

# **MACBETH STUDY GUIDE**

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## **STUDY GUIDE TO THE PLAY**

**OF**

**MACBETH**

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### **DEDICATION**

I thank the Almighty God for enabling me to publish this book. I also thank my father Mr J.A.B Thomo, mother Mrs Florence Thomo, my wife Chikondi Chiwaya Thom and my daughter Rhema Tadala Thom.

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Let me also thank my editor Mr Gladwell Mithenga for  
the effort rendered towards this work.

*The study guide has been prepared in a way that it will assist  
both teachers and Students to understand the play Macbeth  
with ease and expand their general understanding of  
Literature in English.*

*Anyone using this material and experiencing any kind of  
difficulty in understanding Literature in English in general  
and the play of Macbeth in particular under the reference of  
this material should not hesitate contacting Fredrick M.C  
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## CONTEXT

Topic 1. Introduction to Literature Pages.....	1- 5
Topic 2. Elements of Literature Pages.....	6 -29
Topic 3. Dramatic Language.....	30 – 44
Topic 5. Character Analysis.....	61-70
Topic 4. Acts and Scene Summaries.....	45-60
Topic: 6. Other Important Dramatic Elements.....	71-80
Topic 7. Literature Essay writing.....	91-95

*End*

## TOPIC 1

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## **INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE IN ENGLISH**

**Literature:** This is the word derived from the Latin word root 'literatura/litteratura' of which littera means letter or hand writing. It was used to refer to all written accounts but over the period of time Literatures in its broadest term the word literature contemporary definition has extended its self and encompasses texts that are spoken or sung (thus oral literature).

Literature therefore can best be defined as: The verbal or non-verbal work of art especially those that are considered to have a long lasting artistic merit

This means that literature in its broadest term encompasses almost everything that we hear, see and read.

### **KINDS OF LITERATURE**

There are two kinds of literature, these are:

- Oral Literature
- Written Literature

### **ORAL LITERATURE**

This is literature transmitted verbally through the word of mouth or what is confined to the so called folk.

### **FORMS OF ORAL LITERATURE**

- i. **Music:** These are songs.
- ii. **Legends:** These are stories passed down from the past most often based on real events. Historical events told in form of a story. At some point such

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stories may have fantastic events or unverifiable events

- iii. Fables:** These are stories more often with an animal character, told to express a moral.
- iv. Folktales:** These are brief stories passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation.
- v. Myths:** These are the stories that explain objectives or events in a natural world as resulting from some supernatural force or entity, most often a god.
- vi. Proverb or adage:** Is a traditional saying

## WRITTEN LITERATURE

This is a form of literature presented in letters through writing.

### MAIN FORMS OR GENRES OF WRITTEN LITERATURE

- i. Short stories
- ii. Novel
- iii. Poetry
- iv. Play/ Drama

These genres of literature are well defined below:

### Describing 'Genres'(Forms) of Literature

It is very important to note that the study of literature in secondary school focuses on these main four genres of literature.

#### 1. SHORT STORY

It is a written story about imaginary events that is only few pages long with a plot presented by paragraphs.

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF A SHORT STORY

- It has no prescribed length but generally shorter than a novel.
- It is built on themes.
- it is presented in form of paragraphs
- Its plot is developed by employing different styles of writing e.g.: Suspense, Flash back and foreshadowing.
- It has well defined characters.

## 2. NOVEL

This is an inverted written long narrative prose, and typically published as a book, that describes characters and events in a more sequential form in different chapters.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A NOVEL

- It is longer than a short story
- It is mostly comprised of chapters
- It is built on some themes
- It consists of a diversified plot
- It has well defined characters

## 3. POETRY

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A literary work that uses concise, colourful, often rhythmic language to express ideas or emotions.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- Written in verses or stanzas
- Sometimes meanings are hidden behind verses
- Verses can be of different lengths

## 4. PLAY/DRAMA

'Drama' is a Greek word meaning 'action'. In classical Greek it is derived from 'I do'. Therefore, a Play or Drama is a specific mode of fiction represented in performance.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A PLAY/DRAMA

- It consists of actors and actresses.
- It tells the type of costume to be used
- It is meant to be acted.

## WHY DO WE STUDY LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

*(Importance of literature in English)*

- It helps learners to be critical thinkers within the academic and non-academic worlds
- It helps learners in developing the four language skills i.e. speaking, listening, reading and writing which are also necessary for their daily activities.

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- It is a source of entertainment to its readers or scholars
- It helps in developing and enriching ones vocabulary
- It exposes the learners to their own and other people's culture, traditional values and history of the world.
- Literature is also a source of income. In the modern society people have invaded into literature business thus selling of books, music, acting drama etc. in order to get money at the end.
- It enhances personal development.

## **TOPIC 2..... ELEMENTS OF LITERATURE**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE MAIN ELEMENTS OF LITERATURE**



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There are several elements of literature and these elements include:

- Character and characterization
- Setting
- Plot and Conflict in plot
- Theme
- Style
- Figurative language use
- Mood and atmosphere

**NOTE:** Before one starts to analyze any genre or form of literature. It is very important to master the elements of literature before students interact with any literature material. Teaching and learning process has changed in the modern times. In the past ages the teaching and learning process used to be teacher centred but in the modern times the teaching and learning process is encouraged to be learner centred. Learners must fully participate in literature lessons and teachers must only facilitate the teaching and learning process through guidance in achieving the success of the lesson.

With this methodology, learners are supposed to understand better the elements of literature so that they are able to produce and analyze different forms of literature. Once students understand these elements of literature, the teaching of literature can become easy as students can be able to read and analyze different forms of literature on their own simply by identifying the elements from the main text, and look at their effect as used in the piece of work.

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Let us critically analyze these different elements of literature in full details.

These are literary terms or language tools that are used when analyzing literary works. In general these elements of literature are Literature analysis Technical Terms.

## 1. PLOT

Refers to the cause and effect relationship of events OR it is the structure of a story OR the sequence in which the author arranges events in a story. It can also be referred to as the succession of events or what happens in a piece of literature. But Plot is not just the events of a narrative. Plot is the arrangement and the selection of events.

### Arrangement of events:

- Chronological
- Flashback and Flash-forward

### Selection of events:

-**Plot** shows how events are related to one another. There is a cause and effect relationship between the events that reveal character motivation, setting impact, and conflicts.

-The selection of events impacts that pace of the literary work. The selection of many events slows the pace of a literary work while the selection of fewer events speeds it up.

**Conflict:** This is a plot device that engages readers and develops a narrative. Characters are in conflict with one another, with their environment, or within themselves.

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**External conflicts** occur when characters are in conflict with other people or things. **Internal conflicts** occur when characters debate within themselves.

**Protagonist** is the main character that is in conflict with one or more antagonists.

**Antagonist** may be a person or may be other things such as forces in nature, forces of gods/divinities, or psychological traits that cause emotional or intellectual conflicts within the protagonist.

**NB: Plot** can be paraphrased as the series of events in a story and how they are interrelated. Let those studying literature understand that literature is built on the plot. It is the plot that helps the scholars to observe and understand what happens from **A** to **B** up **Z** in a story without isolation of the story's events.

## STRUCTURES OF PLOT

The plot of a story is made up of the following structures:

- Exposition
- Rising action (complication)
- Climax
- Falling action
- Resolution, denouement (catastrophe)

**Exposition** is the background of the story; it mainly consists of the events that are leading to the introduction of the story.

**Rising action** is the kind of conflict or inflicting events that take away the events in the exposition to come to the

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climax. In other words, the rising action is a bridge of events that occur between the exposition and the climax.

**Climax:** This is the highest point of interest in a piece of literature. Between the climax and the falling action, there is a crisis turning point.

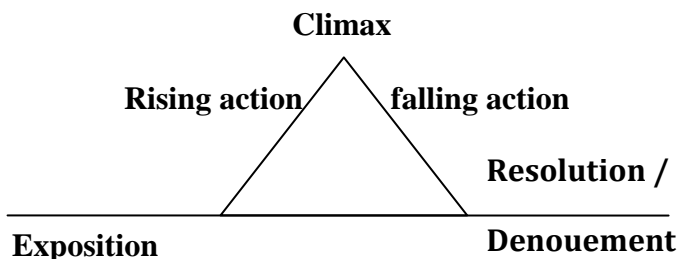
**Falling action:** This is the event that occurs just after the very highest event of interest in the story; most likely it directs the fiction towards its resolution.

Resolution is the ending of the fiction, if there is a conflict in a story, a resolution may be the events that resolve such conflict to the point that the readers expected.

This order is mostly followed by tragedies.

Based on this, it has been noted that the story may start with any of the named five structures of the plot. For example, it may start with the climax and the climax reveals its exposition through feedback technique.

The diagram below indicates the flow of the plot built by the structures mentioned above.



## CONFLICT IN THE PLOT

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It is very important to note that we can find **conflict** in the plot. Conflict may be referred to as the people or circumstances a character must face and try to overcome it. It is this element of conflict that causes the events to occur in the story. It makes the characters to engage in crucial decisions, actions, responses, interactions and making crucial decisions that build up the story. Characters can be in conflict.

## 2. CHARACTER & CHARACTERIZATION

**Character** refers to people, animals and objects taking a human role in the story.

For example: when we read ‘John is going to the market to buy mangoes’ it implies that **John** is a character in the story. In such cases, one can have questions like ‘’ identify one character from the story; or name any one character from the story who went to the market to buy mangoes?’’ The answer to such questions from the sample text given above is **John**.

- i. On the other side characterization means the way of describing characters by naming their characteristics, attributes, traits or behaviours of characters in different forms of literature. For example: ‘**Rhema** went to the hospital with different assorted items to cheer the sick.’ From such a statement we can tell by the works of **Rhema** that she is sympathetic. So the best way of describing Rhema from what she has done is to say she is sympathetic.

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- ii. However, from such assumed text we can be asked questions like: ‘Describe Rhema with one characterization’ Explain the characterization of Rhema as portrayed in the story’.

**NB: Characters** are actors in a literary work and **characterization** is the author’s presentation and development of such characters. Characters are often human beings but may also be supernatural beings, animals, or nonhuman entities/objects or things that take on human characteristics.

