**De Aston**

**English Department**

****

**Year 10: Macbeth**

**Academic Excellence Book**

The role of the Academic Excellence Booklet is for you to complete these tasks over the next six weeks. These activities are purposely designed to challenge you, so don’t worry if you find them difficult. You’re meant to! Learning happens when people have to think hard. That being said, your English teacher is a specialist, so ask any of us for help, anytime!

1. ***Macbeth* and Genre**

One way to think of *Macbeth* is through its generic conventions. *Macbeth* is a fine example of the bloody violence which pervades much Jacobean tragedy which reflects the insecurities of James 1st’s reign (*Macbeth* being written 1 year after the ‘Gunpowder Plot’ and at its centre contains a stark warning to all potential regicides.)

**How is *Macbeth* GOTHC?**

Macbeth pre-dates what we call gothic literature. Due to *Macbeth* being written/first performed before the ‘official’ establishment of the Gothic genre in the 18/19th centuries, we cannot call it a Gothic play but a ‘proto-Gothic’ play.

**Find a quote and/or stage direction to support each of these Gothic features in the play.**

* Setting- wild landscapes
* Ruined or grotesque buildings
* Castles
* Sudden and violent shifts in emotion
* Excess and extremity (violence and cruelty)
* The supernatural and ghostly
* Imagery of darkness, shadow and decay
* Isolation and loneliness
* Blurring of distinctions between sanity and insanity
* Crime, lawlessness (transgression) and abuse (often linked to tyrannical power)
* The devilish and arcane (mysterious/secret)

1. ***Macbeth* and Liminality**

Liminality is a significant element of Gothic literature, and comes from the Latin word 'limen', meaning 'threshold'. And, as the translation suggests, it refers to someone or something being on a boundary between two things - often two extremes. It's like a transitory, 'in-between' state between two things. **Manuel Aguirre** (*Liminal Terror: The Poetics of Gothic Space*), a literary critic, cites liminality as a defining feature of Gothic literature.

From your knowledge of Macbeth so far, consider the following: (Use evidence to support your answers)

* How can the witches be perceived as liminal characters?
* How does the character of Macbeth represent liminality?
* Liminality can also be presented through settings. How can the walls of Macbeth’s castle be considered liminal? Reflect on the outside world vs deception and scheming inside
* In year 11, you will study ‘*The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde’*, carry out some research: are there any similarities, if so what?

**3. *Macbeth* and Bestial Imagery**

Shakespeare uses extended metaphors with references to snakes and scorpions to create a sinister mood, to describe deception or betrayal and often to foreshadow upcoming events and actions.

Lady Macbeth tells Macbeth to **‘look like th’innocent flower/But be the serpent under’t.’**

* How is devilish imagery referenced in this quotation? SQuAD
* How would a Jacobean audience respond to the imperative given by Macbeth’s wife?

In Act 3, Scene 4, Macbeth describes Banquo as a ‘snake’ and his son Fleance as a ‘worm.’ He states:

**‘There the grown serpent lies; the worm that’s fled. Hath nature that in time will venom breed/No teeth for th’present.’**

* How is bestial imagery used to highlight Macbeth’s fears towards his claim to the throne? SQuAD
  + Think about the change from invaluable ‘worm’ to poisonous ‘snake’

Shakespeare also utilises bestial imagery to show the progression/fall of Macbeth’s character.

At the beginning of the play, Macbeth’s valour is expressed through references to ‘eagles’ and ‘lions.’ However, when Macbeth commits regicide, Macbeth is diminished to a ‘mousing owl’ and ‘hell-hound.’

* **‘A falcon tow’ring in her pride of place ‘was by a mousing owl hawk’d at and killed.’**
  + Duncan= Falcon
* How are themes of ambition and the challenge to ‘The Chain of Being’ explored in the quotation? SQuAD



For more resources, including literacy support, visit www.deastonenglish.com