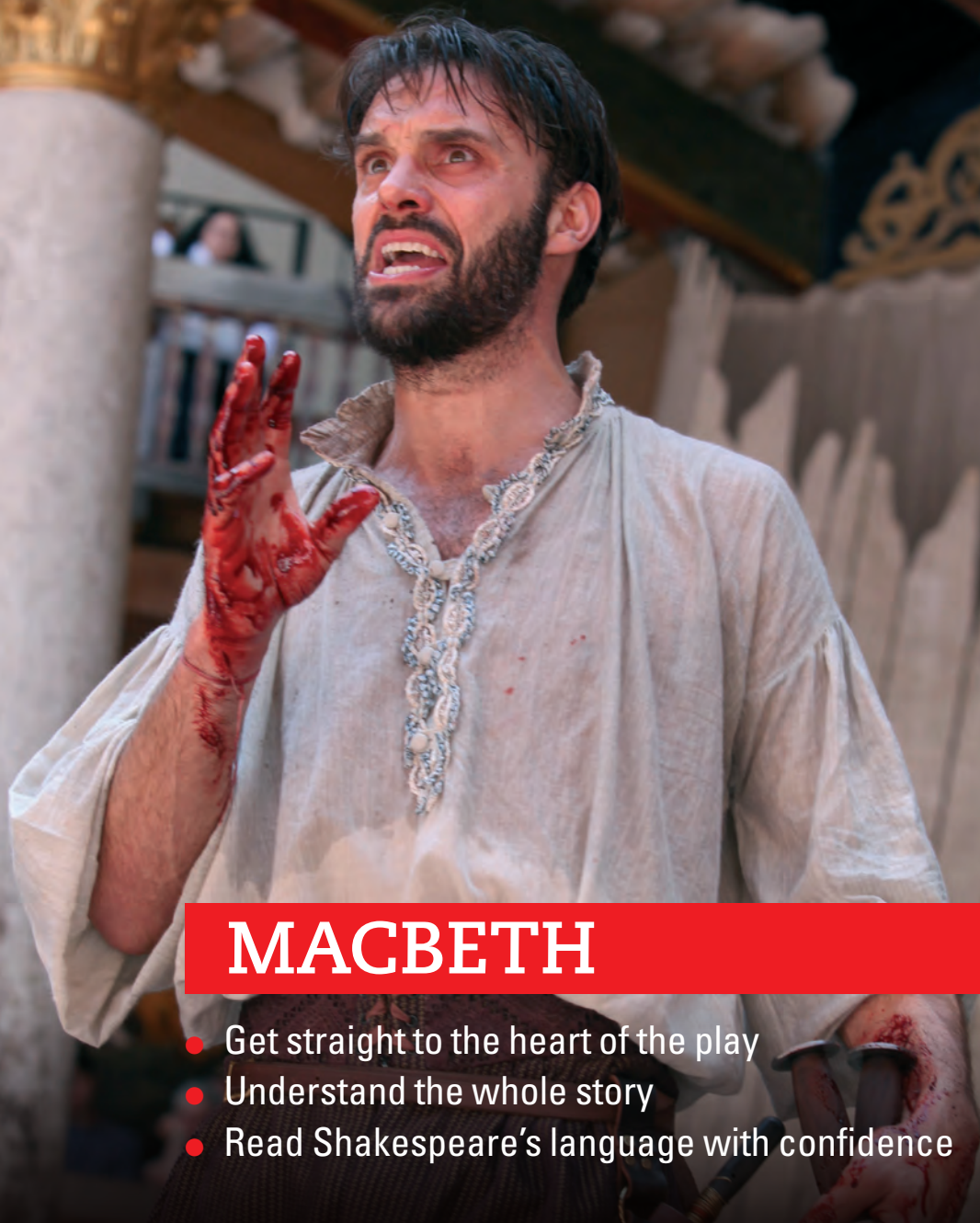




GLOBE EDUCATION SHORTER SHAKESPEARE



MACBETH

- Get straight to the heart of the play
- Understand the whole story
- Read Shakespeare's language with confidence

Introduction

Shakespeare the writer

Shakespeare would probably be amazed that you are studying one of his plays in school over 400 years after his death. He did not write his plays to be read, he wrote them to be performed. When he wrote, he expected a company of skilful actors to interpret and perform his play for an audience to listen to and watch. He did not even have the script of *Macbeth* printed. It was first printed in 1623 (seven years after Shakespeare’s death) in a collection of his plays known as the *First Folio*.

