

1.1 The Witches

“Fair is f_____, and f_____ is
fair: h_____ through the fog and
f_____ air.”

1.1 The Witches

WHAT:

- Ominous, foreboding, corrupting
- Invert normality, disorientate our moral compass

HOW:

- “**Hover**” - floating, supernatural
- “**Fair is foul**” - a paradox (riddle) - deliberately confusing, muddling up good and evil - rejecting order and creating chaos
- “**Fog and filthy air**” - things being hidden from sight - truth being obscured

WHERE:

“Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air”

HOW:

- Rhythm of **trochaic tetrameter** - opposite to iambic rhythm used by human characters - abnormal, unhuman
- Speaking together in a **chant** - spell-like
- **chiasmus** (mirroring) in first line - reflects how normality is being inverted

WHY:

- King James I and *Demonology*
- Christian views about witches, God and the devil
- Mixture of fear and fascination - trying to both entertain and make M's hamartia clear to the audience

1.2 Macbeth as a hero

“with his brandished s_____, which
smoked with b_____ e_____,
like v_____'s m_____ carved out
his passage”

1.2 Macbeth as a hero

WHAT:

- brave, strong, violent
- Fighting on side of king, God and justice

HOW:

- **'brandished'** - skilful, confident, defiant
- **'smoked'** - metaphor: hot, angry, hellish image
- **'execution'** - unaffected by deaths, carrying out his duty, bringing justice to traitors on behalf of the king and god

WHERE: “with his brandished steel, which smoked with bloody execution, like valour’s minion carved out his passage”

HOW:

- **simile of 'like valour's minion'** - a follower of bravery, not worried about himself...
- *...better at following than giving orders? Foreshadows failure as a ruler?*
- *'carved' - violent, physical, image of butchering meat - too extreme?*

WHY:

- King James feared treason (Gunpowder plot in 1605)
- Jacobeans admired brave actions done for king and country
- violence more a part of everyday life (public executions)
- Responsibility and duty that came with title and reputation (Aristotle)

1.3 Macbeth's reaction to the prophecies

“Two t_____ are told / As
h_____ prologues to the
s_____ act / Of the i_____
theme. – I thank you g_____.”

1.3 Macbeth's reaction to the prophecies

WHAT:

- tempted, ambitious, spellbound
- his hamartia of excessive ambition is made clear

HOW:

- “Truths”, “happy”: thinks of prophecies positively
- “Swelling” - image of childbirth - birth of his ambition - present continuous (-ing): ongoing, not yet ready to happen
- “I thank you gentlemen” - quickly and easily hides true feelings - duplicitous

WHERE: “Two truths are told / As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme. – I thank you gentlemen.”

HOW:

- “Prologues”, “act”, “theme” - semantic field of writing - dramatises his own narrative, casts himself as the hero - irony that audience knows he will be a *tragic* hero - downfall inevitable
- **caesura** reflects contrast between inner thoughts and outward actions

WHY:

- Aristotle's ideas about tragic heroes: hamartia of ambition
- Supernatural origins of his knowledge foreshadow downfall
- Theme of inner truth against outward appearances (“fair is foul”)

1.5 Lady Macbeth as transgressive

“C_____, you s_____ ... u_____

me here,

And fill me from the c_____ to the

toe top-full / of d_____ cruelty!”

1.5 Lady Macbeth as transgressive

WHAT:

- confident, evil, transgressive, unafraid
- made clear through links to supernatural

HOW:

- “**come**” - imperative (commanding) verb - controlling and powerful
- “**unsex**” - wants to be freed from limitations of being female in Jacobean society
- “**spirits**” - supernatural forces - asks for help from devil - evil, blasphemous

WHERE:

“Come, you spirits ... unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / of direst cruelty!”

HOW:

- Trochaic meter in “**Come**, you **spirits**” - inverts normal (iambic) rhythm of human speech - echoes language of witches from 1.1
- “**Direst cruelty**” - superlative - regicide as worst crime of all - *does her self-awareness make this worse?*

WHY:

- alignment with devil and witches symbolises rejection of Great Chain of Being and Divine Right of Kings
- expectations of Jacobean women - LM transgresses these
- Not wanting to be ‘male’ but without any gender - more supernatural, liminal - a 4th witch

1.7 Lady Macbeth as manipulative

“I have given s_____ and know how
t_____ ‘tis to love the babe that
m_____ me ...

I would have d_____ the b_____ out
had I so sworn”

1.7 Lady Macbeth as manipulative

WHAT:

- manipulative, violent, shocking, evil
- transgresses maternal role

HOW:

- “dash’d” - violent verb - emasculates Macbeth by being more aggressive
- Maternal imagery in “babe”, “milks” - using experience of loss of a child against Macbeth - emotional blackmail

WHERE:

“how tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me ...
I would have dash’d the brains out had I so sworn”

HOW:

- **Contrast** between motherhood and violence - ability to move easily between roles - vs. fixed hierarchy of GCOB: transgressive

WHY:

- Goes against orthodox (traditional) Jacobean expectation that women obey husbands, raise male heir
- Fear, suspicion in Jacobean audience
- *Shakespeare villainising her or making a comment about society?*
- Humans capable of worse evil than the supernatural witches

2.1 Macbeth and the floating dagger

“Is this a d_____ which I see
before me,

The h_____ toward my hand?

