Macbeth: Historical Background
The King of England in 1606 was James I, a Stuart.

There was no Tudor successor to the throne of England. Therefore, Elizabeth I chose James VI of Scotland to succeed her. After her death in 1603, James VI of Scotland became James I of England.

Elizabeth I had been instrumental in the death of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, who was beheaded.
On her deathbed, Elizabeth wanted to ease her way into Heaven, so she chose Mary’s son James to become the next King of England.

The appointment of James I was a good political move, unifying England and Scotland under one King.
Macbeth: a tribute to King James I

- Shakespeare wrote Macbeth in 1606, during King James’ reign.
- King James was a devout advocate of the “Divine Right of Kings.”
- The setting is Scotland, King James’ homeland.
- Banquo was an ancestor of James and is shown in the play to be a virtuous person.
- James believed himself to be an expert on witchcraft.
- James had an interest in faith healing.
Macbeth: an appeal to Elizabethan people’s interests

1. Shakespeare demonstrated the Elizabethan belief that the country is stable only if the King is good and virtuous.

2. Elizabethans believed that evil occurs in darkness, which is a recurring theme in *Macbeth*.

3. Shakespeare included a lot of blood and murder, which the Elizabethans expected to see in a play.

4. The play was considered a thriller – a threat to an anointed King and the perceived evil behind the threat – and alluded to the Gunpowder plot of 1605.
The Real King Duncan and Macbeth

- Duncan was the king of Scotland at the time the real Macbeth was born.
- Duncan was 38 at the time of his murder - a murder possibly committed by the real Macbeth.
- Macbeth was elected High King of Scotland in 1040.
- Macbeth ruled Scotland for 17 years, during which time Scotland became comparatively peaceful and stable.
- Duncan’s son, Malcolm, invaded Scotland in 1054, supported by Edward the Confessor.
- Macbeth was killed on August 15, 1057 and buried at Iona, the sacred burial place of the Kings of Scotland.
Setting

- King Duncan is the King of Scotland.
- Edward the Confessor is the King of England.
- The time period is the eleventh century (1000-1099).
- Shakespeare used poetic license to bend some of the historical information.
The Gunpowder Plot of 1605

- A failed assassination attempt against King James.
- Disgruntled Catholics planned to blow up the House of Lords.
- Guy Fawkes was discovered guarding their horde of explosives in the basement of the House of Lords on November 5, 1605. ("Remember, remember the 5th of November.")
- The traitors were sentenced to death, and this day is still celebrated in England as Guy Fawkes Day.
Witches and Witchcraft

Witches were said to have “diabolical” powers. They could:
- predict the future
- bring on night in the daytime
- cause fogs and tempests
- kill animals
- curse enemies with fatal, wasting diseases
- cause nightmares and sterility
- take demonic possession of any individual
- raise evil spirits by concocting a brew

It was believed that witches allowed the devil to suck their blood. Accused witches were examined for the “Devil’s Mark” - a red mark on their body from which the devil had sucked blood.
Between 1560 and 1603, hundreds of people, nearly all of them women, were convicted as witches and executed.

In 1604 an official Act of Parliament decreed that anyone found guilty of practising witchcraft should be executed.

Those who confessed to being witches did so under torture or because they were in the grip of delusions recognized today as psychiatric disorders.
Ideas in *Macbeth*. . .

- **Trance**
  - “look how our partner’s rapt”

- **Changed Appearance**
  - “why do you make such faces”

- **Inability to Pray**
  - “‘Amen’ stuck in my throat”

- **Visions**
  - “Is this a dagger I see before me?”

