The ghost of Banquo is covered in blood
- At the end of the play, Lady Macbeth sees the blood on her hands
- Macbeth is killed and his head is chopped off

Masculinity/Manliness

- Macbeth's bravery is celebrated at the beginning of the play
- Macbeth describes his wife as his “partner of greatness”
- Lady Macbeth worries that her husband is too “kind” to kill King Duncan
- Lady Macbeth tells her husband that he won't be a man if he doesn't kill King Duncan
- Macbeth kills King Duncan in his sleep
- Lady Macbeth has to guide Macbeth after King Duncan's murder
- After seeing Banquo's ghost, she again tells him to be a man
- Macduff is upset at the death of his wife and children but others tell him to take the news like a man
- Macduff wants revenge against Macbeth
- At the end of the play, we are reminded of Macbeth's bravery
- Macbeth and Macduff fight to the death

The supernatural

- The witches open the play at set the atmosphere of the action to come
- Macbeth has complete belief in the witches and their prophecies
- Lady Macbeth asks for the evil spirits help to persuade her husband to murder King Duncan
- Macbeth sees visions of a dagger and then later Banquo's ghost
- After King Duncan's death, the world is thrown into chaos
- Macbeth is so consumed that he returns to see the witches
- Lady Macbeth's sleep is haunted and she kills herself
- The witches trick Macbeth with their predictions

Context

Macbeth was written by Shakespeare in approximately 1606. The early 17th century was a time of unrest, suspicion and superstition. A new king had just come to power and the future of the country seemed quite uncertain. Shakespeare's play reflects these changes.

A king in Shakespeare's time was thought to rule by 'divine right'. This meant that God had chosen that person directly to rule over others. The killing of a king (known as regicide) was therefore considered to be just about the worst crime that anyone could commit. That is why Macbeth's decision to murder Duncan seemed so horrific to an audience of the time and why the murderer has such a guilty conscience.

The new King on the throne of England, James I (also known as James VI of Scotland), was paranoid about assassination attempts. This was unsurprising, since the infamous Gunpowder Plot to blow up the King and Parliament had taken place just months before *Macbeth* was first performed. Many of *Macbeth's* themes resonate with the attempted revolt: it's a play about treason, the overthrow of a King, and the downfall of his murderers.

King James also believed in dark magic and the supernatural. He wrote a book called *Daemonologie* in which he supported and encouraged the trials of witches. He believed the witches were controlled by the devil. Many in his audience would have also believed in these things, and certainly all of them would have been entertained by them. This is one of the reasons that Shakespeare decided to include the characters of the witches. The witches also represent danger and evil and present a world linked to the devil. By being tempted by the witches (devil), Shakespeare shows how the world can be thrown into chaos. This would encourage the audience to be loyal to the King and to God.

In both Shakespeare's time and in the time when the play takes place, women had a much lower status than would be the case today. Wives were little more than the property of their husbands and had no legal rights. Their main purpose was to have children and support men.

Lady Macbeth appears to be a much more feisty character with ambitions and desires of her own; these are characteristics that could imply a lack of femininity. It is worth remembering that in the original performances of the play the part of Lady Macbeth would have been played by a man and this would have helped to emphasise the character's masculine qualities.

Key Quotations

Macbeth

- “brave Macbeth” “Signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine on all deservers” 1.2 (Captain and Duncan giving him praise)
- “I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent” 1.3 (has no reason to kill Duncan)
- “stars hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires” 1.4 (thinking of killing Duncan)
- “Yet do I fear thy nature; It is too full o' the milk of human kindness.” 1.5 (L. Macbeth worries Macbeth is too virtuous)
- “we will proceed no further in this business” 1.7 (he decides not to kill Duncan)
- “False face must hide what the false heart doth know” 1.7 (he has been persuaded by L Macbeth)
- “Is this a dagger I see before me, Come, let me clutch thee” 2.1 (hallucinating before the murder)
- “Sleep no more! Macbeth does murder sleep!” 2.2 (after killing Duncan)
- “To be thus is nothing/But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo/Stick deep” 3.1 (is worried about what Banquo knows)
- “By the pricking of my thumbs, Something wicked this way comes.” 4.1 (the witches know he’s returning)
- “I will not be afraid of death and bane Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane” 5.3 (he believes the prophecies)
- “Out, out, brief candle!” 5.5 (about the death of Lady Macbeth)
- “devil,” “hellhound” “abhorred tyrant” “rarer monster” and “follower of Satan” 5.6 (Macduff and others)
- “Yet I will try the last: before my body I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff” 5.8 (he reminds the audience of his bravery)
- “dead butcher and his fiend-like queen” 5.8 (Malcolm describes Macbeth)

