

# macbeth

chicago  
shakespeare theater  
on navy pier



Weird Sister, rendering by Mara Blumentfeld, 2018

# Teacher Handbook

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**Marilyn J. Halperin** Director of Education

*Ray and Judy McCaskey Endowed Chair*

**Roxanna Conner** Education Programs Coordinator

**Jason Harrington** Education Outreach Manager

**Molly Truglia** Learning Programs Manager

**Kate Ackerboom, Jess Santrock,**

**Danielle Szymanski** Education Interns



**Barbara Gaines**  
Artistic Director  
*Carl and Marilyn*  
*Thoma Endowed Chair*

**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. This year, a new, innovative performance venue, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, expands CST's campus to include three theaters. The year-round, flexible venue can be configured in a variety of shapes and sizes with audience capacities ranging from 150 to 850, defining the audience-artist relationship to best serve each production.

Now in its thirty-first 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*, *Edward III*, *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 2017-18 Season offers a student matinee series for three of Chicago Shakespeare Theater's full-length productions: in the fall, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* directed by Artistic Director Barbara Gaines; in the winter, *Red Velvet* by Lolita Chakrabarti; and in the spring, *Schiller's Mary Stuart*, as well as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* directed by Aaron Posner and Teller. Also this winter, a 75-minute abridged version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed in The Yard at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater and toured Chicago 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. ●

# MACBETH

Written by  
William Shakespeare

Directed by Aaron Posner  
and Teller

IT WILL HAVE BLOOD,  
THEY SAY.  
BLOOD WILL HAVE BLOOD

*Macbeth* 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.



# INTRODUCTION



## 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, just as you will here at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater. This tradition of performance and

observance, 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 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

## 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, munching—and even a phone's vibration—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.

the actors sense disinterest, they too are distracted, and the play they create is less interesting. Actors have described the experience of live performance as a story told by the cast members and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller when you experience live theater. We hope 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

# INTRODUCTION



## 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 *Twelfth Night*. His great tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*—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. ●

**N**ow faire Hippolita, our nupt  
Drawes on apace: foure hap  
Another Moon: but oh, me t  
This old Moon wanes: She'l  
Like to a Step-dame, or a Dowger,  
Long withering out a yong mans rener  
Hip. Houre daies wil quickly steep it  
Houre nights wil quickly dreame away  
And then the Moone, like to a filber k  
Now bent in heauen, shal behold thee  
Of our solemnities.  
Tis. Go Philofrate,  
Stirre vp the Athenian youth to merrit  
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of m  
Turne melancholy forth to Funerals:  
The pale companion is not for our por  
Hippolita, I woo'd thee with my sword  
And wonne thy loue, doing thee iniur

## 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

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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 threefold 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



Barbara Robertson as Lady Macbeth and the three Witches played by Laura Fisher, George Keating, and Elizabeth Laidlaw in *Kabuki Lady Macbeth*, directed by Shozo Sato. Photo by Michael Brosilow.



## Shakespeare's England

**E**lizabeth 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 “[her] 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 from after 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 Martin 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 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,

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

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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, to be beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s for tyrannically abusing what he believed was his divinely ordained power. ●



## 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 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.

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

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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 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 could accommodate 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 in Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard 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 were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. Since English Renaissance plays were written to be performed without scene breaks, a throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action or lowered from a pulley above. 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. 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. It is left to scholars of early modern English drama to reconstruct the practices of Renaissance theater from clues left behind. ●

# 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 the 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 the 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

## Shakespeare's Plays ca. 1592-1595

### Comedies

- Love's Labor's Lost
- The Comedy of Errors
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- The Taming of the Shrew

### Histories

- 1,2,3 Henry VI
- Richard III
- King John

### Tragedies

- Titus Andronicus
- Romeo and Juliet

### Sonnets

- Probably written  
in this period

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- 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 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

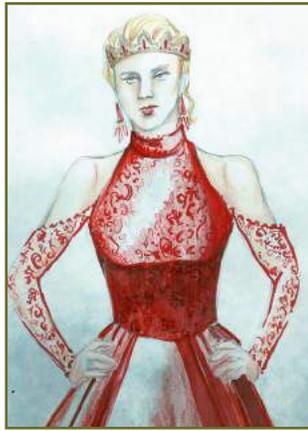
- Henry VIII

# SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH

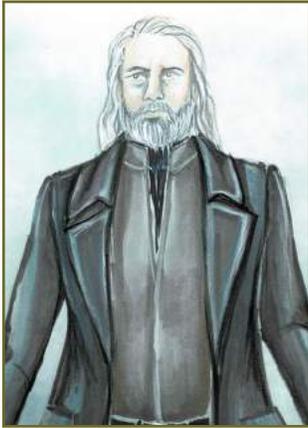
## Dramatis Personae



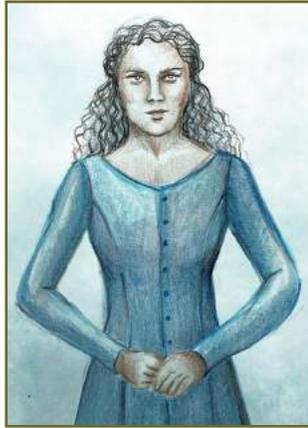
**MACBETH**



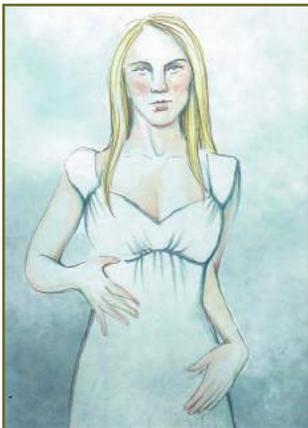
**LADY MACBETH**



**DUNCAN**



**LADY MACDUFF**



**LADY MACBETH**



**WEIRD SISTER**

**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**

*Renderings by Costume Designer Mara Blumenfeld for CST's 2018 production of Macbeth.*

# SHAKESPEARE'S 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 Scotland 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 disappear. 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.

# SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH

## 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 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.

# SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH

## 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. ●



Lanise Antoine Shelley as Lady Macbeth and Chris Genebach as Macbeth in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2015 production of *Short Shakespeare! Macbeth*, directed by Kirsten Kelly. Photo by Liz Lauren.

# SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH

## 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. ●

# SHAKESPEARE'S 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 with-

out 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.

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 the previous page.)

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

# SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH

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



Dorcas Sowunmi as a Witch in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2011 production of *Short Shakespeare! Macbeth*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

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. ●

# SHAKESPEARE'S 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. ●

<sup>1</sup> 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.

# SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH

## CELEBRATING "CPS SHAKESPEARE!"

In its ten-year history, this transformational arts program brought CPS teachers and students together to perform Shakespeare as an intergenerational ensemble, working together for six weeks of intensive workshops and rehearsals. *CPS Shakespeare! Macbeth* was staged in the Courtyard Theater, fully realized with the help of a team of professional artists working alongside Director Matt Hawkins and the entire Chicago Shakespeare education team. In 2014, CPS Shakespeare! received the highest honor in the US for arts after-school programming, honored at the White House by First Lady Michelle Obama. Taking the expanse of learning from CPS Shakespeare!, Chicago Shakespeare developed and launched a new program in 2017 called the Chicago Shakespeare Slam, which brings students together from across the region's public, private and parochial schools to celebrate Shakespeare and our diverse community in a slam-style arena.



Chicago Public School Students in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2015 production of CPS Shakespeare! *Macbeth*, directed by Matt Hawkins. Photo by Liz Lauren.

# SCHOLARS' PERSPECTIVES

## Hereafter



**STUART SHERMAN** is a professor of English at Fordham University, focusing on Restoration and eighteenth-century theater and the histories of both prose style and popular music. In addition to numerous essays on subjects such as the autobiography and the diary, he has also authored the book *Telling Time: Clocks, Diaries, and English Diurnal Form, 1660-1785*.

*"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 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.

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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:

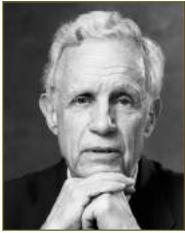
*Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more ...*

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. ●



The Witches in Chicago Shakespeare Theater and Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla e Figli's 2007 WorldStage production of *Marionette Macbeth*. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

## Why Teach *Macbeth*?



**DAVID BEVINGTON** is the Phyllis Fay Horton Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in the Humanities at the University of Chicago. A prolific writer and editor, his latest books include *Shakespeare's Ideas*, *Shakespeare and Biography*, *This Wide and Universal Theater: Shakespeare in Performance Then and Now*, and his new book, *Murder Most Foul: Hamlet through the Ages*.

