EXAM STASH

GCSE ENGLISH – CHARACTER REVISION

MACBETH – ACT 3

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GCSE ENGLISH LITERATURE



AMBITION | FEAR | POWER | VIOLENCE

Possessing the crown does not make Macbeth secure. He begins planning violence independently, while the banquet makes his private fear a public political problem.

THE JOURNEY: ACT 3

3.1 He fears Banquo and hires murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance.



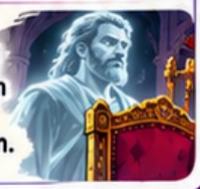
3.2 He hides the new plan from Lady Macbeth.



3.3 Banquo is killed but Fleance escapes.



3.4 The ghost disrupts the royal banquet; Macbeth decides to seek the witches again.



5 KEY QUOTATIONS

1	***'To be thus is nothing'***	**Speaker/Scene:** Macbeth, 3.1 **Method:** Soliloquy; contrast with being safe	**Analysis:** Kingship feels worthless without security. Ambition has not ended desire: it has become fear of losing what violence gained.
2	***'fruitless crown'***	**Speaker/Scene:** Macbeth, 3.1 **Method:** Metaphor of failed growth	**Analysis:** He measures power through hereditary succession. Banquo's promised descendants make his own crown feel sterile and his crime unrewarded.
3	***'full of scorpions is my mind'***	**Speaker/Scene:** Macbeth, 3.2 **Method:** Metaphor of poisonous creatures	**Analysis:** His inward life feels crowded with stinging threats. The image makes mental suffering vivid while anticipating the violence he orders.
4	***'Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck'***	**Speaker/Scene:** Macbeth, 3.2 **Method:** Imperative; affectionate diminutive	**Analysis:** He excludes his wife from planning. Their relationship shifts: the man who needed persuasion now manages murder without her knowledge.
5	***'I am in blood'***	**Speaker/Scene:** Macbeth, 3.4 **Method:** Metaphor of wading in blood	**Analysis:** He imagines violence as an engulfing landscape. Claiming that retreat is difficult rationalises further crime; it does not prove that he has no choice.

KEY CONNECTIONS

- Banquo's integrity and promised heirs make him a threat in Macbeth's imagination; Fleance's escape exposes the limits of murder as control.
- Lady Macbeth tries to preserve appearances at the banquet, but can no longer direct his decisions as in Act 1.
- The nobles witness a king unable to maintain order at his own feast: private terror threatens public authority.

INTERPRETATION: MACBETH IN ACT 3

- **Basic:** Macbeth becomes increasingly fearful and violent.
- **Further:** public kingship is undermined by private mental turmoil.
- **Advanced:** seeing him suffer may invite sympathy, but his deliberate delegation of murder prevents suffering from cancelling responsibility.

CONTEXT (RELEVANT)

- A royal banquet should display stable hierarchy and hospitality. Its collapse turns a social ritual into a theatrical exposure of insecure rule.



PAIRED EVIDENCE

"vaulting ambition" (1.7) ↔ ***"I am in blood"*** (3.4): a warning about overreaching becomes a justification for continuing.



RECALL TASKS

1. Why does the crown fail to satisfy Macbeth?
2. How does "dearest chuck" reveal a change in the marriage?

WRITING TASK

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth's atempt to secure power in Act 3?

