

# *English Literature: Macbeth*



WordIT

### **Supernatural**

**Meaning:** (*n./adj.*) A force beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature; of a manifestation attributed to such a force.

**Origins of the word:** Medieval Latin *supernaturalis*, 'above or beyond nature', 'divine'; only associated with ghosts, etc., since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**In context:** Witches and ghosts are supernatural beings.

**Challenge:** Can you list three of the witches' supernatural actions?  
Are there any other supernatural events in *Macbeth*?

### **Sovereignty**

**Meaning:** (*n.*) A supreme power or authority.

**Origins of the word:** Late 13<sup>th</sup> century. Taken from the Old French *soverain*, 'lord', 'ruler'.

**In context:** Ross: "The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth."

**Challenge:** Why are characters willing to do anything to gain sovereignty?

Do you think sovereignty is something that is positive or negative, both in *Macbeth* and in the world today?  
Which character from *Macbeth* would make the best sovereign and why?

### **Guilt**

**Meaning:** (*n.*) The fact of having committed an offence or crime; a feeling of done wrong or failed a person or commitment.

**Origins of the word:** From Old English *gylt*, 'crime', 'sin' 'moral defect', 'failure of duty'.

**In context:** Macbeth is guilty of killing Duncan. Macbeth feels guilt about the murder of Duncan.

**Challenge:** Who feels the most guilt in the play – Macbeth or Lady Macbeth?

Is guilt a positive or negative feeling?  
Can you think of any other texts that deal with guilt?

### **Disorder**

**Meaning:** (*n.*) The breakdown of peaceful and law abiding behaviour.

**Origins of the word:** From the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, prefix 'dis-' (= not) + the verb 'order' (= in sequence).

**In context:** When Macbeth kills Duncan he causes disorder in the natural order of kings.

**Challenge:** Which event causes the greatest amount of disorder in the play?

Which character, other than Macbeth, causes the greatest amount of disorder in the play?

Can disorder ever be a positive thing?

### **Blood**

**Meaning:** (*n.*) Fluid that circulates around the body in the veins and arteries.

**Origins of the word:** Proto-Indo-European root *hel-* meaning 'to thrive', 'bloom'.

**In context:** *Lady Macbeth*: "Make thick my blood."  
'Blood' is one of the most commonly used words in *Macbeth*.

**Challenge:** Why do you think Shakespeare repeats the word 'blood' so often throughout his play?  
How might the word 'blood' relate to kings and royalty?  
Can you think of another text or poem where 'blood' is a recurring word or theme?

## *Macbeth*

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