- **Disturbed Behaviour**
  - “I have a strange infirmity”

- **Lack of Fear**
  - “I have almost forgot the taste of fears”

- **Indifference to Life**
  - “She should have died hereafter”

- **Invitations to evil spirits**
  - “Come, you spirits”
Macbeth

- The eponymous antihero, Macbeth is introduced at the start as a noble and valiant general, who has led the Scottish army to victory. He is respected by the king.
- In killing the king, he knows that he is committing an evil act, but the temptation is too strong and his ambition to be king gets the better of him.
- The witches and his wife play upon his weakness. We learn that it is Macbeth’s choices that lead to his downfall, as he makes a deliberate choice to take the road to evil, leading him to killing his friend Banquo and many innocent people, including Lady Macduff and her children.
- By the end of the play, Macbeth has become a ‘butcher’.
- Macbeth is a strong character and he is much more than just a horrible monster. We feel repelled by the evil in Macbeth but we also feel sorry for the waste of the goodness in his character.
Lady Macbeth

- From the start, she is shown to be a very strong character, stronger than Macbeth.
- She is viewed at the outset as his ‘dearest partner of greatness’ and by the end she is his ‘fiend-like queen’.
- She is shown to have a desire for power and wishes to help her husband to achieve his potential, even if this involves murder.
- Lady Macbeth cannot cope with the evil she unleashes and goes insane.
- She is often seen as a symbol of evil, but she eventually becomes a victim of evil.
- She becomes increasingly more isolated as a character.
Banquo

• A loyal and honourable Scottish nobleman. He is also an impressive warrior in the army.
• He serves in some ways as a foil to Macbeth, as he makes the right choices when confronted by the witches. He sees the potential for evil and is suspicious of their powers.
• Banquo moves from friend to victim in the play, as Macbeth fears that Banquo will betray him and reveal the truth.
• Banquo’s ghost returns to haunt Macbeth, as a reminded that his children will be the rightful monarchs.
Duncan and Malcolm

• Duncan is the King of Scotland and the first of Macbeth’s victims. He is noble, well-respected and appreciative of loyalty. He is trusting and honourable, which represents a contrast to Macbeth. He shows us the goodness that Macbeth destroys.

• Malcolm is Duncan’s elder son, named at the start of the play as his successor. He also values bravery and loyalty, but knows it is possible to be too trusting. Malcolm flees to England and becomes a shrewd leader. He is restored as the rightful king.
Macduff and his family

• Macduff suspects Macbeth early on. He is shrewd and honourable, as well as being patriotic. He is a caring husband and father, and it is the deaths of his family that motivate him to destroy Macbeth’s reign. He is a key part of the Witches’ prophecies and ultimately kills Macbeth.

• The family appear only in one scene, but they are sympathetic characters. They link to the idea of Macbeth being a ‘butcher’ as they are shown to be truly innocent. They represent the deaths of many other children and women that are only briefly mentioned in the play.
The Witches

• They are seen as the physical embodiment of evil in the play, representing temptation.
• Their language is full of spite, violence and references to destruction and mutilation.
• The Witches never lie, but they speak in puzzling riddles (equivocation), and for Macbeth, he hears only what he wants to hear.
• They represent uncertainty about the supernatural world – we never know whether they have real power or if they are only persuading others to believe what they say.
Section A: Shakespeare

Answer one question from this section on your chosen text.

Macbeth

Read the following extract from Act 5, Scene 5 of Macbeth and then answer the question that follows.

Here, Macbeth is preparing to meet the invading armies of Malcolm and Macduff.

MACBETH  I have almost forgot the taste of fears.
The time has been my senses would have cooled
To hear the night-shriek, and my fell of hair
Would at a dismal treatise rise and stir
As life were in’t. I have supped full with horrors.
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
Cannot once start me.

Enter Seyton

Wherefore was that cry?

SEYTON  The Queen, my lord, is dead.

MACBETH  She should have died hereafter.
There would have been a time for such a word.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle.
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

Starting with this extract, explore how Shakespeare presents Macbeth’s changing character.

Write about:
- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth in this speech
- how Shakespeare presents Macbeth in the play as a whole. [30 marks + AO4 4 marks]

Romeo and Juliet

Read the following extract from Act 3, Scene 5 of Romeo and Juliet and then answer the question that follows.

