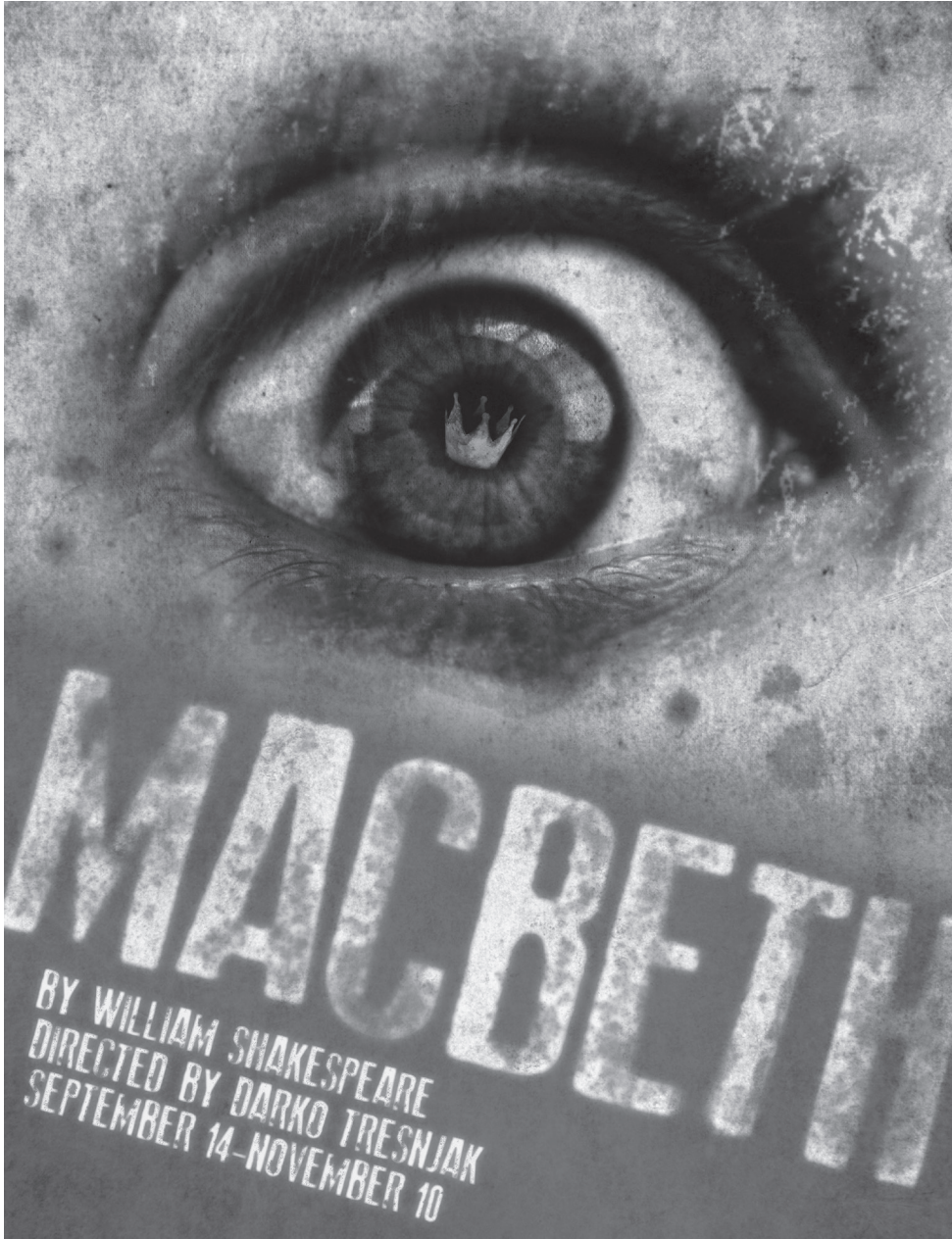


STUDY GUIDE



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STUDY GUIDE OBJECTIVES

This study guide serves as a classroom tool for teachers and students, and addresses the following Common Core Standards and Connecticut State Arts Standards:

Reading Literature: *Key Ideas and Details*

- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text (Grades 9-10).
- Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the themes (Grades 9-10).
- Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop related elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed) (Grades 11-12).

Reading Literature: *Craft and Structure*

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone) (Grades 9-10).
- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise (Grades 9-10).
- Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement) (Grades 11-12).

Reading Literature: *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare) (Grades 9-10).
- Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist) (Grades 11-12).

Theatre

- 5: Researching and Interpreting. Students will research, evaluate and apply cultural and historical information to make artistic choices.
- 6: Connections. Students will make connections between theatre, other disciplines and daily life.
- 7: Analysis, Criticism and Meaning. Students will analyze, critique and construct meanings from works of theatre.
- 8: History and Cultures. Students will demonstrate an understanding of context by analyzing and comparing theatre in various cultures and historical periods.

GUIDELINES FOR ATTENDING THE THEATRE

Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members are able to enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following audience etiquette topics with your students before you come to Hartford Stage.

- How is attending the theatre similar to and different from going to the movies? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?
Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience can affect what kind of performance the actors give. No two audiences are exactly the same, and no two performances are exactly the same—this is part of what makes theatre so special! Students' behavior should reflect the level of performance they wish to see.
- Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. It is absolutely all right to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Talking and calling out during the performance, however, are not allowed. Why might this be?
Be sure to mention that not only would the people seated around them be able to hear their conversation, but the actors on stage could hear them, too. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently!
- Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off (or better yet, left at home or at school!). Texting, photography, and video recording are prohibited. Also, food and gum should not be taken into the theatre.
Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun. If possible, restrooms should be used only during intermission.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

In order of appearance

Three Witches

Duncan - King of Scotland

Malcolm - Duncan's eldest son

Donalbain - Malcolm's younger son

Bloody Captain - a captain in Duncan's army

Ross - a nobleman of Scotland

Lennox - a nobleman of Scotland

Macbeth - a general in the king's army and Thane of Glamis;
later becomes Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland

Lady Macbeth - Macbeth's wife

Banquo - a general in the king's army and Macbeth's friend

Fleance - Banquo's son

Macduff - Thane of Fife

Lady Macduff - Macduff's wife

Son of Macduff

Old Man - a Scottish resident who discusses strange events with Ross

Seyton - a servant in Macbeth's household

Three Gentlewomen - servants in Macbeth's household

Porter - doorman in Macbeth's household

Doctor - cares for Lady Macbeth

Murderers - hired by Macbeth

Messenger

Siward - Earl of Northumberland and general of the English forces

Young Siward - Siward's son

MACBETH SYNOPSIS

Macbeth begins just after Scotland has won a gruesome and bloody battle. A soldier recounts how Macbeth, a general in the army, courageously defeated an enemy commander and “unseamed him from the navel to the chops” (I.2.24). Another Scottish nobleman, the Thane of Cawdor, proved instead to be a traitor by allying with the enemy, Norway, and bringing a siege against the Scots. For this, he was stripped of his title and is set to be executed. Macbeth first appears on stage traveling after the battle with his friend Banquo. The two come across three “weird sisters.” These strange figures prophesize that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor and even King of Scotland, and they tell Banquo that his descendants will be a long line of kings. The two are taken aback. Immediately after the witches vanish, fellow soldiers find them on the road and give them the news that Macbeth has been given the additional title of Thane of Cawdor that was taken from the traitor. He and Banquo are shocked that the witches’ prophecy came true, and Macbeth begins to see the kingdom in his grasp. Macbeth writes home to his wife, Lady Macbeth, who, excited by the news, summons evil spirits to give her the strength to do what she must to ensure Macbeth receives the crown.

