

Talking about literature

Always use the **present simple** to talk about literary texts (novels, short stories, plays, poems, etc.).

Study the following short summary of the first scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

Thunder and lightning crash above a Scottish moor. Three old women, the witches, appear out of the storm. In chanting tones, they make plans to meet again upon the heath, after the battle, to confront Macbeth. As quickly as they arrive, they disappear.

From an analysis of the play's first scenes:

These scenes establish the play's dramatic premise – the witches' awakening of Macbeth's ambition – and present the main characters and their relationships. At the same time, the first three scenes establish a dark mood that permeates the entire play.



Lady Macbeth with blood on her hands.

Useful vocabulary

literature [ˈlɪtrətʃə]	Literatur	
text [tekst]	Text	
line [laɪn]	Zeile	
paragraph [ˈpærəgrɑːf]	Textabsatz	
passage [ˈpæsiːdʒ]	Textabschnitt	
section [ˈsekʃn]	längerer Abschnitt	
chapter [ˈtʃæptə]	Kapitel	
story [ˈstɔːri]	Geschichte, Erzählung	<i>a short story, a detective story</i>
novel [ˈnɒvl]	Roman	
novelist [ˈnɒvlɪst]	Romanschriftsteller(in)	
author [ˈɔːθə]	Autor, Verfasser	
writer [ˈraɪtə]	Schriftsteller(in)	
prose [prəʊz]	Prosa	<i>to write in prose</i>
fiction [ˈfɪkʃn]	Fiktion; erzählende Literatur	<i>a science-fiction novel</i>
non-fiction [ˌnɒnˈfɪkʃn]	Sachbücher, Sachliteratur	
historical [hɪˈstɔːrɪkl]	historisch, Geschichts-	<i>a historical novel</i>
narrative [ˈnærətɪv]	erzählend	
narrator [nəˈreɪtə]	Erzähler	<i>The first-person narrator is a character in the story.</i>
poetry [ˈpəʊtri]	Dichtung, Poesie	
poem [ˈpəʊɪm]	Gedicht	
poet [ˈpəʊt]	Dichter(in)	
poetic [pəʊˈetɪk]	poetisch, dichterisch	<i>Rhyme is a poetic device.</i>
device [dɪˈvaɪs]	Stilmittel (Vorrichtung)	

drama ['drɑ:mə]	Drama	
dramatic [drɑ:'mætrɪk]	dramatisch	<i>dramatic irony</i>
play ['pleɪ]	Theaterstück	
playwright ['pleɪraɪt]	Dramatiker(in)	
comedy ['kɒmɪdɪ]	Komödie	
tragedy ['trædʒɪdɪ]	Tragödie	
character ['kærəktə]	Figur, Person, Rolle	
protagonist [prəʊ'tæɡənɪst]	Hauptfigur	
antagonist [æn'tæɡənɪst]	Gegenspieler (der Hauptfigur)	
setting ['setɪŋ]	Schauplatz, Rahmen	<i>the setting of a novel</i>
scenery ['si:nəri]	Szenerie, Bühnenbild	
function ['fʌŋkʃn]	Aufgabe, Bedeutung	<i>What is the function of her dream in the story?</i>
contrast [kən'trɑ:st]	Gegensatz, Kontrast	<i>Scene iii forms a contrast to the previous scenes.</i>
to contrast with sth.	im Gegensatz zu etwas stehen	
to describe [dɪ'skraɪb]	beschreiben	
description [dɪ'skrɪbʃn]	Beschreibung	
summary ['sʌməri]	Zusammenfassung	<i>Write a summary of the plot of Macbeth.</i>
to summarise ['sʌmə,raɪz]	zusammenfassen	
plot [plɒt]	Handlungsablauf, -führung	
storyline ['stɔ:riˌlaɪn]	Handlung	
to analyse ['ænləɪz]	untersuchen, analysieren	
analysis [ə'næləsɪs]	Analyse	<i>text analysis</i>
to interpret [ɪn'tɜ:pri:t]	interpretieren, deuten	
interpretation [ɪn,tɜ:pri'teɪʃn]	Interpretation, Deutung	
to comment ['kɒment]	etwas kommentieren	<i>comment on a text</i>
comment ['kɒment]	Kommentar, Anmerkung	
commentary ['kɒmentri]	Kommentar, Erläuterung	<i>write a commentary</i>
to quote [kwəʊt]	zitieren	
quotation [kwəʊ'teɪʃn]	Zitat	
perspective [pə'spektɪv]	Perspektive, Berachtungsweise	<i>narrative perspective</i>
point of view ['pɔɪntəv'vju:]	Standpunkt	<i>from her point of view</i>