# Macbeth – Knowledge Organiser

## Plot

**1. Act 1** – This Act opens with the three Weird Sisters setting up the entire theme of the play: Fair is foul and foul is fair. A war is taking place against Scotland (the setting of this play) and Norway. Scotland is victorious due to the valiant efforts of Macbeth. The traitorous Thane of Cawdor is captured and executed. King Duncan decides to reward Macbeth with the title of Thane of Cawdor to show his gratitude. Three Weird Sisters confront Macbeth and Banquo, telling Macbeth that he will become Thane of Cawdor and eventually king. Macbeth soon learns of his new title fulfilling the first part of the prophecy and sends word to his wife. King Duncan plans on staying the night at Macbeth's home. Lady Macbeth receives the news and immediately plots the death of King Duncan so her husband will be king. Lady Macbeth manipulates Macbeth into following her plans. By the end of Act I, Macbeth is determined to follow the plan.

**2. Act 2** - Macbeth again has some doubts (and visions) but he talks himself into following through with the murder. Macbeth is so scared Lady Macbeth must finish the rest of the plan by wiping blood on the drunk guards. The next morning, Macduff and Lennox arrive at Macbeth's and Macduff discovers the dead body of King Duncan. The guards are immediately suspects and Macbeth kills them. Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's sons, flee the castle because they are afraid.

**3. Act 3** - Banquo begins to suspect Macbeth for the murder of King Duncan and Macbeth in turn feels that Banquo will reveal that it was he that killed the King. Therefore, Macbeth sends out some thugs to murder Banquo and his son, Fleance. Banquo is murdered, but Fleance escapes. Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Lennox, Ross, and other lords attend a banquet. The ghost of Banquo presents itself to Macbeth. Macbeth begins to rant and rave, making the other guests uneasy. Lady Macbeth tries to cover up the situation by saying Macbeth is prone to fits. By the end of this Act, we learn that Macduff has not attended the banquet because he has gone to England because he is suspicious of Macbeth.

**4. Act 4** - Macbeth confronts the three Weird Sisters and they show him more visions. The visions lead Macbeth to believe that he cannot be killed by any man, giving him a false sense of security. He then plans to send murderers to the castle of Macduff (who is in England) in order to kill his family. Meanwhile, Macduff is in England begging Malcolm to return to Scotland and seize the throne from Macbeth who has become a tyrant. Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty to Scotland and himself and after being satisfied with Macduff's responses, he agrees to wage war against Macbeth. Malcolm's uncle will also aid in the attack.

**5. Act 5** -Lady Macbeth has finally gone mad with guilt over the murders. The once strong and ruthless woman is now a scared child. She continually sleepwalks, whilst trying to clean her hands of blood. Doctors are unable to help her. Some of the Scottish lords are discussing Macbeth's state of mind and have come to the conclusion that they will help Malcolm and Macduff fight against Macbeth. Of course, Macbeth isn't really concerned because he believes the prophecy ensures that he cannot be killed by any man born of woman. Macbeth soon confronts Macduff and learns that Macduff was not born naturally. Macbeth and Macduff fight and the natural order is restored by the end of the play.

## 6. Punctuation

| Type | Example |
|---|---|
| Listing comma | Macbeth is brutal, violent, bloody and feared. |
| Parenthetic comma | Lady Macbeth, who is mad, kills herself. |
| Semi colon | Lady Macbeth is like a witch; she called on evil spirits. |
| Colon | Macbeth got what he deserved: his head chopped off. |
| Brackets for stage directions | [*aside*] Two truths are told… [*exuent*] |

## 7. Grammar

| Type | Example |
|---|---|
| Main clause | Because of his actions, Macbeth was killed. |
| Dynamic Verbs | His sword carved the enemy open. |
| Active voice | He chopped his head off. |
| Passive voice | His head was chopped off by him |
| Homophone | Where/wear There/their/they're |

## 8. Tier 3 Vocabulary

| 8. Tier 3 Vocabulary | Definition | Example |
|---|---|---|
| Soliloquy | An act of speaking one's thoughts aloud when by oneself or regardless of any hearers, especially by a character in a play. | "Glamis thou art, and Cawdor. Thou shalt be what thou art promised…" (1.5) |
| Aside | A remark or passage in a play that is intended to be heard by the audience but is supposed to be unheard by the other characters in the play. | Macbeth [*aside*]: "The Prince of Cumberland. That is step on which I must fall down, or else o'er leap". (1.4) |
| Subverting Gender Stereotype | When the character acts in a way that challenges the usual gender attributes. | Lady Macbeth: "Unsex me here and fill me from the crown to toe-top with direst cruelty". (1.5) |
| Semantic field | A group of words, which relate to a common theme or motif. | Semantic field: Death Murder, suicide, weapon, poison. |
| Metaphor | A figure of speech, which is not literal. | "…to full o' the milk of human kindness" |
| Dramatic irony | When the audience knows information the characters do not. | Macbeth having Banquo murdered. |
| Foreshadowing | To give an indication of what is to come. | A clue or hint is given at the start of a novel and reappears throughout. |

