2.21 Literature: Macbeth - Themes in Depth: Test Pack

AQA 8702 · about 35 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Six short quotations from Macbeth are given below. For each one, identify the single theme from this list that it relates to most strongly: ambition / guilt / the supernatural / kingship and order / appearance vs reality / gender.

(a) "Stars, hide your fires; / Let not light see my black and deep desires." (Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 4) **(1)**

(b) "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" (Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 2) **(1)**

(c) "By the pricking of my thumbs, / Something wicked this way comes." (Second Witch, Act 4 Scene 1) **(1)**

(d) "The king-becoming graces, / As justice, verity, temperance, stableness..." (Malcolm, Act 4 Scene 3) **(1)**

(e) "Look like th' innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't." (Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5) **(1)**

(f) "Bring forth men-children only." (Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7) **(1)**

(Total for Question 1 is 6 marks)

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2 For each theme below, explain in one or two sentences how Shakespeare first introduces it within Act 1 of the play.

(a) Ambition. **(2)**

(b) Guilt. **(2)**

(c) The supernatural. **(2)**

(d) Kingship and order. **(2)**

(e) Appearance vs reality. **(2)**

(f) Gender. **(2)**

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 Ambition is not a single moment in Macbeth: Shakespeare develops it across the whole play.

(a) Identify three moments that trace the development of Macbeth's ambition: one from Act 1, one from Act 3 and one from Act 5. For each, give the act and scene and a short quotation or clear reference. **(3)**

(b) Using your three moments, explain how Shakespeare develops the theme of ambition across the play. **(3)**

(Total for Question 3 is 6 marks)

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4 The supernatural becomes more direct and more dangerous as the play progresses.

(a) Identify three moments that trace the growing role of the supernatural: the witches' first appearance, a moment when the supernatural directly confronts Macbeth, and a moment when the witches deliver an elaborate but misleading prophecy. Give the act and scene and a short quotation or clear reference for each. **(3)**

(b) Explain how Shakespeare develops the supernatural across the play and how it affects the way an audience judges Macbeth's responsibility for his actions. **(3)**

(Total for Question 4 is 6 marks)

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5 Duncan's murder disrupts both the political order and the natural world.

(a) Identify three moments that trace the theme of kingship and order: one showing the rightful order under Duncan, one showing nature disrupted after Duncan's murder, and one showing the definition of a true king. Give the act and scene and a short quotation or clear reference for each. **(3)**

(b) Explain how Shakespeare links disorder in nature to disorder in the state, and how order is eventually restored. **(3)**

(Total for Question 5 is 6 marks)

6 Deception in Macbeth operates on both a human level and a supernatural level.

(a) Identify three moments that trace appearance versus reality: one where a character openly plans to deceive, one showing Duncan's misplaced trust, and one where a prophecy seems safe but is dangerously misleading. Give the act and scene and a short quotation or clear reference for each. **(3)**

(b) Explain how Shakespeare uses appearance versus reality on both a human and a supernatural level, and why this makes the deception in the play so dangerous. **(3)**

(Total for Question 6 is 6 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.21 Literature: Macbeth - Themes in Depth: Test Pack

Question 1

(a) ambition (oe) cao **B1**

(a) Answer: Ambition.

(b) guilt (oe) cao **B1**

(b) Answer: Guilt.

(c) the supernatural (oe) cao **B1**

(c) Answer: The supernatural.

(d) kingship and order (oe) cao **B1**

(d) Answer: Kingship and order.

(e) appearance vs reality (oe) cao **B1**

(e) Answer: Appearance vs reality.

(f) gender (oe) cao **B1**

(f) Answer: Gender.

Question 2

(a) accurate reference to Act 1 Scene 3, Macbeth's disturbed aside after the witches' prophecy ("why do I yield to that suggestion / Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair") (oe) **B1**

(a) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. through a private aside that shows ambition sparked the instant Macbeth hears he could be king (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Ambition is first introduced in Act 1 Scene 3, when Macbeth's disturbed aside after the witches' prophecy shows the idea of kingship has already unsettled him, using the private form of the aside to reveal a desire he cannot yet admit openly.

