

Writing about the BIG IDEAS in 'Macbeth': Supernatural

This resource has been designed to help you consider the BIG IDEAS explored by Shakespeare in 'Macbeth'. For Assessment Objective 1, you are required to:

Read, understand and respond to texts. Students should be able to: • maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response • use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations

Exploring the BIG IDEAS will help you meet the requirements of this assessment objective. Complete the activities below in as much detail as possible to help you begin to consider how to discuss them in an exam answer.

ACTIVITY 1: Explain where the theme (Big Idea) of the supernatural appears in the play as annotations around the image. Link your answers to events and characters as well as Shakespeare's authorial intent. If you can, include examples from across the play.

Supernatural



ACTIVITY 2: Consider how Shakespeare connects the supernatural to other 'Big Ideas'/themes explored in the play. Explain in as much detail as possible. One has been done for you.

The supernatural is inexplicably linked with power. The witches hold power over Macbeth although this power is not physical. Through their promises of kingship, they seem to dictate Macbeth's actions, even though it could be argued that he acts of his own free will. As Macbeth's own power increases, he believes he can control the supernatural, seen in Act Four, Scene One where he demands answers to his questions and threatens the witches.

Supernatural

Power

Ambition

Gender

Light vs Dark

ACTIVITY 3: Complete the sentence stems that help you answer the following question: **How is the supernatural explored throughout the play?** Try and turn each sentence stem into a full paragraph by exploring your own interpretations of the supernatural. What do certain events, characters and motifs suggest to you? What does Shakespeare want his audiences to understand? Include quotations if you need to, but remember, you do not need to analyse language for AO1.

Shakespeare opens 'Macbeth' by establishing the supernatural as a dominant force in the play. Here, the supernatural is associated with 'thunder and lightning', destructive weather and imagery of pollution and infection when the witches speak of hovering through the 'fog and filthy air'. Perhaps Shakespeare associates the supernatural with infection because...

When we are first introduced to Macbeth, his first words, 'so foul and fair a day I have not seen', cause him to unwittingly align himself with the supernatural. He is already established as a figure that audiences cannot trust, further emphasised when he is 'rapt' by the prophecies offered to him. The fact he is so taken with what the witches have told him about his kingship, tells us the supernatural has the power to...

The supernatural is also presented as a destructive force, called upon by the characters to change them. Lady Macbeth, for example, calls on spirits to 'unsex' her. She is asking the supernatural to rid her of her femininity, perhaps because...

Whilst it could be argued the supernatural has aided the Macbeths in their quest for the crown, by the time Macbeth is king, the supernatural actively begins to destroy them. The appearance of Banquo's ghost, for example, is a manifestation of Macbeth's guilt, implying...