

Year 11 – *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

Plot	Literary Techniques	QR Codes
Act 1 Macbeth and Banquo are victorious in battle against the traitor, Macdonwald and the Norwegian army. On their way back to King Duncan’s camp, they meet witches who give them predictions. Macbeth becomes Thane of Cawdor. Lady Macbeth reads the letter. She taunts Macbeth and Duncan arrives at their castle to celebrate Macbeth’s promotion. Act 2 Lady Macbeth drugs Duncan’s guards so that the coast is clear for her husband. Macbeth sees a hallucination of a dagger which leads him to Duncan’s room where he murders the king. . Duncan’s sons (Malcolm and Donalbain) flee Scotland and Macbeth is chosen to be king. Act 3 Banquo suspects Macbeth; Macbeth hires assassins to murder Banquo but his son Fleance escapes. Macbeth sees Banquo’s ghost at a banquet to celebrate his coronation. Act 4 Macbeth seeks guidance from the witches who show him a series of apparitions which make prophecies about his future. Macbeth orders the killing of Macduff’s family. Macduff and Malcolm agree to invade Scotland with the help of the English army. Act 5 Lady Macbeth’s mental state deteriorates & she eventually commits suicide. Malcolm’s army invades through Burnam wood and eventually Macbeth is killed by Macduff. Malcolm is proclaimed king.	Alliteration – repetition of initial syllable sounds in a series of words, e.g. ‘Fair is foul.’ Aside – where a character speaks to the audience, unheard by other characters on stage. Blank verse – unrhymed iambic pentameter Dramatic irony – when the audience is aware of something that the characters are not. Foil characters – characters who contrast strongly with one another like Banquo and Macbeth. Foreshadowing – a warning of something that will happen in the future. Hamartia – the hero’s tragic flaw or weakness. Macbeth’s tragic flaw is his ambition for power. Iambic pentameter – five pairs of unstressed/stressed syllables. Noble characters use this rhythm. Irony – when someone deliberately says something when they mean something else. Juxtaposition – when two ideas or events are placed side by side for dramatic effect. Metaphor - where an object is said to be something that isn’t literally true. Motif – a recurring image in a text, e.g. there is a motif of nature and nurture in <i>Macbeth</i>. Pathetic fallacy – when the setting (often the weather) reflects the mood of a character or scene. Personification – where something non-human is given human characteristics. Rhyme / rhythm – the pattern of stresses or beats in a line. Rhyming couplet – a pair of lines that rhyme. Simile – when two things are directly compared using ‘like’ or ‘as’. Soliloquy – when a character speaks directly to the audience, voicing their thoughts & feelings. Tragedy – this is the genre of the play. A tragic hero loses his life because of his fatal flaw. Trochaic tetrameter – four pairs of stressed/unstressed syllables. The witches use this rhythm.	Punctuation Guide  British Library Essay on Lady Macbeth  Character Analysis of the Witches 
Characters	Themes and Ideas	
Macbeth A loyal warrior and the tragic hero of the play 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, show by her delirious sleep-walking and eventual suicide. Banquo Macbeth’s close friend and ally who also receives a prophecy from the witches that his children and grandchildren will be monarchs of Scotland, although he himself will never be king. Fleance Banquo’s son who narrowly escapes being murdered alongside his father, thus leaving open the possibility of the witches’ prophecy for Banquo coming true. Duncan King of Scotland Portrayed as a fair and respected leader at the start of the play, though perhaps a little gullible as he was taken in by the original Thane of Cawdor and then goes on to repeat the same mistake with Macbeth. Macduff A brave warrior who is loyal to Duncan and grows suspicious of Macbeth. Macduff eventually goes to find Duncan’s son Malcolm at the court of the king of England and they agree to form an army to take revenge on Macbeth. Malcolm Duncan’s eldest son and next in line to the throne. The Three Witches (Weird Sisters) Portrayed as supernatural forces who seem to know the future. They fascinate Macbeth although Banquo is immediately wary of them. Ross Another Scottish thane who acts as a messenger in the play: he is one of the lords who tells Macbeth he has been made Thane of Cawdor and, later on, he is seen in conversation with Lady Macduff just moments before she and her children are murdered by Macbeth’s soldiers.	Ambition Macbeth cannot resist the power of his ambition (his fatal flaw). When he seems to waver, Lady Macbeth’s ambition spurs him on. Both characters defy divine order to fulfil their ambitions. Appearance and reality The play is one where people’s outward appearances cannot be trusted. For example, Lady Macbeth’s reaction to hearing the news that Duncan was dead. Guilt Guilt plagues both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth underestimates the degree of guilt she will feel when she becomes queen and is made to pay for this with her life. Power Some of the most powerful characters are female: the Witches and Lady Macbeth. Both manipulate Macbeth. Chaos and disorder The events that follow Duncan’s murder are marked by chaos and disorder, be that the mental state of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, or the weather or the state of Scotland itself. Order is finally restored when Malcolm becomes the rightful King at the end of the play. Religion Jacobean England was very religious. Heaven and Hell play heavily on Macbeth’s mind and implies he is concerned about the destination of his immortal soul. Violence The play is filled with violence and conflict, much of it physical but there is also psychological and verbal violence. The Supernatural The inclusion of the witches is contextually significant as James I, the king at the time, believed in and was wary of witches – like the audiences watching. Gender Shakespeare explores masculinity through the character of Macbeth. However, Macbeth’s fear of being emasculated also allows Shakespeare to use his character to explore femininity.	