

Macbeth – key revision

Paired quotations:

A1-S2	The Captain's view of Macbeth	A5-S9	Malcolm's view of Macbeth
	'brave Macbeth'		'dead butcher'
A1-S2	Macbeth's ruthlessness as a warrior	A2-S2	Macbeth's anguish after murdering Duncan
	'Till he unseamed him from the nave to th' chops'		'This is a sorry sight'
A1-S3	Macbeth's reaction to the prophecies	A4-S1	Macbeth's reaction to the apparitions
	'rapt withal'		'The crown does sear mine eyeballs'
A1-S5	Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's relationship – strong partnership	A3-S2	Macbeth beginning to work independently
	"My dearest partner of greatness"		"Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck"
A1-S5	Lady Macbeth's 'fear' about Macbeth	A4-S3	Macbeth's ruthlessness in killing Macduff's family
	'It is too full 'o' th' milk of human kindness'		'hell-kite'
A1-S7	Macbeth's view of Duncan's kingship	A4-S3	Macduff's view of Macbeth's kingship
	'hath been so clear in his great office'		'untitled tyrant bloody-sceptred'
A2-S2	Lady Macbeth's authority and determination	A5-S1	Lady Macbeth's fragility
	'Give me the daggers'		'She has a light by her continually'
A1-S4	Macbeth overturning of nature + appearance/reality	A1-S5	Lady Macbeth's hiding of reality
	"Stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires."		'Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it.'
A2-S2	Macbeth's guilt	A3-S4	Macbeth's fear of consequences
	'Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?'		'It will have blood they say, blood will have blood'
A1-S7	Lady Macbeth's manipulation of Macbeth's masculinity	A3-S4	Macbeth's reaction after recovering from seeing Banquo's ghost
	When you durst do it, then you were a man'		'I am a man again'

1. Context (AO1)

- Written in the **Jacobean** era (James I) when masculinity and bravery were prized
- Fear of the supernatural was real – James I had written a book about it.
- The Gunpowder Plot had threatened parliament and the King – uprisings were a real threat
- The belief in the **Natural Order (The Great Chain of Being)** and the **Divine Right of Kings** was important.
- Hierarchies in society (status, wealth and gender) were more pronounced

2. Themes (AO1 and AO3)

- Corruptive nature of power and abuse of position
- Ambition being a potentially disruptive influence on natural order
- Nature and order being critical over chaos and anarchy
- Kingship – what makes a good king?
- Inheritance and children

3. Key events (AO1)

- Macbeth meets witches + prophecies (Thane of Cawdor, Thane of Glamis, King + Banquo's children to be kings)
- Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to kill Duncan
- Macbeth hallucinates and sees daggers, then kills Duncan
- Macbeth doesn't trust Banquo, has him killed, then sees his ghost
- Lady Macbeth can't calm Macbeth at the banquet scene (Banquo's ghost)
- Macbeth seeks out witches and gets second set of prophecies (Beware Macduff, no one born of woman will harm him, only fear when Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane + Banquo's children still set to be kings)
- Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed
- Lady Macbeth sleepwalks and dies
- Macbeth faces final battle and loses

4. Key literary features (AO2)

- Tragedy – a tragic hero with a flaw (ambition)
- Ends in restoring order from chaos
- Key turning point is when Macbeth decides to kill Banquo to continue his ambition alone
- Dramatic irony – when audience knows more than the characters
- Soliloquy – actors speaking their minds alone on stage (we hear the truth)

5. Prepared introduction to adapt for the exam question

Shakespeare presents [key focus] to reveal the **corruptive nature of power**. The play warns against the way individuals can abuse and corrupt, manipulating others to establish complete control. Macbeth's **tragic downfall** is presented as the inevitable consequence of ambition and breaking the **Great Chain of Being**. The play is a warning to its **Jacobean audience** of the consequences of betraying the monarchy and disrupting society's order.