



Macbeth

The Atlanta Shakespeare Company

Letter from the Artistic Director



Miranda Wilson and Stephen Brown in *R&J: 60*.
Photo Credit: Daniel Parvis Photography

At ASC, we believe that Shakespeare's stories never cease to be compelling. And I think you'll agree with me when you see Shakespeare's words brought to life on our Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse stage by our talented ASC actors.

It is so important for you to see Shakespeare live. Seeing it on the page just doesn't compare to seeing passionate actors up there on stage wielding Shakespeare's poetry as if their lives depended on it. It's exciting; it's fabulous; it brings the magic to life and really drives home how Shakespeare is important and why you study it three times before your high school graduation.

I hope you enjoy *Macbeth*.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Watkins
Artistic Director



The Atlanta Shakespeare Company has performed on the Globe stage in London (top), at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse in Atlanta (middle), and at schools across Georgia (bottom).

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare (1564-1616) wrote thirty-seven plays, which have become staples of classrooms and theatres across the world.

The son of a glove-maker, Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he received a strong education in Latin and rhetoric at the local school. He married Anne Hathaway in 1582, and they had three children: Susanna, Hamnet, and Judith.

By 1592, Shakespeare had journeyed to London, where he became an extremely successful playwright and actor in the Lord Chamberlain's Men. He profited from being a shareholder in the Globe after its construction in 1599.

Shakespeare's plays were popular with all types of people, including the two monarchs who ruled England during his lifetime: Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and James I (1566-1625).

Shakespeare found both artistic and commercial success through his writing. He amassed a sizable fortune, acquired valuable real estate in Stratford, and purchased a coat of arms, which gave him and his father the right to be called gentlemen. Shakespeare was well-known in England at the time of his death in 1616, and his fame only increased following the publication of his plays in the First Folio in 1623.

1616 is the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death, and celebrations honoring Shakespeare's contribution to literature will take place around the world.

“He was not of an age, but for all time.”
- Ben Jonson on Shakespeare

Understanding the Elizabethan Era

"I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too..."

- Queen Elizabeth I to troops at Tilbury facing the Spanish Armada in 1588

The Elizabethan era refers to the period of time in which Queen Elizabeth I ruled England from 1558–1603. The Elizabethan era is often referred to as the Golden Age of England. Elizabeth's reign saw a substantial decrease in the political and religious turmoil that defined the decade before she assumed the throne. Under her rule, England asserted its power, famously triumphing over the invading Spanish armada in 1588. While Elizabethans did endure plague and some unrest, conditions of the era were reasonably favorable.

Playwriting flourished under Elizabeth's reign; Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare found great success during this time. Theatre during the Elizabethan era was a touchy subject; theatres themselves were not allowed to exist within the city limits and moralists decried the frivolity of theatrical outings. However, Queen Elizabeth enjoyed theatrical performances when the actors came to her court. Moreover, she actively involved herself in theatre of the age by forming and serving as the patron of The Queen's Men in 1583. Elizabeth I died in 1603 and was succeeded by her Scottish nephew, James I.



ELIZABETHAN LONDON WAS...

HIERARCHICAL

A sense of hierarchy dominated the Elizabethan worldview. Elizabethans believed in the Great Chain of Being, in which God and the angels were superior to humans, who in turn were superior to animals and the natural world. On earth, the English monarch was superior to all his or her subjects, and nobles were superior to people of lesser socioeconomic stations. Everything from the clothing that people wore to where they sat in a playhouse—if they attended public theatres at all—showed their status.

PATRIARCHAL

Despite having a female queen, the world was very patriarchal, with men controlling many if not all of the actions of their female relatives.

CROWDED AND DIRTY

200,000 people lived in London when Elizabeth took the throne. Without modern conveniences, the city was overflowing in certain places and ripe with the smell of people and animals.



The Jacobean Era

In 1603 Elizabeth I died and James I became King of England and Scotland, succeeding Elizabeth in a smooth transition that assuaged the fears of citizens who were deeply concerned what would happen when the childless Queen died. James ruled until 1625 in an era that scholars dub the Jacobean era.

King James sought to bring about European peace, ending the war with Spain in 1604. He faced some troubles at home; in 1605 the Gunpowder Plot, in which Guy Fawkes planned to blow up the King and Parliament, was foiled. James quarreled with Parliament throughout his reign. He is well known for overseeing the creation of the King James Bible, which is still used today.

