

The following questions have been crafted to deepen and expand your students' understanding of the text. They can be used for homework or to prompt classroom discussions.

CHARACTERS

- Why does Malcolm flee so suddenly after the death of his father, and is this the right decision, considering he is the rightful heir?
- Who holds more power in the relationship: Macbeth or his wife?
- Does Banquo's ghost really appear, or is he simply a figment of Macbeth's imagination?
- Are the witches simply evil, playing on man's weaknesses, such as Macbeth's ambition, or are they vehicles of fate?

CONTEXT

- Why are children so crucial to the action of Macbeth? How is their innocence set against the corruption of Scotland by Macbeth?
- Why was Shakespeare writing about what makes a good or bad king so soon after James I's coronation?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

- For much of the play, Malcolm is a king in exile. What must it be like to be exiled from the country you believe you have a right to rule? Can you find any other examples in history or fiction of a similar scenario?
- Do some research into one or more of the following states and see if you can find out what happened to freedom of speech: Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia, the Stasi-led East Germany during the Cold War, or today's North Korea, Belarus or Burma.
 - How did these regimes control language or people's freedom to meet and talk openly?
 - How accurate do you think Shakespeare was in his depiction of living in a totalitarian state?
- "It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood" (Act Three, Scene Four). This profound realisation from Macbeth comes at the end of the banquet scene, just after the guests (and Banquo's ghost) have left. It is a moment of sobering clarity in the troubled mind of Macbeth, where he understands the act of killing will only lead to more and more bloodletting, either in retribution against him or because he will be forced to kill everyone he sees as a threat to his security. It is a startling image and one that resonates through the play and through the modern world.

Can you think of any examples from the world today, the media or art, where a similar idea is articulated? Potential examples:

- A media report on violence.
- The cycle of sectarian violence and retaliation that dominated Ireland in the second half of the 20th century.
- The situations in Iraq and Afghanistan after the recent wars.
- The genre of gangster films, where an act of violence often leads to many more, such as *The Godfather* or *Goodfellas*.
- TV shows such as *The Wire*, *The Sopranos* or *Breaking Bad*.
- Shakespeare often depicts brilliant generals who flounder in a domestic setting - think about Othello and Mark Antony for example. Can you find any contemporary references to soldiers returning from war who have struggled to settle or find a role for themselves in a domestic setting?