

LITPADS

From First Stories to Shakespeare

Answer Key

Macbeth

Interactive Novel Study

For Parents & Teachers

A Note Before You Begin

This key is a companion for you — not a test to grade. The **Multiple Choice** answers are here so you can confirm the key events landed at a glance. The **Discussion** questions have no single right answer; what follows are gentle talking points to help you steer the conversation if you'd like a nudge. Let your reader lead. The best moments will be the ones you don't plan. Vocabulary definitions are glossed right in the workbook's 'hint' lines, so they are not repeated here.

Act I — So Foul and Fair a Day

Multiple Choice:

1. b 2. a 3. d 4. c 5. b 6. a

Discussion — talking points:

1. Banquo is curious but wary — he warns that the 'instruments of darkness' tell truths to betray us. Macbeth is already imagining murder by his second aside. Same information, opposite response: the play locates the danger in the listener.
2. Most students defend the witches on a technicality and then feel uneasy about it — that unease is the point. Push for a distinction between opportunity and cause.
3. His decency is treated as a defect to be managed. Worth pausing on: the play needs him good first, or there is no fall. Compare with how she speaks of him by Act III.
4. The soliloquy is a complete moral argument against the murder — kinsman, host, good king, no motive but ambition. Shakespeare makes sure Macbeth cannot claim he did not know.
5. Rich options: Macbeth already Thane of Cawdor before he's told; Duncan trusting the man who will kill him; Lady Macbeth's 'innocent flower.' The play trains suspicion of surfaces.

Quote Analysis — speaker & significance:

I.i — The Witches: Sets the play's moral weather before a single human speaks: in this world appearances invert, and the audience is warned not to trust what looks good.

I.v — Lady Macbeth: Reveals both her ruthlessness and — crucially — his decency. The tragedy needs him to be a good man first, or his fall means nothing.

I.v — Lady Macbeth: Names the play's central strategy of concealment, and begins the pattern in which the Macbeths must perform innocence more and more strenuously the guiltier they get.

I.vii — Macbeth: Macbeth diagnoses himself with complete accuracy — he has no motive but ambition, and he already knows ambition overshoots. He proceeds anyway, which is what makes it tragedy rather than mere villainy.

Act II — A Dagger of the Mind

Multiple Choice:

1. d 2. c 3. b 4. a 5. d 6. c

Discussion — talking points:

1. Offstage murder keeps the focus on conscience rather than spectacle. Ask what a staged killing would make the audience feel instead — probably horror at an act, not at a mind.
2. The punishment is internal and immediate; no one has to catch him. This is the play's core claim about guilt, and it sets up Lady Macbeth's Act V collapse.
3. Macbeth is proved right. Point students to V.i, where her line comes back to destroy her. A satisfying moment to let them find themselves.
4. The Porter's hell-gate joke names what has actually happened in that castle, and the equivocator gag plants the idea that pays off in Act IV. Comedy lets him say the unsayable. (Historical note: the Gunpowder Plot trials were fresh news.)
5. No clean answer. Their flight is prudent and it also hands Macbeth his cover story. Good place to discuss how innocence can look like guilt under pressure.

Quote Analysis — speaker & significance:

II.i — Macbeth: The play's first hallucination. Macbeth cannot tell whether the vision comes from outside him or from his own 'heat-oppressed brain' — the question the whole play keeps asking about the supernatural.

II.ii — Macbeth: Guilt is instantly imagined as a stain that spreads outward rather than washing off. The image returns, terribly, in Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking.

II.ii — Lady Macbeth: Her confidence that guilt is a practical problem is the exact belief the play will dismantle — she says these words in Act II and re-enacts their opposite in Act V.

II.ii — Macbeth: Establishes sleep as the play's emblem of innocence and rest. Neither Macbeth will sleep normally again; the punishment is built into the crime.

Act III — We Have Scotch'd the Snake

Multiple Choice:

1. b 2. a 3. d 4. c 5. b 6. a

Discussion — talking points:

1. He has the crown and no peace. Track the word 'safely' — the goal has quietly moved, and it will keep moving. Nothing will ever be enough.
2. The shift is visible in III.ii ('Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck'). He now protects her from his plans, which sounds tender and is actually exclusion.
3. The play deliberately leaves it open — as it did with the dagger. Encourage students to argue that the ambiguity is the meaning, not a gap in it.
4. It is a rationalization dressed as arithmetic. 'Tedious' gives him away: he calls turning back tiresome, not impossible. He is choosing.
5. Lennox's heavily ironic speech in III.vi is the best evidence. Useful for discussing how people speak under authoritarian rule — everything said sideways.

Quote Analysis — speaker & significance:

III.i — Macbeth: The crown he committed murder for is worthless to him the moment he has it. The logic of 'one more killing will finally make me safe' begins here and never ends.

III.ii — Macbeth: Macbeth now speaks in the language of unfinished work. The metaphor admits that his solution created the problem it was meant to solve.

