

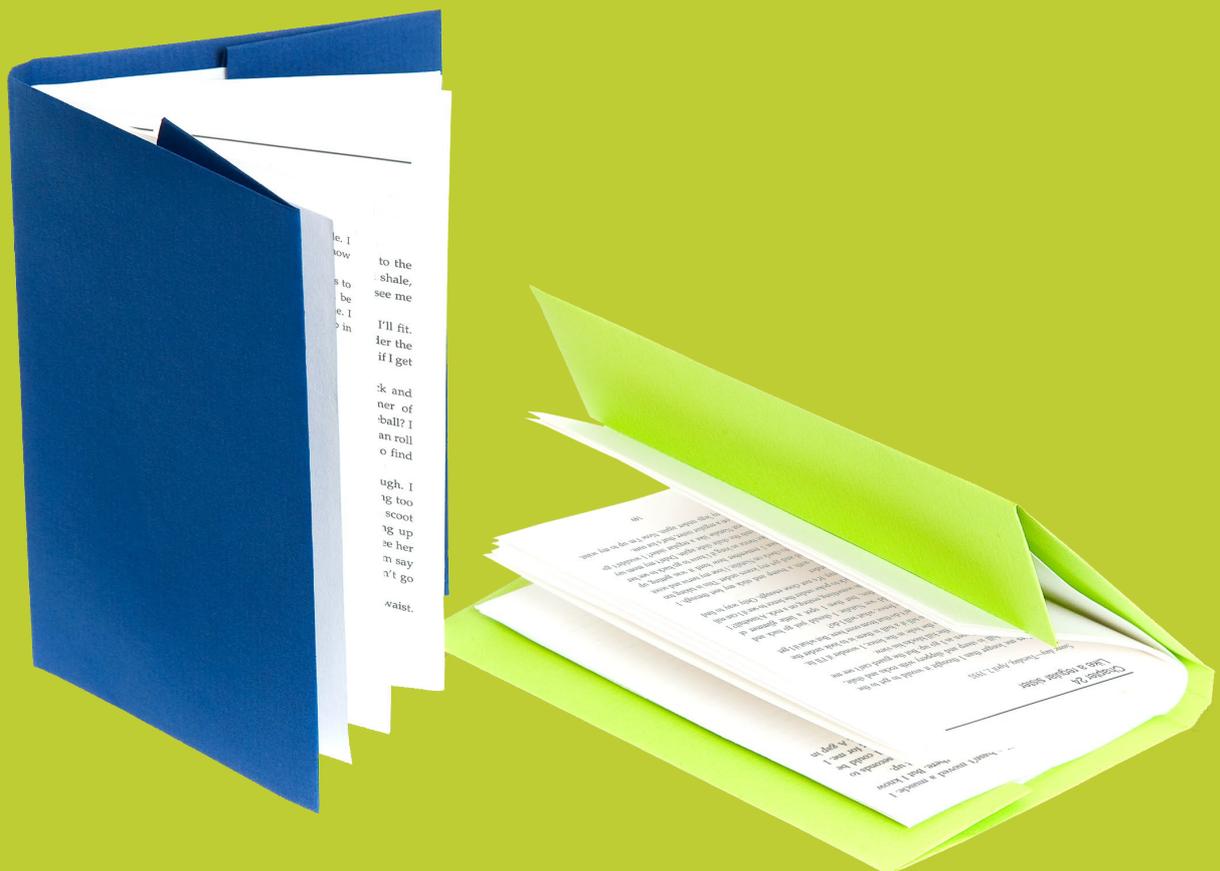


Pearson  
Edexcel

# GCSE (9-1) English Literature

From page to stage (Macbeth)

Jon Seal





# From page to stage - using Macbeth

80 minutes

This workshop explores techniques used by actors when preparing the play. We will think of students as actors and directors. Can we tweak these exercises, so they can be welded into the English classroom?

We will focus on Lady Macbeth's character and use our findings to prepare for an exam-style essay question.

All activities will be taken from '21 creative approaches to Macbeth', which will be given to participants at the end of the workshop.

## 1. Warm ups

- a. 'Change places if'
- b. Speed interviews
- c. Status line

## 2. Macbeth in 8 photos - Plot

In groups of 4 or 5, reduce the play to the 8 most important photos. Add 8 key quotations. Present to the rest of the group.

## 3. Lady Macbeth's tour of Inverness Castle - Setting

Working in pairs, as Lady Macbeth draw a map of Inverness Castle in 3 minutes. Try to include key places eg. the banquet hall, the room in which Duncan will be killed, Lady Macbeth's room when cared for by the Gentlewoman etc.

Change partners. In pairs, A is Lady Macbeth, B is a journalist. Using the map, A takes B on a tour of the castle before the play starts.

Swap roles, B takes A on a tour of their castle just before Lady Macbeth's death.

Individually, write down 5 ways in which the setting might effect or reflect Lady Macbeth's character.

Share these with the rest of the group.

## 4. Revolving hot seats - character

Jon presents as example hot seat - Lady Macbeth. How do we adapt this for the classroom and make it less 'dramery'?

5 groups of 4 participants are given 4 minutes to storm a character from the play. All ideas are written in a spidergram on a large sheet of paper.

Each individual goes to a separate group to be interviewed for 3 minutes as their character. Interviewers make notes.

After 3 minutes, the groups rotate.



Back to original groups and share our findings.

**5. Speed directing**

A is an actor about to play Lady Macbeth. The rest of group (4 or 5) has 2 minutes exactly to brief them on everything they know about the character.

**6. Marking the moment – character and language**

Working in pairs, A and B prepare a section of a speech or scene (eg. Act 3, sc. iv.)

Working in fours. A and B present their extract to C and D.

