

Revise the play by choosing from the shorter and longer revision activities throughout. They are designed to support your understanding of the play for the purpose of the exam, and are organised in three categories:

- language
- characters
- themes
- the whole play.

Language

Quotations

For each of the quotations below, consider the effects of language and structure:

- Create a mind-map around the quotation to include appropriate themes or characters, with a brief explanation of how and why.
- Consider whether it would be useful to learn it for the exam - if so, learn it.

1. 'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' (the witches, Act 1 Scene 1)

2. 'And oftentimes, to win us to our harm, / The instruments of darkness tell us truths,' (Banquo, Act 1 Scene 3)

3. 'Nought's had, all's spent, / Where our desire is got without content' (Lady Macbeth, Act 3 Scene 2)

4. 'Fit to govern!
No, not to live. O nation miserable,
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,' (Macduff, Act 4 Scene 3)

Extracts

For each of the extracts below, complete the following tasks:

- Highlight significant quotations and comment on the language and structure. Annotate directly onto the extract if you like.
- Highlight and comment on the significance of any dramatic devices.
- Highlight any passages in the text that link to general themes, ideas or messages from the play: state the themes.
- Highlight and annotate passages to which you could link any historical or contextual points.
- Consider how the characters are presented, and how they are presented by other characters.

The first extract includes some suggestions, to get you started.

Act 1 Scene 2 - Extract

DUNCAN

What bloody man is that? He can report,
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
The newest state.

MALCOLM

5 This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!
Say to the king the knowledge of the broil
As thou didst leave it.

SERGEANT

10 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
15 Do swarm upon him - from the western isles
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;
And fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,
Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak:
For brave Macbeth - well he deserves that name -
20 Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valour's minion carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,
25 And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN

O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

Dramatic device: Duncan draws the audience's attention to the sergeant through his initial question which raises the theme of battle and levels of command. It highlights the fact that unlike other medieval kings he does not personally fight; this could connote his weakness, either physical or mental, and undermine his right to command and rule.

Act 5 Scene 9 - Extract

Enter, with drum and colours, MALCOLM, SIWARD, ROSS, the other Thaners, and Soldiers.

MALCOLM

I would the friends we miss were safe arrived.

SIWARD

Some must go off: and yet, by these I see,
So great a day as this is cheaply bought.

ROSS

5 Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt:
He only lived but till he was a man;
The which no sooner had his prowess confirm'd
In the unshrinking station where he fought,
But like a man he died.

SIWARD

10 Then he is dead?

ROSS

Ay, and brought off the field: your cause of sorrow
Must not be measured by his worth, for then
It hath no end.

SIWARD

Had he his hurts before?

ROSS

15 Ay, on the front.

SIWARD

Why then, God's soldier be he!
Had I as many sons as I have hairs,
I would not wish them to a fairer death:
And so, his knell is knoll'd.

MALCOLM

20 He's worth more sorrow,
And that I'll spend for him.

SIWARD

He's worth no more
They say he parted well, and paid his score:
And so, God be with him! Here comes newer comfort.

Re-enter MACDUFF, with MACBETH's head.

MACDUFF

- 25 Hail, king! for so thou art: behold, where stands
The usurper's cursed head: the time is free:
I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,
That speak my salutation in their minds;
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine:
30 Hail, King of Scotland!

ALL

Hail, King of Scotland!

Flourish.

MALCOLM

- We shall not spend a large expense of time
Before we reckon with your several loves,
And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,
35 Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland
In such an honour named. What's more to do,
Which would be planted newly with the time,
As calling home our exiled friends abroad
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny;
40 Producing forth the cruel ministers
Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands
Took off her life; this, and what needful else
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,
45 We will perform in measure, time and place:
So, thanks to all at once and to each one,
Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.

Flourish. Exeunt.

Characters

Character profiles

Create a character profile for each of the following characters:

- Macbeth
- Lady Macbeth

Present this in any way that will be useful. For example, you might chart the character chronologically or look at the character from a certain point in the play and how the character changes before and after that point.

You might create a visual collage or use sticky notes. You could choose key quotations or pick out longer extracts from the text which you think are pivotal to his character development. You might react to the character then try to argue against it - could there be alternative views?

The most important thing is: each selection should be justified and you should be able to explain its significance.

Exploring the characters further

Answer the following questions on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to develop your understanding.

Macbeth	Lady Macbeth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Macbeth evil? • How does he treat those closest to him? • Can he tell the difference between right and wrong? • How do his ambitions change throughout the play? • Is he under the influence of the witches? • Is he weak and foolish and/or easily led? • Does he love violence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is Lady Macbeth evil? • Does she act in the way she does because she is frustrated by the gender constraints imposed on her by her society? • Is she all talk and no action? • What does she really want? • Does she love her husband? • Would she have harmed her baby? • Does she enjoy the power she gains?

Quotation quest

Find key quotations relating to some of the other characters. Choose which of these are most useful and relate to the key themes of the play. Choose which ones you will memorise.

Themes

Events relating to themes

Write down the main themes from the play in the table below. Find three events in the play which relate to this theme. Explain how the theme is significant at each point. There's an example below to get you started.

Theme	1st Example	2nd Example	3rd Example
Betrayal	In the second scene of the play the theme of betrayal is raised with the treachery of Macdonwald who sides with the invading Norwegians against King Duncan. Ironically, he is executed for this betrayal by Macbeth who then goes on to betray and murder his King, Duncan, in Act 2.	Macbeth betrays his best friend, Banquo in Act 3 by having him murdered and attempting the assassination of his son Fleance, an innocent child.	Macbeth's betrayal is finally punished by MacDuff at the end of the play. This could be seen as a just and hopeful resolution to the treachery of kings or as part of a continuation of the cycle of betrayal and punishment.

Quotation quest

Find key quotations relating to some of the main themes. Choose which of these are most useful and relate to the key themes of the play. Choose which ones you will memorise.

The whole play

Context research

Research the historical and social context of *Macbeth*.

During your research you might consider the following questions:

- When was it written?
- What importance did the monarchy play in life and what influence might it have had on the people and the theatre? What were the key issues of the time?
- What might be some of the reasons why Shakespeare chose to write this play, especially at that time?

Final thoughts

Answer the following questions, to consider some of the lasting messages of the play.

- What is the significance of the setting?
- What do you think of Macbeth's claim that he is so disturbed by Duncan's death that he cannot return to the chamber with the bloody knives and yet he barely mentions that had also just killed Duncan's grooms?
- Why are the witches sometimes referred to as the weird sisters?
- Did Shakespeare write *Macbeth* to entertain James I, as a warning, or for other reasons?
- Why are there so many ghosts?
- What might the play *Macbeth* teach us?

Summarising

Go through the whole play, and for each scene, write a one-sentence summary of the key events.

Using your revision

Finally, use the work you have completed to help you revise your understanding of the whole play:

- Get someone to test you on key quotations.
- Record yourself talking about key characters, themes, specific extracts or quotations, and how these develop at different points in the play.