

# BBC BITESIZE - MACBETH Episode 8

**Carl:** Hello, and welcome to the Bitesize English literature podcast. Now, you've clearly done something right because you made it here. If you wanna hear all the episodes in this podcast, make sure you download the BBC Sounds app.

**Jean:** And don't forget that whilst you're in the BBC Sounds app, there's loads of other things you can use to help you with your revision – full versions of some of the texts you might be studying, revision playlists and other Bitesize podcasts series to help with different GCSE subjects.

**Jean:** I'm Jean Menzies.

**Carl:** And I'm Carl Anka. And it feels like we've done all the work in the last seven episodes to make sure we feel ready to take on any questions about Macbeth, or shall we say The Scottish Play? Before we get started here, maybe grab a pen and paper so you can make some notes if that's helpful to you. We're gonna be covering subjects from all the episodes. So if there's any answers that you're not sure on, we'll be sure to let you know which episode that subject is in so you can relisten if you need to. Let's take the test, shall we?

**Jean:** I'm ready. Are you ready? In this episode, we're testing everything we've learned so far with a recap quiz.

**Carl:** We're gonna take it in turns to ask questions about Macbeth with some possible multiple choice answers. We're gonna give you a little bit of time to answer each question before we let you know if you gave the correct answer. Let's get started.

**Jean:** Okay. I'm going to jump in with question number one. Who is with Macbeth when he first meets the three witches on his way from battle? Is it Duncan, Banquo, or Macduff?

*MUSIC*

**Jean:** It is of course his best friend, Banquo. Not his best friend through the whole play, though, as he later has him killed because, standard Macbeth. If you weren't sure of that answer though have a listen to Episode One of the podcast again, where we cover the plot of Macbeth.

**Carl:** Alright, question number two. Listen to the following short extract where Banquo is thinking of everything that has happened so far in the play.

*EXTRACT*

**Banquo:** Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
As the weird women promised, and, I fear,  
Thou play'dst most foully for't.

**Carl:** Did you get all that? Right, okay. Here's your question. What key theme is most prominent in this extract? Is it option A, ambition and power, option B, the supernatural or option C, appearance and reality?

*MUSIC*

**Carl:** It was option A, ambition and power. That extract is Banquo thinking about how Macbeth's ambition has helped him to become king very quickly and gain ultimate power. And now Banquo worries about how he actually got there, and if Macbeth has played foul little bit. He does also mention the weird women. So I'll give you a bonus point if you identified the supernatural as a second theme. If you need to know more about that, or want a little bit more of a recap, head to Episode Four of the podcast to find out more about the themes of Macbeth.

**Jean:** Okay, question number three is all about my favourite character. And that is what is Lady Macbeth referring to when she says "out, damned spot, out" in Act 5 scene 1? Is it that Macbeth is to leave the room? Is it imaginary blood on her hands? Or is it the dagger?

*MUSIC*

**Jean:** That's right, she is referring to imaginary blood that she can see on her hands as she is sleepwalking. Whether through her guilt or as a consequence of her committing such a sin, she starts to be driven insane by it all and see blood on her hands that isn't there. For a recap on this you can head to Episode Two where we discuss more about Lady Macbeth as a character.

**Carl:** Alright, then. Do you remember when we told you the word blood is repeated more than 40 times in Macbeth? 40. Now, here's your question. Why do you think Shakespeare did this? Is it option A, because Shakespeare simply couldn't think of any other words? Is it option B, to emphasise to the audience the horror of what is happening and what's happened in the play? Or is it option C, in that it's only ever really important in the parts about the dagger?

*MUSIC*

**Carl:** The answer is Option B. Shakespeare used this to draw the audience's attention to the horror of what is going on in the play. It's used to show both the violence and guilt in Macbeth, Macbeth the play and Macbeth, the chap. A good example of this is Macbeth saying, "It will have blood; they say blood will have blood," as he recalls an old saying that says bloodshed through violence sees more blood than revenge. This is Macbeth realising that he's trapped in a cycle. You can recap all of this in Episode Five of the podcast where we talk about form, structure and language.