C_____, let me c_____ thee.”

2.1 Macbeth and the floating dagger

WHAT:

- uncertain, disturbed, hallucinating
- question of whether dagger is supernatural or psychological

HOW:

- “**dagger**” - murder, assassination, secrecy
- “**clutch**” - greed, ambition leading him on
- “**come**” - uses imperative language to try and assert control, but fails - is he being controlled? By what / who?
- **rhetorical question** - doubt, equivocation

WHERE: “Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.”

HOW:

- **recapitulates image** of Macbeth in 1.2 with his “brandished steel” - but now a “dagger” instead of a sword - murder, assassination, secrecy instead of “execution” like in 1.2

WHY:

- Jacobean belief in supernatural (*Demonology*) - dagger sent by witches to control Macbeth?
- Modern audience - more psychological reading: dagger a symbol of his repressed desires
- Shakespeare questioning where true evil lies: in outside world, or inside us?

2.2 Reactions to regicide

“Will all g_____ N_____’s ocean

w_____ this blood

C_____ from my hand? N_____”

2.2 Reactions to regicide

WHAT:

- guilty, remorseful, understanding, ungodly
- moment when he realises he is doomed

HOW:

- “**blood**” - symbol of sin, guilt
- symbolism of water in “**ocean**”, “**wash**” - purifying, cleansing
- **rhetorical question** - uncertainty, doubt
- **hypophora** in “**no**” - realisation, downfall is inevitable

WHERE: “Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No”

HOW:

- **allusion** to “**Neptune**” - epic scale of guilt - broken connection to Christian God through regicide
- **caesura** - pause for moment of realisation - shift in characterisation as tragic hero

WHY:

- Great Chain of Being, Divine Right of Kings - Macbeth vs natural order
- turning point in development of tragic hero
- permanence of guilt - stained forever: “what’s done cannot be undone” (Lady Macbeth in 5.1)

4.3 Kingship

“O nation m_____ ,

With an u_____ t_____

bloody-s_____’d,”

4.3 Kingship

WHAT:

- undeserved, corrupted, saddening
- earned through blood and violence

HOW:

- “**tyrant**” - Macbeth cruel, corrupt as a king - doesn't deserve the title
- “**untitled**” - Macduff refuses to acknowledge, can't believe chosen by God

WHERE:

“O nation miserable,
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,”

HOW:

- “**nation miserable**” - personification: country given feelings, nation above individual rulers
- *apostrophe in “O” - Macduff's own sadness - deeply connected to his country, humble & no desire to rule - vs Macbeth's selfishness*

WHY:

- *Basilikon Doron* as source for ideas on kingship
- Macduff, Malcolm symbolic of good qualities of king, providing contrast to Macbeth
- Flattery of King James I as a good king himself

5.1 Lady Macbeth's madness

“Out, d_____ spot! O_____, I say!

One: two: why, then, 'tis t____ to

d____'t”

5.1 Lady Macbeth's madness

WHAT:

- Hysterical, fearful, uncertain
- remorseful, desperate, powerless

HOW:

- **'Spot'** (of blood) = metaphor for guilt
- **'Damned'** = evil, from devil: sign of a sin against God
- **imperative verb 'out'** - tries to be powerful and controlling like at start, *but* has to **repeat** it because she can no longer control things as she wants

WHERE:

“Out, damned spot! out, I say!

One: two: why, then, 'tis time to do't ”

HOW:

- **“One, two”** - the bell from the night of Duncan's murder repeatedly in her subconscious
- **fragmented metre** (rhythm) - her mind has been broken and destroyed by her actions - the delivery would be heightened and fearful to reflect loss of control and power

WHY:

- Shakespeare's sources: son-in-law John Hall, Timothy Bright's *Treatise on Melancholie*
- Jacobean religious belief that madness was a punishment for sin
- Psychologically, a result of repressing her guilt about Duncan's murder (“consider it not so deeply”)

5.5 Macbeth's reaction to LM's death

“Out, out, brief c_____!”

Life's but a w_____ s_____, a poor

p_____”

5.5 Macbeth's reaction to LM's death

WHAT:

- despairing, philosophical, existential
- realises that life is transient and empty of meaning

HOW:

- metaphor of **'candle'** - his wife had brought him light and happiness for a short time, but life is short ('brief'), fragile and easily lost
- metaphor of **'shadow'** - life now seems dark, empty, impossible to escape from

WHERE: "Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player"

HOW:

- layered metaphors end in **'player'** (actor) - life as a performance, superficial, and **'poor'**: unrewarding, lacking meaning or quality
- **'out, out'** - ambiguous: tragic echo of wife's 'Out, damned spot'? Or does he feel life not worth living and wants his own to end?

