

Introduction

Born in 1564, William Shakespeare is widely regarded as one of the greatest writers in the English language. *Macbeth*, one of his darkest and most powerful tragedies, is about the corrupting power of ambition. In this key scene from the first act, Macbeth and Banquo encounter The Three Witches, who deliver the fateful prophecy that one day Macbeth will be king. This may be pupils' first experience of reading Shakespeare, and they will almost certainly find some of the language challenging. Before pupils read the extract, explain that in Shakespearean English, the word order is sometimes different than in modern English, and that apostrophes are sometimes used to represent missing letters. Encourage pupils to use the punctuation to guide them through the text, rather than stopping at the end of each line.

Answers

1. not like the inhabitants of the earth (1 mark for two correct; 2 marks for all correct)
2. E.g. They are wrinkled and are wearing such strange clothes that they look as if they could have come from a different planet. They have thin lips and beards.
3. E.g. Because they seem like women, but they have beards, which are normally associated with men.
4. E.g. It shows that Macbeth is shocked by the prophecy ("you start"), and that he seems afraid.
5. "Are ye fantastical"
6. c. a metaphor
7. E.g. No, he doesn't seem frightened of The Witches. He thinks that the things they tell Macbeth sound positive, not frightening. He also says that he isn't afraid of The Witches hating him.



Extra Activities

- Ask pupils to summarise the extract. Then work through the extract with the whole class, explaining any unfamiliar vocabulary and discussing the meaning of each sentence. Encourage pupils to explain each line in their own words.
- Divide the class into small groups and ask them to rewrite the extract using modern language, punctuation and grammar. Pupils should then perform their modernised versions for the class.
- Get pupils to transform the extract into a cartoon strip. Encourage them to try to convey the way The Witches look, and the contrasting ways in which Macbeth and Banquo respond to The Witches' prophecy. As a class, discuss ambition. Explain that The Witches' prophecy described in the extract leads to Macbeth being corrupted and ultimately destroyed by his ambition for power. Ask pupils to explain their opinions about ambition. What are their ambitions? Do they think ambition is something positive or negative? Are they surprised by the negative image of ambition that Macbeth represents?

Genre:
Classic fiction — playscript

Author / Source:
William Shakespeare

Question Book:
Year 6, pages 30-31

- Cross-curricular links:**
- Drama (performance)
 - Art (cartoon strip)
 - PSHE (ambition)

