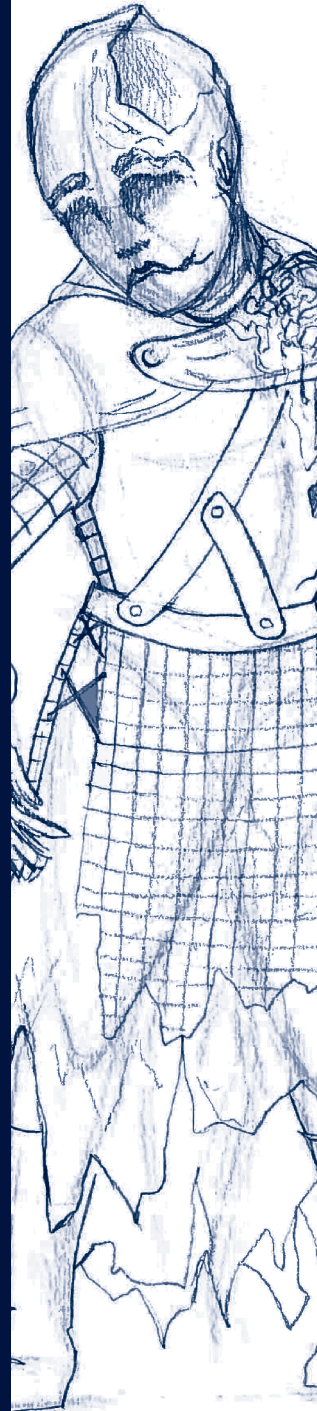


# macbeth

chicago  
shakespeare theater  
on navy pier



# Teacher Handbook

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## Acknowledgments

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**Barbara Gaines** Artistic Director  
**Criss Henderson** Executive Director

Chicago Shakespeare Theater is Chicago's professional theater dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. Founded as Shakespeare Repertory in 1986, the company moved to its seven-story home on Navy Pier in 1999. In its Elizabethan-style courtyard theater, 500 seats on three levels wrap around a deep thrust stage—with only nine rows separating the farthest seat from the stage. Chicago Shakespeare also features a flexible 180-seat black box studio theater, a Teacher Resource Center, and a Shakespeare specialty bookstall.

Now in its twenty-eighth season, the Theater has produced nearly the entire Shakespeare canon: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Henry VIII*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *Pericles*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *The Winter's Tale*. Chicago Shakespeare Theater was the 2008 recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award. Chicago's Jeff Awards year after year have honored the Theater, including repeated awards for Best Production and Best Director, the two highest honors in Chicago theater.

Since Chicago Shakespeare's founding, its programming for young audiences has been an essential element in the realization of its mission. Team Shakespeare supports education in our schools, where Shakespeare is part of every required curriculum. As a theater within a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to a young and diverse audience of 40,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare's programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of main stage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year of one of the "curriculum plays." Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools. In 2012, the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, honored that vision with the prestigious Shakespeare Steward Award. The 2014-15 Season offers a student matinee series for three of Chicago Shakespeare Theater's full-length productions: in the fall semester, Shakespeare's *King Lear* and an adaptation of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* by Impempe Yomlingo, performed by South Africa's Isango Ensemble; and in the spring, Shakespeare's *Pericles*. Also this spring, a 75-minute abridged version of *Macbeth* will be performed at the Theater on Navy Pier and will tour to schools and theaters across the region. We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare's creative genius brought to life on stage.

**Marilyn J. Halperin** Director of Education  
**Jason Harrington** Education Outreach Manager  
**Molly Topper** Learning Programs Manager

A person wearing a dark leather vest and arm guards is holding a sword. The scene is lit with a strong blue light, creating a dramatic and intense atmosphere. The person's hands are positioned to grip the hilt of the sword, which is held vertically.

**It will have blood, they say.  
Blood will have blood.**

**M**acbeth is a gripping eleventh-century power play—and murder mystery. *Macbeth's* world is the world of nightmare. Where men's thoughts and acts are simultaneous. Where reality and unreality shift places. Where fair is foul and foul is fair. Fear and paranoia permeate this world—and the people who live in it. It is the story of a man who comes to isolate himself from his humanity. We watch as a human being wrestles with his conscience, and chooses a tragic path of bloodshed.

Decorative horizontal bands of white arrows pointing right, one above and one below the title.

# macbeth

written by  
**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**  
adapted and directed by  
**KIRSTEN KELLY**



## Art That Lives

**D**rama is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and experience it together. This tradition of performance and observation, of drama as *communication*, is an historically rich and complex

one that reaches far back in time. Textual evidence from Egypt and Mesopotamia—even art like cave paintings depicting men disguised as animals—reveals that since ancient times, impersonation and imitation have been used not only ritualistically but also as a means of expression and communication, a way to impart the knowledge of the community.

The beginnings of Western drama further developed in the religious ritual and festivals of the ancient Greeks, while their theater also took on new emphasis as a sophisticated mode of storytelling, especially as a way of communicating the history of a culture and imagining new heroic tales. The drama of Europe's Middle Ages was closely tied to forms of religious observance, but the medievals also used theater to teach biblical stories, present the lives of saints, and creatively communicate the moral ideals of the community. It is this long and varied tradition of community engagement and communication through drama that Shakespeare and the Renaissance playwrights inherited—and from which they would both borrow and imagine new possibilities.

Drama not only depicts human communication, it *is* human communication. But in the theater, unlike television or film, a two-way communication occurs between the actors and their audience. When you experience theatrical storytelling, you are not simply on the receiving end of this communicative process: the audience, as a community, is also a participant. We are quite used to thinking about the actors' roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing an important role in this living art. Because theater is art that lives, each performance is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience's response.

A live performance depends upon its audience. In the theater, the audience hears and sees the actors, just as the actors hear and see the audience. When the actors experience a responsive, interested audience, their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest, they too are distracted, and the play they create is less interesting. One actor described the experience of live performance as a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller when you experience live theater. We hope

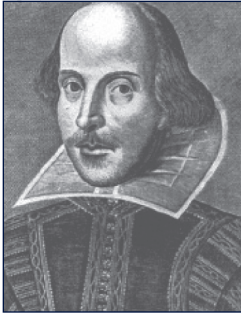
## How can you help us give you the best performance we can?

- ◆ **Please, no talking during the performance.** It distracts the actors as well as the people sitting nearby.
- ◆ **Respond naturally to our play.** Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you'll laugh, cry and even gasp—but as a natural response to the story, and not in order to distract attention from the stage.
- ◆ **Please leave all “noisemakers”—**food, gum, cell phones, iPods, etc.—**back at school or on the bus.** In a quiet theater, wrappers and munching are heard by all, the actors included.
- ◆ **No photographs of any kind, please.** Flashbulbs can make the actors lose their focus and can be dangerous. Digital cameras, along with all other kinds of recording devices, are prohibited, as is text-messaging.

you'll enjoy your role—and will help us to give you a dramatic experience that you'll always remember.

*[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely fused group, make it easy for the performance to 'take you out of yourself.' This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play...to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday.*

—TYRONE GUTHRIE, 1962



## Bard's Bio

The exact date of William Shakespeare's birth is not known, but his baptism (traditionally held three days after a child's birth) was recorded on April 26, 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, was a tanner, glover, grain dealer, and prominent town official of the thriving market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother, Mary Arden, was the daughter of a prosperous, educated farmer. Though the records are lost, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended Stratford's grammar school, where he would have acquired knowledge of Latin and the classical writers, training in rhetoric and analysis of texts, and gained a smattering of arithmetic as well as instruction in the articles of the Christian faith. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

At the age of eighteen, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. They had one daughter, Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died at age eleven. From 1585, the year in which the twins were baptized, until 1592, when he is first referred to as a dramatist in London, we know nothing of Shakespeare's life. Consequently, these seven so-called "lost years" are filled with legend and conjecture. We may never know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of the theater. The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright appears in 1592 and was made by Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, who attacked Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" for presuming to write plays (when he was only a mere actor) and for copying the material of established dramatists.

By the early 1590s Shakespeare had emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright, and part-owner of one of London's leading theater companies for nearly twenty years. Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and a playwright, but also a partner in a new theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which soon became one of London's two principal companies. The company's name changed to the King's Men in 1603 with the accession of James I, and it endured until the Commonwealth closed the theaters in 1642.

During his career, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated on what most scholars now agree upon as thirty-eight plays. His earliest plays—including *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Comedy of*

*Errors*, *Richard III*, *King John*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*—were written between 1589 and 1594. Between 1594 and 1599, Shakespeare wrote both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* as well as other plays, including *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *As You Like It*. His great tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*—were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last play traditionally categorized as comedy, *Measure for Measure*. The earlier histories, comedies, and tragedies made way for Shakespeare's final dramatic form—the plays commonly termed "romances" or "tragicomedies" for their blending of the comic and tragic forms. Written between 1606 and 1611, the romances include *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. These were the plays of a playwright no longer bound by the constraints of his earlier forms.

Although some quarto versions of the plays were printed in Shakespeare's lifetime, there is no definitive extant evidence to suggest that he directly oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, seven years after his death, that his complete plays were published in the First Folio. However, we do know that Shakespeare did oversee the publication of three narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets during his lifetime. Shakespeare retired in 1611 to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

***Shakespeare was the man, who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.***

—JOHN DRYDEN, 1688

Ow faire Hippolita,  
 Draws on apace:  
 Another Moon: but  
 This old Moon waxes  
 Like to a Step-dame, or a Dow  
 Long withering out a yong m  
 Hip. Bourc daies wil quickl  
 Bourc nights wil quickl  
 And then the Moone, like to  
 Now bent in heauen, that beh  
 Of our folemities. —  
 The. Go Philoftrate,  
 Stirre vp the Athenian youth  
 Awake the pert and nimble sp  
 Turne melancholy forth to Fe

## The First Folio

Throughout much of the Renaissance, plays did not occupy the same high cultural status that we attribute to them today. In fact, theatrical texts were not viewed as “literature” at all.

When a play was published (if it was published at all) it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a “quarto,” the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperbacks. It was not until 1616, the year of Shakespeare’s death, when a contemporary English poet and dramatist, Ben Jonson, published his own plays in a large-format book called a “folio”—the format traditionally reserved for the authoritative texts of religious and classical works—with the intention of challenging this pervasive understanding of theatrical texts as holding low literary value, that plays began to be understood as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was still chided as bold and arrogant for his venture for many years.

During Shakespeare’s lifetime, only half of his plays were ever published, and those were printed as quartos. He did, however, oversee the publication of three narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets. It was not until seven years after the playwright’s death that two of his close colleagues decided to gather his plays for publication in a move of three-fold significance: as a gesture of homage to a long-time friend and colleague; as a promotion of the King’s Men as a theater company of the highest cultural prestige; and as a financial venture with lucrative potential.

In 1623, what is now known as the First Folio, a book containing thirty-six of Shakespeare’s estimated thirty-eight plays, was published. Modern textual scholars maintain that the First Folio was likely compiled from a combination of stage prompt books and other theatrical documents, the playwright’s handwritten manuscripts (no longer extant), and various versions of some of the plays already published. Shakespeare’s First Folio took five compositors two and one-half years to print. The compositors manually set each individual letter of type, memorizing the text line by line to increase efficiency, as they moved down the page. There was no editor overseeing the printing, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected, but due to the high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the First Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, and each is slightly different. Chicago’s Newberry Library contains an original First Folio in its rich collections.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater traditionally utilizes the First Folio as the basis for its play scripts. The First Folio still serves as a

manual for many Shakespearean actors nearly 400 years after its publication because the plays as printed in the First Folio took theatrical documents as their basis for printing. Its punctuation, capitalizations, variant spellings, line breaks, and rhetorical structures all give clues to actors and directors about what words to emphasize and about what ideas are important—helping them to break open and examine the language. In Shakespeare’s own theater company, with only a few days to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential and provided information for members of the entire company. Today, these textual clues still help modern actors make the language easier to break apart—even though they’re speaking language that’s 400 years “younger” than ours.

***This is the book that gave us Shakespeare (or most of Shakespeare) [...] But the way it presented Shakespeare was carefully calculated to make a collection of theatre works look plausible as what we would now call works of literature. The book not only gives us the texts; it gives us Shakespeare as a cultural icon.***

—JOHN JOWETT, 2007



## Shakespeare's England

Elizabeth I—daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn—ruled England for forty-five years from 1558 to 1603 in a time of relative prosperity and peace. “Few monarchs,” says Shakespearean scholar David Bevington, “have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp on it so permanently.” He maintains that “[h]er combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending male admirers have become legendary,” and resulted in a monarchy that remained secure in the face of religious and political threats from many sides. In choosing not to marry, Elizabeth avoided allying herself and her throne with a foreign country or an English faction which may have threatened her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout early modern Europe—the period that spans the timeframe following the late portion of the Middle Ages (c. 1500) through the beginning of the Age of Revolutions (c. 1800)—governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords, but the rule of monarchs like Queen Elizabeth I was still absolute, just as it had been understood in earlier historical periods. The monarch was seen as God’s deputy on earth, and the divine right of kings—the theory that the monarch derives from God (as

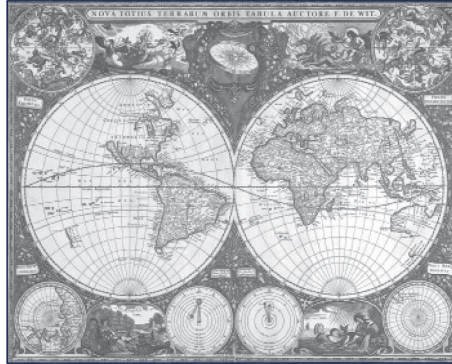
opposed to the people or some other source) his/her power to rule and authority—was a cherished doctrine. It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against both the state and God.

The politics of religion constantly threatened Elizabeth's reign, even though it was one of the most secure that England had known for hundreds of years. As the daughter of Henry VIII's marriage following his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child—and thus an illegitimate monarch. Upon her ascension to the throne, Elizabeth I inherited the rule of a country that, in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, was engaged in the process of attempting to make sense of its own history. Religious power changed hands during the early modern period with astonishing rapidity.

Stephen Greenblatt reminds us that within the possibility of living memory, England had been transformed: from a highly conservative Roman Catholicism (in the 1520s Henry VIII had fiercely attacked Luther and had been rewarded by the pope with the title "Defender of the Faith"): first, to Catholicism under the supreme head of the king; then to a wary, tentative Protestantism; to a more radical Protestantism; to a renewed and militant Roman Catholicism; and then, with Elizabeth and James, to Protestantism once again.<sup>1</sup> The English were living in a world where few people had clear memories of a time without religious confusion. Since, under Elizabeth, England had returned to Protestantism, the Church of England's government was held under the direct authority of the crown (and England's conforming Protestant clergy) during this period.

In addition, Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be subsequently. It had withdrawn from its extensive empire on the Continent, and its explorations of the New World had barely begun. There was a period of internal economic development as Elizabeth ignored the counsel of her advisors and kept out of war until the attempted invasion by Spain and the Great Armada in 1588. England's economy was still based in agriculture, and its farmers were poor and embittered by strife with rich landowners who "enclosed" what was once the farmers' cropland for pastures. Uprisings and food riots were commonplace in the rural area surrounding Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare grew up. London, then the largest city of Europe, was a city of contrasts: the richest and the poorest of England lived there, side by side. While many bettered themselves in a developing urban economy, unemployment was a serious problem.

As England eventually began what would be a long transition from an economy based mostly in agriculture to one of increased reliance upon trade and the manufacture of goods, both cities and social structures would rapidly evolve—it was a time of change and social mobility. For the first time in English history, a rising middle class aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.



As Elizabeth had no heir, the politics of succession posed a real threat to the nation's peace throughout her reign, and Elizabeth I finally died childless in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England's King James I. Ruling from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), James I was famously responsible for overseeing a new translation of the English bible—the 1611 King James

Version—which, with its powerful syntax, remains a legacy of this fertile time, just as Shakespeare's canon has. But national peace was never quite secured as the reign of James I was also troubled with political and religious controversy. It would be James's son, Charles I, who was beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s for tyrannically abusing what he believed was his divinely ordained power. ♦

<sup>1</sup>Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, (New York: Norton, 2004): 93-94.



## Teacher Resource Center

**Teachers, looking for new ideas?** Check out our Teacher

Resource Center, located on the Theater's fourth level. In addition to its primary focus on teaching Shakespeare in performance, the collection includes a number of biographies, history books, scholarly criticism, periodicals and books for young readers about Shakespeare's life and times. The collection also includes reference materials and dictionaries that specifically target Shakespeare's language.

**Call the Education Department at 312.595.5678 to schedule a visit—on your own or with your colleagues.**



## The English Renaissance Theater

**A** time of historical transition, of incredible social upheaval and change, the English Renaissance provided fertile ground for creative innovation. The early modern period stands as the bridge between England's very recent medieval past and its near future in the centuries commonly referred to as the Age of Exploration, or the Enlightenment. When the English Renaissance is considered within its wider historical context, it is perhaps not surprising that the early modern period produced so many important dramatists and literary luminaries, with William Shakespeare as a significant example.

Because of its unique placement at a crossroad in history, the English Renaissance served as the setting for a number of momentous historical events: the radical re-conception of the English state, the beginnings of a new economy of industry, an explosion of exploration and colonialism, and the break with traditional religion as the Church of England separated from the Catholic Church. It is perhaps this last example of cultural upheaval—the changes brought from Continental Europe by the Protestant Reformation—that provides us with a useful lens to examine the culture of theater in England during this period, in particular.

While we can see that Shakespeare lived through a transitional time, and we can understand that rapid change often fosters innovation, we may still be led to ask what could have influenced Shakespeare's dramatic sensibilities. What kind of theater did he encounter as a child or young man that may have made an impression upon him? It is commonly acknowledged by scholars today that Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching acting troupes that were still traveling from town to town during the middle decades of the sixteenth century—the early modern successors to a long heritage of English theater carried over from the Middle Ages. These traveling performers often enacted important stories from the Bible, staged tales of mystery and miracles, or presented their audiences with the stories of the lives of saints and heroes of the faith.

These traveling companies would move around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, stage, and storage for props and costumes.

They would pull into a town square, into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college, and transform that space into a theater. People gathered around to watch, some standing on the ground in front of the players' stage, some leaning over the rails from balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

But during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the Protestant Reformation gained a surer footing in England, the English theater was caught between conflicting ideas about the value and purpose of drama. Many officials of the Protestant Reformation desired to squash these traveling performances for their strong Catholic sensibilities; and even as late as 1606 James I passed legislation to remove all treatment of religious matters from the English playhouses.

But as the stories enacted in the newly constructed public theaters became more secular, public officials scorned the theater as immoral and frivolous. The theaters just outside London's walls came to be feared as places where moral and social corruption spread. The authorities frequently shut them down during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when the city was menaced by the plague and, frequently too, by political rioting. When the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word of a new play before it could be staged. But the practical enforcement of such measures was often sketchy at best, and playing companies themselves found plenty of ways around the strictures of the theatrical censors.



### CST for \$20

Chicago Shakespeare is committed to making our productions accessible for everyone, so CST for \$20 was designed to fit the budget of students. We have allocated thousands of tickets across the entire season, giving our friends under 35 the opportunity to see world-class theater at an everyday price. Anyone under 35 can buy up to two \$20 tickets per production. You and your students will be receiving information on CST for \$20 when you come to the Theater.

**You can find out more at**  
[www.chicagoshakes.com/cst20](http://www.chicagoshakes.com/cst20)



A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare's, James Burbage, built the first commercial theater in England in 1576, in the decade prior to Shakespeare's own arrival on the London theater scene. Burbage skirted rigid restrictions governing entertainment in London by placing his theater just outside the city walls, in a community with the unglamorous name of "Shoreditch." Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council of London by setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including London's brothels and bear-baiting arenas. Actors in Shakespeare's day were legally given the status of "vagabonds." They were considered little better than common criminals unless they could secure the patronage of a nobleman or, better still, the monarch.

Shakespeare and his fellow actors managed to secure both. They provided popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth I's court as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and they continued to enjoy court patronage after King James I came to the throne in 1603, when they became the King's Men. Their success at court gave Shakespeare and his fellow shareholders in the Lord Chamberlain's company the funds to build the new Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe then joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city's jurisdiction as one of the first public theaters in England.

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers—a full house in the Globe could see as many as 3,000 people. The audience typically arrived well before the play began to meet friends, drink ale, and snack on the refreshments sold at the plays. An outing to the theater was a highly social and communal event and might take half the day. It was more like tailgating at a football game, or going with friends to a rock concert, than our experience of attending theater today.

Affluent patrons paid two to three pence or more for gallery seats (like the two levels of balcony seating at Chicago Shakespeare Theater), while the "common folk"—shopkeepers, artisans, and apprentices—stood for a penny, about a day's wages for a skilled worker. The audience of the English Renaissance playhouse was a diverse and demanding group, and so it is often noted that Shakespeare depicted characters and situations that appealed to every cross-section of early modern English society. Audience appeal was a driving force for the theater as a business venture, and so during this period most new plays had short runs and were seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows and,

because of the number of ongoing and upcoming productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a few days.

There was, of course, no electricity for lighting, so all plays at the Globe and the other outdoor theaters were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. A throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action since English Renaissance plays were written to be performed without scene breaks or intermissions. For example, when stage

directions in *Macbeth* indicate that "a banquet is prepared," the stage keepers likely prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare's plays were performed primarily in "contemporary dress"—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare's time—regardless of the play's historical setting. Company members with tailoring skills sewed many of the company's stock costumes, and hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy often provided the elegant costumes for the play's nobility. Because women were not permitted to act on the English stage until 1660, female roles were performed by boys or young men, their male physique disguised with elaborate dresses and wigs. The young actors were readily accepted as "women" by the audience.



An Elizabethan sketch of the original Swan

After an extremely productive creative period spanning about 100 years—often called the "Golden Age" of the English theater—the Puritans, now in power of the government, succeeded in 1642 in closing the theaters altogether. The public theaters did not reopen until the English monarchy was restored and Charles II came to the throne in 1660. A number of theaters, including the Globe, were not open very long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. The fire, combined with the eighteen years of Commonwealth rule—the so-called Interregnum ("between kings")—led to the loss of many of the primary sources that would have provided us with further evidence of the staging traditions of Shakespeare's theater. The new theater of the Restoration approached plays, including Shakespeare's, very differently, often rewriting and adapting original scripts to suit the audience's contemporary tastes. So it is left to scholars of early modern English drama to reconstruct the practices of Renaissance theater from clues left behind. ♦



## Courtyard-style Theater

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's unique performance space reflects elements of both the first public playhouses in London and the courtyards of inns temporarily transformed into theaters, in which the young Shakespeare

might first have acquired his love of the stage. The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599, was simple, and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area, with seating on three levels, one above the other. Both theaters use a thrust stage with an open performance area upstage; basically, the entire performance space is in the shape of a capital “T.” With the audience seated on three sides of the thrust stage, the play is staged in the middle of them. An architect for Chicago Shakespeare Theater describes the experience of theater staged in this way: “You’re the scenery. You’re the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front, and out of, you.”

If you think about a more traditional theater’s proscenium arch “framing” what is (not literally) a two-dimensional stage picture behind it, the thrust stage by contrast creates a three-dimensional picture for an audience that surrounds it on three sides. The people sitting in the side seats have the closest interaction with the performers, and the performers with them. The play unfolds between the audience members seated along the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform. As an audience member, your facial expressions and body language serve both as the focal point of the actors’ energy and the backdrop for the other audience members seated across from you. Architect David Taylor and his company, Theatre Projects Consultants, worked closely with Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s leadership to design this courtyard theater. “It’s important that we don’t lose the performer among the faces, but it’s essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what’s going on,” Taylor explains. “That’s the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design.”

“The backdrop and the scenery for Shakespeare is the human race,” Taylor notes, “so we’re putting Shakespeare into its proper context by making human faces the backdrop for

those sitting in any seat in the theater.” According to Taylor: “This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience. The courtyard experience was about leaning out of windows. It was about throwing open the windows in the courtyard when the stage was brought through on a cart and leaning out and interacting.” Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the “leaning rails” to watch the players below—like those watching from an inn’s balconies centuries ago when a traveling troupe set up its temporary stage.

The actors and the audience share the experience of seeing and interacting with one another. Taylor thinks that actors benefit tremendously from the courtyard design: “They’re not looking at people sitting in straight rows, disconnected from everybody around them in big seats. There’s a sense of community in the space, a sense of embracing the performer on stage.” Actors are always fed by the energy generated from their audience. The design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater offers a feast of feedback to the actors on its stage.

Other theaters have been modeled upon the Elizabethan experience of courtyard theater, perhaps most notably the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan served as a model for Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Besides their deep thrust stages that were designed to create an intimate relationship between actors and audience, prominent architectural elements in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience and natural wood that creates a feeling of warmth. Brick is an aesthetic choice but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustical choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls helps diffuse sound, sending it in different directions throughout the theater. The sound, lighting, and rigging systems are all state-of-the-art. Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s design accommodates a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space. ♦



Chicago Shakespeare Theater's Courtyard Theater

# On the Road: A Brief History of Touring Shakespeare

***A wandering minstrel I, a thing of rags and patches, of ballads, songs, and snatches of dreamy lullaby...***

—GILBERT & SULLIVAN, *THE MIKADO*

***Another op'nin, another show, in Philly, Boston, or Baltimore; a chance for stage folks to say hello, another op'nin of another show.***

—COLE PORTER, *KISS ME, KATE*

***The actors are come hither, my lord... The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or a poem unlimited.***

—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *HAMLET*

No one knows for certain where or when theater began, but from what historians can tell, touring was a part of theater almost from the beginning. Theater has always required an audience, and it's still true that if the audience can't get to the theater, the theater will go to its audience. And though working in the theater is often full of uncertainties, anyone who does is sure to travel, and likely to tour. Tours can be as large as productions like *The Phantom of the Opera*, or as small as a juggler who wanders around the city, clubs in hand. The traveling lifestyle is so strongly associated with actors that many of them refer to themselves as gypsies; the word fits them as they wander about from show to show, going wherever their work takes them.

As early as the second century BCE, companies of actors traveled the Roman Empire, setting up temporary stages at carnivals or in market squares. Audiences circa 190 BCE were apparently just as particular—or perhaps more so—as those today: if the performance did not live up to their expectations, the audience would simply wander away. The following excerpt from Plautus's prologue to the play *Poenulus*, is more than 2,000 years old, though some of it is still considered proper "audience etiquette" today:

***Let...the usher [not] roam about in front of people or show anyone to a seat while the actor is on the stage. Those who have had a long leisurely nap at home should now cheerfully stand, or at least refrain from sleeping... And let the nurses keep tiny children at home and not bring them to see the play, lest...the children die of hunger or cry for food like young goats. Let matrons view the play in silence, laugh in silence, refrain from tinkling tones of chatter...***

As time went on and the Catholic Church became more powerful, plays were forbidden—especially Greek or Roman ones that the Church felt promoted pagan beliefs. Eventually the only professional performers left were minstrels wandering from town to town. Acting was equated with sin, and actors were outcasts from society. But the desire to engage in performance seems to be a universal one, and soon enough the Church itself instigated the creation of a type of play that contemporary scholars regard as a basis of modern theater: the medieval miracle, or mystery play (from *mystère*, the French word for miracle). Based on the Bible, the plays (most often done in a cycle) depicted such famous stories as Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, the Nativity, the Loaves and Fishes, and, finally, the story of Jesus' death, called the Passion Play.

Versions of the medieval Passion Play are still performed today. The mystery plays were a part of church ritual and reinforced its teaching. The players would set up stages throughout a village and the townspeople would wander from stage to stage until they had seen the whole cycle. With some cycles, this could start early in the morning and last until it was too dark for the audience to see. As time went on, the sets became more elaborate. Many were placed on horse-drawn wagons, so that they would not need reconstructing in each town. Some wagons carried structures of two or more stories, and required four horses to pull them!

The mystery plays (with a few exceptions) did not have developed characters or plots, but their popularity led to stagings of new works, called "morality plays," which depicted the common man in allegorical situations ranging from religious to political to comic. Characters in these plays had names such as "Despair" or "Divine Correction." The morality plays made way for new theatrical forms, and once again small companies of actors wandered about Europe, performing for anyone who could pay.

The stigma of sin that the Church had placed on secular entertainment was a long time in wearing off, and even in Shakespeare's day Queen Elizabeth declared all actors to be vagabonds (and thus without civil rights) unless they had a patron in the nobility. Shakespeare's company was known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and during King James's rule (Elizabeth's successor), as the King's Men. These sponsored companies performed at the courts of their patrons, at the new public theaters such as the Globe, and, like companies today, did tours of the country.

The very real threat of plague—associated at that time with large gathering places—closed the London theaters for weeks and sometimes many months on end; during these periods,

the acting companies simply packed up and returned to the road. Traveling from town to town, the troupe would pull its cart into a town square or the courtyard of an inn. Their wagon transformed into a stage, the actors performed to all who gathered around the makeshift stage.


With theater's resurgence in the Renaissance came playwrights, such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and Molière—men who wrote plays whose popularity long outlasted their own lives. Theater was again a vital element of culture, so strong that when the Puritans shut down the theaters in the seventeenth century they stayed closed for eighteen years—as opposed to the six centuries accomplished by the Church's opposition in the Middle Ages. Although touring companies were still popular in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, especially in Italy and Spain, some plays could not tour because of the fast-growing taste for elaborate sets that could not easily be moved. Directors and designers experimented with realistic design elements that were, at the very least, impractical for touring—real sheep in a pastoral play, for instance, or rain falling on stage in a storm scene.

Shakespeare's works delighted directors and designers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the plays were full of shipwrecks, apparitions, battles and country scenes, which gave them opportunities to create larger and more complicated sets and special effects. The results must have been astounding, but it was not unusual for the plays to be cut, rewritten, or rearranged to suit the needs of the set and the demands of the audience. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, was rewritten by at least four different people in various ways. In some versions the lovers did not die, in others they exchange last words as they died; there were some versions that created lengthy funeral processions at the end of the play. More elaborate sets required more time to move, and so "two hours' traffic of the stage" could easily become much longer as the audience waited through the set changes.


The move back to Shakespeare's text as written was a gradual one, and it was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that attempts were made to stage his plays as they are thought to have been staged during his lifetime. An English director named William Poel was instrumental in this "back to basics" Shakespeare. The emphasis in Poel's directing was on language, and on simple staging, which allowed

the plays to emerge through the word rather than the scenery. Poel encouraged his actors to speak Shakespeare's language conversationally, as they spoke in modern plays. He moved away from the declamatory style of nineteenth-century productions—in which the delivery of the lines could be as plodding as the long set-changes—and created instead simple, elegant Shakespearean productions.

The new emphasis on language rather than spectacle gave the audience much more of a stake in the work being performed. Their feelings for the characters and situations in the play were reliant on how well they understood what was going on, and thus by how well the actors did their jobs. Will an audience understand that Phoebe in *As You Like It* is a shepherdess even if she has no sheep with her, or is not dressed in a traditional shepherdess costume? In *King Lear*, can the actors playing Lear and the Fool be at the mercy of the elements even if the storm is evoked by no more than the occasional sound cue of thunder? That, of course, depends on the skill of the actors and director—and the audience's willingness to use their imaginations.



**The new emphasis on language  
rather than spectacle gave the audience  
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work being performed.**



Every year, Chicago Shakespeare Theater also goes on tour. More in line with the traveling acting troupes of Shakespeare's day and not as elaborate as a national touring show, our abridged Shakespeare production tours for five weeks around the tri-state area. The full cast, accompa-

nied by a crew of light and sound operators, a dresser, and stage managers, brings Shakespeare to dozens of communities, giving them the opportunity to share in this centuries-old part of the theater experience.

