

between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

Macbeth: Brave Macbeth

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before we meet him?

Lesson 3 of 24 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the AQA specification

What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our Macbeth scheme for Literature Paper 1, Section A. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model paragraph and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring student packs: one question, three levels of support (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared question answered as a What-How-Why paragraph, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model paragraph and an exit ticket.

In the full scheme

- 24 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook
- Student packs at three levels for every lesson
- Six weeks of deliberate practice homework at three levels
- Four Feedback Loop mini assessments with whole-class feedback sheets and improvement tasks
- An exam-style end-of-unit essay with level guidance and three annotated model answers

Lesson 3: Brave Macbeth

SEQUENCE 1: CONTEXT AND ACT 1 • 60 MINUTES

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before we meet him?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain how the Captain's report builds Macbeth's reputation before he appears
- Analyse how violence is praised as loyalty in Act 1 Scene 2
- Write a What-How-Why paragraph on Macbeth as a hero before we meet him

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lessons 1 and 2. Students self-mark from the answer slide.	2–3
8–20	Know	Pre-teach valour, minion, brandish and reputation. Read the extract aloud while students follow, then ask: who is speaking, and who is he speaking to?	4–6
20–30	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about who Valour is and what a minion does, then students annotate their copy.	7
30–35	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	8–9
35–53	Master	Students write one What-How-Why paragraph using the student pack at their level. Share the model paragraph in the last five minutes and ask students to check their spelling of names and their full stops (AO4).	10–11
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of Lesson 4.	12

Do Now answers

1	What paradox do the witches chant at the end of Act 1 Scene 1?	Fair is foul, and foul is fair
2	Who are the witches going to meet, and where?	Macbeth, on the heath
3	What is the Great Chain of Being?	The God-given order of everything: God, angels, kings, nobles, ordinary people, animals, plants
4	Why would a Jacobean audience see killing a king as a sin as well as a crime?	Because of the divine right of kings: God chose the king
5	What does the word prophecy mean?	A prediction about the future

Vocabulary

valour	great courage in battle
minion	a favourite servant who does whatever the master wants
brandish	to wave a weapon about

reputation

what other people believe about you

Reading**Act 1 Scene 2: the Captain's report**

A wounded Captain (labelled Soldier in this edition) tells King Duncan how the battle against the rebel Macdonwald was going. The Captain speaks first.

For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smok'd with bloody execution,
Like Valour's minion, carv'd out his passage,
Till he fac'd the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chops,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN.

O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

SOLDIER.

As whence the sun 'gins his reflection

Shipwracking storms and direful thunders break,
So from that spring, whence comfort seem'd to come
Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark:
No sooner justice had, with valour arm'd,
Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels,
But the Norweyan lord, surveying vantage,
With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men,
Began a fresh assault.

DUNCAN.

Dismay'd not this

Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

SOLDIER.

William Shakespeare, Macbeth (1606), Act 1 Scene 2

Word help **minion**: favourite servant • **unseam'd**: split open, like undoing a seam • **nave to the chops**: from the navel to the jaw • **kerns**: lightly armed Irish foot soldiers

Explode the quotation**Method**

Personification. Valour (courage) is made into a master and Macbeth is its favourite servant.

Zoom in

"carv'd" is a word for cutting meat. Macbeth cuts his way through living men as if they were a joint on a table.

"Like Valour's minion, carv'd out his passage"**Effect**

The audience admires Macbeth's courage and is a little shocked by the ease of his killing. Both feelings arrive at once.

Purpose

Shakespeare makes Macbeth a hero before he appears so that his fall will hurt. The violence he is praised for here is the same violence he turns on Duncan.

Hinge question

The Captain says Macbeth "unseam'd him from the nave to the chops". How does Duncan respond?

- A. He is horrified by the violence and calls for the fighting to stop.
- B. He praises Macbeth as a valiant and worthy gentleman. (the right answer)**
- C. He is angry that Macbeth killed Macdonwald instead of taking him prisoner.

