Starter idea 1 - Active story telling

This is a way of introducing the scene and telling the story so far which can involve the whole class.

- Choose 3 pupils to play the three witches. They are given the opening of the scene (slightly edited – see below) and go out of the classroom to rehearse their lines.
- The rest of the class are divided into groups to make sound effects to go with the teacher’s telling of the story. The majority of the class make the noise of wind howling, a pair make the sound of thunder and a few others make bird cries. The teacher ‘conducts’ with agreed signals for louder and quieter wind noise and cues for birds squawking and thunder claps. When this has been practised, the three witches rejoin the class and are told what their signal to speak will be.
- The teacher then tells the story so far and sets the scene, accompanied by the sound effects:

Teacher’s script:

King Duncan’s forces have been fighting the rebel, Macdonald. Macdonald’s forces are strong and the Kingdom is in real danger. Three witches meet and talk about a man called Macbeth. They have some plans for him, and decide to meet with him after the battle.

The King has had a report from the battle against the rebel. It seems that one of his Captains, the brave soldier Macbeth, fought heroically and killed the rebel Macdonald. Duncan decides to reward Macbeth for helping to win the battle by making him Thane of Cawdor – a promotion which will make him a much more important and powerful man.

We’re now on the heath, a desolate piece of open land covered with rough grasses and small shrubs. It’s an isolated, lonely place (cue bird cries and quiet wind noise). A storm is coming (cue wind, gradually getting louder). What’s this? Three strange figures appear, is it the witches? (Cue thunder, then cue witches to read their lines).
Lines for the witches:

First witch: Where hast thou been sister?

Second witch: Killing swine.

Third witch: Sister where thou?

First witch: A sailors wife had chestnuts in her lap
Her husband’s to Aleppo gone, master o’ the Tiger:
But in a sieve I’ll thither sail,
And like a rat without a tail,
I’ll do, I’ll do, and I’ll do.

Second witch: I’ll give thee a wind

First witch: Thou art kind.

Third witch: And I another.

First witch: I myself have all the other.
Starter idea 2 – An Improvisation: ‘A Dream Come True’

Pupils are put into pairs, all except one group of three. In the pairs, each one thinks of something they would like more than anything else in the world. If they were given what they want, it would be a dream come true and would change their life. The pairs share their wishes, talking about what it would be like to be granted that wish.

The group of three are briefed in private by the teacher. They are going to be supernatural beings, who can influence people’s lives. They might be good, they might be evil – this isn’t entirely clear. They are going to be given one person’s wish on a piece of paper. They will be telling that person that their wish will come true. They are going to leave the room and go out and discuss what they are going to say to the person. Then they will come back in and improvise the scene. They need to be briefed that they should act strangely, mysteriously and only reveal the wish and the person bit by bit, keeping everyone waiting and uncertain about what is going to happen. They could raise expectations that others might have their wishes fulfilled, only to dash them. The rest of the class shouldn’t have any idea about what’s about to occur. The teacher might provide basic costumes – a cloak, a white sheet or something similar, to add to the effect.

The teacher listens in to some of the pair discussions and picks one to tell to the three strangers. S/he then stops the pair discussion and gets the strangers to enter the room.

After the improvisation, ask the class to share their thoughts and feelings.

Questions for the person whose dreams would come true
What were your thoughts on seeing the three people coming in?
What about when you found out it was you?
What did you think about other people in the room?

Questions for the rest of the class
How did you feel? Were you disappointed? Jealous? Relieved?
How do you now feel about the person whose dreams will come true?
What do you think of his/her reactions? Would yours be the same?
What did you think of the three people?
Starter idea 3
Talk about this phrase from the first scene of the play, when the witches first appear. What does it suggest about the mood at this stage in the play? What ideas might be raised in the play? (whole group)

**Fair is foul and foul is fair**

The witches will re-appear in this scene. Here are some of the things they say. Can you tell from these extracts whether the witches are:
- good
- evil
- neither good nor evil
- ordinary women, who have been labelled as witches
- supernatural beings

How do you know from:
- what they say
- how they say it

‘A sailor’s wife….
Her husband’s to Aleppo gone, master o’ the Tiger: the name of the ship
But in a sieve I’ll thither sail,
And, like a rat, without a tail,
I’ll do, I’ll do, I’ll do.’

