

Outline of *Macbeth* Drama Structure

Pre-reading Drama

Before students read the play, introduce yourself (as teacher in role) as the leader of a writers' guild. You have just been given an assignment from a producer to write a play about two teenagers who, because of excessive ambition, attempt to do something awful to a third teenager who has something that they want. One way to introduce the tension to the guild is to show them a letter written to you by the producer in which the characters' names and personalities are described. Break students into groups of three each and have them write their script, using teacher-selected lines from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in addition to lines of their own. Read aloud the teacher-selected lines and ask students to discuss what is implied about the speaker of each line before letting them create their scripts. Allow roughly twenty minutes for them to prepare and then have each group present their scripts by acting them out. Then, close the episode by having the students vote on the scripts that should be sent to the producer.

Act 1 Drama

After students read and discuss the events of Act 1 of *Macbeth*, read aloud to them an original narrative (sent to them from the producer in response to the pre-reading activity) in which Matt and a buddy are high school students walking around the mall after school one day. A fortune teller there claims that Matt will become student council treasurer, then president. Lisa Marie enters and informs them that the current treasurer used the prom money to buy a stereo for his car. He can't get the money back.

Pretext: How will there be a prom now?

Episode 1: Play the role of student council advisor (as teacher in role) and have students attend a student council meeting (have the entire class play the role as members of the council) to discuss possible ways to get the money back or to raise money all over again.

Episode 2: Have students write a letter in role to the principal suggesting what should happen to the current treasurer and to Matt.

Act 2 Drama

After students read and discuss the events of Act 2 of *Macbeth*, read aloud to them an original narrative in which Matt, as the new student council treasurer (based on students' letters to the principal in the Act 1 drama), quickly wants to be promoted to president (at the prompting of his girlfriend Lisa Marie).

Pretext: What will they do to get rid of Dustin, the current student council president?

Episode 1: Have Matt and Lisa Marie, with help, plant something in Dustin's locker that will get him into enough trouble to lose his title as president. Hand students slips of paper with lines from Act II of *Macbeth* for students to incorporate into their scenes.

Have a student play the role of the inanimate object that gets placed in the locker.

Episode 2: Have students write what happened from the perspective of the inanimate object in a report to the police about what happened.

**At the end of this Drama, inform students that the characters of Malcolm and Donalbain in *Macbeth* are the current vice-president and secretary of the student council who decide to take off because what happened to Dustin smells fishy to them.

Act 3 Drama

After students read and discuss the events of Act 3 of *Macbeth*, read aloud to them an original narrative in which Matt, the new student council president since the rest of the council members have disappeared, conducts a prom committee meeting and asserts his authority to the point of making Lisa Marie uncomfortable.

Pretext: How do we keep everyone from getting suspicious?

Episode 1: Play the role of student council advisor (as teacher in role) and have the students make decisions about what the prom will be like (colors, theme, ticket design, favors, menu, songs, etc.). Have several students play the same character (similar to an ensemble). The students playing Matt should become increasingly more demanding and irrational, especially at certain times. These times should be when a student, playing the role of Dustin as a figment of Matt's imagination, appears. Only Matt can "see" him.

Episode 2: Have students write in role as one of the people at the meeting what their thoughts were about Matt's behavior. If they played the role of Matt throughout Episode 1, then have them write about Dustin's "visit."

**Please note that the ghost in *Macbeth* is Banquo's while the ghost in this parallel drama is equivalent to Duncan's in Shakespeare's play. The reason for this switch is because Banquo's story doesn't have an

equivalent in our parallel drama. In addition, the ghost is really just a vehicle through which students can begin to see Macbeth's/Matt's emotional reaction and subsequent downfall. Who the ghost represents isn't as important as the fact that Macbeth reacts emotionally to all that he's done up to this point.

Act 4 Drama

After students read and discuss the events of Act 4 of *Macbeth*, read aloud to them an original narrative in which Matt, suspicious of Dustin's friend Marcus who was noticeably absent at the prom committee meeting of the Act III Drama, decides to visit the fortune teller for advice after seeing Marcus, Dustin, and a few others talking secretly.

Pretext: What are they up to and what do I do now?

Episode 1: Have students break into pairs and together create two prophecies after hearing a teacher model. Once they've brainstormed, have them artistically display their original prophecies on the wall. Explain that these fortunes will come to fruition at the prom. Emphasize the paradoxical nature of the fortunes given to *Macbeth* by the witches and ask students to mimic this style in their own fortunes.

Episode 2: In that same pair of students, one will become the fortune teller and the other will play the role of Matt. In order to get them into their roles, have students write out who they are, where they are, how they are feeling, what they look like, what motivates them, etc.

Episode 3: With his/her partner, each fortune teller presents the fortunes to Matt in front of the class. (Students will vote by secret ballot later on which fortunes will be dramatized in the Act 5 slide show). Upon hearing the prophecies, Matt then freezes into a tableau, demonstrating his reactions. Is he afraid after hearing the prophecies? Is he calm? If students are hesitant about creating this reaction on their own, tell the students that when you call "freeze," they should do so.

Episode 4 (if time permits): Have students write a journal entry from the perspective of Matt based on those fears articulated through the tableau.

Act 5 Drama

After students read and discuss the events of Act 5 of *Macbeth*, have students vote on the three fortunes they wish to use for the final episode of the parallel drama (from a typed list of all the fortunes presented by the fortune tellers in the Act 4 drama).

Pretext: What happens to Matt at the prom?

Divide students into groups and have each group create a tableau for each prophecy, depicting the fortune coming to pass at the prom through a freeze frame. Putting all of the tableaux together creates a slide show of the three prophecies happening. Students should provide a title/caption for each frame and should end the slide show with who gets crowned prom king.

Conclude with a writers' guild meeting (from the pre-reading activity) in which the leader (teacher in role) reads to the group a thank you letter from the producer for all of their hard work in the creation of this play.

Copycat Productions
Superior Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44128

Wilma Quiverblade
1564 Playwright Lane
Cleveland, OH 44128

Dear Wilma:

For your next assignment, I need a script to be written about two teenagers who, because of excessive ambition, attempt to do something awful to a third teenager who has something that they want. I need this to be done as soon as possible because we start casting for roles in one month.

The first two teenagers should be a dating couple who see an opportunity to become more popular in some way. Matt, the boy, follows whatever Lisa Marie, his girlfriend, thinks is best. He can't imagine needing to become more popular until Lisa Marie plants the seed in his head about the prospect. She is the kind of girl who gets good grades and is actively involved in the school's clubs and activities because she wants to go to a good college. Matt needs to appease her driven spirit by jumping on board her ship to Popularville or else she'll dump him. Dustin is the kid whose life will somehow be disrupted by Matt and Lisa Marie. There's something that he has that they want, and they will stop at nothing to get that, even though Matt and Dustin have been friends for years and Dustin is a likeable guy who certainly didn't provoke this quest of theirs.

With these characters in mind, develop a compelling drama that takes place at a high school as our setting. By the way, you must include the enclosed lines I found in one of my files of favorite lines. And keep in mind our deadline. As always, thanks for all of your hard work and dedication to writing stupendous plays.

Sincerely,

Steven Iceberg
Producer

Encl.: favorite lines

(Letter to use for pre-reading activity)

Lines to use for pre-reading activity

“I dare do all that may become a man . . .”

“Look like th’ innocent flower . . .”

“Speak, if you can . . .”

“We will proceed no further in this business.”

“My dull brain was wrought with things forgotten.”

“Let not light see my black and deep desires.”

“Thou’rt mad to say it!”

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