

### Plot summary

**Act I scene i** – The three witches gather to in a thunder storm to meet Macbeth

**Act I scene ii** – Duncan hears reports of the battle in which Macbeth proves himself a hero and also of the treachery of the Thane of Cawdor.

**Act I scene iii** – Macbeth & Banquo meet the witches and hear the predictions that he will be Thane of Cawdor and the next king. Ross arrives to confirm that Macbeth is the new Thane of Cawdor.

**Act I scene iv** – Duncan decides to make his son Malcolm the heir to his throne and tells Macbeth that he will visit his castle.

**Act I scene v** – Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband about the events so far and makes up her mind to murder Duncan.

**Act I scene vi** – Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle and is welcomed by Lady Macbeth.

**Act I scene vii** – Macbeth decides he cannot go through with the plot but Lady Macbeth persuades him to change his mind.

**Act II scene i** – Banquo feels uneasy about what might happen in the night. Macbeth makes his way to Duncan's room to kill him and sees a ghostly dagger floating in the air before him.

**Act II scene ii** – Macbeth forgets to leave the bloody daggers in Duncan's room after the murder and Lady Macbeth is forced to take charge and put them back.

**Act II scene iii** – The next morning Duncan's body is discovered by Macduff; Macbeth conveniently kills the servants in pretend rage; Duncan's sons, Malcolm & Donalbain, flee the castle.

**Act II scene iv** – Macduff reports that suspicion for the murder has fallen on the king's sons; Macbeth has travelled to Scone to be crowned.

**Act III scene i** – Macbeth is now king, but Banquo is suspicious about how the witch's predications have come true. Macbeth arranges to have him murdered.

**Act III scene ii** – Lady Macbeth tries to get her husband to talk to her about his plans but he refuses.

**Act III scene iii** – Banquo is murdered but his son, Fleance, escapes.

**Act III scene iv** – At a feast that night, Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo. Lady Macbeth tries to calm him down but when this fails cancels the feasts and sends the courtiers away.

**Act III scene v** – The witches discuss events so far; Hecate, the ruler of the witches, predicts his downfall.

**Act III scene vi** – suspicion of Macbeth is growing; Macduff has left for England to rouse support against him.

**Act IV scene i** – The witches tell Macbeth he cannot be harmed by anyone 'born of a woman' and that he will be safe until Birnam Wood moves to the castle at Dunsinane. Macbeth decides to murder Macduff's family.

**Act IV scene ii** – Macbeth's murderers kill Lady Macduff and her children.

**Act IV scene iii** – Macduff discovers his family's murder and, with Malcolm, leads an army to attack Macbeth.

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**Act IV scene iii** – Macduff discovers his family's murder and, with Malcolm, leads an army to attack Macbeth.

### **Historical Context:**

The plays Shakespeare wrote during the reign of King James (such as *Macbeth*) were cynical and dark reflecting the insecurities of King James. The play was **written** in 1606, a time in history that was called the Jacobean era.

The play pays homage to the king's Scottish background. Additionally, the witches' prophecy that Banquo will found a line of kings is a clear nod to James's family's claim to have descended from the historical Banquo.

The play was first performed not long after the **Gunpowder Plot**. Shakespeare shows the murderers of a king tormented by their own guilt and driven to their doom. It was believed that kings were appointed by 'divine right' and were anointed by God. To kill a king was considered the worst sin and a terrible crime.

*Macbeth* is a **tragedy** and the character of Macbeth is a **tragic hero**



### Act 1

- Fair is foul, and foul is fair/ hover through the fog and filthy air” witches
- “...his brandish'd steel /which smoked with bloody execution” about Macbeth
- “O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!” description of Macbeth
- “...Stars, hide your fires; /Let not light see my black and deep desires:” Macbeth after the witches' prophecies
- “...unsex me here, / and fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty!” Lady Macbeth after reading Macbeth's letter
- “When you durst do it, then you were a man” Lady Macbeth to Macbeth when he is thinking of not killing Duncan

### Act 2

- “or art thou but /A dagger of the mind, a false creation, /Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?” – Macbeth hallucinating
- “Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood /Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather/ The multitudinous seas in incarnadine, /Making the green one red.” Macbeth after killing Duncan
- “My hands are of your colour; but I shame /To wear a heart so white /A little water clears us of this deed:” ... Lady Macbeth after framing the bodyguards

### Act 3

- “Thou has it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all, /As the weird women promised, and, I fear,/ Thou play'dst most foully for't:” Banquo about Macbeth
- “To be thus is nothing / But to be safely thus.” Macbeth after becoming King but before Banquo's death
- “O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
- “Be innocent of the knowledge...Till thou applaud the deed.” Macbeth to Lady Macbeth
- “Thou canst not say I did it. Never
- shake thy gory locks at me.” Macbeth to Banquo's ghost

