

GCSE English Literature Paper 1 - Knowledge Organiser: *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare (1606)

Timeline / Context		Concepts and Themes		Key Dramatic Devices / Features of Tragedy	
1533	Henry VIII breaks from the Catholic Church and sets up The Church of England.	appearance and reality	the way that so many things in life are not what they seem	soliloquy	one character speaking to audience; M uses to make audience complicit
1597	James VI of Scotland writes <i>Daemonologie</i> – a guide to hunting witches	guilt	Macbeth and Lady Macbeth suffer torturous guilt as a result of their actions	dramatic irony	audience knows more than characters
1603	Queen Elizabeth I dies without an heir. Chooses James VI of Scotland successor; becomes James I of Scotland and England	regicide	the action of killing a king	symbolism	use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities; such as: visions, daggers, blood, birds
1605	The Gunpowder Plot – Catholics try to blow up parliament and the King	Key Characters		motif	Shakespeare uses dominant or recurring ideas throughout such as: blood, hands, light / dark, sleep / dreams, nature
Concepts and Themes		Macbeth	tragic hero: ambitious, treacherous, usurper	Hamartia	tragic flaw
ambition	If left unchecked, leads to ruthlessness; Macbeth's fatal flaw	Lady Macbeth	driving force at start of play: ambitious, guilty, mad	Hubris	excessive pride
power	without responsibility, is a corrupting influence	King Duncan	foil to Macbeth – a good and gracious ruler: old, pious, benevolent	Catharsis	purging or cleansing of pity and fear
The Great Chain of Being	cannot be broken otherwise disorder will take over; God at the top; the King rules on God's behalf	Banquo	M's best friend: brave, noble, loyal	Anagnorisis	recognition of the tragedy to come
Divine Right of Kings	monarchs rule by Divine Right – they are anointed by God	Macduff	hostile to M from the start and foil to M: loyal, patriotic, steadfast.	Peripetieia	sudden reversal of fortune
mortal sins	sinful acts leading to damnation: regicide, infanticide, suicide				
equivocation	deliberately using vague language to hide the truth	The Witches	use charms, spells, and prophecies to toy with M: equivocators, supernatural, unearthly		