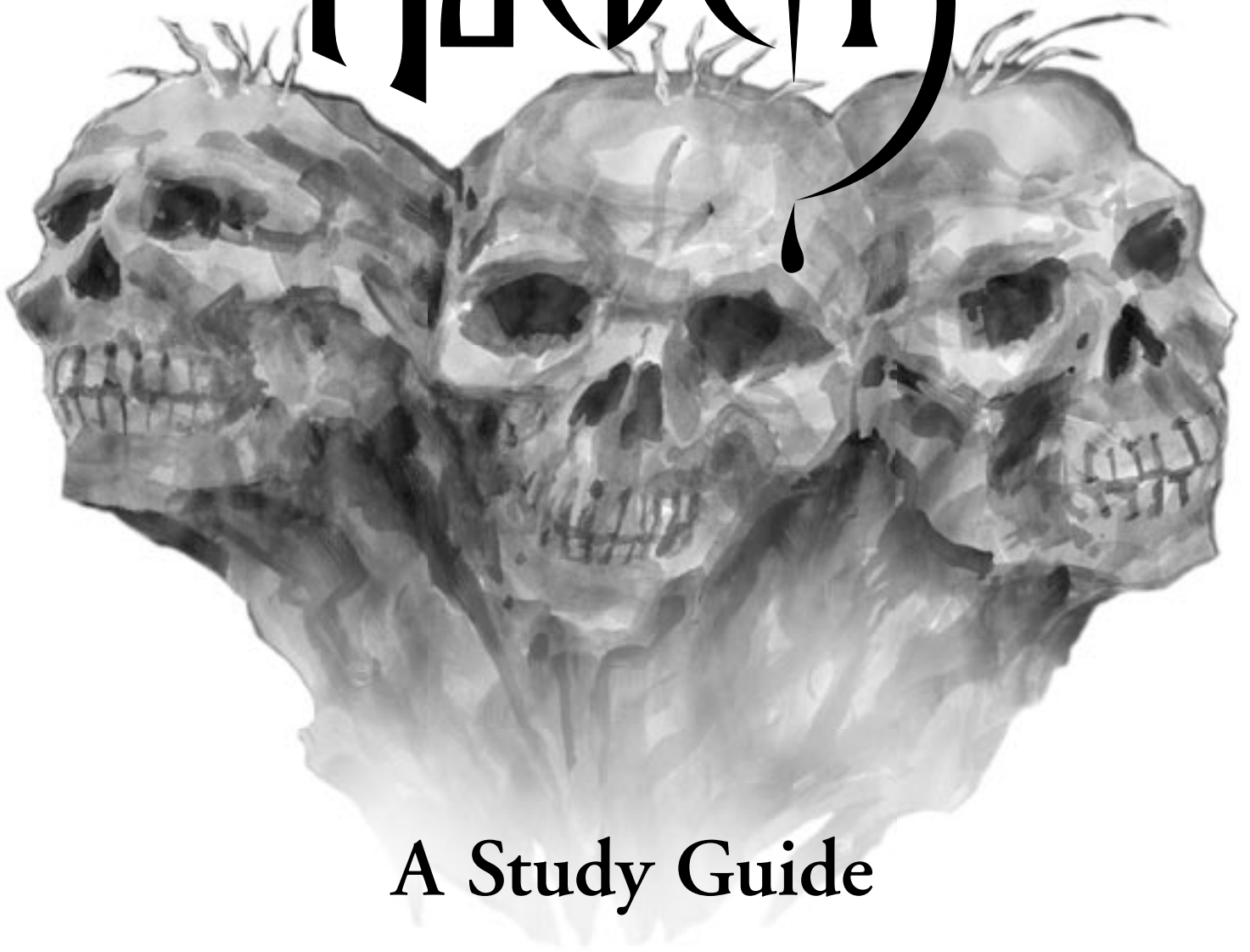


Macbeth



A Study Guide

For more information about
the educational programs offered
by the Utah Shakespearean Festival,
call 435-586-7880
or visit www.bard.org.

The Tony Award-Winning



Macbeth

Table of Contents

The Story of the Play	3
The History and Curse of <i>Macbeth</i>	4
Who's Who in <i>Macbeth</i>	5
Shakespeare's Words	6
Shakespeare's Language	9
<i>Macbeth</i> in Modern Terms	11
The Globe Theatre	12
What They Wore—Costumes	13
A Twisted Tale	14
William Shakespeare	15
Shakespeare's Plays	16
Shakespeare's Audience and Audiences Today	17
Famous Lines and Phrases	19
Suggested Activities	20
<i>Macbeth</i> and the Nature of Evil	21
What Has Gotten into You?	23
Discussion Questions for High Schools	25
Discussions and Activities for Elementary Schools	26
Recommended Reading	28

The Story of the Play

On a barren Scottish heath, three witches await the coming of Macbeth and Banquo, Scottish generals on their way home after a victorious battle. At the same time, on a battlefield not far away, a wounded soldier tells Duncan, king of Scotland, of Macbeth's great courage in battle, then the thane of Ross arrives to inform the king of the traitorous actions of the thane of Cawdor. The king immediately sentences the thane of Cawdor to death and confers that title upon Macbeth, sending Ross to tell Macbeth of the new honor.

When Macbeth and Banquo arrive at the eerie site of the witches, the three prophesy that Macbeth (still uninformed of his new title) shall become the thane of Cawdor and later on shall be king, while Banquo shall be the father of kings although not one himself. When the thane of Ross arrives and addresses Macbeth with the new title, the witches' prophecies already seem to be coming true, and Macbeth begins to wonder if the kingship could really be within his reach. However, when he reports to King Duncan, the king announces two intentions: first, of visiting Macbeth's castle in gratitude of his valor and, second, of making his son Malcolm heir to his throne.

The scene switches to Macbeth's castle, where his wife, Lady Macbeth, is reading a letter from her husband detailing the witches' prophecies and their accuracy thus far. She sets her sights on becoming queen and plans to murder the king when he visits her home; she calls on the power of evil to help her stifle feminine weakness and spur Macbeth to action.

That evening, while the king sleeps in his home, Macbeth, with his wife's urging and assistance, carries out the act, murdering King Duncan in his bed. The king's sons flee the country in terror, and Macbeth is crowned king of Scotland. But he is haunted by the prediction that Banquo's children are to inherit the throne and fearful that Macduff, a noble suspicious of Macbeth's quick rise to power, will take matters into his own hands. Therefore, Macbeth brutally arranges for the murder of Banquo and his only son, Fleance; however, Fleance escapes the attack and flees the country. Macbeth gives a great dinner for the court and is about to take his seat when he sees the ghost of Banquo (invisible to the guests), and his frenzied and incriminating remarks break up the feast and raise Macduff's suspicions even more.