### Act 4

- ‘By the pricking of my thumbs / something wicked this way comes’ – the witches about Macbeth
- “Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff /Beware the thane of Fife.” witches' prophecy
- “for none of woman born /Shall harm Macbeth.” witches' prophecy
- “Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until / Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill / Shall come against him.” witches' prophecy
- “The castle of Macduff I will surprise; /Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword /His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls /That trace him in his line. “ Macbeth after the prophecies

### Act 5

- “Out, damned spot!” Lady Macbeth when hallucinating
- “who would have thought the old man /to have had so much blood in him.” Lady Macbeth remembering Duncan's death
- “I'll fight till from my bones my flesh be hack'd.” Macbeth planning to fight
- “Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage /And then is heard no more:” Macbeth on hearing Lady Macbeth's death
- Life ‘is a tale / told by an idiot / full of sound and fury / signifying nothing” Macbeth's final verdict on himself
- “This dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,” Malcolm's final verdict on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

# What does Shakespeare suggest about.....

1. Regicide
2. Free will versus fate
3. Ambition
4. What it means to be a man
5. What it means to be a woman
6. Guilt
7. Supernatural forces
8. Mental torment
9. Kingship
10. What it means to be human



in 'Macbeth'?

# Essay planning revision

1. Consider the question.
2. Annotate the extract with what it is showing you about the question. Ensure you get your language analysis in here, especially if you have a limited number of other relevant quotations ready to use.
3. Dump everything else you know about the plot / character / quotations that is relevant onto the page in any order.
4. Consider what all these details and the annotation are showing you about your argument in answer to the question.
5. Form your opening statement to your essay, which could use these structures
  1. In 'Macbeth', a play about \_\_\_\_\_, Shakespeare explores how.....
  2. In 'Macbeth', a play that explores \_\_\_\_\_, Shakespeare presents XXX as.....
  3. In 'Macbeth', a play that considers \_\_\_\_\_, not only does Shakespeare explore.... but asks us to think about .....
6. Decide on the order you will write about the ideas from your 'brain dump': chronological is easiest, but you might start with the extract, then go chronological; you might group all one set of ideas together (eg all ideas on a particular character) then go to a contrasting group of ideas.
7. Write!!
8. Whenever you are about to write about the extract, put it in its place in the play first: **In this extract, towards the start / middle / end of the play, character X has just / is discussing / is considering / is about to....**

Starting with this speech, explore how Shakespeare presents the supernatural.

Write about:

The Witches within this extract

The Witches' interactions with other characters in the play as a whole

Explain the extract's place in the play :

What was King James I's reaction to witches?

Why might Shakespeare have started with the witches?

**ACT I, SCENE I. A desert place.**

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches*

**First Witch** When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

**Second Witch** When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.

**Third Witch** That will be ere the set of sun.

**First Witch** Where the place?

**Second Witch** Upon the heath.

**Third Witch** There to meet with Macbeth.

**First Witch** I come, Graymalkin!

**Second Witch** Paddock calls.

**Third Witch** Anon.

**ALL** Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

*Exeunt*

How and why does this scene use pathetic fallacy?

How does the final rhyming couplet set the scene for the whole play?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

Starting with this speech, explore how Shakespeare presents the supernatural.

Write about:

The Witches within this extract

The Witches' influence across the play as a whole

Explain the extract's place in the play :

How does the opening line recall the witches in Act 1 Scene 1?

What does Banquo's first speech show us about his reaction to the witches and of a typical Jacobean expectations of witches?

Act One Scene Three

**MACBETH** So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

**BANQUO** How far is't call'd to Forres? What are these  
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught  
That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her chappy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.

**MACBETH** Speak, if you can: what are you?

**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!

**BANQUO** Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner  
You greet with present grace and great prediction  
Of noble having and of royal hope,  
That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not.  
If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear  
Your favours nor your hate.

What are the three prophecies and how does the last one seem possibly sacrilegious?

What does Banquo's second speech show us about Macbeth's reaction to the witches?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

Starting with this speech, explore how Shakespeare presents the effects of ambition.

Write about: Macbeth's emotions within this scene

The effects of ambition across the play as a whole

Explain the extract's place in the play :

How does the fact that Fleance has escaped link with the witches' prophecies?

Why does news about Fleance escape make Macbeth say 'then comes my fit again'? How is he feeling and why, linked to ambition? Why might a Jacobean audience think it is morally right that Macbeth feels like this?

Act Three Scene Four

**MACBETH** There's blood on thy face.

**First Murderer** 'Tis Banquo's then.

**MACBETH** 'Tis better thee without than he within.  
Is he dispatch'd?

**First Murderer** My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

**MACBETH** Thou art the best o' the cut-throats: yet he's good  
That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it,  
Thou art the nonpareil.