Here, Romeo is leaving Juliet’s room the morning after their secret wedding.

JULIET  Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
Section A: Shakespeare

Answer one question from this section on your chosen text.

Macbeth

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Write about:
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Scrooge

• The protagonist. Victorians saw him as the villain of the piece.
• Presented as grotesque, so a character who blends comedy and horror. We see this in his rudeness to Fred in Stave I.
• In the description of his physical appearance, emphasis is placed on the linking of his personality to the weather (pathetic fallacy).
• Scrooge represents many of the behaviours that Dickens criticises.
• His transformation comes by facing the truth of the choices he has made and the impact of his behaviour on others, as well as the consequences of his actions. His change represents a hope for the reader from the narrator.
• Modern readers may link his memories from childhood to psychological issues that could cause his antisocial behaviour.
Marley

- First character mentioned in the novel, but only appears in Stave I. He died seven years earlier, and was Scrooge’s business partner and only ‘friend’.
- He is now a soul in torment because he loved money and ignored the needs of others. His appearance is gruesome and fearful.
- The heavy chains, with cashboxes, padlocks and so on, represent the greed he practised in life.
- He is different from a traditional Victorian ghost as his purpose is not terrorise, but instead to try and help Scrooge and save him from the misery he has suffered.
- He is shown to be selfless in death.
The Three Ghosts of Christmas

- Christmas Past – appearance resembles some biblical descriptions of Jesus, so shows the ghosts can be good. There are other Christian symbols such as white clothes and holly. He also represents the stages of Scrooge’s life from youth to old age. The light coming from his head could symbolise understanding and insight, so when the cap is put on by Scrooge it could show Scrooge’s unwillingness to think about his choices in the past.
The Three Ghosts of Christmas

• Christmas Present – traditional personification of Christmas, as a father figure dressed in green. Sits in the middle of seasonal food and drink and then takes Scrooge to different celebrations. He sprinkles water to make people’s Christmases happier. He is linked to the child figures of ‘Want’ and ‘Ignorance’, who Scrooge pities and wishes were helped, but naively realises that he did not help those in need himself.
The Three Ghosts of Christmas

• Christmas Yet to Come – this ghost is silent, dressed like the Grim Reaper or the Angel of Death. Through him, Scrooge is shown a mystery that the reader works out before the character, that Scrooge has died and nobody cares. Scrooge learns that he must beg for the opportunity to change his life and his future.
Bob Cratchit

- For Victorian reader, he would have been the most important character, as he is a perfect, hard-working employee, a loving father and husband who is content with his lot. He is noble, uncomplaining and loyal to Scrooge, despite Scrooge's treatment of him.

- Modern reader might see him more as Scrooge’s victim, powerless to demand change in a society where the only other option is the workhouse or prison.

- The Cratchit family might evoke pity in the readers because they are grateful for so little but enjoy life and their family connection.
Fred

• The foil to Scrooge, he is kind and generous. Fred wants to value family and relationships above wealth and show a love for Christmas and charity.
• Fred willingly welcomes Scrooge after his transformation, showing the importance of change and forgiveness.
Fezziwig

- Another foil for Scrooge, Fezziwig is the ideal employer, a jolly, kind man who celebrated Christmas with generosity. He has a strong sense of social responsibility and cares for all, as a direct contrast to Scrooge’s behaviour in Stave I.
Tiny Tim

- Victorian readers would have seen him as the perfect child: uncomplaining, religious and loving.
- Modern readers sometimes find him less appealing.
- Tiny Tim’s death, as a direct result of Scrooge's meanness, teaches Scrooge one of his final lessons.
- It also highlights the inability of the poor to access medical care and proper nutrition.
- His death serves as a contrast to Scrooge.
Practice Questions for *A Christmas Carol*

**Characters**

**Scrooge**

Starting with this passage (p. 36 ‘Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for that’ to ‘Sat down before the fire to take his gruel’), how does Dickens present Scrooge as miserly?

