

GCSE – Macbeth – English Knowledge Organiser

Expectations and content

What is this unit about and why do we teach it?

Shakespeare's most popular play 'Macbeth' teaches us all how greed and ambition can be destructive. Macbeth struggles with his anxiety and demons after committing multiple murders for his own selfish gains. Students will be transported in time to the Jacobean Era under the rule of James I.

Key Vocabulary taught:

Hamartia
Ambition
Domineering
Emasculating
Hypocritical
Patriarchal
Brutality
Spectre
Apparition

Key terminology taught:

- Analytical paragraph
- Context
- Trochaic tetrameter
- Syllables
- Comedic relief
- Comparative sentences
- Plosive (alliteration)
- Rhyme

If your child needs support

Suggested activities to help:

- Watch the animated tales version of the play to understand the plot:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qfnUq2_0FOY&disable_polymer=true
- Discuss what 'blood will have blood' could mean.
- Make a list of all the characters in the play and write a list of ambitious adjectives you could use to describe them.
- If you are struggling with the original Shakespearean language in the play you can access a modern version of the play here:
<https://www.sparknotes.com/nofear/shakespeare/macbeth/>
- Use the Mind Map to revise and memorise the meanings of some of the key terminology taught.
- Make Cornell Notes on the characters and key themes.

If your child needs extension

Questions to discuss with your child:

- Is having power over someone or something good? Is so or not, why?
- Where are examples in the play where Shakespeare is encouraging the audience not to be easily influenced?
- Are there any current or historical examples similar to Macbeth's rise and fall?

Challenging activities to complete:

- Research the great chain of being and how this may have influenced some of Shakespeare's writing in Macbeth.
- Research James I book 'Demonology' and look at how witches were treated in the Jacobean era - why may Shakespeare have written Macbeth then?

Suggested further reading:

- **George Orwell's Animal Farm** this classic tale is about an animal farm revolution which is filled with power struggles and deceit.
- **Lord of the Flies - William Golding** is a complex allegory packed into a tale of struggle and survival.
- **The Weird Sisters - Eleanor Brown** a tale of three sisters lives as they come crashing back together after the recent news of their mother's illness.