

# Edexcel IGCSE English Literature

## Macbeth

### Glossary of Key Terms

This work by [PMT Education](https://www.pmt.education) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)



## Shakespeare - Glossary of Key Terms

### Techniques - Language

**Allegory** - A story, character, place, or event is used to convey a hidden meaning, typically moral or political, about real-world events or issues (e.g. Duncan's death is an allegory for the risks of killing your king).

**Allusion** - An indirect reference to another event, person or work which the writer assumes the reader is familiar.

**Archetype** - The first real example or prototype of something; an ideal model or the perfect image of something.

**Bathos** - An anti-climax which is abrupt; usually humour that comes from an odd and sudden change in tone.

**Biblical** - Language that relates to the bible and thus has religious connotations.

**Blazon** - A poem in which the speaker describes a woman's physique by focusing on and listing various individual parts of a woman's body.

**Caricature** - An imitation where particular notable characteristics are exaggerated to a comic or grotesque effect.

**Colloquialism** - An informal word or phrase used in normal or familiar conversation.

**Comic relief** - Relief from tension caused by the introduction of a comedic element.

**Connotation** - An impression, idea, or feeling associated with a word or phrase beyond its literal meaning.

**Dichotomy** - A division or contrast between two opposed things.

**Double entendre** - Words or phrases that have a double meaning and is deliberately ambiguous, especially when one of the meanings is risqué. (For example: In Elizabethan England, the use of the word "die" referred to both death and orgasm).

**Dysphemism** - The substitution of a more offensive term for one considered less so.

**Epithet** - A word or phrase applied to a person to describe an actual or credited quality. (For example: "star crossed lovers" = Romeo and Juliet).

**Epitome** - A perfect example of a specific quality.

**Epizeuxis** - The repetition of words in succession within the same sentence.

**Euphemism** - The substitution of a harmless term for one that is considered as offensively risqué or explicit.



**Extended metaphor** - A metaphor that continues over many sentences and could even extend throughout the entire play.

**Foreshadowing** - A device in which an author suggests certain plot developments that might come later in the play.

**Grotesque** - Ugly and distorted, physically or figuratively, in a way that is comic or repulsive.

**Hyperbole** - An extravagant exaggeration of fact, used either for serious or comic effect.

**Ideology** - A system of beliefs and ideals, typically forming a framework for a political policy or a religion.

**Imagery** - Use of language which is visually descriptive or symbolic.

**Irony** - The use of words where the meaning is contrary to what is expected to actually occur.

**Juxtaposition** - A literary technique that places two opposing words, phrases or events side by side, often for the main purpose of comparing or contrasting them. (For example - "Here is much to do with hate, but more to do with love.").

**Manifestation** - A physical expression or realisation of an abstract idea through a character, object, place, or event.

**Motif** - An element that reoccurs, such as a word, phrase, idea, image, action, character or symbol that appears throughout the play for emphasis.

**Oxymoron** - A form of paradox that combines a pair of contrasting terms into a single, sometimes unique expression. (For example - When Juliet says "O happy dagger").

**Parable** - A story used to teach a moral or spiritual lesson, typically told in the Bible by Jesus.

**Pathetic Fallacy** - When human emotions or characteristics are given to objects, nature or the weather.

**Personification** - Giving something non-human a human trait, capability, or personality.

**Pun** - A play on words which suggests multiple meanings.

**Satire** - The use of humour, irony or exaggeration to ridicule and criticize an individual's stupidity.

**Semantic Field** - When a writer employs multiple words which are similar and thus group together under one sub-heading.

**Sibilance** - The repetition of 's' sounds close together.

**Simile** - Comparing something to something else in a nonliteral way, in order to convey a particular idea or quality of the original thing.



**Symbolism** - Using one object or character to expose a broader idea running throughout the play.

**Trope** - A particular type of character, event, or setting that is used frequently in stories (e.g. 'The Damsel In Distress' is a trope).

**Zoomorphism** - Imagery representing animal forms.

## Techniques - Structure

**Anaphora** - Repeating a sequence of words at the beginning of adjacent clauses.

**Antithesis** - Parallel structure that uses opposites to create emphasis. (For example: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times").

**Aside** - A part of an actor's lines that are not meant to be heard by other characters on stage and intended only for the audience; a short digression.

**Blank verse** - Unrhymed poetry written in iambic pentameter.

**Couplet** - A rhymed pair of lines.

**Cyclical** - When the same sequence of events repeats throughout a story.

**Dramatic Irony** - When a character shows that they are oblivious of the reality of which the audience is aware.

**Dramatic monologue** - A passage of speech in which one person is speaking to an audience or "thinking out loud".

**Epistrophe** - When the same word (or group of words) is employed at the end of successive sentences with the aim of emphasising it.

**Exposition** - Information provided through stage directions, narration, dialogue, or description, used to introduce the audience to crucial background information.

**Heroic couplet** - The last two lines of a Shakespearean Sonnet - a couplet of rhyming iambic pentameter.

**Iambic pentameter** - A sentence (10 syllables in total) which is composed of two syllables: the first unstressed; the second stressed.

