

ANIMATED SHAKESPEARE

Welcome to Animated Shakespeare!

About Macbeth the Play



We think you'll find these teaching resources – created by professional theatre actors and educators – very valuable supports to your classroom explorations of Shakespeare. The following pages include lesson plans that can stand alone or be used to accompany our video series.

In each Module, you will have three or four Units that deepen students' understanding of various aspects of Shakespeare's work or a particular play. Each video is accompanied by several pages of in-class activities for teachers to prepare, as well as Class Handout sheets to reproduce for your students.

No matter which play you are studying, these activities can supplement your regular class work to enliven the text that has become so influential, not only in theatre, but in the common speech of Western society. Enjoy!

– *The team at KDOONS and WYRD Productions*

NOTE: In the following activities and handouts, you may see references to a few terms:

The First Folio: This is the common name for the collection of Shakespeare's plays, entitled 'Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies', published in 1623. This is the text favored by most professional actors, and the scenes used in the activities will come straight from the Folio. Many of the Folio plays, however, are not broken down into scenes, just five long acts. For ease of reference, therefore, we will include the standardized line numbers from modern editions of Shakespeare.

Puke Books: This term was not created by Shakespeare! We recommend each student have a small notepad – or "Puke Book" – in which she can do timed writing. Students are never forced to share this writing. They will be asked to read it over, highlight the phrase that resonates most strongly and, if they choose, share this tidbit with the class. 'Puking' allows students to personalize their experience of Shakespeare by reflecting on themes from the plays. In their Puke Books, they may discover connections between the stories and their own lives. Optional **Puke Topics** are suggested in an inset many of the Units for students' personal reflections.

MacHomer: The videos are performed by Rick Miller, creator of MacHomer (The Simpsons do Macbeth), a solo play that has been performed in 175 cities over 17 years. Prior knowledge of MacHomer is not a pre-requisite to using these videos, but the DVD and/or script are often used as additional teaching tools, and can be purchased as part of the full Outreach bundle at animatedshakespeare.com



Puke Topic

Students are given a topic, usually a reflective question that they are to consider with pen in hand. We suggest 2 - 3 minutes for students who are new to timed writing, 5 - 10 minutes for a class who is comfortable with it. Their pens are to move constantly through the timed writing period, even if just to repeat 'blah blah blah', because this movement is preferable to both the inertia of thinking and the self-critique of editing. The stream of consciousness that is produced may be ugly – like puke – but it comes whether we like it or not. Students are never forced to share this personal writing. When time is up, everyone should read over his/her own words and underline the phrase that resonates most for him/her.



About Macbeth the Play

Video transcript

Macbeth was written by William Shakespeare between 1603 and 1606, and as far as Shakespearean tragedies go, it's actually very simple: a "**Guy murders king, guy becomes king, guy murders best friend, guy murders another friend's family, and the other friend takes guy's head off**" story.

It's one of Shakespeare's **bloodiest** tragedies and it's also his **shortest**. It's only half the length of *Hamlet*, which is one of the reasons why people perform it so often.

Another reason is because this is one of Shakespeare's **great tragedies**. In these stories there's always a hero – sometimes a very good man – who is then doomed by a tragic flaw in his personality, some sort of defect. In the case of Macbeth, the flaw is his vaulting ambition, his lust for power. Now in the story of Macbeth, he's basically a war hero coming home from battle and he encounters these 3 witches who prophesy that he's going to become king. Macbeth becomes tempted by this prophecy. He tells his wife about it and together they conspire to bring the King into their home and kill him – they assassinate him in his sleep. This of course this leads them down a slippery slope towards destruction and chaos, and this being a tragedy, most people die.

Another reason people perform it is because it's very **fast-paced**, there's a lot of action in *Macbeth*.

And **the roles of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are extremely juicy** for actors. Men love playing Macbeth because he struggles with good and evil in the most profound ways, and women love playing Lady Macbeth because she's an interesting character who eggs her husband on, and then is so plagued by guilt that she goes insane.

So for all these reasons, this play written 400 years ago about a man who lived 1000 years ago still fascinates us, even in this time today. We all know that modern dictators sometimes start as good soldiers and they end up as murdering psychopaths because of their **vaulting ambition**.

About Macbeth the Play

Topic Recap and Discussion Starter:

Macbeth:

- Shakespearian tragedy
- Written between 1603- 1606
- One of his bloodiest tragedies
- Tragedy: Hero who is doomed by a tragic flaw or defect
- Plot summary: the old 'guy murders king, guy becomes king, guy murders best friend, guy murders other friend's family, other friend takes guy's head off' story.

Reasons Macbeth is performed so often:

- Shakespeare's shortest play
- A lot of fast paced action
- Juicy roles for actors

Relevance today:

- 400 year-old play about a king who lived 1000 years ago is still relevant.
- Lust for power, and the struggles between good and evil are timeless
- Modern dictators sometimes start off as good soldiers and end up as murdering psychopaths because of Macbeth's tragic flaw: ***vaulting ambition***"





About Macbeth the Play

In-Class Activities: Teacher Sheet

Activity 1: Five Acts in Five Minutes

Objective:

To acquaint students with the storyline of Macbeth by reducing the complexity of the entire play into five major actions.

