

CHAPTER CHECKS BY READ FRANCE

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare · 5 checks · 40 questions · answer key, rationale and rubrics

How to use these checks

Give a check right after students finish the act or chapters it covers. Each check has recall questions on details a summary skips, inference questions, at least one close-reading question on a short quoted line, and one short written answer graded with the rubric below it.

Multiple-choice items are worth 1 point; the written answer is worth 2. A check takes 10 to 15 minutes.

Keep this key apart from the student file. Every key comes with the line of the text that proves it, so a disputed answer can be settled with the book open.

These checks are graded by you, on paper or in your LMS. They do not track students and collect no student data. If you want each student's reading checked automatically as they go, the Vread app by READ FRANCE does that, free for readers.

How these checks were made

Octave, the AI assistant of READ FRANCE, wrote the questions from the text alone. A second, independent pass answered every question from the text before reading the key and fixed any doubtful item, and a script checked that every quotation appears word for word in its chapter. No teacher has reviewed this edition yet: tell us about any mistake.

The edition

Text used: *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, Project Gutenberg eBook #1533 (gutenberg.org/ebooks/1533). First published 1623 (First Folio). Questions refer to 5 acts, never to page numbers, so they work with any complete edition.

William Shakespeare died in 1616; the work was first published in 1623 (First Folio), before 1931, so it is in the public domain in the United States. The author died before 1925, so it is also in the public domain in the UK, Canada and the EU. The questions, answers and rubrics are original work © READ FRANCE SAS.

Found a mistake?

Write to octave@vread.fr with the title, check and question number. We correct the file and send the new version to every buyer of the title.

Act 1 · answer key (9 points)

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
1	C	recall	Split him open and set his head on the battlements. The Captain reports that Macbeth cut Macdonwald open "from the nave to the chops" and fixed his head on the battlements; the rebel was neither captured nor allowed to escape. <i>"Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chops, And fix'd his head upon our battlements."</i>
2	B	recall	His children will be kings, though he will not. The Third Witch says Banquo will "get kings, though thou be none," and Macbeth repeats it as "Your children shall be kings"; option A is the tempting misreading. <i>"Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:" ... "Your children shall be kings."</i>
3	A	close	Duncan is about to trust another man whose looks hide treacherous thoughts. Duncan admits he was fooled by Cawdor and at once heaps trust on Macbeth, who in the same scene hides his "black and deep desires"; Malcolm reports that Cawdor did confess, so C is false. <i>"He was a gentleman on whom I built An absolute trust." ... "Stars, hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires."</i>
4	D	inference	It places an heir between Macbeth and the crown. Making Malcolm the named heir is a "step" in Macbeth's way, so chance alone is now unlikely to crown him; he must "fall down, or else o'erleap." <i>"The Prince of Cumberland!—That is a step On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap, For in my way it lies." ... "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me Without my stir."</i>
5	B	inference	He is ambitious but shrinks from wicked means. She says he is "not without ambition" but lacks the "illness" (ruthlessness) to take "the nearest way," which rules out A. <i>"It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness To catch the nearest way." ... "Art not without ambition, but without The illness should attend it."</i>
6	C	close	Ambition is his only motive, and it may overreach and fall. Like a rider who jumps too hard and falls off the far side, Macbeth admits ambition is his only reason and that it may ruin him; right after, he tells his wife he will not go on. <i>"I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself And falls on th' other" ... "We will proceed no further in this business:"</i>
7	D	recall	Make them drunk so they can bear the blame. She will overpower the chamberlains with "wine and wassail" so that these "spongy officers" can be made to "bear the guilt" of the murder. <i>"his two chamberlains Will I with wine and wassail so convince That memory, the warder of the brain, Shall be a fume" ... "what not put upon His spongy officers; who shall bear the guilt Of our great quell?"</i>

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
8	2 pts	written	Prompt. Reread Lady Macbeth's line below. How does she use the idea of being "a man" to push Macbeth toward the murder? Support your answer with one detail from Scene 7. "When you durst do it, then you were a man" Model answer. Lady Macbeth defines manhood as daring to act on what one wants, so Macbeth's hesitation becomes a loss of manhood. She reminds him that he was "a man" when he first proposed the plan and calls him a coward "in thine own esteem" who lets "I dare not" wait upon "I would." Macbeth replies that a true man knows limits ("Who dares do more is none"), but by the end of the scene he is "settled." 2: Explains that she links manhood to daring or acting on desire, so backing out makes him less of a man or a coward, AND supports it with a relevant detail from Scene 7 (the coward taunt, the cat proverb, the babe image, Macbeth's reply about what becomes a man, or his final "I am settled"). 1: Says she insults or pressures him but does not explain the link between manhood and daring, OR gives an accurate reading with no supporting detail. 0: Misreads the line (for example, says she praises his restraint or means only courage in battle) or does not address it. <i>"When you durst do it, then you were a man; And, to be more than what you were, you would Be so much more the man." ... "And live a coward in thine own esteem, Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would," ... "I dare do all that may become a man; Who dares do more is none." ... "I am settled, and bend up Each corporal agent to this terrible feat."</i>