**Characterization** occurs through various techniques. The acronym for such techniques is **ODDCATS**.

- O.** Other characters
- D.** Description and Direct Comment
- D.** Dialogue
- C.** Culture
- A.** Actions
- T.** Thoughts and Feelings
- S.** Setting

**The acronym is discussed at length below:**

## **DESCRIBING CHARACTERS BY THE USE OF ODDCATS**

There are many ways in which we can get to know the characteristics of different characters. Before we come to these ways of describing characters it is very important to note that the word character which refers to people, animals or objects playing different roles in the story can also be used to refer to their characteristics. It is therefore very important for

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learners to be competent with English language so as to enjoy characterizing the characters as they study English literature.

## **Now let us examine the ways of describing characters (characterization).**

This is how we can get to know different attributes of different characters.

Example: For one to note that this man is cruel, you must have at first interacted with such attributes or ever come across them.

**Note:** However, adjectives are words that describe the nouns and it is very relevant for students to use adjectives to describe characters in literature.

Here are the ways:

1. **Through Action (what they are doing).** It is very simple to tell one's characterization simply by observing what he/ she is doing. For example when one character kills another character in the story, we can be able to tell that a person is brave, cruel and selfish from the action of killing and other reasons behind the killing.
2. **Through what we hear about them from other characters.** The moment we are reading a certain genre of literature and we hear that character **A** went to the garden at 4 o'clock am for farming, and the information has been articulated by character **B** we can tell that character **A** is hard working from what others like character **B** are saying about character A.
3. **From what the characters say.** We can also tell the characteristic of somebody simply by telling what is spoken by the characters themselves. For example if

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a character says 'he or I will never look back even if I face challenges in the process of my mission until I am successful,' we can simply tell the man is brave. Such characters are strong simply by listening to what they say.

4. **What characters think.** Sometimes we read in the stories what somebody is thinking through the critical reading of such people's mind by analyzing their thought, and we can tell the characterization of one's character.
5. **How they are relating with other characters.** Through dialogue and other external details given in the story, we can tell the attributes of different characters

It is very important to consider a combination of all these ways in order to establish qualities of different characters.

The acronym **ODDCATS** should however be your basic principle when describing characters in any piece of work.

## KINDS OF CHARACTERS

There are **two** general kinds of characters these are:

- a. Simple or flat characters
  - b. Complex or round characters. Some characters change (dynamic) and some stay the same (static).
- A. **Flat Characters** – Characters with one or two personality traits; easily identifiable; sometimes stereotypical.
  - B. **Round Characters** – Characters with numerous and sometimes conflicting personality traits. It may be



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difficult to pinpoint with certainty why they do what they do, what their values are. Round characters are more like real people than flat characters, and as readers we participate in the struggles of complex characters. They are also called dual characters; their duality is in the sense that they possess two different opposing traits.

**Static Characters**- Characters who remain the same throughout a literary work.

**Dynamic Characters**- Characters who change –; who alter their beliefs or behaviours in a literary work.

## TYPES OF CHARACTERS

There are two types of characters, these are:

- Protagonist
- Antagonist

### PROTAGONIST

This is the central character in the piece of literature. He is also known as the main or major character. The main events of the genres of literature are built on such characters. He stands to be the main focus of the story. He or she is the central character of the piece of literature.

### ANTAGONIST

These are minor or supporting characters. They help the main character achieve his goal. They may be working out things together or may try to oppose the protagonist.

## 3. SETTING

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Authors set their characters in a “world” with a particular location in place, time and culture. Setting is comprised of the physical details, the temporal details and the cultural details of that world.

- This clearly means setting deals with place and time an event occurs in the story.
- **Physical Setting**: The physical aspects of setting include all of the places where the action takes place. It includes the geography, the climate, and the physical objects. Physical setting may change from scene to scene.
- **Temporal Setting**: The temporal aspects of setting consist of three things: time in history, time of year, and time of day. Time greatly impacts character motivation and action.
- **Cultural Setting**: The cultural setting includes patterns of behaviour and beliefs that dominate the society in which the characters live. Family relationships, moral values, political systems, class structures, gender roles and race relations are all part of the cultural environment.

## TYPES OF SETTING

There are two main types of setting and these are:

- a. Integral setting
  - b. Backdrop setting
- 
- A. **Integral Setting**: This is the type of setting that fully describes both time and place, usually associated with Historical fiction.

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- B. Backdrop Setting:** This is the type of setting that is vague and general, and helps to convey a universal, timeless tale.

## SETTING CRITERIA

Setting is divided into three main criteria and these include:

### **i. Geographical setting**

This is the actual place and time where events usually occur in the piece of literature. The place where characters, live, play, entertain themselves, walk, pray, chat, and do any other activities. Geographical setting exposes the rural and urban components of setting. However it may also reveal the semi urban set up of literature.

### **iii. HISTORICAL ELEMENT OF SETTING**

This type of setting element patterns to when the events occur mainly by focusing on years, country, place or society. Examples can be in colonial times, during independence, during American Civil War or in 21st century and in South Africa during the Apartheid. It can however reveal the actual years in which the events occur such as in 1994.

### **iv. PHYSICAL SETTING**

This is the actual place in which an event occurs. Such actual places can be in the house, in a tree, in a classroom, at the play field or in an animal farm.

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**NB:** In order to depict the setting criteria or elements of setting in literature, we look at the following things:

- Manufactured setting
- Temporal or cultural environment
- Natural environment e.g. Hills, valleys, mountains etc.
- The season of the year and the century
- The conditions of the day in which events occur such as: the day, morning and night.

## 4. THEME

A theme is a main idea or underlying meaning of any literary work that may be stated directly or indirectly.

### TYPES OF THEMES

There are two types of themes and these include:

- a. Major themes
- b. Minor themes

**MAJOR THEMES:** These are the main ideas just as they sound, developed from the more important and enduring events of a narrative. They reflect the values and motivations of the characters.

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**MINOR THEMES:** These are themes developed from events that happen to certain characters only or something that happens in a narrative. It can also be referred to as a subject.

E.g. Hope.

## 5. STYLE

This is the literary element that describes the ways that the author uses words. Thus, the author's word choice, sentence structure, figurative language use or speech, arrangement of all thoughts working together to establish mood, images and meaning in a text.

It can also be defined as the way a writer pens his or her narrative and it is a technique **which an individual author uses.**

### TYPES OF STYLES IN A FICTION

- A. Flashback
- B. Foreshadowing
- C. Suspense
- D. Point of view

#### A. FLASHBACK

This is a style of writing in which the author brings in a sudden, brief relocation to previous time and then, just as suddenly, a return to the present story. A flashback in a character is depicted as the character

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narrates or meets a situation which is reminding him or her of what happened in the past.

## **B. FORESHADOWING**

This is a literary device in which the author uses in his writing by giving us a hint of what is to come later in the story. It appears at the beginning of the story or chapter or at the rising action of the plot to help the reader develop events that are to occur in the story.

## **C. SUSPENSE**

This is the element of both fiction and nonfiction that makes the reader uncertain about outcomes. Without suspense in stories, a reader would lose interest in the story. Dramatic irony is the other way of using suspense. This occurs when the audience or the reader knows something that characters do not know such a technique is used in most of Shakespearean plays such as Othello and Romeo and Juliet.

In most of the novels, chapters end without necessarily completing the action.

## **D. POINT OF VIEW**

This is a mode of narration in which the author employs to help the readers hear and see what takes place in the story or poem. This is done by deliberately developing an angle of considering

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things, which show us the opinion, or feelings of the individual involved in a situation.

## TYPES OF POINT OF VIEW

### **I. First person point of view**

It involves the use of either of the two first personal pronouns “**I**” and “**we**”. So when we read a story where by the author uses such pronouns to represent some other characters in the story, it translates that the point of view used in his or her writing is the first person point of view. It means that the author is one of the characters in the story when he uses “**I**” and it means that he is amongst the characters when he uses “**we**”.

### **II. Second person point of view**

This is when the author uses the second personal pronoun “**you**” in his or her writing. The use of the second personal pronoun makes the reader feel he or she is part of the characters building the story. It makes the reader to be more involved. When such characters being referred as to “**you**” meet some troubles in the story, the reader feels like he or she is the one suffering.

### **III. Third person point of view**

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This is when the writer uses the third personal pronouns to refer to other characters in the story. Such pronouns include '**he, she, it, they** or specific **names** of characters'. In such type of narration, it is as though the narrator or author knows everything about the characters being referred to as "**he, she, it, they** or by their specific **names**". Such a technique is also called **Omniscient point of view** or **Omniscient narration**. The narrator tells us how the characters are expected to behave. The author/narrator knows all the feelings and thoughts of the characters in the story.

**NB:** This is the point of view exposed by the author in **Tale of Tamari**.

## ***6. TONE, MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE***

**Tone** is the author's attitude toward the writing (his characters, the situation) and the readers. A work of writing can have more than one tone. An example of tone could be both serious and humorous. Tone is set by the setting, choice of vocabulary and other details.

**Mood** is the general **atmosphere** created by the author's words in the very actual senses of the reader. It is the feeling the reader gets from reading those words. It may be the same, or it may change from situation to situation.

### **How does this fit in?**

Authors set a TONE or MOOD in literature by conveying an emotion or emotions through words. The



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way a person feels about an idea, event, or another person can be quickly determined through *facial expressions, gestures and in the tone of voice used.*

**MOOD:** (*sometimes called atmosphere*) this is the overall feeling of the work.

**Mood** defines the emotions that you (*the reader*) feel while you are reading. Some literature makes you feel sad, others joyful, and angry.

I.e. The main purpose for some poems is to set a mood.

Writers use many devices to create mood, including images, dialogue, setting, and plot. Often a writer creates a mood at the beginning of the story and continues it to the end. However, sometimes the mood changes because of the plot or changes in characters.

➤ **Examples** of MOOD include: suspenseful, joyful, depressing, excited, anxious, angry, sad, tense, lonely, suspicious, frightened, disgusted

**TONE:** the way feelings are expressed

**Tone** is the attitude that an author takes toward the audience, the subject, or the character. Tone is conveyed through the author's words and details. Use context clues to help determine the tone.

