

A Note to the Teacher

This exercise uses **quotes** from the play to create a thumbnail sketch of the plot. The **questions**

- test the students' knowledge of the play
- encourage the students to explore the deeper issues with which the play deals
- invite the students to express their opinions on various aspects of the play

The exercise can be used at either **Key Stage 3** or **Key Stage 4** level and works well as a revision exercise.

Suggestions on presenting the material:

1) The **quotes** section can be used as a piece of drama, with students speaking/acting out the parts of the various characters (there are 15 altogether). A 'narrator' can announce the speaker in each case, e.g.

SERGEANT : *brave Macbeth ... valour's minion*
NARRATOR : *said the Sergeant*

NB: A different verb has been used to denote the act of speaking after each quote. Draw the students' attention to this, and point out the desirability of using a range of different 'speaking' verbs in their own writing.

2) The **questions** can be answered in a variety of ways:

- orally or in writing
- individually, in pairs, or in groups

Ideally the answers should lead to some form of class discussion, e.g. a debate on one or more of the contentious issues in the play (such as whether or not one could feel sympathy for Macbeth).

From 'worthy gentleman' to 'butcher'

The rise and fall of Macbeth, through the words of the other characters

QUOTES

brave Macbeth and valour's minion
said the Sergeant
valiant cousin and worthy gentleman
agreed King Duncan
All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!
predicted the witches
*... oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
... to betray's
In deepest consequence*
warned Banquo
*... yet I do fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way ...*
mused Lady Macbeth
*... look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't*
advised his wife
*What cannot you and I perform upon
The unguarded Duncan?*
she asked
A little water clears us of this deed
she assured him
The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth
declared Ross
*He is already named, and gone to Scone
to be invested*
affirmed Macduff
*Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis,
all,
As the weird women promised, and, I fear,
Thou play'st most foully for't*
pondered Banquo
*... safe in a ditch he bides,
With twenty trenched gashes on his head*
reported the First Murderer
*Why do you make such faces? When all's
done,
You look but on a stool*
admonished Lady Macbeth
You lack the season of all natures, sleep
she concluded
*By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes*
noted the Witch
*Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware
Macduff*
echoed the First Apparition
*... none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth*
boomed the Second Apparition

QUESTIONS

- What has Macbeth done to deserve this praise?
- Describe Macbeth's reaction to the witches' prophecy.
- Is there any truth in Banquo's warning to Macbeth? Explain your answer by referring to incidents that occur later in the play.
- Do you think Macbeth would have killed Duncan if Lady Macbeth had not placed pressure on him to do so? Explain.
- Is Macbeth capable of this kind of deception? Support your answer with evidence from the play.
- Explain how the murder is carried out.
- Describe Macbeth's state of mind after the murder.
- Explain why Macbeth and not Malcolm, Duncan's heir, is crowned king.
- Why should Banquo suspect Macbeth of gaining the crown through foul play?
- To whom is the First Murderer referring? Why has this person been murdered?
- What has happened to draw this remark from Lady Macbeth?
- Explain why Macbeth is unable to sleep.
- Explain how Macbeth's attitude towards the witches has changed since his first encounter with them.
- Does Macbeth have reason to fear Macduff? Explain your answer.
- How does this prediction trick Macbeth into a false sense of security?

*Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him*
proclaimed the Third Apparition
*... each new morn
new widows howl, new orphans cry, new
sorrows*
Strike heaven on the face ...
mourned Macduff
*Devilish Macbeth
fumed Malcolm
Alas, poor country!*
cried Ross
*Your castle is surprised; your wife and
babes*
Savagely slaughtered
he confessed
Macbeth
Is ripe for shaking ...
asserted Malcolm
*The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she
now?*
murmured Lady Macbeth
The queen, my lord, is dead
Seyton informed him
*I look'd toward Birnam, and anon,
methought,*
The wood began to move
spluttered the Messenger
Turn, hell-hound, turn!
challenged Macduff
*... behold, where stands
The usurper's cursed head*
exclaimed Macduff
A dead butcher
observed Malcolm

- What is Macbeth's reaction to this prediction?
- What does this remark tell us about the kind of king Macbeth is?
- Is this an accurate description of Macbeth? Explain your answer.
- Whose 'wife and babes' have been 'savagely slaughtered'? Why were they slaughtered?
- How does Malcolm propose to 'shake' Macbeth?
- Describe Lady Macbeth's state of mind at this point in the play.
- How does Macbeth react to the news of his wife's death?
- Explain how the wood 'moves'.
- Do you think it is fitting that Macduff should be the one to kill Macbeth? Explain your answer.
- Do you share Malcolm's view of Macbeth, or do you have some sympathy/admiration for the dead king? Discuss.