The last century has seen remarkable advances and achievements in movies and television, but going to the movies is a completely different experience for its audience: even if everyone in the cinema were to get up and leave, the film continues to play. Theater, however, is impossible without an audience, and no matter how many times one sees the same production, no two performances will ever be the same. The excitement of theater lies in that indefinable connection between playwright, director, actor, and playgoer. This sense of connection is vital to touring productions, which typically rely on less elaborate sets, lights, and costumes. Actors in touring productions have nothing up their sleeves. They must use the play, themselves, and the audience to create magic. ♦



From Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2011 production of *Short Shakespeare! Macbeth*, directed by David H. Bell (clockwise from top left):

1. Dorcas Sowunmi as a Witch
2. Bernard Balbot as the Porter
3. Mark L. Montgomery as Macbeth

photos by Michael Brosilow

# TIMELINE

## 1300

- 1326** Founding of universities at Oxford and Cambridge
- 1348** Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- 1349** Bubonic Plague kills one-third of England's population
- 1387** Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

## 1400

- ca.1440** Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press
- 1472** Dante's *Divine Comedy* first printed
- 1492** Christopher Columbus lands at Cuba
- 1497** Vasco da Gama sails around Cape of Good Hope

## 1500

- 1501-4** Michelangelo's *David* sculpture
- 1503** Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
- 1512** Copernicus' *Commentariolus* published, theorizing that Earth and other planets revolve around sun
- 1518** License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorens de Gominzot
- 1519** Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world
- 1519** Conquest of Mexico by Cortez
- 1522** Luther's translation of the New Testament

## 1525

- 1531** Henry VIII recognized as Supreme Head of the Church of England
- 1533** Henry VIII secretly marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated by Pope
- 1539** Hernando de Soto explores Florida
- 1540** G.L. de Cardenas "discovers" Grand Canyon
- 1541** Hernando de Soto "discovers" the Mississippi

## 1550

- 1558** Coronation of Queen Elizabeth I
- 1562** John Hawkins begins slave trade between Guinea and West Indies
- 1564** Birth of William Shakespeare and Galileo
- 1565** Pencils first manufactured in England
- 1570** Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth
- 1573** Francis Drake sees the Pacific Ocean

## 1575

- 1576** Mayor of London forbids theatrical performances in the City  
Burbage erects first public theater in England (the "Theater" in Shoreditch)
- 1577** Drake's trip around the world
- 1580** *Essays* of Montaigne published
- 1582** Marriage license issued for William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway  
Daughter Susanna Shakespeare christened
- 1585** Christening of son Hamnet and twin Judith

- 1587** Mary Queen of Scots executed  
**1588** Destruction of the Spanish Armada  
**1592** Shakespeare listed with the Lord Chamberlain's Men  
**1593-4** Plague closes London playhouses for 20 months  
**1595** Coat of arms granted to Shakespeare's father, John  
**1596** Death of son Hamnet, age 11  
 Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*  
**1597** Shakespeare, one of London's most successful playwrights,  
 buys New Place, one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon  
**1599** Globe Theatre opens, as home to the Lord Chamberlain's Men,  
 with Shakespeare as part-owner
- 1600**
- 1602** Oxford University's Bodleian Library opens  
**1603** Death of Queen Elizabeth, coronation of James I  
 Lord Chamberlain's Men become the King's Men upon endorsement of James I  
**1603-11** Plague closes London playhouses for at least 68 months (nearly 6 years)  
**1605** Cervantes' *Don Quixote Part 1* published  
**1607** Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall  
 Founding of Jamestown, Virginia, first English settlement on  
 American mainland  
**1608** *A true relation of such Occurances and Accidents of Note as hath passed  
 in Virginia* by John Smith  
 Galileo constructs astronomical telescope  
**1609** Blackfriars Theatre, London's first commercial indoor theater,  
 becomes winter home of the King's Men  
**1611** "King James Version" of the Bible published  
**1613** Globe Theatre destroyed by fire  
**1614** Globe Theatre rebuilt  
**1615** Galileo faces the Inquisition for the first time  
**1616** Judith Shakespeare marries Thomas Quinney  
 Death of William Shakespeare, age 52  
**1618** Copernican system condemned by Roman Catholic Church  
**1619** First African slaves arrive in Virginia  
**1623** The First Folio, the first compiled text of Shakespeare's complete works published

## 1625

- 1625** James I dies, succeeded by Charles I  
**1633** Galileo recants before the Inquisition  
**1636** Harvard College founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts  
**1642** Civil War in England begins  
**1642** Puritans close theaters throughout England until following the Restoration  
 of the Monarchy, 18 years later, with Charles II  
**1649** Charles I beheaded  
**1649** Commonwealth declared

## ca. 1596-1600

### Comedies

The Merchant of Venice  
 Much Ado About Nothing  
 The Merry Wives of Windsor  
 As You Like It  
 Twelfth Night

### Histories

Richard II  
 1, 2 Henry IV  
 Henry V

### Tragedies

Julius Caesar

## ca. 1601-1609

### Comedies

Troilus and Cressida  
 All's Well That Ends Well

### Tragedies

Hamlet  
 Othello  
 King Lear  
 ♦ **Macbeth**  
 Antony and Cleopatra  
 Timon of Athens  
 Coriolanus  
 Measure for Measure

## ca. 1609-1613

### Romances

Pericles  
 Cymbeline  
 The Winter's Tale  
 The Tempest  
 The Two Noble Kinsmen

### Histories

Henry VIII

# MACBETH

## Dramatis Personae

**DUNCAN** *King of Scotland*

**MALCOLM** *eldest son to Duncan*

**DONALBAIN\*** *second son to Duncan*

**MACBETH** *Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, later King*

**LADY MACBETH** *wife to Macbeth*

**SEYTON\*** *Macbeth's armor-bearer*

**PORTER** *at Macbeth's castle*

**BANQUO** *a nobleman of Scotland*

**FLEANCE\*** *son to Banquo*

**MACDUFF** *Thane of Fife, a nobleman*

**LADY MACDUFF** *Wife to Macduff*

**SON OF MACDUFF\***

**ROSS** *a nobleman and thane*

**LENNOX\*** *a nobleman and thane*

**MENTEITH\*** *a nobleman and thane*

**ANGUS\*** *a nobleman and thane*

**CAITHNESS\*** *a nobleman and thane*

**THE WEIRD SISTERS**

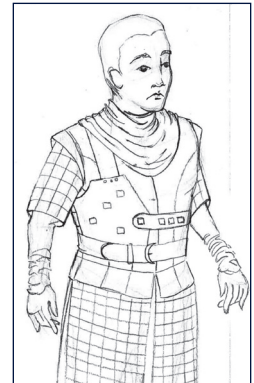
**HECATE\***

**SIWARD\*** *Earl of Northumberland*

**YOUNG SIWARD** *his son*

**CAPTAIN\*, OLD MAN\*, DOCTORS\*, SOLDIERS, SERVANTS,  
MURDERERS, MESSENGER, APPARITIONS**

*\*Character does not appear in CST's 2015 abridged production.*



Sketches by Costume  
Designer Robert S. Kuhn  
for CST's 2015 production  
of *Macbeth*





## The Story

**T**hree “Weird Sisters” await Macbeth and Banquo as the two warriors, victorious from battle, return home. They greet the two men with strange prophecies: Macbeth will be named Thane of Cawdor and king, but it will be Banquo who fathers Scotland’s

future kings. The two men soon learn that the first part of the prophecy is true: the treasonous Cawdor has been executed, and Macbeth’s bravery earns him the new title from the grateful King Duncan.

Learning of the king’s visit to their castle that same night, Lady Macbeth presses her husband to take destiny into his own hands. In the morning, the king’s bloody body is discovered in his bed; fearful that their own lives are endangered, Duncan’s sons flee, and Macbeth is crowned king. Still, Macbeth cannot stop thinking about the Weird Sisters’ final prophecy: Banquo, not he, will father Scotland’s royal lineage. And so Macbeth hires henchmen to slaughter Banquo and his son Fleance, but the boy escapes. That night, at their coronation banquet, the ghost of Banquo appears before the guilty king.

Tortured by his fears, Macbeth seeks out the Weird Sisters once more and, once more, mistakes their cryptic prophecies as assurance of success. Their paths covered in blood, Lady Macbeth is tormented into madness as Macbeth leads his country toward the abyss of civil war. And the Weird Sisters’ prophecies prove true, each more dark and dire than the last. ♦



## Act-by-Act Synopsis

### ACT ONE

**O**n a barren and wild heath in Scotland, the three Weird Sisters meet in thunder and lightning, and await Macbeth. At a battle camp, King Duncan of Scot-

land and his son Malcolm learn that Macbeth’s and Banquo’s heroic fighting against the rebels was successful. The Thane of Cawdor, who led the rebels, will be executed, and his title given to Macbeth. Returning from battle, Macbeth and Banquo come upon the Weird Sisters. The witches address Macbeth as the Thane of Cawdor and the future king; they tell Banquo that it will be his heirs who will rule Scotland. Then they disap-

pear. Ross and Angus arrive to bring the two men to the king, and report that Macbeth has been named Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth and Banquo are stunned that the witches’ prophecy has come true, and Macbeth muses on the second part of their prediction: that he will be king. Duncan receives the warriors warmly and arranges to visit Macbeth’s castle. He then names his son Malcolm as heir to the throne—an obstacle in Macbeth’s eyes on his way to seeing the second prophecy fulfilled. Lady Macbeth reads her husband’s letter telling her of the Weird Sisters’ half-fulfilled prophecy and the King’s imminent visit to their home. Lady Macbeth thinks her husband too weak-spirited to usurp the crown, but thinks that Duncan’s visit will provide them the opportunity to murder the king. When Macbeth returns home, Lady Macbeth tells him of her plan to murder the king as he sleeps that night, a guest in their home. He recoils, and she tells him that she will take charge. Duncan arrives at Inverness where Lady Macbeth, greeting him hospitably, speaks of how much she and her husband owe to their king. Macbeth fears the consequences of murdering Duncan, but Lady Macbeth furiously defends the plan and insults his manhood in now rescinding what she calls an oath. Macbeth finally agrees to go ahead with the murder that night.

### ACT TWO

**W**hile he awaits the appointed moment to kill the sleeping Duncan, Macbeth encounters Banquo. They speak of the Weird Sisters, and Banquo warns Macbeth against taking their prophecy seriously. Macbeth dismisses their legitimacy, but agrees with Banquo to speak of them again. Left alone, Macbeth hallucinates a bloody dagger, and fears the dire effects of murdering the king. The bell tolls midnight—the signal for Macbeth to proceed to the king’s bedchamber. Having drugged Duncan’s guards, Lady Macbeth awaits Macbeth’s return from the king’s chamber. He appears with the bloody daggers, and tells her that the deed is done. Furious that the murder weapons remain in his hand and that he cannot bring himself to return them to the scene of the crime, she takes the daggers back so that Duncan’s guards will appear guilty of the crime. Hearing a knock at the castle door, they retreat to bed. The knocking continues and a drunken porter admits two noblemen, Macduff and Lennox. Macbeth appears to greet them, pretending to have been awakened by their arrival. Macduff heads to Duncan’s chambers while Macbeth and Lennox talk about the night’s horrific and unnatural storm. Macduff shouts out that the king is murdered. Macbeth goes to investigate, and while he is gone, Lady Macbeth, Banquo, and Duncan’s sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, all gather, awakened by the alarm. Macbeth returns to confirm Macduff’s story and reports to the group that, in his rage, he has killed the guards for murdering the king. Malcolm and Donalbain fear that they are no longer safe in Scotland and agree to go their

# MACBETH

separate ways and flee the country. Macduff and others suspect Malcolm and Donalbain of paying the guards to murder their father, and their flight confirms their suspicions. Macbeth will be crowned king.

## ACT THREE

**B**anquo contemplates the truth of the Weird Sisters' prophecy about Macbeth, and wonders if what they said about him will also prove true. Macbeth joins Banquo to remind him of the royal feast that evening, and in answer to the king's questions, Banquo replies that he and his son Fleance plan to ride but will return for dinner. Alone, Macbeth wonders whether his accession to the throne was fruitless if Banquo's heirs are destined to take his place. He plots the deaths of Banquo and his son, sending for two henchmen to do the deed. Macbeth reveals to Lady Macbeth his desire to rid themselves of the threat posed by Banquo and Fleance, and alludes to their murder, then dismisses her summarily from his company. Three murderers assault Banquo and Fleance. Banquo is killed, but his son escapes. At the banquet that night, one of the murderers pulls Macbeth aside to report what has happened. When Macbeth returns to the table, he sees the ghost of Banquo take the last remaining chair. He reacts with astonishment and dread. Lady Macbeth explains that her husband is ill, and Macbeth recovers when the ghost vanishes, but is horrified moments later when it reappears. Lady Macbeth urges their guests to leave, and Macbeth tells his wife that he must immediately seek out the Weird Sisters and learn more. Outside the castle, Lennox and another Scottish nobleman discuss the murdering of Duncan and Banquo and the flight to England by Malcolm, Donalbain, and now Macduff, who has left to enlist help from King Edward in defeating Macbeth.

## ACT FOUR

**T**o respond to Macbeth's demands for more knowledge, the Weird Sisters conjure up three powerful spirits. One warns him that Macduff is a danger; the second tells him that no man born of a woman may harm him; the third tells him he will not fall until the woods at Birnam come to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth surmises from this that nothing can cause his downfall. When he asks if Banquo's heirs shall ever lay claim to the throne, however, he is shown Banquo's line stretching out into an unforeseeable future. The witches disappear as Lennox arrives to tell Macbeth that Macduff has deserted. Macbeth decides to act immediately this time to kill Macduff's family as retribution. At Macduff's castle, Lady Macduff is outraged by her husband's flight, leaving his family unprotected. She tells her young son that his father is dead. A messenger tells her that she and her children are in grave danger and must flee—just moments before the murderers appear, killing all they can find in Macduff's unprotected castle. In

England, Malcolm tries to assess Macduff's true loyalties. He slanders his own character, questioning his own fitness to rule Scotland because of his many vices. When Macduff cries out in fear for Scotland's future, Malcolm places his full trust in him. Ross seeks out Macduff to report that Macbeth has killed Lady Macduff and their children. Macduff swears revenge, and, with Malcolm, plans Macbeth's downfall.

## ACT FIVE

**A** doctor and gentlewoman look on as Lady Macbeth, walking in her sleep, tries desperately to wash the memory of blood from her hands. She speaks of the murders of Duncan, Banquo, and Lady Macduff. Outside Dunsinane Castle, a group of Scottish rebels prepares to meet the English army led by Malcolm and Macduff, and converge to attack Macbeth's defense. Malcolm orders the soldiers to cut branches from Birnam Wood to use as camouflage as they march toward the castle. Bolstered by the Weird Sisters' predictions, Macbeth waves off news of the gathering troops. He dismisses the doctor's report of a deeply troubled Lady Macbeth; and soon after he is told that she has taken her own life, but he hears the news seemingly without feeling. A messenger reports that the woods appear to be moving toward the castle, and Macbeth recognizes a part of the prophecy now fulfilled. The English and rebel army approaches the castle, and Macbeth readies himself for battle. In hand-to-hand combat, he slays Siward, affirming that the youth, born of woman, is unable to kill him—just as the Weird Sisters prophesized. Macduff now challenges Macbeth. Macbeth, guilty of the murders of Macduff's family, urges him to turn away. Macduff reveals that he was removed from his mother's womb by Caesarean section, therefore not technically "born of woman." Macbeth understands at last the witches' equivocation, and dies by Macduff's sword. With Macbeth's severed head, Macduff hails Malcolm as the new king. Malcolm decrees that all his supporters be made noblemen to celebrate Macbeth's defeat. ♦



## Something Borrowed, Something New Shakespeare's Sources for "Macbeth"

**He was more original than the originals.  
He breathed upon dead bodies and  
brought them into life.**

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR, 1846

**The detection of [Shakespeare's sources] has its own fascination and is useful insofar as they illustrate the workings of Shakespeare's imagination, but the most notable feature of the play is the dramatist's inventiveness, brilliantly fusing scattered elements from legend, folklore and earlier books and plays into a whole that remains as fresh and original now as when it was composed.**

—R.A. FOAKES, 1984

As Shakespeare searched into Scotland's history for material for his play, he turned to Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, published in 1587, as he frequently did for his history lessons. Holinshed's history was in part mythology and the tales of oral history, but his stories proved a fertile ground for the active imagination of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is drawn largely from two stories in Holinshed: one of King Duncan and the usurper Macbeth; the other, of King Duff, slain by Donwald with the help of Donwald's ambitious wife. Holinshed's Duncan was an ineffective ruler who depended upon the strength of his warriors—like the tough Macbeth. As in Shakespeare's tale, Macbeth and Banquo are greeted by the prophecies of witches, but in Holinshed, Banquo is an active accomplice to the murder of Duncan. Shakespeare gives Banquo (the reputed ancestor of James I, England's newly crowned king as Shakespeare wrote his new play) a more ambiguous role than did Holinshed. Though Shakespeare's Banquo knows of the prophecies, his character is not involved in the murder, and can be interpreted as a noble foil to Macbeth's villainy. Prior to ascending to England's throne, when James was still King James VI of Scotland, he traced his royal ancestry back to this "Banquo." Interestingly, there is no historical evidence that such a Banquo ever existed. He seems to first appear in a myth created by Boece in 1526. But in Shakespeare's time, this

story of James's lineage was accepted fact. *Macbeth* retells this story to an England now interested in all things Scottish.

According to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Macbeth was said to rule his country well for many years—a welcome contrast to Duncan's ineffective leadership. Only much later did Macbeth's rule become tyrannical, and his overthrow finally a reaction to his tyranny. Shakespeare crafted his Macbeth more darkly, with neither the years of peaceful and effective rule nor the relief of his subjects who had suffered under the rule of King Duncan before him. Holinshed refers to Duncan's naming of his son as heir to the throne as a breach of Scottish law, which in the eleventh century determined succession by election rather than by primogeniture. Duncan overstepped his powers in naming his son Malcolm as his successor, and Macbeth's outrage was therefore historically more justified. As a powerful warrior and as close kin, Macbeth's own claim to the throne was strong. Shakespeare, however, makes no mention of Duncan's abuse of power here; he treats the king's appointment of his son as natural—as it would have been in Shakespeare's own time. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth is another creation of the playwright's imagination—borrowed from another story in Holinshed's *Chronicles* of an ambitious Lady Donwald who assisted her husband in the murder of King Duff.

Another historical source for *Macbeth* credited by scholars was a book published about twenty-five years before Shakespeare wrote his play, entitled *The History of Scotland* by George Buchanan—a book that James I attempted to suppress during his reign as Scotland's king. Why such royal interest in this particular history? Buchanan asserts that sovereignty derives from, and remains with, the people: the king who exercises power against the will of his people, says Buchanan, must be deposed. To James I, who believed in the absolute rule and divine right of a king, Buchanan's was a dangerous text. It was written to justify the 1567 overthrow of James's mother, Mary Queen of Scots, a lawful—and tyrannical—ruler. And it was to be used again in 1642 to depose James's son, Charles I, from the British throne. Many in Shakespeare's audience embraced the doctrine of divine right and absolute power, but in a country that just one generation later would behead its king, there were clearly dissenting views.

Why does Shakespeare use stories from history—and then add characters, ignore the facts, and play havoc with the passage of time? We can't be certain, but it's interesting to hypothesize about some possible answers. In this exploration, we can get glimpses into Shakespeare's creative process. ♦

# MACBETH



## 1606 and All That

The first years of a new century were pivotal ones in England's history. In 1603 the great Queen Elizabeth's 45-year rule came to an end. The "Virgin Queen" died without children and

left the supremely important question of succession unanswered until her final days. After her death, Elizabethan England became Stuart England with the accession of the new king, James I, formerly King James VI of Scotland.

James was the son of the devout Catholic, Mary Queen of Scots, who, claiming her right to the English throne in 1595, was beheaded by order of her cousin—Queen Elizabeth. Some scholars suggest that the beheadings that bookend *Macbeth* echo the horrible public death of the king's own mother. It is clear that this very Scottish play was inspired by this very Scottish king, who had recently begun his reign, over an uncertain England.



photo by Michael Brosilow

Barbara Robertson as Lady Macbeth in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's *Kabuki Lady Macbeth* in 2005, directed by Shozo Sato

James I came to England proclaiming his lineage, his rightful claim to the English throne. A genealogy published in 1604, the year of his coronation, traced the new king's lineage back through Fleance, the son of Banquo in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. One of the great triumphal arches constructed for his coronation procession depicts James I receiving the royal scepter from his English ancestor, King Henry VII. He was there, in other words, by "Divine Right"—a doctrine that greatly interested James, as it had his predecessor, Elizabeth. Both viewed the monarch as God's deputy on earth and rebellion as an act of disobedience against God. James wrote and published a book on his political philosophy, defending the power of the absolutist state and its ruler.

James I became the royal patron of Shakespeare's acting company, renamed the "King's Men" in 1604. Traditionally scholars have looked at *Macbeth* as a play written by Shakespeare to flatter his new king and patron, as it retells the moment in Scottish history when the royal line was passed to James's family by prophecy. (See "Something Borrowed, Something New" on page 17.)

But scholarship in more recent years suggests a very different reading of the relationship between the events of James's accession and Shakespeare's imaginative journey in *Macbeth*. When James VI of Scotland ascended the British throne to become King James I, he was England's first non-English king since the Norman Invasion in the eleventh century, more than 500 years before. He brought with him a hope for unity and peace in unsettled times fraught with anxiety. The Catholics, Anglican Protestants, and Puritan extremists all demanded a voice in the political life of England. In a society where opposing ideas became radical and absolute, the bloody civil wars resulted less than a half-century later in total social and political breakdown.

Who was this foreign king upon whom the English placed such hopes—and fears? He had been crowned once before: as a one-year-old, the infant James became King James VI of Scotland after his father was brutally murdered and his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was driven into English exile. The history of sixteenth-century Scotland was bloody. As James VI grew up, he watched as those nearest him were assassinated. As a teenager, he began to rule Scotland on his own, but was captured and held hostage for several months by a group of Scottish lords. The perilous nature of Scotland's politics and the power of its noblemen is reflected in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

On November 5, 1605 (perhaps just months before Shakespeare began to write *Macbeth*), security forces discovered a secret cache of gunpowder below the Houses of Parliament, powerful enough to destroy the entire government of Britain.

**Gunpowder—considered the devil’s invention, revealed to a friar-scientist—had the eerie and numinous reputation in the Renaissance that atomic weaponry acquired in the 1950s... Though monks or friars had killed single rulers, never had the destruction of a whole court or class been attempted at one blow.**

—GARRY WILLS, 1995

The violence of Guy Fawkes and the other Catholic revolutionaries was a response to years of state violence against Catholic resistance to the state’s efforts to centralize control of religious institutions. During the trial, one Jesuit conspirator invoked a rhetorical device of half-truths in his own defense, which became widely known as “equivocation” (see the Porter’s reference to equivocators in Act 2.3), and was the subject of angry public debate at the same time that Shakespeare was writing a story of spoken half-truths—and their power over Macbeth’s imagination.

Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators were convicted and the Gunpowder Plot aborted, but the age of modern terrorism was born—a terrible reminder to King James I and his subjects that no government or king, even one with legitimate heirs, is truly secure. In the months following the Gunpowder Plot, Shakespeare wrote his *Macbeth*—a tale of political terrorism, of half-truths, and of kings and governments unseated. And England, which at long last had its monarch seated with heirs in place, came to understand that political security was still out of reach. The Gunpowder Plot is still celebrated in England each year on November 5: Guy Fawkes dummies are burned in effigy and fireworks and bonfires blaze across the country.

The Weird Sisters that inhabit *Macbeth*’s untamed heath were not the stuff of fairy tale to James I and his contemporaries; they were something to be feared and eradicated. King James I himself had written a book about witchcraft. During his reign, witch hunts and the persecution of suspected practitioners were commonplace. The King followed the court proceedings closely, and at one trial cross-examined the defendants himself. Witches, with their power over the rational side of man, were viewed as real danger, an evil to be expunged from a law-abiding society.

In the sixteenth century, European governments evolved from medieval feudalism to the absolutist state that characterized the Renaissance. In a feudal state, the king held authority

among a group of peers who were his equals—much as we see represented in *Macbeth*’s eleventh-century Scotland. But in an absolutist state, power became centralized in the monarch. The aristocracy contested this loss of power, and in England the absolutist state was never fully realized. But the question of how much power rested in the king and how much resided outside the monarch’s domain remained a contested doctrine in James I’s England. While many in Shakespeare’s audience would have embraced the absolutist views of their new king, many did not. Those dissenting voices would lead to a civil war 40 years later that would dethrone and execute James’s son, Charles I.

What Shakespeare himself believed is a topic of much debate. Is *Macbeth* a play intended to celebrate divine right and the absolute power of the monarchy—and hence, to flatter James? Or

is it instead a subtle warning, carefully encoded in the lines of its text to beware of the absolute power of any ruler over his subjects? Shakespeare scholars continue to argue this point. Perhaps he intended no single message but wanted instead to engage in a dramatic portrayal of these central questions.

If that was the playwright’s intention in 1606, it is still operative today. How much power do we give to those who rule us? How should that power be divided? How much power remains with the people ruled by a government? And when—and how—must the abuse of power by a ruler be curbed? *Macbeth* leads us to explore these questions for ourselves, in a world vastly different from the one he knew. ♦



**The question of how much power rested in the king and how much resided outside the monarch’s domain remained a contested doctrine in James I’s England.**



# MACBETH



## Shakespeare, Tragedy and Us

**W**e all know something about tragedy: we lose someone we love; we must leave a place we have called home; we make a decision that leads to consequences we never

wanted. Tragedy is a part of our lives as humans, despite all of our attempts to keep it at arm's length.

But what's the point of picking up a book we know to be full of doom and, by choice, entering so dark a world? Clearly, it's more "fun" to spend time with an episode of *Modern Family* than with Act 1 of *Macbeth*. So why do it?

We read tragedy for many of the same reasons we read other literary genres—because we respond to stories that show us people who are somehow *like us*, versions of ourselves under other circumstances. When we feel that characters bear some resemblance to us—are relatable to us in some way, although they may be very different—we become interested in them and can sympathize with them. But when a story communicates a certain kind of emotional truth to us, it goes beyond touching our sympathy. As we come to understand the people in it, we can also reach some understanding about our world, about ourselves and the people we know, and about the tragedies we have to face in our own lives.

None of us will ever face the same tragedy that Macbeth, a warrior in eleventh-century Scotland, faces. We don't live in castles. We don't honor kings. We don't think about killing them. And most of us don't believe in witches. So where do we find *our* story in his?

Shakespeare's tragedies move in and out of joy and sorrow, farce and gravity, in the same manner that we, in a single day, experience emotional extremes. Characters face some very difficult choice—as we sometimes must—and the story follows them as they wrestle with making their choices. In *Macbeth*, we see that choice made early in the play, and the assaults upon a man because of the choices he made. In tragedy, the hero faces some "fearful passage"—a path traveled for the first time where old answers and old behaviors don't work. The stakes are high and the risk to the individual—and sometimes to an entire society, as in *Macbeth*—is great.

As we follow characters on their journey, we may be tempted to hunt for the hero's "tragic flaw"—the character trait, or even

error in judgment, that one may say leads to the hero's downfall. Critic Russ McDonald, however, warns against labeling the hero as inherently weak and not up to the challenge, as someone who gets what he deserves. The heroes of tragedy typically display great strengths, says McDonald. Their tragedy lies not so much in a weakness of character, but in a "kind of tragic incompatibility between the hero's particular form of greatness and the earthly circumstances that he or she is forced to confront."<sup>1</sup> McDonald points out how differently the heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies speak, not only from us, but also from all the other characters around them. Their poetic language, he says, expresses their "vast imaginations." They see the world more completely than the rest of us do.

The tragic hero imagines something out of the ordinary, seeking to transcend the compromises of the familiar. We both admire this imaginative leap and acknowledge its impossibility. The contest between "world" and "will" that exists for those characters brings misery, sometimes insanity, and often death; however, it also produces meaning and magnificence. Through their journeys, tragic heroes and heroines learn something about themselves and about their lives, but it is an understanding which comes from a great deal of loss and pain. It has been noted by some scholars that in Shakespeare's earlier tragedies—such as *Romeo and Juliet*—that the hero and heroine do not gain insight from their fated tragedies. Instead, it is the suffering of those left behind who gain wisdom by facing the consequences of their own actions. In his later tragedies, lessons are internalized into the consciousness of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines through their tragic journeys.

We will never face the same choices Macbeth does. But we are likely to face choices in our lives that seem too big for us. That we will be required to go through some "fearful passage" of our own, where old ways of thinking and behaving don't work. That we will face head-on the consequences of choices we've made—and wish desperately that what's done could somehow be undone.

What makes theatrical art different from life is precisely its transient nature: what was done on stage dissipates when we emerge from the theater. The damage that is permanent and irreversible to tragedy's heroes is temporary for us. We close the book. We leave the theater. But if we enter that world for a time and come to know its characters, we may really come to know ourselves more deeply—we learn. And when our own "fearful passage" comes along, something we have learned along the way about ourselves and the nature of others may help us make our choice. ♦

1 Russ McDonald, "The Flaw in the Flaw," *Shakespeare Set Free: Teaching Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Peggy O'Brien (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993): 9.



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### A Scholar's Perspective: Hereafter

*"When shall we three meet again?"*

First line; weird move: Shakespeare opens *Macbeth* at just that point where an ordinary scene might end (conversation finished, meeting adjourned). The witches' question is all next, no now.

As, of course, is their pivotal prophecy: "All hail, Macbeth! That shalt be king hereafter." Hereafter: the word, ordinary enough, accomplishes extraordinary things. It muddles space (here) with time (after), and performs upon Macbeth a paralyzing temporal takeover. "Nothing is," he says to himself, "but what is not"; Samuel Johnson paraphrased the line this way: "Nothing is present to me but that which is really future." Here is nothing, after is all in all.

In *Macbeth's* dark music, hereafter works as both time signature and tonal center. It establishes the shapes of time through which we'll move, and the idea of time to which we'll restlessly return. Eerily, Lady Macbeth repeats the word even though she has not heard the witches speak it (is she somehow their collaborator?) when she greets her husband at his homecoming:

*Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!  
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!*

Echoing the witches, she also outpaces them in forward thrust. They hailed her husband; she hails the future itself:

*Thy letters have transported me  
Beyond the ignorant present, and I feel now  
The future in the instant.*

For her this is liberation, ecstasy; for Macbeth, shaken by these new tricks of time, the inescapable ignorance of the present remains intermittently worth clinging to. "We will proceed no further in this business," he declares, shortly before surrendering his stasis and colluding in their now-copular momentum. *Macbeth's* marriage scenes, among the most profound in any play, track the tensions and torments of two lovers differently disordered by the ways in which they have come unstuck in time.

It is a harrowing measure of their intimacy that, at play's midpoint, they switch derangements. He hurtles towards the future (the next desperate murder, the next deluding prophecy); she stays stuck in the past ("Out, damned spot"), with an obsessiveness that quickly draws her down to madness and annihilation. In the nightmare word-music with which Macbeth receives the news of her death, Shakespeare orchestrates the whole play's terrifying vision of what the mortal mind can do with time. He starts by tapping his keyword (once more, and for the last time) as though it were a tuning fork:

*She should have died hereafter:  
There would have been a time for such a word.—  
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.*



**Macbeth's marriage scenes, among the most profound in any play, track the tensions and torments of two lovers differently disordered by the ways in which they have come unstuck in time.**



# MACBETH

Macbeth here mourns not his wife so much as her mind's timings, which, in the hypnotic overlap and shuttle of the lines that follow, he will not only remember but relive. The ecstasy that Lady Macbeth savored at her husband's homecoming ("I feel now / The future in the instant") is here horrifically fulfilled: in Macbeth's merciless reckoning of ordinary time, the future perpetuates the blank ignorance of the present, invading each instant in an ongoing usurpation, an endless, empty repetition. Though he mentions his wife only at the start, his soliloquy is nonetheless their marriage's monument: her all-hail hereafter has become first their shared and now his solitary hell.

And by the logic of his language, our hell too. Tomorrow is hereafter's everyday incarnation. Repeating the word as relentlessly and obsessively as his wife once spoke of spots, Macbeth makes it encompass all the everyday processes of deferral—procrastination, hope, ambition, worry, fear, desire—by which we invite the future to distort, dissolve, or paralyze the present, transforming time's abundance into the vacancy of "all our yesterdays." "I have supped full of horrors," Macbeth declares, and by play's end so have we: witches, apparitions, murdered parents and slaughtered children. But running under all of these is a phenomenon perhaps more frightening because more familiar: the havoc wrought by the human mind as it makes its tortured way through ordinary time.