In literature an author sets the tone through words. The possible tones are as boundless as the number of possible emotions a human being can have. Has anyone ever said to you "Don't use that tone of voice with me?" Your tone

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can change the meaning of what you say. Tone can turn a statement like, "You're a big help!" into a genuine compliment or a cruel sarcastic remark. It depends on the context of the story.

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## **Words That Describe**

### **Tone**

Amused  
Humorous  
Pessimistic  
Angry  
Informal  
Playful  
Cheerful  
Ironic  
Pompous  
Horror

Light  
Sad  
Clear  
Matter-of-fact  
Serious  
Formal  
Resigned  
Suspicious  
Gloomy  
Optimistic  
Witty  
Joyful  
Suspenseful

## **Words That Describe**

### **Mood**

Fanciful  
Melancholy  
Frightening  
Mysterious  
Frustrating  
Romantic  
Gloomy  
Sentimental

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## IDENTIFYING TONE & MOOD

For each example identify the tone, what context clues are used to convey the tone, and the overall mood of the sentence.

a. Drawing the attention of his classmates as well as his teacher, the student dared to experiment with his professor's intelligence by interrogating him about the Bible.

Tone:

---

---

---

Mood:

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---

---

b. He furtively glanced behind him, to hear of his imagined pursuers, then hurriedly walked on, jumping at the slightest sound even of a leaf crackling under his own foot.

Tone:

---

---

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Mood:

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---

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**NB:** I am very optimistic that this study on Tone, Mood and Atmosphere has increased your knowledge on the study of literature and that you can come up with a Tone, Mood and general atmosphere from a given text. After you have read each chapter of Tale of Tamari try to identify the Tone, Mood and general Atmosphere of the text.

## 7. FIGURATIVE SPEECH

- i. **HYPERBOLE:** It refers to an expression of exaggeration
- ii. **SYMBOLISM:** Refers to the use of an object to represent an idea
- iii. **PERSONIFICATION:** This is the assigning of human qualities to non-human thing
- iv. **SIMILE:** A is the comparison of two things, often dissimilar, using the connecting words: “like”, “as” or “than”.
- v. **METAPHOR:** This is the comparison of two dissimilar things without using the words “as” or “like” OR a figure of speech that compares two unlike things without the use of “like” or “as”
- vi. **TONE:** The attitude a writer takes towards a piece of literature.
- vii. **RHETORICAL QUESTION:** A figure of speech in the form of a question posed for its

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persuasive effect without the expectation of a reply.

- viii. **SARCASM:** A type of verbal irony in which, under the guise of praise, a caustic and bitter expression of strong and personal disapproval is given. Sarcasm is personal, jeering, and intended to hurt.
- ix. **SATIRE:** A work that reveals a critical attitude toward some element of human behaviour by portraying it in an extreme way. Satire doesn't simply abuse (as with invective) or get personal (as with sarcasm). Satire usually targets groups or large concepts rather than individuals; its purpose is customarily to inspire change
- x. **IMAGERY:** It is the use of words to create images in the mind of the reader. The readers can actually see, hear, feel, taste or smell something by just reading a piece of literature. The readers are what make up imagery. Thus in imagery five senses can be explored to produce the desired effort.
- xi. **IRONY:** This is the way of saying something whereby the actual is the opposite

## ***TYPES OF IRONY***

### **a. Verbal Irony**

In this type, what is said means just the opposite OR it is when the author says one thing and means something else.

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## **b. Dramatic Irony**

In dramatic irony one of the characters is unaware of what is happening and believes the opposite of what appears to be. However the audience is aware of the truth but cannot do anything about it. OR this is when an audience perceives something that a character in the work of literature does not know.

## **c. Situational Irony**

This is when what appears to be in a certain situation is actually the direct opposite of it OR is the discrepancy between the expected result and actual results OR in this Irony the discrepancy is between appearance and reality or between expectations and fulfilment.

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## TOPIC 3.....DRAMATIC ELEMENTS

**Dramatic Terms:** These are the technical words employed in drama/play

**Act:** A major division in a play. It act can be sub-divided into scenes. (See scene).

### **Play Structure**

The five act structure was originally introduced in Roman times and became the convention in Shakespeare's period. In the 19th century this was reduced to four acts and 20th century drama tends to favour three acts. You will notice that Macbeth has five Acts.

**Antagonist:** A character or force against which another character struggles. Examples:

### **Apron:**

The part of a proscenium stage that sticks out into the audience in front of the proscenium arch.

**Aside:** Words spoken by an actor directly to the audience, but not "heard" by the other characters on stage during a play.

### **Blocking:**

Movement patterns of actors on the stage. Usually



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planned by the director to create meaningful stage pictures.

## **Box-set:**

A set built behind a proscenium arch to represent three walls of a room. The absent fourth wall on the proscenium line allows spectators to witness the domestic scene. First used in the early nineteenth century. Catharsis: The purging of the feelings of pity and fear. According to Aristotle the audience should experience catharsis at the end of a tragedy.

**Character:** An imaginary person that inhabits a literary work. Dramatic characters may be *major or minor, static (unchanging) or dynamic (capable of change)*. Example: Just as Macbeth and lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play 'Macbeth' can be referred to as Major character. We must however realise that it is possible to have major or minor characters that are either static or dynamic in nature.

**Chorus:** A traditional chorus in most tragedy plays are a group of characters who comment on the action of a play without participating in it. On the other side, a modern chorus serves a similar function but has taken a different form; it consists of a character/narrator coming on stage and giving a prologue or explicit background information or themes. Example 1. *Modern Chorus* –

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*The Prologue in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, which gives the background to the action.*

**Climax:** The turning point of the action in the plot of a play and the point of greatest tension in the work. (See Appendix 1: Freytag's Pyramid)

**Comedy:** A dramatic work in which the central motif is the triumph over adverse circumstance, resulting in a successful or happy conclusion. Comedy can be divided into:

- a. visual comedy
- b. verbal comedy.

Within these two divisions there are further subdivisions. *For example visual comedy includes farce and slapstick. Verbal Comedy includes satire, black comedy and comedy of manners.*

**Comic Relief:** Comic relief does not relate to the genre of comedy. Comic relief serves a specific purpose: it gives the spectator a moment of "relief" with a light-hearted scene, after a succession of intensely tragic dramatic moments. Typically these scenes parallel the tragic action that they interrupt. Comic relief occurs regularly in Shakespeare's tragedies.

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**Conflict:** There is no drama without conflict. The conflict between opposing forces in a play can be in two kinds. These are

a. External (between characters)

B. Internal (within a character)

In most cases such conflicts are usually resolved by the end of the play.

**Complication:** An intensification of the conflict in a play. **Convention.** **Soliloquies**, (which are not realistic) are accepted as part of the dramatic convention.

**Denouement / Resolution:** Literally the action of untying. A denouement (or resolution) is the final outcome of the main complication in a play. Usually the denouement occurs **AFTER** the climax (the turning point or "crisis"). It is sometimes referred to as the explanation or outcome of a drama that reveals all the secrets and misunderstandings connected to the plot. (See Appendix 1: Freytag's Pyramid)

**Deus Ex Machina:** When an external source resolves the entanglements of a play by supernatural intervention. The Latin phrase means, literally, "a god from the machine." The phrase refers to the use of artificial means to resolve the plot of a play.

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**Dialogue:** The conversation of characters in a literary work. In plays, characters' speech is preceded by their names.

**Diction:** According to the Cambridge Dictionary, diction is “the manner in which words are pronounced.” Diction, however, is more than that: It is a style of speaking. In drama diction can

- (1) Reveal character
- (2) Imply attitudes
- (3) Convey action
- (4) Identify themes
- (5) Suggest values.

We can speak of the diction particular to a character.

**Dramatic Irony:** A device in which a character holds a position or has an expectation reversed or fulfilled in a way that the character did not expect but that the audience or readers have anticipated because their knowledge of events or individuals is more complete than the character's.

## **Dynamic-Character:**

This is the character that undergoes an important change in the course of the play- not changes in circumstances, but changes in some sense within the character in

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question -- changes in insight or understanding or changes in commitment, or values.

## **Exodos:**

The final scene and exit of the characters and chorus in a play.

**Exposition:** “The first stage of a fictional or dramatic plot, in which necessary background information is provided”. (See Appendix 1: Freytag’s Pyramid). In most drama the characters have to expose the background to the action indirectly while talking in the most natural way. What any person says must be consistent with his character and what he knows generally. Exposition frequently employs devices such as gestures, glances, “asides” etc.

**Falling Action:** This is when the events and complications begin to resolve themselves and tension is released. We learn whether the conflict has or been resolved or not.

**Flashback:** An interruption of a play's chronology (timeline) to describe or present an incident that occurred prior to the main time-frame of the play's action.

**Flat Characters:** Flat characters in a play are often, but not always, relatively simple minor characters. They tend to be presented though particular and limited traits; hence they become stereotypes. For example, the selfish

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son, the pure woman, the lazy child, the dumb blonde, etc. These characters do not change in the course of a play.

**Foil:** A secondary character whose situation often parallels that of the main character while his behaviour or response or character contrasts with that of the main character, throwing light on that particular character's specific temperament.

**Linear Plot:** A traditional plot sequence in which the incidents in the drama progress chronologically; in other words, all of the events build upon one another and there are no flashbacks. Linear plots are usually based on causality (that is, one event "causes" another to happen) Instances of linear plot are more commonly associated with comedy than other genres of literature.

**Monologue:** A speech by a single character without another character's response. The character however, is speaking to someone else or even a group of people. (see soliloquy below) Examples: Shakespeare's plays abound with characters talking with no one responding.

**Motivation:** The thought(s) or desire(s) that drives a character to actively pursue a want or need. This want or need is called the objective. A character generally has an overall objective or long-term goal in a drama but may change his or her objective, and hence motivation, from scene to scene when confronted with various obstacles.

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## **Point-of-attack:**

The point in the story at which the playwright chooses to start dramatizing the action.

**Plot:** The sequence of events that make up a story. *‘The plot must be ‘a whole’* thus a good plot must have a beginning, middle, and end’ A plot needs a motivating purpose to drive the story to its resolution, and a connection between these events. Example: “The king died and then the queen died.” Here there is no plot. Although there are two events – one followed by the other – there is nothing to tie them together. In contrast, “The king died and then the queen died of grief,” is an example of a plot because it shows one event (the king’s death) being the cause of the next event (the queen’s death). The plot draws the reader into the character’s lives and helps the reader understand the choices that the characters make.