Act 2 · answer key (9 points)

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
1	A	recall	A diamond, greeting her as a most kind hostess. Banquo reports that the King greets Macbeth's wife with a diamond "by the name of most kind hostess." <i>"This diamond he greets your wife withal, By the name of most kind hostess"</i>
2	C	inference	He will listen only if his loyalty to the king stays clear. Banquo agrees to be "counsell'd" only if he loses no honor and keeps his "allegiance clear"; he makes no threat (B), and he himself raised the subject of the witches (D). <i>"So I lose none In seeking to augment it, but still keep My bosom franchis'd, and allegiance clear, I shall be counsell'd."</i>
3	B	close	She could not bring herself to kill Duncan with her own hands. She prepared the daggers but stopped short of the killing because the sleeping king looked like her father, a crack in the cruelty she called for in Act 1. <i>"I laid their daggers ready; He could not miss 'em." ... "Had he not resembled My father as he slept, I had done't."</i>
4	D	recall	The daggers that were meant to stay with the grooms. Lady Macbeth scolds him for bringing the daggers away, since they must lie by the grooms to make them look guilty. <i>"Why did you bring these daggers from the place? They must lie there: go carry them, and smear The sleepy grooms with blood."</i>
5	A	close	She thinks the guilt washes off easily; he thinks an ocean could not clean it. Macbeth has just said all of "Neptune's ocean" could not wash his hand clean, while she claims "a little water" will do it. <i>"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood Clean from my hand?" ... "A little water clears us of this deed: How easy is it then!"</i>
6	C	recall	Macduff, who was told to call early on the king. Macduff goes in because Duncan ordered him to call "timely," and he returns crying "O horror"; Lennox stays outside talking with Macbeth. <i>"He did command me to call timely on him." ... "O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee!"</i>

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
7	B	inference	They fear the killer may strike them and cannot tell who is false. The sons see that anyone can fake grief and that, as the king's closest kin, they are the next likely targets, so they split up for safety. <i>"There's daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood, The nearer bloody." ... "To show an unfelt sorrow is an office Which the false man does easy."</i>
8	2 pts	written	Prompt. Reread the Old Man's report below. What does this event in nature suggest about Duncan's murder? Support your answer with one other detail from Scene 4. "A falcon, towering in her pride of place, Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd." Model answer. A noble falcon at the height of its flight is killed by an owl that normally hunts mice, which reverses the natural order just as a subject killing his king does. The Old Man himself calls it "unnatural, even like the deed that's done." Ross adds that Duncan's horses broke loose and ate each other and that darkness covers the earth in daytime, so nature itself seems thrown into disorder by the crime. 2: Explains that the lowly owl killing the high falcon mirrors a subject killing his king (or that nature is overturned by the murder), AND cites another relevant detail from Scene 4 (the horses, the daytime darkness, the Old Man's "unnatural" comment). 1: Gives a partly accurate reading (for example, says only that it is a bad omen) without linking it to the murder, OR gives an accurate reading with no supporting detail. 0: Misreads the image (for example, treats it as a literal hunting story with no connection to Duncan) or does not address it. <i>"'Tis unnatural, Even like the deed that's done." ... "And Duncan's horses (a thing most strange and certain) Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race, Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out," ... "by the clock 'tis day, And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp."</i>

Act 3 · answer key (9 points)

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
1	A	recall	Whether Fleance is going with him. Macbeth casually asks "Goes Fleance with you?", information he needs because he later orders the murderers to kill Fleance too. <i>"Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?"</i>
2	D	inference	The witches promised the crown to Banquo's descendants. Macbeth resents that his crown is "fruitless" while Banquo was hailed "father to a line of kings"; he also fears Banquo's wisdom and courage, but nothing in the play so far supports options A to C. <i>"There is none but he Whose being I do fear:" ... "Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown, And put a barren sceptre in my gripe, Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand, No son of mine succeeding."</i>
3	C	recall	That Banquo caused their past misfortunes. Macbeth reminds them that Banquo, not Macbeth as they once believed, kept them "under fortune," and so calls Banquo their enemy. <i>"Know That it was he, in the times past, which held you So under fortune, which you thought had been Our innocent self?" ... "Both of you Know Banquo was your enemy."</i>
4	B	close	The danger to them is wounded but alive and can still strike. The snake will heal ("close, and be herself") and bite again; Macbeth means that threats such as Banquo and Fleance are still alive. <i>"She'll close, and be herself; whilst our poor malice Remains in danger of her former tooth." ... "Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives."</i>
5	B	recall	A third man joins them, saying Macbeth sent him. The First Murderer asks the newcomer who sent him; the answer is Macbeth, and the Second Murderer accepts him because he knows their exact orders. <i>"But who did bid thee join with us?" ... "He needs not our mistrust; since he delivers Our offices and what we have to do To the direction just."</i>