For this core horror, the stage itself (Macbeth and Shakespeare know) can serve as apt and painful proving ground:

*Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more ...*

Time always works strangely at the playhouse. Attending a new play, the audience dwells (like the characters) mostly in the here and now; only the actors know (scene by scene, line by line) what comes next. But *Macbeth's* long run (four centuries and counting) has intensified our susceptibility to its tragedy of time. Deeply schooled in its plot, we too know what happens next. Taking our seats, we enter willingly and even eagerly (this is one of the mighty mysteries of theatergoing) into a peculiar temporal contract: we will inhabit the here and the after simultaneously; we will bear the burden of foreknowledge as we watch Macbeth and his Lady make their agonizing way from all-hail to all hell; we will feel the force and terror of their future in the instant that the first witch speaks. ♦



photo by Liz Lauren

The ghost of Banquo appears as members of the ensemble gather around Macbeth's table in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2009 production of *Macbeth*, directed by Barbara Gaines



## 1600s & 1700s

*To the playhouse, where we saw Macbeth, which, though I have seen it often, yet is it one of the best plays for a stage, and a variety of dancing and music, that ever I saw.*

–**Samuel Pepys**, 1667

*In reading some bombast speeches of Macbeth, which are not to be understood, [Ben Jonson] us'd to say that it was horror, and I am much afraid that this is so.*

–**John Dryden**, 1667

*To say much in the Praise of this Play I cannot, for the Plot is a sort of History, and the Character of Mackbeth (sic) and his Lady are too monstrous (sic) for the Stage. But it has obtained, and in too much Esteem with the Million for any Man yet to say much against it.*

–**Charles Giddon**, 1710

*The Arguments by which Lady Macbeth persuades Her Husband to commit the Murder afford a Proof of Shakespeare's Knowledge of Human Nature. She urges the Excellence and Dignity of Courage, a glittering Idea which has dazzled Mankind from Age to Age, and animated sometimes the House-breaker and sometimes the Conqueror; but this Sophism Macbeth has for ever destroyed by distinguishing true from false Fortitude in a Line and a half, of which it may almost be said that they ought to bestow Immortality on the Author though all his other Productions had been lost. "I dare do all that may become a Man, / Who dares do more is none."*

–**Samuel Johnson**, 1745

*This nation has in all ages been much more addicted to folly and superstition than any other whatever. The belief of GHOSTS and APPARITIONS is at present as strongly implanted in the minds of the major part of the inhabitants of this kingdom as it was in the days when ignorance and want of knowledge and experience blinded the eyes of man. I have always looked upon this foible as the creation of guilt or weakness. FEAR is at the centre of both... In the tragedy of Macbeth the bard has finely pictured the condition of a guilty mind, and the scene when MACBETH goes to murder DUNCAN is one of the strongest proofs that a GHOST or APPARITION proceeds either from GUILT or FEAR, or is a mixture of both.*

–**Arthur Murphy**, 1754

*...the poet has given to Macbeth the very temper to be wrought upon by such suggestions. The bad man is his own tempter.*

*Richard III had a heart that prompted him to do all that the worst demon could have suggested, so that the witches had been only an idle wonder in his story; nor did he want such a counselor as Lady Macbeth...But Macbeth, of a generous disposition, and good propensities, but with vehement passions and aspiring wishes, was a subject liable to be seduced by splendid prospects, and ambitious counsels... Macbeth's emotions are the struggles of conscience; his agonies are the agonies of remorse. They are lessons of justice, and warnings to innocence. I do not know that any dramatic writer, except Shakespear (sic), has set forth the pangs of guilt separate from the fear of punishment.*

–**Elizabeth Montagu**, 1769

*Every Play of Shakespere (sic) abounds with instances of his excellence in distinguishing characters...but because the contrast makes the distinction more apparent; and of these none seem to agree so much in situation, and to differ so much in disposition, as RICHARD THE THIRD and MACBETH. Both are soldiers, both usurpers; both attain the throne by the same means, by treason and murder; and both lose it too in the same manner, in battle against the person claiming it as lawful heir. Perfidy, violence and tyranny are common to both; and those only, their obvious qualities, would have been attributed indiscriminately to both by an ordinary dramatic writer. But Shakespere, in conformity to the truth of history, as far as it led him, and by improving upon the fables which have been blended with it, has ascribed opposite principles and motives to the same designs and actions, and various effects to the operation of the same events upon different tempers.*

*Richard and Macbeth, as represented by him, agree in nothing but their fortunes... Ambition is common to both; but in Macbeth it proceeds only from vanity, which is flattered and satisfied by the splendour of a throne: in Richard it is founded upon pride; his ruling passion is the lust of power. But the crown is not Macbeth's pursuit through life: he had never thought of it till it was suggested to him by the witches... The crimes Richard commits are for his advancement, not for his security: he is not drawn from one into another; but he premeditates several before he begins... A distinction still stronger is made in the article of courage, though both are possessed of it even to an eminent degree; but in Richard it is intrepidity, and in Macbeth no more than resolution: in him it proceeds from exertion, not from nature; in enterprise he betrays a degree of fear, though he is able, when occasion requires, to stifle and subdue it.*

–**Thomas Whately**, c. 1772

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

## 1600s & 1700s continued

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*This short dialogue between Duncan and Banquo, whilst they are approaching the gates of Macbeth's castle (1.6.1-10) has always appeared to me a striking instance of what in painting is termed repose. Their conversation very naturally turns upon the beauty of its situation...The subject of this quiet and easy conversation gives that repose so necessary to the mind after the tumultuous bustle of the preceding scenes, and perfectly contrasts the scene of horror that immediately succeeds. It seems as if Shakespeare asked himself, What is a prince likely to say to his attendants on such an occasion? Whereas the modern writers seem, on the contrary, to be always searching for new thoughts, such as would never occur to men in the situation which is represented.*

—Joshua Reynolds, 1780

*The late Mr. Whately's Remarks [see above]...have shown with the utmost clearness of distinction and felicity of arrangement, that what in Richard III is fortitude, in Macbeth is no more than resolution. But this judicious critic having imputed the cause of Macbeth's inferiority in courage to his natural disposition, induces me to dissent in one particular... Throughout such parts of this drama as afford opportunities for a display of personal bravery, Macbeth sometimes screws his courage to the sticking place but never rises into constitutional heroism. Instead of meditating some decisive stroke on the enemy, his restless and self-accusing mind discharges itself in splenetic effusions and personal invectives on the attendants about his person. His genuine intrepidity had forsaken him when he ceased to be a virtuous character. He would not deceive himself into confidence, and depends on forced alacrity, and artificial valour, to extricate him from his present difficulties.*

—Thomas Davies, 1784

## 1800s

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*Though some resemblance may be traced between the Charms in Macbeth, and the Incantations in [Middleton's The Witch], which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakspeare (sic). His Witches are distinguished from the Witches of Middleton by essential differences. [Middleton's] are creatures to whom man or woman plotting some dire mischief might resort for occasional consultation. [Shakespeare's] originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet with Macbeth's, he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. [Middleton's] Witches can hurt the body; [Shakespeare's] have power over the soul. Hecate in Middleton has a Son, a low buffoon; the hags of Shakspeare have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul Anomalies, of whom we know not whence they are sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending... The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth.*

—Charles Lamb, 1808

*The low porter soliloquy I believe written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakespeare's consent—and that finding it take, he with the remaining ink of a pen otherwise employed just interpolated it with the sentence, 'I'll devil-porter it no further...' Of the rest not one syllable has the ever-present being of Shakespeare.*

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, c. 1813

*Macbeth (generally speaking) is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakespeare's (sic) plays. It moves upon the verge of an abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death. The action is desperate and the reaction is dreadful. It is a huddling together of fierce extremes, a war of opposite natures which of them shall destroy the other... The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under our feet. Shakespeare's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion.*

—William Hazlitt, 1817

## 1800s continued

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*Macbeth has forgot that he was born of woman... In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers and the murder must be insulated—cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs—locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested, laid asleep, tranced, racked into a dread armistice, time must be annihilated, relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is that, when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended it.*

—Thomas de Quincey, 1823

*We must then bear in mind, that the first idea of murdering Duncan is not suggested by Lady Macbeth to her husband: it springs within his mind, and is revealed to us before his first interview with his wife—before she is introduced, or even alluded to... It will be said, that the same 'horrid suggestion' presents itself spontaneously to her on the reception of his letter; or rather, that the letter itself acts upon her mind as the prophecy of the Weird Sisters on the mind of her husband, kindling the latent passion for empire into a quenchless flame... The guilt is thus more equally divided than we should suppose, when we hear people pitying 'the noble nature of Macbeth,' bewildered and goaded on to crime, solely or chiefly by the instigation of his wife.*

—Anna Brownell Jameson, 1833

*The poet has endowed these creatures [the weird sisters] with the power to tempt and delude men, to entangle them with oracles of double meaning, with delusion and deception, and even to try them, as Satan in the book of Job, with sorrow and trouble, with storms and sickness; but they have no authority with fatalistic power to do violence to the human will. Their promises and their prophecies leave ample scope for freedom of action; their occupations are 'deeds without a name.' They are simply the embodiment of inward temptation; they come in storm and vanish in air, like corporeal impulses, which, originating in the blood, cast sisters only in the sense in which men carry their own fates within their own bosoms. Macbeth, in meeting them, has to struggle against no external power, but only with his own nature; they bring to light the vile*

*side of his character... He does not stumble upon the plans of his royal ambition, because the allurements approach him from without; but his temptation is sensibly awakened in him, because those plans have long been slumbering in his soul. Within himself dwell the spirits of evil which allure him with the delusions of his aspiring mind.*

—G. G. Gervinus, 1849-50

*[The weird sisters, says Gervinus], 'are simply the embodiment of inward temptation.' They are surely much more than this. If we must regard the entire universe as a manifestation of an unknown somewhat which lies behind it, we are compelled to admit that there is an apocalypse of power auxiliary to vice, as real as there is a manifestation of virtuous energy... The history of the race, and the social medium in which we live and breathe, have created forces of good and evil which are independent of the will of each individual man and woman. The sins of past centuries taint the atmosphere of today. We move through the world subject to accumulated forces of evil and of good outside ourselves.*

—Edward Dowden, 1881

*Macbeth is not an historical play, though the chief personages that appear in it have a place in history. On the contrary, its soul is mythical, and it belongs to an age of fable as thoroughly as Oedipus. Even in Holinshed, the chronicler from whom the poet derived almost wholly the outer body of his drama, the narrative is mythical, changing suddenly from the dry fact into a Marvelous Tale... But Shakespeare has taken these mythical outlines, and filled them with human motives and actions... We must grasp the very heart of the poet's conception: the Weird Sisters are both outside and inside the man. They are twofold, yet this twofoldness must be seen at last in unity, as the double manifestation of the same ultimate spiritual fact. So all mythology must be grasped: the deities of Homer are shown both as internal and external in relation to the action person. So too Religion teaches: God is in the world, is its ruler, but He is also in the heart of man... Such is the grand mythical procedure of the poet, itself two-sided, and requiring the reader to be two-sided; he must have two eyes, and both open yet one vision.*

—Denton J. Snider, 1887

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

## 1900s

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*If you want to know the truth about Lady Macbeth's character, she hasn't one. There never was no such person. She says things that will set people's imagination to work if she says them in the right way: that is all. I know: I do it myself. You ought to know: you set people's imaginations to work, don't you? Though you know very well that what they imagine is not there, and that when they believe you are thinking ineffable things you are only wondering whether it would be considered vulgar to have shrimps for tea, or whether you could seduce me into ruining my next play by giving you a part in it.*

**–George Bernard Shaw**, 1921, Letter to actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell

*We are confronted by mystery, darkness, abnormality, hideousness: and therefore by fear. The word 'fear' is ubiquitous. All may be unified as symbols of this emotion. Fear is predominant. Everyone is afraid. There is scarcely a person in the play who does not feel and voice at some time a sickening, nameless terror. The impact of the play is thus exactly analogous to a nightmare, to which state there are many references.*

**–G. Wilson Knight**, 1930

*Macbeth surrendered his soul before the play begins. When we first see him he is already invaded by those fears which are to render him vicious and which are finally to make him abominable. They will also reveal him a great poet.*

**–Mark van Doren**, 1939

*But Macbeth is at bottom any man of noble intentions who gives way to his appetites. And who at one time or another has not been that man? Who, looking back over his life, cannot perceive some moral catastrophe that he escaped by inches? Or did not escape. Macbeth reveals how close we who thought ourselves safe may be to the precipice. Few readers, however, feel any such kinship with Macbeth as they do with Hamlet. We do not expect to be tempted to murder; but we do know what it is to have a divided soul. Yet Hamlet and Macbeth are imaginative brothers. The difference is that Macbeth begins more or less where Hamlet left off.*

**–Harold C. Goddard**, 1951

*That the man who breaks the bonds that tie him to other men... is at the same time violating his own nature and thwarting his own deepest needs, is something that the play dwells on with a special insistence.*

**–L.C. Knights**, 1959

*The actor, who impersonates Macbeth, is the priest whose duty it is, with a liturgy of words and gesture, to commemorate the sacrifice of a crowned king. He is directly connected by historical sequence with his forerunners, who, as priests at the altar, shed the blood of human sacrifice. The bloodshed now is symbolical, imaginary; but the ritual is still concerned with sacrifice.*

**–Tyrone Guthrie**, 1962

*Macbeth is not a play about the moral crime of murder; it is a play about the dramatically conventional crime of killing the lawful and anointed king. The convention gives a ritual quality to the action, and the element of reversed magic to the imagery that enables the poet to identify the actors with the powers of nature.*

**–Northrop Frye**, 1965

*This is the work of time; as usual in Shakespeare, evil, however great, burns itself out, and time is the servant of providence. Nowhere is this clearer than in Macbeth.*

**–Frank Kermode**, 1972

*Macbeth appeals to us, even as he repels us, by his unspoken and perhaps unspeakable intuitions of a life within himself and beyond himself to which we too respond, and tremble as we do.*

**–Maynard Mack, Jr.**, 1973

*In simplest terms, what has been shown is that killing the king is almost inevitably to be attempted and yet is almost inevitably unperformable. The king can be killed, but the whole world, human, natural, and supernatural, reacts to offer a new king. Regicide is finally in some strange way impossible, for better and for worse.*

**–Maynard Mack, Jr.**, 1973

## 1900s continued

*Why had the severed head to be brought back? Precisely because it too focuses our response: we no sooner see it than we decide, if only unconsciously, that this is not Macbeth. The head, from which life has fled, represents the tyrant, the outer man; it serves as a ghastly reminder that there was an inner man. No one of the survivors can speak for the Macbeth of the soliloquies: we, the audience, have to do so for ourselves, and the play's tragic effect depends upon our accepting this challenge.*

–E.A.J. Honigmann, 1976

*Critics who chide me for dwelling on unpleasant and even bloody subjects miss the point: art shows us how to get through and transcend pain, and a close reading of any tragic work (Macbeth comes immediately to mind) will allow the intelligent reader to see how and why the tragedy took place, and how we, personally, need not make these mistakes. The more violent the murders in Macbeth, the more relief one can feel at not having to perform them. Great art is cathartic; it is always moral.*

–Joyce Carol Oates, c. 1980

*A world that maintains itself by violence must, for the sake of sanity, fence off some segment—family, the block, the neighborhood, the state—within which violence is not the proper mode of action. In this 'civilized' segment of the world, law, custom, hierarchy, and tradition are supposed to supersede the right of might. Although this inner circle is no more 'natural' or 'unnatural' than the outer one... the play insists that the inner world is bound in accordance with a principle of nature which is equivalent to a divine law.*

–Marilyn French, 1981



photo by Liz Lauren

Celeste Williams as Lady Macbeth in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 1994 abridged production of *Macbeth*

*Shakespearean tragedy constitutes an extraordinary balancing act in which the theater explores the most mystifying contradictions in human experience; and, unlike later attempts by dramatists and literary critics alike to explain away the mysteries, it has come down to us not only as our heritage but as our contemporary.*

–Norman Rabkin, 1984

*In a fairy tale such wishes would cost us dearly, and justly; yet we cannot really feel guilty for having them. In his susceptibility to conventional human desires, and his momentary willingness to forget the reasons they must be suppressed, Macbeth is one of us.*

–Robert Watson, 1984

*A claim to a monopoly of legitimate violence is fundamental in the development of the modern State; when that claim is successful, most citizens learn to regard State violence as qualitatively different from other violence and perhaps they don't think of State violence as violence at all... Macbeth focuses major strategies by which the State asserted its claim at one conjuncture.*

–Alan Sinfield, 1986

*At the end of the banquet scene I remember sitting watching him across that table—we couldn't have been farther apart, and there's such a lot of time for Lady Macbeth to watch him in the scene-watching, and knowing that in my attempt to give him what I believed he wanted, I had unleashed a monster. He was completely gone from me and he would never come back. It was a feeling of absolute hopelessness.*

–Sinead Cusack, 1998 (Lady Macbeth in the 1986 RSC production)

*In its self-conception, in its stage history, in the doubleness of its final tableau, Macbeth seems almost paradigmatically to be a play that refuses to remain contained within the safe boundaries of fiction. It is a tragedy that demonstrates the refusal of tragedy to be so contained. As it replicates, it implicates. Things will not remain within their boundaries: sleepers and forests walk; the dead and the deeds return; the audience stares at forbidden sights. This is what the plot of Macbeth is about.*

–Marjorie Garber, 1987

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

## 1900s continued

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*What he suffers from is the first form of fear... the fear of beginning or entering the process that will bring things to fruition, the fear of his own ability to make things happen, to bring the future to birth. Fear in this sense is inseparable from hope; it is even a form of hope. It is what the future inspires you with when you feel your power to shape the future at its height. Fear possesses Macbeth as a passion amounting to a belief that the future is not something which will simply happen of its own accord, but something which he can and perhaps must make happen.*

–Adrian Poole, 1987

*[Macbeth] cannot bear to wait. He cannot endure the 'interim.' Pondering interims is exactly what Macbeth cannot abide. That is why he is associated throughout the play with prematurity, with getting there or doing something before something or somebody else. This is a valuable quality in a warrior, in a life-or-death emergency. But Macbeth is always in an emergency, desperate to overtake, to leap over, to outrun.*

–Adrian Poole, 1987

*Lady Macbeth and her society confuse womanhood with manhood. In rejecting that which she has been made to think is weak and womanly within her in order to become cruel and manly, she moves away from her humanity toward the demonic, toward becoming a life-denying witch.*

–Robert Kimbrough, 1990

*The relationship between Lord and Lady Macbeth has been one of mutuality and sharing; yet they are prevented from attaining and maintaining a full range of human character traits because of cultural attempts to render some exclusively feminine and some exclusively masculine...The drama of Macbeth contains a fierce war between gender concepts of manhood and womanhood played out upon the plain of humanity. In a metaphoric sense, as well as in the final dramatic siege, Macbeth loses the battlefield.*

–Robert Kimbrough, 1990

*Macbeth is one of the Shakespearean plays nearest to the Greeks in its concept of Fate, and reaches forward to the twentieth century in its psychological insight.*

–Robertson Davies, 1990

*The reason that Macbeth can never be seen simply as a butcher, a vile renegade, or a foolish warrior who is henpecked by his wife and hoodwinked by some witches is because the complexity and subtlety of his mind are realized, through his language, to a remarkable degree.*

–David Young, 1990

*The key difference between Macbeth and Malcolm seems to be that the one cannot encounter the disposition to evil within himself without an accompanying compulsion to act it out, while the other can put it into words, which are retractable and, in this case, harmless. Malcolm will presumably be less corruptible in power because he can contemplate his own potential for sin, articulate it to himself and others, and then draw back from it. The word-deed distinction, crucial to reasonable human behavior, will be restored under his regime. Language will be less magical, behavior less compulsive.*

–David Young, 1990

*Macbeth is dealt a hand of cards with a king in it, but how he is to play his hand is left entirely up to him. ...It is Macbeth himself who must make the fatal choice. Macbeth is thus a tragedy about fate and free will, about a man choosing a morally wrong way to fulfill a fate and the tragedy that results from this exercise of free will.*

–Jerry Crawford, 1990

*His awareness and sensitivity to moral issues, together with his conscious choice of evil, produce an unnerving account of human failure, all the more distressing because Macbeth is so representatively human. He seems to possess freedom of will and accepts personal responsibility for his fate, and yet his tragic doom seems unavoidable.*

–David Bevington, 1992

## 1900s continued

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*Macbeth's error is that he misinterprets to his advantage the prophecies and warnings of the witches; he does, in other words, precisely what all of us do every day—he misreads a text, only we do it with literary texts, and so the consequences for us are relatively minor. The text that Macbeth misreads is the text of the world, of the shadowing moral world of good and evil in which misunderstanding can have fatal results.*

—Russ MacDonald, 1993

*He comes out of [Duncan's bedchamber] a changed man. Never can he be the same man again. There is not a single moment that he enjoys the thought of killing. It torments him, though it also impels him. And never does he enjoy the fruit*

*of his killing. He comes out of that room demented. He went into it terrified, as he says all the time; he comes out of it crazy. Lady Macbeth has never before seen the man who comes out of that door; he is a stranger to her. They have stopped communicating and there is no way that they will ever communicate again... Had she been other than she was he would not have done it. The thought may have been present, but so was the fear of the thought: the first time we see him think it his hair stands on end. Always the thought strikes fear into him...He does the murder for her, and it destroys them both.*

—Derek Jacobi, 1998 (*Macbeth* in the 1993-4 RSC's production)

## 2000s

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*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.*

—Diana Major Spencer, 2000

*It is surely impossible to deny that certain words—"time," "man," "done"—and certain themes—"blood," "darkness"—are the matrices of the language of Macbeth. In the period of the great tragedies these matrices appear to have been fundamental to Shakespeare's procedures. One might guess they took possession of him as he did his preparatory reading. That they are thereafter used with conscious intention and skill seems equally certain. They are one aspect of the language of the plays that show deliberation... In these echoing words and themes, these repetitions that are so unlike the formal repetitions of an earlier rhetoric, we come close to what were Shakespeare's deepest interests. We cannot assign them any limit. All may be said to equivocate, and on their equivocal variety we impose our limited interpretations.*

—Frank Kermode, 2000

*...the play itself equivocates, from the misleading riddles and half-truths of the weird sisters to the tortuous syntax and paradoxical phrasing that characterizes the protagonist's most famous speeches. The play's ambiguities and uncertainties infect almost every line so that nothing, be it the definition of*

*masculinity or femininity, the natural world, or the basic laws of friendship, kinship and hospitality, can be considered reliable or stable. In this play everything...is subject not just to change, but to inversion. As is often the case in Shakespearean tragedy, then, the restoration of order at the final curtain is largely a hopeful illusion, the playwright leaving more than enough loose ends to entangle the future.*

—Andrew James Hartley, 2000

*What ensues is a study in the deterioration of humanity. In Shakespeare's time 'conscience' was indistinguishable from what we now call 'consciousness,' and what Macbeth experiences in the aftermath of his crime is a process by which both are corrupted beyond redemption.*

—John Andrews, 2001

*The Weird Sisters present nouns rather than verbs. They put titles on Macbeth without telling what actions he must carry out to attain those titles. It is Lady Macbeth who supplies the verbs...[S]he persuades him by harping relentlessly on manly action. That very gap between noun and verb, the desired prize and the doing necessary to win it, becomes a way of taunting him as a coward.*

—Susan Snyder, 2002

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

## 2000s continued

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*We see Duncan exulting not only in the victory but in the bloodshed, equating honor with wounds... Yet the mild paternal king is nevertheless implicated here in his society's violent warrior ethic, its predicating of manly worth on prowess in killing. But isn't this just what we condemn in Lady Macbeth? Cultural analysis tends to blur the sharp demarcations, even between two such figures apparently totally opposed, and to draw them together as participants in and products of the same constellation of social values.*

—Susan Snyder, 2002

*For Shakespeare, tragedy will not easily give way to the efforts to deny it. In its endings, the exhausted survivors will inevitably seek to convince themselves that the tragedy has not only passed but also that its causes have been banished and the experience has at least taught worthy lessons. But the plays insist that tragedy is something far less reassuring, as the most seemingly reassuring of them, Macbeth, makes us see. Tragedy tells us that human cruelty is terrible and its consequences are not easily contained.*

—David Scott Kastan, 2003

*It is certainly the swiftest play of Shakespeare's, the play with the least amount of subplots, but it is deceptively swift and full of contradictions. People behave one way and then immediately question what they're doing, or they think they know what they're doing and find out they don't. Someone can be noble and ambitious. Someone can be angry at her husband and still be in love. All of those contradictions are very modern for me.*

—Michael Kahn, 2004

*What makes this tragedy so frightening—why it continues to lodge itself so deeply in our imaginations—is our inability full to explain it. Like Macbeth, we too find our answers always slipping away from us. The force of this tragedy in performance finally lies in its ability to entangle in uncertainties a character and an audience, both of whom search in vain for answers that remain as elusive as the weird sisters...*

—Margaret Jane Kidnie, 2004

*In Shakespeare's tragic universe, it does not take long—one night—to transform a hero into a murderer, especially if he has already spent the day killing. A bit of prophecy and a determined wife can for a few precious hours overcome conscience and piety, honor and decency. Once overcome, Lady Macbeth blithely claims, 'A little water clears us of this deed.' Macbeth knows better; somehow in that moment he knows that for the rest of his life he will wash his hands in blood.*

—Susan Willis, 2004

*The brilliant Polish critic, Jan Kott, asserts that no one can understand Shakespeare who has not been awakened by the secret police at 3 o'clock in the morning. For Kott, it's all about being behind the Iron Curtain, about living in fear. The themes of Shakespeare become so profoundly resonant when you live in that kind of vivid desperation, like the vivid desperation of so many of the characters in Shakespeare. And in Macbeth, bully and coward can coexist; it's that wonderful mix of vulnerability and invulnerability. That is what the journey is for him. He is taunted by that moment when he feels himself courageous, only to be followed immediately by that emotional letdown of realizing that now he is even more vulnerable, which then in turns feeds the invulnerability and the paranoia.*

—David Bell, 2006

*Shakespeare uses the supernatural world as a device in his early plays and then returns to it again in his late plays. There is this wonderful, supernatural compelling of what is, in fact, a human frailty—the human frailty of ambition. And yet in allowing the witches' presence, there is also an affirmation that this is more than simply one man's weakness. It is a weakness that allows for a human history of political manipulation. It allows us to be manipulated by our fates and destiny—to be, in the very big picture, led down the wrong path by 'keeping the word of promise to our ears and breaking it to our hope.' The witches become representative of all those things that manipulate people in our world.*

—David Bell, 2006



## 2000s continued

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*Macbeth follows a path where violence becomes more and more apparent as an easy, immediate solution. But a path that ends in what? Death and damnation and a horrible, tormented death. So like all Jacobean dramas, it is surrounded in a violent, paranoid world. That's where we thrust our audience, but it all ends in Macbeth's death, and the return to world order. The wages of sin is death. The price of death is death. 'It will have blood, they say, blood will have blood.' We know where it's going to end much earlier than Macbeth does, and indeed it does end there. So it's a very moralistic tale in that way, as all Jacobean drama was. It's not an allegory, it's not Pilgrim's Progress, but Jacobean, those wrongdoers, get their own. But there needs to be something compelling about it. We need to identify with Macbeth's world if we're going to understand his journey at all. That journey we need to see through his own eyes.*

**-David Bell, 2006**

*Directed, shaped, and redirected by a potent environment, Macbeth frequently appears to have little control over his passions, desires, or thoughts—a lack of control that raises critical questions about his free will. As the play progresses, Macbeth's prior fantasy of possessing a 'single state of man' (1.3.139) increasingly gives way to internal fragmentation and the competing agencies of those internal parts.*

**-Mary Floyd-Wilson, 2006**

*Lady Macbeth recognizes that her husband could act otherwise when she worries that his nature is 'too full of the milk of human kindness' (1.5.15); she anticipates that he may be easily swayed by feelings of kinship or pity, which are the very emotions that cause him to waver in 1.7. Despite his status as a warrior, which might suggest a resilient or hardened nature, Macbeth initially proves exceedingly passible—receptive to the witches' temptations, to Duncan's virtues, and to his wife's spirited rhetoric.*

**-Mary Floyd-Wilson, 2006**

*Shakespeare has a tendency to register sin in olfactory terms... The opposition is most poignantly illustrated in Lady Macbeth's remark that, 'Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand' (V.1.42-43). The 'smell of the blood' may be imperceptible to audiences, but it is certainly not just a metaphor to Lady Macbeth. Smell is...an index of inner moral truth.*

**-Jonathan Gil Harris, 2007**

*[Macbeth] is interested in the irrevocable act...that act from which you can never go back. I think in some senses we can all relate to that—the pitying finality of that, or the tragic finality of that.*

**-Rupert Goold, 2007**

*The most economical feat of dramaturgy ever, the place where most is done in the least time, is not, as might be thought, 'Let him be Caesar' in Julius Caesar. It is in Macbeth and it lasts less than a second. It is the famous 'start' when Macbeth is told by the Weird Sisters that he will be king thereafter. Shakespeare makes sure that we don't miss this minute bodily reaction by making Macbeth's companion say, 'Why do you start and seem to fear things that sound so fair?' What does the start mean? Some say that is simply signifies surprise. Others more shrewdly say, 'No, it means recognition.' If he had merely been surprised, Macbeth would have said, in Jacobean English, 'Why on Earth do you say that?' The companion, Banquo, is himself puzzled, as he would never have been by simple amazement, and detects a note of fear. Macbeth's start means, 'How do they know that I have already thought about this happening?'...There is no expert manipulator here, no lingo to coax the malleable psyche to the desired outcome. This time the crucial element, ambition, clearly pre-exists the moment of external activation. The effect of the prophecy of the Weird Sisters is simply to translate thought into action. They are a trigger. A gun is fired that might have remained safely in the cupboard.*

**-A.D. Nuttall, 2007**

*At first glance, this Macbeth does not look like a fellow given to self-reflection. On the battlefield he is every inch a soldier, with a ramrod posture and hard, appraising gaze that promise to keep wayward impulses in check. And yet you're soon conscious of a raw susceptibility—to errant thoughts more appropriate for a poet or a philosopher than for a military commander—that sets him apart.*

**-Ben Brantley, 2008**

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

## 2000s continued

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*Shakespeare's* *Macbeth* embodies the substantial paradoxes that we seem to be living with on a daily basis. As an audience, via the focusing device of Shakespeare's intelligence and eloquence, we are allowed access to simultaneous sympathy, dismay and *schadenfreude* during the journey of the play. These emotions are triggered not only by the seemingly unstoppable trajectory of *Macbeth* and his wife, but also by the actual state of impermanence that the play implies is the human condition.

–Anne Bogart, 2008

*Interpretation and its risks and dangers are at the heart of the play, and provide the keyword for Macbeth in modern culture. From the witches' prophecies to the 'equivocation' invoked by the drunken Porter, ambivalence and double meanings are everywhere.*

–Marjorie Garber, 2008

*Macbeth offers the best example in Shakespeare of a character who seems to age considerably in the course of the action... At the beginning of the play Macbeth is represented as a young, heroic warrior...By act 5, scene 3, Macbeth is 'sick at heart' and reflecting actively on images of his own doom.*

–Maurice Charney, 2009

*The play starts in war and ends in war. In the battlefield there are no rules. All the systems we've put in place to be moral beings don't count there. But where does the battlefield end and civilized society begin?*

–Gale Edwards, 2009

*Macbeth begins and ends in war. Duncan's regime is attacked by rebels from within and by invaders from abroad. Civil war and foreign invasion threaten the existence of his country. The fighting is fierce and brutal... It is important to remember that Macbeth is introduced, not as a villain, but as a war hero who saves a country under the rule of a weak king.*

–Des McAnuff, 2009

*On a domestic level, the Macbeths are familiar as a contemporary childless couple who replace baby with career and fiercely pour all of the love and hope normally associated with an infant into their single-minded partnership. Macbeth is an especially intimate (though grotesquely twisted) love story sandwiched between epic historical events.*

–Des McAnuff, 2009

*The play is so much about time. As the audience, we don't know if the events are happening a day or two days later, or a year later. It really is about creating a dramatic sense of time, not linear time.*

–Blanka Zizka, 2010

*I always thought it was principally about a man and a woman—a married couple who conspire to commit a murder. But I think what strikes me, thinking about it again, is that it's not so much about the fact that they commit the murder. I think the central event in Macbeth is watching them realize that they have committed a murder. Which is what's so disturbing about it. It's not so much about the doing. It's all about the realization of what we have done—and its terrifying lines: 'What's done cannot be undone.'*

–Declan Donnellan, 2010

*The strange, uncanny thing about [Macbeth] is that the deeds that the Macbeths commit, the murders, do not stay done: they return to haunt them. Yet, because their deeds are done, they cannot be undone: they cannot escape them. The Macbeths reveal...the very paradoxicality of action.*

–Brayton Polka, 2011

*Macbeth's dagger is neither there nor not there; we "see" it and do not see it at the same time. The dagger is at once in the text, in Macbeth's perception, in our imaginations, and (not) there onstage. Unlike the presence of the eldritch witches, the dagger's presence can be inferred only by its gravitational effects. Those effects transcend Shakespeare's deictic (pointing, indexical) dialogue to produce the effects beyond language [...] The actor must play an imaginative "as if" game in which the dagger hovers between percept and image. If the dagger is just a figment then the scene loses its power; if the dagger is "real" it is not hallucinatory, but a mime. The actor's soliloquy must instead build a verbal carapace around the invisible dagger that allows us to visualize it as charged negative space.*

–Andrew Sofer, 2012

## 2000s continued

*[Biblical] parables play a ... significant and extended role in Macbeth at both a linguistic and a thematic level. Language and imagery from these stories weave their way throughout the narrative in a number of intriguing ways. Important metaphors of seed, planting, roots, cultivation, growing, ground, secrecy, luxury, withering, time and death found in the play can all be connected to [various biblical parables]. Shakespeare does not simply 'apply' the Bible to his plays: rather, his plays are a space where the Bible and biblical ethics are actively interrogated.*

**-Adrian Streete, 2013**

*As many scholars have noted, this is a play where time is horribly disordered... What is less frequently noted is the degree of agency that this temporal confusion affords to the Macbeths. Lady Macbeth's advice to her husband, 'To beguile the time/ Look like the time' (I.v.62-63), is so seductive because it holds out the possibility that the ungodly Macbeth (personified as the second 'time' in this line) may be indistinguishable from the godly 'time' of providence.*

**-John Drakakis, 2013**

*Despite [...] associations between blood and the violent actions of men performed upon the bodies of other males, it soon becomes clear that the meanings of blood in the play cannot be so easily arrested, fixed or sexed. Far from being a true sign of absolute murderous culpability, blood may be smeared ...*

**- Dale Townshend, 2013**

*Of course, Macbeth must be the villain (or one of the villains) of the play. Yet he has much of the best poetry in it, and the 'glamour' he generates becomes readily available to a modern audience ... His replacement by Malcolm doesn't inspire confidence. The new administration has a reach-me-down seedy glamour that briskly ushers in its own shift promotions: 'My thanes and kinsmen,/ Henceforth be earls' (V.xi.28-9); these are confirmed by a hasty scramble to Kingship: 'So thanks to all at once, and to each one,/ Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone' (V.xi.40-1). That enervated final couplet sets its own scornful seal on the new order it describes. Probably it also confirms our modern suspicions. As with any new Middle Eastern war, an armed intervention might produce a new regime, but it will necessarily share much with what went before.*

**- Terence Hawkes, 2013**

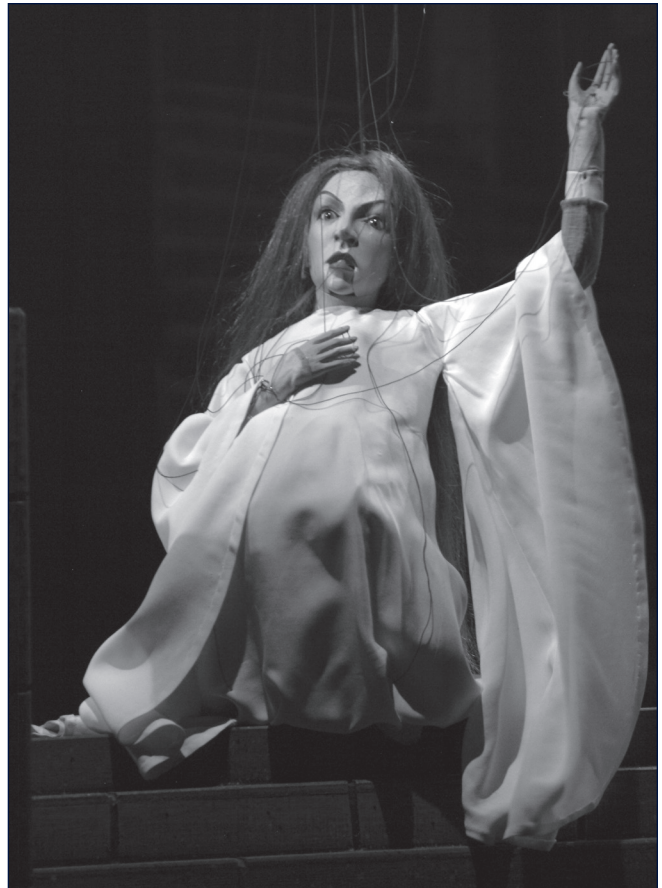
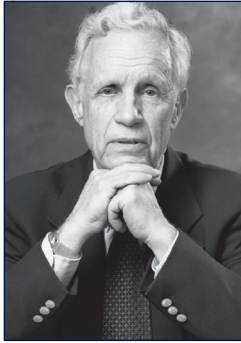


photo by Liz Lauren

Chicago Shakespeare Theater and Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla e Figlio's 2007 production of *Marionette Macbeth*



## David Bevington

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## Why Teach Macbeth?

In some ways, *Macbeth* may look like a hard sell for middle and high school classroom use. The play has no love story. The young people in it are murdered, or are enmeshed in political struggles about inheritance of royal titles. Women are in short supply. Lady Macbeth is a terrifying example of murderous ambition for her husband. Lady Macduff is brutally victimized, along with her children. Young men, like young Siward, are admired most dying bravely for their country's cause. Older men too are valued especially for bravery in battle, like the Captain who brings news to King Duncan of Macbeth's victory. This is an unremittingly bloody play—Macbeth's very name rhymes with "death." And who cares about the history of royal succession in medieval Scotland, anyway?

Ah, but the play has witches. And riddles. And a sleep-walking scene. And terrific poetry. And it studies a problem that we all, young or old, have to face: do we, as human beings, possess control over our own actions, or are we doomed to do things that will destroy us, even when we recognize the danger? If this self-destructive obsession is somehow a part of us, where does this corrupting force come from? How could such a thing happen in a well-ordered universe?

The witches are a good place to begin. They start the play, when we as readers or spectators in the theater know nothing about what will happen next. Who are these "weird sisters"? Why are they so intent on meeting with Macbeth? The witches are obviously sinister. When they next appear, they speak of killing swine, and of revenging themselves in some terrifying

way on a sailor's wife who has had the audacity to cross them. "I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do," they chant (1.3.10). *What* will they do?