**Plot Structure:** See Appendix 1: Freytag’s Pyramid  
**Point of attack:** The point in the story of a play where the plot begins. This may occur in the first scene, or it may occur after several scenes of exposition. The point of attack is the main action by which all others will arise. It is the point at which the main complication is introduced. Point of attack can sometimes work hand in hand with a play’s inciting incident, which is the first incident leading to the rising action of the play. Sometimes the inciting incident is an event that occurred

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somewhere in the character's past and is revealed to the audience through exposition.

## **Proscenium-Arch:**

An architectural element separating the performance area from the auditorium in a theatre. The arch functions to mask stage machinery and helps create a "frame" for the stage action.

## **Prologue:**

(1) The prologue in traditional Literature is defined as either the action or a set of introductory speeches before the first entry of the chorus. Here, a single actor's monologue or a dialogue between two actors would establish the play's background events.

(2) In Modern literature, the prologue serves as explicit exposition introducing material before the first scene begins. The prologue is performed/delivered by the chorus. (See Chorus) Examples: A chorus gives a prologue with the background information as to the feud between the families in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

**Props:** Articles or objects that appear on stage during a play. Props can also take on a significant or even symbolic meaning.

**Protagonist:** The main character of a literary work.

**Recognition:** An ability to see denouement.



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**Repertory:** A system of producing plays in which a company of actors is assembled to stage a number of plays during a specific period of time. The repertory company included actors, each of whom played roles in several plays throughout a theatrical season and who often specialized in a specific type of role  
**Resolution:** The sorting out or unravelling of a plot at the end of a play, novel, or story. (See Appendix 1: Freytag's Pyramid)

**Reversal or Peripatetic:** The point at which the action of the plot turns in an unexpected direction for the protagonist- from failure to success or success to failure.

**Rising Action:** An event, conflict or crisis or set of conflicts and crises that constitute the part of a play's plot leading up to the climax. (See Appendix 1: Freytag's Pyramid)

**Round Characters:** A round character is depicted with such psychological depth and details that he or she seems like a "real" person. The round character contrasts with the flat character who serves a specific or minor literary function in a text, and who may be a stock character or simplified stereotype. If the round character changes or evolves over the course of a narrative or appears to have the capacity for such change, the character is also dynamic. In longer plays, there may be several round characters.

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**Satire:** A literary work that criticizes human misconduct and ridicules vices, stupidities, and follies.

**Scenery:** The physical representation of the play's setting (location and time period). It also emphasizes the aesthetic concept or atmosphere of the play.

**Strophe (& Antistrophe):** A portion of a choral ode in Greek tragedy followed by a metrically similar portion, the antistrophe. The words mean “turn” and “counter-turn,” suggesting contrasting movements of the chorus while the ode was being sung. These two parts are sometimes followed by an epode, during which the chorus may have remained stationary

**Soliloquy:** A speech meant to be heard by the audience but not by other characters on the stage (as opposed to a monologue which addresses someone who does not respond). In a soliloquy only the audience can hear the private thoughts of the characters.

**Stage Direction:** A playwright's descriptive or interpretive comments that provide readers (as well as actors and directors) with information about the dialogue, setting, and action of a play. Modern playwrights tend to include substantial stage directions, while earlier playwrights typically use them more sparsely, implicitly, or not at all. (See gesture). Staging: The spectacle a play presents in performance, including the position of actors on stage, the scenic background,

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the props and costumes, and the lighting and sound effects.

**Static Character:** A literary or dramatic character who undergoes little or no inner change; a character who does not grow or develop.

**Suspension of Disbelief:** Basically the term means that you accept something as real or representing the real when it obviously is not real. In drama this is a crucial condition, as “you have to put aside put aside your disbelief and accept the premise as being real for the duration of the story”

**Stock Character:** A recognizable character type found in many plays. Comedies have traditionally relied on such stock characters as the miserly father, the beautiful but naïve girl, the trickster servant.

**Subplot:** A subsidiary or subordinate or parallel plot that coexists with the main plot.

**Tragedy:** A type of drama in which the characters experience reversal of fortune, usually for the worse. In tragedy, suffering awaits many of the characters, especially the hero.

**Tragic flaw:** A weakness or limitation of character, resulting in the fall of the tragic hero.

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**Tragic hero:** a privileged, exalted character of high repute, who, by virtue of a tragic flaw and/or fate, suffers a fall from a higher station in life into suffering,.

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## TOPIC 5.....CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### GETTING INTO THE PLAY

- Author: William Shakespeare
- Background
- Based on a true story
- Macbeth, as a person, actually lived
- Written in 1606 in England for King James who was obsessed with witches
- Is William Shakespeare's shortest and bloodiest play.
- Takes place in Scotland (think guys in kilts ala Brave heart)
- Is a cursed play- productions of the play have been plagued with accidents and deaths.

### PLAY SETTING

*Remember setting deals with place and time events occur in a fiction. When it comes to play/drama setting can best be describes as place and time of action associated with actors.*

### Setting Description

The setting of Macbeth is in Scotland and England in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The start of the play foreshadows the play as a tragedy just by the portrayal of fogginess and a terrible thunderstorm taking place. Most action takes place in Macbeth's castle and later, the palace in Dunsinane. *Macbeth* is actually the only Shakespearean play set in Scotland, some people connecting it to the reality in which King James IV of Scotland was crowned

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King James I of England. This occurred in 1603 after Queen Elizabeth died, thus allowing King James to become the king of England a few years before the play was even written. Although the play was written in 1606, it takes place in Scotland of medieval times, around the time the actual characters lived. The stage setting of the play included minimal furniture, excessive darkness, and often thunderous sound effects giving into the feel of a tragedy.

## **Specific settings in Macbeth**

- Scotland
- Inverness – Macbeth’s Castle
- Forress - Duncan’s Castle
- Fife – Macduff’s Castle
- Birnam wood – The forest near Dunsinane Hill
- Dunsinane Hill – Macbeth’s Castles stands there.

## **Other details about the Inverness**

### **a. Inverness:**

- This is where Macbeth’s Castle is.
- This is where Macbeth and Lady Macbeth kill Duncan.

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**NB:** This castle has a pleasant seat. The air nimbly and sweetly recommends itself unto our gentle senses (1.6.1-3).

The air is delicate (1.6.12).

- The witches' statement '*fair is nit foul, and foul is not fair*' can be applied to the setting a well. From outside the Castle seem very nice (*fair*), but on the inside Macbeth and his wife are planning Duncan's murder (*foul*).

## *Macbeth Character Descriptions*

### **1. The Three Witches (Female, Any Age)**

Three "black and midnight hags" who plot mischief against Macbeth using charms, spells, and prophecies. Their predictions prompt him to murder Duncan, to order the deaths of Banquo and his son, and to blindly believe in his own immortality.

#### **a. Macbeth (Male, 30s-40s)**

He is a Scottish general and the thane of Glamis who is led to wicked thoughts by the prophecies of the three witches, and seduced by his wife into committing murder to fulfil his ambitions to the throne. Once he commits his first crime and is crowned King of Scotland,

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he embarks on further atrocities with increasing ease  
thus becoming a dreadful tyrant.

## **2. Lady Macbeth (Female, 30s-40s)**

A deeply ambitious woman who lusts for power and position. Early in the play she seems to be the stronger and more ruthless of the two, as she urges her husband to kill Duncan and seize the crown. After the bloodshed begins, however, Lady Macbeth falls victim to guilt and madness to an even greater degree than her husband.

## **3. Macduff (Male, 30s-40s)**

A Scottish nobleman hostile to Macbeth's kingship from the start. He eventually becomes a leader of the crusade to unseat Macbeth. The crusade's mission is to place the rightful king, Malcolm, on the throne, but Macduff also desires vengeance for Macbeth's murder of Macduff's wife and young son.

## **4. Lady Macduff\* (Female, 30s-40s)**

Macduff's wife. She and her children are murdered by Macbeth in order to consolidate power.

## **5. Young Macduff\* (Young Boy, 10-12)**

Macduff's youngest son. Murdered by Macbeth.

## **6. Banquo (Male, 30s-40s)**



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The brave, noble general whose children, according to the witches' prophecy, will inherit the Scottish throne. Like Macbeth, Banquo thinks ambitious thoughts, but he does not translate those thoughts into action, and is eventually murdered by Macbeth.

## **7. Malcolm (Male, 20s-30s)**

The son of Duncan, whose restoration to the throne signals Scotland's return to order following Macbeth's reign of terror.

## **8. Duncan (Male, 50s-60s)**

The good King of Scotland whom Macbeth, in his ambition for the crown, murders. Duncan is the model of a virtuous, benevolent, 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. Will also play the role of Siward.

## **9. Angus (Male, Any Age)**

Scottish Thane, advisor to Duncan

## **10. Lennox (Male, Any Age)**

Scottish Thane, advisor to Duncan

## **11. Ross (Male, Any Age)**

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Scottish Thane, advisor to Duncan

## **12. Caithness (Female, Any Age)**

Scottish Thane and soldier

## **13. Menteith (Female, Any Age)**

Scottish Thane and soldier

## **14. Donalbain (Female, 20s-30s)**

Duncan's daughter and Malcolm's younger sister.

## **15. Fleance (Male, Teens to 20s)**

Banquo's son, who survives Macbeth's attempt to murder him, □ will also play the role of Young Siward

## **17. Seyton (Male, Any Age)**

Macbeth's servant and chief advisor. He is an active conspirator in Macbeth's crimes and reign of terror.

## **18. Siward (Male, Any Age)**

English Lord who aids the Thanes in overthrowing Macbeth. □ will also play the role of Duncan

## **19. Young Siward (Male, Teens to 20s)**

Siward's son. He is killed by Macbeth in hand-to-hand combat. □ will also play the role of Fleance

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## **20. Captain (Male, 20s-50s)**

Scottish soldier who fights in battle first with Macbeth, then against him. □ will also play the role of the Doctor

## **21. Murderers 1 and 2 (Male, Any Age)**

A group of ruffians conscripted by Macbeth to murder Banquo, Fleance, and Macduff's wife and children. They become Macbeth's personal guard and advisors.