- Write about Scrooge’s personality and attitude in this passage
- Write about Scrooge’s personality and attitude in the text as a whole.

Starting with this passage (p. 23 from ‘Let me hear another sound from you’ to p. 24 ‘I’ll retire to Bedlam’), how does Dickens present Scrooge’s attitude towards family?

- Write about Scrooge’s actions and attitude in this passage
- Write about Scrooge’s actions and attitude in the text as a whole.

Starting with this passage (p. 68 ‘This was not addressed’ to ‘you were another man’), how does Dickens present Scrooge’s greed and obsession with money?

- Write about Scrooge’s greed and obsession with money in this passage
- Write about how Scrooge’s greed is presented in the text as a whole.

Starting with this passage (p. 78 from ‘For the people who were shovelling away’ to ‘slow and passionless excitement’), how does Dickens present Scrooge’s new found interest in Christmas?

- Write about Scrooge’s attitude towards Christmas in this passage
- Write about how Scrooge’s attitude to Christmas has developed in the text as a whole.

Starting with this passage (p. 120 from ‘Spirit!’ to ‘sponge away the writing on this stone!’), how does Dickens present Scrooge as a changed character?

- Write about how Scrooge’s character is presented in this passage
- Write about how Scrooge is shown to transform as a character in the text as a whole.

Starting with this passage (p. 129 from ‘A Merry Christmas Bob!’ to ‘and that was quite enough for him’), how does Dickens present Scrooge’s transformation, in contrast to the rest of the text?

- Write about Scrooge’s transformation in this passage
- Write about Scrooge’s transformation in the text as a whole.

**The Ghost of Christmas Past**

Starting with this passage (p. 50 from ‘It was a strange figure’ to p. 51 “which it now held under its arm), how does Dickens present the Ghost of Christmas Past and other ghostly figures in a supernatural way?

- Write about the appearance of the Ghost of Christmas Past in this passage
- Write about the presentation of ghostly figures in the text as a whole.
The Ghost of Christmas Present

Starting with this passage (p. 77 from ‘You have never seen’ to ‘and held it fast’), how does Dickens present the influence of the Ghost of Christmas Present and other ghostly characters on Scrooge?

- Write about the presentation of Scrooge and his change in this passage
- Write about the way ghostly characters influence Scrooge and his attitude in the text as a whole.

The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come

Starting with this passage (p. 104 from ‘The phantom slowly’ to ‘the hand was pointed straight before them’), how does Dickens show that the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come concludes the changes in Scrooge’s attitude?

- Write about the way the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come is shown to affect Scrooge in this passage
- Write about how Scrooge’s personality and attitude changes in the text as a whole.

Tiny Tim

Starting with this passage (p. 85 from ‘As good as gold’ to ‘high procession’), how does Dickens present Tiny Tim as an ideal Victorian child?

- Write about how Tiny Tim is presented in this passage
- Write about how Victorian families are presented in the text as a whole.

Starting with this passage (p. 115 from ‘Quiet. Very quiet’ to ‘My little child’), how does Tiny Tim impact on other characters in the novella?

- Write about the Cratchits’ attitude towards his death in this passage
- Write about the impact of Tiny Tim in the text as a whole.

Bob Cratchit

Starting with this passage (p. 84 ‘So Martha hid herself’ to p. 85 ‘singing in the copper’), how does Dickens present Bob as a man who is devoted to his family?

- Write about way in which family is shown to be all-important in this passage
- Write about Bob Cratchit’s devotion to his family in the text as a whole.

Fred

Starting with this passage (p. 22 from ‘A merry Christmas’ to ‘Don’t be cross, Uncle’), how does Dickens present the contrast between Fred and Scrooge?

- Write about the presentation of Fred and Scrooge in this passage
- Write about the way that Fred provides a contrast to Scrooge in the text as a whole.

Jacob Marley

Starting with this passage (p. 40 from ‘It is required’ to p. 41 ‘and weary journeys lie before me’), how does Dickens present Marley’s influence on Scrooge?