Macbeth goes now to consult the witches. They warn him to beware of Macduff. However, they also assure him, much to his comfort, that no man born of a woman can harm him and that he cannot be defeated until Birnam Wood, a medieval forest, comes to Dunsinane, the site of Macbeth's castle. After this he is greeted with the news that Macduff has fled to England, whereupon Macbeth, in increasing paranoia, orders the murder of Lady Macduff and her children.

While this is all happening, Lady Macbeth, who before the king's murder appeared to be stronger than her husband, becomes completely overcome by remorse and guilt and, with unsettled mind, dies, probably by her own hand.

Macduff, gathering forces with the escaped Malcolm in England, is in complete revolt now and leads an army against Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane, the soldiers covering their advance with branches cut from the trees of Birnam Wood, making it appear that Birnam Wood is coming to Dunsinane. Macbeth's nerves are shaken as he recalls the witches prophecies, but he still clings to their saying that he cannot be harmed by any man born of woman. However, the castle is attacked and during his final hand-to-hand conflict with Macduff, Macbeth learns that his opponent was prematurely ripped from his mother's womb, a Caesarean birth. Macbeth realizes he is doomed but, rather than being captured alive, fights to his death. Macduff kills him, cuts off his head, and announces Scotland's freedom from tyranny.

The History and Curse of Macbeth

In 1606, following the death of Queen Elizabeth, William Shakespeare wrote a play for his new patron, James I (James VI of Scotland); and, being the smart playwright and businessman he was, he chose subjects he knew would interest the king. James had published a treatise called *Deamonology* and was particularly concerned with the threat of witchcraft; and the Stuarts, of which James was the ninth to assume the throne, had descended from Scotland. Consequently, Shakespeare's new play, *Macbeth*, is full of themes of witchcraft and Scottish genealogy.

Interestingly, Banquo is James's ancestor. Shakespeare's scene where the witches prophesy to Banquo: "Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none," was a reference to James. There are many other instances throughout the play that mention Banquo's descendants assuming the throne. The Witch/Apparition sequence where eight descendants of Banquo are shown with crowns was a direct reference to the ninth descendant, James, who was watching the play. All of these were for the sake of James's patronage.

The play itself tells the story of a man, urged by his wife and foretold by prophecy, who commits regicide in order to gain power. For a source, Shakespeare turned to Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587), finding therein the basic facts about Macbeth and Banquo. Like many of Shakespeare's plays, he combined the events of two different stories to create the character Macbeth. In Holinshed's history a figure named Donwald murdered King Duff while the king was safely sleeping in Donwald's castle, "though he abhorred the act greatly in heart, yet through instigation of his wife he cut his throat while he lay sleeping." Shakespeare combined this tale with the story of Makbeth, a valiant and courageous general (who was a contemporary of Edward the Confessor, 1042–1066). The witches, their prophecies, the death of a King Duncan brought with the urging of a power-hungry wife, Banquo's friendship and his death, even the climatic ending with Birnam Wood marching on the castle and Macduff proclaiming that he "was never born of my mother, but ripped out of her womb," are all contained within the Holinshed history. Shakespeare combined these historical events with poetry and philosophy, immortalizing the tragic tale of *Macbeth*.

Some literary historians will argue that Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* with actual witches' spells. The spells, the dark nature of the play, and some of the mishaps surrounding various productions of *Macbeth* have created a superstitious belief surrounding the. Some believe it is "cursed" and that belief has created a theatrical tradition: any mention of the play's name is considered bad luck. It is frequently called the "Scottish play" instead of *Macbeth*. Tradition declares that any actor who mentions or quotes it must leave the room, turn round three times, spit, and knock, humbly begging pardon for the transgression. This will remove the curse. Even among actors who take care, the curse has a way of striking. Stories abound of accident-prone productions. These stories of course perpetuate the belief that Macbeth is cursed.

Who's Who in Macbeth

Duncan, king of Scotland: The father of Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan was a good king under whom the kingdom apparently flourished; however, his life was cut short by the murderous Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

Malcolm: The eldest son of King Duncan and brother of Donalbain, he flees Scotland after his father's murder, placing suspicion initially upon himself, rather than Macbeth.

Donalbain: The son of King Duncan and brother of Malcolm.

Macbeth: The husband of Lady Macbeth, a general in the army, and later the king of Scotland. He holds the title of thane of Glamis before the play begins and is named thane of Cawdor for his valor on the battlefield. However, he is also ambitious and becomes murderous when he sees his way (helped by his wife) to fulfill the witches' prophecies and become king.

Banquo: The father of Fleance and a faithful general in the Scottish army, Banquo initially is a good friend of Macbeth, but becomes an object of Macbeth's wrath when it appears he or his children could interfere with Macbeth's tenuous grasp on the throne. He is murdered by command of Macbeth because the witches prophesy his children will be kings.

Macduff: A Scottish nobleman, Macduff becomes increasingly suspicious of Macbeth, eventually mounting an uprising against the new king. In the end, it is Macduff that kills Macbeth in battle.

Lennox: A Scottish nobleman

Ross: A Scottish nobleman faithful to Duncan and Macduff.

Fleance: Son of Banquo, Fleance escapes Macbeth's murderous rampage and flees to England.

Siward, earl of Northumberland: General of the English forces, Siward teams up with Malcolm and Macduff in their fight against Macbeth.

Young Siward: The son of Siward.

Seyton: An officer attending on Macbeth

Lady Macbeth: In contrast to her husband who initially resists his murderous impulses, Lady Macbeth, possessed by driving ambition seems to embrace them immediately. However, guilt and remorse eventually emotionally unhinge her and she dies, probably by her own hand.

Lady Macduff: The wife of Macduff, she and all her children are killed by the now-ruthless Macbeth.

Three Witches: Referred to as the "weird sisters," witches, and sometimes old hags, these three mysterious beings plant the seeds of murder and ambition in Macbeth, when they prophesy that he will become king. Some critics claim that they represent fate and that they truly prophecy, leaving Macbeth no choice in his actions. Others say that they are simply a catalyst for the brutality to come.

Shakespeare's Words

Vocabulary

Since *Macbeth* was written, many words in English have changed their meaning, and some are no longer used. If you remember the slang you used a few years ago, it seems dated. Who, now uses the word “groovy”? Shakespeare used the rich vocabulary of his day within his plays. When reading Shakespeare read the line in context of the scene. Try translating the lines into your own words, use today’s vernacular.

Hurly-burly: commotion, uproar

Witch: “When the *Hurly-burly’s* done, When the battle’s lost and won.”
When the war is over.

Chaps: jaws, like our usage of chops

Sergeant: “Unseam’d him from the nave to the *chaps*.”
Split him open, from his belly-button to his head.

Aroint thee: begone, go away

Rump-fed: well-fed, pampered

Ronyon: a trash eater

Witch: “*Aroint* thee, witch! The *rump-fed ronyon* cries.”
Get out of here! The pampered garbage eater screams.