King Duncan celebrates the victory at the Macbeths’ castle that night, and the feast and visit provide the perfect opportunity for Macbeth to claim the throne. Other characters notice that the night is unusually strange and foreboding. After much prodding, Lady Macbeth convinces her husband to murder Duncan in his sleep and blame the guards. When Macbeth finally does it, the house awakes in chaos. Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan’s sons, flee to England and Ireland, respectively.

Macbeth becomes king. In order to hold onto power, Macbeth has Banquo murdered, but Banquo’s son, Fleance, escapes the knife. Banquo’s ghost returns to haunt Macbeth at a banquet. Macbeth’s bizarre behavior disturbs his wife and their guests. Macbeth steals away to visit the witches again. He demands to know more details about his future and the witches make three prophecies: that he must beware of Macduff, the Thane of Fife; that he need not worry, for “none of woman born” can harm him; and that he will not be overthrown until “Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill/ Shall come against him” (IV.1.100-101). Macbeth scoffs at these warnings, believing a forest could never change location, and what man is not born of a woman? Before they vanish, the witches also show him the line of Banquo’s descendants who will be kings. Macbeth later receives news that Macduff has fled to England, so he has Macduff’s family and household murdered. Meanwhile, Macduff is with Malcolm in England, where Malcolm tests his loyalty before planning to attack Macbeth and reclaim the crown. There they receive news that Macduff’s wife and children were killed.

The English army marches toward Macbeth’s castle, but Macbeth is confident in the witches’ impossible prophecies and believes he cannot be harmed unless the predictions come true. Macbeth learns that his wife, who was driven insane by the guilt of killing King Duncan, has killed herself. The English army stealthily approaches using a tactic of camouflaging themselves as the forest; it seems as though the forest is approaching the castle. Macbeth goes into battle and meets Macduff on the field. Macduff reveals he was born by Cesarean section, fulfilling the witches’ prophecy. He defeats and beheads Macbeth. Malcolm accepts the crown and becomes King of Scotland.

DID YOU KNOW?

Macbeth is believed by many to carry a curse. Actors and crews have reportedly experienced bad luck when producing the show. Everything from actor injuries to theatre fires have been blamed on “the *Macbeth* curse.” Many superstitious professionals refuse to speak the name of the play inside a theater, referring to it simply as “The Scottish Play.”

SCOTLAND IN THE 11TH CENTURY

KINGSHIP:

Royal succession in 11th century Scotland did not automatically fall upon the first-born son: Scottish kings were elected from amongst those of the nobility with royal blood.

MARRIAGE:

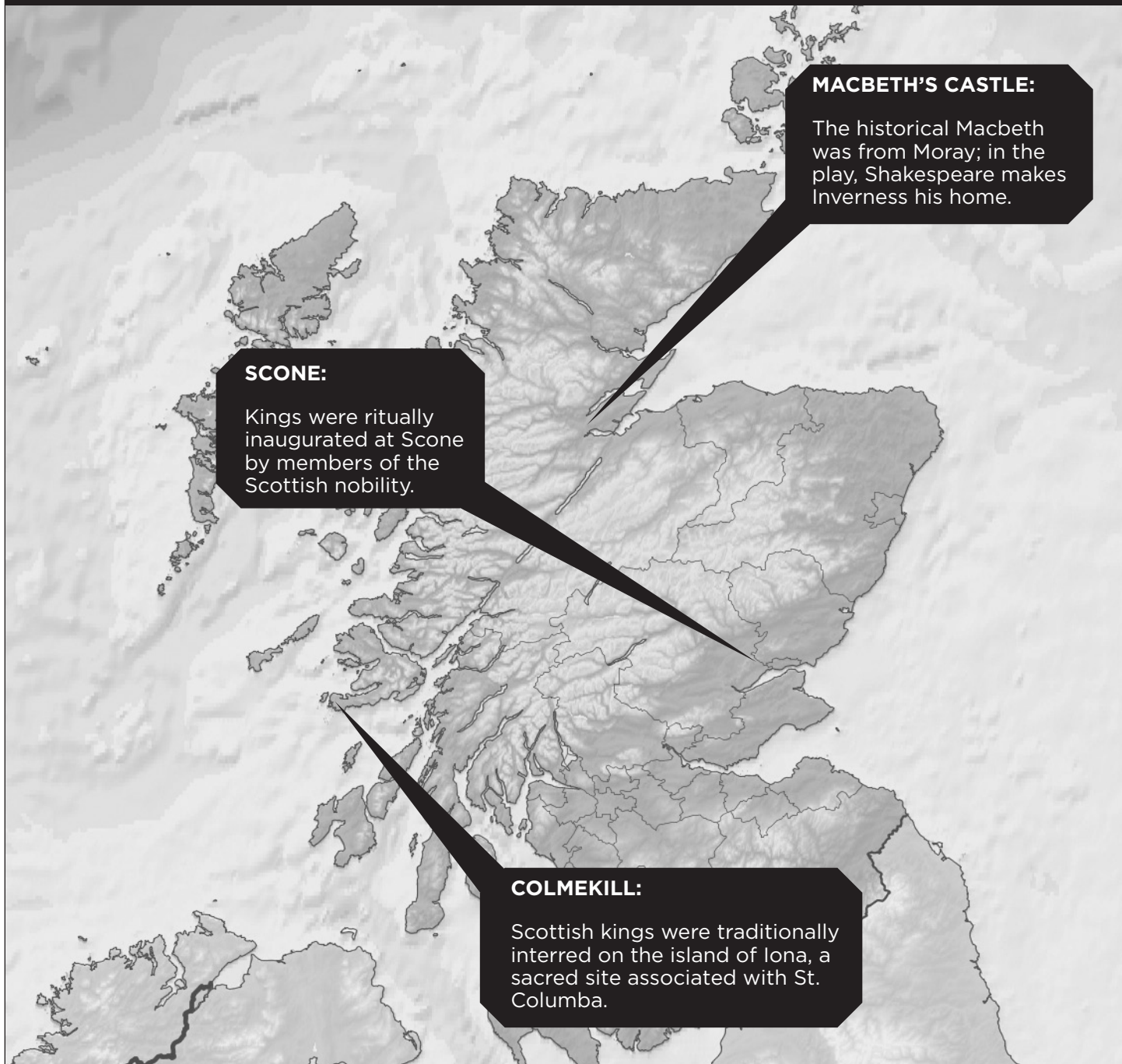
Marriages among the nobility took the form of political pacts and were often used to reconcile inter-dynastic strife. Ensuring the dynasty's survival through children was a key element of a successful marriage.

THANES:

Thanes were royally appointed nobles whose main responsibilities were to manage their thanages and collect royal revenues.

CHILDBIRTH:

Medieval births were fraught with difficulties; unlike today's medical procedure, medieval Caesarean sections were performed to retrieve an infant from a dead or dying full-term pregnant woman, in which case the child would be thought not to be born from a woman, but pulled from the dead.



THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

Ambition and Anxiety

When Shakespeare first introduces Macbeth to the audience, the Thane of Glamis does not have his sights set on becoming king. Macbeth has fought loyally for Duncan and Scotland, and upon hearing the witches prophesize his future as king, he banishes all thoughts of foul play or ill-will toward King Duncan. “If chance will have me king,” he says, “why, chance may crown me,/ Without my stir” (I.3.154-155). According to director Darko Tresnjak, Macbeth is a nobleman with a conscience. He recognizes the full weight of regicide (the murder of a monarch), and of murder in general. He is, as Lady Macbeth describes him, “too full o’ th’ milk of human kindness/ To catch the nearest way” (I.5.12-13). Macbeth fights an internal struggle between seizing power at all costs and his fear of crossing a line into dark territory. Throughout the play, Macbeth’s ambition is at odds with his anxiety about what the future holds.

Perhaps Lady Macbeth has more ambition than her husband. She knows her husband well and worries that he is too soft to seize an opportunity when it presents itself. She says:

“Thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it:”
(I.5.13-15).

