Cruel tyrant – despairing but decisive (final scenes)  
- Scotland has become a country “Almost afraid to know itself” (4.3.164) & where upstart’s subjects “move only in command, Nothing in love” (5.2.20)  
- Decisiveness after second visit to witches means he clings to false assurances but in frustration lashes out at fears: “be it thought and done” (4.1.149)  
- Under threat, esp. with English army near, reacts brutally: orders soldiers to scour country & “Hang those that talk of fear”; insults messenger “cream-faced loon”  
- **Hardened**: “I have supp’d full with horrors”, ignores screams of wife & refuses to grieve her “dusty death” as life seems meaningless; wearied repetition of “tomorrow”, note how language itself almost seems pointless (5.5.25)  
- Nihilistic attitude: compares his existence to an inexperienced actor trapped by his part, written by someone else - “Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more…”  
- Realises deception of prophecy: illusions stripped away – sympathy as victim of manipulation, “equivocation of a fiend that lies like truth” (misled with riddles)  
- **Defiant**: chooses to die in battle, “Give me my armour”, recklessly leaving safe castle where he could “laugh a siege to scorn” (5.5.3) to directly engage enemies  
- Madly self-confident & courageous (“Yet I will try the last” – fight to the end) & brief flicker of conscience when confronting Macduff (complexities of character)  
- Fall, ruined reputation, emphasised by adjectives from “brave” & “noble” to “black” & “Devilish” – “untitled tyrant, bloody scolloped”, “hell-hound” & “dead butcher” (curt insult after head is chopped off & displayed to jubilant people)

Lady Macbeth – ruthless evil & psychological deterioration  
- Close relationship “nearest partner of greatness” (1.5): lives vicariously through husband as no children, determined to advance his (and her) position  
- Understands Macbeth’s concern with honour & his reputation but desperate to “catch the nearest way”, achieve her ambitions as quickly as possible  
- Her strength of purpose contrasts with his tendency to waver: her ambition drives her husband forward & makes decisive contributions to Duncan’s murder  
- **Sinister**, without remorse: invokes spirits to “unsex me here” & fill her from top to toe with “direst cruelty”, wedded to powers of darkness “fiend-like queen”  
- Thoroughly duplicitous, two-faced, highlighted by dramatic contrast: “look like the innocent flower but be the serpent” underneath (1.5.65)  
- Pressures husband into murder by mockery, testing his love, accusing him of cowardice, emphasising her determination to complete what she started – “so much more the man” & “screw up your courage to the sticking place”  
- Assists Macbeth in fixing blame on grooms by painting blood on their faces & tries to calm worries – “A little water clears us of this deed” (2.2.68)  
- Pretends to faint during discovery of Duncan’s death to deflect attention from Macbeth’s suspicious murder of the grooms, tries to maintain decorum at state feast & shame husband – “When all’s done, You look but on a stool” (3.4)  
- Rational view of world believing only in what can be physically seen  
- Yet increasing unease revealed in private, “by destruction dwell in doubtful joy” (alliteration), position never secure, always threat & not “content (3.2.5-7)  
- Completely absent from Act 4 & reappearance sleepwalking particularly shocking.