It was under James I that Shakespeare completed his career and his legacy was established. James gave his patronage to Shakespeare's company, who under James became the King's Men. The King's Men enjoyed great popularity at court; they had been giving about three court performances a year in the last ten years of Elizabeth's reign and they gave thirteen a year in the first ten years of James' rule. The King's Men were also very popular with regular theatre-goers, and Shakespeare responded to audience demand for new plays with a slew of new works. On June 29, 1613, the Globe burned down in just an hour after the roof caught fire after a canon was fired during a performance of Henry VIII. While this was decidedly not good for the King's Men, it was not an outright tragedy because they had another source of income: an indoor theatre called Blackfriars. The Globe was rebuilt in 1614, and the King's Men continued to perform at both the Globe and Blackfriars.

By 1613 Shakespeare was starting to spend more time in Stratford and in late April of 1616 he died and was buried in Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. His loss was felt in the theatrical and literary communities and by people of all classes who had seen his plays.

Playing Shakespeare Through the Ages



The Globe, built in 1599 on the south side of the Thames, was an open-air theatre where many of Shakespeare's plays were performed. The Globe likely was able to hold up to 3,000 tightly-packed audience members. Poorer spectators paid a penny to stand during the performance while richer theatre-goers paid two pennies for a seat and another penny for a cushion. Audience members, especially those standing in front of the stage, were loud and opinionated, often talking to each other or even voicing their thoughts on the play to the actors onstage. Performances took place at 2:00 or 3:00 p.m. to take advantage of the day light, but the time of day meant that many people skipped work to attend the plays, which contributed to conservative politicians' dislike of theatre. While the original Globe does not exist today, a reconstruction, seen in the picture to the left, was built in 1997 in Southwark, London.



The Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, built in 1990 on Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia, features a stage with similar features to the Globe's stage. ASC strives to create productions that are also very similar to the ones that Shakespeare's audience would have seen. All ASC productions incorporate Original Practices, which involve the active exploration of the Elizabethan stagecraft and acting techniques that Shakespeare's own audiences would have enjoyed nearly four hundred years ago. Performances at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse feature period costumes, sword fights, sound effects created live by the actors rather than pre-recorded sounds, and live music played on the stage. ASC's actors are trained to speak Shakespeare's words directly to the audience instead of using the more modern acting convention of ignoring the audience's presence as if there was an imaginary "fourth wall" separating the actors and audience. Audience members at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse should gain a better understanding of Elizabethan style, language, and drama by seeing plays performed as Shakespeare's own company might have performed them.



The ASC touring set, is a playhouse-inspired unit with three curtained entrances from which actors can enter and exit. Like a production at the Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, all touring productions employ Original Practices. However, the connection between ASC's productions and the performances Shakespeare's contemporaries would have seen is not limited to period-inspired costumes and direct address to the audience. The act of taking a performance on tour echoes the Elizabethan practice of actors touring the countryside when outbreaks of the bubonic plague forced theatres, which fostered the spread of disease by enclosing many people in a small area, to close. Elizabethan theatre companies often brought a condensed set, props, and costumes to perform at country estates for noble families or at inns for the common people when the London theatres were closed. ASC strives to carry on this Elizabethan tradition of bringing live theatre to people outside the city.

Language in *Macbeth*

Vocabulary for Talking about Shakespeare's Language

Verse vs. Prose

Verse: "A succession of metrical feet...composed as one line" (Steine 1462). The following lines from *Hamlet* are written in verse (Dunton-Downer 44):

"To be, or not to be--that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer..." (3.1.58-59)

Blank Verse: "Metrical lines that do not rhyme" (Dunton-Downer 44), as in Iago's soliloquy in *Othello* (Dunton-Downer 44):

"And what's he then that says I play the villain,
When this advice is free I give, and honest,
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
To win the Moor again?" (2.3..310-313)

Prose: "Spoken or written language without metrical structure, as distinguished from poetry or verse" (Steine 1062). Here is an example of prose from *Henry IV, Part 2* (Dunton-Downer 44):

"I have a whole school of tongues in this belly
of mine, and not a tongue of them all speaks any other
word but my name" (4.2.17-19)

How can you quickly tell the difference between
verse and prose?

