

COLE

CONVERSATIONS

WITH STUART
PRYKE

Macbeth Analysis: The Witches



 @SPRYKE2



  @EDUCATEDMINDSUK



watch the video.



Be prepared to answer questions about the witches at the end.



TOTAL RECALL



What can you recall from the video about the witches?

Avoid using the video or flash cards until you've completed all the questions using just your brain!

4

How far are the witches responsible for Macbeth's downfall?



3

Why was Jacobean society deeply suspicious about witches?

What imagery is created in the line "fog and filthy air"?

2

Why do the witches speak in trochaic tetrameter?

Why would poor, single or vulnerable women be accused of witchcraft?

How does Banquo's reaction to the witches differ to Macbeth's?



1

What weather is associated with the witches?

What supernatural abilities do the witches have?

What spirit animals are mentioned in act 1:1?

Complete the line:
"Fair is foul and
_____"

In medias res

Contemporary audiences will see the weather as a signifier of witches and witchcraft.

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches

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

Suggests that audiences are joining the witches at the end of their conversation.

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

Confusion/chaos/sounds of the battle

Third Witch That will be ere the set of sun.

Paradoxical statements

First Witch Where the place?

Highlights the ability of witches to look into the future.

With literal darkness comes metaphorical darkness

Second Witch Upon the heath.

'Heath' – A shrubland habitat found mainly on infertile, acidic soil.

The witches will meet Macbeth beyond civilization.

Third Witch There to meet with Macbeth.

First Witch I come, Graymalkin!

Second Witch Paddock calls.

Witches were said to be accompanied by familiars. Graymalkin and Paddock is a toad (Paddock – a toad or frog)

Third Witch Anon.

ALL Fair is foul, and foul is fair:

Hover through the fog and filthy air.

- **Word class/technique**
- **Denotation**
- **Connotations**
- **Effect (reader/writer's intention)**
- **Context**

Macbeth: Presentation of the witches

Potentially quite confusing for an audience. They must question what the characters are saying, placing them in a similar situation to Macbeth himself.

Shakespeare lived and wrote in a society what was deeply suspicious and paranoid about witchcraft. King James I himself was preoccupied with the perceived power witchcraft had over his reign.

Shakespeare begins his play by introducing the conflict between appearance and reality. What appears to be the case is not always the truth. Things that seem 'fair' are 'foul', and in some cases, 'foul' things are 'fair'.

The allure of kingship may seem 'fair', but for the Macbeths, royalty will turn 'foul'.

James I wrote 'Daemonologie', a philosophical dissertation on contemporary necromancy and the historical relationships between the various methods of divination used from ancient black magic.

Paradoxical Couplets

**'Fair is foul and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy**

Fricative alliteration – repeated 'f' sounds mirror the harsh nature of this world and the witches themselves.

air.'

Supernatural abilities!

Truth is obscured.

Disgustingly
dirty.

Imagery of infection and pollution. Air is supposed to be life-giving but here it has been tainted by the supernatural. This imagery of infection and pollution runs throughout the rest of the play.

- **Word class/technique**
- **Denotation**
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This act would be seen as 'mischief following anger'. This was a common charge against women accused of witchcraft- women that sought 'revenge' against someone who may have refused to help them.

The witches can only influence a situation. It is ultimately man who destroys himself.

The unnatural rhythm makes them seem otherworldly and separates them from the more noble characters.

**Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tossed**

Shakespeare plays on the ideas of witches and he heightens the fears the audience would've had about the destruction witches could cause to their lives.

trochaic tetrameter

Threatening chant; casting of a spell. Creates fear and excitement for the audience.

Rhyming couplet

tossed about or agitated violently; thrown into confusion.

When James I was sailing back from Denmark, he blamed witches for the terrible storm that caused one of the ships in his fleet to sink. He believed witches put a curse on him and his ships.

Entertainment for the witches and an opportunity to show their supernatural powers.

- **Word class/technique**
- **Denotation**
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PRACTICE QUESTION

How does Shakespeare present the witches in Act 1 of Macbeth?

1

12 marks

- Read, understand and respond to texts
- Critical style
- Personal response
- Textual references to illustrate interpretations

2

12 marks

- Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects
- Use relevant subject terminology

3

6 marks

- Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.

4

+4 marks

- Use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

~~PEE?~~

What

What is Shakespeare trying to show about the witches?

How

How does Shakespeare show this?

Why

Why does Shakespeare show us this?



Sentence Starters

- Shakespeare presents...
- Jacobean society...
- The reason for this...
- Shakespeare uses...
- The verb/adjective/noun/adverb means..
- This shows...suggests...symbolises
- This makes the audience learn/understand/identify...
- Shakespeare wanted...
- Shakespeare needed the audience to...
- By making the audience see X, Shakespeare hoped that Y would happen and so Z would happen as a result.