# Macbeth-poster

**William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606)**

**Clash of Interpretations Speaker Format**

**Contentions 3 Minutes Apiece**

**Interpretation A**

**Interpretation B**

**Interpretation C**

**Counter-Arguments 3 Minutes Apiece**

**Interpretation C**

**Interpretation B**

**Interpretation A**

**Rebuttals 3 Minutes Apiece**

**Interpretation A**

**Interpretation B**

**Interpretation C**

**Argument Evaluations 4 Minutes Apiece**

**Interpretation A**

**Interpretation B**

**Interpretation C**

The total time, with minimal time allotted to prepare in between speaking components, is 45 minutes.

**Speaking Component Roles**

Note that for each speaking component, a single student speaks from each team.

**Contentions (3 minutes)**

In their contentions, each team lays out their developed case, advancing and upholding their overall interpretive argument. A ‘contention’ in argumentation jargon is merely a developed argument, using more than one piece of evidence. Of course, each piece of evidence must be connected to its argumentative claim through reasoning or warrants that explain, in a student’s own words, how the evidence supports and proves the claim.   
  
In this speaking component, the speaker should introduce herself and state the overall interpretive argument that her contentions will advance and uphold.   
  
Note that after the first contention is delivered, the subsequent contentions **do not** directly refute or counter-argued against the contentions that preceded. This refutational argumentation is reserved for the next speaking component, Counter-Arguments

**Counter-Arguments (3 minutes)**

In their counter-arguments, each team must think analytically and critically about the actual contentions offered by the other teams and must generate a solid counter-argument against each contention. So each team will make four counter-arguments during this speaking component, and each contention will be answered by two counter-arguments.   
  
The quality and force of counter-arguments can be judged and assessed like any argument. That is, a counter-argument should have a claim, which should be buttressed by evidence or grounds, connected back up to the claim through reasoning or warrants. The strength of the evidence – its alignment with the claim, the depth of reasoning explaining it, its sufficiency and credibility – directly correlate with the strength of the counter-argument. The stronger the counter-arguments against other teams’ contentions, the more likely a team’s own contentions will prevail.

When delivering counter-arguments, the student should refer to the team that offered the contention that is being addressed (‘The Macbeth group said . . .’), and then should summarize the contention (‘that Macbeth is most responsible for his tragic outcome because he killed Duncan, starting the chain of events that ended in tragedy’), before offering a counter-claim (‘but that literal reading doesn’t consider the fact that the witches inserted the idea that he would be king into Macbeth’s mind – through their unearthly, immaterial properties, the witches represent a kind of ever-present evil that exists in the world outside of individuals, but they function to wreck people’s lives.’).

**Rebuttal**

Each team needs to refute the counter-arguments made by the other two teams. The tracking form (‘flow sheet’) is an essential instrument here. Counter-arguments cannot be answered and refuted if they are not recorded on the flow sheet – they will be forgotten, in that case, and answered generally, if at all. So every student in a Clash of Interpretations must flow the arguments carefully.

In their refutation, each student should review the evidence that supports the counter-arguments closely and with skeptical reasoning. They should look back to their contention, to see if the initial text they presented and interpreted can surmount the counter-argument with the addition of extended reasoning. The rebuttal should refer to and summarize the counter-argument (‘They said . . .’) before addressing and refuting it (‘but they are wrong because . . .’ or ‘which is a good point, but doesn’t fully negate our point that . . .’).

**Argument Evaluation**

This is the final speaking component of the Clash of Interpretations. Each speaker should use it to evaluate the strength of the clashing interpretations, favoring its position in the end. Evaluation should be done by both addressing the other groups’ contentions, as developed through counter-argument and rebuttal, as well as through the extension of the speaker’s own original contentions, again weighing arguments on both sides and explaining why at least one of the original contentions sustains its compelling force. The Clash of Interpretations flow sheet has two columns for argument evaluation: one for speakers’ final thinking and weighing of other teams’ contentions and one for each speaker’s final thinking and weighing of their own contentions.

Criteria for effective argument evaluation prominently include fully accounting for all of the salient points made on both sides, an evidence-based comparison, and achieving argumentative closure.