

What you need to know: Literary Features of 'Macbeth'

Literary Feature	Can you interpret (explain in your own words) the meaning of these features?	Can you explain the effect of these features and how audiences are invited to take up positions?
Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabethan tragedy (drama) 	<p><i>How do the conventions of this genre shape the representations and perspectives in the play?</i></p>
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Middle Ages – 11th Century Scotland, Reign of James I • Evil deeds under the cover of darkness > disorder of nature “Fair is foul and foul is fair” 	<p><i>How does the historical context shape the representations and perspectives in the play?</i></p>
Concepts (themes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambition (corrupting power of) • Natural order/disorder (kingship and tyranny, natural and unnatural/supernatural) • Fate (and free will) • Gender (masculinity, gender roles) • Guilt/Deceit (morality or conscience) • Temptation (and sin) • Reason versus passion 	<p><i>What is the message of the play in relation to these concepts? How should or shouldn't a nobleman/king/man/woman behave? What are the consequences for them if they do not behave 'properly'?</i></p>
Representation (Characterisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macbeth • Lady Macbeth • The witches • King Duncan (and sons) • Banquo (and son) • Macduff (and family, especially Lady Macduff) 	<p><i>How should or shouldn't a nobleman/king/man/woman behave? What are the consequences for them if they do not behave 'properly'?</i></p>
Stylistic Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soliloquy • Prose versus Verse • Foreshadowing 	<p><i>How does the use of this device help to develop the representations and convey the perspectives of the play?</i></p>
Aesthetic Features Imagery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • darkness 	<p><i>How does the use of this imagery help to develop the representations and convey the perspectives of the play?</i></p>
Motifs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visions and hallucinations • Violence • Prophecy 	<p><i>How does the use of this motif help to develop the representations and convey the perspectives of the play?</i></p>
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blood • The weather/storms • Sleep • Nature/supernatural – ghosts 	<p><i>How does the use of this symbol help to develop the representations and convey the perspectives of the play?</i></p>