**9. Shakespeare Success Criteria – analytical response. Can I:**

- interpret the key ideas that the Shakespeare is communicating through his text? (What?)
- explore and develop explicit and implicit techniques that create meaning for the audience? (How? For what effect?))
- identify Shakespeare's techniques such as soliloquy and pathetic fallacy, and explore their effect on the audience?
- explore and comment on Shakespeare's intention within the text?
- Can I respond personally to the text and suggest alternative interpretations?
- explore and explain the use of techniques/conventions?
- explore how Shakespeare uses language to develop/create tone and atmosphere?
- explore and analyse quotations and key words to write interpretations?
- interpret the key ideas that Shakespeare is communicating through his text? (What?)
- explore contextual ideas from time of written and set and comment on attitudes towards gender etc?

**10. Command Words**

**Describe**: Write creatively, using a combination of metaphor, imagery, sensory language and adjectives.
**Express**: Write a clear point of view which is argued through supporting ideas, each organised in a different paragraph. Each idea is developed through realistic detail, persuasion and argument.
**Summarise**: Identify key ideas expressed by a writer and state each one simply, supporting it with a quick quotation and an inference.
**Analyse**: Using specific references to the text, usually a quotation, explain precisely how a writer has conveyed an idea through words and choices they have made.
**Compare**: Identify clear similarities or differences between the ideas in two texts, focussing particularly on the way that they have been conveyed.

**11. Key Characters**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Macbeth** | A loyal warrior who becomes duplicitous as he becomes obsessed with the witches' prophecies of power. |
| **Lady Macbeth** | Macbeth's wife who drives his ambition in the beginning but loses her control by the end. |
| **Banquo** | Macbeth's close friend and ally who also receives prophecies from the witches. |
| **Fleance** | Banquo's son who represents innocence and justice. |
| **Duncan** | King of Scotland at the beginning of the play who is portrayed as a strong and respected leader. |
| **Malcolm** | Duncan's oldest son and next in line to the throne. Joins the English army to defeat Macbeth at the end of the paly. |
| **Donalbain** | Duncan's youngest son disappears (to Ireland) after Duncan's murder, but never returns. |
| **Macduff** | Macbeth's antagonist: A brave warrior who is loyal to Duncan and is consistently suspicious of Macbeth. |

**12. Key themes**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Ambition** | Lady Macbeth |
| **Fate and Free Will** | Macbeth v Witches v choices |
| **Good and Evil** | Macduff v Macbeth |
| **The Supernatural** | Witches & Lady Macbeth |
| **Appearance and Reality** | "look like the innocent flower but be the serpent…" |
| **Light and Darkness** | "Nor **heaven** peep through the blanket of the dark" |
| Guilt | "Out damned spot" |
| **Gender** | Lady Macbeth challenges and controls Macbeth. |

**13. Top 10 quotations to learn**

a) **Witches**: Fair is foul and foul is fair (1.1)
b) **Banquo**: to win us to our harm the instruments of darkness tell us truths. Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's in deepest consequence. (1.3)
c) **Macbeth**: Stars, hide your fires/Let not light see my black and deep desires (1.4)
d) **Lady Macbeth**: Come, you spirits… Unsex me here (1.5)
e) **Macbeth**: 'this Duncan/Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been/ so clear in his great office. (1.7)
f) **Lady Macbeth**: When you durst do it, then you were a man (1.7)
g) **Macbeth**: Is this a dagger I see before me? (2.1)
h) **Macbeth**: Full of scorpions is my mind dear wife (3.2)
i) **Macbeth**: Blood will have blood (3.4)
j) **Lady M**: All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand (5.1) Out damned spot (5.1)

**14. Context:**

The 5 Acts: Macbeth is a typical tragedy. The first part builds up the turning point (Duncan's murder), and the second part deal with the consequences of this, which leads to the main character's downfall. Tragic Conventions: Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's Tragedies and follows specific conventions. The climax must end in a tremendous catastrophe involving the death of the main character; the character's death is caused by their own flaw(s) (hamartia); the character has something the audience can identify with which outweighs their flaws so we care about them.
The Real Macbeth: Macbeth is loosely based on true events in feudal Scotland in the 11th Century and
would have been known to King James. King James inherited the throne through his ancestors Banquo and Fleance who appear in the play.
Role of women: Women were expected to follow social expectations with their behaviour towards men. They were meant to obey all men, not be violent and be religious. Lady Macbeth reverts these expectations in the play to manipulate Macbeth in getting what she wants.
Superstition and witchcraft: At the time Shakespeare was writing, many people thought that witches were real, so the weird sisters would have seemed believable and frightening to an audience in the 1600s.