Lady Macbeth

- “my partner of greatness” (Macbeth 1.5)
- “Yet do I fear thy nature; It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness” (1.5)
- “I may pour my spirits in thine ear” (1.5)
- “Come, you spirits/That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here/And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full/Of direst cruelty.” (1.5)
- “Come, thick night/And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,/That my keen knife see not the wound it makes”(1.5)
- “Look like th' innocent flower,/But be the serpent under 't.” (1.5)
- “Art thou afeard/To be the same in thine own act and valour/As thou art in desire?” (1.7)
- “I would, while it was smiling in my face,/Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums/And dashed the brains out” (1.7)
- “But screw your courage to the sticking-place,/And we'll not fail.” (1.7)
- “His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt/Of our great quell” (1.7)
- “These deeds must not be thought” (2.2)
- “Give me the daggers.” (2..2)
- “a liittle water clears us of this deed” (2.2)
- “My hands are of your colour, but I shame/To wear a heart so white.” (2.2)
- “Be honest of the knowledge dearest chuck” (Macbeth 3.2)
- “Yet here's a spot...Out, damned spot! out, I say!” (5.1)
- “who would have thought the old man/to have had so much blood in him.” (5.1)
- “What, will these hands ne'er be clean?” (5.1)
- “all the/perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little/hand!” (5.1)
- “She should have died hereafter./There would have been a time for such a word” (Macbeth 5.5)

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 2 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, the Captain is explaining to Duncan how Macbeth and Banquo defeated the enemy in battle.

CAPTAIN

Doubtful it stood,
As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villanies of nature
Do swarm upon him—from the Western Isles
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied,
And fortune, on his damnèd quarrel smiling,
Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak,
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—
Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valor's minion carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseamed him from the nave to th' chops,
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

Starting with this speech explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a hero.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth in this speech
- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth in the play as a whole

30 Marks

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 3 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth has just been told by the three witches that he will become king.

MACBETH (Aside) Two truths are told
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the Imperial Theme. – I Thank you gentlemen. -
This Supernatural soliciting
Cannot Be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor.
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man
That function is smothered in surmise
And nothing is but what is not.

Starting with this speech explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Macbeth as ambitious.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth's feelings and thoughts in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth's ambition in the play as a whole

30 Marks

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 5 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Lady Macbeth has just read Macbeth's letter about his meeting with the three witches

LADY MACBETH

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood.
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark
To cry "Hold, hold!"

Starting with this speech explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as deceitful.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth's feelings and thoughts in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as deceitful in the play as a whole

30 Marks

Read the following extract from Act 1 Scene 7 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth is thinking about whether he should murder Duncan in order to become King.

MACBETH

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th' inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked newborn babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th' other.

Starting with this speech explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Macbeth as ambitious.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth's feelings and thoughts in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth as ambitious in the play as a whole

30 Marks

Read the following extract from Act 2 Scene 1 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth is considering murdering Duncan and he thinks he sees a dagger in the air in front of him.

MACBETH

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressèd brain?

I see thee yet, in form as palpable

As this which now I draw.

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use.

Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses,
Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing.

It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and withered murder,
Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives.
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

A bell rings

I go, and it is done. The bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

Starting with this speech explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Macbeth as conflicted.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth's conflicted feelings and thoughts in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents conflict in the play as a whole

30 Marks

Read the following extract from Act 2 Scene 2 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth has just killed King Duncan and returned with the daggers.

MACBETH

I'll go no more:
I am afraid to think what I have done;
Look on 't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
For it must seem their guilt.

*Exit
Knock within*

MACBETH

Whence is that knocking?
How is 't with me when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes.
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.

Enter LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH

My hands are of your colour, but I shame
To wear a heart so white.

Knock within

I hear a knocking
At the south entry. Retire we to our chamber.
A little water clears us of this deed.
How easy is it, then! Your constancy
Hath left you unattended.

Knock within

Hark! More knocking.
Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us
And show us to be watchers. Be not lost
So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

Knock within

Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would thou couldst.

Exeunt

Starting with this extract explain how far you think Shakespeare presents a contrast between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents conflict between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in the play as a whole

30 Marks

Read the following extract from Act 3 Scene 2 of *Macbeth* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth is beginning to lose control and is suspicious of everyone, even his best friend Banquo.

MACBETH

O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives.

LADY MACBETH

But in them nature's copy's not eterne.

MACBETH

There's comfort yet; they are assailable;
Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
A deed of dreadful note.

LADY MACBETH

What's to be done?

MACBETH

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;
While night's black agents to their preys do rouse.
Thou marvell'st at my words: but hold thee still;
Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.

Starting with this speech, explain how you think Shakespeare presents Macbeth's state of mind.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth's state of mind in this speech
- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth's state of mind in the play as a whole

Your response

Read the following extract from Act 3 Scene 4 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, the murderers have just returned after killing Banquo.

MACBETH

(aside to FIRST MURDERER) There's blood upon thy face.

FIRST MURDERER

'Tis Banquo's then.

MACBETH

'Tis better thee without than he within.
Is he dispatched?

FIRST MURDERER

My lord, his throat is cut. That I did for him.

MACBETH

Thou art the best o' th' cutthroats:
Yet he's good that did the like for Fleance.
If thou didst it, thou art the nonpareil.

FIRST MURDERER

Most royal sir, Fleance is 'scaped.