WHY:

- arguably a form of **anagnorisis** as a tragic hero: still believes can't be killed due to witches' prophecy, but seems to recognise that existence is hollow and his quest for power worthless
- existential anguish as punishment for regicide - lost all connection with God and comfort from God's natural order

Additional quotations from class

1.1 “he unseamed him from the nave to th' chops, / And fixed his head upon our battlements”

1.1 “where the place? / Upon the heath. / There to meet with Macbeth.”

1.3 “function / is smothered in surmise, and nothing is / But what is not.”

1.5 “look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't.”

2.1 “Now o'er the one halfworld / Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse / The curtain'd sleep;”

2.2 “'tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil.”

3.2 “O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!”

3.4 “Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo! how say you? / Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.”

4.1 “Yet my heart throbs to know one thing: tell me, if your art / Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever reign”

4.3 “the king-becoming graces, As justice, verity, temperance, stableness, Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness, Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude”

5.1 “Here's the smell of blood still / All the perfumes of Arabia / will not sweeten this little / Hand. Oh, oh, oh!”

5.5 “it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.”

5.8 “Yet I will try the last. Before my body / I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff”

3.2 Macbeth's hubris in killing Banquo

WHAT:

- secretive, sinister, purposeful
- moment when M's hubris is made clear - begins to act alone

HOW:

- **"Be innocent"** - imperative phrase - taking control, ownership of murder - wants to protect his wife? Or feels too guilty to share his plans?
- **"dearest chuck"** - gentle, tender tone - love for wife - protective

WHERE:

LADY MACBETH: "What's to be done?"

MACBETH: "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck."

HOW:

- **"What's to be done?"** - use of question shows LM's lack of knowledge - places her beneath M in power at this point
- *M almost patronising to her here*
- structural turning point in play as balance of power shifts

WHY:

- Turning point in development as a tragic hero (peripeteia)
- Hubris as his main goal is already achieved - this is more personal - even worse betrayal - Banquo a close friend
- Goes against King James' advice in *Basilikon Doron*

3.4 Banquo's ghost

WHAT:

- assertive, bold, self-controlled
- sees the reality of the situation

HOW:

- 'painting of your fear' - metaphor - not real, but in his imagination - not sent by witches but psychological, caused by his own repressed emotions

WHERE:

"This is the very painting of your fear:
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said, / Led you to Duncan."

HOW:

- 'you said led you to Duncan'
- 'you' - accusatory tone through direct address - mocking, shaming him?
- 'led' Macbeth tries to blame other objects for his actions, avoids responsibility

WHY:

- central question of whether evil is external or internal
- is Macbeth under supernatural control ('charm', 'rapt') or driven by own 'vaulting ambition'?
- should not be distracted by superficially scary things around us, but look inside to find their cause

4.1 Macbeth returns to the witches

WHAT:

- Demanding, commanding, assertive
- Hubristic

HOW:

- **'Satisfied'** - arrogant, greedy, expectant - M has always thirsted after forbidden knowledge from the witches - this instinct becomes stronger through the play, from mere curiosity in Act 1
- **'Deny me'** - threatening tone, dominant

WHERE: "I will be satisfied: deny me this,
And an eternal curse fall on you!"

HOW:

- **curse** - (noun) connotations of witchcraft and magic, Macbeth attempting to intimidate the witches
- *Highlights the inversion of the audience's understanding of morality? Foreshadows Macbeth's downfall? Associates Macbeth himself with dark magic and the devil?*
- *like LM in 1.5 ("Come, you spirits...")*

WHY:

- Tragic hero/Macbeth's downfall: Macbeth's hubris and ambition - Aristotle on tragedy
- Contradicts Jacobean expectations for witches/witchcraft/evil
- Highlights Shakespeare's humanist exploration of fate vs free will (Macbeth always chooses temptation)

5.8 Macbeth's death

WHAT:

- doomed, foolish, hubristic
- easily manipulated and blinded by ambition
- moment of tragic realisation

HOW:

- “**fiends**” = witches as monstrous, hellish - M realises their connection to Devil and sees his own transgression
- “**juggling**” = witches ‘play’ with truth, confuse Macbeth with half-truths - seen in their paradoxical language & trochaic metre in Act 1

WHERE: “be these juggling fiends no more believed.”

HOW:

- “**no more**” = M's changed viewpoint, realises his hubris and his hamartia (his ambition and being easily manipulated) - but too late
- **dramatic irony:** Macduff describes Macbeth as “fiend of Scotland” (Act 4) and Malcolm describes LM as “fiend-like queen” (Act 5)

WHY:

- moment of **anagnorisis** (Aristotle) - realisation of his **hamartia** (flaw / mistake) confirms his downfall as tragic hero
- sees his actions clearly as **transgressing against God**, and how he has followed evil, supernatural witches instead
- still seems not to blame himself?