DUNCAN

Key features · development · paired evidence

THE BIG IDEA

Duncan embodies generous authority but repeatedly misreads loyalty. His vulnerability makes Macbeth's betrayal both political and intimate.

FOLLOW THE CHARACTER

1 Rewards loyal service › **2** Trusts appearances › **3** Enters Macbeth's home › **4** Becomes the murdered king

TRUST BETRAYED TWICE

"There's no art"

Duncan, 1.4; reading a face

PAIRED WITH

"O worthiest cousin!"

Duncan to Macbeth, 1.4

METHOD → MEANING

His admission that appearances conceal character is followed by affectionate praise of the next traitor. Dramatic irony makes his confidence disturbing.

HOSPITALITY REVERSED

"This castle hath a pleasant seat"

Duncan, 1.6

PAIRED WITH

"His silver skin laced with his golden blood"

Macbeth describing Duncan, 2.3

METHOD → MEANING

The welcoming setting conceals the plan to kill him. Macbeth's ornate report idealises the body even as the murderer performs public grief; interpretation must account for that speaker's deception.

PUSH THE ARGUMENT

Duncan's generosity does not make his judgement flawless. Distinguish the image of legitimate kingship from a claim that every decision he makes is wise.

COVER THE SHEET. CAN YOU EXPLAIN…?

Why does Shakespeare let Duncan recognise deception before he trusts Macbeth?