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 sleepwalking 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?

**...do we, as human beings,  
possess control over our own actions,  
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the danger?**

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?

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 "god"? 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" (1.3.6). And that raises for us as audience the same imponderable question: if Macbeth were to do

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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 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’ assigation / 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?

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

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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 unassailable. 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).

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?

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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 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*.) ●



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. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

## 1600s & 1700s

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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 Housebreaker 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

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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

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

## 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 Shakespear'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. Shakespear's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion.

—WILLIAM HAZLITT, 1817

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

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we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended it.

—THOMAS DE QUINCY, 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

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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

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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

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

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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 humanhood. 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 metaphorical 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

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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)

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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

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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

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

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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

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 Jacobeans, 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’ (I.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’ (I.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 I.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 it 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

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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

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

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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

[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

Lady Macbeth is undoubtedly the most notorious villainess in the Canon. Yet her character has a lot in common with the "evil women" in other tragedies. She too defies the patriarchal order, not embodied in a father or a husband, but in a king. By inciting Macbeth to commit regicide, she too violates her role of a good wife.

—ANA SENTOV, 2014

Nothing is certain in this play, not even the most accepted of divisions. All is in turmoil—in chaos—in savage conflict. The play begins with an enormous blast on a desolate space—an open space—an arena of thunder and lightning. And in this void, this emptiness, anything can happen. Any words can be spoken. Any manifestation—diabolical, divine—can take shape. All is translated into the medium of theatre itself.

—FRANK MCGUINNESS, 2015

Do you believe in magic, black magic, do you believe in witches? There is consequently a rapport between actor and audience, between hero and hearers, between this ambitious individual and his inquisitive observers. The hunger for information—for action—matches Macbeth's appetite for power. There is a dependence created between his career and the plot's suspense.

—FRANK MCGUINNESS, 2015

# WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

## 2000s

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Shakespeare invites his audience to ask whether corrupt abuse of office can be carried out by the ruler alone, without accomplices. The audience sees a network of corruption in operation, involving not only Lady Macbeth but also the lesser officials who act as “hired guns” to administer Macbeth’s corrupt schemes. How can one be sure who among the leading public figures is in league with Macbeth, secretly if not openly? As for the avengers who seem inclined to restore public integrity by opposing Macbeth, who among them are genuinely committed to integrity, and who are biding their time, perhaps waiting for the opportunity to replace Macbeth without necessarily restoring public integrity?

—JOHN UHR, 2015

Macbeth goes ahead with his plan partly for purely instrumental reasons—his ambition and replace Duncan’s son Malcolm as future king—but also partly because with the help of his wife, he is beginning to enjoy inflicting powerlessness, shame, and suffering on others for its own sake. Depraved pleasures of this type obviously involve some sort of death wish for the victim, although the perpetrator often wants to inflict suffering more than death, since death ends both the victim’s plight and his enemy’s power over him.

—CATHERINE GIMELLI MARTIN, 2016

Lady Macbeth’s desire to persuade Macbeth to kill the king reveals a world of merciless persuasion and resolute purpose. She sees herself as the only catalyst of social and political change as well as the only source of masculine power... such disruption of gender roles in the tragedy is presented in the female usurpation of the dominant role in her family. Lady Macbeth took the leading position in the couple and started to dictate the actions of her husband to realize her ambitions to become a queen.

—MAFRUHA FERDOUS, 2017

*Macbeth* is about the dangerous power of words to mystify us, to create new realities, and to perform magic. In *Macbeth* imagination is also under critical scrutiny—not necessarily because it is at the service of Macbeth’s ambition but because language and her partner, imagination, are by their very nature dangerous... Macbeth is trapped by language, and that trap threatens to make life meaningless...An analysis of *Macbeth* that ignores Shakespeare’s obsession with language is ignoring Shakespeare’s perhaps greatest and most revolutionary theory of all: that language is an ambiguous and dangerous—yet mysteriously revealing—lie.

—SKY GILBERT, 2017

Whatever the weird sisters are in *Macbeth*, they are figures of ambiguity, ‘imperfect’ speakers who deliberately confuse ‘fair’ with ‘foul’, and ‘foul’ with ‘fair.’ And they are dangerous to those who look upon them. Fascination, the means by which their ‘suggestion’ enters and controls the minds of their victims, is a visual and aural process. It is accompanied by words which direct the victim’s eyes to look at the witch, whereupon eye contact allows the witch’s venom to be communicated. The victim’s eyes are the point of entry, the vulnerable organ for the transference of pollution to the mind.

—CLIFFORD DAVIDSON, 2017

Even the most cursory exposure to Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* reveals the play as utterly preoccupied with children. They proliferate throughout the text, signifying innocence and its unjust violation at the hands of the Macbeths, promising generational security for fathers’ and kings’ legacies, and serving as motives, with the absence of children magnifying Macbeth’s desire for kingship and immortality...Macbeth views young Macduff, however erroneously, as a threat, and this perspective tinges the audience’s perception; though murdered, the child is somehow not quite victim enough.

—AMANDA ZOCH, 2017

## 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

Though 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.

**To religious extremists, the theater's pageantry was viewed as sacrilegious, an unnecessary evil that should be outlawed.**

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 eighteen 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.

# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

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

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, suggested that the movements of the two protagonists were under supernatural control at every turn. The murder of Duncan was made visual rather than simply reported by the perpetrators: through Japanese 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.

*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* (1957), 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.

Shakespeare's play has also inspired several other television and film adaptations, including Ken Hughes' 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.

Other prominent film adaptations of the play include Shakespeare-Told's *Macbeth* (2005), with James McAvoy playing Joe Macbeth—a talented chef in Duncan Doherty's three-star Michelin restaurant. Joe's wife Ella Macbeth is the restaurant's Maître d'. As Duncan's sous chef, Joe tires

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of playing second fiddle to an inferior cook. He and Ella conspire to murder Duncan so that Joe can take over the culinary empire.

Justin Kurzel's recent *Macbeth* (2015) stars Marillon Cotillard and Michael Fassbender as the ambitious couple. The film opens on the sight of a small boy on the ground; the Macbeths stand by, helpless as their only child rests—lifeless—at their feet. The entire film, described by critics as both contemporary, yet true to Shakespeare's play, frames the entire tragedy through the loss of the Macbeths' son.

*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 in loin clothes to shower 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. In 2010, this production was adapted into a film as well.

TR Warszawa's liberal 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 former president Barack Obama, CST's production invited audiences to engage in 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,

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controlling demon that drives the weaker-willed Macbeth to his great crime. Verdi's 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. In 2003, the British company Punchdrunk conceived an immersive site-specific adaptation of *Macbeth*, called *Sleep No More*. Directed by Felix Barrett and Maxine Doyle, audience members were invited into what was initially an old school building to don Venetian masks and walk through the rooms, promenade style, discovering their own journey through the story. The actors perform choreographed routines that evoked specific scenes from the play, but never speak. The widely acclaimed performance was extended past its original one-month run, and went on to become a cult event, with remounts by American Repertory Company in Massachusetts (2009), New York (2011), and Shanghai (2017). Productions in New York and Shanghai are ongoing, with websites and blogs devoted to the show, as well as tributes on television, including episodes on *Law & Order* and *Gossip Girl*.

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 a doll to represent Malcolm and a small sweater to represent one of Macduff's sons. 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.

Stacey Christodoulou's 2016 *Macbeth*, staged at Quebec's The Other Theatre, was translated into Haitian Creole for francophone audiences. This production, loosely based on Orson Welles's 1936 "Voodoo" *Macbeth*, is set in a war-torn Haiti. Christodoulou reframed Shakespeare's tale of ambition and regicide into a contemporary tale of a man who is the product rather than the cause of his violent environment. The Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington D.C. produced *Macbeth*, directed by Liesl Tommy, in 2017.

Tommy's interpretation is set in a contemporary African country that suffers at the hands of Western imperialists. Here, the witches were not supernatural, but merely American operatives, looking to crown a dictator who can serve Western objectives. The action of the play is driven, not by the Macbeths' ambition, but by American interventionists.

