

**Macbeth Conflict Model Answer 18th April 2018 (this is a SHORT response - you must write MORE in your actual exam)**

Macbeth is a play filled with conflict: the play opens during a war between Scotland and Norway. Macbeth, the protagonist, is at the centre of most of the conflicts in the play, whether that is with his wife, his King, his best friend, the witches, or even his country. This conflict strikes at the very heart of King James' fear of regicide, something which must have been close to the surface of Shakespeare's mind as he wrote the play - creating a cautionary tale for anyone who dared to attempt to kill the king, showing them the tragic and devastating consequences of such behaviour.

Perhaps one of the most obvious moments of conflict in the play is following Macbeth's reunion with his wife, who appears to have convinced him that Duncan must be killed to allow the witches' prophecy to come true. Having made an unwritten agreement to commit the murder, Macbeth then, alone on the stage, begins to question their plan - "he is here in double-trust", "his virtues trumpet," "he hath honoured me of late". However, it is Macbeth's "vaulting ambition" that pushes him on. The distress that Macbeth is feeling, due to the conflict in his mind, is heightened for the audience, both contemporary and modern, as they are aware that this "ambition" has been stoked by the witches and their prophecies. Macbeth's desire to kill and become King conflicts with his desire to be a good and loyal subject and soldier - as he is presented at the start of the play: Duncan describes him as "worthy Cawdor" "noble Thane" - these things must be running through his mind as he contemplates the power that being even higher up the 'nobility' will bring. It is perhaps this that would have most shocked a Jacobean audience - the idea of killing the King (God's temporal representative on earth) would have been extremely challenging to them, and Shakespeare's warning to them of its dire and 'damned' consequences would have been obvious and clear to them.