The very day seems caught up in self-defeating paradoxes. "So foul and fair a day I have not seen," is Macbeth's first utterance (1.3.38), as he and Banquo come on stage to confront the weird sisters. The promises that the witches temptingly offer Macbeth are cast in the form of riddling self-contradiction. He will be Thane of Glamis, then Thane of Cawdor, and finally "king hereafter." When the witches then address Banquo, they speak similarly in a triad of paradoxes: he will be, they predict, "Lesser than Macbeth, and greater. / Not so happy, yet much happier." He will "get kings," though he will "be none" himself (65-7). How can these seemingly impossible contradictions be true?



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Macbeth is already Thane of Glamis, having inherited this title from his dead father. We as audience know too (though Macbeth as yet does not) that he is about to be named Thane of Cawdor, in reward for his victory against rebellion. How is it that the witches possess this news, which they then

use to whet his appetite for more? The witches are indeed "supernatural," he sees, since they have shown themselves to be capable of vanishing. Why does he characterize their utterances as both "ill" and "good"? Macbeth sees at once what this paradox means. "If ill, / Why have they given me earnest of success / Commencing in a truth?" He has just learned that he is now indeed to be Thane of Cawdor, from the news of this brought to him by Angus and Ross. Who are these "imperfect speakers," as he calls the witches, who speak so enigmatically and cryptically? How have they known that he has been named Thane of Cawdor? Most importantly, why does

this seemingly good news instantly provoke him to ambitious thoughts so dark and uncomfortable that he can scarcely bear to think of what lies ahead?

The “good” news in what he has just heard is obvious to him: he will be greatly honored and promoted to the kingship. But what will bring about this kingship? Will it happen by itself? Macbeth immediately considers this possibility: “If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me / Without my stir” (145-6). And that raises for us as audience the same imponderable question: if Macbeth were to do nothing else at this point but wait, would the kingship have come to him?—a great question for class discussion. We can never know, since Macbeth chooses not to wait. This is what we might call an existential answer to the age-old paradox of determinism and free will. *Que sera sera*, whatever will be will be, whatever must be shall be.

Another great question follows. How can the witches “know” that Macbeth will “be king hereafter”? Being made Thane of Cawdor has already happened, after all, even if we can’t figure out any rational or human way that the three witches could have found out about this before Macbeth did. But the kingship lies in the future. So, the witches must have supernatural knowledge that he will be king. But what does this mean? Do they know that it will happen even if he does nothing? No, it can’t be that, since that possibility remains unknown and unfulfilled. Then they must know that Macbeth will kill Duncan in order to become king himself. But how do they know that? Presumably they understand that they can tempt him that way. But they must also know that he will have a choice in the matter, and that he *will* choose to kill Duncan.

That is an unnerving thing for us to ponder in *Macbeth*, that he is fatally inclined toward murder and regicide even before the opportunity presents itself. This possibility is all the more unnerving in that it appears to us to be true. Why else would Macbeth greet what appears to be good news of an impending kingship for him by meditating, “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?” (1.3.135-8). Clearly he has contemplated the killing of the king already, without the prompting of the weird sisters.

And that disturbing truth is confirmed a short time later, when he is conferring secretly with his wife at their castle after Duncan has arrived on the unexpected state visit that now puts opportunity squarely before Macbeth and his wife. Making one last attempt to resist temptation, Macbeth tells his wife that they should “proceed no further in this business.” Her response is angry and incredulous: “What beast was’t it, then, / That made you break this enterprise to me?” (1.7.32-49). When did



The Weird Sisters in CST’s 1994 Team Shakespeare production of *Macbeth*

he “break this enterprise” to her by proposing a plan? It must have been some time before the play begins, since this is the first time in the play that they have been together. “Nor time nor place / Did then adhere, and yet you would make both,” she bitterly reminds him (52-3). It was his idea, she says; he was fully prepared to do the deed, and he was ready to do it even when no suitable occasion had yet presented itself.

Macbeth thus stands before us as a man not only capable of such a murder but as one who has previously pondered and discussed it. The weird sisters appear to know this supernaturally, and that is why, we now realize, they have come to him in this inveigling way, presenting a seemingly irresistible opportunity. Still, considerations on the side of restraint have to be taken into account: Banquo sees that the weird sisters are in league with “the instruments of darkness.” He sees that they speak in conundrums, in riddles, which are seductive to men susceptible to evil suggestion.

Macbeth too knows this. On the night of the murder, as King Duncan is banqueting in Macbeth’s castle, Macbeth’s thoughts are those of one who fervently wishes to be an honorable man and a Christian. He reasons that he might attempt such a crime if “th’ assignation / Could trammel up the consequence,” that is, if the deed itself could bind up and thus eliminate any consequences of detection and punishment, but he knows that “we still have judgment here” on earth to exact a severe penalty. Macbeth sees that the crime he contemplates is a multiple insult aimed at holiness itself: the intended victim is a king, he is a guest, and he is a decent and generous human being. The crime is thus one of regicide, of offending against the sacred obligations of hospitality, and of violating the most austere of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not kill.” How could an intelligent man, aware of all these potent reasons for not going ahead, nonetheless go ahead and kill Duncan?

# MACBETH

Such a question cries out for thoughtful discussion. The role of Lady Macbeth now becomes central, and it is one that is riddled with paradoxes. Why is she so intent on the murder of Duncan? Is it because as a wife she is ambitious for her husband? Or is she personally ambitious to be queen? Or both? Why does she insist that her husband carry out the actual murder, instead of doing it herself? In soliloquy, she offers a reason: “Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done’t” (2.2.12-13). What are her feelings about her father, and how do those feelings help explain how she feels about other men, including the one she has married? Was it an arranged marriage as many royal marriages were? Why does she accuse Macbeth of being “infirm of purpose” when he says that he cannot return to the death chamber with the daggers, and why does she do this herself? How does blood differentiate husband and wife? We note the irony of her saying, after the murder, “A little water clears us of this deed” (2.2.71), when we have just heard Macbeth agonizing over that very matter. “Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hands?” he asks. “No, this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red” (64-7).

This is of course hyperbole, but it speaks a truth in Macbeth’s mind, that his crime will prove to be ineradicable. It will incriminate him, and will cost him his peace of mind forever. The difference of interpretation between wife and husband is instructive: to her, blood is a physical substance to be removed with thorough washing, whereas for him it is an eternal brand of shame. He senses better than she that crime cannot long be hid. He turns out to be right in this, while she, less perceptive of moral consequences, will be tortured with dreams that lead to her walking in her sleep.

Banquo does die in a murderous attack by Macbeth’s henchmen, but Fleance his son escapes. Why does Macbeth’s sinister plot fail? Is it because Destiny will not allow this? (Recent productions sometimes play with the idea that the third figure brought on to assist with this assassination is none other than one of the three, who allows Fleance to escape under her arm.) Macbeth uses the word “chance” to characterize this unseen force (“If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me / Without my stir,” 1.3.145-6). “Chance” is, appropriately enough in what he says, a pagan concept: this is the Greek and Roman goddess Fortuna. Does this play invite the speculation that Providence is in charge instead? “Providence” here is not mentioned; though it turns up significantly in *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*, it is not a word often used by Shakespeare.

The affairs in Scotland seem to proceed with uncontrollable violence and deception for a desperately long time. When matters begin to turn against Macbeth, they can be seen as historically motivated: the nobles of Scotland grow increasingly

mistrustful of their tyrant king until rebellion arises almost of its own accord. The battle of good and evil in this play is one that is won by the good. Their perseverance in doing good, at huge personal cost and in the face that of a fallen world that offers little pragmatic encouragement for such perseverance, is an ideal that resonates in many of Shakespeare’s plays, not least of all in *King Lear* and *Macbeth*.

The riddles and conundrums in the last scenes of *Macbeth* are fascinating as the fulfillment of the weird sisters’ dark prophecies. Why does Macbeth insist on going to see them one last time, after he has already become king? What are we to make of their predictions that he should beware of Macduff, that “none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth,” and that he will never be vanquished “until / Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill / Shall come against him”? (4.1.71-94). We are wary of the weird sisters’ prophecies by this time, to be sure, but these warnings and guarantees of safety sound unsailable. The unravelling of the riddles, when the time arrives, comes in the form of contrived quibbles, but that is how evil works its will. Macbeth’s ending is one more confirmation of what he has himself come to believe. Life, for him, is “but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more”; “it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing” (5.5.24-8).



Ben Carlson as Macbeth with Danforth Comins as the ghost of Banquo in Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s 2009 production of *Macbeth*, directed by Barbara Gaines

photo by Liz Lauren

But is it no more than that for us? Macbeth's use of a theatrical metaphor to suggest the evanescence and meaninglessness of life are reminders to audiences that they are watching a play, in which all is illusion and theatrical sleight of hand. Yet paradoxically, the audience also understands that Macbeth has been defeated by brave men who have risked their lives in a cosmic battle against tyranny. The prophecy that Banquo's lineage will become kings in the fullness of time, though not actually represented in this play, is at last adumbrated by the death of Macbeth and the succession to the throne of his son Malcolm. Polanski's film and Jarzyna's stage production to the contrary notwithstanding, political and social order are restored. Historical determinism may be inevitable, and human beings often succumb to evil temptation, but humans still do have a choice.

The play seems to suggest that human beings will make a better choice if they are willing to die for truth and justice than if they fall prey to an omnipresent evil insinuation. Do readers today see the play in those terms? Or is the tenor of cynicism such today that we want to deconstruct the text in search of more contemporary messages? These are questions that readers and viewers should want to discuss. And those questions lead perhaps to the largest and most troublesome question of all: if human beings do have a choice in such matters, how are we to understand the way in which Macbeth and his wife gravitate one way while Macduff, Banquo, Malcolm, Siward, Duncan and others choose to persevere in the face of danger and death? Does Macbeth really have a choice other than to do, by his own will, what is already determined? What does it mean to be "a man," as Lady Macbeth derisively asks her husband? And what, finally, does it mean to be human?

For all these reasons, *Macbeth* is an immensely challenging play. Perhaps human beings have a choice, but in this play Macbeth and his wife seemed trapped by a predictable and unavoidable destiny. Even Macbeth's full knowledge of the evil nature of his ambition cannot save him from fulfilling that evil nature. Where does that leave us as individuals? Are we like Macbeth and his wife, or are we like the right-minded Scots and Englishmen who are willing to risk their very lives to confront and destroy evil? That question is a gravely important one. We can only hope that an understanding of the challenge will sharpen our resolve to be worthy of what is best in us. Reading and seeing *Macbeth* is one way to reach for that understanding.

A postscript...

As we contemplate the dark depths of Shakespeare's tragedy, we can begin to understand why *Macbeth* is universally known as "the Scottish play." Tradition has it that the play is hexed. It



photo by Michael Brosilow

Lesley Bevan as Lady Macbeth and Mark L. Montgomery as Macbeth in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's *Short Shakespeare! Macbeth* in 2011, directed by David H. Bell

is believed that anyone speaking the name "Macbeth" inside a theater will bring down disaster. One tradition proposes that Hecate, goddess of witchcraft and necromancy, whose sole scene (3.5) is sometimes cut from the text because the authorship is questioned, takes revenge by pronouncing a curse on those who have snubbed her thus. Or perhaps the playwright purloined some of the witches' best lines from an actual coven of witches who, when they witnessed a production, put a curse on the play. Did Shakespeare himself hex the play to insure that no production other than his own would succeed? One story tells how an acting company, needing a pot for the witches' cauldron, stole one from some actual witches, who cursed the play as a way of avenging the theft. Another legend avers that in the play's first performance, in 1606 or 1607, a real dagger was introduced on stage in place of a stage prop—with fatal results. (See Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature's Uncanny Casualty*.) ♦

# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

## A Look Back at “Macbeth” in Performance

**Whether his dramas should be taken as plays or as literature has been disputed. But surely they should be taken as both. Acted, or seen on the stage, they disclose things hidden to the reader. Read, they reveal what no actor or theater can convey.**

—HAROLD C. GODDARD, 1951

Through its 400-year history, *Macbeth* has remained one of Shakespeare’s most enduring and popular plays. Half the length of *Hamlet*, it is the shortest of Shakespeare’s tragedies. *Macbeth* maintains what some scholars have called “an intensity of tragedy,” which never lets up from the play’s dark beginning to its ambiguous conclusion.

*Macbeth* is also a play whose stage history has been shrouded in mystery and superstition. So strong is the belief among actors that the play carries a magic of its own that taboos still exist today against speaking the name “Macbeth” in the theater (outside the play’s text itself). Those who break the rules must perform time-honored rituals to undo the curse: leave the room, turn around three times, spit, knock on the door three times and beg to be readmitted!

The performance history of this play reveals a series of bad fortunes that *could* be viewed as being cursed. In its first production outside England in 1672, the Dutch actor playing Macbeth was having an affair with his Lady Macbeth—who happened to be the wife of the actor playing Duncan. One evening, the murder scene was particularly bloody, and Duncan did not return for his curtain call. Macbeth served a life sentence for his all-too-realistic murder. When Lawrence Olivier played the title role in 1937, he narrowly escaped death as a heavy weight swung from the fly loft above, crushing the chair where he had been seated moments before. A 1942 production directed by and starring John Gielgud had four fatalities during its run, including two of the witches and Duncan: the set was quickly repainted and used for a light comedy—whose lead actor then died suddenly. When Stanislavsky, the great Russian director, mounted an elaborate production, the actor playing Macbeth forgot his lines during a dress rehearsal and signaled to the prompter several times, but with no success.

Finally, he went down to the prompt box and found the prompter dead, clutching his script. Stanislavsky cancelled the entire run immediately.

While 1611 marks the first documented performance for which any written record still exists, we know that *Macbeth* was performed by 1607, when references to it in other plays appeared. Scholars are fairly certain that *Macbeth* was written and first performed in 1606—the year that Father Garnet, a Jesuit priest on trial for conspiracy in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, used “equivocation” to protect himself in his famous trial. (See “1606 and All That.”) The first published text of *Macbeth* appeared in 1623 with the First Folio—seventeen years after it was first performed and seven years after the playwright’s death. Like many of the other texts compiled by Heminge and Condell for the First Folio, *Macbeth*’s text was based upon the “prompt copy” used by Shakespeare and his actors in actual performance. A few passages in the Folio’s texts (and CST’s today, which are based on the Folio) are attributed to a contemporary playwright named Thomas Middleton, who was appealing to the special interest in witchcraft among his Jacobean audience. The witch named Hecate is, according to scholars, entirely Middleton’s creation, as are the songs of the witches in 3.5 and 4.1.

In early modern England, theater was eyed with suspicion by public authorities, who feared not only the spread of the plague among the gathered crowds, but also its influence upon an impressionable population. But to religious extremists, the theater’s pageantry was viewed as sacrilegious, an unnecessary evil that should be outlawed. It was banned in 1642 following Cromwell’s overthrow of King Charles I (the son of King James I). When theater was once again declared legal eight-

teen years later after the restoration of the monarchy, Shakespeare was considered old-fashioned—and ripe for adaptation. William Davenant (Shakespeare’s godson, who also claimed to be his godfather’s illegitimate son) adapted *Macbeth* for Restoration audiences. The songs and dances of the witches assumed far greater prominence. Davenant

“made sense” out of what Shakespeare refused to. No longer did the audience see the world from Macbeth’s point of view; Macduff became the play’s hero and Macbeth its irrefutable villain, motivated by unbridled ambition.

For nearly a century, Davenant’s adaptation held the stage, and Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* disappeared entirely from production.



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# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

It has been suggested that the ambiguity of Shakespeare's own text appealed more to an audience who, before the outbreak of civil war, was wrestling with the questions the play raises: about absolute power, about violence, and about loyalty. It was not until 1744, approximately 150 years after Shakespeare first wrote *Macbeth*, that his play returned to the stage in the production by the famous actor and director of London's theater, David Garrick. Garrick, too, added lines that made Macbeth a less ambiguous character than originally drawn by Shakespeare.

The 1800s were marked by lavish Victorian productions of Shakespeare, and *Macbeth* was no exception. It was not until the early 1930s that a modern-dress production was staged in Birmingham, England. In Harlem in 1936, a young Orson Welles staged a modern all-black production of *Macbeth*—a "Voodoo" *Macbeth*, where his king ruled over a nineteenth-century colonial Haiti.

The most prevalent contemporary interpretation of Shakespeare's play portrays a royal couple who acts alone, motivated by the couple's own internal psychologies, with one or the other of the partners controlling the action. Another approach to *Macbeth's* text in performance places the human world against a powerful supernatural sphere in which the Weird Sisters dwell. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, as well as their counterparts in a human and corrupt society, are portrayed as insignificant players in a world controlled by Fate and evil forces.

A third interpretation of Shakespeare's text in performance understands *Macbeth's* tragedy as familial and intimate. The Macbeths are governed by their relationship with one another and with those near to them. Trevor Nunn's celebrated 1976 production by England's Royal Shakespeare Company starred Ian McKellan and Judi Dench as the tragic couple who lose each other along the way. First staged in the RSC's most intimate space and on a very limited budget, the action took place within a small chalk circle, in which the couple moved in a counter-clockwise direction, signaling the play's demonic associations.

*Macbeth* is said by some to be the Shakespeare play that reads most like a film script. Akira Kurosawa's famous film, *Throne of Blood*, explores a fourth interpretation, with human society as the determining and overriding force. The Macbeths act—but in

response to their world shaping their behavior. Kurosawa widens his scope through the use of hundreds of supernumeraries to embrace an entire political and social realm of violence and counter-violence. Society and human history are the root cause of tragedy in this sociological interpretation of Shakespeare's text.



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At Wisdom Bridge Theater, in Chicago, 1986, Shozo Sato directed a *Kabuki Macbeth* in which the Weird Sisters were on stage much of the time, mimicking the gestures of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and thereby suggesting that the movements of the two protagonists were under supernatural control at every turn. The murder of Duncan was made visual, rather than reported orally by the perpetrators: through

Oriental rice-paper screens the audience could see, in back-lit silhouette, the image of Macbeth raising an axe to accost Duncan, at which point Duncan arose and burst through a rice-paper screen onto the stage and out into the audience, pursued by Macbeth.

Shakespeare's play has also inspired several other television and film adaptations, including Ken Hughes's gangster film, entitled *Joe Macbeth* (1955), in which a Tarot card-reader tells Joe that he will first become Lord of the Castle and later, King of the City. In 1991, writer-director William Reilly returned to the gangster genre in his modern-day retelling, *Men of Respect*. The Weird Sisters are portrayed as gypsies watching a TV cooking show featuring a recipe for lamb's head stew, and Lady Macbeth frantically attempts with a can of bleach to make her bloodied hands guiltless. In 1997, the co-founder of the English Shakespeare Company, Michael Bogdanov (who that same year guest-directed Chicago Shakespeare Theater's production of *Timon of Athens* at the Ruth Page Theatre), directed the play with residents of a government-subsidized housing project in Birmingham; the documentary was aired on the BBC.

*Macbeth* was first staged by Chicago Shakespeare Theater as a full-length production in 1992. Directed by the Czech director Roman Polak the production was one of the first that the young company staged. Polak conducted the entire rehearsal process with his all-Chicago cast through the use of a translator, and the production was woven together by a series of visual images. Macbeth (played by Kevin Gudahl) and Banquo, returning from the battlefield covered in filth, stripped to loin clothes to shower

# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

in a rainstorm before returning to home and civilization. It was the company's first "water effect"—of many to follow. Polak covered his other-worldly witches in white gauze from head to toe, and cast his leading couple as young, virile, impulsive lovers seduced by their passions.

In 2005, Chicago Shakespeare Theater staged the world premiere of an adaptation based on Shakespeare's play, entitled *Kabuki Lady Macbeth*. Conceived and directed by Master of Zen Arts Shozo Sato, and written by New York playwright Karen Sunde, this retelling focused on the journey of Lady Macbeth, portrayed as the force behind Macbeth's downfall. Sato told the story through the 400-year-old Japanese theater tradition of Kabuki, which utilizes traditional Japanese dress, vocalization patterns, and the sound of the wooden "ki" to punctuate the story's forward drive. Performed in the 200-seat Upstairs at Chicago Shakespeare black box theater, the production was an intimate, cross-cultural experience for both the performers and their audience.

Then in 2007 Chicago Shakespeare Theater, in collaboration with one of Italy's oldest marionette theaters, Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla e Figli, created a new production, *Marionette Macbeth*, combining the 300-year-old artistry of Colla e Figli with the voices of Chicago Shakespeare Theater actors. With more than 100 three-foot-tall, hand-carved puppets, the

story of *Macbeth* was enacted by this troupe of Milanese master puppeteers. The production toured subsequently to The New Victory Theater in New York City.

From 2007 to 2008, breakthrough director Rupert Goold toured a lauded production of *Macbeth* featuring Patrick Stewart and Kate Fleetwood. Set entirely in a white-tiled space that functioned as field hospital, kitchen, and abattoir, Goold's Soviet-era production overlaid a harsh, terrifying political landscape with a surreal, claustrophobic emotional effect. Banquo's execution in a railway car was just one reminder of the modern-day plausibility of *Macbeth*'s political portrait of slowly escalating terror.

TR Warszawa's free adaptation in 2008, directed by Grzegorz Jarzyna, was set in a roofless tobacco factory in Brooklyn. Lady Macbeth licked Duncan's blood from her husband's hand before straddling him in a sexual embrace. Banquo appeared as a blood-soaked ghost wearing combat boots and not much else. Machine-gun-toting soldiers and men outfitted in kaffiyeh headdresses pointedly reminded the audiences of recent and current military interventions by the United States in the Middle East.

Stratford Festival staged a version of the play in 2009, which placed the action in a war-torn African nation. Director Des McAnuff used security monitors, press conferences, and ear-splitting weapons effects to create an Orwellian atmosphere that evoked memories of heroes-turned-dictators in the Sudan and Rwanda.

Chicago Shakespeare's Artistic Director, Barbara Gaines, took CST's 2009 production of *Macbeth* to present-day Chicago, in a modern restaging that spared no squeamish stomachs in its brutal treatment of eviscerations, stabbings and butchery. Set in stark contrast to this soldier's world of blood and carnage, Gaines's modern Macbeths moved in a circle of the urban wealthy, plotting murders at cocktail parties filled with the tinkle of jazz pianos. Featuring a Malcolm who bore a stunning resemblance to President Barack Obama, CST's production invited audiences to entertain very immediate political parallels. The unexpectedness of an adaptation like Warszawa's, McAnuff's or Gaines's, can encourage students to be adventurous and to see *Macbeth* as a play that need not rest complacently in routine interpretations.

In 2010, Gaines returned to *Macbeth*, this time to direct an operatic version, composed by Verdi, 1842-1850, at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Channeling damning visions of *Eve and the Fall*, Verdi's Lady Macbeth is more single-minded than Shakespeare's: she is the power-hungry, controlling demon that drives the weaker-willed Macbeth to his great crime. Verdi's

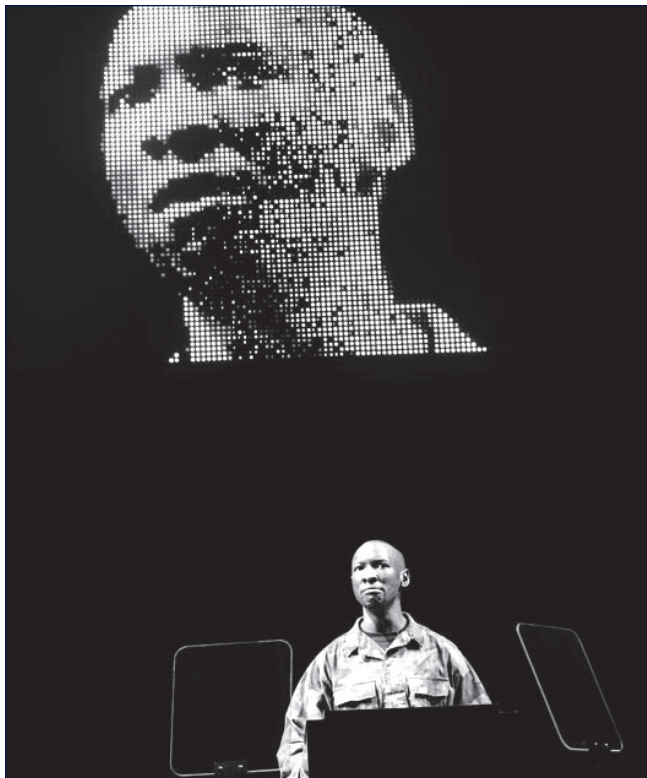


photo by Liz Lauren

Phillip James Brannon as Malcolm in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2009 production of *Macbeth*, Directed by Barbara Gaines

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retelling represents a variation on earlier fate-versus-free-will readings, with the wife as an almost supernatural source of evil and her husband, a more human, flawed will. In contrast to her 2009 production at Chicago Shakespeare, which was set in a contemporary and realistic Chicago, her opera production was timeless, with costumes and set pieces, like the themes of the play itself, spanning from ancient Greece to the contemporary era. She described the challenge of looking at the relation between the score and the text as a process towards understanding that “what’s really important with Verdi and Shakespeare—they share this—is that the music is completely character-oriented, as Shakespeare’s language is character-oriented.”

Several productions in the last few years have chosen unusual settings to probe various components of the play. The British company Punchdrunk conceived an immersive adaptation of *Macbeth*, entitled *Sleep No More*. Directed by Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle, this production has been described as a “Macbeth-themed haunted house,” inviting audience members to don Venetian masks and walk through the rooms discovering their own journey through the story. The actors perform choreographed routines that evoked specific scenes from the play, but never spoke. The widely acclaimed performance was extended past its original one-month run and is still being performed today, over three years since the original production.

Alan Cumming’s one-man production in 2012-13, directed by John Tiffany and Andrew Goldberg, set the play in a mental institution and used dolls and props to represent other characters. Along with focusing on Macbeth’s mental state and seeing the story through his eyes, it also drew more than usual attention to the Scottishness of the play by emphasizing Cumming’s accent.

Kenneth Branagh’s 2013 production added extra-textual scenes: opening with an extended battle scene not typically represented, the production also depicts the murder of Duncan. Performed in a deconsecrated church in Manchester, members of the audience sat on both sides of a tunnel, close enough to the action of the play to get spattered in blood and mud. Branagh’s performance was acclaimed for the breadth of emotion and the production for its immediacy.

The same play has been understood and brought to life in countless ways through four centuries. The never-ending search for meaning in Shakespeare’s poetry and characters is testament to the playwright’s power and genius. Each time a director approaches Shakespeare, he or she hopes to bring to light something previously hidden. And what’s quite remarkable about Shakespeare’s art is that, 400 years later, directors still succeed in doing that. ♦

photo by Michael Brosilow



Barbara Robertson as Lady Macbeth and Michael F. Goldberg as Macbeth in Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s *Kabuki Lady Macbeth* in 2005, directed by Shozo Sato

# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE



## Dueling Macbeths Erupt in Riots!

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* incited one of the most violent riots in American history.

Though it is a play swirling in superstition and violence, all of that stays on stage, right? Not on the night of May 10, 1849, in New York City, when a theater performance provoked rocks and bricks hurled in rage and language as hateful as any on the stage.

Why such passionate and chaotic anger? The altercation stemmed from a longstanding argument between two famous Shakespearean actors claiming to be the best—the Englishman Charles Macready and the American Edwin Forrest. The English Macready's acting style was intellectual, refined, and by American standards, more affected. By contrast, the American Forrest's style was emotional and explosive. An attractive, well-built man, he expressed the characters he played in a very physical manner. Each man was fiercely loyal to his own country. Macready believed Americans to be ignorant, vulgar and lacking in taste. Forrest resented the influence of English actors on the American stage. He once wrote to a friend that, "An American needs to reside in Europe only a few months to feel his own country is blessed beyond all others." The two routinely took turns trading insults and jibes. In Edinburgh, Forrest was booed from the audience at Macready's performance of *Hamlet*. Then, when Macready began his American tour, Forrest followed him from city to city, booking the nearest theater and performing the same roles. The competing tours took on the tone of a sports rivalry, one Macready could not hope to win against Forrest's "home field advantage."

The rivalry came to a climax in New York. On May 7, 1849, Macready opened *Macbeth* at New York's new Astor Place Opera House. Forrest opened his *Macbeth* just one mile away. The audience booed Macready from the moment he took stage. But he continued to perform until a hurled chair narrowly missed him and forced the remaining orchestra members

out. Macready bowed to the audience and informed the theater that he had "fulfilled his obligation." He planned to leave America on the next boat, but was flattered into staying by a petition signed by forty-seven prominent citizens, including noted American writers Washington Irving and Herman Melville. Macready decided to stay, and *Macbeth* was scheduled again for three days later.

In the following days flyers and handbills flooded the streets proclaiming: "Workingmen! Shall Americans or English rule the city?" The handbills were printed by the "American Committee," a jingoistic group that favored "America for Americans," and played to the public's prejudice against the growing number of immigrants competing for employment in the United States.

City officials ordered 325 local policemen and 200 members of the Seventh Regiment to keep the peace surrounding the theater. As police rushed in to remove people for throwing trash and rocks on stage, the battle escalated outside. Rioters began throwing bricks through the theater windows.

Protesters trying to set the Opera House on fire were arrested. The mob pressed closer, trying to force their way into the Opera House where Macready was acting. Finally, the police and soldiers fired on the crowd. The riot broke up and the theater was saved from destruction. Between twenty-two and thirty-one people died, and more than 100, including police, soldiers and innocent onlookers, were wounded.

And what happened to Charles Macready? Disguised, he left the theater with the fleeing audience. Catching a train to Boston, he left America by boat twelve days later and never returned. The night of the riot Edwin Forrest was performing *Spartacus* and, although authorities urged him to cancel his performance, he insisted that the show must go on. ♦



**In the following days flyers and handbills flooded the streets proclaiming: "Workingmen! Shall Americans or English rule the city?"**





## A Conversation With the Director

Macbeth guest director Kirsten Kelly talks with the Education team and CST staff about her approach to her production of Macbeth.

### What is a central idea in *Macbeth* that has drawn you in to your own retelling of the story?

The world of *possibility* that exists in the natural world is always evocative to me. You see these elements in nature that are so eerily beautifully [but] they're also warped. Life and death co-exist in nature. Is it "good"? Is it "evil"? When you see a tree that's fallen, gnarled and rooted over, something is happening there. There's mystery. What is that mystery when the world of nature intrudes into the world of man? And what is it when the human world and the things we've created as human beings, like kingdoms and status, collide with the power of nature?

### And are there elements of this human world and its culture of conflict that are critical to your approach to this story?

Yes, there is also something important about this intimate world of the warrior. The comradery of fighting for a cause, for your country—you are either with us or against us. The play begins with a major betrayal—Cawdor has betrayed Duncan and is sentenced to death, and the title is given to Macbeth. I think Duncan does this to make sure to keep Macbeth, his best warrior, close. And so when Macbeth decides to go through with the murder, it is a huge betrayal to his king, his friend and the brotherhood of his army—everything he has fought for up until now. And once Duncan is murdered, suspicion and distrust seep into everyone's mind. I'm interested in seeing how characters like Lenox, Ross, Angus, Macduff and Malcolm help tell the story of how their world—their brotherhood—has fallen apart.

### How have you come to understand the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth?

I am so interested in that moment when the couple first unites. They've lost their child and Macbeth has been absent from home and submerged in war. When he returns, it's not a fairytale moment of reunion. There is deep uncertainty in them both. And between their leave-taking and now, there has been the trauma of battle. I am really drawn into how they reconnect through their shared planning and plotting—and through their mutual ambition. Like any soldier returning from the front line,

Macbeth must wonder, What will 'coming home' truly be like? On her side, as a woman in that time who has not produced a child or an heir, she could easily be cast a failure. But if she can be the driving force of success for her husband, that would, I believe, motivate her deeply.

### Are they, in your mind, in love with one another—or only with their shared ambition?

Yes, I do believe that they are genuinely in love, but they are strangers now in two different lives, and what becomes paramount is that they reconnect with one another—at any cost. Plotting Duncan's murder and becoming king and queen is what begins to reconnect them and, as the plot grows, so does their connection. They keep reaching for it and it becomes their engine. I don't think there's a moment when Lady Macbeth says, Okay, if I can get my husband to murder Duncan, this will bring him closer to me. But I do think in that first scene, she can see the idea, the possibility of a new and shared future together so clearly, and it drives them both forward. Their conspiracy becomes something that is just theirs—not unlike the way a couple shares a child. And so, when he says "No more of this" and she replies "Was the hope drunk?" she feels rebuffed and is terribly hurt. It's not just about being king and queen; it's her thinking instead, You're betraying me. We were going to do this—together.

### How does ambition play into this relationship between them?

I think that it is their shared ambition that ignites a sexual energy between them. It becomes the engine that drives them. If it's just about being king, it's too removed. I kept trying to find answers for why people really have a drive to become, say, a movie star, a rap star, a politician or someone else who's famous. It *is* ambition and it *is* about power, but it's not the position, but rather the titillation. It all becomes a drug. We've all seen when somebody gets an award or somebody gets a really big role or important new position. There are people who deal amazingly gracefully with that and there are people who just get out of control. I think that's where free will comes in; one chooses how to navigate this set of circumstances, and somebody else may choose a different path through that.

### How did your vision of the play influence your adaptation choices?

One of the things I tried to do was make the web of evil become more intimate. I've tried to tighten the relationships and reduce the number of people running around. I'm very interested in the contrast between Macbeth and Macduff, not by way of saying that one is good and one is evil, but rather in a way of how

# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

each of their decisions to kill influence their behavior. I want to draw a parallel between the two pairs of husband and wife that this play presents us with: Lady Macbeth /Macbeth with Lady Macduff/Macduff. In our playscript for this production, I have Lady Macduff at the castle with Macduff on the night of the murder so that they have a stronger presence as a couple. You can see parallels between the two, but also how they're on different paths and what different decisions they make.

## **What interests you about putting on this production for students, specifically?**

It's been such a gift working with Chicago Shakespeare's CPS Shakespeare! program over the past nine years. Here, I've worked with these high school students and their teachers and tried ideas out, and I really see, from the student's perspective, what's landing, what's not, and what they're grabbing on to. With our student ensemble, *Macbeth* was one of the hardest stretches for them to see themselves in, and I became fascinated with finding ways that we could really excite them and foster that connection with the story. I think this story achieves that connection through its penetrating focus on good and evil, and how both intersect with war and the decision-making that goes along with it.

