

Act 4- Knowledge Organiser

Plot summary

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.

Historical Context:

The play pays homage to the king’s Scottish lineage. 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.



Key Terms:

apparition – a ghostlike image

descended – related to

orb – spherical shape

sceptre – ornamental stick

glass – mirror

hubris/hubristic – excessive pride

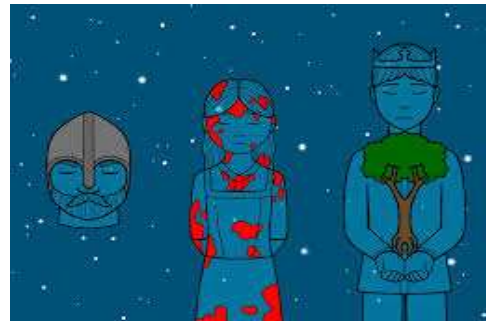
chaos – disorder and confusion

massacre – killing many people

depravity – moral corruption

epic – remarkable

allusion – reference to



Key Themes:

Guilt - the play shows the terrible consequences of murdering a king. **Kingship vs tyranny** – Duncan and Macbeth embody the qualities of a good king and a tyrant respectively.

Order vs chaos Natural order is disrupted then re-established.

Quotes:

“Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff; Beware the thane of Fife.”

“for none of woman born Shall harm Macbeth.”

“Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill Shall come against him.”

“shall Banquo's issue ever Reign in this kingdom?”

“And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass Which shows me many more; “

“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. “

“Not in the legions Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd In evils to top Macbeth.”

“Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men, Already at a point, was setting forth. Now we'll together;”

“Alas, poor country!”