Prose and verse

Most of the time, Shakespeare wrote *blank verse* – verse where the ends of the lines do not rhyme. So what makes it verse? It has a rhythm. Normally there are ten syllables in every line. Shakespeare wrote the lines to be spoken with the stress on every second syllable. Try saying, “*baa-boom baa-boom baa-boom baa-boom baa-boom*”.

Moving on to a line from *Macbeth*, try saying it with the same rhythm and stress:

“*What bloo-dy man – is that? – He can – report*”.

But Shakespeare often breaks the rules of blank verse. The first scene of *Macbeth* does not have a single ten syllable line, and they all rhyme. Here, he does this to underline that the Witches are different from other characters. If he wanted to show a character was stressed or confused he might give a character short lines, or long lines, or a mixture of both. He is happy to cheat too – see *elision* on the next page. Sometimes Shakespeare writes in prose not verse. Comic characters often speak in prose, like the Porter in *Macbeth* (Act 2 Scene 3).

Shared lines: Sometimes Shakespeare had two characters share the ten syllables that make a line (as Banquo and Fleance do on the right). He did this when he wanted the actors to keep the rhythm going. This was often to show the characters are particularly close, or when one is impatient.

Banquo	How goes the night, boy?
Fleance	The moon is down, I have not heard the clock.
Banquo	And she goes down at twelve.
Fleance	I take't 'tis later, sir.
Banquo	Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in heaven, Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.

5

Counting lines: You can see the number 5 at the end of the last line above right. It is normal to print the line number every five lines in a Shakespeare play. This helps people find an exact place when talking or writing about the play. If you count, however, you will see this is the sixth line – the two lines that make the shared line only count as one.

How to use this book

Act and Scene: Printed plays are divided into Acts and Scenes. On the stage there is no real gap – a new scene happens when the story moves on, either to a new time or place. When Shakespeare's company performed indoors by candlelight they needed to trim the candles about every half an hour, so they picked points in the story where a short gap between scenes made sense. These became the divisions between Acts.

Act 1 Scene 7

Enter servants with oboes and torches. They are followed by the Steward, and more servants carrying dishes and food. They cross the stage, and exit.

Then enter Macbeth.

Macbeth If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If **th'** assassination

Elision: Elision is the correct term in English Literature for leaving a bit out. Shakespeare does it a lot. Often he can not quite fit what he wants to say into his ten-syllable line, so he cheats – running two words together. In the highlighted examples do not say *it is*, say *'tis* – the inverted comma shows you there is something missing. Likewise say *'twere* not *it were*, and run together *the* and *assassination*, so it comes out as one word – *th'assassination*.

Stage Directions: Shakespeare wrote stage directions – mainly when characters enter or exit, but sometimes telling actors what to do. In this book we develop Shakespeare's stage directions a bit, to tell you what you would see if you were watching the play.

Some stage directions are in square brackets, we print them as part of an actor's lines. These help you understand who the actor is talking to – which would be obvious on stage. *Aside* is a significant one – this is when the character shares their thoughts with the audience.

Banquo [*To Ross and Angus.*] Look, how our partner's rapt.

Macbeth [*Aside.*] If chance will have me king,
Why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir.