- Write about Marley’s influence on Scrooge in this passage
- Write about the influence of Marley on Scrooge in the text as a whole.

Fezziwig
Starting with this passage (p. 60 ‘They went in’ to ‘Yo ho there! Ebenezer! Dick!’), how does Dickens present Fezziwig as a contrast to Scrooge?

- Write about Fezziwig’s personality and attitude in this passage
- Write about the contrast to Scrooge in the text as a whole.

Starting with this passage (p. 60 from ‘The Ghost topped’ to ‘a winter’s night’), how does Dickens present Fezziwig’s attitude to Christmas and how does this compare to Scrooge’s attitude?

- Write about Fezziwig’s attitude to Christmas in this passage
- Write about Scrooge’s attitude to Christmas in the text as a whole.

The Portly Gentlemen

Starting with this passage (p. 27 ‘This lunatic’ to ‘Excuse me – I don’t know that’), how are the Portly Gentlemen and other characters presented as a contrast to Scrooge?

- Write the way the Portly Gentlemen are presented as a contrast to Scrooge in this passage
- Write about the way other characters create a contrast to Scrooge in the text as a whole.

Themes

Guilt: Starting with this passage (p. 69 from ‘Spirit’ said Scrooge’ to ‘What would I have not given to be one of them!’), how does Dickens present the theme of guilt?

- Write about Scrooge’s reactions and how this presents guilt in this passage
- Write about the theme of guilt in the text as a whole.

Poverty: Starting with this passage (p. 80 from ‘Would it apply’ to ‘your family said Scrooge’), how does Dickens present the theme of poverty?

- Write about the presentation of the theme of poverty in this passage
- Write about the way poverty is presented in the text as a whole.

Charity: Starting with this passage (p. 28 ‘Under the impression’ to p. 29 ‘temper than was usual with him’), how does Dickens present the theme of charity?

- Write about the presentation of charity in this passage
- Write about the development of the theme of charity in the text as a whole.

Wealth and profit: Starting with this passage (p. 68 from ‘It matters little’ to ‘When it was made, you were another man), how does Dickens present the importance of wealth and profit to Scrooge?

- Write about the way wealth and profit are shown to be important in this passage
- Write about the importance of wealth and profit to Scrooge in the text as a whole.
Section B: The Nineteenth-Century Novel

Answer the question on the novel you have studied.

Robert Louis Stevenson: The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

Answer both parts of the question.

Re-read Chapter 8 (‘The Last Night’) from

‘That’s it!’ said Poole. ‘It was this way. I came suddenly into the theatre from the garden. It seems he had slipped out to look for this drug or whatever it is; for the cabinet door was open, and there he was at the far end of the room digging among the crates...’

to

‘...No, sir, that thing in the mask was never Doctor Jekyll – God knows what it was but it was never Doctor Jekyll; and it is the belief of my heart that there was murder done.’

In this extract, Poole, Dr Jekyll’s servant, is telling Mr Utterson why he thinks that Jekyll has been murdered.

Starting with this extract, write about how Stevenson uses Jekyll’s transformation to explore ideas about good and evil in The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

Write about:
- how Stevenson writes about what Poole has seen in this extract
- how he uses the transformation to explore ideas about good and evil in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]

Charles Dickens: A Christmas Carol

Answer both parts of the question.

Re-read Stave (Chapter) 3 (‘The Second of the Three Spirits’) from

‘Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask,’ said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit’s robe, ‘but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw?’

to

‘Are there no prisons?’ said the Spirit, turning on him for the last time with his own words. ‘Are there no workhouses?’

In this extract, the children Ignorance and Want are revealed to Scrooge by the Ghost of Christmas Present.

Starting with this extract, explain how Dickens writes about social problems in A Christmas Carol.

Write about:
- how Dickens writes about social problems in this extract
- how he explore ideas about social problems and social responsibility in the novel as a whole.

[30 marks]
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