

50 (or so) things you need to know about *Macbeth*

1. When was <i>Macbeth</i> written, who was the monarch and what do we call this era?	It was written around 1606, King James I, Jacobean era.
2. What was Shakespeare's Big Idea when he wrote <i>Macbeth</i> ?	In <i>Macbeth</i> , Shakespeare examines the destructive power of unchecked ambition.
3. What is regicide and how was this crime viewed in the Jacobean era?	Murder of a king is called 'regicide' and it was considered to be crime against God.
4. What is the Chain of Being? (also referred to as Natural Order)	The idea that things are fixed in a specific place in the universe and cannot be changed.
5. In <i>Macbeth</i> , the "owls scream and the crickets cry" after Duncan's murder. What has been disturbed?	The natural order / chain of being
6. Weather and nature are used to demonstrate that things are not following the Chain of Being in <i>Macbeth</i> . What is this called?	Pathetic fallacy
7. What kind of setting does Shakespeare usually use when the witches are on stage?	Isolated and stormy. In Act 1, they appear on a 'heath' with 'thunder'.
8. How does <i>Macbeth</i> begin?	With the witches who are planning when and where they will meet next.
9. How is <i>Macbeth</i> presented at the beginning of the play?	<i>Macbeth</i> is initially presented as a brave and well respected man who led the Scottish army to victory over the Norwegian invaders.
10. In <i>Macbeth</i> , what purpose do the witches serve?	Shakespeare constructs the witches to sow discord in the universe.
11. What are the three things do the witches predict in Act 1?	<i>Macbeth</i> will be Thane of Cawdor, then 'king hereafter', and that Banquo will be the father of kings. They also hail <i>Macbeth</i> as Thane of Glamis, a title he knows he possesses.
12. How does Lady <i>Macbeth</i> advise <i>Macbeth</i> to act around Duncan?	She tells him to 'look like th'innocent flower' which suggests that he should act normally and graciously around Duncan.
13. How does Duncan reward <i>Macbeth</i> for his bravery?	Duncan appoints <i>Macbeth</i> as Thane of Cawdor.
14. How does Duncan misjudge <i>Macbeth</i> ?	Duncan trusts <i>Macbeth</i> so he does not realise that <i>Macbeth</i> intends to betray him.
15. Why is Banquo a threat to <i>Macbeth</i> ?	The witches predict that Banquo's sons will be kings which means <i>Macbeth</i> 's descendents will not be heir to the throne.
16. Who says, 'Stars hide your fires, let not light see my black and deep desires.'?	<i>Macbeth</i>
17. In Act 1, <i>Macbeth</i> says that a 'False face must hide what the false heart doth know.' What does this suggest?	This shows that appearances are not always the same as reality.
18. Define fate.	Fate is the idea that everything that is going to happen is already decided so people can't change the future and aren't in control of what happens to them.