Banquo Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure

that I can think of nothing else

90

92 **Without my stir:** without me
having to do anything

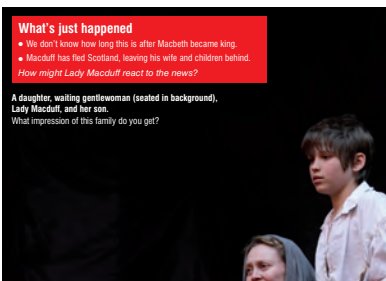
The glossary: Some words and phrases have changed their meaning or fallen out of use since Shakespeare's time. The glossary helps you with them. It gives you the line numbers in the play (in red); then in **bold**; the word, or the start and end of a long phrase (with three dots to mark the elision if some words have been left out), then the explanation in modern English. It is as close to the original line as we can make it.

What's just happened

- We don't know how long this is after Macbeth became king.
- Macduff has fled Scotland, leaving his wife and children behind.

How might Lady Macduff react to the news?

A daughter, waiting gentleman (seated in background),
Lady Macduff, and her son.
What impression of this family do you get?



The questions: There are questions in the photograph captions, and in red boxes. Here are two tips for answering them:

- There usually is not a simple 'right' answer. We hope you will develop your own ideas. The best way to answer any question is to be able to back up your answer with a reference to the play text.
- Unless we tell you otherwise, you can answer the question using the play text on the opposite page.

What's just happened

- Duncan has arrived at Macbeth's castle.
- Lady Macbeth has persuaded Macbeth to murder Duncan during the visit.
- [Not shown on stage] There was a grand dinner to welcome Duncan. Macbeth has left the dinner table early, he is worried ...

What is he worried about?



Macbeth, between lines 1 and 25.

How well does the actor's body language fit the text?

Lady Macbeth

All our service

In every point twice done, and then done double,
Were poor and single business to contend
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith
Your majesty loads our house.

5

Duncan

Give me your hand.

Conduct me to mine host, we love him highly,
And shall continue our graces towards him.
By your leave, hostess.

10

They all exit.

Act 1 Scene 7

Enter servants with oboes and torches. They are followed by the Steward, and more servants carrying dishes and food. They cross the stage, and exit.

Then enter Macbeth.

Macbeth

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

5

10

15

20

25

Enter Lady Macbeth.

How now? What news?

Lady Macbeth He has almost supped. Why have you left the chamber?

Macbeth

Hath he asked for me?

5 In every point ... double: even if we had done much, much more

6 poor and single business: feeble effort

6-7 to contend Against: compared to

11 By your leave: Shall we go in?

1 If it were done, when 'tis done:
[Macbeth is talking about killing Duncan]

2-4 If th' assassination ... success:
If the murder was certain to make me king without further trouble

6 bank and shoal of time: in our short life on earth (compared to eternity)

7 jump the life to come: risk punishment in the afterlife

8-10 that we but teach ... th' inventor: we set others the example of violence which is then turned against us

10 He's here in double trust: he has two reasons to trust me

15-6 borne his faculties ... great office: has been such a good and generous king

18 taking-off: murder

20 the blast: the outcry at the murder

21 sightless couriers of the air:
winds

23-4 spur To prick ... my intent:
nothing to drive me to act

25 o'erleaps: jumps too high

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, between lines 33 and 67.

Macbeth is speaking. Which of his speeches best fits this photograph?



These questions are about all of Act 1 Scene 7.

1. How is Macbeth feeling in the first four lines of the soliloquy (on page 23)? What repetition of sounds does Shakespeare use to suggest this?
2. How does Shakespeare show the tension Macbeth feels as he thinks about the murder?
3. List words that show Macbeth has a conscience and those that show elements of evil in his character.
4. What does the scene add to our understanding of Macbeth as a man with both good and evil in his character?
5. What does Shakespeare show us in this scene about the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth?