She seeks to convince her husband to do whatever he must to obtain the crown. While in Act I, Scene 7, Macbeth claims he would not go beyond human capacity to obtain the throne, Lady Macbeth prays to “murdering ministers” to make her hard, male even, for the courage to commit murder (I.5.46). Lady Macbeth must appeal to evil spirits, the epitome of “illness,” to summon the courage to commit murder. Once she does, she does not look back. She has been changed and sets on the task of persuading her husband to kill for the throne. She fortifies her ambition with “illness.”

Shakespeare suggests that ambition is a male trait. Macbeth is “too full o’ the milk of human kindness,” implying he carries a woman’s nurturing milk. Lady Macbeth on the other hand must be made male to carry out ambitious actions. She prays to evil spirits, “unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full/of direst cruelty!” (I.5.39-41).

When she describes in detail the plan to kill Duncan in Act 1, Scene 7, Macbeth encourages her to “bring forth men children only!” While Macbeth worries about the consequences of committing murder, Lady Macbeth is focused only on the outcome of the action. She cannot see beyond it to how it will change her or her husband. Indeed, no human being can. Once she convinces her husband, she encourages him to shake off any haunting thoughts of their deed (“The sleeping and the dead / are but as pictures: ‘tis the eye of childhood / that fears a painted devil” II.2.63-65).

T I M E L I N E

1005-Macbeth, also known as Mac Bethad mac Findlaich, is born to Finlay, Mormaer of Moray, and Donada, second daughter of Malcolm II.

1020-Finlay, Macbeth’s father, dies; Macbeth joins Malcolm II’s court, which is evident by his attendance to a meeting with Malcolm II and Cnut.

1029-Gillacomgain becomes Mormaer of Moray.

1031-Cnut, ruler of England and Denmark invades Scotland; Macbeth receives the title of “sub-king” in Irish chronicle.

1032-Presumably, Macbeth is responsible for the burning and death of Gillacomgain, as Macbeth gains Mormaership of Moray immediately following.

1040-Macbeth kills Duncan I, the ruling king of Scotland in a battle near Elgin, Morayshire. Macbeth marries Gruoch, Kenneth III’s granddaughter and crowns himself king of Scotland.

1045-Macbeth defeats and kills Duncan I’s father, Crinan, at Dunkeld in a small rebellion against Macbeth as king of Scotland.

1046-A failed invasion of Scotland is led by Siward of Northumbria.

1050-Macbeth rules over Scotland, encouraging Christianity and imposing fair laws and order. He travels a pilgrimage to Rome for a papal jubilee.

1054-The Battle of the Seven Sleepers: Siward and Duncan’s son, Malcolm Canmore, challenge Macbeth for the throne. Macbeth retreats to south Moray and defends his kingship.

1055- Siward dies in Scotland, presumably in battle.

1057-On August 15, in the Battle of Lumphanan in Aberdeenshire, Dunan's eldest son, Malcom Canmore kills Macbeth.

1558- Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII, assumes the throne and rules for the next 45 years over England.

1564- April 23, William Shakespeare is born in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire to John Shakespeare, an established glove maker and Mary Arden, a leather dresser.

1570-The Catholic Church excommunicates Queen Elizabeth; there is a change in religion to Protestantism.

1576-London creates its first permanent theatre, The Theatre, which forms a new appreciation for theatre in the community.

1582-William, at 18 years old, marries 26 year-old Anne Hathaway in Warwickshire.

1583-William and Anne's first child, Susanna is born.

1585-Twins, Hamnet and Judith, are born to William and Anne Shakespeare.

1587-On February 8, after 19 years of imprisonment, England executes Mary, Queen of Scots, for her complicity in a plot to murder Queen Elizabeth I, her cousin.

1588-London is swept by the plague, there are thousands of deaths and all theatres are closed.

1588-The Catholic Spanish Armada attempts an invasion of England due to the persecution of Catholics during Queen Elizabeth's reign.

1588-Famous playwright, Christopher Marlowe, publishes *Doctor Faustus*.



Macbeth, played by Matthew Rauch, and *Lady Macbeth*, played by Kate Forbes.
Photo by T. Charles Erickson

While ambition drives each character, it also changes them. Once he crosses a sacred line, Macbeth's fear of committing murder from Act I is replaced by anxiety about retaining the throne. He envies Duncan, who, in death, cannot be usurped. "Duncan is in his grave: / After life's fitful fever he sleeps well. / Treason has done his worst:" Macbeth says, "nor steel, nor poison, / Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing / Can touch him further" (III. 2.24-28). Macbeth can still be overthrown. His anxiety transforms him and now he cannot go far enough to protect his position as king.

After killing Duncan, Macbeth must stay safe and retain control of the crown. "To be thus is nothing, / But to be safely thus," Macbeth says in Act III, Scene 1. Macbeth is jealous of Banquo's fate and wants it for himself. If Macbeth cannot have kings for descendants, neither can Banquo. Banquo becomes an enemy because he stands in the way of Macbeth's power and posterity. Macbeth's ambition begins to grow like a monster inside of him, consuming lives and terrorizing Scottish noblemen and their families. The consequences for Macbeth are loss of friends, loss of self (see Loyalty, Love, and Betrayal), and loss of respect for life. Ultimately, Macbeth is pressed against a wall. His anxiety has driven him to fight a losing battle against Malcolm and Siward. Although he has nothing to fight for he stands his ground. "They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly, / But, bear-like, I must fight the course" (V.7.1-2).

Questions:

- How does following his ambition to become king change Macbeth? How does following her ambitious to gain the crown for her husband change Lady Macbeth?
- What is the difference between being ambitions and being greedy? Where do you draw the line?

The Natural and the Supernatural

“The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
And these are of them.”

-Banquo (I.3.81-82).



David Manis as Doctor, Kate Forbes as Lady Macbeth, and Mahira Kakkar as First Gentlewoman. Photo by T. Charles Erickson

The supernatural realm plays a large role in the world and plot of *Macbeth*. The play opens with witches whose “strange intelligence” and connection to dark forces have the power to alter the lives of those around them (I.3.78). When he first encounters them with Macbeth, Banquo observes:

“What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire,
That look not like th’ inhabitants o’ th’ earth,
And yet are on’t? Live you, or are you aught
That man may question?”

(I.3.40-44).

Each character is haunted by the supernatural forces of the play in unique ways.

Lennox and other noblemen loyal to Duncan are keenly aware of strange occurrences on the night of Duncan’s death. Lennox recalls:

“The night has been unruly. Where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down...
...the obscure bird
Clamoured the livelong night. Some say the earth
Was feverous and did shake”

(II.3.48-55).

Macbeth admits “Twas a rough night,” and just before Macduff reveals Duncan’s murder, Lennox declares it was the roughest night he had ever experienced (II.3.56). “My young remembrance cannot parallel / A fellow to it,” he says (II.3.57-58). Ross and the old man also recall strange events. They note that on the day following Duncan’s murder, although it should be daytime, the sun did not rise as it should have. A strong falcon was recently killed in flight by an owl—a much weaker bird. Duncan’s horses reportedly went wild, broke out of their stalls, and bit at each other. The Scottish thane and resident are witnesses to unnatural events. Similarly, the servants in Macbeth’s household and the audience are witnesses to the strange, unnatural acts of the Macbeth couple.

1589-1594-Shakespeare writes many of his early plays, including *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Henry VI Parts I and 3*, *King John*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Titus Andronicus*.

1593-Shakespeare writes the poem, *Venus and Adonis* as well as the play *Richard III*.

1594-Shakespeare establishes himself as both an actor and playwright for the newly created acting company, The Lord Chamberlain’s Men.

1594-Shakespeare writes the poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, the plays: *Romeo and Juliet* and *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, and his Sonnets.