What the answers tell you

A shows the student is judging the violence by modern standards and has missed Duncan's line: re-read "O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!" together and start these students on Securing. C means the student has not followed who is speaking: recap the speakers before they write.

Why the answer is right

Duncan replies "O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!", so the brutal killing is praised as loyal service to the king.

Master task**How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before he appears on stage?**

Securing aiming for a 4 Quotations to choose from "brave Macbeth" "unseam'd him from the nave to the chops" "O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!" Starters Before Macbeth appears, Shakespeare presents him as _____. The Captain says _____. The word _____ suggests _____. Shakespeare wants the audience to _____ so that later _____.	Strengthening aiming for grades 5 to 6 Prompts What: Make a clear point about how Macbeth is presented before we meet him. How: Choose a quotation from the Captain or Duncan. Name the method (personification, violent imagery, epithet) and zoom in on one word. Why: Why does Shakespeare want the audience to admire Macbeth before they meet him? Think about what a tragedy needs its hero to be at the start.	Soaring aiming for grades 7 to 9 The debate <i>"In Act 1 Scene 2 Shakespeare shows us a killer, and only the king calls him a hero. How far do you agree?"</i> Write two paragraphs. In the second, give an alternative reading that begins with Alternatively.
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Model paragraph

What	Before he appears, Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a hero whose courage is admired by everyone, even though it is built on brutal killing.
How	The Captain calls him "brave Macbeth" and describes how he "unseam'd" Macdonwald "from the nave to the chops". The verb "unseam'd" treats a man like a piece of cloth to be ripped open, yet Duncan answers with "O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!".
Why	Shakespeare wants his audience to admire Macbeth so that his fall is a true tragedy: a great man ruined. At the same time the gap between the butchery described and the praise it earns is a quiet warning. A soldier rewarded for cutting men open may find it easy to cut open a king.

Exit ticket

Shakespeare lets the audience hear about Macbeth before they see him because...

Teacher notes**Subject knowledge**

In the Gutenberg text the wounded officer is labelled SOLDIER in the speeches and Captain in the stage direction; AQA papers and most editions call him the Captain. His report is epic in style: Fortune is a goddess, Valour a master, and Macbeth cuts a passage through the battle like a carver through meat. Duncan's delight in the violence sets up the irony of Act 1 Scene 4, where he says he cannot read a face. The scene also hands Macbeth the traitor Cawdor's title, so the audience hears treason and reward in the same breath.

Common misconceptions

- Treating the Captain's praise as Shakespeare's own view of Macbeth. The report is one soldier's account, and its images cut both ways.
- Saying Macbeth kills Macdonwald because the witches told him to. The battle happens before he meets them.
- Writing about what Macbeth does instead of how Shakespeare has other characters describe him.
- Missing that the student is analysing a report about an absent character, which is a structural choice worth naming.

Adapting the lesson

Everyone answers the same question on the same extract. Students who chose A or C in the hinge question, or who could not say who was speaking, start on Securing. Move anyone who completes the Securing frame in ten minutes to the Strengthening prompts for a second paragraph. Students who already see that the praise and the violence pull in different directions start on Soaring.

Brave Macbeth

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before we meet him?

Securing

aiming for a 4

Do Now: five quick questions

- 1 What paradox do the witches chant at the end of Act 1 Scene 1?
- 2 Who are the witches going to meet, and where?
- 3 What is the Great Chain of Being?
- 4 Why would a Jacobean audience see killing a king as a sin as well as a crime?
- 5 What does the word prophecy mean?

Vocabulary

valour	great courage in battle
minion	a favourite servant who does whatever the master wants
brandish	to wave a weapon about
reputation	what other people believe about you

Reading

Act 1 Scene 2: the Captain's report

A wounded Captain (labelled Soldier in this edition) tells King Duncan how the battle against the rebel Macdonwald was going. The Captain speaks first.

For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smok'd with bloody execution,
Like Valour's minion, carv'd out his passage,
Till he fac'd the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chops,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN.