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
6	D	inference	To cover his outburst so the lords suspect nothing. She invents an old illness and asks the guests not to stare, so that his words to an empty chair look like a harmless fit rather than guilt. <i>"Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus, And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;"</i> <i>... "If much you note him, You shall offend him, and extend his passion."</i>
7	C	close	He sees no point in turning back, so he will keep killing. Like a man halfway across a river of blood, he decides going back is as hard as going on; he adds that they are "yet but young in deed," so more killing will follow. <i>"For mine own good, All causes shall give way:"</i> ... <i>"We are yet but young in deed."</i>
8	2 pts	written	Prompt. Reread Lennox's remark below. What is Lennox really suggesting about who killed Banquo and Duncan? Support your answer with one other detail from Scene 6. <i>"And the right valiant Banquo walk'd too late; Whom, you may say, if't please you, Fleance kill'd, For Fleance fled."</i> Model answer. Lennox is speaking ironically: if fleeing proves guilt, then Fleance must have killed his own father, which is absurd, so the same logic cannot convict Duncan's sons either. He hints that Macbeth is the real killer. He also mocks Macbeth's "pious rage" in killing the grooms ("Was not that nobly done?") and openly calls Macbeth "the tyrant." 2: Recognizes the irony (Lennox does not believe Fleance or Duncan's sons are guilty and points toward Macbeth), AND supports it with another detail from Scene 6 (the mock praise of Macbeth's grief or of killing the grooms, the word "tyrant," the hope for help from England). 1: Senses that Lennox doubts the official story but does not identify Macbeth as the implied killer, OR gives an accurate reading with no supporting detail. 0: Takes Lennox literally (for example, says he believes Fleance killed Banquo) or does not address the passage. <i>"how monstrous It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain To kill their gracious father? damned fact! How it did grieve Macbeth!"</i> ... <i>"Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too;"</i> ... <i>"and 'cause he fail'd His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear, Macduff lives in disgrace."</i>

Act 4 · answer key (9 points)

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
1	A	recall	To beware Macduff, the Thane of Fife. The armed head warns "Beware Macduff; Beware the Thane of Fife," and Macbeth answers that it has "harp'd my fear aright." <i>"Beware Macduff; Beware the Thane of Fife."</i>
2	C	inference	He wants to make doubly sure and silence his own fear. Macbeth trusts the prophecy but wants extra security ("assurance double sure") so that he can tell his fear it lies and sleep in peace. <i>"But yet I'll make assurance double sure, And take a bond of fate. Thou shalt not live; That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies, And sleep in spite of thunder."</i>
3	B	close	A procession of kings that Banquo claims as his line. Eight kings pass by, the last holding a glass showing many more, and Banquo's ghost points to them as his descendants; the "line" is Banquo's royal line. <i>"And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass Which shows me many more;"</i> ... <i>"For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me, And points at them for his."</i>
4	D	recall	That he is dead, and that he was a traitor. Bitter at being abandoned, she tells the boy his father is dead and, when he asks, agrees that his father was a traitor; the son does not believe her. <i>"Sirrah, your father's dead." ... "Ay, that he was."</i>