1595-Shakespeare writes *Richard II* and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

1596-William and Anne’s son, Hamnet, dies, presumably from the plague; Shakespeare writes *The Merchant of Venice* and *Henry IV, Part I*.

1597-1598-London builds The Globe Theatre, which provides access to theatre for people of all different socio-economic status.

1597-Shakespeare purchases New Place in Stratford as a home for his wife and children; he also completes *Henry IV, Part 2*.

1598-Shakespeare completes the play *Much Ado about Nothing*.

1599-The Globe grants Shakespeare a financial share in the theatre; he writes *As You Like It*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Henry V*.

1600-1603- In three years, Shakespeare completes the following plays: *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *All’s Well that Ends Well*, and *Othello*.

1603-On March 24, Queen Elizabeth I dies; her cousin, James VI of Scotland, becomes king of England and unites the two countries. He reigns as King James I of England until 1625.

1603-The theatre company The Lord's Chamberlain's Men is renamed The King's Men and commissioned to perform at the court for James I. Shakespeare also completes the play *Measure for Measure*.

1603-After King James I becomes leader of England, there is continual tension between Catholics and Protestants; Catholicism is actively disapproved and suppressed by the state.

1604-1606-Shakespeare writes *Timon of Athens* and *King Lear*.

1605-August 7, It is presumed to be the first performance of *Macbeth* given before James I, the new Scottish-born King of England.

1605-Nearing November 5, the date of attack, Lord Monteaule, the brother-in-law of one of the plotters receives an anonymous letter warning Parliament of the plan. Monteaule passes the letter to Robert Cecil, an advisor and spymaster against the Catholics.

1605-On November 4, Cecil orders searches of the whole House of Parliament and Fawkes is arrested for the act of treason. Fawkes endures two days of torture before confessing.

1606-January 30 and 31, eight individuals, including Fawkes, are executed by being hanged, drawn and quartered. Several others are executed in the following months.

1606-1608-Throughout two years, Shakespeare creates *Macbeth*, *Pericles*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*.

While many characters witness horrifying events, the Macbeths participate in them. Initially, Macbeth is both intrigued by and wary of the prophecy the "weird sisters" have for him. He questions his relationship to their accurate prophecies:

"This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature?"

(I.3.140-147).

It is unclear whether his hallucinations are merely functions of the "heat-oppressed brain" or if the natural realm is colliding with the supernatural realm (II.1.46). Regardless, Macbeth starts to rely on the supernatural realm for his access to power. He pursues the witches when he first encounters them

"Stay, you imperfect speakers: Tell me more.
...Say from whence
You owe this strange intelligence or why
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you."

(I.3.72-80).

He again begs them for more information about their prophecies even when they demand that he "Seek to know no more" (IV. 1.112). Unsatisfied with the three apparitions that predict his future, he must know whether Banquo's descendants will still become kings. Macbeth pleads with the witches until they show him the answer.

Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, welcomes the dark spirits and they show up. She lets them into her home and even into herself. Eventually, Macbeth becomes jealous of Lady Macbeth's seeming composure after consorting with evil. He says:

"You make me strange
Even to the disposition that I owe,
When now I think you can behold such sights,
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks
When mine is blanched with fear."

(III.4.129-133).

The play is filled with dark imagery. Motifs of blood, smoky hell, shrieking birds, and sleeplessness suggest supernatural forces influence the most horrific deeds imaginable. Yet, in contrast to Macbeth and his wife, Banquo removes himself from the influence of the supernatural very early in the play. He says:

"But 'tis strange:
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths..."

(I.3.131-133).



Grant Goodman as Banquo. Photo by T. Charles Erickson

Banquo refuses to let the truthful prophecies of the witches influence his behavior. He shines as a beacon of untainted humanity. Although he suffers at the hand of his friend, he does not give in to temptation of the dark forces and his fate remains just as the witches promised. Comparing Macbeth's actions to Banquo's begs the eerie question: If

Macbeth had not taken matters into his own hands, would he still have become king eventually? Throughout the play, characters' responses to the supernatural realm fulfill the witches' prophecies and knit human action to the dark, sinister forces that surround them.

Questions:

- Examine Macbeth's speech in Act II, scene 2 (see LANGUAGE). Is his hallucination a product of stress, or are there supernatural forces at work? How do the natural and supernatural worlds interact in this speech? Use examples from the text to support your argument.
- Shakespeare uses dark imagery and nighttime settings throughout the play. What signs or sounds do you associate with evil? If you were writing a story or short play, what frightening images would you include to scare your audience?
- In what ways do you, or do you not, believe in "signs" or superstitions?

Loyalty, Love, and Betrayal

"There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face:
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust."

-Duncan (I.4.13-16).

Duncan says the above about the original Thane of Cawdor, who, by allying with Norway, commits treason against the king. He is stripped of his title and executed. Duncan gives the title to Macbeth, yet as the witches attest, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" – nothing is as it seems (I.1.1-2). In a world where loyalty and love of one's country are so important, betrayals are a frequent motif. Characters betray not only their country, but also themselves and their families.

Lady Macbeth is loyal to a part of Macbeth she knows and preserves when he cannot. She reminds him of his former, opportunist, self— a victorious warrior who wrote to her of the prospect of becoming king. "Hie thee hither,/ That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,/ and chastise with the valour of my tongue/ All that impedes thee from the golden round" (I.5.20-23). She remains loyal to making her husband king. As Macbeth's "dearest partner in greatness," she pushes him when he can go no further, she shames him into acting courageously, and when he cannot frame the guards for murder, she takes on the task herself (I.5.7). Her appeal to her husband works and they become royalty together.

1609-Shakespeare writes *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* in one year.

1610-1611-William completes *The Tempest*.

1611-Shakespeare writes *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with John Fletcher, who would later become resident playwright for The King's Men after Shakespeare's death.

1611-The earliest actual documented performance of *Macbeth* is performed at the Globe.

1611-James I dissolves the English parliament; The King James Bible is published in England, promoting Protestantism.

1613-William Shakespeare and John Fletcher (allegedly) write *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry VIII*.

1613-On June 29, The Globe Theatre is destroyed by a fire when a special effect involving a cannon goes wrong during a performance of *King Henry VIII*.

1614-The Globe Theatre is rebuilt after its destruction a year prior.

1616-William Shakespeare dies due to old age and illness.

1623-The First Folio of Shakespeare's work is published by his fellow actors John Heminges and Henry Condell.

1936-The Negro Theater Project of Harlem, New York, stages *Macbeth* with an all-black cast and Jack Carter as the lead. Director Orson Welles sets the play in 19th century Haiti, in which Jacobean witchcraft was replaced with Voodoo.

1957-Remarkable Japanese movie adaptation, *Throne of Blood*, is created by Akira Kurosawa who sets the story in medieval Japan and borrowing from Noh drama, casts the heroes as samurai warriors.

1998-99-The Italian adaptation, *Macbeth Clan*, by Angelo Longoni, at the Piccolo Teatro in Rome receives recognition for its twist using a world of gun-toting street gangs.

2000-2001 - *Macbeth* is produced for the first time at Hartford Stage, directed by Michael Wilson.

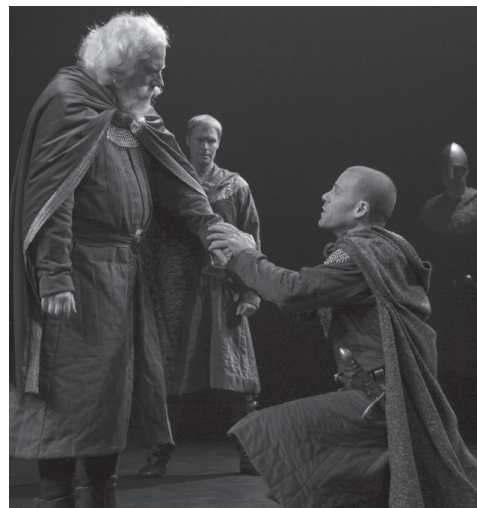
2002-In Berlin, *Macbeth* was performed in a chic, dramatically lit and posh set in Schaubuhne am Lehniner Platz's production.