Verse is always written with line breaks, and the first
word of each new line is capitalized while in prose
each sentence leads into the next and looks like this
sentence on the page.

Iambic Pentameter

Iambic Pentameter: "A common meter in poetry
consisting of an unrhymed line with five feet or accents,
each foot containing an unaccented syllable and an
accented syllable" ("iambic pentameter"). The rhythm
of iambic pentameter is often compared to a heartbeat.

Look at this example from *Romeo and Juliet* (2.1.44)

But, soft! What light from yonder window breaks?

You can scan, or mark the beats of iambic pentameter.
You can use this symbol — for unaccented syllables and
this symbol / for accented syllables like this:

— / — / — / — / — /

But, soft! What light from yonder window breaks?

Understanding Shakespeare's Language

For many people, part of what makes reading and seeing Shakespeare so daunting is how different Shakespeare's language seems from our modern-day English. But, there are ways to make understanding Shakespeare's words easier.

First, remember that "thee" and "thou" are variations on the word "you," although in Elizabethan times "you" was the most formal of the three expressions. When one of the witches greets Macbeth, she says, "All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!" (1.1.46). Replace "thee" with "you," and you will realize she is saying "hail to you, thane of Glamis," which is Macbeth's title.

Second, it is very helpful to get an edition of the play like the Folger Shakespeare Library's editions of every Shakespeare play in which words that might not make sense to modern readers are defined. ASC is part of the Folger Shakespeare Library's Theater Partnership. Visit www.folger.edu for background information on Shakespeare's life and all his plays and poems.

Shakespeare's Words in *Macbeth*

Listen for these words when you are watching *Macbeth*:

Second Witch: "When the **hurly-burly's** done
When the battle's lost and won" (1.1.3-4)
"Hurly-burly" means a "commotion, uproar" (Crystal).

First Witch: "A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,
And munched and munched and munched. 'Give me,' **quoth** I" (1.3.4-5).
"Quoth" means "said" (Crystal).

Lady Macbeth: "...Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o'the milk of **human-kindness**..." (1.5.14-15)
"Human-kindness" means "natural feelings, human qualities" (Crystal).

Lady Macbeth: "But screw your courage to the **sticking place**" (1.7.60)
"Sticking place" means the "place on a device at which something is held fast (such as a stringed instrument or crossbow)" (Crystal).

Macbeth: "No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas **incarnadine**
Making the green one red" (2.2.61-63).
"Incarnadine" means "redden, turn blood red" (Crystal).

Porter: "**Anon**, anon! I pray you remember the porter" (2.3.19).
"Anon" means "soon, shortly, presently" (Crystal).

Macbeth: "...tell me, if your art
Can tell so much, shall Banquo's **issue** ever
Reign in this kingdom?" (5.1.100-102).
"Issue" means "offspring, family, descendants" (Crystal).

Background on *Macbeth*

The Influence of King James I on *Macbeth*

Scholars believe that Shakespeare paid attention to King James I's pride over his lineage, his fears over assassination, and his interest in witchcraft while he was writing *Macbeth*. James traced his heritage to Banquo, and scholars suggest that Shakespeare emphasized Banquo's virtue as a compliment to the king, who saw *Macbeth* at his court. The play's focus on assassinating a king deals with one of King James' main fears; both his parents were killed, and he feared he would face a similar fate. The idea of regicide, or the act of killing a monarch, was incredibly topical in 1606, just one year after Guy Fawkes was thwarted in his plan to blow up King James and all of parliament. The fact that *Macbeth* ends with the character of Malcolm becoming king is a reassuring ending because it shows good triumphing over evil. The prevalence of witches in *Macbeth* also reflects James' interest in witchcraft, a topic which will be discussed later in this study guide.

“*Macbeth* is steeped in the preoccupations of the new king: the rights of royal succession, the relationship between England and Scotland, the reality of witchcraft, the sacred powers of the monarch...” (Bate 6).

Original Performance and Publication

Shakespeare likely wrote *Macbeth* in 1606, and it was published in the 1623 *First Folio*.