Thane: Scottish nobleman

Macbeth: “I know I am *thane* of Glamis”
I know I am the mayor or leader of Glamis.

Soliciting: inciting, persuading

Macbeth: “This supernatural *soliciting* cannot be ill.”
This persuasion from another world cannot be bad.

Harbinger: forerunner, one who goes before

Macbeth: “I’ll be myself *harbinger* and make joyful the hearing of my wife.”
I’ll go ahead before you and tell my wife who will be so happy.

Incarnadine: make blood-red

Macbeth: “No! This, my hand, will rather the multitudinous seas in *incarnadine*,
making the green one red.”

The blood on my hand would make all the green seas of the world blood-red.

Prate: chatter, noise

Macbeth: “Thy very stones *prate* of my whereabouts.”
As I walk, the noise of my feet on the rocks reveals where I am.

Marshall’st: directs, leads

Macbeth: (speaking to the dagger) “Thou *marshall’st* me the way that I was going.”
You tell me which way I’m going.

Weird: also spelled weyard, from Old English “wyrð” meaning fate

Witch: “The *Weird* sisters, hand in hand, posters of the sea and land.”
The Fates (like the Fates, Furies and Muses of Greek mythology) or the sisters that know of fate.

Physic: cures, having to do with physicians or doctors

Macbeth: "Throw *physic* to the dogs, I'll none of it."

Throw away doctors and worrying about petty cures, I'm invincible! (Also, I am in so deep I am not concerned with any cure.)

Play the Roman fool: commit suicide the way the Romans did

Macbeth: "Why should I *play the Roman fool*."

Why should I kill myself?

Tied to a stake: For sport, bears were tied to stakes and dogs were allowed to attack the trapped bear.

Macbeth: "They have *tied me to a stake*; I cannot fly, but bear-like, I must fight the course."

I cannot escape so I must fight on.

Knell: funeral bell

Macbeth: "Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a *knell*

That summons thee to heaven or to hell."

Don't listen, Duncan, for the funeral bell summons you to your death.

Missives: messengers

Lady Macbeth: "Came *missives* from the king."

Messengers came from the king.

Figurative Language

In addition, Shakespeare uses figurative language as he speaks with metaphors, similes, and personification. Recognizing when his characters are speaking figuratively helps in understanding the play.

For example: Macbeth grows excited about the prophecies coming true and compares his becoming king to a play:

"Two truths are told
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme. . . . I thank you!"

The play is also full of examples of comparing humans to various animate and inanimate objects, such as a flower or serpent:

"Look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under it."

Or a book:

"Your face, my Thane, is a book where men
May read strange matters."

Or a plant:

"I have begun to plant thee, and will labor
To make thee full of growing."

Symbols

Lastly, Shakespeare uses symbols throughout his plays. For example in Macbeth, the characters talk of how dark it has become: owls prey where once it was light. Continuing with the bird image Shakespeare builds a wonderful symbol with the death of Lady Macduff.

Before her death she complains about her husband leaving:

“Wisdom! To leave his wife, to leave his babes,
He loves us not: For the poor wren, will fight,
Her younger ones in her nest, against the owl.”

Then she talks to her son about her husband being gone:

Lady Macduff: “How will you live?”

Son: “As birds do, Mother.”

As they are being killed by Macbeth’s henchmen, the murderer calls Macduff’s son an egg and a fry (a small bird) as he is killed:

First Murderer: “What, you egg? [Stabs son.] Young fry of treachery!”

The symbol continues as Macduff hears of the death of his family:

Macduff: “My wife kill’d too? All my pretty ones.

Did you say all?—O hell-kite! All?

What, all my pretty chickens and their dam

At one fell swoop?”

By using a bird and her flock, Shakespeare creates a powerful image. When the symbols are understood, the line makes more sense: a hell-kite (kites are scavenging birds) killing Macduff’s chicks and their dam (mothering hen) in one fell swoop (fell means scalping and swoop is a flying attack). The image fully conveys the attack and the helplessness of the victims. You can better understand it, when you understand the symbols.

Shakespeare's Language

Many students—and adults, for that matter—find Shakespeare difficult to read and hard to understand. They accuse him of not speaking English and refuse to believe that ordinary people spoke the way his characters do. However, if you understand more about his language, it is easier to understand. One idea that may help is to remember that his plays are written in two forms: prose and verse. In *Macbeth* prose and verse are both used extensively.

Prose

Prose is the form of speech used by common people in Shakespearean drama. There is no rhythm or meter in the line. It is everyday language. Shakespeare's audiences would recognize the speech as their language. When a character in a play speaks in prose, you know that he is a lower class member of society. These are characters such as murderers, servants, and porters. However, many important characters can speak in prose. The majority of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is written in prose because it deals with the middle-class. The porter from *Macbeth* speaks in prose.

For example:

Porter: "Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were a porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key. [Knocking] Knock, Knock, Knock. Who's there i' the name of Beelzebub?"

The porter, the keeper of the door to Macbeth's castle, is awakened in a drunk and salty state. He talks about being in charge of the gate of hell and asks who is at the door "in the name of the Devil!" Because there is no rhyme or rhythm, and the text flows without concern of where the line ends on the page, we recognize the passage as prose. Consequently, we can tell that the porter is a commoner who speaks with the language of an Elizabethan audience member.

Verse

The majority of Shakespeare's plays are written in verse. A character which speaks in verse is a noble or a member of the upperclass. Most of Shakespeare's plays focused on these characters. The verse form he uses is blank verse. It contains no rhyme, but each line has an internal rhythm with a regular rhythmic pattern. The pattern most favored by Shakespeare is iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter is defined as a ten syllable line with the accent on the every other syllable, beginning with the second one.

For example:

Macbeth: "Away and mock the time with fairest show:
False face must hide what the false heart doth know."

The accent occurs on every other syllable, and the natural accent of each word is placed in that position on the line.

At times, Shakespeare found it necessary to take a vowel out of a word so that the rhythm of the line would not be interrupted.

For example, damn'd is pronounced as one syllable

Macbeth: "Infected be the air whereon they ride;
And damn'd be them that trust them! I did hear"

Shakespeare used this style of writing as a form of stage direction. Actors today can tell by "scanning" a line (scansion) what words are most important and how fast to say a line. When two characters are speaking they will finish the ten syllables needed for a line showing that one line must quickly come on top of another.

For example:

Lady Macbeth: “I heard the owl scream and the cricket cry.

Did not you speak?

Macbeth: When?

Lady Macbeth: Now.

Macbeth: As I descended?

Trochaic Verse

On some special occasions Shakespeare uses another form of verse. He reverses the accent and shortens the line. The reversed accent, with the accent on the first syllable is called trochaic. He uses this verse frequently in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and in *Macbeth* where magic or ritual is involved. The witches speak in trochaic, which is different from the earthly mortals, giving them an unnatural sound.