2011-The adaptation, *Sleep No More*, is an immersive theatre experience produced by Punchdrunk Theatre set in a hotel during the 1930's staged in an old warehouse in Chelsea, NY.

2011-With a minimalistic set design, using a few crates and all black attire, Declan Donnellan presents a streamlined *Macbeth* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. This is the second production of *Macbeth* at BAM within three years. A 2008 English production featured Patrick Stewart in the title role and moved to Broadway.

2013-Allan Cummings takes on the challenge of portraying not only *Macbeth* but all other significant characters in an essentially-one-man, one-act interpretation of *Macbeth* at the Barrymore Theatre in New York.

Macbeth however, struggles with murdering the king to whom he has been loyal. "He's here in double trust:" *Macbeth* says, "First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, / Strong both against the deed: then, as his host, / Who should against his murderer shut the door, / Not bear the knife myself" (I.7.12-16). After murdering Duncan, *Macbeth* is terrified by what he has done. He is afraid he cannot sleep at night with the knowledge and guilt of his betrayal. "To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself. (knock) / Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!" (II.2.84-85). Once he commits treason, *Macbeth* begins his transformation from a loyal and trustworthy thane into the murdering tyrant he will become.



David Manis as Duncan and Matthew Rauch as Macbeth.
Photo by T. Charles Erickson

To secure his place as king, *Macbeth* murders all who threaten his position. He murders Banquo, his closest friend. He sends hitmen to kill innocent women and children. By the end of Act III, the *Macbeth* who was afraid to kill has all but disappeared. "For mine own good," he says, "All causes shall give way: I am in blood/ Stepped in so far, that, should I wade no more,/ Returning were as tedious as go o'er" (III. 4.157-159). As Jan Kott observes, *Macbeth* has lost his own identity (Kott, 80). No betrayal is too deep, and so he betrays his former, humane, self. Only when the Doctor brings the news that Lady *Macbeth* has committed suicide does *Macbeth* reflect. He struggles with his sense of compassion. Life, he says "is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing" (V.5.26-28).

Macbeth is not the only one to betray those close to him. Lady *Macduff* makes it clear to her cousin, Ross, that she believes her husband has abandoned their family. The country is run by a tyrant and *Macduff* has fled to England, leaving his wife and children behind. For Lady *Macduff*, this betrayal is inexcusable. "Wisdom?" she asks, "to leave his wife, to leave his babes,/ His mansion and his titles in a place/ From whence himself does fly? He loves us not:" (IV.2.8-10). *Macduff* must weigh loyalty to his country against loyalty to his family and Lady *Macduff* resents his decision. Ross tries to get her to see the other side of the argument, "but, for your husband,/ He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows/ The fits o' th' season" (IV.2.18-20). Lady *Macduff* will



Robert Eli as Macduff and Philippe Bowgen as Malcolm.
Photo by T. Charles Erickson

hear none of it, and later, *Macduff* must grapple with the consequences of his decision to follow Malcolm to England. Eventually, Ross and Lennox also switch allegiances in order to support Malcolm and Siward of England in their fight to regain the crown from *Macbeth*. The question is, at what cost?

Questions:

- What tactics does Lady Macbeth use to convince her husband to kill the king? Why do you think she does this?
- How do Macbeth's loyalties change throughout the play? Who/what do you think Macbeth is most loyal to, above all?
- Lady Macduff argues that her husband has abandoned his family in a time of need. Ross believes Macduff's leaving for England demonstrates his loyalty to his country. Should Macduff have stayed in Scotland with his family or gone to England to help overthrow Macbeth? What would you have done if you were him?

LANGUAGE IN MACBETH

Meter: the arrangement of a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables to create rhythm in a verse

Foot: the basic unit of meter

Iamb: a metrical foot consisting of one unstressed followed by one stressed syllable

Trochee: a metrical foot consisting of one stressed followed by one unstressed syllable

Prose: common language resembling everyday speech, which has irregular rhythm and lacks metrical structure

Shakespeare did much of his writing in a form called iambic pentameter, in which each line of text contains ten alternately stressed syllables (five pairs/feet). There are five iambs in each line.

A full line of iambic pentameter has the rhythm:

da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM

Or, for example:

- but SOFT what LIGHT through YONder WINdow BREAKS (Romeo, Act II Scene 2, *Romeo and Juliet*)
- It WILL have BLOOD; they SAY, blood WILL have BLOOD: (Macbeth, Act III Scene 4, *Macbeth*)

Writing consistently in iambic pentameter is called blank verse. Shakespeare wrote mostly in blank verse for his tragedies and history plays. However, blank verse, like life, is not perfect. Sometimes Shakespeare's lines have an extra syllable or two, or are short a syllable or two. Many Shakespeare scholars and actors believe variation in blank verse offers insight into a character's state of mind, emotional state, or reaction to what is happening onstage. Does the character stumble over his or her words because of fear or anxiety? Is the character excited? Does the character pause to contemplate news they've just heard? Often actors use these and other subtle clues in the text to determine how to play a specific moment. For example, when Macbeth learns that his wife has killed herself, he says, "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day / To the last syllable of recorded time;" (V.5.19-21). The lines that end with "tomorrow" and "time" both have extra syllables. Macbeth is processing the death of his beloved wife. His final line of this speech "Signifying nothing," is only six-syllables long, suggesting a long pause (V.5.28).

Macbeth is a unique play because it is one of the few in which Shakespeare uses different types of verse. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare often uses another rhythm, trochaic tetrameter, for the witches' lines. Trochaic tetrameter occurs when each line of text contains four alternately stressed syllables (four pairs/feet). There are four trochees in each line.



*The witches, Kaliswa Brewster, Kate MacCluggage and Mahira Kakkar.
Photo by T. Charles Erickson*

A full line of trochaic tetrameter has the rhythm:
DUM-da DUM-da DUM-da DUM-da

For example:

- DOU-ble, DOU-ble, TOIL and TROU-ble;
(Witches, Act IV, Scene 1 *Macbeth*)

This change in rhythm creates a shift in tone. The world and language of the witches is remarkably different than Macbeth's natural world. Stress on the first syllable creates a ritualistic rhythm, perfect for casting spells. By exploring rhythm and emphasis in *Macbeth*, one can gain insight into various moods, states of mind, and emotions in the play.

Questions:

- Examine Macbeth's dagger speech in Act II, Scene 1. This monologue is mostly in iambic pentameter, but some lines are longer or shorter than five iambic feet. Speak the speech out loud and tap out the rhythm. What inferences can you make about Macbeth's state of mind based on what you find? Try reading the speech again without stressing the rhythm, but explore your ideas about how Macbeth is feeling.

MACBETH

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses,
Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one halfworld
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtained sleep: witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's off'rings, and withered murder,
Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost.—Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts
And take the present horror from the time
Which now suits with it.—Whiles I threat, he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives. (*Bell rings.*)
I go, and it is done: the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.
(II.1.40-71)

EXPLORE LANGUAGE IN MACBETH

•Read the witches' spell at the beginning of (IV.1.1-46) out loud. Practice emphasizing the rhythm. Then, practice going against the rhythm. (There are no right answers! Use the rhythm where it's useful, or make your own strong, spooky choices about the witches' voices). Get two friends and try staging it. Create movement to go with your scene. How does the rhythm affect your movement?

ACT IV SCENE I.

A cavern. In the middle, a boiling cauldron.