## **22. Gentlewoman (Female, Any Age)**

Lady Macbeth's maid.

## **23. Doctor (Male, Any Age)**

A doctor called upon to treat Lady Macbeth's madness.  
□ will also play the role of the Captain

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## TOPIC 5 .....ACT AND SCENE UMMARIES

### *Acts and Scene Analysis*

#### *Reading Notes Act 1 Scene 1*

The witches make plans to meet after a battle is over. They will meet at sunset, in the rain and thunder on a heath with Macbeth. (The battle is between Norway and Scotland.)

#### *Important Lines*

1.1.11 “Fair is foul and foul is fair” = a Paradox= a contradiction.

Right from the beginning of the play, things aren’t always what they appear to be

Duncan= King of Scotland (we know Macbeth is going to die, Macbeth is going to kill him)

Malcolm= Duncan’s oldest son

Sergeant= wounded and bleeding from battle (this means that the king is very close to the battle) and is reporting to the king about the war

#### **Key Words:**

Thane= a nobleman

-Lennox and Ross are noblemen. So are Macbeth and Banquo.

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## **Reading Notes Act 1 Scene 2**

The sergeant reports that “doubtful it stood”- the battle could have gone either way. Macdonwald, a Norwegian soldier, was merciless. Macbeth “unseamed him from navel to chops and fixed his heads upon the battlement” (cut him in half and beheaded him). Macbeth is a pretty incredible soldier. Macbeth and Duncan are 1st cousins. Duncan praises Macbeth’s effort in the war. The Sergeant reports of how the battle went back and forth, but the Sergeant can’t finish his report because of his wounds. Lennox and Ross finish the report for him. They tell of the Thane of Cawdor and how he assisted the Norwegians fight against Scotland, but in the end Scotland won the war. Duncan orders the execution of the Thane of Cawdor. Duncan gives his title, money and land to Macbeth as a reward (but Macbeth doesn’t know it yet). Macbeth is already the Thane of Glamis.

## **Reading Notes Act 1 Scene 3**

The three witches are on a heath. It is thundering and lightning. They are casting a spell on a sailor because his wife wouldn’t share her chestnuts. They curse him not to sleep for 81 weeks. To top it off they curse him to sail in a ship tossed by storms that they won’t allow to sink. They won’t let him die, because torture is more evil. They are pretty bitter, cruel and angry.

## ***Important Terms:***

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**Aside:** a part of an actor's lines supposedly not heard by others on the stage and intended only for the audience; or lines spoken to only one other character on the stage.

## *Some important dramatic elements*

**Thane:** a nobleman

**Paradox:** a contradiction

**Setting:** On a heath, in a thunderstorm, after the battle.

Macbeth says “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (paradox- foul= it is raining and he is tired from fighting in the battle; fair= they won the war). Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches on the heath. Banquo insults the witches. Not a good idea after they just cursed someone’s husband after she didn’t share her chestnuts. He describes them as wild, bearded, alien-looking, wrinkly, creepy, thin-lipped and corpse-like. The witches make three predictions. They give two to Macbeth.

1: He will become the Thane of Cawdor (we know that this will come true, because King Duncan has ordered the execution of the current Thane of Cawdor, but

The witches disappear and Ross and Angus enter. They tell Macbeth and Banquo the news of the execution of the Thane of Cawdor, and give Macbeth his title. Macbeth speaks in an aside. Macbeth is interested in the possibility of Macbeth doesn’t know this yet)

2: Macbeth will be king (But remember Malcolm and Donalbain are in line for the throne before him). Banquo

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asks the witches for a prediction too. They speak in paradoxes. *“Lesser than Macbeth and greater”, “Not so happy, yet much happier”*.

3: They tell him that he will not be king, but his sons will be kings. Macbeth Summary Notes becoming king. Banquo warns Macbeth that the witches may have bad intentions. Macbeth thinks about killing his way to the crown, but he doesn't want to. The thought of murdering scares him- it is different from killing in war. He decides to let fate take over- he will wait and see what happens. He decides not to kill anyone.

## **Reading Notes Act 1 Scene 4:**

**Setting:** At Forres, King Duncan's castle.

The King wants to know if the Thane of Cawdor has been executed. Malcolm reports that he confessed to being a traitor- then died. Duncan said “He was a gentleman on whom I built an absolute trust.” Duncan trusts Macbeth as well. Macbeth says he loves the king and lives to serve him. Malcolm is named the successor to the throne- the “crown prince”. This makes the lineage to the throne official. In an aside Macbeth says that he has two choices

1. Give up and forget about being king or
2. kill to be king. Macbeth has murder on his mind. Duncan, Macbeth, Malcolm, Donalbain and all the thanes plan to go to Macbeth's castle at Inverness to celebrate their recent victory.

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## **Reading Notes Act 1 Scene 5:**

**Setting:** At Inverness, Macbeth's castle.

Lady Macbeth is reading a letter Macbeth has written her about the witches prediction that he will be king and the prediction that he would gain the title of "Thane of Cawdor" coming true. Lady Macbeth says that Macbeth will be king, but that she thinks he is too nice to kill to get the title. Macbeth is ambition, but she doesn't think he has the evil qualities to go with it. She wants Macbeth to come home so she can tell him what to do. Lady Macbeth "wears the pants in the relationship". She is in charge. When Duncan comes to the castle tonight she is going to make sure he dies. She calls on the help of "spirits" to make her evil, strong and powerful (this reminds us of the witches). She wants the strength of a man. She wants to be able to kill without remorse. When Macbeth returns, she tells him of her plans and that she will take care of everything. Macbeth doesn't want to hear of it and doesn't want to do it. Lady Macbeth ignores him and tells him to leave everything to her.

### **Terms to Know:**

**Dramatic Irony** - When we know more than the characters.

**Soliloquy**- a character talking to themselves/ the audience while alone on stage

## **Reading Notes Act 1 Scene 6:**



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Duncan and the thanes reach the castle and meet with Lady Macbeth. Duncan is respectful and nice to her. Lady Macbeth is a good faker. She puts on a false face and is polite and nice to Duncan, but we know she is planning his murder as they speak.

## **Reading Notes Act 1 Scene 7:**

### **“The Seduction Scene”**

Macbeth is torn between his loyalty to his king and family and his ambition. He wants to be king, and Lady Macbeth wants to be queen, but he is frazzled and distressed at the thought of murdering for the crown. He is struggling to determine what to do. He is worried about what might happen if he murders Duncan. He worries about his own death and karma. He knows murdering Duncan is wrong.

### **Macbeth’s thought process:**

Pros Cons Macbeth gets to be king Duncan is family (his cousin) Macbeth is Duncan’s subject and he should be loyal to him Macbeth is Duncan’s host and he should protect him, not murder him Duncan is a good king The people of Scotland will be sad Lady Macbeth comes in. Macbeth says he won’t kill the king. Lady Macbeth taunts him. She makes fun of him. She says he is afraid and calls him a coward. She emasculates him (makes him less of a man). She insults his masculinity. She manipulates him. She says if he is king she will be impressed with him more. She reminds him that he promised to do this- she says if she promised to kill her child for him, she would. She is psychotic.

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## **Lady Macbeth's plan:**

Step 1: Get guards drunk.

Step 2:

Use guard's daggers to kill Duncan (frame the guards)

Step 3: Act sad when the body is discovered

## **What about Malcolm and Donalbain?**

- They might think Malcolm did it because he just became the crown prince.

## **Reading Notes Act 2 Scene 1:**

‘Scene before the murder’

Banquo and Macbeth talk about the witches predictions. Macbeth says he hasn't thought about them- it is a lie. Macbeth running into Banquo right before he is planning to kill Duncan is a reminder that predictions were made for Banquo as well. Banquo is going to be suspicious that Macbeth killed Duncan because he knows about Macbeth's predicted to become king.

Macbeth is thinking dark thoughts. He is upset, confused and hallucinating. There is a lot of dark imagery- murder, blade, fatal vision, gouts of blood; dagger of the mind, nature seems dead, wicked dreams. Macbeth is worried about the consequences of his actions. He sees the hallucination of a dagger in front of him that is

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leading the way to Duncan. He is going to kill the king but he doesn't want to. He is still very much conflicted.

He hears a bell. This is his signal that the guards have passed out and everything is clear for him to go ahead with the murder. The murder happens offstage...

## **Recap of the plan:**

- 1- Get the guards drunk
- 2- Take their daggers
- 3- Kill Duncan with them
- 4- Smear the guards with blood
- 5- Leave the daggers

## **Reading Notes Act 2 Scene 2:**

### **‘During/ Immediately Following the Murder’**

Lady Macbeth got the guards drunk and drugged their wine. She is calm. Lady Macbeth is alone while Macbeth is killing Duncan. If Duncan hadn't looked like her father she says she would have killed him herself. Lady Macbeth is clearly the one in charge. Macbeth enters and is frantic. His hands are covered in blood. He is full of regret for the murder. He is convinced the guards (or Malcolm and Donalbain) woke up and were talking while he was murdering. His guilt is weighing on him. Macbeth forgot to leave the daggers on the guards. Lady Macbeth chastises him and takes them

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back and smears the blood on the guards to incriminate them. She calls the sleeping and the dead “pictures”. Macbeth is left alone. Knocking is heard at the castle door. Macbeth says he wishes the knocking could wake Duncan. Hi ways a whole ocean couldn’t wash the blood from his hands. His emotional state isn’t good. Lady Macbeth talks about how easy it was to kill Duncan and says **“a little water clears us of this deed”**. They wash up and put on their nightgowns. We notice the exchange of role here; Macbeth has taken the **“female”** role, and Lady Macbeth the **“male”**.

## Character Reaction Line(s)

Macduff -thane -freaked out -OMG -wakes up the house  
-suspects Macbeth -68-69

Lady Macbeth -fake OMG -pretty good faker -“faints” to  
take attention away from Macbeth -95.

Banquo -doesn’t believe it -suspects Macbeth - wants to  
figure out what really happened -96 -132.

Macbeth -kills the bodyguards -talks too much -112 -  
114-123.

