

MACBETH
READING COMPREHENSION
ACT 1
YEAR 3 AND 4

The sky was dark, and growing darker still, as an icy wind blew across the plain. Thunder growled in the distance, and the storm-clouds rolled and boiled. From horizon to horizon there was not one living soul to be seen. Not. One. Then, as if the earth itself was holding its breath, the wind dropped and the clouds stood still. Lightning flashed three times and there, in the middle of that lonely place, stood three women. Some might call them witches.

“When shall we three meet again, In thunder, lightning, or in rain?” asked one.

“When the hurlyburly's done, When the battle's lost and won.” came the reply.

”That will be ere the set of sun.” added the third.

And there would be a fourth at their meeting – though he didn't know it.

“Macbeth.”

As they spoke his name they smiled three mirthless smiles. Then they were gone – mist blown on the wind.

Our story has barely started, yet these three have glimpsed its end.

Not us though! We know almost nothing! Where are we? What are we doing here? Who is Macbeth?

1. What is the weather like at the beginning of this story? Tick ONE answer

Bright and sunny

Snowy and Frosty

Stormy

Wet and Windy

2. How many times does lightning flash?

1

2

3

4

3. 'There in the middle of that desolate place, stood three women. Some might call them witches'

Tick one synonym for 'lonely'

happy

pleasant

crowded

bleak

Scotland was at war with Norway. The battle was at its height. The air stank of blood and fear and rang with the sound of steel on steel. King Duncan, leader of the Scottish army was looking around the battlefield, desperate for news. Suddenly he spied a heavily wounded captain, staggering towards them. What a tale the captain had to tell – one of bravery almost beyond belief. When it looked as if the Norwegian army were unbeatable, two Scottish warriors had swung their swords fearlessly, cutting down huge numbers of the enemy like wheat in a field. And, thanks to those two, Macbeth and his friend Banquo, Scotland had won the day.

The enemy had been defeated! For Duncan, though, the good news was tinged with sadness. In the midst of the battle, one of his most trusted friends, the Thane of Cawdor, had betrayed him to the Norwegians and now he must be executed. It begged the question: who would be the new Thane? Who deserved this noble title? The answer came to him instantly and he turned to his companions; Macbeth!

4. Who was at war with Scotland?

England

Norway

Wales

France

5. Who was King of Scotland?

6. What are the names of the two Scottish warriors who 'swung their swords fearlessly, cutting down huge numbers of the enemy'

Tick two names

Duncan

Macbeth

Macduff

Banquo

7. ‘the enemies had been defeated! For Duncan, though, the good news was tinged with sadness’

Why was King Duncan sad even though he’d won the battle? Use evidence from the text to justify your answer

It would have been more fitting, thought Macbeth, if the sun had come blazing out from behind the storm clouds to celebrate their victory. Instead here he was trudging through some of the worst rain he could remember (and he was Scottish) across a desolate heath, towards Duncan’s headquarters. His great and valiant friend Banquo was by his side and they found themselves almost laughing at how bad the weather was.

8. What does the word ‘trudging’ mean? Tick one box

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Running | <input type="checkbox"/> | Walking slowly | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dancing | <input type="checkbox"/> | Skipping | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. ‘His great and valiant friend Banquo was by his side and they found themselves almost laughing at how bad the weather was’.

Write down the two adjectives that describe Banquo

a. _____

b. _____

An instant later, Macbeth saw the smile freeze on Banquo's face. There, blocking their path, stood three figures. Through the rain it was hard to make out whether they were men, women – or even human. We know them, though. We have seen them before. "What are these" asked Banquo," So wither'd and so wild in their attire? Macbeth was more interested in what they had to say, "Speak, if you can: what are you?" he demanded. Three pairs of eyes turned and fixed him with a stare, each of the weird sisters taking it in turns to speak.

"All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!"
"All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!"
"All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!"

Banquo was astonished to see his friend, so fearless upon the battlefield, turn pale.

10. Who was blocking Macbeth and Banquo's path?

- A tree
- Three soldiers
- Three figures
- A tractor

11. Why was it hard to make out whether the three figures were 'men, women or even human'?

- Macbeth and Banquo were tired from the battle
- It was raining
- A tree was in the way
- The sun was in Macbeth and Banquo's eyes

12. What made Banquo realise that his friend, Macbeth was scared?

ANSWERS
READING COMPREHENSION
ACT 1
YEAR 3 AND 4

1. What is the weather like at the beginning of this story? Tick ONE answer

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Stormy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wet and Windy	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. How many times does lightning flash?

1	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
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3. 'There in the middle of that desolate place, stood three women. Some might call them witches'

Tick one synonym for 'lonely'

happy	<input type="checkbox"/>	pleasant	<input type="checkbox"/>
crowded	<input type="checkbox"/>	bleak	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Who was at war with Scotland?

England	<input type="checkbox"/>	Norway	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wales	<input type="checkbox"/>	France	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Who was King of Scotland?

KING DUNCAN

6. What are the names of the two Scottish warriors who ‘swung their swords fearlessly, cutting down huge numbers of the enemy’

Tick two names

Duncan	<input type="checkbox"/>	Macbeth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Macduff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Banquo	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. ‘the enemies had been defeated! For Duncan, though, the good news was tinged with sadness’

Why was King Duncan sad even though he’d won the battle? Use evidence from the text to justify your answer

“One of his most trusted friends, the Thane of Cawdor, had betrayed him to the Norwegians and now he must be executed”

8. What does the word ‘trudging’ mean? Tick one box

Running	<input type="checkbox"/>	Walking slowly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dancing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Skipping	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Write down the two adjectives that describe Banquo

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B valiant

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The sun was in Macbeth and Banquo's eyes

12. What made Banquo realise that his friend, Macbeth was scared?

"He turned pale"