For example:

Witch: “Round about the cauldron go;

In the Poisoned entrails throw.”

When reading or acting a Shakespearean play, count the syllables in the lines. You will be surprised at Shakespeare's consistency. Then circle the syllables where the accent appears. You will notice that he placed the most important words on the accent. Words like “the,” “is,” and “and” that don't carry the meaning are on the unaccented portion of the lines. In the Globe Theatre where there were no microphones, the more important words would carry and an audience member would still know what was going on because the important words were heard. Iambic pentameter has been called a “heart beat,” and each of Shakespeare's lines contains that human beat.

Macbeth in Modern Terms

Activity: Have the students translate the speech below into their own words, encouraging the use of slang, colloquialisms, or regional jargon.

Macbeth: "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our own poison'd chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust;
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then as his host
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath born his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking off;
And pity, like a naked newborn babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other."

The Globe Theatre

The theatre where audiences watched Shakespeare's company perform many of his plays was called the Globe, situated on the south side of London.

It is thought that the stage was several feet above the ground where the people who paid a penny stood, and that it extended into the audience from the backstage wall. This was a model for construction of the Adams Shakespearean Theatre at the Utah Shakespearean Festival (see photo), with the difference being that all the audience is seated and no one has to stand.

As you can see in the photo, there is a center section near the back which is somewhat inset from the outer stage; this is called the inner below and is the area of the stage where bedchambers and intimate scenes with only two people were staged, so that a curtain could be drawn in front of it, while another scene begins on the stage closer to the audience. At the back of the inner below is a space for a curtain.

Two columns support the second story of the inner below, providing a balcony called the above. You can see that there is a space behind the balcony where actors can walk, and that is called the inner above.

The stage has four possible entrances on the main floor and three entrances on the second floor, so the whole of Macbeth's court could enter at the same time.

In the floor of the mainstage, there are two trapdoors, where ghosts and apparitions could come from belowstage, and which could open to reveal the witches.

All the main architectural features in the photo are permanent; some plays add various kinds of staircases to get from the first level of the stage to the balcony, and some plays separate the balcony completely from the main floor, so that actors have to go up or down stairs which are hidden backstage.

What can change are the curtains or doors at the front of the inner below which can be of several different colors and can be open or closed; the kinds of doors, which can be plain wood, or decorated, or replaced with iron gates; and the various kinds of furniture which can be brought onto the stage.



What They Wore—Costumes

The clothing which actors wear to perform a play is called a costume to distinguish it from everyday clothing. In Shakespeare's time, acting companies spent almost as much on costumes as they do today for a television series.

The costumes for shows in England were so expensive that visitors from France were a little envious. Kings and queens on the stage were almost as well-dressed as kings and queens in real life.

Where did the acting companies get their clothes? Literally "off the rack" and from used clothing sellers. Wealthy middle class people would often give their servants old clothes that they didn't want to wear any more, or would leave their clothes to the servants when they died. Since clothing was very expensive, people wore it as long as possible and passed it on from one person to another with no one being ashamed to wear hand-me-downs. However, since servants were of a lower class than their employers, they weren't allowed to wear rich fabrics, and would sell these clothes to acting companies, who were allowed to wear what they wanted in performance.

A rich king like Duncan would wear a gown of velvet, with real fur trim; if he wore a doublet, it might have gold embroidery. *Macbeth* is set in a much more barbaric time than most plays, so kilts with furs, leather, and earthy fabrics are often used.

Today's audiences want costumes to be more authentic, so that they can believe in the world of the play. *Macbeth* is often set in different periods and different countries than medieval Scotland.

Activity: Have the students discuss what period and/or country *Macbeth* could be set in to appeal to a more modern audience. What kind of costumes would the actors wear for these different periods and countries?

A Twisted Tale

“As is frequently pointed out by the critics, *Macbeth* was probably written in haste. No one knows why Shakespeare was in a hurry, unless he was nauseated by all the bloodshed. At any rate this explains the unusually large number of tragic flaws in the play.

“It is the shortest of Shakespeare’s major tragedies (some don’t consider this a flaw). According to one theory, it was long in its original version and subsequently cut. Most of the cutting was doubtless left in the capable hands of Macbeth and the hired murderers, with Lady Macbeth cheering them on.

“Shakespeare, who never could think up a plot all by himself, found this one in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, changing it just enough so that no one would recognize the source. (He didn’t count on the resourcefulness of modern scholars, who have to discover things like this to become associate professors.) If, as researchers say, Shakespeare took liberties with Scottish history, most of us who love liberty applaud him for it.

“As Kittredge observes, Shakespeare at the beginning of the play ‘plunges, as usual, *in medias res.*’ Whatever this is, he doesn’t come up for air until the play is over. Few Elizabethan dramatists had such powers of endurance as Shakespeare, and few modern theatrogoers have such powers of endurance as the Elizabethans.

“The play is full of atmosphere, which helps the characters breathe. Of the characters, the most interesting are Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The latter is not only her husband’s wife but his evil genius (all in all, quite a helpmate). According to G.B. Harrison, ‘Lady Macbeth is at the same time greater and less than her husband,’ which is about as neat a trick as you will find in all Shakespeare. Cruel and heartless as they appear both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are said to have a gentle, loving side. It must be the side away from the audience.

“There are some beautiful passages. One of them is the hallway in Macbeth’s castle, where Lady Macbeth loved to fingerpaint on the wall with other people’s blood.”

(From *Twisted Tales from Shakespeare* by Richard Armour. Copyright 1957 by Richard Armour. Used with the permission of the author.)

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616)

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in England on April 23, 1564. His father was John Shakespeare, a well-to-do general storekeeper. Shakespeare went to a good school, very much like yours, except he studied some Latin and Greek and became familiar with Greek and Roman plays and poetry.

We don't know much about his early life, since no one wrote a biography of him while he was a live, but we do know that he married Anne Hathaway in 1582 when he was eighteen, and that they had three children: Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith. Nothing is known of why he decided to go to London, but the next mention we have of him is in 1594, when he was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a professional acting company. Through looking at some of the records of the theatre, we can find out that his first play was probably *The Comedy of Errors*, written in 1591, and that *Macbeth* was written probably about 1605, when Shakespeare had made enough money to buy a house in the country for his wife and children, to which he retired, probably about 1613.

Shakespeare died on his birthday, April 23, in 1616, at the age of fifty-two. His only son, Hamnet, had died at the age of eleven, and his wife died seven years after her son's death. Although his two daughters married and had children, the line died out, so there aren't any descendants of Shakespeare alive today.

What are still alive are his plays, which are still being performed after almost 400 years, in countries all over the world—in German, French, Russian, and Japanese. Every ten years or so, the film industry “rediscovers” Shakespeare and makes lavish movies of some of his most famous plays. We are in one of these periods of rediscovery right now.