Connecting Macbeth's story to the here and now I think can be hard for students initially. And so I want to embrace the theatricality and I want it to be a story, and in this world of *Macbeth*, there is magic. I want to invite them to open this storybook so that they won't question or judge what the magic is, and why it is there. There is old-world evil, there is good; and these things are there in battle with each other.

## **Can you tell us about the design for this production?**

In working with Scott Davis, our set designer, we were interested in how this intersection between nature and humanity could become an inspiration for our set. An archway anchors the set from the start, but throughout the story as Macbeth goes towards what he believes he wants, the arch suggests a castle, enwrapped in twisting roots. It is nature climbing in and around what represents Macbeth's fortress and kingdom. And as Macbeth goes further and further on his rampage, nature and the Witches' prophecy encroach more and more. We watch as he and Lady Macbeth first build a world that

they desire and subsequently destroy. In our costume design working with Bob Kuhn, we started with a foundation of the medieval time period, but we didn't want to be completely tied to it. We didn't want it to seem like it had to be historically accurate. We wanted to create a world that was very different from today, a place where the story could be seen as a story in a far-off land, where a battle between good and evil could be wrought. Almost like fantasy or an intensive video game world where magic happens and the rules are very clear.

There's astounding beauty in nature—and there's also profound evil. Kevin O'Donnell, our sound designer, and I were talking about how elements of nature can be incorporated into music. How can a soundscape of wind help provide the tone and the eeriness and the suspense? How can the Witches' chanting incorporate the sounds of nature? Those natural sounds are like the calm before the storm—before the battle—begins.

## **How will you approach the notions of honor and war in your production?**

At the beginning of the play, there's a terrible battle, and evil and death surround the story. When you are so honored for being successful in battle, as Macbeth is, and you're lauded for killing for your country or for your cause, how does that *not* affect you? How can you not want that level of honor again and again? You get a taste for it, and it just grows and grows, and festers. Watching that path for Macbeth has always been fascinating to me.

## **Do you believe that Shakespeare in *Macbeth* is making a unified statement about war?**

No, I don't want the production to say that "war is bad." That's not an ideology I'm interested in. I don't think the play says that. Perhaps, it is a statement rather that war is inevitable; that, through time, it has always been and it seems like it always will be. And it's the same today in our world today. We are getting more and more acclimated to barbarian acts. And do we ever learn our lesson, or are we destined to remain in a cycle of violence? It's like a vine in nature: it grows and it twists around you and it winds into your brain, and soon there's no going back because, like Macbeth, you've gone too far.



**We wanted to create a world that was very different from today, a place where the story could be seen as a story in a far-off land, where a battle between good and evil could be wrought.**



# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

**The Witches are some of Shakespeare's most famous characters. How do you understand their role in this story and how will they be realized on stage?**

In this production we're starting with an intense battle, in which you see Macbeth killing and being honored for that. The Witches, who come into this story here, represent the collective evil of every battle in every time in human history. They are part of the warrior world. We'll see evidence of the weapons and elements of war that they have picked up throughout the centuries. In our production, they're ripped and they're filthy; their faces are scarred and their teeth are mangled. You can imagine that they have been present at every single war, ever. And they carry this huge burden of savagery and death. Witnessing Macbeth in battle unleashes their prophesy.

**How do they play into the drama's larger themes?**

We were very interested in the battle of good versus evil within both the human mind and within nature, and how these two worlds collide. For me, that's where the Witches emerge from. How can they come out of nature, but be called upon by human action? That's why I wanted to open our production with the representation of the battle, which lets that kind of evil circulate and gain power. The Witches come out of that moment.

For the Witches, it's not which side is honorable and which side is not. They appear in this place where a barbarian—and still human—release has transpired. In a sense, they are egged on by it, and so they too are part of that kind of barbarianism. It's not a judgment; it's a fuel. I go back to those haunting, mesmerizing, seemingly irreconcilable words: "Fair is foul and foul is fair." And the other line in that first scene with the Witches: "When the battle's lost, and won." That's every battle that has ever happened. ♦



Karen Aldridge as Lady Macbeth in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2009 production of *Macbeth*, directed by Barbara Gaines

photo by Liz Lauren

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Before You Read the Play

### AS A CLASS

#### 1. BARD BLOG: A TOOL FOR DISCUSSION

Create the beginning of a *Macbeth* blog on your class website to which you can add as you read and discuss the play. (To the teacher: Don't yet have a class blog? Check out <http://www.kidblog.org>, a free and simple website for teachers to create class blogs. You may also want to explore <http://wordpress.com/classrooms>, another resource for building a classroom website.)

Start your class blog by posting images or words that represent any information you already know or have heard about *Macbeth* or Shakespeare. As you study the play, add videos, headlines, articles, songs, etc. that remind you of characters, events, key objects, words, or anything else you feel is relevant to your reading. Give a short explanation about why your post is relevant to the play, or note the line or lines that prompted you to share it. You'll find more Bard Blog suggestions through this "Classroom Activities" section.

#### Guiding Questions:

- What words or images come to your mind when you hear *Macbeth* or think about Shakespearean tragedy?
- What do you already know about this play?
- What words would you list to best describe Shakespeare?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL1, W6, W10

#### 2. THE DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

Tragedy is part of the human experience. But what exactly *is* tragedy? How do we define it in literature and drama? And why do we choose to read tragedy? Why do we willingly read or watch a play that may remind us of the darkness in our lives?

Explore these questions about the genre of "tragedy." Break into five or six small groups. As a group, think about the elements that you believe make a book or play truly *tragic*. When brainstorming your list, think about other Shakespeare plays you have read, like *Romeo and Juliet* or *Othello*. Also consider other books or contemporary stories that you may have recently studied, such as *The Scarlett Letter*, *The Great Gatsby*, or *Of Mice and Men*. Come up with a group definition of "tragedy" by listing four or five tragic characteristics.

After a few minutes, reconvene with your class. After every group has presented its list, work together to compile a master list of elements that define "tragedy."

#### Guiding Questions:

- What is "Shakespearean tragedy?"
- Why do we read tragedy?
- What elements make an event, plot, play, or work of literature truly tragic?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W7, SL1, SL2

#### 3. DISEMBODIED LINES

(To the teacher: Excerpt from the play one line for each student. Choose lines that are rich in Shakespeare's language or are descriptive of character. Distribute a line to each student on a slip of paper, not revealing the character who spoke it. Since the students have not yet begun to read the play, the focus here is not on the characters themselves but rather on the language that the characters speak.)



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Look at your line(s), and as you begin to walk around the room, say it aloud again and again without addressing anyone. Let the nature of the line and the way you say it affect the rhythm and pace at which you walk around the room. Then, say your line for at least five other people, and listen closely as they share their line with you. Continue walking around the room, silently, making eye contact with each person you pass. Now begin investigating different ways of moving with these prompts:

- Pick up and slow down pace. If “1” is slow motion and “5” is running, start at a “3.” Each time you take on a new pace, say your line to at least one other student. Slow down to a “2.” Speed up to a “4.” Back to “3.” Down to “1,” etc.
- Alter your posture. Walk upright with your chest out. Hunch your shoulders. Strut with swagger. Shuffle your feet. Fold your arms. Swing your arms freely by your side. Each time you explore a new posture, say your line to at least one other student.
- Change your status. If “1” is the lowest status in a society and “10” is royalty, begin walking at a “5.” Now change to a “10.” What does a “1” feel like? Continue repeating your line to a fellow student each time you switch your status.

Now regroup in a circle, each student in turn delivering his or her line to a classmate opposite him or her in the circle, at the pace, posture, and status level that feels best to you. Sit down as a group and discuss the lines. Remember that this is an idea or brainstorming session; begin to imagine the world of the play you’ve just entered.

## Guiding Questions:

- What do you imagine about the character who speaks your line?
- Are there lines that might possibly have been spoken by the same character?
- What pace felt best with your line? What size? What status?
- Did any sounds of the words you spoke aloud in your line tell you anything about the emotions of the character?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R4, SL1

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 4. FIGURATIVE DOODLING

*(To the teacher: Choose a number of examples of figurative language from the text and print them on strips of paper to distribute. See suggestions below.)*

Read your line once aloud. Then, paired with a student who has a different line, read your lines to one another twice. With the same partner, identify a word or phrase in each line that evokes a strong visual image. Working alone, draw a picture of your figurative language, showing a literal interpretation.

Form a small group (about 4-5) with others who have the same line as you. Analyze each doodle, comparing and contrasting, and looking for greater meaning in the text. Work together to create a tableau, or frozen image, that’s inspired by your group’s doodles. Share tableaus and the corresponding lines with the class and discuss.

*It is **too full o’ the milk of human kindness** /To catch the nearest way. (Lady Macbeth, 1.5)*

***But screw your courage to the sticking-place,** / And we’ll not fail. (Lady Macbeth, 1.7)*

*Methought I heard a voice cry “Sleep no more! / **Macbeth does murder sleep,**” the innocent sleep... (Macbeth, 2.2)*

***Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?** (Macbeth, 2.2)*

***Life’s but a walking shadow,** a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage... (Macbeth, 5.5)*

*O, **full of scorpions is my mind,** dear wife! (Macbeth, 3.2)*

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Guiding Questions:

- How does this process reveal greater exploration into figurative language?
- How does the use of visualization and doodling aid in comprehension of the language?
- What was revealed by seeing others' interpretations?
- What was gained by physicalizing the figurative language?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R4, SL2

## 5. HOW INSULTING

You know how it just makes you feel better when you've said a word or two to someone in anger? Language developed to help us express feelings—and release feelings (and some words just by their very sound accomplish this better than others). In groups of 4-6: practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—the insults below that characters from *Macbeth* sling at one another. If the meaning of a word is not clear, don't get stuck! Keep repeating the insult and you'll be closer to its meaning than you might think.

*The multiplying villainies of nature / Do swarm upon him. (1.2)*

*[You] rump-fed runyon! (1.3)*

*You should be women / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so. (1.3)*

*[Your] horrid image doth unfix my hair. (1.3)*

*Pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell. (1.5)*

*Your face is as a book, where men / May read strange matters. (1.5)*

*False face must hide what the false heart doth know. (1.7)*

*This is a sorry sight. (2.2)*

*Infirm of purpose! (2.2)*

*Go the primrose way to th'everlasting bonfire. (2.3)*

*Where we are, there's daggers in men's smiles. (2.3)*

*Tis said, they eat each other. (2.4)*

*Ay, in the catalog ye go for men / As hounds, and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs / Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves, are cleft / All by the name of dogs. (3.1)*

*Thou art the best o' th'cut-throats. (3.4)*

*Never shake / Thy gory locks at me. (3.4)*

*[You are] quite unmann'd in folly. (3.4)*

*Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold. (3.4)*

*How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags! (4.1)*

*What, you egg! / Young fry of treachery! (4.2)*

*Fit to govern? / No, not to live. (4.3)*

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

*Those he commands move only in command. / Nothing in love. (5.2)*

*Go, prick thy face, and over-red thy fear / Thou lily-liver'd boy. (5.3)*

*[This] is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing. (5.5)*

*Thou call'st thyself a hotter name than any is in hell. (5.7)*

*Turn, hell-hound, turn! (5.8)*

*Thou bloodier villain / Than terms can give thee out! (5.8)*

## Guiding Questions:

- What are some of your favorite insults in this list, and why do those stand out to you?
- Which words are the most fun to say? Are there sounds in those words to help the insult to stick?
- Pick three or four of these insults and imagine what kind of character they would be directed toward. What specific weaknesses or traits do certain insults target?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, L4, R4, SL4

## 6. PUNCTUATION EXPLORATION

Read aloud the verse passage below from Act 1, scene 3, stripped of all punctuation. Read it again several times aloud, listening for the rhythm and to find the sense of the verse. When you feel you have grasped the meaning, add punctuation and compare it with the text. Why did you punctuate where you did? Punctuation and the fundamentals of grammar are some of the tools of the trade for poets and writers. After you've punctuated your text, compare your choices with the edited text you are using in class.

MACBETH:

*This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill cannot be good if ill  
Why hath it given me earnest of success  
Commencing in 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 present fears  
Are less than horrible imaginings  
My thought whose murder yet is but fantastical  
Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smothered in surmise and nothing is  
But what is not*

## Guiding Questions:

- How does a writer use punctuation to enhance and dictate the text?
- How would other forms or placements of punctuation alter what the character is saying?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L2

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## 7. PICTURES INTO WORDS

(To the teacher: find about five images of different moments from various productions/movies of *Macbeth* and give each group a set of pictures. Good go-to sites are IMDB, <http://www.imdb.com>, for films, and ADHS Performing Arts, <http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/>, for theater images—as well as CST's own site, of course! [http://www.chicagoshakes.com/about\\_us/production\\_history](http://www.chicagoshakes.com/about_us/production_history))

In small groups, examine each of the five images in your packet. What's going on and what is the relationship between the people in the picture? Where does the scene take place? What is happening? Take turns looking at the photos and write your responses down by each picture. You can also respond to comments your other group members have already made. After you've all had a chance to look at each image, try to arrange the pictures in the order in which you think these scenes occurred.

### Guiding Questions:

- Did any of your classmates write something that helped you to make your own connection to a photo?
- How might these scenes be connected? Why does one picture come before another?
- How did your groups' decision about the order compare with other groups? Would you change your order after hearing the thought process of other groups?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R7

## ON YOUR OWN

## 8. FOCUSED FREE-WRITE AND COLLABORATIVE POEM

Before you read *Macbeth*, it's helpful to think about some of the play's central ideas as they relate to your own life and personal experience. Take a moment to free-write some of your thoughts about one of the following situations:

Can you remember a time that someone you know predicted that something would happen in your life that seemed very unlikely—and then it did happen? Did you act differently or make any different decisions after this person said what he/she did? Do you think the predicted event would have happened anyway if you hadn't been told that it might? How do you think this person was able to predict something about you that you yourself had not?

Think about a time in your life when you were in the middle of a very tough situation. To keep going on the same course seemed impossible, but so did backtracking. What did you do? Were there other possibilities that you considered? Looking back, can you see some options that didn't seem possible then? If so, how come?

Have you ever wanted something that was out of your reach and been tempted to go after it, even if it meant doing something you felt you shouldn't in order to obtain it? Describe the situation. What did you want, and who or what was in your way? How did you decide what course to take, and what did you do in the end?

In groups of three, read what you wrote to your classmates. After each reading, underline the words or phrases that stood out to your fellow classmates. Choose one of these underlined phrases to donate to a collaborative class poem. Sit in a circle or U-shape and speak the lines in turn, with a contribution from each student.

### Guiding Questions:

- What predictions can you make about the play based on this activity?
- Were there any repeated ideas or themes in the collaborative class poem?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, SL6, W10

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## As You Read the Play

### AS A CLASS

#### 9. BARD BLOG

As you begin to enter Shakespeare's text, continue building on your Bard Blog. Use these ideas to get you started, or modify other activities in this section to a blogging format:

- Choose a character to follow through the play. Keep a running list of text references for that character—both their lines and other characters' lines about them. What does s/he feel about the other characters? How do they feel about him/her? How much does your character reveal about themselves through their own words and how much did you learn from other characters? Based on the notes you've taken, write a short summary of your character, such as one you would find in a contemporary script. What qualities do you think are most important to highlight about your character?
- At the end of each act, list five of the major characters in *Macbeth*. Write a single sentence for each that begins, "What I most want is..." Take a risk—there's not just one right answer! Then write a sentence for each character that begins, "What I'm most afraid of is..." (Is there ever a situation when what one most wants is also what one most fears?)
- One of the best ways to get at the "through-line" or dramatic progression in a play is to give each scene a name or title that captures the heart of the action. Directors often use this technique to help actors (and themselves) during the rehearsal process. As you read, give each of the scenes a name or title that you feel gets at the essence of the scene. Be as creative and specific as you can in naming each scene.

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, W3, W6, W10

#### 10. CREATIVE DEFINITIONS

Shakespeare uses words in his plays that are no longer part of modern American English. He was also making up so many words that were completely new to the English language that his own audiences wouldn't have known many of their meanings either! But in performance, now or then, actors use vocal expression as well as body language to help communicate their meaning to their audience, who might otherwise be left in the dark. As you're reading, jot down three words that aren't used in modern-day English. Then look your words up in the text's glossary or a lexicon—<http://www.shakespeareswords.com>, developed by Ben and David Crystal, is a free online lexicon.

Now, standing in a circle, say one of your words and its definition. Say your word again, this time making a strong verbal "choice" that helps your fellow classmates to understand the meaning of that word through your delivery. Pass the word to the person next to you, who repeats that same word with your inflection. Try playing with the sounds of the words, perhaps with the following prompts:

- Stretch out the vowel sounds.
- Exaggerate the consonant sounds.
- Speed through the word, or go in slow motion.
- Whisper the word, or say the word at full volume.

Once the word makes its way around the circle, the person who chose it will repeat the definition one last time and then the next student will continue on with his/her selected word and definition.

#### Guiding Questions:

- What definitions surprised you? Were there any that you expected?
- What sorts of different choices did you and your classmates make with inflection? How did these choices help you understand the words?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L4, R4, SL2

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 11. IN THEIR OWN WORDS

In pairs, as an actor and understudy for a part, select a character from the *dramatis personae* to explore through the play. Skim through the play and mark speeches or lines that appear characteristic. Select three or four small segments that seem to best portray your character and prepare to present them to the class—and defend your ideas! Elizabethan actors had to learn their lines and come to know their characters, having no more than their own part in front of them. They were given just their own lines with the cue lines that preceded theirs, and were never handed an entire script. (At the end of your study, go back and repeat this exercise with the same character. Present again and discuss the differences now that you've read the play.)

#### Guiding Questions:

- What information did you use, without having read the play, to select passages that appeared characteristic?
- Some characters reveal a great deal about themselves through their words, while other characters remain more elusive or may even intentionally mislead the audience. Based on your classmates' presentations, where does your character fit on this spectrum of truthful self-description vs. deceptiveness relative to other characters in the play?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL4

### 12. ADOPT A CHARACTER

(*To the teacher: Select several students to lie on large sheets of paper to trace their profile.*) In small “adopt-a-character” groups, draw, cut-and-paste or attach costumes to these life-size portraits. As you read through the play, use “caption bubbles” to attach quotes from the text that have particular significance for this character. Continue to costume the portrait and add caption bubbles, developing your character throughout the study of the play.

#### Guiding Questions:

- How did your ideas about the character change as you read the play?
- What in the text did you use to guide your costume choices? How did thinking about costumes develop your understanding of your character?
- Think about choices people make about how they want to be perceived (someone applying for a job, TV show characters, celebrities, people you know). What sorts of messages do they convey through their clothing? What sorts of messages might your character convey through their costume?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3

### 13. SHARED SYNOPSIS

This is a good refresher to do after you've finished reading an act—or after you've read the entire play. Sitting in a circle, choose a leader. The leader begins to describe the action from Act 1 (or 2 or 3...) until he/she has come up with three plot points, or can't think of what comes next. Then the story passes to the next person, who adds the next few actions. You can use the “Act-by-Act” synopsis included in this book as a place to check your own story against!

#### Guiding Questions:

- How did hearing the story from different narrative voices affect your understanding of the play?
- What aspects of the play or what characters were more difficult to recall or to describe? Why do you think this was the case?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, SL4

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## ON YOUR OWN

### 14. FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First—and last—impressions are often great insights into character development and relationships. Using the *dramatis personae* and the text, make a list of a character's first lines and their context as you come across each new important character. Come back to this activity after having finished the play to examine how the characters have changed over the course of the play.

#### Guiding Questions:

- What predictions were you able to make from the first lines? How close were your predictions?
- In what ways have the characters changed by the end of the play? What do you understand about the lines and about the characters after having read the entire play?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R3

## Act One

### AS A CLASS

### 15. INTRODUCING SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

Actor Michael Tolydo developed the following exercise as a way to introduce Shakespeare's language and style to students unfamiliar with his work. Tolydo emphasizes that Shakespeare's plays are not always just about the plot, but are an exploration of human nature and the use of language. Most importantly, his plays were written to be performed, not simply read.

*(To the teacher: This activity may take two class sessions to complete, but is well worth it! The exercise is a performed group scene, involving five or more characters from the play. This is not a "staged" performance, so there should be no heavy focus on acting skills; rather, this should be approached as a learning experience involving exploration of plot, character, language, play structure, and play style. For our purposes, the second scene from Act 1 of Macbeth will work very well; though the characters are all male, the students reading the parts need not be male. The script should be photocopied and typed in a large font [at least 13 point], with no text notes or glossary, and enough copies for every student in the classroom. In selecting readers for the speaking roles [with as many "attendants" as you can handle] it is important to remember that the play is not being "cast," but rather that the students are actively exploring the text; your students need not be aspiring actors in order to learn from this exercise!)*

While the scene is being read for the first time, the rest of the class listens rather than read along, so no open books. Don't worry about the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words or phrases. Say them the way you think they would sound. (Later, you can take a class vote on the pronunciation of any words that cannot be located in the dictionary.)

Follow the first reading with a second one, with new readers for each part—not to give a "better" reading of the scene but to provide an opportunity for others to expand their familiarity with the text, and possibly gain new information or clearer understanding of a particular passage. After this second reading, engage in a question-and-answer session. Answers to the questions asked should come only from the scene being read, and not rely on any further knowledge of the play outside the scene at hand. Some examples of the questions to be discussed: Who are these guys? Where are they? Why are they there? What are they doing? What are their relationships to each other? What words don't we understand? What else is confusing in this scene? If there is disagreement, take a class vote. Majority rules! Remember, there is no one right answer, but a myriad of possibilities—as long as the conclusions are supported by the text. After this, you may choose to read the scene a few more times, with new sets of readers, followed by more questions.

The "fast read-through" is next. Stand in a circle; each student reads a line up to a punctuation mark (commas don't count) and then the next student picks up. The point of this is to get as smooth and as quick of a read as possible, so

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

that the thoughts flow, even though they are being read by more than one person—much like the passing of a baton in a relay race.

The final step is to put the scene “on its feet.” Select a cast to read the scene, while the rest of the class directs. No one is uninvolved. There are many ways to explore and stage this scene—there is no one “right” way, and everyone’s input is important. Some questions to consider during this process are: *Where does the scene take place? What time of year? What’s around them?* Use available materials to set up the scene. Establish entrances and exits. (This should all come from clues in the text!) In making your decisions, remember to use the ideas you discovered from the earlier readings. After the advice from the “directors” has been completed, the cast acts out the scene. After this first “run-through,” make any changes necessary, then do the scene again using the same cast or a completely new one. Ask the students to comment on the process.

The process of getting the scene off the page and on its feet enables students to come to an understanding of Shakespeare’s text on their own, without the use of notes or explanatory materials. A familiarity with the scene and the language is developed, beginning a process of literary analysis of the text and establishing a relationship with the play and with Shakespeare.

## Guiding Questions:

- What aspects of hearing (or reading) the script out loud helped in understanding the text?
- What ideas, themes and language did you notice in the process?
- What clues did you use from the text to understand the scene without the use of a glossary or other notes?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R7, SL1, SL2

## 16. PERSUADING ANGELS

Discuss how Lady Macbeth may have come to the decision that Duncan needed to be eliminated. If she were to have two angels appear on her shoulders (one good, one bad), what would each say and how would each try to influence her decision? With nine students at the front of the class, one student will play Lady Macbeth, four will alternate as “the Good Angel,” the other four as “the Bad Angel.” Lady Macbeth should be seated in the middle with her angels on opposing sides. As the angels attempt to persuade her, Lady Macbeth may choose to listen to or reject the angels’ statements. After a couple of minutes, Lady Macbeth must make her decision. It need not be the decision that Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth makes! Discuss when she was convinced and what/who convinced her.

## Guiding Questions:

- Sometimes the difference between “good” and “bad” seems clear-cut, while other times the lines between the two seem blurred. How clear did the lines feel in this case? Were there times when the angels said similar things? If not, can you imagine anything that the angels could conceivably both say?
- Think of a time when you have had to make a decision (any decision, not one like Lady Macbeth’s). What types of arguments did you make in your own mind? What arguments did family members or friends make that helped you make your decision? What made some arguments more persuasive than others?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL2, SL3

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

## 17. DEBATING WITH ONESELF

Soliloquies were important tools in Shakespeare’s dramatic “toolbox.” The soliloquy allows the audience to learn about the character and his/her motivations privately—we learn what other characters cannot. It allows us to get as close to the essence of a character as he/she can psychologically permit. Often, a character is debating an issue, weighing the pros and cons, of taking one action over another. Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” is a prime example of this.



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

In *Macbeth's* Act 1, scene 7 soliloquy ("If it were done when 'tis done..."), he is grappling with his decision to murder Duncan. Explore the two sides of his debate in a kinesthetic way through the following activity. Read the speech as a group, changing speakers at each punctuation mark. Repeat once more for comprehension and discuss any words that are unfamiliar.

With a partner, read through the soliloquy again. As you work through the speech, divide it into two voices: FOR killing Duncan and AGAINST killing Duncan. When you've determined which parts of the speech support each side of the argument, choose one person to read the FOR voice and the other to read the AGAINST voice. Read the speech again with your new role; when it's your turn to read, move towards the other person, touching your finger tips together lightly, while your partner moves backward. Listen to a few different pairs' readings of the speech and discuss.

## Guiding Questions:

- Are there different ways to divide up the speech? Which lines seem more open to interpretation?
- By the end of this soliloquy, what has Macbeth decided to do?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL2

## 18. DREAMS AND PROPHECY

Take a moment to write down three personal dreams or wishes—anything is possible and nothing is too far-fetched! Exchange your paper with a partner. Take turns "prophesizing" your partner's dream list as though you were...

- his/her best friend
- the President of the United States
- a fortune teller

Now choose one of these same three roles and try prophesying your partner's list with three different intents:

- to scare
- to reassure
- to tempt

Which prophecy did you most believe? Which prophecy made you most skeptical? How does each interpretation affect your confidence in your dream? Now in a group of five, read aloud Act 1, scene 3, assigning everyone a part. Try reading the scene a few times, having the witches act out the three different intents above—or come up with your own. Discuss how each interpretation might make Macbeth and Banquo feel. Which interpretation works best?

## Guiding Question:

- Why do you think that Macbeth and Banquo respond differently to the witches? Do you attribute it more to the different messages they receive or to their personalities? Or to something else?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, SL2

## 19. WORDS AS WEAPONS

Shakespeare used "duologues"—the conversation between two people—to heighten a play's intensity and to reveal information about each character and about the complexity of the relationship between them. Often, the two are left alone together on stage. The duologue can have the feel of a duel between two combatants whose "swords" are their words. Working in pairs, take the duologue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, 1.7.29-82 ("He has almost supped...") Explore the movement of a duologue by standing up and each taking a part. But this time, read silently to yourself. As you read your lines, move in relation to the other character. Begin to get a feel for the way the lines position for attack and retreat, and as you move, imagine that your weapon is a dagger, perhaps, rather than the words you speak. The lines, like two swords, "cut and thrust."

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Guiding Questions:

- What do you notice in not using words? Are there aspects of the story or characters that become clear that weren't clear when reading the text?
- What emotions were easy to convey with body language and an imaginary dagger? What emotions were harder to convey?
- Conversely, what emotions or personality traits were easy or challenging to perceive in your scene partner?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, SL2

## 20. WITCHES' ECHO

Look at the Witches' lines in 1.1 and 1.3. Make a list of their words in these two scenes that might stick in Macbeth's memory, haunting him and eventually influencing his decision to murder Duncan. As one person from the group reads aloud Macbeth's 1.7 speech ("If it were done when 'tis done..."), the others choose places to echo the witches' words. Consider adding sounds and movement, in addition to the words, to create a haunting memory in Macbeth's mind.

## Guiding Questions:

- Think about the words that you chose. What led you to choose these specific words, and how might they speak to and connect with the text in Macbeth's soliloquy?
- What do you learn about Macbeth's character through this exercise?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL2, W9

## 21. FAIR OR FOUL

One of the best ways to get into a new play is to imagine its opening scene in detail by "getting it up on its feet." The opening scene of *Macbeth* is a great one for trying this out. How do the witches move? Are they old? Young? Male? Female? How are they dressed? Are they all similar in appearance, or distinctive somehow from one another? What do their voices sound like? What pitch? What pace? Are they loud? Do they whisper? What props do you want to include in your scene? Are they carrying objects with them? What would they wear? How do they enter the scene? Together? Separately? Think of sound effects that help set the mood—using Shakespeare's script for your clues.

## Guiding Questions:

- How do the witches that you imagine for this scene differ from other images of witches that we see (costumes for Halloween, for example, or witches from fairy tales)? How are they similar?
- Think about some of the choices that you made in terms of age, gender, props, and sound. What did you base these choices on?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL2

## ON YOUR OWN

## 22. COMPARE AND CONTRAST

In 1.4, Macbeth's six lines spoken to Duncan (beginning with "The service and the loyalty I owe..."), followed later by the six lines he says to himself (beginning with "The Prince of Cumberland..."), are very different and stand in sharp contrast. Read both of Macbeth's speeches aloud, and with each polysyllabic word (i.e. a word with more than one syllable), spread your arms out wide. Then read Macbeth's second speech again, and rap your fist whenever you come to a monosyllabic word (i.e. a word with only one syllable). Next, read Macbeth's lines to Duncan again, smiling and bowing every time you speak a word about loyalty or kingship. Finally, return to Macbeth's lines to Duncan a second time, making a stabbing gesture each time Macbeth voices a word conveying his evil intentions. What do you notice? Do this activity again, but this time choose your own words to emphasize and your own gestures to accompany these words.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Guiding Questions:

- What themes stand out to you as particularly important in these passages? What sounds are repeated?
- Imagine yourself directing the play. You probably wouldn't have an actor rap their fists for every monosyllabic word, but how would you instruct actors to emphasize certain ideas or sounds?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R4

## Act Two

### IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

#### 23. HEAR THE WORDS

In Shakespeare's day, audiences talked about going to "hear a play" rather than going to "see" one, as we do. (Consider the Latin root of the word "audience.") The Elizabethans loved language. New word usages and word combinations were being created all the time and the language was still so fluid that many spellings of words weren't agreed upon yet. So what does this have to do with us? It means that the way we come to know the words in a play (in reading a text or watching a performance) is a very different approach from the one used by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. It's not hard to switch over—it just takes some "muscle building." In pairs, take Macbeth's famous "Is this a dagger" soliloquy (2.1). While one person reads the script aloud, breaking apart lines as necessary in small, manageable "chunks," the other person (without a script in hand) listens to the chunks and repeats them aloud. The person who is listening closes his/her eyes and is led slowly around the room by his/her partner—the two are "connected" by only the lightest touch of their index fingers. This isn't a race, so go slowly, use manageable chunks of text, and really listen to the sound of Macbeth's words. Then switch roles and read the passage again.

## Guiding Questions:

- Does hearing (and speaking) Macbeth's words change the "climate" of the soliloquy for you?
- What did it feel like to be saying Macbeth's words but not reading them? Did the power of the words change at all? (Some actors memorize this way, by "feeding in" their lines to one another.)
- What did you notice listening to the text that you didn't notice reading it? What did you notice reading the text that you didn't notice when listening to it?
- Were there any specific words that jumped out or brought any new images or feelings to you? Did you notice any repetition of sound?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L4, R7

#### 24. SHARED LINES

Shakespeare's texts contain many clues to help actors better understand their parts. You'll notice that some capitalized verse lines in *Macbeth* are indented from the left margin, starting well to the right of other lines. This is one half of what is called a "shared line," and it happens when two speakers share the ten beats (or sometimes eleven) in a line. When actors come across a shared line, this prompts that the two lines be delivered as one, with no pause between the end of one character's line and the beginning of the next.

In pairs, decide who will take on the roles of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Read through an excerpt of Act 2, scene 2, beginning with Macbeth's line "I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?" and ending with Lady Macbeth's lines "These deeds must not be thought / After these ways; so, it will make us mad." After your first read-through, recap with your partner what you understand about the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth at this point in the story. Then take a moment to identify and underline all of the shared lines you can find in this excerpt.

Read through your scene a second time. This time, when you reach a shared line, practice jumping in as soon as your scene partner has finished their line. For a challenge, you can also use a ball (like a hot potato!) for this activity to throw

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

back and forth as you “toss” the lines to each other. Discuss what the shared lines suggest about these characters’ emotions and state of mind in the scene.

## Guiding Questions:

- How do shared lines influence the pace of dialogue between characters?
- Why might Macbeth and Lady Macbeth be jumping to speak—almost on top of one another—in this moment of the story?
- Think about times when you’ve felt a need to jump in and respond to someone quickly, perhaps even cutting them off. Is there anything similar to that scenario and the circumstances in Act 2, scene 2?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5, SL1

## 25. BEGINNING, MIDDLE, END

The characters in *Macbeth* participate and react to the lead-up and murder of Duncan in distinct ways. Using the following steps, work together to tell the story of this moment in the play from different perspectives.

Split your class into four groups, and have each group form a single file line. Each group should focus on one character: Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, Macduff and Banquo. Using the text as a reference, each group will narrate the major moments in the first three scenes of Act 2 from their character’s perspective. Speaking in first person, start on one end of the group and move down each line, with each person supplying one line of the character’s narration of the scenes’ events. Draw on the characters’ lines as well as textual clues to guide your narration of the scene.

## Guiding Questions:

- How does changing the perspective of the narration deepen your understanding of this dramatic moment in the story?
- What textual clues does Shakespeare leave his audience as possible indicators of what each character is thinking?
- What choices might an actor make to communicate their character’s perspective?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3

## ON YOUR OWN

## 26. POETRY FROM VERSE

Shakespeare often gives his comic characters prose instead of verse to speak. You can tell what’s written in prose by just glancing at a page—the type is printed on the page, justified on the left and right margins (verse will look more like a traditional poem). Even in a play with little comic relief, the Porter in *Macbeth* is no exception. Read and re-read the Porter’s opening passage in 2.3, then adapt his prose into poetry. Notice his repetition, his imagery, and any other conventions that catch your eye as poetic. You can cut whatever you choose, and reorganize whatever you like, as long as you’re using the lines from the speech.

## Guiding Questions:

- Rewriting a passage such as this requires close examination of the text. What discoveries did you make about the passage in doing this activity?
- Now that you have written the passage in verse, what do you think works better in verse? What works better in prose? Consider some reasons why Shakespeare would have chosen to write this passage in prose.

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R5, W9

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Act Three

### AS A CLASS

#### 27. THE REAL MACBETH

Macbeth, or Mac Bethad mac Findlaich, was a real Scottish king, though historical accounts differ greatly from Shakespeare's story. As we begin to delve into the layers of Macbeth's character as told by Shakespeare, compare Shakespeare's portrayal to what is known of the historical Macbeth.