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
5	A	inference	To test whether Macduff is secretly working for Macbeth. Malcolm explains that Macbeth has tried many tricks ("trains") to lure him, so he tested Macduff; Macduff's grief for Scotland proves his honesty, and Malcolm takes the vices back. <i>"Devilish Macbeth By many of these trains hath sought to win me Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me From over-credulous haste:" ... "my first false speaking Was this upon myself."</i>
6	B	recall	He cures a disease called "the evil" by his touch. The Doctor says the sick recover "at his touch," and Malcolm names the disease "the evil"; the holy English king is a contrast to Macbeth. <i>"but at his touch, Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand, They presently amend." ... "Tis call'd the evil:"</i>
7	A	close	"At peace" can also mean dead, which they truly are. Ross delays the news with words that are technically true, since the dead are "at peace"; moments later he admits the family has been slaughtered. <i>"Your castle is surpris'd; your wife and babes Savagely slaughter'd."</i>
8	2 pts	written	Prompt. Reread Macbeth's vow below, made when he hears that Macduff has fled to England. What does it suggest about how Macbeth will now act on his thoughts? Support your answer with one detail from Act 4. "From this moment The very firstlings of my heart shall be The firstlings of my hand." Model answer. Macbeth vows that from now on his first impulses (the "firstlings of my heart") will be carried out at once by his hand, with no pause for thought or conscience between wanting and doing. Having just missed Macduff, he decides that a purpose not acted on immediately is lost ("The flighty purpose never is o'ertook Unless the deed go with it"). He at once orders the surprise of Macduff's castle and the killing of "his wife, his babes," to be done "before this purpose cool," which shows how far he has moved from the man who hesitated before killing Duncan. 2: Explains that Macbeth will now turn his first impulses straight into action, with no delay or reflection between thought and deed, AND supports it with a relevant detail from Act 4 ("be it thought and done," the flighty purpose that must be overtaken by the deed, the planned attack on Macduff's wife and children, "before this purpose cool," or the murders at Fife in Scene 2). 1: Says Macbeth is growing more violent or wants to kill Macduff's family but does not explain the link between heart (thought) and hand (action), OR gives an accurate reading with no supporting detail. 0: Misreads the line (for example, says he vows to follow his heart's love, to think more carefully, or to stop killing) or does not address it. <i>"Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits: The flighty purpose never is o'ertook Unless the deed go with it." ... "To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done: The castle of Macduff I will surprise; Seize upon Fife; give to th' edge o' th' sword His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls That trace him in his line." ... "This deed I'll do before this purpose cool:"</i>

Act 5 · answer key (9 points)

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
1	A	recall	Write on a paper, seal it, and go back to bed. The Gentlewoman describes Lady Macbeth taking out paper, writing, reading, and sealing it, all while fast asleep. <i>"I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep."</i>
2	C	inference	Her sickness comes from guilty secrets, not her body. The Doctor traces her disorder to "unnatural deeds" and to secrets her "infected mind" lets out in sleep, so her illness is one of conscience that medicine cannot reach; he never doubts that she is truly asleep, and she never speaks to him. <i>"Unnatural deeds Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets. More needs she the divine than the physician."</i>
3	D	close	Her guilt now covers Macbeth's later killings, not only Duncan's. Her broken speech moves from Duncan's blood to Lady Macduff and back to her unclean hands, so the slaughter at Fife now weighs on her conscience too. <i>"What, will these hands ne'er be clean?" ... "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?"</i>
4	C	recall	Cut down a bough and carry it before him. Malcolm has each soldier carry a bough to hide the army's numbers from Macbeth's scouts, which makes the wood appear to move. <i>"Let every soldier hew him down a bough, And bear't before him. Thereby shall we shadow The numbers of our host, and make discovery Err in report of us."</i>
5	A	close	Life is short and empty, a brief show that leaves nothing. The candle, shadow, and actor are all brief and insubstantial, and Macbeth ends by calling life a tale "signifying nothing"; B reverses "heard no more." <i>"it is a tale Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing."</i>
6	D	inference	He will not surrender only to be mocked before Malcolm. Macduff offers him life as a public spectacle, and Macbeth refuses to kneel to Malcolm and face the crowd's curses, choosing to "try the last" instead. <i>"I will not yield, To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet, And to be baited with the rabble's curse." ... "Yet I will try the last."</i>
7	B	recall	His son had his wounds on the front. Wounds on the front mean young Siward died facing the enemy, not fleeing, so his father calls him "God's soldier." <i>"Had he his hurts before?" ... "Ay, on the front." ... "Why then, God's soldier be he!"</i>

#	Key	Skill	Why, and where the text says it
8	2 pts	written	Prompt. Reread Macbeth's words about the witches below. What has he come to understand about their prophecies? Support your answer with one Act 5 detail showing a prophecy fulfilled in an unexpected way. "That palter with us in a double sense; That keep the word of promise to our ear, And break it to our hope!" Model answer. Macbeth realizes that the prophecies were double-edged: their words were literally true, but they misled him into false confidence. "None of woman born" sounded like no one at all, yet Macduff was "from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd." Likewise, Birnam Wood did come to Dunsinane, but only because Malcolm's soldiers carried boughs cut from it. 2: Explains that the prophecies were literally true but deceptive (they kept the promise "to our ear" but not "to our hope"), AND supports it with a specific Act 5 detail of a prophecy fulfilled unexpectedly (Macduff's birth, the soldiers carrying boughs from Birnam Wood, or the Messenger's report that the wood began to move). 1: Says the witches lied or tricked him without explaining the double meaning, OR gives an accurate reading with no supporting detail. 0: Misreads the passage (for example, says Macbeth still trusts the prophecies) or does not address it. <i>"I pull in resolution; and begin To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend, That lies like truth." ...</i> <i>"Despair thy charm; And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb Untimely ripp'd." ... "Let every soldier hew him down a bough, And bear't before him."</i>

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