Orson Welles directed a film version of *Macbeth* in 1948, and Roman Polanski directed a production in 1971 that was very true to the text and brought the film to life, but was extremely graphic and bloody. Various directors have used *Macbeth* as a catalyst for their films, including a number of Japanese directors with *Throne of Blood* and *Ran* (loosely based on *King Lear*).

Question: Can you name some of the Shakespeare plays which have been made into movies recently and some of the famous actors in them?

Answer: *Hamlet* with Kenneth Branagh; another *Hamlet* with Mel Gibson; *Richard III* with Ian McKellen; *Twelfth Night* with Nigel Hawthorne; *Much Ado about Nothing* with Kenneth Branagh, Emma Thompson, and Michael Keaton; *Henry V* with Kenneth Branagh; *Romeo and Juliet* with Clare Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio; and *Othello* with Laurence Fishburne and Kenneth Branagh.

Shakespeare's Plays

Comedies

The Comedy of Errors
The Taming of the Shrew
The Two Gentleman of Verona
A Midsummer Night's Dream
Love's Labour's Lost
The Merchant of Venice
As You Like It
Much Ado about Nothing
Twelfth Night
The Merry Wives of Windsor
All's Well That Ends Well
Measure for Measure

Histories

Henry IV, Part 1
Henry IV, Part 2
Henry V
Henry VI, Part 1
Henry VI, Part 2
Henry VI, Part 3
Richard II
Richard III
King John
Henry VIII

Tragedies

Titus Andronicus
Romeo and Juliet
Julius Caesar
Hamlet
Troilus and Cressida
Othello
King Lear
Macbeth
Timon of Athens
Antony and Cleopatra
Coriolanus

Romances

Pericles
Cymbeline
The Winter's Tale
The Tempest

Shakespeare's Audience and Audiences Today

Seating

Shakespeare's audience for his outdoor plays was the very rich, the upper middle class, and the lower middle class. The lower middle class paid a penny for admittance to the yard (like the yard outside a school building), where they stood on the ground, with the stage more or less at eye level—these spectators were called groundlings. The rich paid two pennies for entrance to the galleries, covered seating at the sides. The rich paid three pennies to sit in the higher galleries, which had a better view. The best seats were in the lords' rooms, private galleries closest to the stage.

How much did it cost?

To get an idea of the cost of a ticket in today's terms, consider that the average blue collar worker earned five to six pennies a day; bread for his midday meal cost a penny, ale cost another penny, and if were lucky enough to have chicken for dinner, it cost two pennies. His rent was often a shilling (twelve pennies) a week, so there wasn't much money left over for playgoing, nor would he have been able to take time off from work to go and see a play in the middle of the day, when they were usually performed.

Activity: Ask the students to set the space with room to sit on the floor (for the one penny seats), a semi-circle of chairs on the floor (for two-penny seats), and tables behind the chairs for three-penny seats. Depending on the size of the class, a second rank of tables with chairs on them may be set up as lords' rooms.

Before the students decide what seating area they wish to be in, have them "cost out" the price of a ticket, using their allowances or earnings as a base for comparison with Elizabethan ticket prices and deducting amounts for rent and food.

Example: A student gets an allowance of \$5 a week. He gets 500 pennies, as compared to the Elizabethan worker's 36 pennies per week. Therefore, 14 of the student's pennies equal one of the worker's pennies. From his weekly allowance he must deduct his food and lodging, which would be 33 pennies Elizabethan (12 pennies for lodging and 3 pennies times 7 days for food). The worker has 3 pennies left for entertainment or extra chicken or ale. Let the student work out how much he has left for entertainment, and whether he will see one play with a very comfortable seat, or several, standing in the yard.

How Was Seeing a Play in Shakespeare's Time Different from Seeing a Play Today?

Shakespeare's audience was perhaps not as well-behaved as you are. Since the play was so long, people would leave their seats and go looking for food to eat and ale to drink during the performance, or perhaps go visit with their friends. Some playgoers, especially those who had saved up money to come and see the play, were extremely annoyed if they were unable to hear the actors and would tell rowdy audience goers to quiet down.

Later in Shakespeare's career, his acting company was invited to perform in noble houses and royal courts; the audience there was a good deal more polite, and focused on the play as you do.

Today's Audience

Today, you have a lot of entertainment to choose from, not including the ones you provide yourselves, such as sports or putting on your own shows. Today's audiences can choose

television, movies, or stage shows, and there is a different kind of behavior that is right for each one.

Television audiences are the most casual; they don't have to dress up, they don't have reserved seats, and they can talk or go to the fridge whenever they want.

Movie audiences sometimes think they're at home. Have you ever been annoyed by someone who sat behind you and kicked your chair or talked loudly so you couldn't hear the movie? And you paid good money to go and see it, too! Then there are the people who can't decide where to sit, and keep getting up in front of you so you can't see the screen. What other behaviors have you seen which ruin your enjoyment?

People who go and see theatre (like you) usually pay more for a ticket than they would for a movie, and are most often annoyed by any disturbance. A theatre performance is not something you put on tape and play back on your VCR—it's like seeing a basketball game live—there aren't any instant replays. It requires your full attention, and you don't want to be interrupted by other people talking and moving.

The actors who put on a show for you also want your attention—they've worked for a long time to develop a good production, and you can see them concentrating extremely hard to get the best meanings out of all they have to say and do. If you've seen any golf on television, you know that when the golfer is lining up his shot, even the announcers stop talking. What other situations can you think of where you need quiet and full concentration?

Activity: Take a four- or eight-line speech from the play and ask the students to memorize it while you provide some aural distraction (loud music, some of the students talking, you asking questions). Then have them write down what they remember. Take another speech of the same length, provide an environment with no distractions, and ask the students to study it. Then have them write down what they remember. The third method is to have the students study a speech in units of two or three, keeping the groups as far apart as possible, and keeping voices at a low level. This shows that interplay between actors helps memorization.

Famous Lines and Phrases

“Fair is foul, and foul is fair.”

—Witches, 1.1.12

“So foul and fair a day I have not seen.”

—Macbeth, 1.3.39

“Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it.”

—Malcolm, 1.4.8–9

“Yet do I fear thy nature.
It is too full o’ the milk of human kindness.”

—Lady Macbeth, 1.5.15–6

“Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here.”

—Lady Macbeth, 1.5.44–5

“Look like the innocent flower,
But be the serpent under ’t.”

—Lady Macbeth, 1.5.73–4

“If it were done when ’tis done, then ’twere well
It were done quickly.”

—Macbeth, 1.7.1–2

“Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?”

—Macbeth, 2.1.42–3

“Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care.”

—Macbeth, 2.2.51

“Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand?”