Thunder. Enter the three Witches.

FIRST WITCH

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

SECOND WITCH

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

THIRD WITCH

Harpier cries 'Tis time, 'tis time.

FIRST WITCH

Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw.
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

ALL

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

SECOND WITCH

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL

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

THIRD WITCH

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark;
Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,
Make the gruel thick and slab:
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,
For the ingredients of our cauldron.

ALL

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

SECOND WITCH

Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

Knocking

SECOND WITCH

By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.
Open, locks,
Whoever knocks!

Enter MACBETH

(IV.1.1-46)

•Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene (Act V, Scene 1) is one of only two scenes in *Macbeth* written in prose, or without any specific metrical structure. The characters simply talk using everyday speech. Why do you think Shakespeare made this choice? What does it tell you about the character's emotional state?

Whaddya say?...Famous quotes from *The Scottish Play*

Have you ever heard “What’s done cannot be undone”? That’s Shakespeare! In fact, that’s Lady Macbeth talking. See below for other phrases coined by this enduring work.

Fair is foul, and foul is fair...

-Witches (I.2.1-2)

The be-all and the end-all here.

-Macbeth (1.7.5)

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

-Macbeth (I.3.39)

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

Come, let me clutch thee.

-Macbeth (II.1.44-46?)

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

-Lady Macbeth (I.5.47-48)

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

-Macbeth (III.4.151)

**“It’s horrific,
but it’s filled with so much beauty.”**

-Darko Tresnjak on language in *Macbeth*

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

-Witches (IV.1.10-11)

At one fell swoop?

-Macduff (IV.3.258)

What’s done cannot be undone.

-Lady Macbeth (V.1.7)

Out, damned spot, out, I say!

-Lady Macbeth (V.1.37)

**Tomorrow and tomorrow and
tomorrow...**

-Macbeth (V.5.22)

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Behind the Scenes...Behind the Script



Macbeth costume design by Suttirat Larlarb

Shakespeare's Macbeth differs quite a bit from the Scottish nobleman of the Middle Ages on which the character is based. Shakespeare originally drew from a source called "Chronicles of Scotland" by a historian named Raphael Holinshed. Shakespeare's departures from Holinshed's history have their reasons in the social and political landscape of Shakespeare's own time. A playwright and part owner of a theatre, and a member of the company endorsed by the king, Shakespeare knew he had to satisfy audiences and the reigning monarch. The result was a terrifying tale that slanders an otherwise peaceful king, celebrates the presumed ancestors of King James I, explores the dark forces of witchcraft, and echoes traces of Shakespeare's current socio-political climate.

Mac Bethad mac Findlaich was born in 1005 to Finlay, Moamer of Moray (a Moamer would have been the 11th century Scottish equivalent of an English Earl), and possibly Donada, the daughter of Malcom II, a former Scottish king. Mac Bethad mac Findlaich actually became king of Scotland after slaying his predecessor, Duncan I, in battle. He was married to Gruoch, the daughter of a former king of Scotland, which further solidified his claim to the throne. In 1045, he killed Duncan's father, Crinan, in battle, securing his place as the Scottish monarch. He then reigned peacefully for fourteen years. He was known for upholding law and order and for his large, charitable gifts to the Church. He even went on a pilgrimage to Rome in 1050.

Mac Bethad mac Findlaich's reign ended when he was killed in battle by Duncan I's son, Malcolm III in 1057. Malcolm III was aided by his uncle Siward (sound familiar?) of Northumberland after advances on Northumberland had been made by the king. While many of the names

sound the same, Shakespeare did what he often did with his plays, which was to use the source material to tell a compelling story, even if it does not adhere strictly to history.

The first account of a performance of *Macbeth* was in 1611. It is widely believed however, that the play was first produced for King James I in court in 1605 or 1606. King James, like the Malcolm of the play, was a monarch who united Scotland and England under the same crown. He was King James VI of Scotland for 36 years before becoming King James I of England, as well. King James believed his ancestors were related to Banquo, so Shakespeare was sure to show Banquo in a complimentary light. In the play, Banquo does not succumb to trusting or consorting with witches or evil forces. He is wary of what the witches have to show him and Macbeth in Act I, Scene 3, and at no point entertains the thought of speeding up his fate like Macbeth does. Instead, Banquo holds the moral high ground, even in death.

King James I was widely known to be fascinated by witchcraft. He believed the monarch held divine right from God. He saw himself positioned against the dark forces of evil, and thus was preoccupied with what those were. According to King James, witches could be described as masculine women, were in consort with the devil, kept familiars (spirits they spoke to through animals), struck animals with disease, and could curse other people. Shakespeare follows King James' profile of witches very closely. They are described as seeming to be women, but having beards, they enact curses and have prophetic powers, and they report killing animals and seducing men. Strangely, Shakespeare may have never referred to them as "weird sisters;" Holinshed did. The term "weird sisters" appears in Holinshed's "Chronicle of Scotland" when he describes Macbeth's encounter with them on the Scottish heath. (Imagine finding witchcraft in your main source—could be a very exciting start to a new play!) Shakespeare's original text always used the term "weyard" suggesting "wayward," instead of "weird."



King James I

This suggests that the witches were societal outcasts, at odds with order in society. The witches parallel those accused of witchcraft in Jacobean England, who were also associated with treason and being at odds with the state.

Shakespeare also includes references to the culture of his time. The play carries an air of conspiracy and treason, echoing the Gunpowder Plot which was present in the memories of the public. In 1605, a disgruntled group, upset by English oppression of Catholics, planned to bomb and destroy Parliament. The plan was thwarted and the conspirators put on trial. Guy Fawkes and others were put to death for their plan, but not before seeping into the consciousness of the nation. Shakespeare may be referencing famous defense arguments made by Father Garnet, known for his “equivocating” his knowledge of the Gunpowder Plot—to equivocate is to discuss something in a way that deliberately avoids disclosing the full truth. The Porter references the practice in Act II, scene 3. “Faith, here’s an equivocator, that could swear in both scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God’s sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven:” (II.3. 7-10). Although Garnet was protected by confidentiality, he could not escape the death penalty himself.

Shakespeare transformed the historical Macbeth from a warrior who fearsomely vanquished his predecessor on the battlefield, to a clandestine one who murders by the cover of night. He lurks and takes King Duncan’s life when the monarch thinks he is safe as a guest in Macbeth’s home. What in history was an established, possibly even acceptable, form of overthrow became a dark and horrifying storyline in Shakespeare’s play. This suggestion of betrayal, treason, and conspiracy with his wife, would have echoed ripe sentiments at the time following the Gunpowder Plot and trial.

By using a source text such as Holinshed’s “Chronicles,” Shakespeare created a play that appealed to the Jacobean royal audience and has chilled playgoers for hundreds of years since. Millennial audiences even have King James I to thank for *Macbeth* being Shakespeare’s shortest tragedy. Rumor had it that King James I had a short attention span.

Questions:

- Research The Gunpowder Plot. What parallels do you find between the history of The Gunpowder Plot and the themes of conspiracy and treason in *Macbeth*?
- Playwright Arthur Miller also used a historical setting in *The Crucible* to wrestle with political and moral questions of his time. How might you use a story or an event from the past to shed light on something that is happening in your life or your community? Use one of the following events and write a short story or dialogue that is placed in that time period, but speaks to our world today.
 - 1492-1616: The first settlers (Spanish or English) land in the Americas and encounter new people
 - 1775-1779: Militias are called up in Redding, CT, to fight for the Patriot cause in the Revolutionary War
 - 1963: March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom during which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gives his “I Have a Dream” speech

For example, a short story might tell an account of a character’s experience during the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s; however, it may also address massive demonstrations in the Middle East and the rise of social media as an organizing tool during the Arab Spring.