The directors of Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2018 *Macbeth*, Aaron Posner and Teller, return to CST after their production of *The Tempest* at in 2015. This will not be the first time that Posner and Teller have directed *Macbeth* together. In 2008, the pair staged a production of the play at the Two River Theater Company in New Jersey, which later moved to the Folger Shakespeare Theatre in Washington, DC. Their 2008 production was marked by high drama, sensory overload, and supernatural horror. Now, ten years later, Posner and Teller return to *Macbeth*—a tale of ambition, violence, greed and, of course, magic—in this completely new production of Shakespeare's tragedy.

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 artists still succeed in doing that. ●

## 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?"**

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. ●



Mike Nussbaum as a Witch in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2009 production of *Macbeth*, directed by Barbara Gaines. Photo by Liz Lauren.

# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

## Conversation with the Directors

**The co-directors of *Macbeth*, Aaron Posner and Teller, met with the staff to talk about CST's upcoming production.**

**W here do you first enter your process of working on a play?**

**Aaron Posner:** The first step for me with any Shakespeare play is: What is my *personal* relationship to it? However, *Macbeth* was a play that I never had a relationship with; quite honestly, its issues didn't particularly engage me. The concept of 'Don't kill your boss' is relatively straightforward advice that you don't need to look deeply into, yet it's often treated with this sort of reverence. When Teller and I began talking about *Macbeth*, it was at the time of the first Iraq War. There was lots of conversation on social media at the time about beheadings, and at some point Teller said something about, 'You know, there are witches and beheadings and incantations and magic and murder in *Macbeth*...' And so we started thinking about the production as a supernatural horror-thriller. You don't put witches and incantations and prophecies and beheadings into a play if you're trying to draw a deep and complicated political allegory; you put all that in if you want to entertain the hell out of everybody. The way we headed into the play ten years ago was less about, Look how deep and complicated it is, and more along the lines of, Let's have a rip-roaring, entertaining, sit-forward-in-your-seat, scream-a-couple-of-times story. But it's *Shakespeare*, so you're going to find humanity and complexity along the way.

**Teller:** We spend a lot of time reading the play to figure out, What is the intention? We try to make everything we do, however flamboyant, be in the service of what's there. Because this guy who wrote this play—he had lots of really good ideas. We do this absolutely religiously, and we argue over it. We even study the fragmentary, original stage directions and ask, What are the implications here? If they say, '*Armed head rises from the cauldron*,' we ask, Okay what's the *point* of that? We begin there.

**And what were your early inspirations for this 'supernatural horror-thriller'?**

**Posner:** They gave me the list of movies I had to watch to understand horror. I got through *Shaun of the Dead* and I stopped. I just can't take them, they freak me out—but it's fun to think about from our *own* imagination. Ten years ago

when we worked on our first production at The Folger, we started into it as this sort of supernatural horror-thriller, and what happens of course when you engage with Shakespeare deeply is more things reveal themselves: more complexity of relationship, more humanity. to group, and so especially in this abridged version of the story, I've been thinking of how to pull the strings of the play tight, to solve how it moves toward one destination, not four, and to make sure all four pieces feel like they're all in the same world and need each other.

**Teller, you're a magician. How did you first get hooked on Shakespeare?**

**Teller:** My first contact with Shakespeare was when my grandfather gave us a set of the plays. And my father, who knew I was interested in magic, said, 'There are witches in *Macbeth*!' and I went, Where? Where? We found the Act 4, scene 1 'Cauldron Scene,' whereupon I proceeded to memorize it. When you've memorized a poem, you own it for the rest of your life. I was big on memorizing poetry because my father and grandfather both did that. I fell in love with that scene before anything else in Shakespeare. It's the language, but it's also that the language carries with it the *ideas*.

**And in *Macbeth*, are you thinking about some language in particular?**

**Posner:** 'Nothing is but what is not,' and 'Fair is foul and foul is fair.' What's illusion and what's real? Those lines have shaped our entire approach into this play.

**Everyone still talks about your production of *The Tempest* that you co-directed here at CST two years ago. How much will your *Macbeth* remind us that the same two artists are behind it?**

**Teller:** It's not going to be *The Tempest*—*The Tempest* was a comedy. But what both these stories *do* have in common is that they're both about situations where reality seems fluid. You could apply that same phrase from *Macbeth* to *The Tempest*: 'Nothing is but what is not.' Magic is appropriate to both plays because it's helpful to put the audience into the same emotional position that these characters are to the world. The *Macbeths* are subject to illusions and hallucinations. They mistake what the reality of the situation is, and think that they can take the Witches' prophecies as straight information. Prospero on his island can conjure up whatever he wants for the purposes of his very strange, theatrical revenge. The magic in *The Tempest* was, I would say, merry—there's no real peril. The magic in *Macbeth* is very much on the creepy side. There were

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twenty-five magic tricks in *The Tempest*, there's five magic tricks in *Macbeth*. We are doing magic that is necessary: we are creating the complexity of their difficult mind-state, and making the world unreliable through magic.

**Posner:** Half the magic, twice the plot. It's a visceral, psychological thriller.

**Teller:** There's no real danger in *The Tempest*. The biggest, most dangerous event is the show that Prospero stages for his daughter's wedding. In *Macbeth*, these are not people who use performance to fight; they use knives. Nobody dies in *The Tempest*; everybody dies in *Macbeth*. It's a different world. And keep in mind, too, that *The Tempest*, even in its day, was a different kind of show altogether: it was a pageant, more like a musical. *The Tempest* is not plot-driven the way *Macbeth* is. *Macbeth* is a bite-your-fingernails suspense yarn about a relatively nice guy; *Macbeth* is not an awful guy, and certainly has his darker sides, but even she complains that he's 'too full of the milk of human kindness.' *Macbeth* is a guy 'just like you'—who happens to get caught by these strange circumstances and gets snarled in this web of evil.

**Does the fact that, through magic and illusion, we see the world in the way that the Macbeths see it in some way change how we understand their characters?**

**Teller:** We're trying to do something that we did in *The Tempest*, which is taking you a bit more inside the brains of Mr. and Mrs. Macbeth. So, when Mr. Macbeth sees his air-drawn dagger, we will see it, as well. Same thing with Lady Macbeth's bloody hand hallucination. We just read the stage directions and sometimes the implicit stage directions, and are staging those moments in front of the audience's eyes. I suspect that if Shakespeare had been equipped to do that, he would have done it, too.

**Posner:** Here, we're being pulled into a lot of different perspectives: we're inside and outside Lady Macbeth's mind; we're inside and outside of Macbeth's mind. Banquo sees the Sisters, too, so they exist for him, as well. I think it's important that we focus on both the humanity and psychology of these characters and, at the same time, put this spiritual, magical pressure on them to explore what that pressure instigates for them. Shakespeare plays fast and loose with his plays; he's not worried about rules, so he gives us access to whomever he wants to give us access to, which usually comes through a character's direct engagement with the audience. He doesn't worry about whether it's consistent or not; there's no rule about who gets an aside. We've taken that further in creating the

world of this production. When Lady Macbeth sees blood on her hands, not only does she see it, we see it, too. We are putting the audience into her brain in that way.

**Will you be changing the script at all?**

**Teller:** We aren't wholesale rewriting Shakespeare, no. You want to serve what the intention was—not the letter of the law, in other words, but the spirit of the law. Apart from cutting or changing an archaic word here and there to make the meaning more accessible, the one place that we've altered the language is the part of the Porter. There's no question that the play wants the Porter to be funny. He's one of Shakespeare's genius touches. The Porter builds suspense beyond what any human can possibly bear. The audience is bent over in their seats, gnawing their fingers with suspense, and it's all capped off with this knocking at the gate driving the Macbeths crazy. They're covered in blood, it's the middle of the night, and they're out of their minds. Then they leave the stage, and the funniest guy in the world, drunk, comes on and does a monologue. However, not all jokes age well. Things that were really funny in 1605 are not necessarily really funny now. Can we revisit this and translate the comedy so that it's not a museum piece but will actually get laughs? It's all along that same theme of, 'Hi! It's the middle of the night, I'm drunk, I'm barely awake, and—Whoah! I have a funny notion! What if this were the doorway of Hell? And what if I were the doorman in Hell? Who would I be letting in?' The subject he's talking about—equivocation—is one that is now so current it's terrifying: being able to say something that explains away a misdeed as something appropriate.