—Macbeth, 2.2.78–9

“Naught’s had, all’s spent,
Where our desire is got without content.”

—Lady Macbeth, 3.2.6–7

“We have scotched the snake, not killed it.”

—Macbeth, 3.2.15

“Duncan is in his grave;
After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well.”

—Macbeth, 3.2.24–5

“I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears.”

—Macbeth, 3.4.30–1

“It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood.”

—Macbeth, 3.4.152–53

“Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.”

—Witches, 4.1.10–1

“I’ll make assurance double sure.”

—Macbeth, 4.1.93

“At one fell swoop.”

—Macduff, 4.3.256

“Out, damned spot! out, I say!”

—Lady Macbeth, 5.1.31

“All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten
this little hand.”

—Lady Macbeth, 5.1.46–7

“What’s done cannot be undone.”

—Lady Macbeth, 5.1.62–3

“I have lived long enough. My way of life
Is fallen into the sere, the yellow leaf.”

—Macbeth, 5.3.25–6

“Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased.”

—Macbeth, 5.3.47

“I have supped full with horrors.”

—Macbeth, 5.5.14

“Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.”

—Macbeth, 5.5.21

“I ’gin to be aweary of the sun.”

—Macbeth, 5.5.54

“Lay on, Macduff,
And damned be him that first cries ‘Hold enough!’”

—Macbeth, 5.8.38–9

Suggested Activities

1. Shakespeare understood the Universal nature of man. That is why we can relate to him today. As humans, our psychology is just like it was in his day. Teenagers rebel against their parents' wishes just like they do in *Romeo and Juliet*. Jealousy can eat at and destroy relationships like it does in *Othello*. Ambition unchecked can destroy like it does in *Macbeth*.
Activity: Have students place the story *Macbeth* in another time period. The students must draw the costumes of three main characters, design the set, and write a one page paper on their concept and present it orally to the class.
Example 1: Two Indian braves are returning from a battle when spirits arise from the woods, chanting prophecies; the chief is coming to sleep in Macbeth's teepee; Lady Macbeth is found sleep-walking in the forest; the medicine man watches; the desert sage brush marches on the encampment.
Example 2: After a Mafia gang war, a rising Don hears of the Godfather's arrival at his house. Three fortune tellers predict the Don's rise in the family. His wife dreams of becoming the wife to a successful gangster.
Discuss after each presentation whether the concept works. Do the costumes fit the characters. What does this teach us about human nature and Shakespeare's understanding of man.
2. Have students divide into groups and stage various sections of the play.
Examples: *Macbeth*, Banquo, and the witches; the banquet scene; the apparition scene; the sleep-walking scene; the battle between Macduff and Macbeth.
3. Pick a monologue within the play, and have the students translate it into modern speech. Have the students perform both speeches for the class, one following another. They will easily understand the speech. Translate and perform a variety of monologues so each student has a different speech.
4. Divide the class into groups, and have each group write a number of news stories focusing on the rise and fall of Macbeth. Have them include headlines and quotes; then let each group present its news stories to the class.
Examples: "Birnam Wood Rises, Dunsinane Falls!" "Caesarean Section Is Rip for Macbeth!" "Haunting Spots Damn the Lady!"
5. Have individual groups create a five-minute show based on an event in *Macbeth*. Models for these shows can be *The People's Court*, a modern talk show with guests (Jay Leno to Jerry Springer), a game show (*Jeopardy*, *The Dating Game*, etc.). Have the students prepare scripts and visual aids and present them to the class.
6. Lead a classroom debate on the following question: Is Macbeth a victim of fate (it was going to happen no matter what) or a victim of his own ambitious choices? Have the students prepare arguments on both sides with guided interjections from the teacher. At the end of debate, help the class members write a brief paper stating which argument won and why.
7. Have students write a poem fourteen lines long in iambic pentameter, (ten syllables, accent on the second syllable) Rhyme scheme is a-b-a-b c-d-c-d e-e with a rhyming couplet at the end. Have the students read their poems in front of the class.
8. Divide the class into boy and girl groups to research (have the groups prepare organized arguments) the following questions: Is the relationship between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth a healthy one? Is Lady Macbeth helping Macbeth? Does Macbeth have weaknesses and does Lady Macbeth help eliminate them? Do they make a good team as they work together? Who is stronger? Do they complement each other? Are they two halves of a whole? What attributes do you like in the couple? Would you find these attributes desirable in a boyfriend or girlfriend?

Macbeth and the Nature of Evil

By Elaine Pilkington

From Insights, 2004

Macbeth examines the nature of evil and the corruption of the human soul. In *Macbeth* evil is the opposite of humanity, the deviation from that which is natural for humankind, yet evil originates in the human heart. Supernatural and unnatural forces are the agents of human beings, not their instigators. The witches' words do not seduce Macbeth. He is compelled by his own ambition and his wife's ruthlessness. Similarly, spirits do not solicit Lady Macbeth, rather she invokes their aid for her purposes.

The character Macbeth, like the play itself, is a collection of contradictions. His wife believes that his "nature / . . . is too full o'th' milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way" (1.5.1517, all references are to Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, eds., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988]). At the beginning of the play, he seems the epitome of a loyal subject, valiantly fighting the rebel forces to protect the king and preserve his power. Described as an almost superhuman warrior on the field of battle, brave Macbeth "carv'd out his passage" (1.2.20) through the enemy till he reached the traitor Macdonald, "unseamed him from the nave to th' chops, / And fix'd his head upon ... [the] battlements" (1.2.223).

When we actually meet Macbeth and Banquo, however, we see interesting contrasts that belie the great hero. His first words, "So fair and foul a day I have not seen" (1.3.36) echo the "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1.10) of three witches in scene one and immediately link him to them. Upon his bidding, the witches speak, greeting him with three titles: Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and king hereafter (1.3.4648). Macbeth hears their words not with the detached skepticism of Banquo but with a kind of fear. For him, this is not a revelation of the future but an invasion of his private, hidden thoughts. His first reaction is like one who has been discovered. Banquo asks him, "Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?" (1.3.4950).

After Ross and Angus inform him that Duncan has bestowed upon him the title of the thane of Cawdor, validating the witches' second title, Macbeth analyzes their words: "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill, / Why hath it given me earnest of success / Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor. / If good, why do I yield to that suggestion / Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair / And make my seated heart knock at my ribs / Against the use of nature?" (1.3.12936). The witches' words were neutral. It is Macbeth that puts a moral value to them, concluding that he must perform an unnatural act to acquire the title of king.

But the clear knowledge that killing a king, a kinsman, and a guest in his house is against all social propriety, natural order, and human or humane behavior puts Macbeth at war with himself. As he says, he dares to "do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none" (1.7.4647). It is impossible to murder Duncan, a man of great virtue and sound leadership, and remain human. His desire for the crown and his revulsion at the means he must use to obtain it cause him to vacillate. At Lady Macbeth's urging, he agrees, "I am settled, and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat" (1.7.7980), putting aside his earlier refusal, "We will proceed no further in this business" (1.7.31).