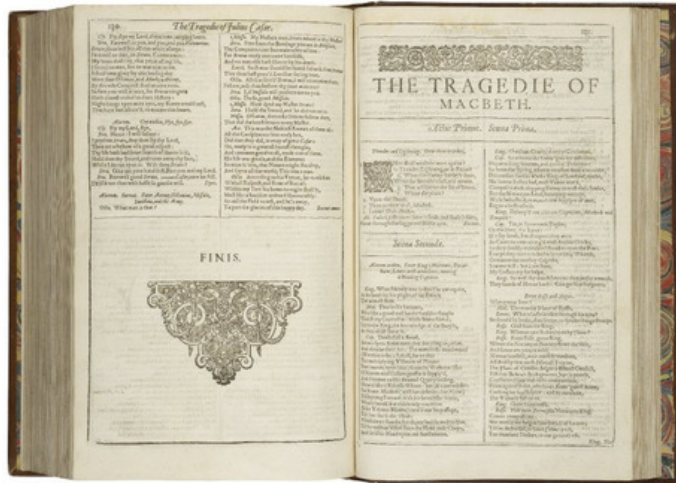


Photo Credit: Folger Shakespeare Library

Shakespeare's Sources

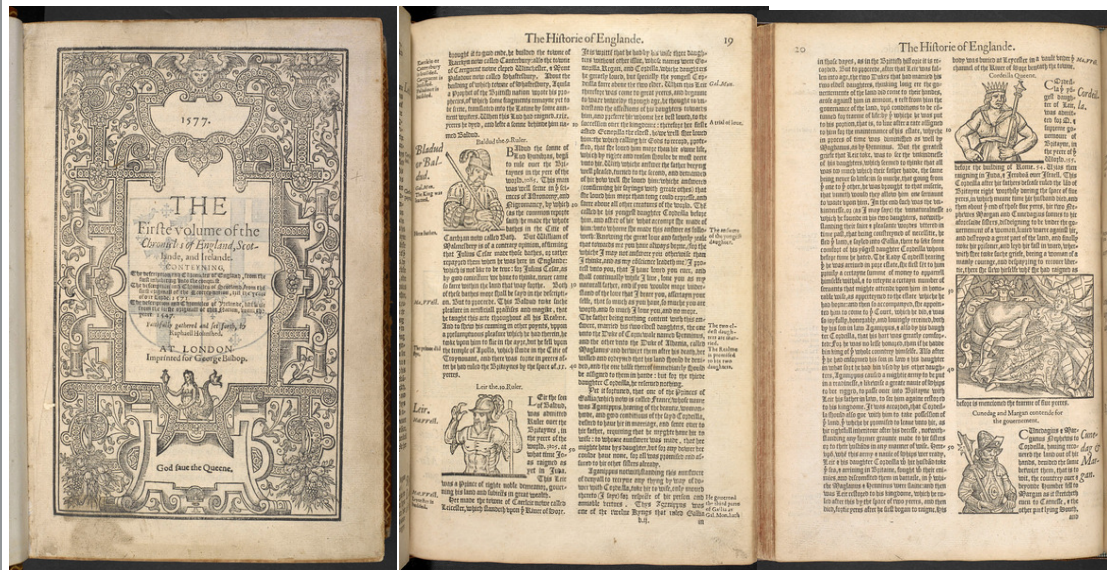


Photo Credit: British Library

Shakespeare was without a doubt a brilliant writer, but much of his creativity and talent manifests itself in the language he composed for his characters, not in the originality of his stories. The Elizabethan concept of originality differed greatly from our modern-day perception of the term. Borrowing heavily from a previous text and adapting features of the original story--an act which today would garner accusations of plagiarism--was a very common practice for Elizabethan playwrights. In keeping with this tradition, Shakespeare took much of the plot of *Macbeth* from Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, pictured above. However, Shakespeare made some key changes to Holinshed's story. Whereas in Holinshed's version Macbeth kills Duncan, who is a young and inefficient ruler, and rules for ten years, Shakespeare's Macbeth kills the good ruler Duncan, does not rule for very long himself, and is soon replaced by the virtuous descendants of Banquo. Shakespeare's decision to change the story was likely informed by his desire to flatter King James I, who traced his lineage to Banquo. It is important to know that Shakespeare adapted many of his plots from other sources, but it is also vital to recognize Shakespeare's extraordinary skills in composition, so pay attention to the plot changes and imagery that make Shakespeare's version of Macbeth's story so unique.

CHARACTERS IN *MACBETH*



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

King Duncan: A good and virtuous ruler of Scotland, King Duncan stays as a guest in Macbeth's castle, where Macbeth murders him.