**When you talk about delving deeper into the human stories in this play, what comes to mind?**

**Posner:** First, the relationship between Macbeth and Banquo and why they respond so differently to this temptation of the Witches continues to intrigue us. Also, who is Macduff that he will step up against the forces but perhaps recklessly endanger his whole family to do what's right? And what is the precise dynamic of the relationship between Macbeth and Mrs. Macbeth? The loss of their child, which is implied in Shakespeare's script, we want to make manifest in our staging. And then there's the Gentlewoman. I imagine her letters home: 'I've got this great job. I'm working for Lady Macbeth. She gives me her old outfits... Hey mom, things are getting a little weird. It's not going so well anymore... Please get me out. Send money. Need to get home.' We want to shed light on these smaller, human stories, which I think can become access points for everyone and a lot of ways in.

# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

**Can each of you talk about this unique artistic partnership that the two of you have shared for years now?**

**Posner:** It's been one of the greatest theatrical educations of my life getting to do these two shows with Teller over the last ten years. We are very different people, with very different careers, very different outlooks—and very different tastes in movies. But we are both populists. Accessibility and engagement for everybody has shaped both of our careers. My mind is a kind of random, chaotic mind. Watching Teller drill down to the center of the dramaturgical events in the story, and then begin to dream what those moments are in magical terms, how that might manifest, using Teller's and Johnny Thompson's encyclopedic knowledge of magic to think about the things that have ever been done in all of magic history—and I'm not exaggerating in saying that. Then, after that kind of active imagination, the meticulous, detailed nature that magic requires, which is so unforgiving and so pass/fail. You can't have a magic trick that *almost* works.

**Teller:** In magic, we get often away with arbitrary movements and arbitrary gestures, and the audience buys it. Aaron won't let me get away with that, and that strengthens magic enormously. It's all motivated by the actors, so when you get to that magic trick, it's cubed in its effect because you've taken it and woven it in dramaturgically to be part of that world.

**Posner:** The brush sizes between magic and directing are so different. When we're directing, we use a roller, sometimes a wide brush, and occasionally a smaller brush. But we have two-and-a-half hours to stage, and so don't have time to do it all like a Seurat painting, one point at a time. But that three-second magic trick *has* to be that meticulous in detail. And so the two of us learning from each other about what size brush we're painting with at any given moment has been very much of our process of collaboration over the years.

**What role has the unique architectural footprint of The Yard played in shaping your world for this production?**

**Teller:** The elegance and classical nature of Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard Theater, and the rough, raw, majestic, heart-beating, foot-stomping capacity of The Yard are really different. The set design, the musical choices, the idea of 'Hell above' came out of a sense of scale that that The Yard's space demands, and that you want to fulfill.

**Posner:** We have this space that makes you lift up when you walk into it. It has a strength and a rectangularity to it. The space just feels strong, like something you want to step up and live in relation to. The design of the scenic world was something that we wanted to lift up towards where the sisters and the percussionist live we refer to as 'Hell above.' I think there's a sense of strength of majesty, which has become one of our guiding principles in this show. Every time I talk about it—the passions of this world when you're dealing with war and murder and the supernatural—I lift my chest a little bit. You are lifted up towards something.

**Can you talk about the world that these characters inhabit that you're creating with Scenic Designer Dan Conway and Costume Designer Mara Blumenfeld?**

**Posner:** You have a couple of givens: it's a military world, a world of soldiers, of battles, and of castles—it's a hard-edged, difficult world. It's not a place of softness or ease or comfort. And 'nothing is but what it's not.' We don't know what's real. We don't know what's going on. We're in a forest, but we're in a house, but we're in a castle, but we're on a stage. Dan Conway talks a lot with his design students about 'dreaming the play.' And that's particularly central to the work in a play that is psychologically and spiritually as complex as this. I think we're all finding ourselves resisting one-to-one correlations, and instead we're imagining a dreamscape around that world that this sort of magic exists in. Anything that lands us someplace in particular feels less helpful; contradictions feels more helpful. You won't be able to say what period it is because it's not a particular period it is. It's an imagined world. It's an imagined aural and physical landscape.

**What can you tell us about the soundscape for the production?**

**Posner:** In the world of horror, we are looking not to replicate the emotional landscape of the play but to engage with it, to push on it in order to unsettle the audience. If the magic is putting the audience into the same sort of relationship to to the world that Macbeth experiences, so will the soundscape.

**Teller:** It started with a discussion about the role the soundtrack plays in a movie. We thought about the Weird Sisters and the way they drive the action, and we initially wondered if they could function like a string quartet, providing the show's soundtrack so that we would feel musically that they were driving it. Then we started

# A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

auditions and we found that a limited number of world-class string players can also speak Shakespeare, so Aaron suggested instead that we go for vocal. Kenny Wollesen, who also worked with us on *The Tempest*, is one of the most pure artistic spirits I have ever encountered. He was somewhere in Eastern Europe last summer and heard these sheep bells. He went to the place where the bells were manufactured, where they beat these bells in flaming, hot ovens. He brought home an entire collection of sheep bells, these gorgeous, weirdly out-of-tune objects. You can whack them or you can use a bow across them and they produce sounds like you've never heard anywhere.

**Posner:** And that's probably the most normal thing Kenny did this year... Our Weird Sisters will live in what we call a 'Hell above' aloft as percussionists and vocalists. The Weird Sisters are present and in many ways driving the action; perhaps they could *vocally* drive the action as well. André Pluess, the sound designer and composer, is composing vocal material for them; so, for example, while Mrs. Macbeth is ruminating on what the Weird Sisters have said, they will vocally reflect what is going on in her head—and maybe, for all we know, control it with their voices. Imagine a diabolical Andrews Sisters...

**Do you think that the Weird Sisters are controlling the events of the story?**

**Posner:** Are they the cause of things? Are they just reporting things? Are they just happily observing the way human beings screw up everything century after century after century? I don't know that we're going to answer

these questions, but instead I think we're going to ask the audience to answer those questions. Nothing makes me happier than audiences leaving the theater, arguing about what the role of the witches was in all of it.

**Fair enough. Anything else that either of you want to add about this play and how you're approaching it?**

**Teller:** Shakespeare was really good at writing stuff that was appealing to his audience. At this moment in history, James I was on the throne and was obsessed with witches and the supernatural. The first book about magic as trickery written in English was printed at the time—and was burned by James because it suggested that not all witches were for real. Ezra Pound has a great way of putting that: 'Literature is news that stays news.'

**Posner:** I do Shakespeare with a group of people in mind that I call, 'The Husbands.' The Husbands can be male or female, they can be young or old, they can be single, but they weren't the ones to buy the tickets. They'll take out their earpiece with the game being broadcast at the last possible moment. And it will only take five seconds of not understanding something before they've checked out for the rest of the play. They'll sit there and think about whatever else they need to be doing. But I have had hundreds of experiences with Husbands over the years, of people saying, in amazement, That was great! And my favorite is always, How much of the language did you change?—when we've changed no more than a word or two here and there. It's 'The Husbands' that I'm directing for. ●



Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2006 production of *Short Shakespeare! Macbeth*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Liz Lauren.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & 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. 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?

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.

#### CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL1, W6, W10

#### 2. MACBETH MOVIE TRAILER

*This pre-reading activity was created for Chicago Shakespeare's Macbeth teacher workshop by Dr. Tim Duggan, Associate Professor in the College of Education at Northeastern Illinois University, and long-time CST workshop instructor.*

Consider using this movie trailer as a way to energize students about the coming reading experience. Assign roles to students and do a readers' theater rendition with the music playing. Once students have read the entire script, you may have them do their own movie trailers, complete with movie-making technology.

#### Sound Effects

**Welcome to a strange and eerie world . . .** (cue Scottish music)

Thunder and shriek

Witches: Fair is foul and foul is fair

**Where weird sisters roam the blasted heath . . .**

Witches: Hover through the fog and filthy air

**See a king embattled with unruly rebels . . .**

Shouts

King Duncan: What bloody man is that?

**And hear reports of an extraordinary hero . . .**

Captain: Brave *Macbeth*, with his brandished steel,  
Unseamed him from the navel to the chops!

Cheering

King Duncan: O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!

**This is the story of *Macbeth*!**

Witches: All hail *Macbeth*! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## Sound Effects

### **Turned from his loyalty by strange promises of glory . . .**

Witches: Hail to thee Thane of Cawdor! Thunder  
Witches: All hail, Macbeth, that shall be KING hereafter!  
Macbeth: Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more!