Lady Macbeth	Know you not he has?		
Macbeth	We will proceed no further in this business. He hath honoured me of late, and I have bought Golden opinions from all sorts of people, Which would be worn now in their newest gloss, Not cast aside so soon.	30	30 of late: recently 30–1 bought Golden opinions: earned a high reputation 32 would: should 32 newest gloss: while it is new 33–4 Was the hope ... dressed yourself?: Were your earlier plans made while drunk on ambition? 37 account: value 38–9 To be the same ... art in desire?: to act bravely to get the thing you want 39 Pr'ythee, peace!: For heaven's sake stop pushing me! 40 may become: is suitable; is proper behaviour for 41 is none: is not a proper man 43 durst: dared to 45 given suck: breastfed a baby 49 had I so sworn: if I had made such a solemn promise 50 this: the killing of Duncan 51 screw ... sticking place: be brave, don't waver 53–4 (Whereto ... him): Which he's likely to do deeply after his hard journey 54 chamberlains: servants who put the king to bed, get him up and guard him while he sleeps 55 with wine ... so convince: get so drunk 57 receipt of reason: brain 58 limbeck: a container alcohol passes through in the distilling process 61 put upon: blame 62 spongy officers: the drunken servants 63 quell: murder 64 undaunted mettle: fearless nature 65 received: believed
Lady Macbeth	Was the hope drunk, Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since? And wakes it now, to look so green and pale At what it did so freely? From this time, Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard To be the same in thine own act and valour, As thou art in desire?	35	
Macbeth	Pr'ythee, peace! I dare do all that may become a man, Who dares do more is none.	40	
Lady Macbeth	What beast was't, then That made you break this enterprise to me? When you durst do it, then you were a man: And to be more than what you were, you would Be so much more the man. I have given suck, and know How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me — I would, while it was smiling in my face, Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums, And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you Have done to this.	45	
Macbeth	If we should fail?		
Lady Macbeth	We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking-place, And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep, (Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey Soundly invite him) his two chamberlains Will I with wine and wassail so convince, That memory, the warder of the brain, Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep Their drenchéd natures lie as in a death, What cannot you and I perform upon Th' unguarded Duncan? What not put upon His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt Of our great quell?	50 55 60	
Macbeth	Bring forth men-children only. For thy undaunted mettle should compose Nothing but males. Will it not be received, When we have marked with blood those sleepy two Of his own chamber, and used their very daggers, That they have done't?	65	

How to do well in assessment

Most importantly, you should enjoy the Shakespeare play that you are reading, and start to think about why Shakespeare makes the characters act as they do and what the main themes of the story are. You should also think about the language that Shakespeare uses. This is also a great start for studying Shakespeare at GCSE.

There are a series of skills that will help you in any assessment of your understanding of a Shakespeare play. They are:

- Read, understand and respond to the play clearly. Comment on the characters' behaviour and motivations, using evidence from the text.

In other words, you need to show that you know the play and can answer the question that you have been given.

- Analyse the language, form and structure that Shakespeare uses. Show your understanding of Shakespeare's techniques by explaining their effects. Use subject terminology.

Here, you show that you understand how the play has been written by commenting on the words and techniques that Shakespeare uses. Also, you should demonstrate that you understand and can use appropriate technical language.

- Show understanding of the relationship between the play and the context in which it was written.

You must show that you understand the connections between the text and the time that it was written. This could be historical events, like the Gunpowder Plot, but also people's social and cultural beliefs of the time – such as a belief in witches – and how these affect the way Shakespeare shows the characters thinking and behaving.

- Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

This means that your work should be clear, organised and well-written. You are not expected to have perfect spelling, but you should spell key words and character names correctly and use correct grammar.

Advice for answering questions

Remember the skills explained above. You will usually not have to show every single skill in every answer that you write. For example, extract questions usually require you to cover the first two skills – commenting on characters' behaviour and looking at how the play has been written. Remember that there is not one perfect answer to any question. Consider how you feel about the characters' actions. It is perfectly acceptable to use phrases such as, 'I think,' 'I feel that' and 'In my opinion' when answering. The most thoughtful responses often show originality, but remember to support your points with sensible argument and evidence from *Macbeth*.