Introduction:

The following five scenes (roughly ten lines each) are intended to represent the five key actions of the story, according to Rick Miller's plot synopsis of Macbeth: "it's a variation on the old 'guy murders king, guy becomes king, guy murders best friend, guy murders other friend's family, other friend takes guy's head off' story. "

Instructions:

Have students read the scenes aloud (see Class Handout). Narrators can read each introductory paragraph. A single actor should read Macbeth throughout and another will read Macduff. There are parts for ten other actors as well.

From these short excerpts, what do we know about Macbeth? (the play as well as the character.) What questions do you have about the rest of the story?





Activity 2: Bloody Murder

'If it doesn't bleed, it doesn't lead.'

- popular expression in journalism as to what gets headline / page 1 treatment.

Objective:

To help students see the relevance of Shakespeare's tragedy in the light of current events.

Introduction:

Though Macbeth was written 400 years ago about a king who ruled a 1000 years ago, the themes of vaulting ambition and the lust for power still dominate our headlines.



Instructions:

Students will write their own news articles or song lyrics to report or protest the details of Macbeth's crimes. Ask students to locate **news articles** about violent political acts and murders at the hands of modern dictators (warlords in organized crime, ruthless corporate takeovers or brutal shutdowns of peaceful protests.) Reporters, unlike columnists (editorials), are meant to inform readers rather than to persuade them with their opinion. Ask students to notice ways in which the journalists grab our attention.

Songs, on the other hand (and poetry and other creative outlets), are meant to share the writer's point of view. Can you think of any recent **songs** that share an opinion about current events? (For example, K'naan's 'Fatima', Green Day's 'American Idiot', Radiohead's 'Electioneering' or Sarah McLachlan's 'World On Fire'.)

To inspire their search, you may want to play 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' by U2, a song which makes a political statement about noteworthy events. Wikipedia explains that Bloody Sunday was an incident on January 30, 1972, in Northern Ireland, in which 26 unarmed civil-rights protesters and bystanders were shot by soldiers of the British Army. Distribute lyrics of the song so students can analyze the songwriter's poetry.

After this discussion of songwriting and news reporting, ask students to write about one or all of Macbeth's murders:

- King Duncan
- Banquo
- Macduff's family

in either a song OR a news story.

Activity 3: Queen Macbeth ('his Fiend-like Queene')

Objective:

To give students the opportunity to examine the play from a feminist perspective, examining Lady Macbeth's role in the action and considering female monarchs and other leading ladies on the world stage.

Introduction:

In Lady Macbeth's time, a woman's only claim to power came through her husband. By helping Macbeth to murder Duncan, Lady Macbeth became his queen. By Shakespeare's time, known as the Elizabethan Age, England had emerged as a leading world power in commerce and culture under Queen Elizabeth I. Today, the second Queen Elizabeth has been on the throne for 60 years.


Instructions:

Ask students to reflect on what it means to be a heroine or a leading lady on the world stage. Have the class list all the current heads of state who are female (such as Queen Elizabeth II or Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel) and mark them on a map of the world. Debate the question, 'Could the world be a more peaceful place if women ruled more countries?' Take into account each country's socioeconomic challenges, attitudes toward women, etc.)

List all of Lady Macbeth's lines (there are only 59 of them. Macbeth has almost three times as many at 146!) to understand how she feels about various situations and characters in the play. Based on what she says, do you think that she, like her husband, meets her downfall because of her own vaulting ambition? Does she have the same tragic flaw as Macbeth?

Have students also consider what is said *about* Lady Macbeth. For example, in Malcolm's closing speech he says, '...this dead Butcher, and his Fiend-like Queene;/Who (as 'tis thought) by selfe and violent hands/Tooke off her life.' (ACT V, Sc. ix, lines 36-38.)



 **Puke Topic** 

Macbeth has crazy visions before the killing (his bloody dagger in Act II, Sc I) and Lady Macbeth goes mad after the killing (her bloody hands in Act IV, Sc I.)

Think of a time when you have felt crazy with thinking over and over about something you knew you shouldn't do or wish you hadn't done.

As with all Puke Topics, given the sensitive (potentially self-incriminating) nature of this exercise, no one should be forced to share something s/he does not want to.



About Macbeth the Play

Five Acts in Five Minutes

1. Guy Murders King

ACT I, Sc v, lines 54-73

This scene shows Macbeth's reunion with his Lady after return victorious from battle and having sent her a letter about his encounter with the witches. Though Macbeth commits the actual murder (in Act II, Sc iii), it is Lady Macbeth who makes the original suggestion, sets up the scene (drugging the guards) and indeed finishes the job (returning the daggers to the scene and smearing the guards with blood.)