- What other examples can you come up with? If you could only use a historical setting, what time would you draw from to tell an important story to a current audience?

The Macbeth Design Process

**Director/Set Designer Darko Tresnjak and Costume Designer Suttirat Larlarb
in Conversation with Dramaturg Elizabeth Williamson**

Elizabeth Williamson: What initially drew you both to *Macbeth*?

Darko Tresnjak: I've always wanted to direct *Macbeth*, but I knew I should wait -- both because it's a ferociously complicated play and I needed a lot of experience with Shakespeare before taking it on, and because I needed to get older and a bit more knocked up and down by life to be ready to tackle it. The play has to do with the things we want in life that elude us and what lines we're willing to cross to get them. You can't direct the show and completely disassociate yourself from the lead characters and their actions - you have to be able to find yourself in them, as scary as that is.

Suttirat Larlarb: Darko drew me to *Macbeth* - both literally and imaginatively. He's worked a great deal with my friend Linda Cho, and I saw several shows they did together. As to why now, I feel, like Darko, that by the time you reach your 40s in your career as a creative person, you've gone through quite a bit, and you've dealt with politics and intrigue. It takes the fire of ambition and hope to maintain your artistic relevance in an insecure world. And Darko's vision for Lady Macbeth was so unexpected and up my alley; I felt I understood who she might be today. It's very exciting to unlock such a historical play, which comes with so many preoccupations and so much baggage, and approach it in a more immediate way. I showed Darko an image of how I saw Lady Macbeth as a woman sitting at a window with a cup of coffee, with everything possible for her in life if she just reached out for it.

Elizabeth: You've set the play roughly in the time period it's historically set in. The play's probably been done in every imaginable period at some point: what appealed to you about 11th Century Scotland?

Darko: Towards the beginning of the play, Macbeth and Banquo both see the three witches. Later, Lady Macbeth reads Macbeth's letter about the witches, and doesn't question either their existence or their veracity. So it was essential to me that we find a world in which witches are real. The more I work on the play, the more I understand the influence of King James - he felt that conspiring against the true king and natural order was witchcraft, and he was committed to cracking down on witches, so it's important that we're in a world where witches are taken for granted in that matter-of-fact way. Lady Macbeth also analyzes her husband's character with great psychological acumen - so we had to find a world where psychological insight and magic can co-exist. The obvious choices were Shakespeare's own period and the period the play is set in. Aesthetically, we were drawn to the harsh feeling of feudal Scotland. At the beginning of the play, Lady Macbeth tells her husband his letter has "transported me beyond this ignorant present" so it seemed important that they have a long way to go from their early state, which is poor by our standards (within the feudal system) to the coronation. They need to live in a rough, poor world... This is not a Gucci world. And the 11th Century is not a frivolous period.

Suttirat: Exactly - fashion hadn't been invented yet, which makes it easier to pare down to the essentials in terms of the costume design, so that the things that really matter are clear and have enough weight. I want every detail to be significant, and that's easier in a period without a lot of carefully thought-out fashion. The costumes aren't for display and theatricality; they should catch each character's essence in a way that isn't added on, but rather inherent, and clarify the journey in social status within the play. I felt *Macbeth* needed to be free of Capital C "Costume Design."



Witch costume design by Suttirat Larlarb

Elizabeth: Darko, in addition to directing the show, you designed the set; can you talk about that process?

Darko: I knew I wanted the set to allow the play to move as fast as it needs to. *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's swiftest tragedy, composed of short scenes, with a quick rise, like a flickering light bulb, and a fall that is one of theatre's greatest train wrecks. So I wanted a physically intimate space, and to let the costumes, props, light, and sound work on the audience's imagination. Suttirat and I talked a lot about how to achieve the horror of

the play by getting the ideas into the audience's skulls and letting them do the rest. Everything is worse if you don't see it. In Suttirat's film *127 Hours* there's a sound cue that is the worst imaginable thing-

Suttirat: Yes, we should never play out what we're afraid of - your mind has already gone there, and we can't make it worse than what we imagine.

Elizabeth: Creating the witches is arguably the most important design choice in *Macbeth*. Can you take us through the process of finding the witches, and the magic, in the play?

Darko: Well, we completely threw away my original idea. It was horrifying, but it didn't work well enough with the language. The way they talk reminds me a little of Puck in *Midsummer* - "If we shadows have offended" - there's a nursery-rhyme-like quality to the verse: "Where shall we three meet again?/ In thunder, lightning, or in rain?" Though the witches are much more malignant.

Suttirat: I'd done a first pass at them based on Darko's original idea when he came over to my apartment and said he wanted to get rid of that idea completely. As we were talking, he took on the witches' physicality, and was walking around as them and I started sketching them from his movements.

Darko: It's important to me that there's something irrational about them, that can't be explained away; they need to be uncanny, freaky and unexpected.

Suttirat: Which goes back to why we kept the play in the 11th Century: witches were an accepted part of life. If we apply 21st Century beliefs to them, and try to justify them within our world, we're not serving the play.

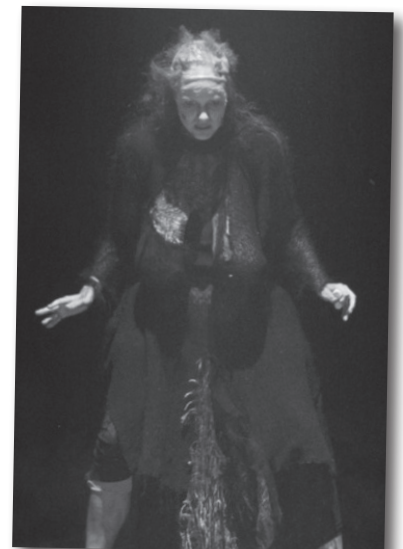
Darko: The scariest thing in the play is that it's about the darkness inside of seemingly good people. The witches pick the most vulnerable moment to nudge them in a horrible direction - but the potential was inside of them all along.

Questions:

- Have you ever wanted something so badly you would do anything for it? What would you do to achieve your goals? What lines would you not cross for the sake of your goals?
- Darko and Suttirat create a palpable, functional 11th century design for this production. Try your hand at a costume design for the witches that embraces the traditional markers of 15th and 16th century witchcraft.

WITCHES IN MACBETH

During the 15th and 16th centuries, it was commonly believed that witches contained supernatural powers. Witches were central to many plays of the time and were connected to social and political levels in society. While most people believed in witches during this time period, the powers and characteristics of witches varied greatly. Women were more likely to be labeled a witch than men; the typical characteristics of a witch included being either hollow-eyed, missing teeth, dirty in nature or either some type of mental or physical disability. However, most witches were merely outcasts of society—scarred, disfigured or shunned due to their social status or relationships with others in their community. Due to a lack of scientific evidence or understanding, many witches were blamed for unidentifiable phenomena or inexplicable events or deaths of people and animals. Linking witches to these unexplainable events was the main reason they were deemed to have supernatural powers. To receive supernatural powers, witches were known to partake in activities such as eating blood, collecting human body parts, and making sacrifices. From 1563-1603, over fifty executions of witches took place in England. Often, witches were women blamed for events that they could not have caused on their own, and most activities that witches presumably partook in were not provable.



Kate MacCluggage as First Witch in *Macbeth*
Photo by T. Charles Erickson

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Everyday Shakespeare

Try exploring Shakespeare's language by speaking everyday statements and questions in iambic pentameter. A line of iambic pentameter has ten syllables that can be broken into five pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables in the following pattern:

Ta-DUM ta-DUM ta-DUM ta-DUM ta-DUM

As a class, sit in a circle and hold a conversation by passing sentences around that scan (meaning follow the rhythmic pattern) as iambic pentameter. For example:

A: May I please have another piece of pie?

B: Of course. You did not have to ask for it.

C: I'll get the coffee ready while I'm up.