‘Sleep shall neither night nor day
Hang upon his penthouse lid; eye-lid
He shall live a man forbid. cursed
Weary sev’n nights nine times nine,
Shall he dwindle, peak and pine:
Though his bark cannot be lost, ship
Yet it shall be tempest-tost.’

‘The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land, swift travellers
Thus do go about, about:
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, three times
And thrice again to make up nine.
Peace! – the charm’s wound up.’

Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

Not so happy, yet much happier.

Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.
Follow-up to starters

Reading the scene up to l.88
Talk about the reactions of Macbeth and Banquo (and how they compared with your own, if you did the improvisation).

What’s the men’s view on whether the witches are good/evil/supernatural.

Predict what you think might happen next.

Read on to find out what happens.

Predict the reactions of Macbeth and Banquo

Read to the end of the scene to see how they react.

Lesson 2

A language starter

Paradoxes and oxymorons
Look at these words and phrases:

Deep down he’s really very shallow

the sound of silence

It was a bittersweet moment for her

Parting is such sweet sorrow

A living death

What do they have in common?
Putting together two entirely opposite ideas that seem to contradict each other is known as a paradox or oxymoron. See if you can come up with any of your own.

Look at all these phrases taken from the scene you’ve just read. What’s interesting about them? Talk about what their effect is in this scene - what themes or ideas or mood do they suggest?

‘a rat without a tail’

‘So foul and fair a day I have not seen.’

The witches: ‘look not like th’inhabitants o’ the earth/ And yet are on’t’

‘you should be women/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so.’

‘why do you start, and seem to fear/Things that do sound so fair?’

‘Are ye fantastical, or that indeed/ Which outwardly ye show?’

‘Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.’

‘Not so happy, yet much happier.’

‘What! can the devil speak true?

‘cannot be ill; cannot be good:’

‘nothing is/ But what is not.’

Questions and riddles
Look through the scene and find as many examples as you can of questions or riddles. Pick which of these motifs you think are developed in this scene by the use of so many questions and riddles:

- Anger
- Ambition
- Uncertainty
- Trust
- The differences between appearance and reality
- Love
- Good and evil
Different ways of interpreting this scene

The activities that follow are an introduction to watching the scene, or part of it on video, or watching clips from more than one version.

Theatre and film directors have interpreted this scene in different ways. Look at this list of possible decisions. Try to match the ways of staging or filming it with the interpretations that are suggested by these decisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ways of staging or filming the scene</th>
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<tr>
<td>A. The witches are young and look quite appealing, like ordinary but attractive women.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. The witches look like traditional witches – hags with pointy chins, long black hair and beards</td>
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<td>C. The witches look like strange, supernatural creatures and at the end of the scene, the director makes them seem to vanish into thin air.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. The witches are like homely grannies, wearing specs and knitted cardigans.</td>
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<td>E. Macbeth is quiet and thoughtful, clearly shocked by the witches and what they have to say. He speaks, almost in a whisper.</td>
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<td>F. Macbeth is strong and aggressive with the witches, wanting to force them to say more and clearly excited by what they have told him.</td>
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<td>G. Banquo is quiet, reasoned and sensible, trying to think rationally and calm down Macbeth. He doesn't seem to realise how deeply this has affected Macbeth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>H. Banquo is confused and upset by what he sees. He appears flustered and stands apart from Macbeth, watching him as well as the witches.</td>
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Interpretations

1. Macbeth is a good soldier, who hasn’t really thought about becoming king but the witches put it into his mind.

2. Macbeth is highly ambitious and easily led into pursuing those ambitions, whatever it takes.

3. Banquo is a good friend to Macbeth, who is surprised by his reactions.

4. The relationship between Banquo and Macbeth is a typical one of two soldiers both competing to succeed. There is some jealousy and the friendship isn’t entirely trusting.

5. The witches are supernatural creatures who are going to lead Macbeth on a path of destruction.

6. The witches aren’t responsible for what happens – they’re just clever women who recognise what’s already in Macbeth’s mind.