Having performed the act, he is immediately filled with remorse. His bloody hands are a "sorry sight" (2.2.19). He cannot voice an amen to an overheard prayer, "I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen' / Stuck in my throat" (2.2.3031), having made himself no longer a man, no longer worthy of blessing. He imagines a voice crying, "Sleep no more, / Macbeth

does murder sleep” (2.2.3334). He is incapable of returning to Duncan’s chamber to put the bloody daggers with the grooms. Hearing the knocking at the gate, he says, “Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would thou couldst” (2.2.72).

Despite his profound remorse, he does nothing to right the wrong. His fear of earthly justice compels him to make more inhuman choices. He proceeds with the plan to place the blame upon the grooms and kills them before they can establish their innocence. He believes Banquo suspects him and attempts to have Banquo and Fleance killed, succeeding only with Banquo’s death and Fleance’s escape. Murder becomes his primary tool of leadership. Having missed the opportunity to kill Macduff, he resolves to kill Lady Macduff, her children, “and all unfortunate souls / That trace him in his line” (4.1.16869). By the end of the play, Macbeth is a bloody tyrant, disappointed in all aspects of his life—his reign, his marriage, a family for a potential dynasty—and damned for eternity in his death.

Lady Macbeth’s decline mirrors her husband’s. Denying her humanity, she too turns against human nature. To contemplate such horror and steel Macbeth to kill Duncan she calls upon spirits “that tend on mortal thoughts [to] unsex . . . [her] / And fill . . . [her] from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty” (1.5.4042), turning her into an unnatural creature like the witches, who are neither male nor female. Her denial of her essential nature is unsuccessful. She cannot bring herself to murder Duncan for the human reason that he resembled her father as he slept. Despite her assurance that “A little water clears us of this deed” (2.2.65), she cannot forget her actions. The innocent dead haunt her dreams as she walks through the castle in her sleep, washing her hands, trying to remove the stain of her inhuman acts. But no water can clear the blood from her hands; no power can free her from her guilt. “What’s done cannot be undone” (5.1.65).

The evil of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is so great that ultimately it destroys both of them. The human soul cannot endure such evil. One way or another evil destroys the soul. Knowing he is doomed to lose, Macbeth still battles against Macduff, the representative of virtue and the redresser of the play. Lady Macbeth is defeated by madness and death. Evil is incompatible with humanity.

What Has Gotten into You?

By Diana Major Spencer

My grandmother used to say, “Di-AN-a! WHAT’S gotten INto you!” Could she have known something I didn’t? Could my behavior have been caused by some mysterious outside force that invaded my spirit and made me a “naughty girl”? I didn’t know it at the time, but Grandma Emma’s locution has a long history in the English language, long enough, in fact, that our understanding of and sympathy for Macbeth, for example, can be enriched by asking the same question of him: “Really, Macbeth, what HAS gotten into you?”

Shakespeare uses four words in the course of *Macbeth* which, interpreted in sixteenth century terms, reveal a man of nobility waylaid by conjurors: noble, charm, weird, and wicked. For maximum tragic effect, Macbeth must be noble (in a sixteenth-century sense); he must also be charmed and wicked (in a sixteenth-century sense) by the Weird (in the sixteenth-century sense) Sisters. In contrast, many productions minimize the weird and wicked and aim the early scenes in the direction of unfettered ambition and bloody cruelty, culminating in mad scenes for both Macbeth and his lady. If the mad scenes are mad enough, the entire motivation of the play lies in the insanity of its two primary characters—not very tragic.

If, however, Macbeth is a noble man (not merely a nobleman) caught up in something beyond his control, he is a sympathetic, tragic figure. Noble implies a code of behavior as well as rank of birth. A person earns the respect paid to Macbeth in act 1, scene 2: “brave Macbeth . . . Valor’s minion” (*The Riverside Shakespeare* [Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974], 16-20); “O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!” (24); and “What [the former Thane of Cawdor] hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won” (67). Even Lady Macbeth “fear[s his] nature, / [as] too full o’ the milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way” (1.5.15-17). Macbeth begins as a brave and noble warrior who counts kindness and gentility among his virtues. He is noble by birth and noble of character.

In the first scene, however, the Weird Sisters agree to meet Macbeth, whom they have singled out for their attention. Act 1, scene 3 enumerates the miseries they will unleash upon him as they cast this magical spell: “The weird sisters, hand in hand, / Posters of the sea and land, / Thus do go, about, about, / Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, / And thrice again, to make up nine. / Peace, the charm’s wound up” (1.3.32-37).

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), the original meaning of charm was “to sing [magic] into,” as in two other French versions of the Latin, in-cant-tation and en-chant-ment: “chanting or recitation of a verse supposed to possess magic power or occult influence” (*The Compact Edition* [New York: Oxford UP, 1971], 1.383). Prospero in *The Tempest*, ends his magical career with “My charms I’ll break, [my captives] senses I’ll restore” (5.1.31). Romeo and Juliet are “alike bewitched by the charm of looks (2.Prologue.6). Magic, witchcraft, and spells are consistently associated with charms. By extension, to say someone is charming, enchanting, or bewitching as metaphors for attractive, or that one is spellbound by a person’s charms, implies something metaphorically magical, though not usually occult. Macbeth later says he leads a “charmed life” (5.8.12), meaning that he is “rendered invulnerable by a spell or charm” (OED 1:383).

The OED’s primary meaning of weird, moreover, is “the principle, power, or agency by which events are pre-determined” (2:3731). The Weird Sisters correspond to the Three Fates, who spin, weave, and cut the thread of life. Like the oracle in *Oedipus Rex*, they bring confusion to the issue of responsibility: How can Oedipus be responsible for his actions when they have already been determined by the gods or the Fates? How can Macbeth? Is the

Fates' power absolute? Or do they merely have the power of prophecy? Maybe foreknowledge is the same as causality. When Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, weird characters were deemed capable of prophecy. *Macbeth* makes the association when he asks why the sisters “stop our way / With such prophetic greeting?” (1.3.76-78). We moderns, though, hear the modern denotation of weird, which, incidentally, dates from its use to describe these bearded ladies who vanish into the air. Formerly, weird ladies—i.e., those endowed with prophetic powers—were presumed to have magical powers as well; now, ladies who think they have magical powers are presumed to be weird—i.e., strange, peculiar.

If we are to enjoy a tragic sympathy for *Macbeth*, he must be good without being quite perfect and he must contribute to his own downfall. Banquo notices that the sisters have deeply affected his companion: “Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?” (1.3.51-52). *Macbeth*'s aside confirms his own misgivings: “If good, why do I yield to that suggestion / Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair / And make my seated heart knock at my ribs, / Against the use of nature [i.e., against the normal habit of my nature]?” (1.3.134-37). What in his character makes him vulnerable to the Weird Sisters? Ambition, perhaps; but Shakespeare has not established unreasonable ambition as *Macbeth*'s normal state.