D: Please don't forget the sugar and the cream.

And so on. As the exercise continues, you will become more accustomed to the rhythm of the language and will develop greater comfort with reading plays written in verse.

Letter Writing

"They met me in the day of success: and I have learned by the perfect'st report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge..." (I.5.1-2)

Macbeth writes a letter home to share news of the latest battle with his wife. Try writing your own letter from the Scottish battlefield. Imagine you are Macduff, or Ross, or Lennox. What news do you have to update your loved one about? Write two letters:

- It is right after the first battle in the play. How well did you fight? Were you nervous? Are you homesick? In your own words, describe your experience and what happened afterward. Use clues from these descriptions in Act I scene 2 to form your opinions.

DUNCAN

What bloody man is that? He can report,
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
The newest state.

MALCOM

 This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!
Say to the king the knowledge of the broil
As thou didst leave it.

CAPTAIN

 Doubtful it stood;
As two spent swimmers, that do cling together
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonald—
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villainies of nature
Do swarm upon him - from the Western Isles
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;

And fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,
Show'd like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak:
For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name –
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valour's minion carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Til he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN
O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!
(I.2.1-26)

ROSS
God save the king!

DUNCAN
Whence camest thou, worthy thane?

ROSS
From Fife, great king,
Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky
And fan our people cold. Norway himself,
With terrible numbers,
Assisted by that most disloyal traitor
The thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict;
Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,
Confronted him with self-comparisons,
Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm.
Curbing his lavish spirit: and, to conclude,
The victory fell on us.

DUNCAN
Great happiness!

ROSS
That now
Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition:
Nor would we deign him burial of his men
Till he disbursed at Saint Colme's inch
Ten thousand dollars to our general use.
(I.2.51-68)

•Write a letter after the last battle in the play. Have you remained loyal to Malcolm or did you fight with Macbeth? What happened in the battle? Did you march to Dunsinane, or were you defending it? How do you feel about Malcolm regaining the crown? In your own words, describe what you will do next.

Bonus letter: Imagine you are one of the soldier's wives, children, or a family member. Write a letter to a soldier fighting in Scotland.

Write Your Own Witness Scene

Many characters in *Macbeth* witness strange supernatural events. Sometimes characters witness strange behavior by the Macbeths. For example, in Act V, scene 1, the Doctor and a Gentlewoman witness Lady Macbeth sleepwalking. Imagine you are a servant in the Macbeth's castle. Try writing a scene between you and another servant in which you discuss strange actions you have observed or plans you have overhead. Try writing about these events:

- You notice Macbeth is talking with three strange men who you have never seen before. The men are very low status, wear hoods, and talk in low tones. What could they possibly have to talk to the king about?
- Macbeth is on his way to bed, but then begins running away from something or someone. There is no one chasing him. He stops, turns, and yells at the air.
- Macbeth has prepared the castle for battle. He is pacing and muttering about the Thane of Fife and the woods moving.

Telegram Monologues

Many of the speeches in *Macbeth* include complex grammatical constructs that can be confusing to the reader on first glance. Actors performing in plays like *Macbeth* must ensure that they thoroughly understand the through-line of their characters' thoughts and communicate that clearly to the audience.

The following exercise will help you to find the core meaning of a speech by reducing it down to its most essential words. These words are the skeleton of the speech; if one or more words were removed, the speech would lose its meaning. Try rewriting the following monologues, using only the words that are absolutely necessary. For example:

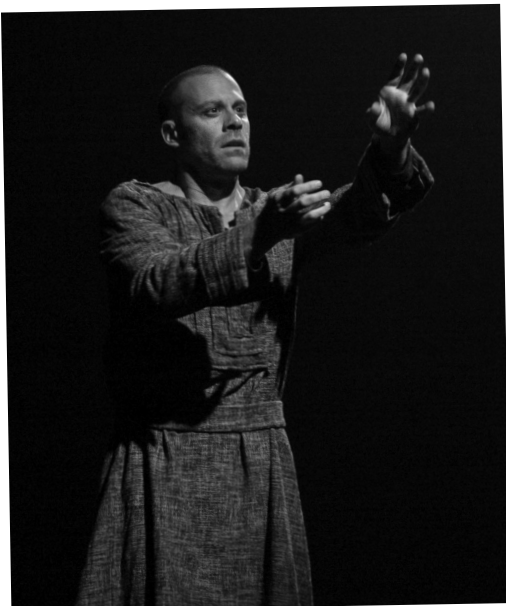
LADY MACBETH
Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou'ldst have, great Glamis,
That which cries 'Thus thou must do, if thou have it;
And that which rather thou dost fear to do
Than wishest should be undone.' Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown'd withal.
(1.5.10-25)

Would become:
LADY MACBETH
Glamis, and Cawdor
Promised. I fear thy nature
Is too full o' kindness
Be great
Not without ambition
Illness should attend it
Thou wouldst not play false
Wrongly win
"Thus thou must do
That which thou dost fear"
Hie the hither
I pour spirits in thine ear
And chastise
All that impedes
Fate and aid seem
To have thee crown'd.
(1.5.10-25)

TRY THESE:

MACBETH

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly: if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all - here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust;
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other.
(1.7.1-28)



*Matthew Rauch as Macbeth.
Photo by T. Charles Erickson*

BANQUO

Thou hast it now. King, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promised, and, I fear,
Thou play'dst most foully for't. Yet it was said
It should not stand in thy posterity,
But that myself should be the root and father
Of many kings. If there come truth from them--
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine--
Why, by the verities on thee made good,
May they not be my oracles as well,
And set me up in hope? But hush! no more.
(3.1.1-10)



*Philoipe Bowgen as Malcom.
Photo by T. Charles Erickson*

MALCOLM

Macduff, this noble passion,
Child of integrity, hath from my soul
Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts
To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth
By many of these trains hath sought to win me
Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me
From over-credulous haste: but God above
Deal between thee and me! for even now
I put myself to thy direction, and
Unspeak mine own detraction, here abjure
The taints and blames I laid upon myself,
For strangers to my nature. I am yet
Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,
Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,
At no time broke my faith, would not betray
The devil to his fellow and delight
No less in truth than life: my first false speaking
Was this upon myself. What I am truly,
Is thine and my poor country's to command:
Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,
Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,
Already at a point, was setting forth.
Now we'll together; and the chance of goodness
Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent?
(4.3.129-152)

MACBETH

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
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. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's 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.
(5.5.17-28)



*Cast from Macbeth
Photo by T. Charles Erickson*

Performance: Noblemen Tableaux and Improvisation

There are many Noblemen in Macbeth. In your class, work in groups of 5-9 and create tableaux of the Scottish Thanes (include the English Earl, Siward). A tableau is a frozen stage picture, made by a group of people posing that tells a story or communicates an idea. Encourage students to be specific with their body language so all the thanes look different.

One way to differentiate between them is to have students improvise short dialogues between the characters. To learn more about their individual characters, have each student select a Thane from the list below, examine the text, and make a list of details about that character. Then students can test their knowledge by improvising a dialogue among the different noblemen. For example, Lennox may ask Macduff about his family. Macduff may observe that a storm is coming and ask Lennox if he has witnessed any unnatural signs lately.

Noblemen in Macbeth

Banquo, a Thane
Ross, a Thane
Siward's son
Fleance, Banquo's son
Malcolm, Prince of Scotland
Macduff, Thane of Fife
Siward, Earl of Northumberland
Donalbain, Malcolm's brother
Lennox, a Thane



(L to R): Philippe Bowgen (Malcom), Jake Loewenthal (Donalbain), David Manis (Duncan), Jeffrey Omura (Lennox), Matthew Rauch (Macbeth), Grant Goodman (Banquo), and Noble Shropshire (Ross). *Photo by T. Charles Erickson.*

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