O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

SOLDIER.

As whence the sun 'gins his reflection

Shipwracking storms and direful thunders break,
So from that spring, whence comfort seem'd to come
Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark:
No sooner justice had, with valour arm'd,
Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels,
But the Norweyan lord, surveying vantage,
With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men,
Began a fresh assault.

DUNCAN.

Dismay'd not this

Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

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William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (1606), Act 1 Scene 2

Word help **minion**: favourite servant • **unseam'd**: split open, like undoing a seam • **nave to the chops**: from the navel to the jaw • **kerns**: lightly armed Irish foot soldiers

Explode the quotation

Annotate each box as your teacher explodes the quotation.

Method	Zoom in
“Like Valour’s minion, carv’d out his passage”	
Effect	Purpose

Your task

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before he appears on stage?

Word bank

valiant	brave
brutal	savagely violent
loyal	faithful to your king
reputation	what others believe about you

Choose your quotations

- “brave Macbeth”
- “unseam’d him from the nave to the chops”
- “O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!”

Worked example

Shakespeare presents Macbeth as a frightening fighter. The Captain describes “his brandish’d steel, Which smok’d with bloody execution”, which suggests his sword is so busy killing that it steams with blood.

The example uses a different quotation. Choose one from the list above for your own paragraph.

Your task

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before he appears on stage?

Write your paragraph

What: Before Macbeth appears, Shakespeare presents him as ____.

How: The Captain says _____. The word _____ suggests _____.

Why: Shakespeare wants the audience to _____ so that later _____.

Exit ticket

Shakespeare lets the audience hear about Macbeth before they see him because...

Brave Macbeth

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before we meet him?

Strengthening

aiming for grades 5 to 6

Do Now: five quick questions

- 1 What paradox do the witches chant at the end of Act 1 Scene 1?
- 2 Who are the witches going to meet, and where?
- 3 What is the Great Chain of Being?
- 4 Why would a Jacobean audience see killing a king as a sin as well as a crime?
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Effect	Purpose

Your task

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before he appears on stage?

What, How and Why

What	Make a clear point about how Macbeth is presented before we meet him.
How	Choose a quotation from the Captain or Duncan. Name the method (personification, violent imagery, epithet) and zoom in on one word.
Why	Why does Shakespeare want the audience to admire Macbeth before they meet him? Think about what a tragedy needs its hero to be at the start.

Plan your paragraph

My point answers the question	
My quotation short and exact	
Method and zoom the method, and the one word I will explore	
Shakespeare’s purpose what he wanted readers to think or do	

Your task

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before he appears on stage?

Write your paragraph

Check your paragraph

- ☐ My point answers the question
- ☐ I use a short, embedded quotation
- ☐ I name a method and explain its effect on the audience
- ☐ I explain why Shakespeare wants Macbeth admired at the start of a tragedy
- ☐ I have spelt Macbeth, Duncan and Macdonwald correctly (AO4)

Exit ticket

Shakespeare lets the audience hear about Macbeth before they see him because...

Brave Macbeth

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before we meet him?

Soaring

aiming for grades 7 to 9

Do Now: five quick questions

- 1 What paradox do the witches chant at the end of Act 1 Scene 1?
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Your task

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The debate

“In Act 1 Scene 2 Shakespeare shows us a killer, and only the king calls him a hero. How far do you agree?”

Write two paragraphs. In the second, give an alternative reading that begins with Alternatively.

Think about

- How the Captain’s images (“carv’d out his passage”, “smok’d with bloody execution”) turn killing into skilled work
- Why Ross calls Macbeth “Bellona’s bridegroom”, and what it means to marry the goddess of war
- How Duncan’s line “What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won” about the traitor Cawdor’s title prepares the audience for Macbeth’s own treason

Verbs to try

glorifies · unsettles · foreshadows · complicates · ennobles

Plan your argument

My argument	An alternative reading

Your task

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth before he appears on stage?

Write your answer

Exit ticket

Shakespeare lets the audience hear about Macbeth before they see him because...