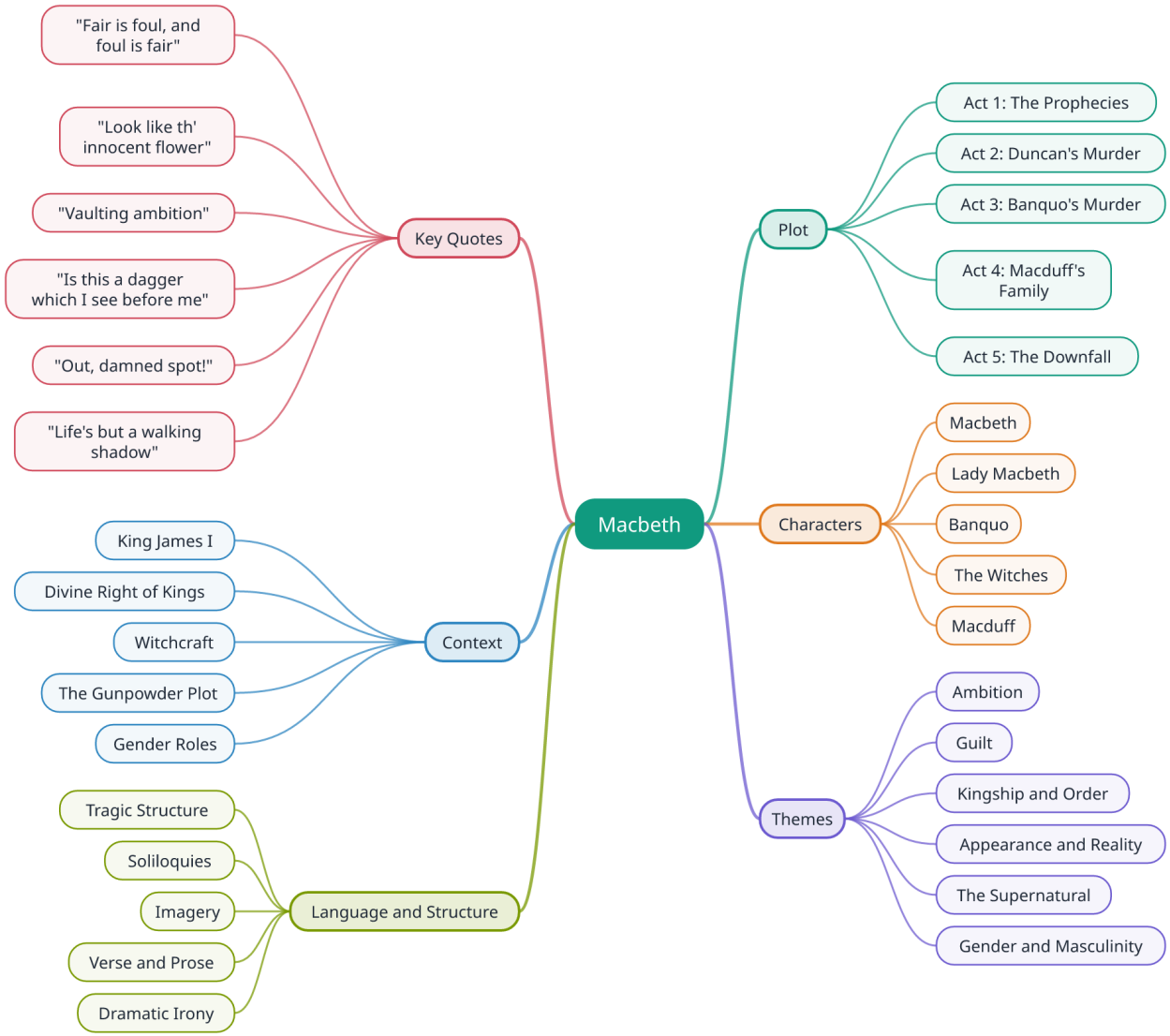
Macbeth Mind Map (GCSE)

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Macbeth mind map explained

Plot

Macbeth's rise and fall, from loyal thane to tyrant, told in five acts.

Act 1: The Prophecies

The witches predict that Macbeth will be Thane of Cawdor and then king. Duncan makes him Thane of Cawdor, and Lady Macbeth persuades him to kill Duncan.

Act 2: Duncan's Murder

Macbeth murders Duncan in his sleep. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, flee, so suspicion falls on them and Macbeth is crowned.

Act 3: Banquo's Murder

Macbeth has Banquo murdered, but Banquo's son Fleance escapes. Banquo's ghost appears at the banquet and Macbeth's guilt and paranoia are exposed.

Act 4: Macduff's Family

The witches' apparitions give Macbeth new prophecies that seem to make him safe. Macduff joins Malcolm in England, and Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children murdered.

Act 5: The Downfall

Lady Macbeth sleepwalks, overcome by guilt, and dies. The prophecies come true in unexpected ways, Macduff kills Macbeth, and Malcolm becomes king, restoring order.