Malcolm -crown prince -they look suspicious -they are  
worried they’re next -think that splitting up is the best  
way to stay safe -decides to flee to England -141-152.

Donalbain -they look suspicious -they are worried  
they’re next -think that splitting up is the best way to  
stay safe -decides to flee to Ireland Recap

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## **Reading Notes Act 2 Scene 3:**

Duncan is dead. Malcolm and Donalbain ran away. They look guilty of their father's murder. They separated. One went to England, one went to Ireland. Macbeth freaked out and killed the guards. This made him look suspicious and guilty to Duncan's sons, Macduff and Banquo.

A few weeks have gone by since Act 2. Macbeth is now king. Lady Macbeth is queen. Banquo is alone. He speaks in a soliloquy. Banquo is suspicious that Macbeth killed Duncan. He remembers his own prediction that he will be the father of kings. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are planning a banquet in Banquo's honour. Banquo tells Macbeth that he and his son Fleance are going to go riding before the banquet that night. Banquo and Macbeth talk about Malcolm and Donalbain who are now in England and Ireland. Macbeth talks about how Malcolm and Donalbain won't confess to the murder of their father, King Duncan. Macbeth speaks in a soliloquy. He wants to be sure he is going to stay king. He knows Banquo is smart and will figure out that he killed Duncan.

## **Reading Summary Act 3 Scene 1**

Macbeth is afraid of Banquo because he knows about the witches' predictions and because of his own prediction (Banquo's sons will be kings). Macbeth is king but it isn't good enough- he wants to be safely and permanently king. Macbeth knows there is no security in his position with Banquo and Fleance alive. Macbeth

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says that if Banquo's sons get to be kings then he has killed Duncan for them. Macbeth has decided to kill Banquo and Fleance. He isn't the same old Macbeth. He is more decisive and sounds more like Lady Macbeth.

Macbeth meets with two murderers. The murderers are homeless, hungry and desperate. Macbeth blames their problems on Banquo. Macbeth is pretty calm. He seems to have lost some part of his moral compass. He views Banquo and Fleance's deaths as just a job that needs to be done. This is completely different from his state of mind before he killed Duncan. Macbeth can't kill them himself because he is king now. He is afraid of damaging his reputation and losing friends if he directly orders them to be killed or if he is caught killing them himself. He sounds like Lady Macbeth when he convinces the murderers to kill. He manipulates them and compares them to dogs. He tells the murderers to 1- kill Banquo and Fleance 2- tonight 3- while they are out riding away from the castle.

## **Recap Act 3 Scene 1**

Banquo is suspicious of Macbeth. Macbeth plans Banquo's murder.

1- He hires 2 murderers.

2-

He manipulates them and tells them they are poor and homeless because of Banquo.

3-

He tells the murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance while

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there are out riding their horses away from the castle that night. Macbeth wants to make sure that his position as king is safe and secure.

- They are more distant as a couple

## *Reading Summary Act 3 Scene 2*

Lady Macbeth and Macbeth aren't as close as they used to be. They don't interact as passionately as they used to. Macbeth is talking more, but isn't giving Lady Macbeth any important information. Lady Macbeth is in the dark about Macbeth's plan to kill Banquo and Fleance. During the day Macbeth is afraid someone is going to kill him and at night he has nightmares (lines 16-24). Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth to be nice to Banquo at the banquet later tonight. He tells her to put on a false face and hide her true feelings (echoes what Lady Macbeth tells Macbeth to do in Act 1 Sc 5 before he kills Duncan). Lady Macbeth doesn't want Macbeth to kill Banquo, she says they'll die soon enough. Macbeth ignores her. He asks for the help of night- he sounds like Lady Macbeth when she asks for help to convince Macbeth to murder King Duncan. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth seem to have switched roles. Macbeth has been corrupted by two things- the power of the crown and guilt.

Differences in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's Relationship

- They appear to have switched personalities o Macbeth talks more, Lady Macbeth talks less o Macbeth is now

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doing the planning of the murders o Lady Macbeth isn't  
in control Reading Summary Act 3 Scene 3

The three murderers attack Banquo and Fleance while they are out riding in the woods. Banquo is killed, but he tells Fleance to run, and he escapes. Banquo tells Fleance to get revenge. Macbeth will be angry.

Macbeth Summary Notes Reading Summary Act 3  
Scene 4: Banquet Scene

The banquet is in full swing. One of the murderers enters to speak with Macbeth. He reports that he killed Banquo but Fleance escaped. Macbeth is worried that Fleance will get revenge for his father's death. When Macbeth returns to his chair he begins acting strangely- he sees the ghost of Banquo sitting in it (no one else can see the ghost). Lady Macbeth tries to do damage control and says he has had "fits" since he has been young. She is trying to have Macbeth keep it together.

## **Reading Summary Act 3 Scene 4:**

### **Banquet Scene (continued)**

Lady Macbeth tries to do damage control and says he has hit "fits" since he has been young. She is trying to have Macbeth keep it together. Macbeth gives himself away by repeating the word "murder" and describing Banquo's wounds. When they find his body it will be very suspicious. Macbeth is going to go to sleep and then go back to the witches to learn more predictions.

### **Apparition**



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## *Reading Summary Act 4 Scene 1*

The witches cast a spell. They put lots of gross things into their cauldron- bit of people and animals. They say “something wicked this way comes”- and Macbeth enters. He wants more information from the witches and he will get it directly from their masters in the form of apparitions (ghosts-like visions).

### *Warning Macbeth's Interpretation/Plan*

1. Armed Head (Severed head with a helmet on it)

Beware Macduff He will kill him.

2. Bloody Baby (a just born baby) No one born of woman can kill Macbeth. Macbeth doesn't think he has to worry about anything, but he will still kill Macduff just to be sure.

3. Crowned child carrying a tree (a child with a crown on his head who is carrying a tree) Macbeth will not be defeated until Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane hill Macbeth can't be killed until a whole forest moves. Macbeth thinks he is safe and that the warning is impossible.

4. 8 kings holding mirrors followed by a smiling Banquo. Banquo will still be the father of 8 kings

This is too problematic for Macbeth. He is not happy about this.

Lennox enters and says Macduff fled to England where Malcolm was spreading word that Macbeth was the

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murderer of King Duncan. Macbeth is not happy with this and decides to murder Mac duff's family- his wife, children and all of his relatives. Macbeth decides to no longer think, and plan before he acts- he will now make all of his decisions impulsively and act on them immediately.

## Recap of 3.4 and 4.1

Macbeth threw a banquet for Banquo, but he was already dead. One of Macbeth's hired murderers visits Macbeth during the banquet and tells him that Banquo was killed, but Fleance escaped. During the banquet Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo and talks of murder. Lady Macbeth tries to smooth things over, but eventually they have to tell the thanes to leave. Things don't look good. Macbeth decides he is going to act now without thinking. Macbeth visits the witches and got 4 more predictions:

## Apparition

### *Warning Macbeth's Interpretation/Plan*

1. Armed Head Beware Macduff He will kill him.
2. Bloody Baby none born of woman can kill Macbeth. Macbeth doesn't think he has to worry about anything, but he will still kill Macduff just to be sure.
3. Crowned child carrying a tree Macbeth will not be defeated until Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane hill Macbeth can't be killed until a whole forest moves.

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Macbeth thinks he is safe and that the warning is impossible.

4. 8 kings holding mirrors followed by a smiling Banquo. Banquo will still be the father of 8 kings Problematic for Macbeth. He is not happy about this. Macbeth is informed that Macduff has fled to England. Macbeth orders the slaughter of Macduff's family.

Macbeth had killed all of Macduff's family (wife, children, all!). Lady Macbeth is sleepwalking and talking in her sleep. Her gentlewoman has observed her obsessively washing her hands for 15 minutes at a time **(Like Macbeth in Act 2.2 she is talking about how much blood is on her hands)** and talking of the murders of Macduff's family, Duncan and Banquo. Lady Macbeth must also constantly have light by her. This is a big change from when she asks for the help of darkness. She is paranoid, tired and starting to lose her mind. The guilt is getting to her.

## *Reading Summary Act 5 Scene 1*

### *'The Sleepwalking Scene'*

She is a very different Lady Macbeth from earlier. The doctor and gentlewoman are worried she may hurt herself. Scotland is unofficially at war. Everyone has turned against Macbeth. They are trying to overthrow him because of the murders he has committed. SCOTLAND ENGLAND Macbeth Macduff Fleance Malcolm Donalbain Menteith Caithness Lennox Angus English Army (10,000 soldiers)

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## **Reading Summary Act 5 Scene 2**

The thanes gather to discuss their abandonment of Macbeth. They say he is a bad king. Pretty much everyone knows about his murderers. Macbeth is still feeling confident because of the witches' predictions. His servant tells him that there are ten thousand soldiers gathering to fight against him. Macbeth is not afraid, but gets ready for battle. He says he has lived long enough. He knows that his way of life will not lead to old age, that it is a way of life that comes with an early death without honour. He is determined to fight until his flesh is hacked from his bones (5.3.33-34).

## **Reading Summary Act 5 Scene 3**

The doctor tells Macbeth that Lady Macbeth is not well and her illness is mental, not physical. Macbeth's only reaction is to tell the doctor to "cure her".

## **Reading Summary Act 5 Scene 4**

### **'Crowned Child Carrying a Tree'**

Malcolm and Macduff meet in front of Birnam Wood and make a plan for the English army to conceal their numbers by cutting branches from the trees and carrying them as they march to Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane. This will make the witches third prediction/warning come true. We know Macbeth will die.

## **Reading Summary Act 5 Scene 5**

### **Lady Macbeth's Death**

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Macbeth says (line 9) “I have almost forgot the taste of fears”- Macbeth seems to not have feelings anymore- but it bothers him that he isn’t bothered by the horrible screams of the women. He admits to being a murderer- and that nothing should surprise him anymore. His major characteristic is that he is a “bad guy” now- but he isn’t evil- he still has a conscience. Seyton tells him that Lady Macbeth is dead (she committed suicide). Macbeth says (lines 17-28) “She should have died hereafter...” Macbeth does not react strongly to her death. He is very calm. He compares life to a “walking shadow”, a “brief candle”, a “poor player” (actor), and a “tale” (story). Candle= short; Shadow= dark, empty; Actor= not real/fake; Tale= fake. Macbeth feels that life is meaningless. Macbeth hears that Birnam Wood is coming to Dunsinane and he knows he will be defeated.