### **A man who finds strange predictions coming true . . .**

Banquo: What, can the devil speak true?  
And who loses himself to ambition . . .  
Macbeth: Two truths are told as happy prologues to the swelling act.

### **And whose wife will stop at nothing to fulfill her husband's ambitions . . .**

Lady Macbeth: Come, you spirits, unsex me here and fill me top-full of direst cruelty.  
Macbeth: Duncan comes here tonight.  
Lady Macbeth: Look lie the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it!

### **A king MURDERED . . .**

Macbeth: I have done the deed! Whence is that knocking? Bloody shrieks  
Knocking  
Lady Macbeth: Retire we to our chambers!  
A little water clears us of this deed!

### **And the body discovered by a great rival . . .**

Macduff: O HORROR! HORROR! HORROR! Shouts:  
The king is dead!

### **Two princes flee in fear . . .**

Malcolm: I'll to England.  
Donalbain: To Ireland, I!

### **See Macbeth become king, then turn more bloody . . .**

Macbeth: There shall be done a deed of dreadful note.  
Murderers: We shall, my lord, perform what you command us.

### **See his best friend, Banquo, murdered by his command . . .**

Banquo: Fly good Fleance, fly, fly! (dying groan)

### **And Banquo's ghost return to haunt Macbeth at his feast . . .**

Macbeth: (cry of fear) Avaunt and quit my sight!

### **A land with a tyrant king . . .**

Lennox: Our suffering country under a hand accurst  
. . . ruled by supernatural predictions . . .

Ghost noises  
from Banquo

Witches laughter

Weird laughter

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## Sound Effects

Witches: Double, double, toil, and trouble, fire burn and cauldron bubble!

Spirit 1: Beware Macduff!

Spirit 2: No man of woman born shall harm Macbeth

Woman  
screams

Spirit 3: Do not fear till burnam wood do come to Dunsinane

**See Macduff's family slaughtered . . .**

Macduff son: He has killed me, mother! Run away!

**And a warrior who hears the worst news . . .**

Ross: Your castle is surprised, your wife and babes savagely slaughtered.

. . . and vows revenge . . .

Macduff: (shouts) Bring thou this fiend of Scotland!

**See a guilty queen lose her mind . . .**

Lady Macbeth: Out damned spot, out I say. Ahhhhhh!

. . . and her life . . .

Seyton: The queen, my lord, is dead.

Macbeth: Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow . . .

**Hear as ghastly riddles unravel . . .**

Messenger: I looked toward Birnam, and the wood began to move!

Shouting

Macduff: Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped! Ha!

Macbeth: Lay on, Macduff!

**This is the "The Scottish Play": Shakespeare's tragedy of MACBETH!!!!**

**Coming soon!**

Cut music.

## **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, SL2**

### **3. 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."

## **CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W7, SL1, SL2**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 4. 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.]*

- 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

## 5. 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 aloud a few times. Identify a word or phrase in each line that evokes a strong visual image, and 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)

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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)

## 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

## 6. 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)

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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)

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:

- 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

## 7. 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

## CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L2

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 8. PICTURES INTO STORY

[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 group's 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

## 9. 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 they 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 & RESOURCES

## As You Read The Play

### 10. 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 your character feel about the other characters? How do they feel about your character? 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**

### 11. 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 & RESOURCES

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 12. 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

### 13. 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

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 14. 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**

## ON YOUR OWN

## 15. 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 1

### AS A CLASS

## 16. INTERPRETING THE WEIRD SISTERS

The very first scene of the play is a short one—only 13 lines long!—in which we meet the three witches, also known as the weird sisters. There are countless ways to interpret these three characters, and over the years, directors of film and theatrical productions have made wildly different choices in how to portray them. As a class, read through the scene aloud twice and discuss what you know about the witches based on the text alone. Share all of your observations, from the straightforward ("they rhyme when they speak") to the more nuanced inferences. Then, make a list of what questions you have—are there words, people, or places that you don't yet know?

As a class, watch this 11-minute YouTube video—<https://tinyurl.com/macbethfive>—that excerpts the opening scene from film adaptations of *Macbeth* by the following directors: Polanski (1971), BBC (2005), Wright (2006), Goold (2010), and Kurzel (2015). Which of these interpretations is the most surprising? The most disturbing? Which draws you into the story the most?

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

As you read through the rest of the text, begin to form your own interpretation of the weird sisters. 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? Are they carrying objects with them? What would they wear? Share your interpretation of the witches in writing or drawing once you've finished the play.

## CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, W9

### 17. INTRODUCING SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

Actor Michael Tolaydo developed the following exercise as a way to introduce Shakespeare's language and style to students unfamiliar with his work. Tolaydo 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. 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 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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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**

## 18. 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 plays Lady Macbeth, four alternate as "the Good Angel," the other four as "the Bad Angel." Position Lady Macbeth 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

## 19. 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.

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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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 fingertips 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

## 20. 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 is most convincing?

## Guiding Questions:

- 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

## 21. 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. 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!”

## CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, SL2

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 22. 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.

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL2, W9**

## 23. 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.

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R4**

## Act 2

### IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

## 24. 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**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 25. 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 all of the shared lines you can find in this excerpt and draw a diagonal line connected the two halves together.

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 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

## 26. 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, R6

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## ON YOUR OWN

### 27. THE PORTER 2.0

For CST's 2018 production of *Macbeth*, co-directors Posner and Teller chose one scene to alter Shakespeare's language. Here's how Teller talked about it:

*The Porter is one of the genius touches about this play. He builds suspense beyond what any human can possibly bear. The audience is gnawing their fingers with suspense because the murder is so, so suspenseful, and then it's capped with this knocking at the gate that's driving the Macbeths crazy. They're covered in blood, and it's the middle of the night, and they're out of their minds. Then they leave. And then the funniest guy in the world, drunk, comes on and does a monologue. However, jokes don't always age well. Things that are really funny in 1605 are not necessarily really funny now. We looked at the text and asked: What's the content of this, and can we translate this comedy so that it will actually get laughs? Some of the words of the Porter's monologue are Shakespeare's, some are the work of the actor with the audience that night, some are ours, but it's all along that same theme: 'Hi! It's the middle of the night, I'm drunk, I'm barely awake, and—Whoah! I have a funny notion! What if this were the doorway of hell? And what if I were the doorman in hell? Who would I let in?'*

So, say that your job as scriptwriter is to create a new monologue for the Porter: some Shakespeare, some you, and perhaps some that you set up for the actor to improv that night in performance. Who would your Porter welcome into Hell—and how might he deliver his lines to give his audience the comic relief that Shakespeare wants to provide immediately after Duncan's assassination?

## CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, W4

## Act 3

### AS A CLASS

### 28. 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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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**

## **29. 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**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

### 30. 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

### 31. 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 them, either through the character's own words, or through words said about them 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!

#### Guiding Questions:

- How much did you draw on the character's own lines and to what extent did you draw on other characters' lines?
- 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

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## Act 4

### IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

#### 32. 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

#### 33. 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

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 34. 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 Questions:

- What are the different reactions the adults might have to the missing youth? How are their reactions supported by the text?
- What does each of the young lovers believe has happened?

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS L3, R1, W3, W4**

## ON YOUR OWN

## 35. 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?
- 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**



## 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 and young professionals. 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 can find out more at [www.chicagoshakes.com/cst20](http://www.chicagoshakes.com/cst20)**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## Act 5

### IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

#### 36. 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 do you observe 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

#### 37. 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.

#### 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

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## ON YOUR OWN

### 38. 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

### 39. 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



## 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 hundred of teaching resources.

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

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## After You Read The Play

### AS A CLASS

#### 40. 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

#### 41. “BLOOD WILL HAVE BLOOD”

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**

#### 42. 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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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

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

## 43. MACBETH SOUNDTRACK

Create a soundtrack for the character of *Macbeth*. 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**

## 44. 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 their true feelings. With your partner standing behind you, hold a mask up to your face while they say 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 reveal, in your own words, what your character is truly feeling and thinking.

## 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**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## ON YOUR OWN

### 45. 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?

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

### 46. 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

### 47. 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 & RESOURCES

## The Performance: Preparing and Reflecting

### AS A CLASS

#### 48. 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**

#### 49. THE WEIRD SISTERS

You may know already that Shakespeare rarely invented his own stories. Like writers then (and now), he borrowed from existing narratives—from history, drama, poems, legends and folklore—and then altered, combined, and spun them into stories that were uniquely his own. *Macbeth's* story is rooted in Scotland's history (see "Something Borrowed, Something New," pg. 14), but the Weird Sisters were an addition all his own—though they were inspired, certainly, by folklore, and perhaps even the contemporary writing of his own king, James I, who was fascinated by witchcraft.

