**Big Ideas**

**Macbeth**

1. The dangers of excessive ambition
2. The dangers of witches and witchcraft
3. The conflict between appearance and reality
4. The corrupting influence of power
5. The consequences of moral transgressions
6. The importance of honour and morality
7. The nature of kingship
* **Shakespeare explores what it means to be both a good and a bad king**

**Language and Style**

1. Macbeth is a tragic hero who both suffers and causes others to suffer
2. A number of images recur throughout the play with connections to darkness, sleep and blood
3. The witches are presented as grotesque and otherworldly figures
4. The play contains a number of soliloquies that provide the audience with important insights
* **The suffering of Macbeth elicits a range of strong emptions from the audience**

**Context**

1. James I conveniently believed that monarchs derived their power from God
2. Catholic plotters attempted to blow-up the Houses of Parliament in 1605
3. There was a widespread belief that witches existed and were harmful
4. James I felt strongly about the threat posed by witches and he wrote a book called Daemonologie
* **England was divided both politically and religiously at the time the play was first performed**

**Vocabulary**

1. Supernatural Forces that operate beyond the accepted laws of nature
2. Prophecy A mysterious prediction about the future
3. Regicide The murder of a monarch
4. Soliloquy A monologue in which a character speaks privately to themselves
5. Tragedy The story of a main character who acts in a way that proves disastrous
6. Hubris Excessive pride that results in punishment
7. Hamartia A fatal error of judgement
8. Anagnorisis A turning point where the main character recognises the true state of affairs

**Big Ideas**

**A Christmas Carol**

1. The inequalities of Victorian society
2. The struggles of the poor
3. The consequences of greed
4. The need for social reform
5. The importance of love and friendship
6. The importance of kindness and generosity
7. The influence of past events
8. The possibility of redemption
* **Scrooge’s transformation reflects the wider social transformation Dickens wanted to see**

**Language and Style**

1. The best and worst qualities of the main characters are purposefully exaggerated
2. Moments of seriousness are blended with moments of humour
3. There are several elements that are recognisably gothic
4. The narrative is non-chronological because it switches between time-periods
* **Dickens carefully crafted the novel to both entertain and gently provoke his readers**

**Context**

1. The majority of Londoners lived in poverty when the novel was written in 1843
2. London was rapidly expanding and overcrowding was a serious problem
3. The economist Thomas Malthus argued that the population would grow too large to be sustained
4. People who encountered financial problems were required to enter a workhouse
* **Dickens contradicts the popular notion that poverty was the result of moral failure**

**Vocabulary**

1. Allegory An element that reveals an important message or wider meaning
2. Bildungsroman A text that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of a character
3. Didactic A text that is intended to teach a moral lesson
4. Gothic A genre characterised by darkness, mystery, conflict and the supernatural
5. Stave Five parallel lines on which musical notes are written
6. Symbolism The use of images or objects to convey wider meanings

**Big Ideas**

**An Inspector Calls**

1. The inequalities of society in 1912
2. The struggles of the poor
3. The importance of respect and empathy
4. The importance of individual responsibility
5. The misuse of power and authority
6. The consequences of greed
7. The superficial nature of respectability
8. The interconnectedness of society
9. The conflict between tradition and change
* **Priestley emphasises the importance of working together for greater social change**

**Language and Style**

1. Dramatic irony is used to emphasise the flaws of the characters on stage
2. There is a contrast between the presentation of the ‘older’ and ‘younger’ Birlings
3. Sharp sounds and changes in stage lighting signal important moments of transition
4. The names of some of the characters have significant connotations
* **A clear generational divide emerges between the Birling family as the play progresses**

**Context**

1. There was a large gap between the rich and poor in 1912 and society was deeply divided
2. Society was becoming more equal in 1945 and there was a widespread desire for further change
3. Priestley was a socialist and the Inspector conveys his views about the importance of equality
4. Birling represents ‘hard-headed’ capitalism because he prioritises the accumulation of wealth
* **Priestley provides the audience with a stark reminder of the inequalities in 1912**

**Vocabulary**

1. Dramatic irony The knowledge of the audience is greater than that of the characters on stage
2. Capitalism A system based on private ownership and personal profit
3. Socialism A system based on shared ownership and the equal distribution of profit
4. Class Division of society based on wealth and status
5. Inequality Unequal and unfair access to benefits and resources
6. Privilege Special rights and advantages granted to individuals

**Big Ideas**

**Romeo and Juliet**

1. The distinction between love and infatuation
2. The power of love to cause joy and misery
3. The conflict between fate and freewill
4. The tension between personal desires and family expectations
5. The consequences of impulsiveness
6. The futility of violence and feuding
* **Shakespeare shows how love and hatred are often inextricably linked**

**Language and Style**

1. The use of oxymorons to convey emotional conflict
2. Contrasting imagery connected to light and darkness
3. A mixture of blank verse, rhymed verse and prose to reflect status and shape tone
4. Wordplay (e.g. puns) to generate moments of provocation and humour
* **Shakespeare uses language to enhance the emotional and thematic depth of the play**

**Context**

1. Social norms of the time promoted the importance of family duty and loyalty
2. The independence of women was significantly limited because society was patriarchal
3. Marriages were often arranged for social and political reasons rather than personal affection
4. The concept of honour is central to understanding the violent confrontations in the play
5. The play is shaped by the Christian values of the time (e.g. ideas of sin and redemption)
* **Shakespeare explores social issues that are still very relevant today like duty and honour**

**Vocabulary**

1. *Fate* The idea that events are predetermined and beyond human control
2. *Patriarchy* A system where men hold power and authority in society and families
3. *Dramatic irony* The knowledge of the audience is greater than that of the characters on stage
4. *Oxymoron* A figure of speech combining contradictory terms (e.g. ‘sweet sorrow’)
5. *Sonnet* A form of poem that is often used to explore themes of love
6. *Blank verse* Formal and rhythmic speech used for important characters or serious topics
7. *Prose* Language that is more informal and used for humor or accessibility