At any point C or D can shout, ‘Stop’ and ask a question (eg. ‘I dare do all that may become a man’ – ‘Stop. Macbeth, what is your decision at this moment? Why?’). The actor must answer in role. When the questioner is happy with the response, they shout, “Go”. A and B continue.

**7. A Silent discussion - theme**

Individuals in the group sit around a large sheet of paper. Each student has a pen. The subject for discussion is written in the middle of the sheet eg. *Lady Macbeth is a victim*. Students discuss this subject but can only do so in writing. They can work as a large group, as pairs or even individually, entering into dialogue and debate but this must be in writing - no talk!

**8. Let’s all be examiners**

Pairs write exam-style questions based on Lady Macbeth. They hand these to another pair.

**9. Collaborative silence**

A and B use the above ‘Silent discussion’ techniques to explore a collaborative answer to the exam-style question they have been given.

**10. Viva Lady Macbeth**

Working in fours, A and B talk through their proposed answer to the ‘examiners’. C and D can ask detailed questions of A and B’s answer (as in a viva).

**11. A la carte.**

Time for participants to choose one or two activities from the list, which we haven’t covered.

**12. Can we use this approach in the English classroom?**



## 21 creative approaches to Macbeth

### 1. **Status line**

Write the names of characters from the play on separate cards. Each class member is given a card (there may need to be 2 or 3 Lady Macbeths). The class has to stand in line according to their characters status at the beginning of the play. Repeat for the middle and the end of the play. Why have you chosen to stand in this position?

### 2. **Theme satellites**

Write a theme on a card eg. ambition. Place it in the middle of the room. Give each individual a card with a character's name on it. Satellite your character around the theme, according to relevance. What evidence do you have to back up where you are standing?

### 3. **Macbeth in 8 photos**

In groups of 4 or 5, reduce the play to the 8 most important photos. Add 8 key quotations. Present to the whole class.

### 4. **Lady Macbeth's tour of Inverness Castle**

As Lady Macbeth, draw a map of the castle. This can be detailed and reflective (backed up with evidence from the text) or a timed sketch. Try to include eg. the banquet hall, the room in which Duncan will be killed etc. In pairs, A is Lady Macbeth, B is a journalist. A takes B on a tour of the castle before the play starts. Swap roles, B takes A on a tour of their map just before Lady Macbeth's death.

### 5. **A silent discussion**

The group sits around a large sheet of paper. Each student has a pen. The subject for discussion is written in the middle of the sheet eg. Lady Macbeth is a victim. Students discuss this subject but can only do so in writing. They can work as a large group, as pairs or even individually, entering into dialogue and debate but they must not talk, only write!

### 6. **Let's all be examiners**

Pairs write exam-style questions. They hand these to another pair who write collaborative answers. When finished they are handed back to the 'examiners' for marking.

### 7. **Collaborative silence**

Use the 'silent discussion' technique to create a collaborative answer to an exam-style question. Use the resulting sheet as notes to be used by individuals for their own answers.

### 8. **Revolving hot seats**

In groups, students are given a character from the play to research, individuals go to other groups in the class to be interviewed as their character. The interviewers make notes.

### 9. **Actors and directors**

Pairs are given a short extract/speech from the play. A is the actor, B is the director.



**10. Speed directing**

A is an actor about to play eg. Lady Macbeth. The rest of group (4 or 5) has 2 minutes exactly to brief them on everything they know about the character. The individual actors then tell the rest of the class what they have found out.

**11. Globe time traveller**

A is a time traveller who has just got back from their visit to the Globe. B is an excited journalist who has the scoop to interview them.

**12. What's outside like?**

Take the group into the school playground to perform the witches' scene. (This exercise not only reminds us that in Shakespeare's day the play may well have been performed in the open air but also the reliance of language to create tone, atmosphere and setting.)

**13. Design your production**

Draw a set design and two costumes for your production of Macbeth. It could be set in eg. a dystopian future, the world of high finance, 1970's New York, Brexit Britain etc.

**14. Pitch your production**

In groups, A and B are hard-nosed (and not easily impressed) artistic directors of a theatre. One at a time, B, C and D pitch their production ideas to A and B. A and B decide which production to commission and give their feedback.

**15. Bill's big idea**

A is William Shakespeare with a great idea for a new play – Macbeth. He has to pitch his idea to Philip Henslowe and a group of financiers. (Particularly good for exploring context eg. the ever-nervous financiers are concerned about offending King James, bringing witchcraft on to the stage etc.)

**16. Guilty Lady Macbeth**

Write and present the opening prosecution speech for Lady Macbeth's trial.

**17. Innocent Lady Macbeth**

Write and present the opening defence speech for Lady Macbeth's trial.

**18. Lady Macbeth on trial**

Develop the above into a full-blown trial with witnesses, a judge and jury.

**19. Boxing dialectic**

A faces B. A argues the witches are to blame. B argues they are just victimised old women with no real power. After 2 minutes a bell rings, A and B return to their corners where their group has one minute to coach them with further arguments. Ding–ding, back for round 2 on so on.

**20. Marking the moment**

Prepare a section of a speech or scene eg. Act 3, sc. iv. A (and B) present speech/scene. At any point members of the audience can shout, 'Stop' and ask a question (eg. 'I dare do all that may become a man' – 'Stop. Macbeth, what is your decision at the moment? Why?'). The actor must answer in role. When the questioner is happy with the response, they shout, "Go" and the actors continue.



**21. Playing Lady Macbeth in different ways**

A is the actor, B the director. Look at Lady Macbeth's attempts to persuade Macbeth in Act 1, sc. vii. Choose the most significant 6 or 7 lines. Present the speech as if Lady Macbeth is tough and ruthless. Present the speech as if Lady Macbeth is gentle and loving. Discuss which works best. Why?