Instead *Macbeth* is wicked (“By the pricking of my thumbs / Something wicked this way comes” [4.1.45-46]). We do not understand the sentence, *Macbeth* was wicked by the weird sisters; yet the adjective wicked derives from the passive of a dialect variant of (be)witched. To say something was wicked meant literally to Shakespeare's audience that it was under the spell of a witch (wicca). Something “had gotten into” *Macbeth*—the inner disturbance induced by whatever has the power to witch, bewitch, or charm: the Weird Sisters. Interpretations of the disturbance range all the way from total infestation by supernatural powers to the mere catalyzing of *Macbeth*'s latent seed of ambition. Nevertheless, the witches have done something to *Macbeth*.

For catharsis, the ultimate goal of tragedy, the tragic hero must recognize his role in his own downfall. As wickedly as *Macbeth* behaves, he never completely loses his traces of his nobility. Two crucial speeches suggest sorrow and futility rather than satisfaction with his bloody actions. In his sleep-deprived “in blood stepped in so far” (3.4.136-7), he is so clearly guilty of crimes he's worse off trying to make amends than trying to complete the task, futile as it may be. Hence, he is resolved to bloodier actions. In “tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” (5.5.19), he acknowledges that he and Lady *Macbeth* have spent “all [their] yesterdays . . . light[ing] fools [i.e., themselves] the way to dusty death” (5.5.22-23).

Macbeth makes for exciting drama even as a bloodbath prompted by a fourth witch--Lady *Macbeth*. But the play has the potential to engage the emotions at a deeper and more universal level. *Macbeth* needs to undergo crisis and change during the course of the play, which can best be achieved, I believe, by playing the Weird Sisters at face value as other-world powers that seduce the hero from his truest nature.

Discussion Questions and Activities for Elementary Schools

Discussion Questions

1. Who made Macbeth do the things he did?:
 - a. The witches
 - b. Lady Macbeth
 - c. Macbeth's own ambitions
2. Was Lady Macbeth more powerful than Macbeth at the beginning? At the end?.
3. Was Macbeth really bad from the beginning, or was he a good man who did bad things?
What good qualities can you find in him?
4. How scary are the witches? Do you think Macbeth should have believed them?
5. One of the themes in the play is that if you do bad things, bad things will happen to you.
What happens to Lady Macbeth? To Macbeth himself?
6. Does Macbeth deserve to die?
7. Is Lady Macbeth a nice person? Does she really love Macbeth?
8. Which character did you like the best? Why?

Activities

1. Read the "eye of newt" speech to the students. Ask them how they think this would taste; then ask them what ingredients they would put in a spell or magic recipe.
2. Ask the students if they were directing *Macbeth*, would they want the witches to be scary or pretty? Have each student draw a picture or find in a magazines his or her idea of the perfect Macbeth witch.
3. Have one student be Macbeth and one be Banquo; then ask three students to be the witches. The witches have to try and convince Macbeth and Banquo they can see the future. Have the rest of the students decide whether the witches are convincing. Have the students playing Macbeth and Banquo tell what's convincing and what they have a hard time believing.
4. Have the students decide how they would prepare the castle for Duncan's arrival, and how many servants it would take. How many people would Duncan bring with him? Would people in the castle have to wear special clothes to meet the king? What about feeding the horses? What kind of food would be served at the banquets in the play?

Discussion Questions for High Schools

1. Discuss how two of the following influenced Macbeth's actions in the play *Macbeth*: the witches, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth's own ambitions
2. Shakespeare's women are not slaves or subordinates to the men in the plays. They are complete characters in their own right; they influence other characters, and by so doing they influence the plot; they have dreams, ambitions, feelings, and desires; they are capable of sin and guilt, as well as joy and love; they, like men, can become tragic figures. With specific reference to scenes and events in the play, discuss how much of this is true for Lady Macbeth.
3. Sometimes a person's actions are determined largely by some aspect of his character, sometimes by some external force or forces exerting pressure on him, and sometimes by a combination of both. Using the character of Macbeth, illustrate whether the motivations for the actions of the character are internal, external, or both. Refer to specific incidents in the play and support your answer.
4. Themes or messages are very important to Shakespeare's plays. Discuss fully the development of one major theme or message the play has for its audience.
5. The idea of deception—that is, things are not always as they seem—is presented in *Macbeth*. Using specific references, trace the theme of deception as it is presented in the play.
6. To what extent is Lady Macbeth responsible for Macbeth becoming king of Scotland? Use specific evidence from the play to support your answer.
7. Below is a passage taken from the play. Answer the following questions about it: Who is speaking? What is the situation in which this passage is spoken? In your own words, summarize what is being said. Finally, with specific references to the plot of the play, explain the significance this passage has to the theme and to the character.

“I have almost forgot the taste of fears;
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair
Would at a dismal treatise rouse, and stir
As life were in it; have supp'd full with horrors:
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
Cannot once start me.”
8. One of the themes of *Macbeth* is that wrongdoing has serious consequences. Discuss this statement with careful reference to the play and to the decline of both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth.
9. The misfortunes that befall us are sometimes due to our own acts and sometimes due to fate or ill luck. By referring to *Macbeth* explain the situation the character finds himself in and the extent to which the character is responsible.
10. By referring to Lady Macbeth's actions, thoughts and words and the things that are said about her, develop a character sketch of her.
11. One of the themes of *Macbeth* is that our actions have certain consequences, and that some of these consequences can be terrible and unexpected. Discuss this statement with reference to both *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*.
12. A writer such as Shakespeare was able to create in the reader a feeling (such as respect, sympathy, love, hate, admiration, or several of these together towards one or more characters. Choose a character in the play and write your feelings towards that character and explain how the author managed to make you feel as you do.

13. Macbeth has not been a scoundrel all of his life. Instead he is a good man who has gone wrong. This is a real tragedy. Discuss this statement by focusing on Macbeth's good qualities some of which are used for the wrong purposes.
14. Shakespeare not only presents the actions of characters but also helps us to understand what motivates characters to act in the way that they do. Discuss the factors which motivate Macbeth's own ambitions.

Recommended Reading

- Armour, Richard. *Twisted Tales from Shakespeare*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1957.
- Barnett, Sylvan, ed. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. New York: New American Library Penguin, Inc., 1987.
- Kennedy, Dennis. *Looking at Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- McDonald, Russ, ed. *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996.
- Underwood, Linda. *A Teacher's Guide to the Signet Classic Edition of William Shakespeare's Macbeth*. New York: New American Library Penguin, Inc., 1989.