**First Murderer** Most royal sir,  
Fleance is 'scaped.

**MACBETH** Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,  
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe?

**First Murderer** Ay, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,  
With twenty trenched gashes on his head;  
The least a death to nature.

**MACBETH** Thanks for that:  
There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled  
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,  
No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: to-morrow  
We'll hear, ourselves, again.

*Exit Murderer*

Why does Macbeth say 'now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in/ To saucy doubts and fears' : what does this show he is feeling and why is he feeling like this?

Why does Macbeth call Banquo 'the grown serpent' and Fleance 'the worm that's fled' who has 'no teeth for the present'? How does Shakespeare use this imagery to show Macbeth's worries about remaining King?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

Starting with this speech, explore how Shakespeare presents the effects of guilt.

Write about: Macbeth's emotions within this scene

The effects of guilt across the play as a whole

Explain the extract's place in the play :

Where does Lady Macbeth tell Macbeth he is unmanly in this extract and why does she do this?

Why does Lady Macbeth link Macbeth's behaviour to 'the air-drawn dagger' that led Macbeth to Duncan?

*Act Three Scene Four*

**MACBETH** The table's full.

**LENNOX** Here is a place reserved, sir.

**MACBETH** Which of you have done this?

**Lords** What, my good lord?

**MACBETH** Thou canst not say I did it: never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.

**ROSS** Gentlemen, rise: his highness is not well.

**LADY MACBETH** Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;  
The fit is momentary; upon a thought  
He will again be well: Are you a man?

**MACBETH** Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
Which might appal the devil.

**LADY MACBETH** O proper stuff!  
This is the very painting of your fear:  
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,  
Impostors to true fear, would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all's done,  
You look but on a stool.

**MACBETH** Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo!  
how say you? Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.  
If charnel-houses and our graves must send  
Those that we bury back, our monuments  
Shall be the maws of kites.

*GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes*

**LADY MACBETH** What, quite unmann'd in folly?

**MACBETH** If I stand here, I saw him.

**LADY MACBETH** Fie, for shame!

**MACBETH** the times have been,  
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,  
And there an end; but now they rise again,  
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,  
And push us from our stools: this is more strange  
Than such a murder is.

Which lines make Macbeth seem the most afraid and why?

Why would a Jacobean audience think it apt that Macbeth is afraid and feeling guilty?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?



**Explore how Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth in the play. Refer to this extract from Act 1 Scene 5 and elsewhere in the play.**

Explain the extract's place in the play :

Why does Lady Macbeth wish spirits to 'unsex me here'?

Why does Lady Macbeth wish to have her blood made 'thick' and her 'milk' taken for 'gall'? How is Shakespeare subverting typical ideas of being a woman?

Act 1 Scene 5

**Lady Macbeth** :The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull  
Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,  
Stop up th'access and passage to remorse  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between  
Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry 'Hold, hold!'

Why does Lady Macbeth appeal to 'thick night'?

Why would a Jacobean audience think it wrong that Lady Macbeth does not want 'heaven to peep through the blanket of dark' and how is Shakespeare using language here?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

## Explore how Shakespeare presents women in the play. Refer to this extract from Act 1 Scene 7 and elsewhere in the play

Explain the extract's place in the play :

Why is Lady Macbeth angry with Lady Macbeth in this scene'?

Why does Lady Macbeth use the image of dashing a baby to death in this scene?

**MACBETH**

Prithee, peace:  
I dare do all that may become a man;  
Who dares do more is none.

**LADY MACBETH**

What beast was't, then,  
That made you break this enterprise to me?  
When you durst do it, then you were a man;  
And, to be more than what you were, you would  
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place  
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:  
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now  
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this.

**MACBETH**

If we should fail?

**LADY MACBETH**

We fail!  
But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep--  
Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey  
Soundly invite him--his two chamberlains  
Will I with wine and wassail so convince  
That memory, the warder of the brain,  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep  
Their drenched natures lie as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
The unguarded Duncan?

How is Shakespeare subverting typical notions of manhood and womanhood in this scene'?

What does it show about Macbeth that he says 'If we should fail'?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

## Explore how Shakespeare presents the dark side of human nature in the play. Refer to this extract from Act 2 Scene 1 and elsewhere in the play.

Explain the extract's place in the play :

What is Macbeth hallucinating and why? How might a Jacobean audience interpret these hallucinations?

Which sense does Macbeth not trust and why? Which quotes show this?