*(To the teacher: Divide the class in half—one half will read Macbeth's soliloquy in 3.1 beginning with "To be thus is nothing" and ending with "To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings"—and the other half will read "The Scottish King (Macbeth)" by Mark Nicholls. Scotland Magazine, April 2007. <http://www.scotlandmag.com/magazine/issue32/12007815.html>. Consider a shorter excerpt of the magazine article to fit your time constraints and student reading levels.)*

Read your assigned passage, circling any words or sections that are confusing. Read the passage again, underlining any particularly vivid words, phrases or sentences that jump off the page at you.

Find a partner who read the other passage. Exchange texts and read through your partner's passage, noting what your partner underlined. Among those underlined by your partner, select the phrase, word or single sentence that you feel best captures the character's or author's voice, mood and tone. Place brackets around your choice. Discuss with your partner why you chose to bracket the word/phrase/sentence you did, and how it best reflects the overall tone and "big idea" contained in this passage.

With your own annotated text back in hand, join forces with two to three other pairs, forming a group of six to eight classmates. Together, compose a found poem—a poem that takes existing texts and refashions them into poetry—containing a selected word/phrase/sentence from each member of the group. Be sure to compose your poem up on your feet so that the words are being spoken and heard as you compose collaboratively! As you develop your poem, you may also choose to:

1. repeat any words, phrases, sentences
2. choose to speak specific elements in unison
3. incorporate movements that support the words

Perform your poem for the class and afterwards, discuss the comparative texts' points of view and the varying interpretations garnered from them.

#### Guiding Questions:

- What words or phrases struck you most? Why?
- How did the discussion with your partner regarding his/her selection of key word/s impact your understanding of the passage? Your understanding of *Macbeth*?
- What new textual discoveries did you make while working with your choral poem group?
- What did you learn from watching the other groups' poems?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R9, SL1, SL2, W9

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## 28. GHOST GUESS WHO

Imagine that the ghost, spirit or invisible image of a famous contemporary figure (a rock or film star, a politician, etc.) has just entered your classroom—visible only to you! As the rest of your classmates look on and try to guess at the identity of your unseen guest, you have a one-sided conversation with this vision, using information you know about him/her to give your classmates clues to the invisible identity. Start with tough clues, and use more well-known information as you go along.

As a class, read through Act 3, scene 4, when the ghost of the murdered Banquo appears at Macbeth's feast, visible only to him. Watch how Macbeth reveals information about the ghost's identity to his other guests who watch him in amazement. Try to duplicate that sense of horror and fright as you converse with your uninvited guest.

### Guiding Questions:

- How did this classroom exercise affect your understanding of the banquet scene?
- Did you feel strange speaking to an invisible person? Do you think Macbeth was aware that his behavior was strange in 3.4?
- In this scene, Lady Macbeth must watch her husband interact with someone who is not visible to anyone else in front of guests. Imagine yourself in her position. What would you say to Macbeth?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL2

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

## 29. STAGE DIRECTIONS

*(To the teacher: If your students aren't familiar with the format and purpose of stage directions in dramatic literature, consider sharing examples from Henrik Ibsen's A Doll House, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2542/2542-h/2542-h.htm>, and George Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man. Both playwrights are known for their detailed stage directions.)*

Shakespeare is known for brevity—at least when it comes to writing stage directions! He rarely indicates more than an entrance or exit, so try your hand at writing what the Bard left out. *Macbeth* has many scenes you could use to add your own stage directions: the first time Macbeth and Banquo meet the Weird Sisters (1.3), the arrival of Macduff to Dunsinane and the uproar after he finds Duncan murdered (2.3), Fleance's escape after the murderers kill Banquo (3.3). In groups of three, write your own stage directions. To get started, think of specific details: How old are the characters, and how will age affect their movements? What are some of the sounds or smells we would experience? Will the characters' clothes affect their movements? What are their states of mind during the scene? After writing your stage directions, present your scene in all the detail you imagined, and explain your reasons for staging it the way you did.

### Guiding Questions:

- The lack of stage directions leaves room for a variety of interpretations for the stage action. How do your interpretations compare to those of your classmates?
- Think about some of the different stage directions you imagined. Describe your process for forming your choices. Were there clues in the text that shaped your decisions?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R5, W4

## 30. DESCRIPTIVE LINES

In groups of four to five, choose a character that appears in Act 3 and find a series of lines that say something about him/her, either through the character's own words, or through words said about him/her by other people. Cite the passages.

As a group, prepare to present your character to the class through a tableau. A tableau is a still picture made by bodies in a group and in relationship to one another, assuming certain poses and conveying a particular mood or image. Then, consider how you might incorporate some or all of your chosen lines while in your tableau stance. Present your tableau and chosen lines to the class—and be prepared to answer questions and defend your choices of characteristic lines!

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Guiding Questions:

- How much did you draw on the character's own lines and to what extent did you draw on other characters' lines? Given what you know about your character by this point, did you expect to learn mainly from the character him/herself or from other characters?
- Look for examples of inconsistencies: does anything your character says about him/herself conflict with what other characters say? How can you show these nuances of character through a tableau as well as your chosen lines?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL1, SL2

## Act Four

### IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

#### 31. IMAGERY AND MULTIMEDIA

In groups of two or three, explore the imagery found in the Witches' chanting at the beginning of Act 4 through this multimedia project.

In your small group, read through the Witches' chant (beginning with "Round about the cauldron go" and ending with "Then the charm is firm and good."), switching readers at every full stop—a period, question mark, or exclamation point. Together, agree on one line to explore that your group finds especially "juicy." Find digital images that illustrate the words or ideas found in your line. Check out Creative Commons (<http://search.creativecommons.org>), a website where you can search media including photography, music and videos that you can legally publish with free copyright licenses. Create a collage with your favorite images. There are many free, collage software programs on-line. Try Fotor (<http://www.fotor.com/features/collage.html>) to start.

Publish all the collages on the Bard Blog, or post hard copies on the board. Seeing them all in one place, work with your group to find an instrumental song that mirrors the mood of the collages. Explore music at Sound Junction (<http://www.soundjunction.org/default.aspx>) where you can find music from across the world. You can even create own your own music there. You can also search music on Creative Commons. In your group, play the song while reading the Witches' chant aloud.

## Guiding Questions:

- How did the collages help you to visualize the words? When the chant was spoken a second time, was it easier to understand?
- What was the result of reading the passage while the song was playing? Do the instruments and melodies suit the words?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R4, SL1, SL2



## Teacher Resource Center

If you have an activity or lesson plan that was a classroom success with your students, we want to hear about it! Consider donating your lesson plan to the Teacher Resource Center, and become part of our ever-growing, permanent collection! Need inspiration? If you are looking for the perfect activity or "proven" lesson plan, visit the Center to access hundreds of teaching resources.

**Call the Education Department, 312.595.5678, to make an appointment.**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## 32. SILENT CONVERSATION

(To the teacher: This exercise works well whenever students are struggling with a more complex piece of text and could benefit from slowing down the reading process and making transparent some of the strategies utilized by a good reader. It also helps students to consider their classmates' differing or similar points of view. To prep for this activity, enlarge a passage of text to fit on 11x17 paper with wide margins; mount it in the center of a sheet of flip chart paper.)

In groups of four, silently read—and reread—the exchange between Malcolm and Macduff in 4.3 (beginning with “Let us seek out some desolate shade...” and ending with “I have lost my hopes”). In the margins, write responses to the text, which include: questions about words, meaning, characters, plot line; connections to the world, other texts or personal experience; responses to others' comments and questions; responses and/or clarifications to one's own questions; predictions. Still without speaking, visit other groups' stations to read their comments and if you're compelled, respond to other groups' conversations in writing. Reconvene as a class for discussion.

### Guiding Questions:

- What did this process reveal to you about this moment in the story?
- What questions about this scene still remain after completing your silent conversation?
- How did this process differ from—and how was it similar to—the way we typically read?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R7, W10

## 33. FULL STOP MUSICAL CHAIRS

One reason a Shakespeare text can be challenging to read is because the sentences that Shakespeare wrote are often much longer and more complex than the way we speak and write today. It is not uncommon for three or four verse lines—or more!—to comprise one complete sentence. Taking note of all of the full stops—a period, exclamation point, or question mark—throughout a given passage creates a visual tool for separating out the major thoughts of a speech.

With a partner, read through *Macbeth's* soliloquy in 4.1, in which he vows to kill the entire Macduff family (beginning with “Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits” and ending with “Come bring me where they are.”) Find all of the full stops in your speech and circle them. Then highlight the last four words before the full stop punctuation. Using two chairs, take turns speaking the speech. Each time you come to a full stop, switch chairs and continue speaking.

### Guiding Question:

- How did adding the movement from one chair to another help to separate and understand the distinct thoughts in this passage?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L1, L2, R5

## ON YOUR OWN

## 34. CHARACTER WANTS

Make a list in your notes or reading journal of all the significant characters you have met so far in *Macbeth*. Add a second column in which you describe as specifically as you can what each of these characters wants (which may change as the story progresses). In a third column, note the act, scene and line numbers that created this impression for you. Which characters get what they want? Does it seem likely that they will keep it? Why or why not? As you go through the play act by act, return to your list, filling it in with new characters you meet, and making notes in a fourth column to indicate when they (or you) have changed their mind.

### Guiding Questions:

- What changes did you find especially surprising?
- Some characters are very clear about what they want while other characters may be more vague or elusive. Which characters had more difficult motivations to identify?



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

- Look for examples of characters conveying one motivation to the audience while keeping their true motivations to themselves. Which characters do this, and what in the text helps us to understand their true intent?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3

## Act Five

### IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

#### 35. UNROUND ROBIN

With a partner, explore a close reading—and re-reading—of Macbeth and Macduff’s standoff in 5.8 (beginning with Macduff’s line “Turn, hell-hound, turn” and ending with Macbeth’s line “And damned be him that first cries, ‘Hold, enough!’”). Reading aloud:

**Read-through #1:** Alternating readers at every **punctuation mark**, read the passage aloud, chunk by chunk. Circle any unfamiliar words or words that are confusing in this context.

**Read-through #2:** Read to the end of a **complete sentence** (period, question mark, or exclamation point), alternating readers sentence by sentence. Again, circle any words or phrases that are confusing.

**Read-through #3:** Re-read the passage, standing **back to back**, each partner taking the lines of one character throughout. Listen closely to what your partner says.

**Read-through #4:** This time, read the passage again (same roles) **whispering**—and making sure that your partner can hear all the words.

**Read-through #5:** Standing about **ten paces apart**, read the passage again at “full” volume, sending your voice to one another.

**Read-through #6 (at last!):** While one partner stands stationary, the other **moves** wherever/however he/she wants to in relationship to his/her scene partner. Based on the words you both say, move how it feels right instinctively. (If space is limited, explore the options of sitting and standing rather than moving around the room.)

Discuss what you discovered with your partner and with the class.

#### Guiding Questions:

- What are you observing about your reading process and comprehension of the text during each round?
- Were there times when whispering or full volume felt instinctively right?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L2, SL1

#### 36. CHOICES IN ACTION

What would have happened in the play if the characters made different choices? How would those choices have impacted the story? In groups of three to five, create a chart for a single scene in *Macbeth*. For every action that drives the plot, offer an alternative. In one color write the moment in the play, and below write out a different choice in a second color. For example, as Malcolm and Donalbain flee for safety, an alternative could have been that Malcolm and Donalbain stay to avenge their father’s murder. Compare your chart with others. A writer has countless choices that he or she can make in crafting a story, but the choices have to make sense in terms of the characters and they have to help you follow the arc of the storyline.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Guiding Questions:

- Try to imagine choices that would lead to a happy ending. What would need to happen differently? What characters would need to make other choices? If you do not think it is possible for the play to end happily, defend your opinion.
- Is it possible for a character to make a choice that plays out in a comedic fashion? If so, how might this change the tone of the play? Is the play still considered a tragedy in this case? Discuss this with your group or partner.

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W3

## ON YOUR OWN

### 37. GUILTY LETTERS

Imagine that, out of guilt, Macbeth decides to write letters to the family members of those that he has killed in pursuit of the crown. Using your own words, write one of these letters as if you were Macbeth. If the letter is addressed to a character that doesn't exist within the text (e.g. Banquo's wife), be specific about the person's relationship to the deceased. What would Macbeth say? Once you've written the letter, share it with the class. Now imagine Lady Macbeth finding one of Macbeth's letters. How would she react? What would she say?

## Guiding Questions:

- Did you choose to present a clearly articulated letter, or is it muddled because of Macbeth's emotional distress?
- Is your letter an attempt to apologize, or to clear his conscience? Which choice best supports your interpretation of the character of Macbeth?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W3

### 38. INSPIRING SPEECHES

In Act 5, scene 9, Malcolm delivers a post-battle speech in which he refers to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as the "dead butcher and his fiend-like queen." You'll find other inspirational monologues in the speeches of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, William Wallace in *Braveheart*, or even sports movies like *Any Given Sunday* or *Remember the Titans*. Read the monologue and watch a film version (see our "*Macbeth* Film Finder" for film suggestions). What rhetorical tools does Malcolm use to create a moving speech? For instance, are words repeated, are metaphors employed, does the speaker set up words that have opposite meanings (antitheses)?

Now think of a cause in which you believe strongly. Using some of the same techniques as Malcolm, write a persuasive speech to convince your fellow students of your position on this issue.

## Guiding Questions:

- What impression do you have of Malcolm based on this speech? What impression do you have of him based on the rest of the play? What kind of leader do you think he will make?
- Do you find his speech persuasive? What elements do you think contribute to its effectiveness? Where and how did you use those same elements in your persuasive speech?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L1, W1

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## After You Read the Play

### AS A CLASS

#### 39. CHARACTER QUESTIONS

*Macbeth* is a play that is filled with people asking questions—to one another and to themselves. G. Wilson Knight suggests that this play may contain more questions asked by its characters than any other play written by Shakespeare. “These questions,” writes Knight, “are threads in the fabric of mystery and doubt which haunts us in *Macbeth*. All the persons are in doubt, baffled.” Retrace the questions that people ask throughout the course of the play’s action, and choose one question that you feel is essential to the story. As a class, begin reading the questions aloud, listening closely to avoid speaking on top of your classmates. Several people may choose the same question and that is okay—no one “owns” a question, and there is no prescribed order in which questions are to be spoken. Together, see if you can re-create the sense of mystery and doubt that Knight suggests.

#### Guiding Questions:

- What questions do you have as you read *Macbeth*? Do your questions in any way mirror those asked by the characters?
- Are there any characters in the play who don’t ask any questions? What else distinguishes these characters from the more “doubtful” characters?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL2

### IN SMALL GROUPS

#### 40. REPEATED WORDS

Choose one of the following words that appear several times in *Macbeth*: blood, fear, night, murder. Visit <http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/> and enter your word in the “Text Search” field in the right column of the page. Read the *Macbeth* passages that come up and using the questions below, discuss them. Share your findings with the class.

#### Guiding Questions:

- Is Shakespeare using the word in a consistent way throughout the play? If so, how, and if not, what are some of the differences you detect?
- How does your word connect to the themes or characters in the play, as your group interprets them?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R2, R4

#### 41. CREATING A FILM STORYBOARD

In groups of three to four, choose a key scene from the play that would adapt well to a silent film. Consider how setting, movement, costume and props can convey the necessary information and emotion developed in the scene. A good place to start is by storyboarding the scene. A storyboard involves a series of thumbnail sketches of individual shots of the action with captions below that describe aspects of the shot that the sketches are not unable to convey.

As you rehearse your wordless scene, consider adapting the melodramatic acting style of those early films to modern audiences’ tastes and expectations. Once you’ve planned and rehearsed your scene, film it with your phone or tablet. Add music and sound for special effects. (A special thanks to Mary Christel for this post-reading suggestion!)

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Directions for creating a storyboard and downloadable storyboard templates can be found at:

- Print Resource – *Lessons for a Media-Rich Classroom*. Ed. Mary T. Christel and Scott Sullivan. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 2007 (available in CST TRC)
- Online resource – <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/what-are-storyboards>
- Online resource – <http://www.the-flying-animato.com/storyboard-template.html>

## Guiding Questions:

- Do any aspects of the story or character relationships become easier to see when words are removed?
- What acting techniques and audio-visual elements work best to convey important plot points?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, SL1, SL5

## 42. MACBETH SOUNDTRACK

Create a soundtrack for Macbeth's character. Would you use rock? Pop? Hip-hop? Would the tone of your album be depressed or angry? Would the music be slow, eerie, or something powerful to get the listener energized and ready to go to battle? Choose ten songs (lyrical or instrumental) to include on your CD. Choose songs that follow Macbeth's character arc and tell his story through the songs' lyrics or the sounds of the music itself. Alternatively, this activity could be done with the plot instead of one specific character. How would you go about making a soundtrack for the arc of the play? What kind of songs would you use to personify different characters?

## Guiding Questions:

- How did your soundtrack compare with your classmates'? What discoveries did you make by listening to your classmates' presentations? What choices surprised you?
- What lines or character traits guided you as you made your song choices?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, SL5

## 43. BEHIND THE MASK

Frequently in *Macbeth*, characters portray a particular feeling in public while they are thinking something very different underneath. They hide behind a mask. Lady Macbeth even tells Macbeth, "Away, and mock the time with fairest show / False face must hide what false heart doth know." Brainstorm a list of examples of characters in *Macbeth* saying one thing and meaning another.

Then choose one short passage where a character is "acting"—saying one thing for public consumption while hiding his/her true feelings. With your partner standing behind you, hold a mask up to your face while he/she says your line(s) in your "public voice." Then step from behind the mask, and using your face and voice, communicate how you truly feel as you repeat the line.

## Guiding Questions:

- How did it feel to have someone else speaking your "public voice"? Try reading your public voice yourself. How does this feel different?
- In your own life, when is your public behavior different from how you act or feel in private?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L5, R6

## ON YOUR OWN

## 44. LETTERS FROM INVERNESS JAIL

If Macbeth committed his crimes today... Imagine that Macbeth has been imprisoned and is writing a letter to his lawyer. Would he be truthful, or would he lie? Would he express remorse, or would he stand his ground and defend his actions?

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Would he implicate his wife? The Weird Sisters? Remember to keep your audience in mind, and also that Macbeth is sitting in a jail cell. What is his state of mind while he writes the letter? Is he claustrophobic? Scared? Angry? Volunteers can share with the rest of the class.

## **Guiding Questions:**

- What textual evidence can you find to support what you chose to include in your letter?
- Imagine yourself as Macbeth's lawyer. How would you defend him?
- As you listen to your classmates, imagine yourself as a member of the jury. What verdict would you give, and how would you defend your verdict?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, W3

## 45. **FIVE YEARS LATER**

Many modern plays have been written about what happens to the characters in a Shakespeare play after Shakespeare's story has ended. For instance, David Grieg's *Dunsinane* tells the story of what happens to the Scottish kingdom following Macbeth's demise. Try your hand at this by writing an epilogue (a short passage/essay) to *Macbeth*. What's happening to the main characters five years following the conclusion of Shakespeare's play? Is Malcolm a fair and good king? Do Ross, Macduff, and the others remain loyal to Malcolm? What has happened to Fleance? Do the Weird Sisters reappear, and if so to whom and bearing what message? Compare your epilogue with those of your classmates.

## **Guiding Questions:**

- How similar or different is your epilogue to those written by your classmates?
- What aspects of the characters or the plot did you pay particular attention to in order to make your epilogue consistent and plausible?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W3

## 46. **OBITUARY AND LAST WORDS**

We learn of Lady Macbeth's suicide by report, but never see it on stage. Write her dying speech—either as Shakespeare might have written it, or in modern language. Then write an official “press release” issued by the palace announcing her death. You'll need to think through (as every good PR person must!) just how much of the truth you're willing to reveal—and how much you have to spin...

## **Guiding Questions:**

- How do your letter and your press release compare to one another? How did your writing change, given your audience, the differing perspective from which you were writing and the structure of a letter versus a press release?
- What does each piece reveal about Lady Macbeth's character and about how she is perceived by others?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, W3

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## The Performance: Preparing and Reflecting

### AS A CLASS

#### 47. BARD BLOG: A TOOL FOR DISCUSSION

Before and after you see the performance, continue adding to your Bard Blog. Use these ideas to get you started, or modify other activities in this section to a blogging format:

- Select one of the quotations from the “What the Critics Say” section of the handbook. Do you agree with the writer? Blog an argument about this quotation. Cite specific examples from the play to support your assertions. Does your argument still hold up after seeing the performance?
- Each actor brings his or her own unique quality to a character. They make specific choices based on the director's vision, chemistry with the ensemble of other actors and their own interpretation of what motivates their character to action. Choose a character to follow closely when you see CST's performance (if you already began a character diary, stick with your same character.) As you watch the actor playing your chosen character, note the acting choices he or she makes through voice, movement and “subtext”—the inner feelings beneath the spoken words. Compose a free-write of your thoughts on the actor's interpretation of the character. How does the actor in CST's production differ from what you had imagined? What choices did the actor make that enhanced your understanding of the character?
- As you read the play, how did you imagine the relationship between the Macbeths? Is it a marriage that begins as intimate and significant to the partners? Or one that has failed even before we meet them? After you see CST's production, compare your interpretation to the approach taken in the production. Productions portray the relative strength of each partner in various ways. How did Chicago Shakespeare portray the strength of each? Who dominated—and when? Did that change? If so, when? And how were you made aware of the change?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, W6, W10

#### 48. THE STORY IN SHORT

If you have not read *Macbeth* in class, use these resources to become acquainted with the story and follow the performance more easily:

- Refer to the *dramatis personae* and the synopsis in the beginning of the handbook.
- Watch Video SparkNotes: Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at <http://www.sparknotes.com/sparknotes/video/macbeth>
- Use the “Before You Read the Play” activities in this handbook to become more familiar with the story, setting, characters, themes and language.

L.I.N.K. to activate any prior knowledge you may have about *Macbeth*.

- **L**ist the information you already know about the story of the play before you watch the Sparknotes video or review the handbook sections.
- **I**nquire about other information you would like to know.
- After you watch the video and review the handbook sections above, **N**ote new knowledge and connections between known information.
- Finish by writing what you **K**now about the story including setting, characters, and themes.

Discuss what else you would like to learn about the play before going to see the performance at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. In groups, list all questions you still have about the story on large chart paper and hang them around the classroom. As you explore the play further, fill in the answers to the questions. Listen and watch closely during the performance to be able to respond to any of the unanswered questions when you return to the classroom.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Guiding Questions:

- What images come to mind when you hear “Macbeth?”
- What do you already know about Shakespeare’s plays or plays in general?
- What questions do you still have about the story as you anticipate attending CST’s production?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R7

## 49. MACBETH’S CHARACTER

Every director must decide how his/her Macbeth will be portrayed. As a man driven by ambition? As a man who is inherently evil, or one gradually corrupted? A man trying to escape his own fears? Is Macbeth larger than life? Or quite small and helpless against the larger forces against him? Before you see CST’s production, discuss your vision of Macbeth’s character as a class.

Once you’ve seen CST’s production, how would you characterize this Macbeth? What was he like? What motivated him? How does this production support its interpretation of Macbeth’s character? Compare with your own interpretation—or with another director’s vision whose Macbeth you might have watched in class. If you can, be very specific about the places where you remember the differences.

## Guiding Questions:

- What moments in the play were treated differently by the Macbeth in CST’s production?
- Did you feel that this interpretation was consistent with the text? Why or why not?
- What insight into the play or the character did this specific interpretation give you?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3, R9

## 50. SUPERNATURAL

Discuss as a class the world of the supernatural as envisioned in your mind and as portrayed in CST’s production. Is it merely a figment of Macbeth’s imagination? Something real of flesh and blood, but without vast power? Or is it dominant, strong and willful, a force much greater than the human world it controls? Think about the clues in the production you saw that gave you these impressions. What did the director, her actors and her designers do to play out their own particular interpretation of this question in Shakespeare’s play? Have you seen other productions that handled those same elements in a different way? Which was more believable for you—and why?

## Guiding Questions:

- How did this interpretation of the supernatural compare with your own as you read the text?
- Compare your experience with the supernatural elements in the production with your classmates! Are they consistent? How might they have impacted you differently?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R7

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

## 51. DESIGNING FOR A TIME AND PLACE

*Macbeth* has been set in a number of periods and settings from classical to modern times. Imagine that your class is producing *Macbeth*. Discuss as a class what period and/or setting you would choose to place it in. Do certain settings give the play a lighter or darker tone? How does a different period or setting affect the characters?

*(To the teacher: Place the act and scene numbers for each scene in the play on slips of paper, and mix them up in a hat. Divide your class into groups of four. One person from each group picks one scene out of the hat.)*

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

In your groups imagine that you are designing a production of *Macbeth*. What does your scenic design look like? What kinds of costumes are your characters wearing? What is the lighting like? Some questions to get you started:

- Where does the scene take place? Inside or out?
- What time period is the play set in?
- What props are helpful in setting the mood?
- What is the weather like?
- What time of day is it?
- What is the overall tone of the scene?
- Who is in the scene? Where are they from?

You may want to make a designer's board—that is, a large piece of poster board with swatches of fabric, copies of paintings or photographs that have an element of what you envision, and anything else that illustrates the scene for you. Magazines and art books provide a good source for ideas. When you've finished your collage, pick the line or lines from the scene that are essential to your design concept. As a class, share your concepts in order of scenes (designers often do this for the cast on the first day of rehearsal).

## Guiding Questions:

- What factors must you take into account when designing a set?
- After you see the play, think about its scenic design compared to what you saw in class. Are there similar elements to some of the designs you saw in class?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R6, SL5

## 52. DOUBLING ROLES

Theater companies in Shakespeare's day (as well as today) often "doubled." Double-casting means that one actor will play two or more roles. For instance, in CST's production, all three actors playing Witches will also take on a number of other roles.

You are the casting director for *Macbeth*. In groups of three, work through the *dramatis personae* and develop a list of parts that could be doubled. Remember: there must be sufficient stage time in between the appearance of doubled characters to allow the actor playing them to change costumes, if necessary, and they can't be on the stage at the same time! Also consider when a double casting might draw a helpful comparison between two characters.

When you see CST's production, see if you notice actors playing multiple roles. What did they do to differentiate the parts? Check your observations against the play program. Were there any performances that were so convincing that you did not even notice the actor was the same?

## Guiding Questions:

- How do directors and costume designers differentiate roles for the audience when an actor plays more than one role?
- Did any of the double-casting illuminate some aspect of a character, or make you think of any characters in a new or different way?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R9

## 53. OFFSTAGE ACTION

Often in Shakespeare's plays, you may notice that he chooses to communicate information by reporting it. We hear about it instead of seeing it enacted in front of us. *Macbeth* is filled with examples of offstage action that we learn about by another character's report—or by a letter read aloud. As a class, think back and reconstruct as many points in the play as you can where we as the audience are given information about events we don't actually witness on stage. Often, a film or stage director will choose to enact an offstage scene. In Kenneth Branagh's 2013 stage production of



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

*Macbeth*, for example, a key offstage action—Duncan’s murder—was staged. In your small groups, talk together about the possible gains and losses of staging this scene or other examples of offstage action (another key example being Lady Macbeth’s suicide).

## Guiding Questions:

- If you were directing the play, would you choose to stage either death? Why?
- After you’ve seen Chicago Shakespeare’s production, return to this activity. Do you agree with the director’s choice to stage or not stage these scenes? Why or why not?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, R7

## 54. CASTING A PRODUCTION

Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s casting director is responsible for finding the right person for every character you see on our stage—no small task! After you’ve read the play, return to the text and look for clues for each character to answer these questions: how do they look? sound? move? behave? Think of television and film celebrities who fit your image of the character and, in groups, discuss who your “Dream Team” would be for your version of the play. Print or post on your class blog images to create “headshots” for your perfect cast. Then present your cast to your classmates, explaining why you made each decision, and compare your ideas with those of your classmates, using specific textual evidence whenever possible. After you see the play, contrast your vision to that of Director Kirsten Kelly and the actors whom she and CST’s casting director have assembled.

## Guiding Questions:

- What clues in the text should you consider when casting a character?
- Why might one director choose different actors from another?
- How is your “dream team” different than or similar to Chicago Shakespeare’s cast of actors? How did the production’s interpretation of the main characters compare to yours?

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R7, SL5

## ON YOUR OWN

## 55. WRITING A CRITICAL REVIEW

A scaffold for this activity: Before you write your review, read three different theater reviews of current plays at Theatre is Chicago’s Critics Review Round-Up: <http://www.theatreinchicago.com/reviewlistings.php>. Analyze the structure of a review, identifying the key elements. Based on these key elements, describe the style you found most helpful (or least helpful) in communicating a play’s appeal for potential theater-goers.

Write a critical review of Chicago Shakespeare’s production of *Macbeth*. Briefly recount the plot. Discuss the parts of the production—including the casting, acting, setting, music, costumes, cuts—you thought worked particularly well, or did not work well at all and explain why you thought so. Consider “publishing” your piece in a classroom newspaper or the Bard Blog.

## Guiding Questions:

- How easy (or difficult) was it to understand Shakespeare’s language?
- How much did you believe what was happening?
- Did the comedic aspects make you laugh out loud? Did violent actions make you flinch? Did the shocking moments make you gasp? Were there any moments that moved you?
- Did the performance convey a sense of magic effectively?
- Which performances were most surprising? (For instance, were there characters who were scarier on stage than on the page?)

CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R7, W1, W9

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## A “Read and View” Teaching Strategy Explained

**MARY T. CHRISTEL** taught AP Literature and Composition as well as media and film studies courses at Adlai E. Stevenson High School from 1979 to 2012. She has published several works on media literacy including *Seeing and Believing: How to Teach Media Literacy in the English Classroom with Ellen Krueger (Heinemann)* as well as contributing articles to *Teaching Shakespeare Today (NCTE)*, *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-First Century (U of Ohio)*, *For All Time: Critical Issues in Shakespeare Studies (Wakefield Press)*. Ms. Christel has been recognized by the Midwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for promoting media literacy education.

### SETTING THE STAGE WITH READING AND VIEWING

Before attending a performance of any of Shakespeare’s plays, it can be helpful to prime students with basic information about setting, characters and conflict. A brief summary of the play certainly would suit that aim, but a summary does not help to tune up students’ ears to Shakespeare’s language and cadences, so critical to understanding the actions onstage. Reading and studying the entire play would be ideal, but limits of time, demands of the established curriculum—and sheer stamina—may make this unabridged option less than optimal.

Screening a film version instead would save class time and help students both see and hear the play, but the viewing experience might not allow students to linger over the more challenging scenes and speeches or engage in more participatory activities with the text. A happy medium approach marries the study of key scenes and speeches with viewing of the rest of play in a recommended film version in order for students to understand both the dramatic arc of the comedy, tragedy, history or romance as well as tackle the signature scenes and speeches of that play in greater depth and detail. Those select scenes can be explored through “active Shakespeare” strategies.

This reading/viewing approach had its genesis early in my teaching career when I methodically took students through Act 1 of *Romeo and Juliet* while they listened to key speeches on a recording of the play. Even though I thought reading and listening would enhance their understanding, students glazed over as the speeches were declaimed on a scratchy, worn record in particularly plummy British accents in the style of rather melodramatic “radio acting.” Since it was the spring of 1980, I had access to some new A-V technology, a VCR and a VHS copy of Franco Zeffirelli’s film of *Romeo and Juliet*—the school’s first VHS tape purchase.

I decided to combine reading the play and watching the film incrementally act by act. After students read and discussed Act 1, I screened the equivalent of that act in the film to promote discussion of difficult aspects of character, plot and language that we encountered during the reading process. For example, Mercutio’s witty banter was difficult for students to fully grasp until they both read the text and viewed one actor’s interpretation of the language and the resulting onscreen characterization. Seeing one visual interpretation of the characters, their actions and the world of the play gave my students the ability to create a movie in their heads as they continued to read the play.

I extended this methodology when I taught plays by Molière and Ibsen, sometimes showing shorter excerpts to help students understand costumes and manners that informed character behavior and the overall “look” of an era that a few photos in a textbook don’t effectively convey. Though this approach is billed as a way to preview a theatrical performance of a play, it could be adapted to the study of any challenging play or work of fiction, like nineteenth-century works by Austen, Dickens or the Brontë sisters.

### SELECTING THE SCENES FOR CLOSE READING AND STUDY

Though a range of scenes is suggested below for previewing *Macbeth*, pulling back the pedagogical curtain on how the scenes and speeches are selected can help in applying this approach to any play. First, consider which scenes and speeches are the “signatures” of the play: “To be or not to be” in *Hamlet*, the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, the St. Crispin’s Day speech in *Henry V*.

Once those scenes are identified, select the ones that might prove most difficult to fully understand when viewing the play in the “real time” of the stage performance and the scenes truly crucial to fully grasping the arc of the conflict or the development of key characters. If there is a particular theme that a production will emphasize, scene and speech selection might focus on how that theme is developed throughout the play and in the production. For example, in approaching

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*Macbeth*, different stage productions and film adaptations focus variously on supernatural forces, ambition, guilt and conscience or tyranny.

An effective tool to understand how a play can be boiled down to its essential scenes is evident in Nick Newlin's series *The 30-Minute Shakespeare*, with eighteen abridgments of Shakespeare's plays currently available. Newlin's adaptations focus on the continuity of plot and provide a narrator to link the selected, edited scenes together. If a teacher's goal is to have students grasp the arc of the conflict (inciting incident, basic conflict complications, climax, essential falling action and resolution) then Newlin's approach will suit that aim. These texts are available for download as PDFs as well as in traditional print forms.

If investing in copies of a text like *The 30-Minute Shakespeare* is not possible for a single use, Shakespeare's plays are available online in the public domain at:

Folger Library Digital Texts (<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org>)

The Complete Works at MIT (<http://shakespeare.mit.edu>)

Downloading the complete play for students who have access to computers or to tablets in the classrooms allows students the freedom to use the text beyond the scenes and speeches studied in class. Some students might be motivated to read the play in its entirety or "follow along" in the text with the selected scenes from the film version. The only drawback in allowing students to follow along with any film arises when they discover that directors and screenwriters/adapters make subtle or massive cuts to the original text, which can disrupt students' viewing—but also, of course, provide fertile conversation.

## READING SCENES AND SPEECHES FROM *MACBETH*

Typically, I would recommend screening a group of scenes to help students comprehend the arc of the play's narrative. However, since *Macbeth* is included in *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales* series, screening that twenty-five minute abridgement vividly and efficiently establishes the major characters and events that comprise the tragedy's plotline. Selection of scenes and speeches might then focus on: the relationship between 1) Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, 2) a careful examination of Macbeth's key speeches and soliloquies that track the trajectory of his character, or 3) the influence of the Weird Sisters. (Those three focus points could also be combined effectively to examine the internal and external forces that shape Macbeth's behavior.)