Malcolm: King Duncan's eldest son, Malcolm fight against Macbeth and becomes King of Scotland at the end of the play.

Donalbain: Donalbain is King Duncan's youngest son.

Macbeth: Macbeth is the Thane of Glamis, who is given the title Thane of Cawdor by King Duncan. After the witches tell him that he will become King, Macbeth kills Duncan. Macbeth becomes King of Scotland, but he embarks on a brutal string of murders to maintain his power.

A porter: The doorman of Macbeth's castle, he is intoxicated when he opens the door for Macbeth's guests.

Three Murderers: Macbeth hires these murderers to kill Banquo, Fleance, Lady Macduff, and Macduff's son.

Seyton: Macbeth's servant, he brings news to Macbeth that Lady Macbeth committed suicide.

Lady Macbeth: Macbeth's wife, Lady Macbeth is initially so driven by ambition that she convinces her husband to kill Duncan, but she later commits suicide out of guilt for her involvement in the murder.

A Doctor of Physic: The doctor observes Lady Macbeth's strange behavior before she kills herself.

Banquo: Banquo is a noble Scottish soldier, who is told by the three witches that his children will become Kings of Scotland. Macbeth has Banquo murdered, and Banquo's ghost returns to haunt Macbeth.

Fleance: Banquo's son, Fleance escapes the murderers' attempt to kill him. Fleance is alive at the end of the play, which puts him in the position of one day fulfilling the witches' prophecy that Banquo's offspring will eventually rule Scotland.

Macduff: A virtuous Scottish nobleman, Macduff leads forces in the fight against Macbeth, seeking retribution for Macbeth's murder of his wife and child. Macduff was not born naturally but was delivered from his mother's womb via what we would call caesarean section. When he kills Macbeth, he fulfills the prophecy that "none of woman born/ Shall harm Macbeth" (4.1.96-97).

Lady Macduff: Macduff's wife, she is killed by the murderers Macduff sends to her home.

Macduff's Son: Macduff's heir, he is also killed by the murderers.

Lennox: A nobleman, Lennox fights against Macbeth.

Ross: A nobleman, Ross initially supports Macbeth but then changes sides and fights in the army against Macbeth.

Angus: A nobleman, Angus eventually fights in Malcolm's army against Macbeth.

Caithness: Caithness fights with Malcolm and Macduff against Macbeth.

Menteith: Menteith fights against Macbeth.

Siward: The Earl of Northumberland, he brings 10,000 men to support Malcolm in the fight against Macbeth.

Young Siward: The Earl of Northumberland's son, he is killed by Macbeth in battle.

Hecate: Hecate is Queen of the Witches.

Witches: The witches appear throughout the play and give prophecies regarding Macbeth's rise and fall from power.

Plot of *Macbeth*



Photo Credit: Jeff Watkins

Three witches appear on a heath in Scotland while a battle rages. King Duncan of Scotland hears from a bloody captain how Macbeth and Banquo have defeated the traitorous Thane of Cawdor, Macdonwald. Duncan resolves to bestow Cawdor's Thaneship on the brave Macbeth.

Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches as they return from the battle. The witches hail Macbeth as Thane of Glamis, and prophesize that he will become Thane of Cawdor and then King. The witches tell Banquo that one of his descendants will become King. The witches vanish into thin air, and Ross appears to greet Macbeth with the new title Thane of Cawdor. All three travel on to meet with King Duncan.

King Duncan, overjoyed at the great victory, rewards Macbeth and Banquo. The King also names his oldest son, Malcolm, as his heir. He invites himself to Macbeth's castle to feast and visit after the victory. Macbeth promises to travel ahead of the King to tell his wife of their arrival.

At Macbeth's castle, Lady Macbeth awaits her husband's arrival. She reads a letter that Macbeth sent her, and talks to herself about how she wants Macbeth to become King but that she knows Macbeth will be hesitant to take any immoral action to become Scotland's ruler. She draws on her own ambitious and cruel inclinations and says she is determined to help Macbeth achieve what the witches promised him.

King Duncan arrives at the Castle and is warmly welcomed by the Macbeths.