### Macbeth

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppresed brain?  
I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
As this which now I draw.  
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;  
And such an instrument I was to use.  
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,  
Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,  
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:  
It is the bloody business which informs  
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one halfworld  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,  
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,  
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace.  
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,  
And take the present horror from the time,  
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:  
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

*A bell rings*

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.  
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

Explain Shakespeare's use of personification of 'wither'd murder' and then link it to how Macbeth is feeling about killing Duncan.

How does this speech end differently to how it started and what does this show about Macbeth's state of mind?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

## Explore how Shakespeare presents violence in the play. Refer to this extract from Act 2 Scene 1 and elsewhere in the play.

Explain the extract's place in the play :

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth's response to killing Duncan in this scene and how does this imagery about the ocean stress this?

Why does Lady Macbeth say 'the sleeping and the dead Are but as pictures' and what does this show about her reaction to killing Duncan?

**MACBETH** I'll go no more:

I am afraid to think what I have done;

Look on't again I dare not.

**LADY MACBETH** Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead

Are but as pictures: 'tis the eye of childhood

That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,

I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;

For it must seem their guilt.

*Exit. Knocking within*

**MACBETH** Whence is that knocking?

How is't with me, when every noise appals me?

What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas in incarnadine,

Making the green one red.

*Re-enter LADY MACBETH*

**LADY MACBETH** My hands are of your colour; but I shame

To wear a heart so white.

What does Lady Macbeth do to the 'grooms' – the bodyguards? How does this subvert typical views of women?

Why does Lady Macbeth say 'My hands are of your colour; but I shame /To wear a heart so white'?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

**Explore how Shakespeare presents the impact of killing a king. Refer to this extract from Act 2 Scene 4 and elsewhere in the play.**

Explain the extract's place in the play :

Why does Ross say 'dark night strangles the travelling lamp'?

What other acts of the natural world acting unnaturally are described in this extract?

**Old Man** Threescore and ten I can remember well:  
Within the volume of which time I have seen  
Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore  
night

Hath trifled former knowings.

**ROSS** Ah, good father,  
Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's  
act,

Threaten his bloody stage: by the clock, 'tis day,  
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp:  
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,  
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,  
When living light should kiss it?

**Old Man** 'Tis unnatural,  
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,  
A falcon, towering in her pride of place,  
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

**ROSS** And Duncan's horses--a thing most strange  
and certain--

Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,  
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make  
War with mankind.

**Old Man** 'Tis said they eat each other.

**ROSS** They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes  
That look'd upon't. Here comes the good Macduff.

Why does Shakespeare include descriptions of the natural world acting unnaturally, linked to the Great Chain of Being and regicide?

Why does Lady Macbeth say 'My hands are of your colour; but I shame /To wear a heart so white'?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

## Explore how Shakespeare presents the idea of guilt in the play? Refer to this extract from Act 5 and elsewhere in the play.

Explain the extract's place in the play :

What plot points is Lady Macbeth referring to in this scene? There are four.

What does it reinforce about her state of mind that Lady Macbeth speaks prose here and not in blank verse as she does the rest of the play?

**Doctor** You see, her eyes are open.

**Gentlewoman** Ay, but their sense is shut.

**Doctor** What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her hands.

**Gentlewoman** It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands: I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

**LADY MACBETH** Yet here's a spot.

**Doctor** Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

**LADY MACBETH** Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two: why, then, 'tis time to do't.--Hell is murky!--Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?--Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.

**Doctor** Do you mark that?

**LADY MACBETH** The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?--

What, will these hands ne'er be clean?--No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

**Doctor** Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

What is Lady Macbeth hallucinating and why?

Why is this portrayal of Lady Macbeth more in tune with a typical representation of women?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?

## Explore how Shakespeare presents power and ambition in the play. Refer to this extract from Act 5 Scene 1 and elsewhere in the play.

Explain the extract's place in the play :

What might Macbeth mean by 'She should have died hereafter; / There would have been a time for such a word'?

What does the metaphor 'Out, out brief candle' mean and what does it suggest about Macbeth's state of mind?

**SEYTON** The queen, my lord, is dead.

**MACBETH** She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been a time for such a word.  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time,  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

*Enter a Messenger* Thou comest to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

**Messenger** Gracious my lord,  
I should report that which I saw I saw,  
But know not how to do it.

**MACBETH** Well, say, sir.

**Messenger** As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,  
The wood began to move.

**MACBETH** Liar and slave!

**Messenger** Let me endure your wrath, if't be not so:  
Within this three mile may you see it coming;  
I say, a moving grove.

**MACBETH** If thou speak'st false,  
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,  
Till famine cling thee:

How can the line life 'is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/Signifying nothing' be seen as Macbeth's final verdict on himself and his attempts to be King?

What is the messenger's news, why might Macbeth be angry at it and what does his anger suggest about him?

What other quotes / references would you use from **the play as a whole** to answer this question?