(b) accurate reference to Act 1 Scene 7, Macbeth's soliloquy ("If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well / It were done quickly") (oe) **B1**

(b) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. through soliloquy showing Macbeth's conscience troubling him before he has even committed the murder (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Guilt is first introduced in Act 1 Scene 7, where Macbeth's soliloquy weighing up reasons against the murder shows his conscience is already active before Duncan is killed, using the private form of soliloquy to reveal anticipatory guilt.

(c) accurate reference to Act 1 Scene 1, the three witches meeting on the heath amid thunder and lightning ("Fair is foul, and foul is fair") (oe) **B1**

(c) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. the opening scene establishes an uncanny, disordered world before any human character appears (oe) **B1**

(c) Answer: The supernatural is introduced in the very first scene, Act 1 Scene 1, where the witches meet amid thunder and lightning and chant a paradox, immediately establishing a disordered, uncanny world before the human plot begins.

(d) accurate reference to Act 1 Scene 2, the Captain's report and Duncan's praise of Macbeth ("O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!") (oe) **B1**

(d) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. through Duncan rewarding loyalty, establishing the rightful bond between king and thane before it is broken (oe) **B1**

(d) Answer: Kingship and order is introduced in Act 1 Scene 2, when Duncan praises Macbeth as a loyal, valiant subject, establishing the legitimate hierarchy and bond of loyalty between king and thane that Macbeth later destroys.

(e) accurate reference to Act 1 Scene 4, Duncan's comment that "there's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face", followed by his trust in Macbeth (oe) **B1**

(e) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. through dramatic irony, since Duncan says this about the executed former Thane of Cawdor just before welcoming his next betrayer (oe) **B1**

(e) Answer: Appearance vs reality is introduced in Act 1 Scene 4, where Duncan reflects that faces cannot reveal true character, then immediately extends complete trust to Macbeth, creating dramatic irony that introduces the theme before any deliberate deception occurs.

(f) accurate reference to Act 1 Scene 5, Lady Macbeth's soliloquy asking spirits to "unsex me here" (oe) **B1**

(f) comment on how it is introduced, e.g. through Lady Macbeth deliberately rejecting conventional femininity to find the resolve to murder Duncan (oe) **B1**

(f) Answer: Gender is introduced in Act 1 Scene 5, when Lady Macbeth's soliloquy asks supernatural spirits to strip away her femininity, showing the theme through her deliberate rejection of what she sees as weak, feminine qualities.

Question 3

(a) Act 1 (e.g. Scene 7, "vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself", or Scene 3, Macbeth's disturbed aside) (oe) **B1**

(a) Act 3 (e.g. Scene 1, Macbeth's soliloquy fearing Banquo's 'royalty of nature' and a 'fruitless crown', or Scene 4, his open tyranny at the feast) (oe) **B1**

(a) Act 5 (e.g. Scene 3, "I am sick at heart", Scene 5, "I 'gin to be aweary of the sun", or Scene 8, "Why should I play the Roman fool") (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act 1 Scene 7 ("vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself"); Act 3 Scene 1 (fear of Banquo's 'royalty of nature' and a 'fruitless crown'); Act 5 Scene 5 ("I 'gin to be aweary of the sun").

(b) identifies the shift from secret/hesitant ambition to open tyranny (oe) **B1**

(b) reference to a method, e.g. soliloquy, the horse-riding/vaulting metaphor, or imagery of sickness/blood (oe) **B1**

(b) links ambition to Macbeth's eventual isolation, exhaustion or downfall (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Ambition moves from a secret, hesitant desire revealed only in soliloquy and aside in Act 1, to open, violent tyranny once Macbeth is king in Act 3, and finally to numb exhaustion and defiance by Act 5, as unchecked ambition leaves him isolated and destroyed.