MACBETH

Then comes my fit again. I had else been perfect,
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air.
But now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears.—But Banquo's safe?

FIRST MURDERER

Ay, my good lord. Safe in a ditch he bides,
With twenty trenchèd gashes on his head,
The least a death to nature.

MACBETH

Thanks for that.
There the grown serpent lies. The worm that's fled
Hath nature that in time will venom breed;
No teeth for th' present. Get thee gone. Tomorrow
We'll hear ourselves again.

Starting with this extract, explain how Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a villainous character.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth as villainous in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents villainy in the play as a whole

30 marks

Read the following extract from Act 4 Scene 1 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth has gone back to visit the witches who call on apparitions to tell Macbeth about his future.

MACBETH

How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?
What is 't you do?

ALL

A deed without a name.

MACBETH

I conjure you by that which you profess—
Howe'er you come to know it—answer me.
Though you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches, though the yeasty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up,
Though bladed corn be lodged and trees blown down,
Though castles topple on their warders' heads,
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations, though the treasure
Of nature's germens tumble all together,
Even till destruction sicken, answer me
To what I ask you.

FIRST WITCH

Speak.

SECOND WITCH

Demand.

THIRD WITCH

We'll answer.

FIRST WITCH

Say, if th' hadst rather hear it from our mouths,
Or from our masters'.

MACBETH

Call 'em. Let me see 'em.

FIRST WITCH

Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten
Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten
From the murderer's gibbet throw
Into the flame.

ALL

Come, high or low;
Thyself and office deftly show!

Thunder. FIRST APPARITION : an armed head

MACBETH

Tell me, thou unknown power—

FIRST WITCH

He knows thy thought.
Hear his speech but say thou nought.

FIRST APPARITION

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff.
Beware the thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.

Descends

MACBETH

Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks.
Thou hast harped my fear aright. But one word more—

FIRST WITCH

He will not be commanded. Here's another
More potent than the first.

Thunder. SECOND APPARITION : a bloody child

SECOND APPARITION

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!—

MACBETH

Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

SECOND APPARITION

Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.

Descends

MACBETH

Then live, Macduff. What need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance double sure,
And take a bond of fate. Thou shalt not live,
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder.

Starting with this extract explain how far you think Shakespeare presents the supernatural as evil.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents the supernatural in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents the supernatural in the play as a whole

30 Marks

Read the following extract from Act 5 Scene 1 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, a Doctor and a Gentlewoman are observing Lady Macbeth as she appears to be sleepwalking around the castle.

LADY MACBETH

Yet here's a spot.

DOCTOR

Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

LADY MACBETH

Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two: why, then, 'tis time to do't.--Hell is murky!--Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?--Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.

DOCTOR

Do you mark that?

LADY MACBETH

The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?--What, will these hands ne'er be clean?--No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

DOCTOR

Go to, go to; you have known what you should not. Gentlewoman She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known.

LADY MACBETH

Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

Starting with this speech explain how far you think Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as disturbed.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth's feelings and thoughts in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as disturbed in the play as a whole

30 Marks

Read the following extract from Act 5 Scene 5 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth is waiting for the castle to be attacked.

	<i>A cry within of women</i>
MACBETH What is that noise?	
SEYTON It is the cry of women, my good lord.	
	<i>Exit</i>
MACBETH I have almost forgot the taste of fears. The time has been my senses would have cooled To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir As life were in 't. I have supped full with horrors. Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts Cannot once start me.	
	<i>Enter SEYTON</i>
Wherefore was that cry?	
SEYTON The queen, my lord, is dead	
MACBETH She should have died hereafter. There would have been a time for such a word. Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, Creeps in this petty pace from day to day To the last syllable of recorded time, And all our yesterdays have lighted fools The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player That struts and frets his hour upon the stage And then is heard no more. It is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing.	

Starting with these speeches, explain how Shakespeare presents Macbeth's state of mind.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth in the play as a whole

Read the following extract from Act 5 Scene 8 and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play, Macbeth's castle has been attacked and he is about to face Macduff.

MACDUFF

Turn, hellhound, turn!

MACBETH

Of all men else I have avoided thee.
But get thee back. My soul is too much charged
With blood of thine already

MACDUFF

I have no words.
My voice is in my sword. Thou bloodier villain
Than terms can give thee out!

They fight

MACBETH

Thou lovest labor.
As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air
With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed.
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield
To one of woman born.

MACDUFF

Despair thy charm,
And let the angel whom thou still hast served
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripped.

MACBETH

Accursèd be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cowed my better part of man!
And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
That palter with us in a double sense,
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

MACDUFF

Then yield thee, coward,
And live to be the show and gaze o' th' time.
We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
Painted on a pole, and underwrit,
"Here may you see the tyrant."

MACBETH

I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
Though Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou opposed, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last. Before my body
I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,
And damned be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"

Starting with this extract, explain how Shakespeare presents the conflict between Macbeth and Macduff.

Write about:

- How Shakespeare presents Macbeth and Macduff in this extract
- How Shakespeare presents conflict in the play as a whole