Characters

Duncan, the trusting king, and Malcolm, his rightful heir, frame the play: the order Macbeth destroys and the order that returns.

Macbeth

A brave soldier whose ambition, encouraged by the witches and his wife, becomes his ruin. Guilt and paranoia drive him to more violence. A tragic hero whose fatal flaw is his vaulting ambition.

Lady Macbeth

Manipulative and ruthless at first, she challenges Macbeth's masculinity to push him to murder. Later she is undone by guilt, and the sleepwalking scene shows her collapse.

Banquo

Hears the same prophecies as Macbeth but does not act on them. A foil to Macbeth who shows that the prophecies did not have to lead to murder.

The Witches

Supernatural figures whose prophecies set the tragedy in motion. They raise the question of whether Macbeth's fate is decided for him or chosen.

Macduff

Loyal to Scotland rather than to Macbeth. He loses his family, kills Macbeth, and helps restore justice.

Themes

The central ideas examiners expect you to explore and support with evidence.

Ambition

Unchecked desire for power leads to moral decay and destruction. Macbeth's vaulting ambition is his main motive and his fatal flaw.

Guilt

Blood imagery, hallucinations and lost sleep chart the Macbeths' mental decline. Macbeth asks whether "all great Neptune's ocean" could wash Duncan's blood from his hand.

Kingship and Order

Duncan represents rightful kingship and Macbeth the tyrant. Killing a king breaks the natural order, and chaos follows until Malcolm restores it.

Appearance and Reality

Characters hide evil behind innocent faces, and the witches' words are never quite what they seem.

The Supernatural

The witches, the floating dagger and Banquo's ghost. They raise the question of fate against free will: are the Macbeths driven by prophecy, or do they choose?

Gender and Masculinity

Lady Macbeth rejects the expected female role and attacks her husband's manhood to push him to murder.

Key Quotes

Learn who says each line, when, and which theme it links to. Wording can differ slightly between editions, so check against the one you study.

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair"

The Witches, Act 1 Scene 1. Opens the theme of appearance and reality, and a world where moral boundaries are blurred and reversed.

"Look like th' innocent flower"

Lady Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 5: "Look like th' innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't". Deception and appearance against reality.

"Vaulting ambition"

Macbeth, Act 1 Scene 7: "I have no spur / To prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition". He admits ambition is his only motive.

"Is this a dagger which I see before me"

Macbeth, Act 2 Scene 1. A hallucination before the murder that shows the supernatural and his troubled mind.

"Out, damned spot!"

Lady Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 1, while sleepwalking. She cannot wash away imagined blood: guilt has destroyed her.

"Life's but a walking shadow"

Macbeth, Act 5 Scene 5, after Lady Macbeth's death. Despair, and a sense that life has lost its meaning.

Context

The historical background that shapes the characters, the politics and the audience's response.

King James I

The play was written around 1606, early in James's reign. Banquo was thought to be James's ancestor, so he is shown as noble.

Divine Right of Kings

Kings were believed to be chosen by God and to sit at the top of the Great Chain of Being. Killing one was a terrible sin that broke the natural order.

Witchcraft

James wrote Daemonologie (1597) about witches, and many people feared them. The witch scenes played on those fears.

The Gunpowder Plot

The failed plot to blow up James in 1605 made treason and regicide a recent, real fear for the audience.

Gender Roles

Women were expected to be obedient. Lady Macbeth's power and her challenge to her husband's masculinity

would have unsettled a Jacobean audience.

Language and Structure

The dramatic techniques, imagery and forms that create meaning and tension.

Tragic Structure

A hero brought down by a fatal flaw (hamartia), here his ambition.

Soliloquies

Give us direct access to Macbeth's conscience and show his progression from doubt to resolve to despair.

Imagery

Recurring images link the characters' inner states with moral and natural disorder:

- Blood: guilt
- Darkness: evil
- Sleep: innocence and peace
- Clothing: stolen power

Verse and Prose

The witches speak in rhyming chants that set them apart. Lady Macbeth speaks in prose in the sleepwalking scene, showing that her mind has broken down.

Dramatic Irony

Duncan trusts Macbeth completely while the audience already knows he plans to kill him.

How to revise with this mind map

1. Link every quote to a theme. For each quote on the map, say out loud who says it, when, and which theme it shows. Exam answers need quotes used as evidence for an idea, not quoted on their own.

2. Track the change in each Macbeth. Macbeth moves from doubt to resolve to despair, and Lady Macbeth from control to collapse. Being able to explain how and why a character changes across the play is what lifts an answer.

3. Practise from an extract. Most exam boards give you an extract and ask you to write about the play as a whole. Pick a scene, find which branches of the map it connects to, then plan an answer that moves out to the rest of the play.

4. Weave in context, don't bolt it on. Use the Context branch to explain why something matters, for example why killing Duncan would horrify an audience who believed in the divine right of kings.

5. Make it yours. Build your own Macbeth map in Mindmapi from your class notes, and ask the AI about any branch you are unsure of. The answer is saved into that branch's notes for next time.