7. The witches are temptresses. Like many women, they lead men astray.

8. The witches emphasise that this play is a bit like a fairytale, a story, where you don’t have to worry too much about everything being absolutely true to life.

Decide which of the interpretations of the witches, Macbeth and Banquo best fits your own, or write a statement describing your own if it is different.

Setting the play
Directors chose a setting to create or add to their interpretation.

Here are a few possible settings. Talk about which one you think would work best with your own interpretation of this scene.
A. It is set on a wild, dark heath, with the wind blowing. The atmosphere is gloomy. The characters are wearing traditional costumes – the men in old-fashioned armour, the witches in long bedraggled black gowns.

B. It is set in a foyer at the Ministry of Defence, late at night when no-one is around. The men are dressed in suits. They look as if they have been up working all night. The witches look like high-powered secretaries or PA s, young and glamorous.

C. It is set in China. The two men are Samurai warriors. The witches are spirits from another time, fragile, delicate and seemingly unthreatening. The men are, like all men, in fierce competition to become king but have a strong code of honour. It is a world in which you fight for your survival and the strongest wins. But if you break the code of honour, you will live to regret it.

D. It is set in 1930s America, in the world of the mobsters and the Mafia. Macbeth and Banquo are members of a Mafia clan, with the King as the Godfather. The three witches are beautiful young women, gangsters' molls, who will attach themselves to the most rich and powerful men.

Watching a film version
Now look at the way one film director decided to film this scene.

Talk about:
- the setting
- the witches
- Banquo
- Macbeth

drawing on all the discussions you have had about possible ways of playing the characters, setting the scenes and interpreting what is happening.
Lesson 3

Starter activity – one’s OK, two’s good, three’s even better
In lots of traditional stories, particularly fairytales or folktales, things happen in threes. There are three brothers or sisters, three riddles, three main events, three attempts at a difficult task, three choices to be made or three stages to the story.

Share all the stories you can think of in which things occur in threes. Talk about why this might be a particularly good way of structuring a story and particularly satisfying for a reader or audience. Why not ones, twos or fours for instance?

A focus on the three part structure of the scene – forum theatre
The aim of this activity is to explore the differences between the three sections of the scene and to track what the language and actions tell you about Macbeth and Banquo’s characters. It takes place with the class sitting in a circle, with the action taking place in the middle. Hand out the parts to individuals in advance of the lesson, so that they have a chance to read through their roles at home. You can change the roles from section to section, to give more pupils a chance to take a part.

Forum theatre is a read-through of a scene, where the audience also act as directors. The directors can stop the action at any time and make suggestions or ask questions.

Work section by section, reading the parts and stopping to make suggestions for how it could be read/acted, or to ask questions about what’s happening.

At the end of each section, stop and talk about:
- the effect of that part of the scene on the audience
- what that part of the scene contributes (for instance, knowledge about characters, taking forward the plot, creating suspense and so on)
- what would have been lost if any of these sections had been missing.

Talk about all the ways in which things happen in threes in this scene and compare them with the stories you brainstormed at the beginning of the lesson.

Section 1 The witches

Section 2 Macbeth and Banquo’s encounter with the witches

Section 3 News from the King and the prophesies begin to come true
Lesson 4

A focus on character

Finding out about Macbeth
In Act 1 Scene 3 Macbeth appears on stage for the first time. This makes it an important scene in the play.

Use the chart below to sum up what you learn about him in this scene, so that later you can compare this with what happens to their characters as the play progresses (and in your other SAT scene in particular).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning of Act 1 Scene 3</th>
<th>End of Act 1 Scene 3</th>
<th>Act 3 Scene 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MACBETH is</td>
<td>- Brave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Loyal</td>
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Talk about your expectations of what Macbeth might be like later in the play and why. You could use these headings to help you:

Just the same
Kinder and more caring or harder and more aggressive
Loyal to King Duncan or disloyal to King Duncan
Friendly with Banquo or enemy of Banquo
Brave and fearless or afraid and anxious
More ambitious or less ambitious