Lady Macbeth encourages Macbeth to kill the King and when Macbeth expresses his concerns, she uses all her wiles to convince him that killing Duncan is the only way to get the power they both crave. Even though Macbeth should protect the King because he is a monarch and a guest, Macbeth kills Duncan and frames his

guards for the crime. The next morning, Macduff, the Thane of Fife, arrives, and everyone in the castle discovers the grisly murder. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth pretend to be horrified, and they initially manage to conceal their guilt. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, immediately resolve to travel to England and Ireland, respectively, to escape certain murder themselves.

Macbeth is soon crowned King of Scotland. Banquo muses on the witches' prophecy that his heirs will rule Scotland instead of any children Macbeth may have. Macbeth also ponders the witches' prophecy, and he contracts murderers to kill Banquo and Banquo's son, Fleance. The murderers succeed in killing Banquo but are unable to murder Fleance.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, now King and Queen, dine with the nobleman to celebrate their coronation. Macbeth learns of Banquo's murder, and he is horrified when his dead friend's ghost appears to him at the feast, making Macbeth appear disconcerted in front of his guests. Lady Macbeth covers up his bizarre behavior, and everyone retires for the night. Outside in the stormy night, Hecate chastises the witches for interacting with Macbeth without consulting her, and she promises to use her stronger magic to show Macbeth his destiny the next day. Elsewhere in Scotland, Lennox and another nobleman accuse Macbeth of being a tyrant and a murderer, blaming him for the deaths of Duncan and Banquo. The noblemen express hope that Malcolm's appeal to the English king for aid in the impending fight against Macbeth will be granted.

Macbeth meets the witches once more, and they conjure apparitions who tell Macbeth that he should fear Macduff, and that Macbeth will not be killed by any man born of woman.

Plot of *Macbeth*



Photo Credits: Jeff Watkins

The witches also tell Macbeth that he will be safe until Birnam Wood travels to Dunsinane Hill, the location of the King's palace that Macbeth and his wife now inhabit. The witches disappear, and Lennox enters with news of Macduff's escape to England. Macbeth contracts murders to slaughter Macduff's wife and children, who are killed in their home.

Malcolm and Macduff are in England bemoaning the sad state of tyranny in Scotland. Malcolm tests Macduff's honesty and loyalty, and Macduff shows his virtuous character. Ross enters and reluctantly tells Macduff of his family's slaughter. Macduff, full of pain and grief, vows to confront Macbeth upon his return to Scotland.

Back at the palace, Lady Macbeth has been sleepwalking, and a gentlewoman has called a doctor to observe her strange behavior, specifically her constant hand washing. Lady Macbeth's behavior is driven by her guilt in participating in the murder of Duncan.

Macbeth has lost all fear and perhaps all reason, judging that the witches' prophecies will hold true, and no one can harm him. He begins to rant and violently oppose all who try to cross him.

Malcolm, meanwhile, has returned to Scotland with Macduff, Siward and 10,000 men, to oust Macbeth from his throne. Malcolm has his men cut down branches in Birnam Wood, to disguise the true numbers of his force, and they begin a march to Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane.

Lady Macbeth kills herself, and Macbeth prepares for battle when a messenger enters and reports that Birnam Wood is indeed coming to Dunsinane Hill. Malcolm's army gradually overwhelms Macbeth's forces. Macduff comes upon Macbeth, and the final fight begins. Macduff kills Macbeth and brings his head, aloft on a pike, to Malcolm. The witches were correct; Macbeth is the only soldier able to kill Macbeth because he was born via c-section instead of born naturally. Malcolm proclaims his right to the throne and invites his new-created earls, the first that Scotland has ever seen, to Scone to see him crowned King of Scotland.



The Witches in *Macbeth*

The Weird Sisters

The three witches call themselves "the weird sisters" (1.3.30), which is a moniker that Shakespeare likely got from the source of *Macbeth*, Holinshed's *Chronicle of Scotland*, in which the witches are described as "'weird sisters,' 'fairies' and 'women in strange and wild apparel'" (Bate 7). In the *First Folio*, "weird" is spelled as "weyward," which comes from the Old English word "wyrd," which means "fate" (Greenblatt 848). The connection between the witches and fate is clear in Shakespeare's play because the role of the witches within the story is to provide prophecies regarding the fates of various characters.