**In Media Res** - Starting in the middle of the action.

**Microcosm** - Using a place, group of people, or event in the small-scale to represent something much larger (e.g. the battle at the start of Macbeth is a microcosm for the whole play).

**Paradox** - A statement that seems to contradict itself but is still true.



**Parallelism** - Using components that are similar in grammar, structure, or meaning within a sentence or multiple sentences, or throughout the text as a whole (e.g. "He came, he saw, he conquered").

**Refrain** - A word, phrase, or sentence that is repeated throughout a text.

**Soliloquy** - A dramatic device whereby a character stands alone on stage and addresses the audience, giving voice to their deepest thoughts and feelings.

**Sonnet form** - A highly stylized form of poetry, with 14 lines written in iambic pentameter. (For example - Romeo and Juliet's first real encounter in the balcony scene).

**Stichomythia** - A dialogue between two characters who speak one after the other. *For example:*

LADY MACBETH: \_\_\_\_\_

MACBETH: \_\_\_\_\_

LADY MACBETH: \_\_\_\_\_

MACBETH: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Describing character development/change**

**Anagnorisis** - A moment in a play when a character makes a critical discovery, such as the tragic hero's sudden awareness of a real situation usually as a result of their downfall.

**Antagonist** - A character who actively opposes or is hostile to another character, particularly the protagonist.

**Catharsis** - The process of letting go of or providing liberation from, strong or suppressed emotions.

**Conscience** - A moral sense of right and wrong that guides a character's behaviour.

**Foil** - A character with qualities that are in contrast with another character. (For example, Rosaline and Juliet, or Macbeth and Banquo).

**Hamartia** - A character's tragic flaw.

**Hubris** - An exaggerated self-pride or self-confidence which often leads to a fatal retaliation.

**Peripeteia** - A sudden turn of events or an unexpected reversal.

**Protagonist** - The leading character in the play.

**Tragic hero** - A character who is usually depicted as perfect and honourable yet has one 'fatal flaw' or hamartia.



## Context & Concepts

**Arthurian Legend** - The stories of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, popular for how they celebrate chivalry and patriotism.

**Autonomy** - The right and ability to be able to govern yourself, including your actions and decisions.

**Code of Chivalry** - The moral, religious, and social code of Medieval knights, including bravery, honour, and courtesy.

**Convention** - The traditional way of doing things.

**Dehumanise** - Denying someone their humanity, including their emotions and independent thought.

**Divine Order/Great Chain of Being** - The belief in Medieval Christianity that all life and matter on Earth was organised into a hierarchy by God.

**Divine Right of Kings** - The belief in Christianity that the monarch of a country is chosen by God Himself to be His representative on Earth, meaning they don't have to answer to anyone except God.

**Facade** - A front or mask that is put up to disguise something or someone's true character.

**Fate** - The development of events outside an individuals' control, it is sometimes said to be determined by a supernatural power.

**Globe Theatre** - A theatre in London associated with William Shakespeare where all of Shakespeare's plays were performed. It was built in 1599 by Shakespeare's playing company and has been rebuilt and reconstructed since.

**Heathen** - Someone who isn't a Christian, particularly someone who is pagan or lacks moral principles.

**Infallible** - Never failing, incapable of making mistakes.

**Melodrama** - A dramatic piece that includes exaggerated characters and exciting events.

**Misogyny** - Hatred, contempt, or prejudice towards women for no reason other than their gender.

**Morality** - Principles, either personal or social, concerning the difference between right and wrong, going beyond legality and often religion.

**Mythology** - A collection of stories, especially belonging to a particular religion or culture such as the Ancient Greeks, that teach moral lessons or explain aspects of our world.

**Nihilism** - Believing life is pointless and meaningless.



**Paganism** - A non-Christian or pre-Christian religion, particularly nature worship

**Patriarchy** - A system of society whereby men have ultimate authority which they use to oppress women who are largely excluded from the male dominated society.

**Prejudice** - Having a negative view or opinion of someone that is not based on experience or logic.

**Remorse** - The feeling of intense regret and guilt for doing a bad deed.

**Repent** - To feel or/and express great regret for sinning or committing a crime, particularly in a religious context.

**Stereotype** - A view or preconception of a person or thing that is fixed and oversimplified, held by most of a population.

**The Gunpowder Plot** - An assassination attempt on the King of England, King James I, in 1605, where a group of Catholics tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament with gunpowder.

**The Renaissance** - A period of time from the 14th to 17th century where artists, writers, and philosophers revisited the works of the Ancient Greeks and Romans.

**Toxic Masculinity** - The concept that traditional male gender roles restrict emotion in men while encouraging negative, often violent traits.

**Tragedy** - A branch of drama that usually depicts the downfall and the reversal of fortune of a good person; suffering usually awaits many of the characters, especially the tragic hero.

**Vice** - A behaviour or trait that is immoral.

**Virtue** - A behaviour or trait that is moral.