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Question 4

(a) Act 1 Scene 1, the witches on the heath ("Fair is foul, and foul is fair") (oe) **B1**

(a) Act 3 Scene 4, Banquo's ghost appears at the feast, visible only to Macbeth (oe) **B1**

(a) Act 4 Scene 1, the apparitions and the prophecy that "none of woman born" shall harm Macbeth (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act 1 Scene 1 ("Fair is foul, and foul is fair"); Act 3 Scene 4 (Banquo's ghost at the feast); Act 4 Scene 1 (the apparitions, "none of woman born").

(b) the supernatural grows from ambiguous prophecy to direct, terrifying confrontation, to a deliberately misleading show of apparitions (oe) **B1**

(b) reference to equivocation: the witches tell partial truths that encourage Macbeth's overconfidence (oe) **B1**

(b) discussion of fate versus free will: the witches may prompt Macbeth's ambition but do not force his choices, so he remains responsible (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: The supernatural moves from ambiguous prophecy, to a direct haunting only Macbeth can see, to elaborate but technically misleading apparitions; because the witches never force Macbeth to act, an audience can still judge him as morally responsible for choosing to believe and act on what he is told.

Question 5

(a) Act 1 Scene 2, Duncan praises Macbeth as "valiant cousin, worthy gentleman" (oe) **B1**

(a) Act 2 Scene 4, Ross and the Old Man describe unnatural events, e.g. Duncan's horses eating each other and darkness at noon ("dark night strangles the travelling lamp") (oe) **B1**

(a) Act 4 Scene 3, Malcolm lists the "king-becoming graces" while testing Macduff (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act 1 Scene 2 ("O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!"); Act 2 Scene 4 (unnatural events after the murder, e.g. the horses eating each other); Act 4 Scene 3 (Malcolm's "king-becoming graces").

(b) reference to the Great Chain of Being/Jacobean belief that regicide would cause chaos in both nature and the state (oe) **B1**

(b) specific unnatural events (e.g. horses, darkness, an owl killing a falcon) as physical signs of the state's sickness under a usurper (oe) **B1**

(b) order is restored when Malcolm, the rightful heir, defeats Macbeth and becomes king (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Shakespeare uses the Great Chain of Being to link regicide to chaos in nature, shown through the unnatural events reported by Ross and the Old Man; order is only restored at the end of the play when Malcolm, the legitimate heir, defeats Macbeth and is crowned.

Question 6

(a) Act 1 Scene 5, Lady Macbeth's instruction to "look like th' innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't" (oe) **B1**

(a) Act 1 Scene 4, Duncan's comment that "there's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face", just before trusting Macbeth completely (oe) **B1**

(a) Act 4 Scene 1, the witches' prophecies that Macbeth cannot be harmed by "none of woman born" and is safe until Birnam Wood moves (oe) **B1**

(a) Answer: Act 1 Scene 5 ("look like th' innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't"); Act 1 Scene 4 (Duncan's misplaced trust); Act 4 Scene 1 (the apparitions' misleading prophecies).

(b) on the human level, the Macbeths deliberately disguise murderous intent behind hospitality and loyal appearances (oe) **B1**

(b) on the supernatural level, the witches' equivocal prophecies appear to promise safety but are technically true and misleading, e.g. Macduff "from his mother's womb / Untimely ripp'd" (oe) **B1**

(b) the combination of human and supernatural deception explains why Macbeth is repeatedly caught out, trusting appearances until it is too late (oe) **B1**

(b) Answer: Shakespeare shows deception operating on a human level, as the Macbeths hide murderous intent behind loyal appearances, and on a supernatural level, as the witches' equivocal prophecies appear to guarantee safety but are technically misleading; together these make Macbeth's downfall especially dangerous, since he trusts appearances at every level until it is too late to change course.

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