The enduring appeal of the "Scottish tragedy" could be attributed to the compelling and complex relationship between the Thane of Glamis and his wife. In some productions they are a young couple; in others, a mature couple who has weathered the good and bad fortunes of a long-term marriage. No matter how they are cast, they both succumb to the lure of the Witches' prophetic insight that *Macbeth* will ascend the throne of Scotland. Like any oracle's message, the end result is revealed but the path to realize that end is the rough work of human beings.

When examining scenes between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth in isolation, it is useful to focus on the extent that Macbeth is "acted upon" by his wife to escalate his ambitions and seize the throne by clearly unlawful, unethical means. Is he trapped by the expectations established by the Witches' prophesies and by his wife's overwhelming lust for power? How does Lady Macbeth mount an argument that appeals to logic and/or emotion? To what extent does she use her sexual appeal to motivate Macbeth's actions? Where is there evidence of that strategy in the play's language? Why does Shakespeare cease their onstage interactions in Act 3, with their final appearance onstage together occurs at the banquet that Banquo's ghost "crashes"?

The last time the audience sees and hears Lady Macbeth she is ensnared in an unconscious state. In the sleepwalking scene, she expresses the need to literally and figuratively cleanse herself of crimes and sins committed in the name of ambition. Macbeth is notified of her condition—and later her death—which he acknowledges briefly in the midst of combat.

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## Following Macbeth and Lady Macbeth: Partners in Unbridled Ambition

- 1.5 Responding to the Witches' prophesies
- 1.7 Resolving to execute the plan to remove Duncan
- 2.2 Killing the king, shifting blame
- 3.2 Securing the throne, eliminating another threat
- 3.4 Confronting Banquo's ghost and consequences of ambition
- 5.1 Sleepwalking and the pangs of conscience
- 5.5 Responding to loss

Narrowing the focus to examine only Macbeth's key asides, soliloquies and speeches provides a strategy to consider how his character develops psychologically over the course of the play in a very compressed manner. It also reveals how Macbeth behaves in private versus public moments—a focus that would expand as students watch the play in its entirety. All but one of the passages above appear in scenes without Lady Macbeth, so the two subsets (with and without Lady Macbeth) can be utilized to examine Macbeth when he is in the company of his wife and when he is unable to rely on her powerful influence.

## Following Macbeth's Key Asides, Soliloquies and Speeches

- 1.3.126-141\* "Two truths are told...": processing, responding
- 1.4.48-53 "The Prince of Cumberland: that is a step...": brooding, dissembling
- 1.7.1-28 "If it were done, when 'tis done...": equivocating, hesitating, resolving
- 2.1.33-64 "Is this a dagger which I see before me...": taking action
- 3.1.49-73 "To be thus is nothing/But to be safely thus...": facing consequences
- 4.1.143-155 "Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits...": making plans
- 5.3.1-10 "Bring me no more reports, let them fly all...": trusting prophecy
- 5.5.17-27 "She should have died hereafter...": grieving, brooding

\*Line numbers correspond to Cambridge School Shakespeare's *Macbeth*

Did the Witches or his own ambition corrupt Macbeth? Did Macbeth always have the desire to seize the crown or did the Witches plant that notion in his mind? Those questions are in the forefront of Ethan Hawke's mind when he explores the character of Macbeth in the episode of PBS's *Shakespeare Uncovered* that he hosts. Examining the language and behavior of the Witches provides an opportunity to consider the role of supernatural forces in the play.

Costuming the Witches and staging their scenes provide challenges for any production that modernizes the time period. Watching clips of the witches' scenes from films directed by Roman Polanski and Orson Welles, which take a traditional approach with the time period, and television productions that rely on a modernized setting offer an opportunity to discuss how the Witches provide the catalyst to set the tragedy in motion. Some productions keep the Witches' scenes intact, while others greatly reduce their presence onstage.

## Following The Weird Sisters

- 1.1 "When shall we three meet again?": Setting the stage to incite conflict
- 1.3 "All hail Macbeth, that shall be the king hereafter": Providing catalyst
- 3.5 "How did you dare/To trade and traffic with Macbeth": Facing Hecate's rebuke
- 4.1 "Fire burn, and cauldron bubble": Predicting future consequences for Macbeth

Close study of the Witches' scenes would work best combined with either the scenes involving Macbeth and Lady Macbeth or Macbeth's speeches since the Witches provide the catalyst for the decisions those characters make and the action they take to fuel the play's bloody conflict. Macbeth's ambition is stoked first by the Witches and then by Lady Macbeth. It is worth noting and discussing that Lady Macbeth does not appear in Act 4 after the Witches reveal

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

Macbeth's fate and the lineage of Scottish kings that do not spring from Macbeth. Lady Macbeth has no agency in the falling action of the tragedy.

## SELECTING A FILM VERSION

The “Film Finder” feature of this handbook provides a list of films (both theatrical releases and television broadcasts) commonly available in a variety of formats (VHS tape, DVD, streaming online). Two versions of *Macbeth* will be recommended here, but they can easily be substituted by other more available or age/classroom appropriate versions. Both originally aired on television. Versions that have played on broadcast television are usually “classroom-safe,” but it is incumbent upon any teacher to fully screen a film before bringing into the classroom to ensure that there is no objectionable content in the rendering of Shakespeare’s text. For example, the 2010 *Great Performances* version starring Patrick Stewart features a good deal of blood and gore, including one of the witches plucking the heart out of the dying Captain’s chest at the end of 1.2. That adaptation would probably be more appropriate for mature junior and seniors, while the 1978 version starring Ian McKellen and Judi Dench handles the play’s violence in a more subdued manner, suitable for most high school and middle school viewers.

Some plays have a rich range of film versions, while others have a scant few. Some have only been staged and shot for the BBC Shakespeare series. Fortunately *Macbeth* offers many options. If there is a choice of films, what then should be the criteria for selecting one for the read/view pairing? You might choose to select a version with a design concept that situates the play in its expressed time period or in Elizabethan costumes so that students recognize the visual style as Shakespearean. If the design concept is too avant-garde, that approach might prove too distracting and confusing for some students. Choosing films with actors familiar to students can offer both advantages and disadvantages depending on students’ ability to move beyond their preconceived notions of that actor’s range or signature roles (or off-screen antics). Finally, the running time of a film might determine how it fits into classroom use. If a film runs two hours, it has eliminated a fair amount of the text, which might lead to greater clarity for a Shakespeare novice since the plot has been streamlined. Zeffirelli’s *Hamlet* runs a lean two hours but it does not sacrifice characterization or plot in the cuts to the text, relying instead upon effective visuals to replace dialogue. Conversely, Ian McKellen’s *Richard III* (1995) eliminates the character of Queen Margaret and reassigns many of her lines to Queen Elizabeth or to the Duchess, which could prove confusing if a similar approach to Margaret is not observed in the theatrical production.

## SELECTING A FILM VERSION OF *MACBETH*

Roman Polanski’s film of *Macbeth* could be considered the cinematic “gold standard” for the play based on its strong performances and visual style, but its violence and nudity makes it difficult to screen in many classrooms. A new film, set for theatrical release in 2015 and starring Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard, promises to exploit the play’s bloody business based on its early poster, which depicts Fassbender’s face streaked with grime and blood (and will likely earn the film an “R” rating). Using versions originally screened on broadcast television are far more classroom-friendly, so two of them are recommended here.

In 1978 Thames Television adapted Trevor Nunn’s RSC production starring Ian McKellen and Judi Dench for broadcast, and it has been widely available on video, making it a classroom video staple. Production designer John Napier doesn’t place the play in any particular period. Shot on a sound stage, the action is played largely against a black background devoid of scenic details, relying on only essential props to suggest specific locations. Atmospheric lighting and mist provide the visual interest. The production’s costumes draw on a variety of periods from medieval through the late nineteenth century to present day. When Macbeth and Macduff fight, they are wielding swords and clad in armor. This television film is directed by Phillip Casson, who relies primarily on medium shots and close-ups that work well with camera-friendly performances of a stage production. The violence and its bloody aftermath is subdued and classroom-friendly.

In 2010, PBS’s *Great Performances* broadcast a television adaptation of the Chichester Theater Festival, directed by Rupert Goold. Unlike the Thames Television version, this production was shot on location at Welbeck Abbey using its interior and exterior spaces. The production design sets the play during the late 1930s, in a World War II context, reminiscent of the *Richard III* film starring Ian McKellen. Though not quite on par with that R-rated film, this treatment of *Macbeth* is graphic and liberal in its use of violent, bloody action and images for broadcast television. This version would

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

be most suitable for high school upperclassmen and college students; for younger or more sensitive students, it could be used in excerpt form.

	McKellen Version	Stewart Version
Act I	0 - 33:09	0 - 34:26
Act II	33:10 - 58:18	34:27 - 59:51
Act III	58:19 - 88:50	59:52 - 97:00
Act IV	88:51 - 120:28	97:01 - 125:55
Act V	120:29 - 143:44	125:56 - 157:18

A third recommended version comes packaged in a deluxe copy of the Folger edition of the play, priced around \$15. This film based on the 2008 Folger Theatre/Two River Theatre Company production directed by Teller and Aaron Posner. Teller is the silent partner to Penn Jillette of the edgy magician duo Penn & Teller. Teller and Posner classify the play as a “supernatural horror thriller.” The production design relies on Elizabethan costumes to give it a traditional look in comparison to the other recommended adaptations. Filmed at the Folger’s Elizabethan theater rather than on a sound stage, the viewing experience isn’t as immersive as the other films, but the production does feature Teller’s inventive strategies to enhance the supernatural elements of the source material, and those scenes are easily excerpted to compare to alternative treatments.

## COMBINING THE READING AND VIEWING EXPERIENCE

To read first or to view first? Is that the question? It really depends on students’ comfort level and experience with reading and viewing Shakespeare. I recommend viewing any film adaptation act by act to facilitate previewing the highlights of action and character development in each act. This strategy can focus on the structure of play since Shakespeare’s works tend to present the inciting incident in Act 1, complications to escalate the conflict in Act 2, the climax or turning point in Act 3, falling action in Act 4, and the resolution in Act 5.

*Macbeth* has a rich resource of film adaptations. Since this includes a high-quality, twenty-five minute animated version, viewing of that version might provide enough framework to understand the basic plotline in order to place individual scenes examined in proper context before reading and applying active Shakespeare techniques. There may then not be a need to screen one of the suggested films act by act.

If teachers prefer to use one of the above films, it can be screened act-by-act to create context prior to digging into individual scenes and focusing on specific characters. Or students can screen individual speeches and scenes as they are performed in two different productions that rely on very different interpretations and visual approaches to the same material.

When deciding on which film strategy to use, teachers may choose to be highly selective, perhaps focusing on the early acts of the play and then allowing students to discover what becomes of the characters and the central conflict when they see the production at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. The aim of this previewing strategy is to prime students with just enough information and level of challenge to place them on a firm foundation to not just follow the action but to appreciate the approach taken by the director, designers and actors to make *Macbeth* fresh and relevant.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Strategies for Using Film to Teach Shakespeare

BY MARY T. CRISTEL

Given that Shakespeare as a playwright in Elizabethan England found himself at the epicenter of popular culture, one can't help but wonder if he wouldn't be writing screenplays if he were alive today. He would likely be pleased that his legacy is not only perpetuated on stages like CST but also on the silver—and now digital—screens. It is up to the savvy teacher to determine how to help students “read” Shakespeare in the three ways Mary Ellen Dakin suggests: as text, as performance and as film.

Mary Ellen Dakin's recently published book entitled *Reading Shakespeare Film First* (NCTE 2012) might seem a bit contradictory to the approach many English/Language Arts teachers take. How can one “read Shakespeare” if one places film first? Film might be considered an enemy when helping students to read and appreciate Shakespeare's work. For most teachers, film generally follows the reading of a play and functions as the “dessert” at the unit's end. The strategies that follow are intended to help teachers reconsider how and when film can be used in order to motivate, clarify and enrich students' engagement with any play.

### FILMS CAN BE USED BEFORE READING...

#### ...to preview the story, characters and themes

Many of the stories that Shakespeare dramatized were familiar, even well known, to his audience, so providing students with a broad outline of the action of a play prior to reading it would be consistent with the knowledge that Renaissance audiences brought to many of the plays they saw performed on stage. Previewing can be accomplished in the classroom in one of two ways.

First, twelve of the plays were adapted into thirty-minute animated films, which aired in the 1990s on HBO and now are distributed on DVD by Ambrose Video. These “Shakespeare in short” adaptations retain the play's original language and present the essentials of the story in an abbreviated form. This activity acquaints students with the major characters, incidents and themes, providing a “road map” for students who might get mired in sorting out who's who and what's what as they adjust themselves to the language and structure of play.

A second method requires the teacher to select key scenes from a film that takes a relatively conventional approach to the play. For example, Franco Zeffirelli's version of *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) would be preferred over Baz Luhrmann's film (1996), while Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996) is a rare “full text” version and useful in this context, whereas Zeffirelli's adaptation (1990) reduces the text to two hours on screen. The BBC filmed all of Shakespeare's plays for television in the 1970s and '80s; these versions are faithful to the texts, with relatively traditional staging and the full text intact. Like the animated films, the teacher's scene selection should provide students with a broad outline of the play, as well as introduction to key events, main characters and crucial soliloquies. Students can use these scenes as reference points in their discussion of the play as they read it.

#### ...to create context

Film can be utilized as an introductory element of a unit to provide a context prior to reading a specific play. A&E's Biography series provides students with Shakespeare's biographical details and a survey of the times in *Shakespeare: A Life of Drama* (1996), a conventional approach to delivering contextual information. Historian Michael Wood takes viewers on a lively tour of various locations throughout contemporary England to explore Shakespeare's life, times, and plays in this acclaimed four-part series, *In Search of Shakespeare* (2004). (An episode guide is available at <http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/theshow/> to facilitate selection of the most appropriate segments from this comprehensive work.)

Context can be built by viewing a commercially released film that “sets the stage” for the Elizabethan era, enabling students to get a sense of the politics, social customs, and “look” of the times. A film like *Elizabeth* (1998) starring Cate Blanchett has little to do with Shakespeare, but it provides a vivid glimpse into the monarch's struggle to claim

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and maintain the throne. *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and *Anonymous* (2011) provide glimpses into the world of early modern theater practice and Shakespeare himself, but the liberties these films take with conventional historical fact may create more confusion than clarity for many students. Excerpts, however, could be used to help students visualize the time and the occasion of attending the theater, but contextual information is required to help students sort out historical accuracy from bias, poetic license or pure invention.

Al Pacino's documentary *Looking for Richard* (1996) provides an ideal way to contextualize the study of *Richard III*, but it should not be overlooked as a viewing experience to help students of any play understand what makes the study and performance of Shakespeare invigorating for actors, directors, scholars, readers and audiences. Pacino's passion for the hunchback king is infectious and the film is effectively broken up into sections: a visit to Shakespeare's birthplace, Shakespeare's Globe rebuilt in contemporary London, brief conversations with modern Shakespearean scholars and directors, and actors in rehearsal tackling the meaning of particularly dense passages of text. The film may not be practical in most cases to screen in full, but it certainly helps to build anticipation and knowledge prior to diving into a full text.

Films that document students interacting with Shakespearean texts can also generate enthusiasm for reading, and perhaps performing, a selected play. *Shakespeare High* (2012) showcases California high school students who annually compete in a Shakespeare scene contest. Students, who are both likely and unlikely competitors, are followed from scene selection, casting, rehearsal, through the final competition. *The Hobart Shakespeareans* (2005) features fifth-graders, whose home language is not English, performing scenes with uncommon poise and command of the language as a result of a dedicated teacher's commitment to offering his students the rigor of studying Shakespeare. These films shared, in full or in part, can provide motivation to not only read and understand the text but to take it to the next level of student engagement: performance.

Films Media Group (formerly Films for the Humanities and Sciences) has an extensive catalogue of films useful in providing context; many titles are available as streaming video, allowing teachers to "sample" a film without that "lifelong commitment" to purchasing a DVD that can cost several hundred dollars and sometimes not be the proper fit for students' interest or abilities.

Many of their offerings have been produced in the UK or by the BBC and cover the gamut of plays and approaches to Shakespeare in performance and on the page. (That search can start at <http://ffh.films.com>.)

## FILMS CAN BE USED DURING READING...

### ...to clarify understanding

For students who are having difficulty visualizing the action or fully comprehending the language, it can be beneficial to watch a faithful adaptation incrementally, act by act. Again, Zeffirelli's version of *Romeo and Juliet* works well. The film is easily broken down act by act with all the critical incidents and speeches intact. Students should be given a focus for their viewing, through the lens of their own questions and quandaries that they retain after reading an act, along with thoughts on how the film might address them. As students become more comfortable with the reading/viewing rhythm as they work through the play, they can adopt a more "critical" attitude toward examining later acts to discuss choices made by the screenwriter/adaptor, director, designers and actors.

When working with students who are really struggling with the language and where listening to a recorded version of a play isn't particularly helpful or engaging, film can also be used in a "read along" fashion for the exposition and key scenes or speeches. Students follow in their own printed text while the film is running, and are coached to follow in their book while taking "peeks" at the screen when they need the support of the image to clarify their understanding of the language. Staged versions of a play with close adherence to the script (BBC, for example) are better choices for this application. More cinematic versions tend to be so visually rich that students have a hard time reading rather than watching. For example, the RSC filmed version of *Macbeth* (1979) featuring Ian McKellan and Judi Dench in the leading roles follows the standard text fairly closely in most of the interactions between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. This strategy is best used for the analysis of short scenes or at moments of crisis in students' understanding. It is essential for teachers to prescreen scenes to make sure that they closely follow the edition of the play being studied.



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## ...to make comparisons

Just as the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries adapted Shakespeare's scripts to fit the fashion and tastes of the theatergoing audiences (as susceptible to trends as the fashion industry), once Shakespeare's work entered the multi-media performance space of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the text is often transformed to support the spectacle of the cinematic image. Every cinematic adapter of a complex dramatic text must consider the balance of "showing" versus "telling," sometimes choosing to emphasize the visual over the verbal. These adapters struggle with the question: What can the art of cinema reveal visually through a close-up, crosscut, or a montage that effectively augments or replaces the text? In the past thirty years, Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, histories and romances have been transported to modern settings that maintain the broad outlines of plot and character but replace Shakespeare's blank verse with contemporary language and colloquialisms. A sample list of adaptations includes:

*Zebrahead* (1992) . . . . . *Romeo and Juliet*  
*Ten Things I Hate About You* (1999) . . . *The Taming of the Shrew*  
*O* (2001) . . . . . *Othello*  
*She's the Man* (1996) . . . . . *Twelfth Night*  
*My Own Private Idaho* (1991) . . . . . *Henry IV*  
*Tempest* (1982) . . . . . *The Tempest*  
*A Thousand Acres* (1997) . . . . . *Macbeth*  
*Scotland, PA* (2001) . . . . . *Macbeth*  
*Men of Respect* (1990) . . . . . *Macbeth*

Additional adaptations of plot, characters and setting include four plays in the BBC series, entitled *Shakespeare Re-Told* (2005): *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Macbeth*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A second type of adaptation shifts the plot and characters to another genre, such as the musical (*West Side Story/Romeo and Juliet* or *Kiss Me Kate/The Taming of the Shrew*), science fiction (*Forbidden Planet/The Tempest*) or the Western (*Broken Lance/Macbeth*). *Royal Deceit* (aka *Prince of Jutland*, 1994) tells the story of the "historical" Prince Hamlet using Danish source material to differentiate the story from Shakespeare's approach. Akira Kurosawa produced the best-known adaptations of Shakespeare's plays placing them in a different cultural context with his films *Throne of Blood* (1957) based on *Macbeth*, and *Ran* (1985) based on *King Lear*. Soviet filmmaker Grigori Kozintsev adapted both *Hamlet* (1964) and *Macbeth* (1991), which have been restored and released recently on DVD. For film historians and real curiosity seekers, a collection of adaptations, which run from a few minutes to over an hour, showcase the earliest eras of cinema, entitled *Silent Shakespeare*. Sharing these adaptations, in part or in full, can facilitate the discussion of the relevance of Shakespeare's themes, conflicts and characters across time, cultures, and cinematic traditions.

## FILMS CAN BE USED AFTER READING...

### ...for culminating projects and summative assessment

Students can successfully engage in their own film production as a collaborative project. A movie trailer can tout an imagined film adaptation of the play they have just studied. The necessary steps involved can be found in *Lesson Plans for Creating Media-Rich Classrooms* (NCTE 2007), which includes Scott Williams's lesson, "Turning Text into Movie Trailers: The *Romeo and Juliet* iMovie Experience." Creating a trailer requires that students: first focus on the essential elements of plot, character and theme in order to convey excitement; and second, develop an imagined version in a highly condensed and persuasive form, which comes to life in a minute or two.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## TERMS TO EXAMINE THE PAGE-TO-SCREEN PROCESS

(adapted from *Film Adaptation*, ed. James Naremore)

### **Fidelity:**

Much discussion in film adaptation criticism focuses on how faithful a film is to the source material. Obviously, film and literature use very different narrative strategies and tools of composition. A fruitful way to have students approach the question of fidelity is to ask them to list the scenes, characters, motifs and symbols that are essential to telling the story of the source text. Then as they watch a film adaptation, they can keep track of how those elements are handled by the film version.

### **Film as Digest:**

This concept acknowledges that the written text is far more detailed and comprehensive in its ability to set a scene, develop a character, reveal a narrative point of view, or create a symbol. Film works best in developing plot and showing action.

### **Condensation:**

Due to the “film as digest” phenomenon, characters and events need to be collapsed or composited in order to fit the limitations and conventions of the film adaptation. Students can explore this term by determining which characters can be combined based on their common functions in the text.

### **Immediacy:**

Viewing a film is a far more “immediate” experience cognitively than reading a book. We decode visual images much faster and more readily than the printed word.

### **Point of View:**

The camera can express a point of view, just as the narrator of a written text can and does. Voice-over narrators are seldom used in film, since it seems artificial and intrusive. Point of view in film is visual and subtle.

Here are three ways to express or describe the point of view in a film:

- Neutral: the camera is merely recording events as they happen in a reportorial fashion. This is the most common shot in filmmaking.
- Subjective: the camera assumes the point of view of one of the character so the viewer sees what the character sees.
- Authorial: the director very deliberately focuses the camera on a feature of a sequence or shot to comment on the action or reveal something.

### **Shot and Sequence:**

As defined by *Basic Film Terms: A Visual Dictionary*, a “shot” is the “basic unit of film structure or an unbroken strip of film made by an uninterrupted running of the camera.” Think of a shot as a “still” image that is combined with other still images to create a moving picture. A shot captures its subject from a particular distance and angle. The camera can be stationary or moving as it captures its subject. Individual shots then are joined together by the editing process to create a sequence of action.

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## KEY QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

### Prior to viewing:

- In order to maintain fidelity to Shakespeare's play, what are the essential scenes that must be included in an adaptation to cover the basic plot? Considering that film is a digest of the original play, what constitutes the exposition, inciting incident, central conflict, complications, climax and resolution to represent and streamline the central action?
- What point of view dominates the play? Who is the central character? Which character has the most soliloquies or asides and might have the strongest relationship with the reader/viewer as a result? How could the viewpoint of the central character or the character that has the most direct connection with the audience be represented through the use of the camera? Or, should the camera maintain a neutral position to reveal the story and the characters?
- What details does the play provide to guide the casting of principle actors for the central characters? Looking at the text carefully, which details regarding physical appearance, class or behavior should be embodied by an actor to make an immediate impression on the viewer?
- Which supporting characters are essential to the development of the plot and main characters? Which characters serve the same functions in the story? How might several of those characters be composited in order to condense the story in helpful and necessary ways considering a film will normally be shorter than a stage production?
- Which central images, motifs, symbols or metaphors are central to the literary source? How could one or two of these literary techniques be translated into visual or sound techniques to make their impact more immediate in order to support or to replace the play's language? How would they be represented on the screen or through the musical score?

### During viewing:

- How much of the actual dialogue from the play itself is used in a scene?
- To what extent does the camera work seem unobtrusive, natural or obvious, stylized?
- Which character(s) appears mostly in one shots?
- At what point in the scene are two shots used? What is the effect of their use at that point?
- What is the typical distance (close, medium, long) of the camera to the subject of the shots? To what extent does the manipulation of camera distance make the scene an intimate one or not?
- To what extent are most of the shots at eye level, slightly above, or slightly below? How do subtle changes in angle influence how the viewer perceives the character in the shot?
- To what extent does the scene make use of extreme high or low angles? To what effect?
- To what extent does the camera move? When? What is the effect of the movement?
- To what extent does the sequence use music? If it does, when do you become aware of the music and how does it set a mood or punctuate parts of the dialogue?

### After viewing:

- Which choices made to condense the events of the play by the screenwriter are the most successful in translating the original text to the screen? Which choices are less successful or satisfying?
- Which narrative elements (events, characters, key speeches) omitted from the screen adaptation of the play shift the focus of the comedy, tragedy or history in comparison to the original text?
- If any characters were composites of two or more characters, what was gained or lost by reducing the number of characters or altering the function of a particular character?
- Which actors performed their roles in expected and/or unexpected ways? How did the original text dictate how roles such be performed?
- Which visual elements of the film made the strongest impression upon you as a viewer?
- How did the visuals help draw your attention to an element of plot, a character or a symbol that you might have missed or failed to understand when reading the play?
- As a reader of the play, how did viewing the film help you to better understand the overall plot, particular character, or specific symbol/theme?

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## MACBETH FILM FINDER

### Top Five Films to Invite Into Your Classroom

#### 1. **Shakespeare: The Animated Tales—Macbeth (25 min.), Ambrose Video**

*Hitting the Highlights—The Pre-viewing, Pre-reading Experience:* This twenty-five minute condensation of the play provides the perfect overview of the characters and the plot to prepare students for reading the play or seeing a performance. To give students a viewing focus, consider assigning a particular character to track through the film and write a summary about the importance of that character to the work as a whole. Students might then be charged with becoming an “expert” on that element of the play. They can use that focus while reading the play or seeing the actual performance, which can help students who feel overwhelmed by understanding a complicated narrative or Shakespeare’s language.

#### 2. **Shakespeare Uncovered: Macbeth (2012, 55 min.), PBS**

*Providing Context:* Ethan Hawke hosts this episode and uses preparation for the role as the framework for his inquiry. He seeks out scholars, historians, master actors and film versions to answer his questions about Macbeth’s historic origins, motivations and actions in Shakespeare’s tragedy, as well as the influence of the Weird Sisters and Lady Macbeth on his behavior.

The program is exceptionally well focused on the aspects of the supernatural in the play by posing the following questions: Did the Witches or his own ambition corrupt Macbeth? Did Macbeth previously have the desire to seize the crown or did the Witches plant that idea in his mind? Hawkes’ thoughtful investigation features: interviews with Anthony Sher and Harriet Walter from the RSC (2001) production; excerpts from several productions including RSC (2001), from the Chichester Festival (2010) with Patrick Stewart, and an avant-garde modern dance adaptation performed in New York City; and rehearsal sessions held at Shakespeare’s Globe in London. *Caution: a male actor’s naked backside is briefly exposed in excerpts from the avant-garde production.*

#### 3. **Throne of Blood (1957, NR, 109 min.)**

Directed by Akira Kurosawa

Starring Toshiro Mifune, Isuzu Yamada

*Macbeth as Samurai Warlord:* Blending elements from Japanese Noh theater with the Scottish tragedy, Kurosawa creates the first important and influential cinematic reimagining of Shakespeare’s work within the context of a non-Western culture. Distilling the plot to its essential elements and running under two hours, the film can be easily screened in full or in excerpted form.

#### 4. **Shakespeare Re-Told: Macbeth (2005, 87 min.), BBC**

Directed by Mark Brozel / Written by Peter Moffat

Starring James McAvoy and Keeley Hawes

*Getting a Modern Makeover—Shakespeare as an Anthology Television Series:* This adaptation begins at a garbage dump where the Weird Sisters are male garbage collectors who prophesize Joe Macbeth’s success in the world of haute cuisine. When his restaurant receives three Michelin stars as the garbage collectors predict, Duncan, the celebrity chef/owner, charges Joe with preparing a celebratory feast—that turns out to be Duncan’s last. As a result of this untimely death, Joe stands to inherit the restaurant before Duncan’s son Malcolm has been properly trained. Joe’s wife Ella goads him into using his skills as a “knife man” to kill Duncan and blame it on two Eastern European porters who have hastily departed the restaurant. The aftermath of Duncan’s murder follows the events and character development of the source material fairly faithfully. This adaptation effectively traces Joe Macbeth’s trajectory from an outgoing, exacting “general” in the kitchen to a man emotionally and morally deadened by his brutal actions that serve his misguided ambitions. *Caution: An early scene involves Joe butchering a pig’s head to demonstrate his knife skills that might be too intense for sensitive viewers.*

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## **5. *Macbeth* (2006, NR, 110 min.)**

Directed by Geoffrey Wright

Screenplay by Geoffrey Wright and Victoria Hall

Starring Sam Worthington and Victoria Hill

*Getting a Modern, Aussie Adaptation:* The opening scene is set in a cemetery where Lady Macbeth grieves at a tombstone inscribed, “Beloved Son,” and the Witches cavort in the guise of vandalizing school girls as Macbeth passively observes them and his wife. “The Cawdor” is a mobster’s nightclub, conferred on the youthful Macbeth for his heroic efforts taking down a treacherous drug lord. This adaptation substitutes large portions of the text with vivid visual storytelling, which expertly suits its updated context. Shakespeare’s language is spoken naturally and compellingly, and does not seem out of place in the modern world.

The film does rely on very graphic violence and its bloody aftermath. It also includes a heavy dose of nudity and Macbeth’s sexual seduction by the Witches in the film’s adaptation of 4.1 as well as Lady Macbeth emerging from her bed naked in the sleepwalking scene.

For high school classrooms, the film can be shown effectively in excerpted form, illustrating how this adaptation handles the Witches’ scenes in Act 1, as well as the character of Lady Macbeth, who initially seems so ravaged by her grief and drugs that she cannot muster the concentration, energy, or force of will to become Macbeth’s potent, scheming helpmate.

The Australian Teachers of Media offer a very useful, downloadable study guide for this film. It is available to order at their Education Shop: <http://www.theeducationshop.com.au/shop/default.asp>.

### ***Notable Actors and Directors Interpret Macbeth***

These versions offer diverse approaches to adapting the source material, developing a design concept, casting Macbeth and Lady Macbeth at different ages, as well as presenting supernatural elements and the Weird Sisters.

Orson Welles, Jeanette Nolan	1948, Orson Welles/Paramount Pictures
Marurice Evans, Judith Anderson	1954, George Schaefer/Hallmark Hall of Fame
Jon Finch, Francesca Annis	1971, Roman Polanski/Columbia Pictures*
Ian McKellen, Judi Dench	1978, Trevor Nunn/RSC
Ian Merrill Peakes, Kate Eastwood Norris	2008, Teller (of Penn & Teller), Aaron Posner**
Patrick Stewart, Kate Fleetwood	2010, Rupert Goold/Chichester Festival/PBS

\*This theatrical release film is rated R for violence and partial nudity.

\*\*This video was shot during several performances adapted for the camera and was produced jointly by Two Rivers Theater Company and the Folger Theater. The DVD also includes fifty minutes of interviews with the directors, actors and designers. Teller’s career as a magician is evident especially in the “Is this a dagger?” scene, which relies on a floating dagger that materializes onstage. The DVD is packaged with a deluxe version of the Folger print edition of *Macbeth*.

### ***Coming Soon...and not available for preview for this set of recommendations!***

#### **1. *Macbeth* (2014)**

Directed by Justin Kurzel / Screenplay by Jocab Koskoff and Michael Lesslie

Starring Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard

A “first look” at the Cannes Film Festival would suggest a theatrical release in late 2014 or early 2015. Early posters make the film look gritty and fierce. View posters at <http://www.firstshowing.net/2014/cannes-debuts-two-posters-for-macbeth-with-michael-fassbender/>.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## **2. *Macbeth: The Caribbean Macbeth* (2014)**

Directed by Aleta Chapelle / Screenplay by Aleta Chapelle  
Starring Terence Howard, Sanaa Lathan, Evan Ross, Henry Lennix

Promotional material for this film promises a modern-day setting in the Caribbean that remains faithful to the source material. There has been no theatrical release date set, but the film can be screened online: <http://www.ovguide.com/macbeth-%28the-caribbean-macbeth%29-9202a8c04000641f80000001e182f59>.

### ***Other Times, Other Places***

#### **1. *Joe MacBeth* (1955, 90 min.)**

Directed by Ken Hughes / Screenplay by Philip Yordan  
Starring Paul Douglas, Ruth Roman

Lily MacBeth goads her husband, Joe, to knockoff a mob boss, so Joe can assume that role. The recognizable elements from Shakespeare's tragedy emerge.

View clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3z0gDmi-vwM>

#### **2. *Siberian Lady Macbeth* (1962, NR, 93 min.)**

Directed by Andrezej Wajda / Screenplay by Sveta Lukic  
Starring Olivera Markovic, Ljuba Tadic

Based on the novel *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and using the music from Shostakovich's opera based on the same source material, Polish director Wajda tells the tale of a young woman in Czarist Russia who embarks on an adulterous affair, which leads to the poisoning of her father-in-law to conceal her adultery from her husband.

Available online:

[http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xmtwuc\\_siberian-lady-macbeth\\_shortfilms](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xmtwuc_siberian-lady-macbeth_shortfilms)

[http://www.fandor.com/films/siberian\\_lady\\_macbeth](http://www.fandor.com/films/siberian_lady_macbeth)

#### **3. *Men of Respect* (1991, R, 131 min.)**

Directed by William Reilly / Screenplay by William Reilly  
Starring John Turturro, Katherine Borowitz, Rod Steiger

Another film that imagines Macbeth among mobsters, this version also integrates the Witches as clairvoyants—an adaptation of a crucial element of Shakespeare's play that works exceptionally well in a modern context. Excerpts from this film can illustrate how a screenwriter and director bring the play into a contemporary setting and update the language into late twentieth-century vernacular.