**Jean:** Okay, next question. How does Shakespeare say the witches should look when casting for Macbeth?

*MUSIC*

**Jean:** Yeah, okay, that one was a little bit of a trick. Shakespeare actually gives very little information about how his characters should look. And the witches in particular are left open to interpretation for directors. That's why they're often very different in different performances, from being portrayed as identical triplets to binmen, to having a greater or fewer number than three. Now, we talked more about that and the dramatisation of Macbeth in Episode Six if you need a recap.

**Carl:** Hello again. I've got another extract for you. Have a little listen.

*EXTRACT*

**First Witch:** All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

**Second Witch:** All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

**Third Witch:** All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!

**Carl:** Those are the three witches. Which one of their predictions comes true first?

*MUSIC*

**CARL:** I'm sorry. That was a little bit of a trick question from me, because Macbeth is already the Thane of Glamis when he hears those witches' prophecies. However, soon after, he finds out that King Duncan is making him the Thane of Cawdor for his bravery in battle. And it's this that ignites Macbeth's ambition for power and kickstarts off this whole trail of murders. If you want to know more about this, dear listener, go to Episode One if you want a recap on the plot of Macbeth.

**Jean:** Okay, time for another extract. So give this one a listen.

*EXTRACT*

**Porter:** Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator.

**Jean:** So the porter appears after King Duncan has been murdered, but he has not yet been discovered. In this extract the porter makes reference to an event that would have been fresh in the minds of the audience at the time. Is that the First World War? Is it women being allowed to act on stage for the first time? Or is it the Gunpowder Plot?

*MUSIC*

**Jean:** And the answer is the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Macbeth was first performed in 1606. So the Gunpowder Plot would feel very recent to an audience. A priest called Father Henry Garnet was actually hanged for lying about his knowledge of the gunpowder conspiracy, which he pleaded that he

did for “God's sake”. In his speech, the porter meanwhile, refers to someone who committed treason and enough for God's sake, a direct reference to the Gunpowder Plot and Father Garnet. Jacobean's believed that monarchs were selected by God so regicide, the killing of a king, had pretty grave consequences.

**Carl:** Grave consequences. Yes, see what you did there.

**Jean:** I shouldn't have found that so funny.

**Carl:** Right then final question, listener, and a final extract for you to listen to.

*EXTRACT*

**Macduff:** I could play the woman with mine eyes  
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission; front to front  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;  
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too!

**Carl:** Right, that you just listened to was Macduff. We, the audience, already know that Macduff is a very loyal character within the play as he followed Malcolm to England to help him regain the throne. What has he just found out here, and how does that impact him? Is it option A, his wife and family have been murdered? Is it option B, Macduff has found out that Macbeth is on his way to England too. Or is it option C, Macduff has found out that a forest has moved.

*MUSIC*

**Carl:** Have you got it? That was option A. The extract you heard was Macduff finding out that his wife and family have been murdered. So now not only does Macduff want to defeat Macbeth out of loyalty to his king and country, but he also wants revenge. If you want to find out more, you can listen to Episode Three again, if you want a recap on the character of Macduff.

**Jean:** But I think that brings us to the end of our recap quiz and of this series. So thanks for listening to the Bitesize English literature podcast all about Macbeth.

**Carl:** We hope you've enjoyed stepping inside Macbeth with us, hearing the words on the page and finding out more about the play. And remember, if you want to get all the episodes in this podcast, make sure you download the BBC Sounds app and you will find loads on there to help with your studies. You can find more BBC Bitesize podcasts to help with different English literature texts, and other subjects, revision playlists and plenty of audiobooks, music or podcasts to help you relax between your revision sessions. So we hope you'll join us for more - just search for Bitesize on the BBC Sounds app.

**Jean:** Bitesize English literature podcast - listen on BBC Sounds.