

## Key Themes in *Macbeth*

### **Fate versus free will:**

Does Macbeth have any control over his fate? Do the witches represent a destiny that cannot be avoided or do they simply provide an opportunity for Macbeth to reveal his character and create his own fate?

### **The nature of evil:**

Is evil a supernatural force that infects people? Or is it part of human nature? What happens to Macbeth once he commits himself to evil actions? What happens to the world around him?

### **Appearance vs. reality:**

How can one tell good from evil? Friends from enemies? Why does Duncan think that Macbeth and his wife are trustworthy when they are plotting his overthrow?

### **The effect of guilt on the human mind:**

Can people take actions they know are wrong and remain unaffected? How are Macbeth and Lady Macbeth changed by their actions? Do they suffer psychologically even when they are not caught?

### **The nature of kingship:**

What determines who is a rightful king? Can someone like Macbeth simply seize power? Or does a leader need to win the loyalty of subjects? Must a king be virtuous, like Malcolm? Or simply powerful, like Macbeth?