Trailers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDIZ9CjZGAE>

<http://www.fandango.com/movie-trailer/menofrespect-trailer/18150>

#### **4. *Scotland, PA* (2002, R, 104 min.)**

Directed by Billy Morrisette  
Starring James Le Gros, Maura Tierney, Christopher Walken

Ambition, treachery, and murder—all set in a small town fast-food joint called Duncan's in the 1970s. This treatment is certainly more comedy than tragedy, with tasty dollops of satire and parody highlighted by Duncan murdered in a deep fryer. It might remind some viewers of the Coen Brothers' macabre sensibilities in their film, *Fargo*.

Ebert review: <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/scotland-pa-2002>

Preview clips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDI2cnBOrno>

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## 5. *Maqbool* (2004, 132 min.)

Directed by Vishal Bhardwaj / Screenplay by Abbas Tyrewala and Vishal Bhardwaj  
Starring Irrfan Khan, Tabu, Pankaj Kapur

*The Godfather* meets *Macbeth* in the Mumbai underworld. *Maqbool*/*Macbeth* is having an affair with the mob boss's mistress, Nimmi, which creates a necessity to eliminate the underworld's overlord and to take his position. Two policemen assume the roles of the Weird Sisters and the sea stands in for Birnham Wood.

## 6. *Never Say Macbeth* (2007, 86 min.)

Directed by Christopher J. Prouty Screenplay by Joe Tyler Gold  
Starring Tammy Caplan, John Combs, Scott Conte

A science teacher, hoping to impress his girlfriend, joins the cast of *Macbeth* only to bring the curse of naming "the Scottish play" on the entire production. He tries to use the resources of science and a few sympathetic and unorthodox allies to manage the ensuing chaos.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxYGDiyh3Jo>

Helpful analysis: <http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/782305/display>

## 7. *The Word aka Obietnica* (2014, NR\*, 97 min.)

Screened at the Chicago International Film Festival, this Polish-Danish coming-of-age thriller draws on elements of a police procedural and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Using ubiquitous social media and cell phone tools, a teenage girl goads her hapless boyfriend into exacting revenge against a romantic rival that involves emotional betrayal, psychological manipulation, and murder. Director Anna Kazejak-Dawid explores female aggression among teenage girls using a "ripped from the headlines" scenario which makes the ensuing tragedy that destroys families and a community all the more plausible and chilling.

*\*This film has not been rated by the MPAA. It contains nudity, sexual situations, and language that may not be appropriate for high school classroom use in its entirety.*

Review: <http://www.screendaily.com/reviews/the-latest/the-word/5067960.article>

### **More Ways to Introduce *Macbeth***

#### 1. *This Is Macbeth* (2008, 99 min.)

<http://thisismacbeth.com/>

Jeremy Sabol and Greg Watkins of Stanford University's Program of Structured Liberal Arts Education have created an engaging way to introduce *Macbeth* in the form of a talk show, hosted by Ralph Holinshed who interviews key characters from the tragedy. The program also includes scenes from the play that are intercut with the interviews. The website includes clips from the film and helpful strategies for using the film in the classroom. The film is especially easy to use in excerpt form throughout the study of the play. Sabol and Watkins have also created *This Is Hamlet*.

#### 2. Resources from Films Media Group

These films are available on DVD or through Films on Demand service, for a single screening or for a three year streaming license.

##### ***Macbeth: A Critical Guide* (33 min.)**

<http://www.films.com/ecTitleDetail.aspx?TitleID=9143&r=SR>

##### **A First Look at *Macbeth* (31 min.)**

<http://www.films.com/ecTitleDetail.aspx?TitleID=2981&r=SR>

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## **Macbeth: Young Actors in Training (15 min.)**

<http://www.films.com/ecTitleDetail.aspx?TitleID=19288&r=SR>

## **Reflections on Macbeth (five 20 min. segments)**

<http://www.films.com/ecTitleDetail.aspx?TitleID=5982&r=SR>

### **Cinematic Curiosities**

#### **1. Never Mention the “Scottish Play”!**

A segment from an episode of the BBC series *Blackadder* hilariously addresses the superstition surrounding uttering “Macbeth” among theater folk. View it online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h--HR7PWfp0>.

#### **2. Macbeth Gets the Silent Treatment**

A total of eight silent films tackled the Scottish play. The earliest known version appeared in 1908 directed by J. Stuart Blackton. In 1916 another notable adaptation was directed by John Emerson and produced by D. W. Griffith. Running 80 minutes, it starred Sir Herbert Beerbohn Tree and Constance Collier, both noted stage interpreters of Shakespeare. Film critic Kevin Brownlow points out that Tree failed to understand that in a silent film gestures, rather than mouthing Shakespeare’s lines, were crucial to an effective screen performance. A 1922 film starred Sybil Thorndike as Lady Macbeth.

Watch 1908 version online: <http://www.ovguide.com/macbeth-9202a8c04000641f8000000006b06225>

## Theater Warm-ups

Unlike many of the classic works studied in the English classroom, Shakespeare’s plays were written to be spoken out loud and heard by an audience. Introducing drama-based activities into the classroom can be a powerful tool for increasing fluency and comprehension, encouraging empathy, building community, and exploring character perspective and choices. Learning to read Shakespeare can be compared to learning music, sports or other “learning by doing” classes. How does a music class usually begin? With a warm-up. How does one start a physical class? With a warm-up!

A brief physical and vocal warm-up—approximately five to seven minutes—can help students move from a “classroom mode” to a “studio mode.” It sets the tone for a student coming to understand Shakespeare as a living script, as well as a piece of great literature. And you will find that after the first couple of times, your students’ trepidations—and yours—will be unseated by energy and focus. If this is your first time incorporating warm-ups with your students, a few rehearsals in the privacy of your own home can do a lot to bolster your courage! You might also want to check out this video of actors practicing through physical and vocal warm-ups shared by the National Theatre in London at <http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/video/vocal-warm-up-1-breathing>. Every actor develops his/her own set of physical and vocal warm-ups. Warm-ups help the actor prepare for rehearsal or performance not only physically, but also mentally. For the actor, warm-ups create a mental and physical space to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and to begin to assume the flexibility required to create a character.

Actors have described the experience of acting Shakespeare as the “Olympics of Acting.” Shakespeare’s verse demands a very flexible vocal instrument, and an ability to express not only the flow of the text, but also the emotional shifts, which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words—some rarely or never used in our contemporary language—the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor preparing to perform Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. Shakespeare requires a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.



# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## PHYSICAL WARM-UPS

### Getting Started

- creates focus on the immediate moment develops body awareness helps reduce tension
- Push desks aside to create an open area where students can spread out and move. Begin by taking a comfortable stance with feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed, and arms down by your sides. Inhale deeply through your nose, filling your lungs deep into your abdomen, and exhale through your mouth. Repeat this a few times.

### Warm-up from the top of the body down (approximately seven to ten minutes)

- increases circulation, flexibility, and body readiness through gentle movement
  - increases physical and spatial awareness
- a) Begin by doing head-rolls to the left and to the right, about four times each way, very slowly. Then do a series of shoulder rolls to the back and to the front, again very slowly, and emphasizing a full range of motion.
  - b) Stretch each arm toward the ceiling alternately, and try to pull all the way through the rib cage, repeating this motion six to eight times.
  - c) Next, with particular care to keep knees slightly bent, twist from the waist in each direction, trying to look behind. Again, repeat six to eight times.
  - d) From a standing position, starting with the top of the head, roll down with relaxed neck and arms until the body is hanging from the waist. Ask the students to shake things around, making sure their bodies are relaxed. From this position, bend at the knees, putting both hands on the floor. Stretch back up to hanging. Repeat this action about four times. Then roll back up—starting from the base of the spine, stack each vertebra until the head is the last thing to come up.
  - e) Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Ask the students to bring their feet together, bend their knees, and keeping their knees together ask the students to rotate their knees in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.
  - f) Pick up the right foot, rotate it inward six to eight times, and then do the same with the left foot. Repeat with outward rotation of the foot. Take a few moments and shake out the entire body.

## VOCAL WARM-UPS

Vocal warm-ups can follow your physical warm-up. Some of these exercises may seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. Once students see their teacher looking completely foolish going through the vocal warm-ups, they are much more likely to smile and go along with it. So take a risk! Go for it. They will get on board and begin to embrace the silliness when they see you can too.

- helps connect physicality to the voice
  - begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities
- a) Begin by gently massaging your jaw muscles in a downward motion on either side of your face. This will help wake up the facial muscles.
  - b) Stick your tongue out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. Repeat this exercise once or twice.
  - c) Ask students to put their lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a “raspberry.”

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

- d) Next, hum—quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Humming helps to lubricate the vocal chords.
- e) Create the vowel sounds, overemphasizing each shape with the face—A, E, I, O, and U—with no break.
- f) Choose two or three tongue-twisters—there are some listed below. Again, overemphasize the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles. Begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually increase speed, repeating until the speed is moving along so quickly that the enunciation is lost.

## Tongue Twisters

Tongue twisters and other drama-based activities provide a great forum for us to help shy adolescents and those who struggle with articulating aloud in the classroom to build self-confidence in public speaking. Foster a safe and encouraging environment to cultivate this life skill that will benefit them beyond their adolescence.

- Red leather, yellow leather
- Unique New York
- Rubber baby buggy bumpers
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers
- The lips, the teeth, the tip of the tongue, the tip of the tongue, the teeth, the lips
- I carried the married character over the barrier toy boat, toy boat, toy boat

## Guiding Questions for Physical and Vocal Warm-ups:

- Why is a warm-up important for actors before a rehearsal or performance?
- Why is breathing included in a theater warm-up?
- As we begin to explore this play in class through performance, what do we need to do vocally to be understood by our audience—and by our classmates?
- What other activities/professions require a warm-up to begin?
- How might those activities be similar to acting?
- How is acting a physical activity? How is it a mental activity?

## COMMUNITY-BUILDERS

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand our imaginations, increase our sense of “ensemble” or teamwork, and encourage being “in the moment.” These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor’s training—and, of course, they are fundamental, too, to the learning process in the classroom. Incorporating community-builders into your classroom routine builds the trust and safety needed for risk-taking and creativity. Allow five to ten minutes to include one or two of the exercises suggested below to follow a physical and vocal warm-up.

### Four Up

- helps the ensemble/classroom work together
- helps to slowly introduce physical activities in the classroom
- brings focus to the classroom

For this exercise, everyone stays seated at desks. The goal is to have four people standing at all times. There are a few rules: anyone can stand up whenever they want, but only four can be standing at a time and they can only stand up for a maximum of five seconds. Everyone should participate and try to stand with a group of four.

A sense of community and having a strong focus can be the keys to a successful production (and classroom). This exercise can help to establish those norms in a fun way, which also gets the students up on their feet.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Zounds! Ball

*(This exercise requires a soft ball about 8-12 inches in diameter.)*

- helps the ensemble/classroom grow together
- helps the students let go of their internal “censor” and begin tapping into their impulses
- brings together the physical and the vocal actor tools

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part; making it come out of their mouths as if they’re saying it for the very first time is the hard part, especially with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can sound like a song, but how do you make it sound like real people talking to each other? Actors listen to each other and try to respond to what they hear in the moment of the play. Listening is a very important part of acting; it keeps the moment real—and the characters believable.

Stand in a circle facing in. *(To the teacher: explain to your students that the ball carries energy with it. This energy is like a feedback loop that increases the energy, speed and focus of the entire group by the amount that each actor-student puts into the ball.)* The goal is to keep the ball moving in the circle without letting the energy drop. There should be no space between throw and catch. There should be no thought as to whom you will throw next. To keep the intensity of the energy, as the ball is thrown, make eye contact with the person you are throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, call out “Zounds!”

“Zounds,” a frequent expletive on the Shakespearean stage, rhymes with “wounds”—and was, in fact, a contraction for “God’s wounds.” The 1606 “Act to Restrain Abuses of Players” prohibited the use of the word “God” on the secular stage of the playhouse.

Experiment with the way you say “Zounds!” It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way they wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy. Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals and all sorts of relationships in his plays. Actors—in the classroom and on stage—must be able to experiment, follow impulses, and create character without the fear of failure.

## Zounds! Ball (without a ball)

- encourages students to make their imagination specific and clear to the ensemble
- focuses the students on physical detail

This exercise builds on Zounds! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zounds! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using “Zounds!” toss the ball to someone in the circle, who must catch it with the same weight and speed with which it was thrown. Whoever holds this imaginary ball must create the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how they’ve changed it. As in Zounds! Ball, work around the circle. The wide range of vocabulary in Shakespeare’s plays can often be intimidating as one reads the scripts. The actor’s job is to make the language clear, and this is often accomplished by very specific physical gesturing.

## Zip Zap Zop!

- facilitates mental focus
- encourages eye contact and team work
- builds a sense of rhythm and pace

*(To the teacher: For a demonstration of this community builder, watch this video, <http://www.tinyurl.com/zipzapzop>, for a demonstration and instructions.)* Stand in a circle, facing in. Bring your hands to your chest in a prayer pose. Make sure everyone can see each person in the circle. Eye contact is going to be very important! Point your hands like a laser, make clear eye contact at another person in the circle, and say “zip,” “zap” or “zop,” picking up your cue from the person before you. While maintaining the word sequence of zip, zap, zop as well as the rhythm, start slowly and eventually build speed.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

## Wah!

- facilitates physical awareness and risk-taking
- encourages vocal projection
- helps actors increase their sense of timing and decrease their response time

*(To the teacher: Want to see Wah! in action with a group of students? Watch this brief video, <http://www.tinyurl.com/wahwarmup>.)* Stand in a circle, facing in. No one in the circle is a student or teacher any longer, but rather a fearsome warrior. Press the palms of your hands flat together to become a sword. To begin the game, one warrior raises his or her sword straight up, then brings it down, pointing at another warrior in the circle. Warriors must make excellent eye contact to avoid confusion. As the warrior brings down his or her sword, he or she utters a fearsome battle cry, by saying, "Wah!" (Be wary, warriors, of shouting, which comes from the throat and leads to laryngitis, a warrior's worst enemy. Using the good support and deep breathing from your vocal warm-up will help you keep your vocal chords in top fighting condition.) When you become the recipient of "Wah!," raise your sword up above your head. While your sword is raised, the warriors on either side of you slash towards her stomach, as they cry "Wah!" in unison. Then make eye contact with someone else in the circle, slash your sword towards them with a final defiant "Wah!" Each "battle" should therefore include three cries of "Wah!" As the group becomes familiar with the game, work to increase your speed and volume. This is a silly game; remember that warriors don't care about "looking cool" because they're too busy fighting unending battles. When a warrior misses his or her cue, stop the round and start it again until everyone is comfortable being loud and making big physical choices.

## What Are You Doing?

Form two parallel lines, and enough room in between for "action" to take place. The first student in one line, Student A, steps into the empty space between the two lines and begins miming any action (ex. bouncing a basketball). The first student in the opposite line, Student B, steps out and addresses Student A, saying their first name (a good name reinforcer!) and asking, "[Name], what are you doing?" Student A then states any action that is not what they are miming (e.g. "baking a cake"). Student B then begins miming the action that Student A has just stated, and the next student steps out to continue the exercise. *(To the teacher: Once students feel confident with the exercise, ask students to choose actions found in a chosen text. For instance, if you are teaching Macbeth, students might say, "I'm washing blood from my hands" or "I'm stirring a cauldron.")*

## Guiding Questions for Community-Builders:

- Why is a sense of trust and community important in theater?
- Are there other activities where an ensemble is important? How might they be similar to theater?
- How is acting in a play similar to being on a sports team? Or a classroom?
- Why might mental focus be important in acting?

## Chicago Shakespeare Theater

### **Chicago Shakespeare Theater's website**

<http://www.chicagoshakes.com/education>

Access articles and teacher handbooks for eighteen of Shakespeare's plays, as well as information on introducing your students to Shakespeare in performance.

## Comprehensive Link Sites

### **Shakespeare in Europe Sh:in:E**

<http://shine.unibas.ch/metasite.html>

Access an array of web links categorized into criticism, theater and film, music, adaptation, education, and more. Website created and maintained by Basel University in Switzerland.

### **Touchstone Database**

<http://touchstone.bham.ac.uk>

This website database identifies and maps significant UK Shakespeare collections. Created and maintained by University of Birmingham in the UK.

### **Absolute Shakespeare**

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com>

Access a comprehensive collection of Shakespeare's work, including full texts and summaries, a timeline, and lists of film adaptations.

### **Open Source Shakespeare**

<http://opensourceshakespeare.com>

This website is a useful concordance to look up passages by word, line, character, or play.

## Teaching Shakespeare

### **The Folger Shakespeare Library**

<http://folger.edu/education>

This website features lesson plans, primary sources and study guides for the most frequently taught plays and sonnets.

### **Teaching Shakespeare with Technology—PBS**

<http://pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/technology>

Learn more about incorporating digital media into your Shakespeare units.

### **The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider**

<http://siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html>

View costume illustrations of different social classes and cultures from various historical times.

# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

## Macbeth

### **A Teacher Guide to the Signet Edition**

<http://penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/macbeth.pdf>

This teachers' guide provides summaries of each act in addition to study questions to consider while reading the play and follow up writing prompts.

### **Shakespeare Online**

<http://shakespeare-online.com/plays/macbethscenes.html>

The full text of the play is provided with accompanying activities and information.

### **Absolute Shakespeare Art**

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/macbeth.htm>

Paintings depicting scenes from *Macbeth* are linked to relevant excerpts from the text.

### **Royal Shakespeare Company**

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/shakespeare/plays/macbeth/>

This resource from the RSC provides a wealth of information on the play, including reviews of notable productions.

### **The Curse of the Play**

<http://austinchronicle.com/arts/2000-10-13/78882/>

This article describes the history of the curse.

### ***Macbeth* Background and Plot Summary/Study Guide**

<http://cumingsstudyguides.net/xMacbeth.html#Macbeth>

This resource provides a summary of the play along with information about characters and themes.

### **Teaching Resources for *Macbeth***

<http://shakespearehigh.com/library/surfbard/plays/macbeth/>

This resource provides a summary along with study guides, descriptions of adaptations and additional helpful links.

### **An Analysis of Shakespeare's Sources for *Macbeth***

<http://shakespeare-online.com/sources/macbethsources.html>

This site provides a discussion of the sources Shakespeare used for writing *Macbeth*.

### **Legends. Shakespeare's Stories. *Macbeth***

<http://bestoflegends.org/shakespeare/macbeth.html>

This resource looks at Shakespeare's sources and also provides links about the text, the Globe and superstitions.

### **The History of *Macbeth* and King Duncan I of Scotland**

<http://ise.uvic.ca/Library/SLTnoframes/history/macbeth.html>

This site provides a brief account of the historical figures relevant to the play.

# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

## **The Anglo Saxon Chronicle**

<http://www.britannia.com/history/docs/asintro2.html>

This site provides an abridged version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, a document from the 9th through the 12th centuries that documents British history through 1154. Relevant for a fuller understanding the historical background of the play.

## **Folger Library Educational Resources**

<http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=2778>

This site provides extensive resources and links for teaching *Macbeth*.

## **BBC's 60-second Shakespeare: *Macbeth***

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes\\_macbeth.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes_macbeth.shtml)

An engaging introduction to the play, this site is written in the format of exclusive breaking news on the front page of a newspaper.

## **BBC Shakespeare Animated Tales *Macbeth***

Part 1: <http://vimeo.com/65811990>

Part 2: <http://vimeo.com/65812041>

This animated version of the play covers the entire story in about 20 minutes.

## **Shakespeare and Elizabethan England**

### **The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**

<http://shakespeare.org.uk>

Learn more about Shakespeare's life and birthplace through an extensive online collection of Shakespeare-related materials.

### **The Elizabethan Theatre**

<http://uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare>

Read a lecture on Elizabethan Theatre by Professor Hilda D. Spear, University of Dundee, held at Cologne University.

### **King James I**

<http://luminarium.org/sevenlit/james/>

Learn about the life of King James I and his own literary canon.

### **Queen Elizabeth I**

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm>

Learn more about Queen Elizabeth and the people, events and concepts relevant to the study of the Elizabethan Age.

### **Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend**

<http://newberry.org/elizabeth/>

This web-based exhibit is a companion to The Newberry Library's 2003-04 Queen Elizabeth exhibit.

### **Encyclopedia Britannica's Guide to Shakespeare**

<http://www.britannica.com/shakespeare>

An excellent resource for non-fiction companion pieces, find encyclopedia articles on Shakespeare, his works, and the Elizabethan period.

# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

## Texts and Early Editions

### **The Complete Works of William Shakespeare**

<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/>

Access the first online web edition of the complete works, created and maintained by Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

### **Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto**

<http://bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html>

A copy of the quartos, available to compare side-by-side, as well as background information. This website was created and is maintained by the British Library.

### **The Internet Shakespeare Editions**

<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Foyer/plays.html>

This website has transcriptions and high quality facsimiles of Shakespeare's folios and quartos, categorized by play with links to any articles written about the play that can be found on the website.

### **Furness Shakespeare Library**

<http://dewey.lib.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/>

This collection of primary and secondary texts and images that illustrate the theater, literature and history of Shakespeare. Created and maintained by University of Pennsylvania.

### **What Is a Folio?**

<http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm>

This page gives an easy-to-understand introduction to the Folio texts, part of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's website "*Hamlet* on the Ramparts."

### **Shakespeare's First Folio**

<http://bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/landprint/shakespeare/>

This page from the British Library provides an easy to understand introduction to the First Folio.

## Words, Words, Words

### **Shakespeare's Words Glossary and Language Companion**

<http://shakespeareswords.com>

Created by David Crystal and Ben Crystal, this site is a free online companion to the best-selling glossary and language companion, *Shakespeare's Words*.

### **Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary**

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.03.0079>

Part of Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library and created by Alexander Schmidt.

### **Words Shakespeare Invented**

<http://shakespeare-online.com/biography/wordsinvented.html>

This list compiled by Amanda Mabillard has some of the many words Shakespeare created; when you click on the word it directs you to the play in which it first appeared.



## Shakespeare in Performance

### **The Internet Broadway Database**

<http://ibdb.com>

This online database of Broadway plays is a great place to search for 'Shakespeare' and learn about some of the different productions of the Bard's works. (Note: this will only give you information about shows performed on Broadway.)

### **The Internet Movie Database: William Shakespeare**

<http://imdb.com>

Similar to IBDB, utilize this online movie database to search for "Shakespeare" and learn about the different cinematic versions of his plays.

### **Shakespeare's Staging: Shakespeare's Performance and his Globe Theatre**

<http://shakespearestaging.berkeley.edu>

This website catalogues stagings (with images!) from the sixteenth century to today.

### **Designing Shakespeare Collections**

<http://www.ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/playlist.do>

This index page once connected to a now-defunct Arts and Humanities Data Service in the UK. While much of the original site (<http://www.ahds.ac.uk/performingarts/>) is no longer searchable, this single link offers a treasure trove of production photos focusing on design practice at the Royal Shakespeare Company, along with many other British theaters. The photos can be enlarged and used for a myriad of classroom activities and research.

## Shakespeare in Art

### **Shakespeare Illustrated**

[http://english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare\\_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html](http://english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html)

Harry Rusche, English professor at Emory University, created this helpful website that explores nineteenth-century paintings that depict scenes from Shakespeare's plays. Most plays have at least two works of arts accompanying them; you can search for works of art by both play title and artist name.

### **Folger Shakespeare Library Digital Image Collection**

<http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/all>

In August 2014, over 80,000 images from Folger's collection were released for use in the public domain. Images include books, manuscripts and art.

### **Absolute Shakespeare**

[http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare\\_pictures.htm](http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare_pictures.htm)

View examples of paintings based on Shakespeare's works and features examples of text believed to have inspired the painting.

### **The Faces of Elizabeth I**

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm>

Access a collection of paintings of Queen Elizabeth spanning her lifetime.

### **Tudor England: Images**

<http://marileecody.com/images.html>

Peruse paintings of royalty from the Tudor Era.

# SUGGESTED READINGS

**Barton, John. *Playing Shakespeare*. London: Methuen, 1986.** A bible for Shakespearean actors, this classic book by John Barton (of Royal Shakespeare Company fame) offers any reader with an interest in Shakespeare's words an insider's insight into making Shakespeare's language comprehensible.



***Basic Film Terms: A Visual Dictionary*. Dir. Sheldon Renan. Pyramid Films, 1970.** This short film was created with the purpose of teaching film technique and film appreciation in schools. Basic terms are explored and defined, which can aid in the classroom analysis of a film.

**Bevington, David, ed. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. 4th edition. New York: Longman, 1992.** A compendium of Shakespeare's complete works, with an excellent, readable introduction and clearly written footnotes.



**Boose, Lynda E., and Richard Burt. *Shakespeare, the Movie: Popularizing the Plays on Film, TV, and Video*. London: Routledge, 1997.** A valuable resource in teaching a wide variety of film adaptations, and especially the film adaptations of the 1990s. The first chapter provides an examination of the proliferation of film adaptations in the '90s that appeal to both teachers and students, and a useful overview of the styles of film adaptations that have evolved.

**Brockbank, Philip, ed. *Players of Shakespeare: Essays in Shakespearean Performance, Volumes 1-6*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.** Written by famous actors about the Shakespearean roles they have performed on the English stage, this collection of personal essays offers the reader a privileged look inside the characters and the artist's craft.

**Bullough, Geoffrey, ed. "Macbeth" *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare. Vol VII: The Tragedies*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.** The classic reference detailing Shakespeare's sources. Out of print, this multi-volume resource is well worth searching for in a library.

**Chrisp, Peter, and Steve Teague. *Shakespeare*. New York: DK Publishing, 2002.** Part of DK Eyewitness Books' "children's book series," this title, plus a number of others (Costume, Arms and Armor, Battle, Castle, Mythology) offers students of any age beautifully illustrated background information to complement a classroom's Shakespeare study.



**Christel, Mary T., and Scott Sullivan. *Lesson Plans for Creating Media-rich Classrooms*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2007.** This book provides sample lesson plans for incorporating media literacy into the curriculum. Particularly interesting are Scott Williams' lesson plans for creating movie trailers.

**Crystal, David, and Ben Crystal. *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*. London: Penguin Books, 2002.** An informative, easy-to-use one-volume dictionary devoted to Shakespeare.



**Dakin, Mary Ellen. *Reading Shakespeare with Young Adults*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2009.** This book offers practical strategies for how and why to teach Shakespeare.



**Davis, James E., and Ronald E. Salomone. *Teaching Shakespeare Today: Practical Approaches and Productive Strategies*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1993.** This text is similar in format to *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-first Century*. In combination, they provide the greatest wealth of teaching ideas, including the use of film.

**Drakakis, John, and Dale Townshend. *Macbeth: A Critical Reader*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.** This text contains several recent essays on *Macbeth*, as well as chapters devoted to recent literary criticism and performance history. It provides a very helpful overview of current discourses as well as more in-depth essays on specific topics.

# SUGGESTED READINGS

**Foster, Cass. *Sixty-minute Shakespeare: Macbeth*. Chandler, AZ: Five Star Publications, Inc., 1997.** Swan Books developed a series of “short Shakespeare” editions with Shakespeare’s original language, abridged for younger students. It’s an excellent series for elementary and ESL teachers to have on hand.

**Frye, Northrop. *Fools of Time: Studies in Shakespeare Tragedy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973.** Frye’s work is a classic in Shakespearean scholarship. This work examines tragedies and the role that the inevitability of death shapes the plays’ focus on time.

**Garber, Marjorie. *Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality*. New York: Routledge, 1987.** Marjorie Garber is one of the leading Shakespeare scholars today, whose most recent book, entitled *Shakespeare*, has earned her a wide following outside the Academy.

**Gibson, Rex, ed. *Cambridge School Shakespeare: “Macbeth.”* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.** This unparalleled series, used extensively as a resource in CST’s education efforts, includes most of Shakespeare’s plays, as well as a book devoted to the Sonnets. Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully thanks Cambridge University Press for its permission to include various classroom activities annotated throughout this Teacher Handbook.

**Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.** As inspiration to the “active Shakespeare” movement worldwide, Rex Gibson compiles into one incomparable resource activities that encourage students to playfully and thoughtfully engage with Shakespeare’s language and its infinite possibilities.

**Goddard, Harold C. *The Meaning of Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.** A classic, post-war critical analysis, which is both readable and humanistic, devoting a chapter to each play.

**Grun, Bernard, and Werner Stein. *The Timetables of History*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991.** This book is a must-have resource for anyone who loves to place Shakespeare, his writing, and his royal characters in an historical context.

**Gurr, Andrew. *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.** This text provides a discussion of Elizabethan audiences and play-going conditions based on historical materials.

**Hawkins, Harriet. *Twayne’s New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987.** This reliable, accessible series of Shakespearean criticism is a good resource for many plays in the canon. Each volume is written by a single scholar, as opposed to a representing a collection of essays by a number of writers.

**Hills, Wayne F., and Cynthia J. Öttchen. *Shakespeare’s Insults: Educating Your Wit*. New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks, 1995.** The editors combed the canon for lines that will incite any classroom to speaking Shakespeare with wild abandon.

**Kimbrough, Robert. *Shakespeare and the Art of Humankindness*. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1990.** One of the most eloquent academic writers, Kimbrough here addresses the question of prescribed (and proscribed) gender roles in several of Shakespeare’s plays, including *Macbeth*.

**Kliman, Bernice. *Shakespeare in Performance: “Macbeth.”* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992.** This excellent series focuses upon performance history and details varying interpretations of past film and stage productions.



**Krueger, Ellen, and Mary T. Christel. *Seeing and Believing: How to Teach Media Literacy in the English Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers-Heinemann, 2001.** Providing the vocabulary of film analysis, this resource helps acquaint teachers with various ways to teach film adaptations as a cinematic text.

# SUGGESTED READINGS

**Mack, Maynard. *Killing the King: Three Studies in Shakespeare's Tragic Structure*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.** Maynard Mack's writings are readable, thought-provoking, and illuminating.

**Michaels, Wendy. *Playbuilding Shakespeare*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.** The former director of education at the Royal Shakespeare Company guides students through exploring elements of five of Shakespeare's plays including *Macbeth*.

**Moncrief, Kathryn M., Kathryn R. McPherson, and Sarah Enloe, eds. *Shakespeare Expressed: Page, Stage, and Classroom in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013.** This collection contains various classroom activities, along with accessible essays, including ones on Lady Macbeth and the Porter.

**Muir, Kenneth. *The Arden Shakespeare: Macbeth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962.** The well-reputed Arden edition of Shakespeare's works provides a clear text with relevant commentary, as well as an introduction with useful critical background.

**Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.** Among the myriad of books written about the Elizabethan stage, Mullaney's is one of the best.

**O'Brien, Peggy. *Shakespeare Set Free*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1993.** The Folger Library's revamping of teaching practice, encapsulated in this three-volume set (*Macbeth* is included in the first of three books) has helped teachers approach Shakespeare as the performative script it was written to be. It is a treasure chest of creative and comprehensive lesson plans.



**Naremore, James. *Film Adaptation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000.** The opening chapters outline the strategies that filmmakers use in adapting literature into film, which include "cinema as digest" and issues of fidelity to the literary source.

**Parsons, Keith, and Pamela Mason. *Shakespeare in Performance*. London: Salamander Books, 1995.** A beautifully illustrated book detailing the performance history of Shakespeare's plays, both on the stage and in cinema.

**Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy*. London: Routledge, 2000.** Not for the prudish, Partridge's classic work offers an alphabetical glossary of the sexual and scatological meanings of Shakespeare's language. It will help the reader (including even the most Shakespeare-averse) understand another reason for this playwright's broad appeal on stage.

**Peacock, John. *Costume: 1066 to the Present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2006.** Among the many excellent costume books available, Peacock's offers hundreds and hundreds of annotated sketches—an essential resource (from our point of view) for every English classroom's study of Shakespeare.

**Poole, Adrian. *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.** Poole's book is an erudite and a challenging read, but is well worth the effort, particularly in light of an exploration of *Macbeth*.

**Rosenthal, Daniel. *Shakespeare on Screen*. London: Hamlyn, 2000.** An excellent illustrated resource.

**Salomone, Ronald, ed. *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-First Century*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997.** This collection of essays by high school teachers and college professors offers a wide range for strategies to teach Shakespeare, including several essays on the use of film and film adaptation in the classroom.

# SUGGESTED READINGS

**Schmidt, Alexander, and Gregor Sarrazin. *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*. New York: Dover Publications, 1971.** No self-respecting cast of Shakespearean actors would be left alone in a rehearsal room without this fundamental, two-volume tome. Also online free of charge.

**Scott, Mark W. *Shakespeare for Students*. Detroit: Gale Research, 1992.** This excellent three-volume set (Book One includes *Macbeth*) is a collection of critical essays on 23 of Shakespeare's plays plus the Sonnets, and edited for secondary school students.

**Smith, Emma. *Macbeth: Language and Writing*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.** This is a useful guide for teachers and students, focusing on language and highlighting specific passages for study. It also provides various writing prompts and study questions. Although it is generally more geared to undergraduate classrooms, much of it could be used or adapted for high school.

**Sofer, Andrew. "Spectral Readings." *Theater Journal*. Vol. 64, Number 3, Oct 2012.** This essay looks at the role of material and immaterial props, closely examining Richard II's crown and Macbeth's dagger.

**Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*. New York: Harper & Rows, 1992.** This abridged version of Stone's magnum opus presents his treatise about the evolution of the family in England from the impersonal, economically tied group to the smaller, affectively tied nuclear family.

**Whalen, Richard F. "The Scottish/Classical Hybrid Witches in Macbeth." *Brief Chronicles IV*, 2012-13.** This essay examines the role of the witches in the play, paying special attention to the frequently overlooked comedic element of their characters.

**Wilders, John. *Shakespeare in Production: Macbeth*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.** This excellent series combines the complete text with copious historical notes on production choices from the sixteenth to twenty-first centuries. It's a great resource for a teacher interested in performance choices.

**Wills, Garry. *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth*. New York: New York Public Library, 1995.** Pulitzer Prize-winning scholar Garry Wills addresses the relationship between the Gunpowder Plot and Shakespeare's timely story.

**Wilson, Edwin, ed. *Shaw on Shakespeare: An Anthology of Bernard Shaw's Writings on the Plays and Production of Shakespeare*. New York: Dutton, 1961.** George Bernard Shaw was one of Shakespeare's most outspoken critics—and also one of the most humorous. Students who know of Shaw's work, too, may enjoy having him as an ally!

**Wilson, Jean. *The Archeology of Shakespeare: The Material Legacy of Shakespeare's Theatre*. Gloucester: Far Thrupp, 1995.** Among many books on early modern theater in England, this one is particularly interesting as it traces the roots of the first public theaters in England.



indicates a focus on methods for teaching Shakespeare through film



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