Witches in Jacobean England

People in Shakespeare's time debated whether or not witches existed. King James I was very interested in the subject and wrote a book called *Of Demonology*, in which he asserted that witches did indeed exist. He said that "'witches were women, women with unnaturally masculine features such as facial hair, that they were in league with the devil...that their most dangerous work consisted of conjuring up images of people and cursing them'" (Bate 7). James I thought that witches actually sought to harm him at various times throughout his life. In his book, he said that all witches should be punished, declaring that they "'ought to be put to death according to the Law of God, the civil and imperial law, and municipal law of all Christian nations'" (Calhoun 185).



Macbeth is at times thrilled and terrified by the witches because he believes that their prophecies could be true. For many people watching Shakespeare's play when it premiered in the early seventeenth century, the witches would also have been terrifying and much more real than they appear to modern audiences. Think about how differently you would react to seeing the scenes with the witches performed on stage if you believed that the witches' words had power and were true.



G.J. Bennett, Drinkwater Meadows, W.H. Payne as the witches in an 1838 production of *Macbeth*. Photo Credit: Folger Shakespeare Library



Analyzing Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

In the early part of the play, watch how forcefully Lady Macbeth manipulates and cajoles her husband into murdering Duncan. Lady Macbeth is a formidable character, and her ambition and cruelty would have made her appear unwomanly to Jacobean audiences, who expected women to be meek, virtuous, and obedient. One scholar explains how “the witches and Lady Macbeth represent the perversion of early modern notions of natural womanhood and good housewifery” (94). The idea that Lady Macbeth is an unnatural woman is only amplified in her depiction how she would have “dashed the brains out” (1.7.58) of her child if she had sworn to do so, just as Macbeth swore to kill Duncan. What do you think is motivating Lady Macbeth throughout the play? Macbeth seems like he is ambitious, as his wife claims he is, but do you think he would have murdered Duncan without his wife’s encouragement?

As you watch *Macbeth*, focus on how Macbeth transitions from expressing doubts about the morality of murder to repeatedly embracing murder as a tool to gain more power, while Lady Macbeth transitions from encouraging her husband to commit murder to being consumed with guilt and grief for her involvement in the regicide of Duncan.

Listen for Macbeth's reasoning that he should not kill Duncan because “[h]e's here in double trust” (1.7.12) as a kinsman and a ruler and then pay attention to how Macbeth tells the murderers not just to murder Banquo and Fleance but to do it carefully, saying “leave no rubs nor botches in the work” (3.1.135).

Listen for how eagerly Lady Macbeth speaks of “gild[ing] the faces” (2.2.53) of the guards framed for the murder but later is obsessed with the blood that she believes she cannot wash from her hand: “Here's the smell of blood still” (5.1.42).

“Macbeth and Lady Macbeth act on ambition, restless desire, and a will to power normally kept in check by the pragmatic, ethical, and religious considerations to which the wavering Macbeth initially gives voice. Lady Macbeth in effect works to liberate that will to power in her husband...so that he can act with a ruthless blend of murderous violence and cunning. In her radically disenchanting, coolly skeptical view, the murder of the King can be undertaken without fear of guilty conscience, vengeful ghosts, or divine judgment” (Greenblatt 838).



Macbeth: Did You Know?

→ *Macbeth* in *Hamilton*

Lin-Manuel Miranda referred to *Macbeth* in *Hamilton* in "Take a Break," writing "My dearest Angelica, 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow/Creeps in this petty pace from day to day./I trust you'll understand the reference to another Scottish tragedy/Without my having to name the play./They think me Macbeth, ambition is my folly...Madison is Banquo, Jefferson's Macduff/And Birnam Wood is Congress on its way to Dunsinane" (Miranda 168).

Miranda is referring to Macbeth's famous speech in Act Five, Scene Five, just five scenes before Macbeth is killed by Macduff.

→ Performance Trends

Many actresses who play Lady Macbeth mime washing their hands during the sleepwalking scene to illustrate Lady Macbeth's guilt over shedding Duncan's blood. Sarah Bernhardt (below), an actress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, helped popularize this gesture.



Photo Credit: Folger Shakespeare Library

→ Superstitions

Many theatre professionals refuse to say the name "Macbeth" in a theatre unless they are performing in a show because saying the name is reportedly bad luck.

Discussing *Macbeth*

Before the play, think about...

Are Macbeth and Lady Macbeth happily married? Do they love each other? Can you find lines of text that indicate what their relationship may be like? How could you play the text to make them either happily or unhappily married? Does their relationship change during the course of the play?

During the play, listen for...