In their play scripts for CST's 2018 production, Co-directors Aaron Posner and Teller have dubbed Shakespeare's Witches One, Two and Three, "Ordu, Orwen, and Orgoch" (though you'll never hear them or anyone else refer to them by name!). Posner and Teller borrowed those names (just like Shakespeare...) from Lloyd Alexander's *Chronicles of Prydain*. But powerful, supernatural women have often come in threes in legend and mythology—like the Norns in Norse mythology, and the Morai (or the Fates) in Greek mythology. If you're interested in witchcraft and lore, take a look at what you can find about these women who come in threes! What powers do different cultures attribute to them?

Every production and every director of *Macbeth* has to address the question of fate versus free agency when it comes to Shakespeare's "Scottish play." As you watch the play, watch for specific moments where you think that the directors might be suggesting one side of the scale or the other. What makes you think that? And are there times when in the course of watching, you see evidence in their staging choices that suggest the opposite? What do you think?—and if you read *Macbeth* before seeing the production, did your ideas about fate versus free agency change in any way?

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R1, R2**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 50. 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*.

- List the information you already know about the story of the play before you watch the Sparknotes video or review the handbook sections.
- Inquire about other information you would like to know.
- After you watch the video and review the handbook sections above, Note new knowledge and connections between known information.
- Finish by writing what you Know 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.

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R2, R7**

## 51. MACBETH'S CHARACTER

Every director must decide how their 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 than you were expecting 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**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 52. 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

## 53. WEIRD SISTERS' ENCORE APPEARANCE(S)

In CST's production of *Macbeth*, co-directors Posner and Teller plan to reintroduce the Weird Sisters into the script at key points in the story. There are five acts in *Macbeth*. Dividing the class into at least 10 small groups, distribute the five acts as evenly between the number of groups as possible. Each group is responsible for reviewing one act and deciding at which point, or points, the witches might make an unscripted appearance. Here are some things to consider:

- What motivates their reappearance? Why are they there?
- Are they associated with one specific character? Are they "equal opportunity" conveyers?
- IF they speak, what do they say? (And let's say, for the sake of this activity, that we're not adding new text to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, but instead, are echoing other characters' words—or the Weird Sisters' own words.)

Reconvene as a class and discuss your choices. When two groups' choices vary, what impact does their presence/absence from that moment in the script have—upon the plot or upon the characters' motivations and psychology?

Watch for the specific moments that co-directors Posner and Teller decide to reintroduce the Weird Sisters into the story. Returning to class, talk about the choices that Posner and Teller made. What do you think these additional, extratextual appearances suggest:

- about the role of the Weird Sisters?
- about the characters' motivations and agency?
- about the world that the characters inhabit?

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R3**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 54. 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.]

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

## 55. 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 *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

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 56. 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 Directors Aaron Posner and Teller and the actors whom he 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

## 57. OPENING MOMENTS

Just as a filmmaker carefully crafts the opening moments that introduce an audience to the world of the story, so, too, does a theater director—and it's not always the first lines of Shakespeare's script, as you might anticipate... Directors often develop what is called an “extratextual scene”—a brief, typically wordless, scene that does not exist in the original text. In the production of *Macbeth* that you're about to witness, co-directors Aaron Posner and Teller have created such a scene—intended to grab their audience and pull them, atmospherically and emotionally, into the world of their storytelling.

If you were directing *Macbeth* and you wanted to do just that—open with a wordless scene that pulls your audience into the world, what might that be? What brief story would it tell—which may or may not be dictated by the play? What would it look? Sound like? On your own, write a paragraph—and make it as specific about every detail that you imagine on that stage—that will help your designers and actors create your extratextual scene. Then, storyboard your scene, from beginning to end. In small groups, share your ideas for these opening scenes, comparing them by responding to these questions:

- Can you get a sense of what the director may be focusing on in their production—and how it may differ from his/her colleagues' films?
- What mood is created in each opening—and how does it differ or echo the others you heard?
- What theater tools (acting, movement, lighting, sound effects, etc.) is each director using to pull you in to the story, and can you think of any other tool that might help engage you even more, right from the start?

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS SL2, R2**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 58. WRITING A THEATER REVIEW

A scaffold for this activity: Before you write your review, read three different theater reviews of current plays at Theatre in Chicago's Critics Review Round-Up: <http://www.theatreinchicago.com/reviewlistings.php>. Analyze the structure of a review, identifying 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.

Now, write your own critical review of CST's *Macbeth*. Briefly recount the plot. Discuss the parts of the production—including the casting, acting, setting, music, dance, costumes, cuts—you thought worked particularly well, or did not work well and explain how you thought each worked to tell the story. Consider publishing your piece in a school newspaper or the Bard Blog. Use some of the questions below to generate ideas for your review:

- What aspect of the play captivated your attention?
- How did the production's interpretation compare with your own interpretation of the play? Do you believe it stayed true to Shakespeare's intention?
- Were there particular performances that you believed were powerful? Why?
- Would you recommend this play to others? Who would most enjoy it?
- Based on your answers to the above questions, how many stars (out of a possible five) would you give this production?

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS W1, W4**

## 59. TOOLS OF THEATER

Consider all the different tools of theater that can help bring a story to life, including:

- Acting (vocal, physical and character choices made by the actors)
- Blocking (the actors' movement and positioning on stage)
- Set design
- Costume design
- Lighting Design
- Music and sound design
- Props
- Special effects

In each of these arenas, there are countless choices made by the director, designers and actors, contributing to their unique interpretation of the story. Before you see CST's production, choose one of the above tools of theater to focus on. As you watch the performance, note the specific ways that tool is used throughout and how those choices help to support the storytelling.

After you see CST's production, write an analysis of how your chosen tool was utilized to create a unique interpretation of *Macbeth*. Outline the choices made using that tool, and how those choices either supported or didn't effectively support the storytelling.

**CONSIDER COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS R6, W1**

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## Classroom Warm-ups and Community Builders

A brief physical and vocal warm-up can help your students move from a “classroom mode” to a “studio mode.” It sets the tone for a student learning Shakespeare in a theatrical sense as well as a literary sense. Try warming up every class, and you will find that after the first couple of times, your students’ nerves—and yours—will be unseated by energy and focus. A few rehearsals in the privacy of your own home can do a lot to bolster your courage!

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. The actor has the chance to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and beginning to assume the flexibility required to create a character. The body, the voice and the imagination are the actor’s (and the student’s) tools in mastering Shakespeare.

### PHYSICAL WARM-UPS

#### 1. GETTING STARTED

- creates focus on the immediate moment
- brings students to body awareness
- helps dispel tension

Begin by taking a comfortable stance with your feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Inhale deeply through your nose, filling your lungs deep into your abdomen, and exhale through your mouth. Repeat this a few times. Notice how your lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

#### 2. WARM-UP FROM THE TOP OF THE BODY DOWN *(approximately seven to ten minutes)*

- gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness
  - 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. Shake things around, making sure your body is 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. Bring your feet together, bend your knees. Keeping your knees together, rotate them 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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## VOCAL WARM-UPS

*[Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly—approximately seven minutes]*

### 3. GETTING STARTED

- helps connect physicality to vocality
  - begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities
- a. Begin by gently massaging and pat the muscles of your face. This will help wake up the facial muscles.
  - b. Stick out your tongue out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This exercise will seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. When students see you going through these exercises with commitment, that’s often all they need to draw them in.) Repeat this exercise once or twice.
  - c. Put your lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a “raspberry.”
  - d. Next, hum, quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Explore all the resonating spaces in the body, by moving the sound around. Humming helps to lubricate.
  - 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 overemphasizing the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles, begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually speed up, repeating until the speed is such that the enunciation is lost.

### 4. TONGUE TWISTERS

- red leather, yellow leather ... (focus on the vertical motion of the mouth)
- unique New York... (focus on the front to back movement of the face)
- rubber, baby, buggie, bumpers... (focus on the clear repetition of the soft plosives)
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers... (focus on the clear repetition of hard plosives)

**One of the actors at Chicago Shakespeare Theater likes to describe 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 the emotional shifts which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words, some of which are rarely—if ever—used in modern vocabulary, the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor acting Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. This requires a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.