Enter Macbeth.

LADY MACBETH

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant.

MACBETH

My dearest love,
Duncan comes here to-night.

LADY MACBETH

And when goes hence?

MACBETH

To-morrow, as he purposes.

LADY MACBETH

O, never
Shall sun that morrow see!
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower;
But be the serpent under't. He that's coming

Must be provided for: and you shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch;
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

MACBETH

We will speak further.

LADY MACBETH

Only look up clear;
To alter favour ever is to fear:
Leave all the rest to me.

2. Guy Becomes King

ACT II, Sc iv, lines 22-32

In this scene, Ross is getting more information about the King's murder and questions why the King's own guards ('the groomes') would do such a thing. He also finds it unbelievable that the King's own sons would kill him (presumably for the Crown) then leave, Malcolm to England and Donalbaine to Ireland. Next in line to the throne is Macbeth.

ROSS

Is't known who did this more than bloody deed?

MACDUFF

Those that Macbeth hath slaine.

ROSS

Alas the day,
What good could they pretend?

MACDUFF

They were suborned,
Malcolme, and Donalbaine, the Kings two Sonnes



About Macbeth the Play

Five Acts in Five Minutes

Are stolne away and fled, which puts upon them
Suspition of the deed.

ROSS

'Gainst Nature still.
Thriftlesse Ambition, that will raven up
Thine owne lives meanes: Then 'tis most like,
The Sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

MACDUFF

He is already nam'd, and gone to Scone
To be invested.

3. Guy Murders Best Friend

ACT III, Sc iii, lines 14-22

At the beginning of Act Three, Banquo suspects Macbeth of murdering Duncan, saying that Macbeth has 'play'd most fowly' for the titles that the witches promised. Macbeth knows that Banquo heard these same words and decides to have him killed. He leads the murderers to believe that Banquo has done them wrong and finds out when Banquo will be out horse-riding with Fleance. The murderers wait for them after dark, knowing that people habitually walk the last mile back to the castle.

Enter Banquo and Fleance, with a torch

2nd MURDERER

A light, a light!

3rd MURDERER

'Tis he.

1st MURDERER

Stand to't.

BANQUO

It will be rain to-night.

1st MURDERER

Let it come down.

They set upon Banquo

BANQUO

Treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!
Thou mayst revenge. O slave!
Dies. Fleance escapes

3rd MURDERER

Who did strike out the light?

1st MURDERER

Wast not the way?

3rd MURDERER

There's but one down; the son is fled.

2nd MURDERER

We have lost Best half of our affair.

1st MURDERER

Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

Exeunt

4. Guy Murders Other Friend's Family

ACT IV, Sc ii, lines 79-85

Before this scene, Macbeth visits the witches again and the first of their apparitions tells him, 'Beware Macduffe.' Macbeth is past considering his violent acts and as soon as he decides to attack Macduff's castle, he speaks to the men



About Macbeth the Play

Five Acts in Five Minutes

who will do it for him. Before the murderers arrive, Ross tells Lady Macduff that her husband has gone to England (as a soldier, his first duty is to protect his country from an unjust ruler.) A messenger warns her to leave with her little ones but then, only moments later, the following exchange occurs:

LADY MACDUFF

What are these faces?

1st MURDERER

Where is your husband?

LADY MACDUFF

I hope, in no place so unsanctified
Where such as thou mayst find him.

1st MURDERER

He's a traitor.

SON

Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain!

1st MURDERER

What, you egg! *Stabbing him* Young fry of treachery!

SON

He has kill'd me, mother: Run away, I pray you! *Dies*

Exit LADY MACDUFF, crying 'Murder!' Exeunt Murderers, following her

5. Other Friend Takes Guy's Head Off

ACT V, Sc viii, lines 27-34 and 54-59

When Macbeth and Macduff finally face off, Macbeth's defenses are crumbling because the witches' prophecies

- which seemed impossible - are now coming true. The English force has disguised themselves with branches as they advance so now 'a Wood/Comes toward Dunsinane.' Macduff was 'from his Mothers womb/Untimely ript' (meaning an early, and fatal, C-section) so he is not exactly 'born of woman.'

MACBETH

I will not yeeld

To kisse the ground before young Malcomes feet,
And to be baited with the Rabbles curse.

Though Byrname wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou oppos'd, being of no woman borne,

Yet I will try the last. Before my body,

I throw my warlike Shield: Lay on Macduffe,

And damn'd be him, that first cries hold, enough.

Exeunt fighting.

Later...(with Macbeth's head)

MACDUFF

Haile King, for so thou art.

Behold where stands

Th'usurpers cursed head: the time is free:

I see the compast with thy Kingdomes Pearle,

That speake my salutation in their minds:

Whose voices I desire allowed with mine.

Haile King of Scotland.

From these short excerpts, what do we know about Macbeth? (the play as well as the character.) What questions do you have about the rest of the story?