Duncan in the beginning of the play honors Macbeth, and yet Macbeth immediately feels threatened by Malcolm being named his father's heir. Listen and watch for Macbeth's reaction.

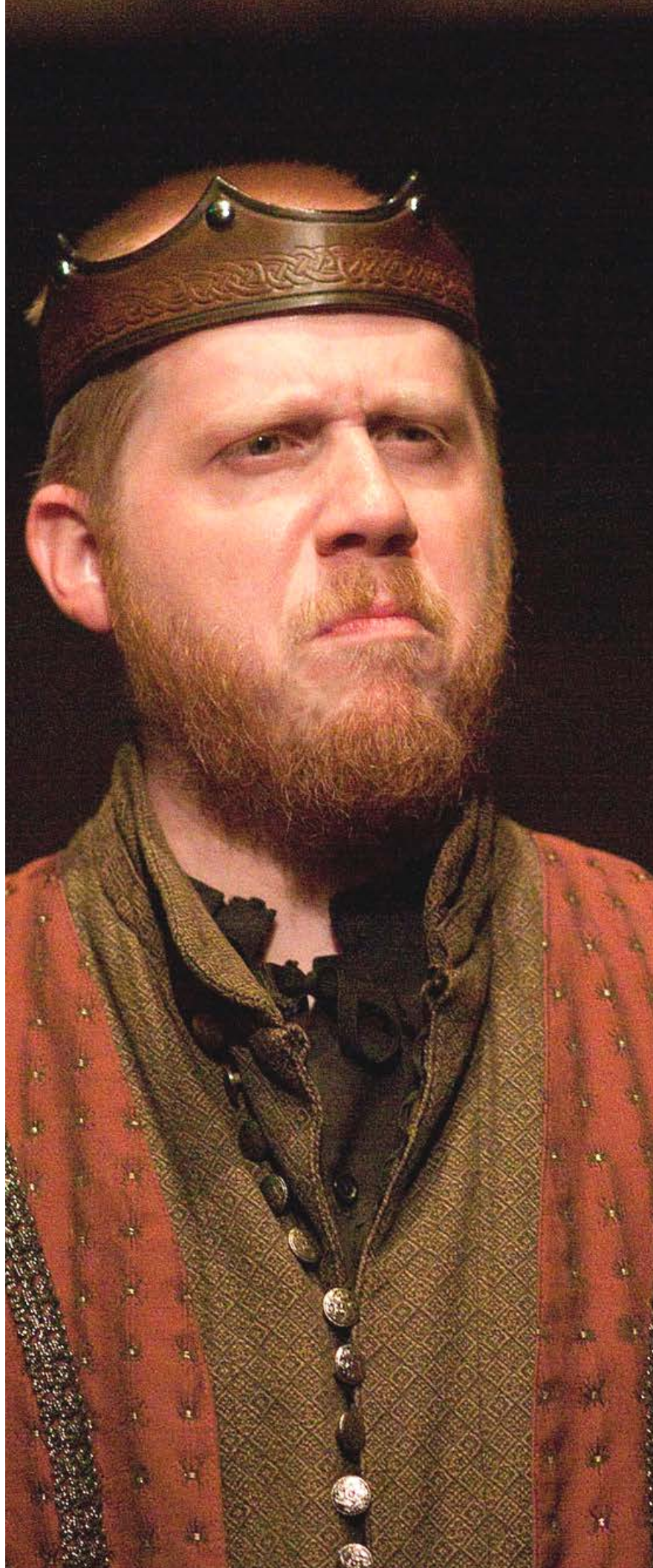
Lady Macbeth drugs the drinks of the grooms and lays daggers ready for Macbeth to use against Duncan. Listen and watch for her lines about what Duncan looked like as he slept.

Macduff is disappointed when Malcolm reveals his inner thoughts in England because those thoughts seem truly awful. Listen and watch for Malcolm's list of apparent sins.

After the play, talk about...

How does violence play a role in *Macbeth*? How do the fights and bloodshed add to the telling of the story? Do you understand more of what happens on stage? How does stage violence compare to TV or movie violence? How does it compare to real life violence?

Does directly addressing the audience affect what you think and feel about the characters? Does it affect your understanding of what is going on onstage? Does it interfere? Why do you think Shakespeare wrote his plays this way? What are the benefits to the actor and/or audience? What are the risks?



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