## 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.

### 5. STAGE PICTURES *(approximately ten minutes)*

- shows how varied interpretation is: there is no one “right” answer
- encourages the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies
- begins to show how the body interprets emotion

You will need a list of very strong descriptive, colorful, emotional words from the script for this activity. Find your own, or use our examples on the next page.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

Drain him dry as hay	Witch, 1.3
Blanket of the dark	Lady Macbeth, 1.5
Milk of human kindness	Lady Macbeth, 1.5
Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself	Macbeth, 1.7
Life's but a walking shadow	Macbeth, 5.5

Begin walking around the room. While walking, fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like to be a different weight or a different height. Move the center of your body into different places. For instance, try walking with your nose leading your body. Now try your hip, your knee, your elbow and so forth.

Shakespeare's characters are often very physically broad. He created elderly characters and hunchbacked characters; clowns, star-crossed lovers and cold-blooded killers. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in his/her gut? Or perhaps his/her chin? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character's body.

Notice if you feel any emotional differences within these changes. After about three minutes of exploring these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. *[To the teacher: encourage these discoveries without necessarily drawing focus to individual students, as this is a self-reflective activity, but perhaps suggest to the group they might "Try what it feels like if you slow your pace, hunch your shoulders, droop your head, and move your center into your knees."]*

After a few minutes of this exploration, find a "neutral" walk. You are now going to create a stage picture as an entire group. Chose a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, say freeze, and the class must create a photograph of the word you have chosen, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotional quality the stage picture exudes. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, asking the observing group:

- What do you notice?
- What emotions are evoked in the stage picture?
- What questions do you have about the stage picture?
- What changes would you like to suggest to strengthen or clarify the stage picture?
- What patterns do you see emerging from the stage picture?

## 6. MIRRORING (approximately ten minutes)

- helps build trust within the ensemble
- encourages the students to "listen" with all their senses
- helps the students reach a state of "relaxed readiness," which will encourage their impulses, and discourage their internal censors

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part; making it come out of their mouths as if for the 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.

Find a partner, then comfortably sit facing your partner, in fairly close proximity. You and your partner will be mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. You must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that your partner can follow. Partners should make eye-contact and see each other as a whole picture, rather than following each other's small motions with their eyes. Switch leaders and repeat.

After the second leader has had a turn, students will stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. Keep going, but now there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 7. **FOUR UP** (*approximately five minutes, but can also be extended*)

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

For this game, everyone should be seated; it would be fine for the students to stay seated at their desks. The goal of this game is to have four people standing at all times. There are a few rules—everyone can stand up whenever they want, but only four should be standing at a time and they can only stand up for a maximum of 5 seconds. Finally everyone needs to pay attention to each other and everybody 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 too!). This exercise can help to establish those things in a fun way that is also getting the students up on their feet.

## 8. **ZING! BALL** (*approximately five minutes and requires a soft ball about 8-12 inches in diameter*)

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

Stand in a circle, facing into the center. In this game, the ball carries with it energy. 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 idea 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 the student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, you must make eye contact with the person you are throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the person throwing should say “Zing!” Experiment with the way you say “Zing!” It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way you 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 must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure.

## 9. **ZING! BALL (WITHOUT A BALL)** (*approximately five to seven minutes*)

- asks the students to make their imagination clear to the ensemble
- focuses the students on physical detail

This exercise builds on Zing! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zing! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using “Zing!,” toss the ball to someone across the circle, and as it floats down, that person will try to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then he/she will recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how it changed. In the same way as Zing! 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.

## 10. **WAH!** (*approximately five to ten minutes*)

[To the teacher: Want to see Wah! in action with a group of students? Watch this brief video, <http://www.tinyurl.com/wahwarmup>]

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

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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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.

## 11. ZIP ZAP ZOP! (approximately five minutes)

- 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.

## 12. TO BE! (approximately seven to ten minutes)

- helps students to listen to and work with one another, creating a supportive learning community
- brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together
- facilitates mental focus
- introduces students to some of Shakespeare’s language and characters

[To the teacher: consider using ZIP ZAP ZOP here as a scaffold to this warm-up.]

Stand in a circle, facing in. One person will start as the keeper of the energy. There are multiple ways to pass the energy, all based off Shakespeare’s plays and words. The idea is to keep the energy constantly in motion around and across the circle. Introduce each option one at a time, so students have time to experiment with each option as the game builds in complexity.

- “To be!”—make eye contact with the person to the left or right of you. Reach towards them with your hand (as if you are clutching Yorick’s skull) while speaking this line from *Hamlet*. Now that person has the energy.
- “Not to be!”—to change the direction the energy is flowing, hold up your hands in a “stop” gesture while speaking this line from *Hamlet*. The person who tried to pass you the energy now has to send it in another direction.
- “Get thee to a nunnery!”—to send the energy across the circle, point to someone and deliver this line from *Hamlet*. That person now has the energy
- “Out, damn spot!” —to “ricochet” the energy back across the circle in response to “Get thee to a nunnery!”, make an X with your arms as you speak this line from *Macbeth*. The person who tried to pass you the energy now has to send it in another direction.
- “Romeo!” “Juliet!”—to trade places with someone else in the circle, make eye contact and stretch your arm

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

towards them as you cry, “Romeo!” They must then respond “Juliet!” Now run gracefully past each other. The person who cried “Juliet” now has the energy.

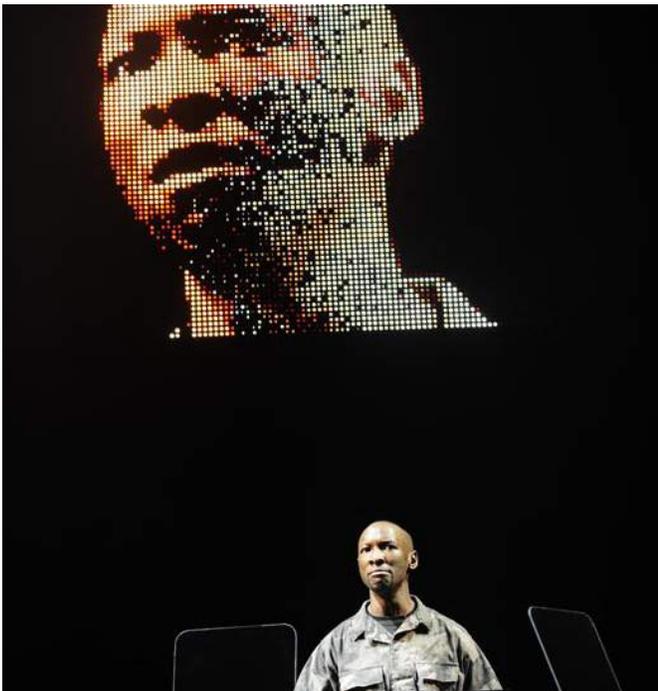
- “Double, double, toil and trouble!”—this line from *Macbeth* instructs everyone to change places at once, leading to a completely new circle. Whoever cried, “Double, double, toil and trouble!” keeps the energy.
- “A horse, a horse!”—Whoever has the energy may call out this line from *Richard III*. Everyone else in the circle must respond, “My kingdom for a horse!” while galloping in place like a horse. The energy stays with the person who gave the command.
- “Exit, pursued by a bear!”— point to someone across the circle as you speak this stage direction from *A Winter’s Tale*. Run through the circle to take their spot. Your classmate must now run around the outside of the circle to take your previous spot in the circle. That person now has the energy.
- Add your own rules! Choose short lines from the play you’re studying and match them with a gesture and action. Where does the energy travel?

Your goal as a group is to keep the energy moving in the circle without letting focus drop. As the class becomes more comfortable with each command, the game will get faster and faster, and you will need to think less and less about what to say next.

Experiment with the way you deliver the lines! There is no wrong way, as long as you speak the lines with energy.

## 13. 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. ●



Phillip James Brannon as Malcolm in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2009 production of *Macbeth*, directed by Barbara Gaines. Photo by Liz Lauren.



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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## To Listen or Not to Listen: Audiobooks in Reading Shakespeare

**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 with Christine Heckel-Oliver (NCTE)*, *Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-First Century with Anne Legore Christiansen (U of Ohio)*, *For All Time: Critical Issues in Shakespeare Studies (Wakefield Press)*, and *Acting It Out: Using Drama in the Classroom to Improve Student Engagement, Close Reading, and Critical Thinking with Juliet Hart and Mark Onuscheck (Routledge)*. Ms. Christel has been recognized by the Midwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for promoting media literacy education.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF LISTENING TO A SHAKESPEARE PLAY?