19. Define free will.	Free will is the idea that people can choose their own destiny, or course of action, and are in control of their future.
20. What happens to disturb Macbeth's new found ambition to become King?	Duncan names his son, Malcom, Prince of Cumberland and heir to the throne of Scotland. Macbeth sees this as a "step on which I must fall down, or else o'erleap, for it lies in my way".
21. How does Macbeth break the chain of being?	He murders Duncan.
22. What sound 'invites' Macbeth to kill King Duncan?	A bell rings. Macbeth takes this as a signal to do the deed. Macbeth calls it a 'knell' which is telling as a knell is a funeral bell.
23. Who are Malcom and Donalbain?	Malcolm and Donalbain are King Duncan's sons.
24. What do Duncan's sons do when they learn of their father's death?	They flee: Malcolm goes to England; Donalbain goes to Ireland.
25. How does the porter refer to the door of the castle? What does Shakespeare imply?	He calls it a 'hell-gate,' as if warning us the castle itself might be considered hell for those who enter.
26. Why does Shakespeare include the porter scene after the murder of King Duncan and before his body is found?	The scene provides some comic relief amidst all the tension and darkness of the murder. Do not disregard it as unimportant.
27. Who says 'there's daggers in men's smiles' and what does Shakespeare mean by this?	Malcolm says this after his father is murdered. He means everyone is pretending to be nice but one of his 'friends' is really a traitor. He just doesn't know which one.
28. What three prophecies do the witches predict when Macbeth visits them in Act IV?	"beware Macduff, Beware the Thane of Fife", "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth", and "Macbeth shall never vanquished be until Great Birnam Wood to Dunsinane Hill shall come against him".
29. How do the witches' second prophecies spur Macbeth's ambition?	The combination of these three prophecies make Macbeth feel invincible, but it is "none of woman born" that he puts the most faith into.
30. What is foreshadowing?	Foreshadowing is a warning or an indication of a future event.
31. How does Shakespeare use foreshadowing in <i>Macbeth</i> ?	Shakespeare explicitly foreshadows through the witches' prophecies. Shakespeare tells us what is going to happen but not how.
32. What is iambic pentameter?	Also known as blank verse, iambic pentameter is the rhythm of the lines using stressed and unstressed syllables.
33. Shakespeare typically uses iambic pentameter for which types of characters?	Shakespeare used iambic pentameter for people of higher status.
34. Define rhyming couplet.	Two successive lines which rhyme.
35. What is prose?	Prose has no rhyme or rhythm- it's 'normal' writing.
36. What type of character usually speaks in prose?	It is used by lesser or lower status characters.
37. List two characters who use prose (instead of verse) in <i>Macbeth</i> .	The Porter Lady Macbeth when she reads Macbeth's letter and when she is sleepwalking.
38. Who kills Banquo?	Macbeth hires murderers to kill Banquo.

39. Macbeth describes Fleance as a 'worm' which 'in time will venom breed.' What does this metaphor suggest about how Macbeth views Fleance?	This metaphor suggests that Macbeth sees Fleance as a threat because, although he is currently only a 'worm', he will have 'venom' in future. This shows that Macbeth thinks that Fleance might be a danger to him in the future and a threat to his position as king.
40. Give an example that shows how much Macbeth admires Lady Macbeth at the start of the play.	Macbeth addresses her as 'my dearest partner of greatness.'
41. What is Lady Macbeth's opinion of her husband?	Lady Macbeth thinks Macbeth is weak and cowardly. She calls him, 'white,' and comments that he is 'too full o'th milk of human kindness'.
42. Lady Macbeth sees femininity as weakness.' What evidence supports this statement?	She appeals to the spirits to 'unsex' her. She questions Macbeth's masculinity when he is unsure about killing Duncan.
43. What is the significance of this line: 'Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped'?	The witches' prophecy stated that, 'none of woman born shall harm Macbeth.' Macduff was not 'born' in the obvious sense; he was delivered via caesarean.
44. What does the 'spot' Lady Macbeth refers to in, 'out, damned spot!' really symbolise?	The spot is an imagined blood stain on her hands, Duncan's blood. The spot symbolises the stain upon her character: her ambitious, treacherous side, but also her guilt that cannot be soothed or washed away.
45. Why does Lady Macbeth sleepwalk?	She is consumed by guilt for her part in Duncan's murder.
46. What does the 'tomorrow' soliloquy (Act 5, Scene 5) reveal about Macbeth's state of mind?	The 'tomorrow' soliloquy reveals that Macbeth feels numb at the death of his wife. He also feels that he has wasted his time on a path that ultimately destroys him.
47. Why is Macbeth present in less than half of the Act 5 scenes?	This could be reflective of Macbeth's lack of control over Scotland. His reign is ending and he is becoming less significant.
48. Which character kills Macbeth?	Macduff.
49. Explain, briefly, how ambition is presented as a destructive force throughout <i>Macbeth</i> .	Ambition is destructive as it motivates Macbeth to murder Duncan. The violence escalates as Macbeth kills an increasing number of people to stay king. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth experience extreme guilt as a result of these killings. The bloody battle at the end of the play is also a result of Macbeth's ambition to be king.
50. How does the structure of <i>Macbeth</i> suggest that betrayal is always punished?	The play begins and ends with a traitor getting beheaded. At the beginning of the play it is reported that Macbeth has beheaded a traitor, and at the end of the play Macbeth himself is beheaded for betraying Duncan. The circular structure suggests that betrayal is always punished.