## **Reading Summary Act 5 Scene 6**

Malcolm, Macduff and the English Army are about to launch their attack on Macbeth’s castle. The first group will be Young Siward; the second will be Macduff and Malcolm. They don’t know Macbeth is fighting alone.

## **Reading Summary Act 5 Scene 7**

### **‘Battle Scene’**

Macbeth fights Young Siward and kills him. Macbeth remarks “Thou wast born of woman”. Macbeth still feels slightly invincible. Macduff enters the castle vowing revenge for his slain family.

## **Reading Summary Act 5 Scene 8**

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## ‘Macbeth vs. Macduff’

Macbeth contemplates suicide, but decides to kill more before he dies. Macbeth does not want to fight Macduff because he has killed too many of his family members already. Macbeth states that he can't be killed by a man born of a woman, but Macduff reveals that he was born by a C-section- a loophole in the witches' prediction/warning. Macbeth is beheaded and the last of the witches predictions comes true (beware Macduff). Malcolm is crowned king.

### **TOPIC 6....OTHER IMPORTANT DRAMATIC ELEMENTS**

#### **ANALYSIS ON THEMES, SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS**

**Explore the different symbols within William Shakespeare's tragic play, Macbeth.**

**Themes** are fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

**Symbols** are central to understanding Macbeth as a play and identifying Shakespeare's social and political commentary.

**Motifs** are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

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## UNDERSTAND THE FOLLOWING CENTRAL CONCEPTS IN MACBETHS DEVELOPEMENT OF THEME, SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS

**The fall of Man.** The ancient Greek notion of tragedy concerned the fall of a great man, such as a king, from a position of superiority to a position of humility on account of his ambitious *pride, or hubris*. To the Greeks, such arrogance in human behaviour was punishable by terrible vengeance. The tragic hero was to be pitied in his fallen plight but not necessarily forgiven: Greek tragedy frequently has a bleak outcome. Christian drama, on the other hand, always offers a ray of hope; *hence, Macbeth ends with the coronation of Malcolm, a new leader who exhibits all the correct virtues for a king.*

Macbeth in general is a symbol. The play exhibits elements that reflect the greatest Christian tragedy of all: **the fall of Man**. In the Genesis story, it is the weakness of Adam, persuaded by his wife (who has in turn been seduced by the devil) which leads him to the proud assumption that he can "play God." But both stories offer room for hope: Christ will come to save mankind precisely because mankind has made the wrong choice through his own free will. In Christian terms, although Macbeth has acted tyrannically, criminally, and sinfully, he is not entirely beyond redemption in heaven. Fortune,

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Fate, and Free Will Fortune is another word for chance. The ancient view of human affairs frequently referred to the "Wheel of Fortune," according to which human life was something of a lottery. One could rise to the top of the wheel and enjoy the benefits of superiority, but only for a while. With an unpredictable swing up or down, one could equally easily crash to the base of the wheel.

**Symbol of Fate**, on the other hand, is fixed. In a fatalistic universe, the length and outcome of one's life (destiny) is predetermined by external forces. In Macbeth, the Witches represent this influence. The play makes an important distinction: Fate may dictate what will be, but how that destiny comes about is a matter of chance (and, in a Christian world such as Macbeth's) of man's own choice or free will.

Although Macbeth is told he will become king, he is not told how to achieve the position of king: that much is up to him. We cannot blame him for becoming king (it is his Destiny), but we can blame him for the way in which he chooses to get there (by his own free will). **Kingship and Natural Order** Macbeth is set in a society in which the notion of honour to one's word and loyalty to one's superiors is absolute. At the top of this hierarchy is the king, God's representative on Earth.

Other relationships also depend on **loyalty**: comradeship in warfare, hospitality of host towards guest, and the



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loyalty between husband and wife. In this play, all these basic societal relationships are perverted or broken. Lady Macbeth's domination over her husband, Macbeth's treacherous act of regicide, and his destruction of comrades and family bonds, all go against the natural order of things.

The medieval and renaissance view of the world saw a relationship between order on earth, the so called microcosm, and order on the larger scale of the universe, or macrocosm. Thus, when Lennox and the Old Man talk of the terrifying alteration in the natural order of the universe — tempests, earthquakes, darkness at noon, and so on — these are all reflections of the breakage of the natural order that Macbeth has brought about in his own microcosmic world. Disruption of Nature Violent disruptions in nature — tempests, earthquakes, darkness at noon, and so on — parallel the unnatural and disruptive death of the monarch Duncan.

The medieval and renaissance view of the world saw a relationship between order on earth, the so-called microcosm, and order on the larger scale of the universe, or macrocosm. Thus, when Lennox and the Old Man talk of the terrifying alteration in the natural order of the universe (nature), these are all reflections of the breakage of the natural order that Macbeth has brought about in his own microcosmic world (society).

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Many critics see the parallel between Duncan's death and disorder in nature as an affirmation of the divine right theory of kingship. As we witness in the play, Macbeth's murder of Duncan and his continued tyranny extends the disorder of the entire country. Gender Roles; Lady Macbeth is the focus of much of the exploration of gender roles in the play. As Lady Macbeth propels her husband toward committing Duncan's murder, she indicates that she must take on masculine characteristics. Her most famous speech — located in Act I, Scene 5 — addresses this issue.

Clearly, **gender is out of its traditional order**. This disruption of gender roles is also presented through Lady Macbeth's usurpation of the dominate role in the Macbeth's marriage; on many occasions, she rules her husband and dictates his actions. Reason Versus Passion; During their debates over which course of action to take, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth use different persuasive strategies. Their differences can easily be seen as part of a thematic study of gender roles. However, in truth, the difference in ways Macbeth and Lady Macbeth rationalize their actions is essential to understanding the subtle nuances of the play as a whole.

Macbeth is very rational, contemplating the consequences and implications of his actions. He recognizes the political, ethical, and religious reason why he should not commit regicide. In addition to

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jeopardizing his afterlife, Macbeth notes that regicide is a violation of Duncan's "double trust" that stems from Macbeth's bonds as a kinsman and as a subject.

On the other hand, Lady Macbeth has a more passionate way of examining the pros and cons of killing Duncan. She is motivated by her feelings and uses emotional arguments to persuade her husband to commit the evil act.

## MOTIFS

**Motifs** are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

**Hallucinations Visions and hallucinations** recur throughout the play and serve as reminders of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's joint culpability for the growing body count. When he is about to kill Duncan, Macbeth sees a dagger floating in the air. Covered with blood and pointed toward the king's chamber, the dagger represents the bloody course on which Macbeth is about to embark. Later, he sees Banquo's ghost sitting in a chair at a feast, pricking his conscience by mutely reminding him that he murdered his former friend. The seemingly hard-headed Lady Macbeth also eventually gives way to visions, as she sleepwalks and believes that her hands are stained with blood that cannot be washed away by any amount of water. In each case, it is ambiguous whether the vision

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is real or purely hallucinatory; but, in both cases, the Macbeths read them uniformly as supernatural signs of their guilt. Violence Macbeth is a famously violent play. Interestingly, most of the killings take place offstage, but throughout the play the characters provide the audience with gory descriptions of the carnage, from the opening scene where the captain describes Macbeth and Banquo wading in blood on the battlefield, to the endless references to the bloodstained hands of Macbeth and his wife. The action is bookended by a pair of bloody battles: in the first, Macbeth defeats the invaders; in the second, he is slain and beheaded by Macduff. In between is a series of murders: Duncan, Duncan's chamberlains, Banquo, Lady Macduff, and Macduff's son all come to bloody ends. By the end of the action, blood seems to be everywhere. Prophecy sets Macbeth's plot in motion—namely, the witches' prophecy that Macbeth will become first thane of Cawdor and then king. The weird sisters make a number of other prophecies: they tell us that Banquo's heirs will be kings that Macbeth should beware Macduff that Macbeth is safe till Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and that no man born of woman can harm Macbeth. Save for the prophecy about Banquo's heirs, all of these predictions are fulfilled within the course of the play. Still, it is left deliberately ambiguous whether some of them are self-fulfilling—for example, whether Macbeth wills himself to be king or is fated to be king. Additionally, as the Birnam Wood and

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“born of woman” prophecies make clear, the prophecies must be interpreted as riddles, since they do not always mean what they seem to mean.

## SYMBOLS

**Symbols** are objects, characters, figures, and colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

- **Blood** is everywhere in Macbeth, beginning with the opening battle between the Scots and the Norwegian invaders, which is described in harrowing terms by the wounded captain in Characters, Themes, Symbols and Motifs **Act 1, scene 2**. Once Macbeth and Lady Macbeth embark upon their murderous journey, blood comes to symbolize their guilt, and they begin to feel that their crimes have stained them in a way that cannot be washed clean. “Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?” Macbeth cries after he has killed Duncan, even as his wife scolds him and says that a little water will do the job (2.2.58–59). Later, though, she comes to share his horrified sense of being stained: “Out, damned spot; out, I say . . . who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?” she asks as she wanders through the halls of their castle near the close of the play (5.1.30–34). *Blood symbolizes*

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*the guilt that sits like a permanent stain on the consciences of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, one that hounds them to their graves.*

- **The Weather:** As in other Shakespearean tragedies, Macbeth's grotesque murder spree is accompanied by a number of unnatural occurrences in the natural realm. From the thunder and lightning that accompany the witches' appearances to the terrible storms that rage on the night of Duncan's murder, *these violations of the natural order reflect OR symbolise corruption in the moral and political orders*

## THEMES

The list is of the major themes and motifs within Macbeth and provided examples of scenes where you can study them or refer to for a wider understanding of the concepts.

## Themes

➤ Themes are the central message of a fiction.

- Ambition
- Kingship
- Fate and free will
- Appearance and reality

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## Motifs

➤ Motifs are the recurring elements and patterns of imagery in Macbeth which support the play's themes. This is the reason this guide exposes themes not in isolation but in line with the motifs.