III.iv — Macbeth: A denial that functions as a confession — he protests his innocence of a murder nobody in the room has accused him of, in front of everyone who matters.

III.iv — Macbeth: The play's clearest statement of moral momentum. Note the word 'tedious' — not impossible, merely tiresome. He is choosing, and dressing the choice as necessity.

Act IV — Something Wicked This Way Comes

Multiple Choice:

1. d 2. c 3. b 4. a 5. d 6. c

Discussion — talking points:

1. An equivocation is true and deceptive at once, which makes the victim complicit in his own deception — he hears what he wants. A lie could not have trapped Macbeth; only a truth could.
2. It marks the point where he is no longer calculating. Also structurally vital: it gives Macduff a personal reason and turns the ending from politics into justice.
3. Both things are true — he serves Scotland and he leaves them exposed. Macduff himself says 'sinful Macduff, they were all struck for thee.' Let the tension stand.
4. Defensible but cruel. It shows how thoroughly Macbeth has poisoned trust: even the rightful heir cannot take an ally at his word.
5. Lady Macbeth: manhood as ruthlessness ('When you durst do it, then you were a man'). Macduff: 'I must also feel it as a man.' The play sides with Macduff — feeling is not the opposite of strength.

Quote Analysis — speaker & significance:

IV.i — The Witches: The most famous incantation in English drama. Its sing-song rhythm makes the horror casual — for them, ruining a king is ordinary work.

IV.i — Second Witch: The 'something wicked' is Macbeth. Even the witches now class him as the evil thing in the room — a quiet measure of how far he has travelled since Act I.

IV.i — Third Apparition: Sounds like a guarantee of immortality — forests do not walk. The literal truth of it is what destroys him, which is the definition of equivocation.

IV.iii — Macduff: Three words and a broken question do what a long speech could not. 'He has no children' is also an accusation: Macbeth cannot be repaid in kind, because he has nothing to lose.

Act V — Signifying Nothing

Multiple Choice:

1. b 2. a 3. d 4. c 5. b 6. a

Discussion — talking points:

1. Dramatized rather than declared. She never says 'I regret it'; her body says it for her, nightly, beyond her control. Far more damning than a confession.
2. Not coldness — exhaustion. He has spent the play unable to feel, and by now grief has nowhere to land. Some students read it as the moment he is finally honest.
3. The play arguably disagrees with him by showing consequences that matter enormously. Encourage a reading where Macbeth's nihilism is his conclusion, not Shakespeare's.
4. All three, and students should be allowed to hold more than one. Compare his last line to the 'brave Macbeth' of I.ii — the courage was always real, which is the tragedy.
5. Accurate as a verdict, inadequate as a description. Malcolm has to say it to close the wound; the audience knows five acts he did not see. A strong closing discussion.

Quote Analysis — speaker & significance:

V.i — Lady Macbeth: The most complete reversal in the play. The woman who managed the evidence now re-enacts the crime nightly and cannot wake from it. Her mind has done to her what no enemy could.

V.i — Lady Macbeth: Answers Macbeth's Act II question about Neptune's ocean — and answers it no. The word 'little' is devastating; her strength has shrunk to the size of the hand she cannot clean.

V.v — Macbeth: Macbeth reaches a terrible clarity: he sees that his life has amounted to nothing. It is the play's bleakest speech and, arguably, the moment he becomes most recognisably human.

V.viii — Macbeth: Knowing he cannot win, he refuses to yield. The soldier from Act I resurfaces for a moment — which is exactly why his ruin registers as loss rather than relief.

Final Essay Prompts — what to look for

Fate vs. Free Will: Reward essays that move past 'the witches made him do it.' The strongest answers notice that the prophecies are only ever descriptive, never instructive, and weigh that against Banquo's counter-example. An essay arguing the play holds both at once, with evidence, is the best possible outcome.

The Anatomy of Guilt: Look for the specific pairings: Neptune's ocean (II.ii) against 'all the perfumes of Arabia' (V.i); 'a little water clears us' against the sleepwalking; 'Macbeth does murder sleep' against her nightly re-enactment. The best essays notice the Macbeths swap positions.

Equivocation: The Porter (II.iii) and the apparitions (IV.i) are the anchors; strong essays will also reach for Lady Macbeth's 'innocent flower' and Malcolm's self-slander in IV.iii. Look for a claim about WHY it matters, not just a catalogue of instances.

What Is a Man?: Key texts: Lady Macbeth's 'When you durst do it, then you were a man' (I.vii) and Macduff's 'I must also feel it as a man' (IV.iii). Reward essays that take a position on which definition the play endorses and defend it structurally.

The Cost of the Crown: The pivot is 'To be thus is nothing, but to be safely thus' (III.i). Best essays trace how the goal keeps receding and connect it to the final speech's emptiness rather than treating them as separate observations.