- Nature / The natural world
- Light and darkness
- Children
- Blood
- Sleep
- Visions

## Themes

➤ **Ambition and the devastation as results of ambition overstepping moral boundaries.**

Some related scenes:

- Act 1 Scene 5: Lady Macbeth receives Macbeth's letter, analyses his character, and invokes the forces of evil.
- Act 1 Scene 7: Macbeth reflects on what is needed to achieve his ambition and Lady Macbeth taunts him to 'screw your courage to the sticking place.'
- Act 3 Scene 1: Macbeth determines to kill Banquo in order to prevent his children succeeding to Scotland's throne.

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➤ **Kingship and the difference between appropriate use of power and tyranny.**

Some related scenes:

- Act 1 Scene 7: Macbeth reflects on Duncan's qualities as king.
- Act 3 Scene 6: Lennox and another lord discuss life under Macbeth's rule.
- Act 4 Scene 3: Malcolm and Macduff compare tyranny to honourable kingship.

➤ **Fate and free will and the extent to which we control our own destinies.**

Some related scenes:

- Act 1 Scene 3: Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches on the heath. Macbeth reflects on their prophecies.
- Act 2 Scene 1: Macbeth talks with Banquo about their encounter with the witches, sees a visionary dagger and makes his decision to kill Duncan.
- Act 6 Scene 1: Macbeth visits the witches who offer him further prophecies.

➤ **Appearance and reality, and how people and events are often not as they seem.**



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Some related Scenes

- Act 1 Scenes 1 and 2: The witches invoke confusion ('Fair is foul, and foul is fair').
- Act 1 Scene 4: Duncan reflects on the traitorous Thane of Cawdor and ironically rewards Macbeth with this title, saying, 'I have begun to plant thee, and will labour/to make thee full of growing.'
- Act 1 Scene 6: Duncan remarks on the Macbeths' castle having 'a pleasant seat' as the Macbeths plot his murder.

## Motifs

- **Nature /The natural world and its disruption when the bounds of morality are broken.**

For example:

- 'Against the use of nature' Act 1 Scene 3
- "Tis unnatural,/ Even like the deed that's done.' Act 3 Scene 4
- 'And his gash'd stabs looked like a breach in nature' Act 3, Scene 1
- 'Boundless intemperance/ In nature is a tyranny.' Act 4, Scene 3

- **Light and darkness, representing innocence and evil.** For example:

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- 'Stars, hid your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires' Act 1 Scene 4
- 'that darkness does the face of earth entomb, /When living light should kiss it?' Act 4 Scene 2
- 'Come, steeling night, / Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day' Act 3 Scene 2

➤ **Children, as a representation of the future and a highlight evil when abused.**

For example:

- 'Your children shall be kings.' Act 1 Scene 3
- 'And pity, like a naked new-born babe,' Act 1 Scene 7
- 'I have given suck, and know / How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me' Act 1 Scene 7
- 'He has no children. All my pretty ones?' Act 4 Scene 3

➤ **Blood, representing evil plans and consequences of overreaching ambition.**

For

example:

- 'Make thick my blood' Act 1 Scene 5
- 'And on thy blood and dungeon gouts of blood/which was not so before. There's no such thing:/It is the bloody business which informs thus to mine eyes.' Act 2 Scene 1
- 'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?' Act 2 Scene 1
- 'Here's the smell of blood still.' Act 5 Scene 1

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- **Sleep, a natural process and its disruption as caused by the fracture of the moral order.** For example:

- 'Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse / The curtain'd sleep' Act 2 Scene 1
- 'There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!' Act 2 Scene 2
- 'Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more! / Macbeth does murder sleep' Act 2 Scene 2
- 'we may again / Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights' Act 3 Scene 6
- 'A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching!' Act 5 Scene 1

- **Visions, representing the extensions of a guilty conscience.** For example:

- 'Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible / to feeling as to sight? Act 2 Scene 1
- 'Hence, horrible shadow! Unreal mockery, hence!' Act 3 Scene 4
- 'Wash your hands; put on your nightgown; look not so pale! I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried.'
- Act 5 Scene 1
- 'My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still' Act 5 Scene 7

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## **LITERATURE ESSAY WRITING**

This is a process of arranging ideas in relation to the work of art in a very well presented and a unified way.

This process must involve telling what you want to tell, then tell and at the end retell what you have told but now in a very brief way.

### **Essay Structure**

- A. A good literature essay must have three main components. This means that it must have a well-developed style that extends ideas in a unified way.

### **Essay Style**

#### **i. Introduction**

This is a stage whereby a student is expected to introduce the topic being discussed in the essay. Literature essays demand the students to just give a topic sentence highlighting what the write-up is all about. A single statement is enough to introduce the essay.

Sometimes a student is expected to define the question key word in his or her introduction.

**E.g.** *In an essay form, discuss any four themes exposed in the novel 'Tale of Tamari'.*

#### **Introduction Sample**

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- A. Not that the key word in this essay is **‘themes’** so a student is expected to definite theme in the introduction and tell what the essay is all about.

You can therefore write this as your introduction:

*The word theme refers to the main message in a piece of literature. This essay therefore intends to examine four themes as portrayed in the novel ‘Tale of Tamari’.*

**NOTE:** Your introduction must not be personalized. Thus it **mustn’t** show that it’s you writing it.

E.g. My essay examines..... or in this essay **I** will explain the four themes.....

**This is wrong doing! DO not employ any pronoun to possess the write up rather open it. It must explain itself.**

## ii. **Body**

The body is the paragraphs that follow the introduction. The body tells what the essay is all about. A literature essay must go straight to outlining the key point, explaining it and later giving examples as evidence of what you are talking about.

Do not number your paragraphs.

E.g. If we are to write a body responding to the very same question of themes as exposed as an example in .I. above:

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*To begin with, there is a theme of cruelty. This theme of cruelty is exposed through the conduct of Uncle Banda. He is so cruel to both Kuda and Tamari who are also orphans in the sense that he plans to collect the monthly house rentals from the lodgers living in the children's house which was left to them by their parents without considering that the children need the money for their survival in terms of school fees and food. As a result of this these children suffer as they do not have any other avenues to source funds for a living*

**NB:** Your essay's body needs to have well developed paragraphs. For the JUNIOR LEVEL, it should at least have four paragraphs as its body.

The paragraphs shouldn't mix points..... For example don't combine two themes in one paragraph.

### iii. Conclusion

It must be a brief paragraph that comes after the body and it must be a summary of what the essay, mainly the body has explained.

Do not mention points explained in the body again. Simply write something like this as your essay conclusion:

**E.g.** *This essay has examined four themes that are portrayed in the novel 'Tale of Tamari'.*

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This statement is enough to be used as your concluding remark.

Just as we said in the introduction, in the ending, you must not even personalize the write up. Don't write;

'In this essay 'I' have explained..... or 'My' essay has explained.....the use of personal pronouns 'I' and 'my' are wrong. **Do not Own OR Personalise the write up.**

## MACBETH ESSAY QUESTIONS

### *Practicing questions*

1. How does the play portray evil as a perversion of human nature? Show how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have to go against their own natures in order to kill Duncan. Trace the effect the betrayal of human nature has on each of them.
2. How does the imagery of disease function in Macbeth? Trace the way in which evil works on Macbeth and on Scotland like a sickness. Find imagery to support the idea that Malcolm and Macduff "heal" the country by overthrowing Macbeth.
3. As Macbeth becomes more evil, how do his feelings change? Start by exploring how his feelings at the beginning of the play are much like anybody else's. Trace the way in which his feelings about people and his responses to events became twisted and abnormal.

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4. How does evil work by deception? Contrast what Macbeth and Lady Macbeth believe they are gaining through murder with what they actually get. Do they deceive themselves, or are they deceived by others? Or both?

5. Supernatural events occur throughout the play. Discuss their dramatic function. Each time Macbeth encounters something supernatural – the witches, the floating dagger, a ghost – he moves more deeply into evil. List the supernatural events and comment on how each marks a step in Macbeth's downfall.

6. Do the supernatural events really occur, or are they projections of Macbeth's inner state? Some readers believe that the floating dagger, Banquo's ghost, and even the witches are products of Macbeth's imagination. Explore that possibility. Point out in what way, if any, the meaning of the play is changed by accepting or rejecting the reality of the supernatural.

7. Contrast Macbeth's imaginative nature to Lady Macbeth's pragmatic nature. Compare their attitudes toward Duncan's murder, both before and after the deed. Throughout the play, give instances of his poetic description of feelings and situations and her prosaic, practical way of thinking and expressing herself. Do their natures prepare us for what ultimately happens to each?



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8. How are Malcolm and Macduff foil characters to Macbeth? Compare Malcolm, the rightful king, with Macbeth. What motivates each of them? Does Malcolm care about his people? Does Macbeth? Compare the way Macbeth manipulates the two murderers for his own purposes and the way Malcolm temporarily deceives Macduff for the good of their country. How does Shakespeare establish Macduff as a good man? Show how Macduff's character is revealed through his actions and reactions. Focus on how he handles himself after Duncan's murder and after hearing that his wife and children have been killed.

9. How does the imagery of light and darkness work through the play? List instances of characters calling upon darkness to hide their evil deeds. Through light-dark imagery, trace the contest of good and evil.

10. Fate and destiny: what is a man's proper relation to them? Explore what the play is saying about this question by dividing the characters into two groups—those who trust their fate to a higher power, and those who take destiny into their own hands. Which group fares better?

11. Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's shortest plays. Discuss the economy of the writing. Show how each detail contributes to the advancement of the plot, and

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how Macbeth seems to plunge to his destruction at a sickening pace.

12. Discuss the use of dramatic tension in Macbeth. Chart what Shakespeare lets us know and what information he withholds from us in order to maintain suspense.

13. Social structure: How is the Scottish society of Macbeth's time ordered? How is peace maintained? Evaluate how Macbeth affects the social structure and what happens to it after Macbeth takes over.

14. How and to what extent does Macbeth's rise and fall mirror the experiences of your life in how people in your society rise and fall. Look carefully at such aspects as Macbeth's rise to king, the decisions he makes to secure his kingship, the way he treats those close to him and his subjects, the pressures he faces, mistakes he makes, his psychological breakdown.

15. To what extent do Macbeth's soliloquies present Macbeth in a more sympathetic light than if we were to judge him on the basis of his actions alone?

**THE END**

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