Despite the wealth of audio performances available, these resources easily can be overlooked or forgotten. Asking students to listen to portions of an audio performance—either key scenes or speeches—can help them hear the auditory effect of iambic pentameter and the poetic devices, such as alliteration, assonance, metaphors and figurative language. Using a “listen along strategy” can help students transition to an independent, skilled reader of the text or sharpen their listening skills before seeing Shakespeare in performance.

When preparing to introduce a play using audiobooks, keep in mind the following framework that The National Capital Language Resource Center suggests in order to maximize the effectiveness of using audio texts (<http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/listening/goalslisten.htm>)

- Before listening - plan the listening task
- During listening - monitor comprehension
- After listening - evaluate comprehension and strategy use

### WHAT KINDS OF TECHNIQUES “WARM UP” STUDENTS’ LISTENING SKILLS?

Like an actor who warms up their body and voice, an audio-book listener needs to warm up their active listening skills. Rebecca Alber offers useful warm-up activities at <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/five-listening-strategies-rebecca-alber>—tips that inspired the following strategies.

To help students warm up their ears, offer them a prose passage that focuses on the play they will be studying. Excerpt that passage from an introduction or analysis of the play to provide an easily accessible listening experience that also offers information that will inform their listening of the play. A recording of this passage is preferred to a live reading. Increase the length of each “listening passage” as students’ proficiency develops.

#### **Summarizing and Posing Questions**

Students listen to a segment of prose text or a scene/speech from a play, paying attention to details that would help summarize that piece’s content. Then, students write down their summary and any questions about what they did not understand. Students then listen to the piece a second time, revise their summary as needed, and reconsider their previously posed questions.

#### **Pair and Share**

Students follow the directions for the previous activity. In pairs, they share their summaries, discuss differences in their summaries, and consider the reasons for differences between their summaries.

#### **Eyes Open, Eyes Shut**

Students listen to a prose passage or scene/speech from a play and summarize what they have heard. During a second listen, students close their eyes and after, revise their summaries as needed. Discuss if students felt that their concentration improved when they closed their eyes, minimizing visual distractions. Invite students to suggest a variety of strategies for minimizing distractions as they listen to an audio text (e.g. following along with print text, picking a focal point in their listening environment, etc.)

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR LISTENING TO AN AUDIO PERFORMANCE?

As with effective reading instruction, a teacher needs to set a purpose for listening and break down the listening experience into segments, allowing students to process and react to what has been heard.

Every opening scene is brimming with exposition, so an initial goal might be to have students listen to Act 1, scene 1, focusing on the “who, what, where, and why” that emerge in play’s first lines. Students can be given one focus to follow throughout the scene and report to the class what they discover about their given “w.” So that the act of listening reinforces the act of reading, they can mark in their text or photocopy all details that respond to their listening/reading focus. How much the audio performance relies on a heavily or lightly edited script can pose a challenge, so a teacher should do a “test listen” to see how different the audio version is from the print text. Folger audio/digital books do match their printed companion texts and Arkangel Shakespeare recordings are based on Pelican editions of the plays. Cambridge publishers also offer recordings that match their New Cambridge editions. Taking time for a “test listen” is important in helping students navigate any differences they might encounter in their text—and any encountered discrepancies offer a teachable moment about how plays are edited and what is lost or gained in the process. Information about these audio-books can be located at:

### **Folger**

<http://www.folger.edu/podcasts-and-recordings>

### **Arkangel**

<http://www.audioeditions.com/complete-arkangel-shakespeare.aspx>

### **Cambridge**

[http://education.cambridge.org/us/subject/english/shakespeare/cambridge-school-shakespeare-\(latest-editions\)](http://education.cambridge.org/us/subject/english/shakespeare/cambridge-school-shakespeare-(latest-editions))

Giving students the opportunity to “listen along” can be carried through each act of the play to preview or highlight a key speech or scene and to set the stage for the next segment of the plot.

As students become more comfortable with the details of plot, they can be directed to look for changes in how a character’s use of language changes in conjunction with changing motives or actions—as they fall in love (*Romeo or Juliet*), become more desperate and distracted (*Othello or King Lear*), or gain confidence in their bid for power (*Henry IV or Richard III*).

For struggling readers, they may find that the reading/listening strategy is the best way for them to develop the necessary fluency to stay on pace with their peers. A listening station can be set up easily in the classroom for students to self select more support from the audio-book strategy, or a link to an audio-book online site can be established on the class web page so students can listen in study hall, at home—whenever or wherever they might need support.

## HOW DO I SELECT AN AUDIO PERFORMANCE OF A SHAKESPEARE PLAY?

The following blog entry from offers some advice in selecting audio performances for commonly taught plays:

**Top Ten Shakespeare Audio Productions** [as well as 11-20 suggestions]

<http://www.shakespeareteacher.com/blog/archives/2760>.

In addition to audio performances tied to published editions of the play, various free audio files are available online at these sites:

### **Learn Out Loud**

<http://www.learnoutloud.com/Free-Online-Learning/Free-Video-Audio-Resources/Free-Shakespeare-Plays-on-Audio/315>

### **Speak the Speech: Universal Shakespeare Broadcasting**

<http://www.speak-the-speech.com/>

### **Free Shakespeare**

<https://www.playshakespeare.com/>

Extensions of listening to excerpts from a play could involve students storyboarding scenes based on how they visualize the action and setting, or trying their hand at recording their own speech or scene.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## Strategies for Teaching Shakespeare with Film

BY MARY T. CHRISTEL

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 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).

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 and maintain the throne. *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and *Anonymous* (2011) provide glimpses into the world of early

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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.

If students and teachers are interested in a serious examination of the authorship question, *Anonymous* is not the most scholarly approach to the matter. A better option is First Folio Pictures documentary *Last Will. And Testament* (2012). A trailer and other preview materials can be located at <http://firstfoliopictures.com/>. Other films that address the controversy surrounding Shakespeare's authorship include:

*The Shakespeare Enigma* (2001) Films Media Group  
<http://ffh.films.com/ItemDetails.aspx?TitleId=5953>

*Who Wrote Shakespeare's Works?* (1993) Films Media Group  
<http://ffh.films.com/ItemDetails.aspx?TitleId=7069>

*The Shakespeare Mystery* from PBS' Frontline series (1989)  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shakespeare/>

Incorporating this kind of film can help students examine how a documentary film constructs an argument to support its thesis through the use of standard rhetorical strategies that students use to analyze and create written arguments.

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. *Romeo Is Bleeding* (2015) follows poetry slam performer and teaching artist Donté Clark's process of adapting and "remixing" *Romeo and Juliet* into his own play, *Té's Harmony*, to reflect the tension and conflicts that have emerged between gangs in Richmond, California. The film includes Clark's collaboration with amateur actors from RAW Talent, a community arts outreach agency. 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/>.)

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## 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 as much as possible.

### ...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:

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



Lady Macbeth in Chicago Shakespeare Theater and Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla e Figli's 2007 WorldStage production of *Marionette Macbeth*. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

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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/King Lear*). *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 *King Lear* (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.

## 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:

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

- 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.

## **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?

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## **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 should 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? ●



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. Photo by Liz Lauren.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## A "Read-and-View" Teaching Strategy

BY MARY T. CHRISTEL

### SETTING THE STAGE WITH READING AND VIEWING

Before attending a performance of any of Shakespeare's plays, students should be able to be helpful to prime students primed 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 selec-

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tion might focus on how that theme is developed throughout the play and in the production. For example, in approaching *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 ([www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/))  
The Complete Works at MIT ([www.shakespeare.mit.edu/](http://www.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 points of compare/contrast discussion.

## 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 threads 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' prophecies 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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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

- 1.5 Responding to the Witches' prophecies
- 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 later by

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

Lady Macbeth. It is worth noting and discussing that Lady Macbeth does not appear in Act 4 after the Witches reveal 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. For example, Roman Polanski's film of *Macbeth* is a powerful, visceral adaptation of the play, but its R-rated violence and nudity would not make it a wise choice for many classrooms.

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 the text, which might lead to greater clarity for a Shakespeare novice since the plot has been streamlined.

## SELECTING A FILM VERSION OF *MACBETH*

Both of the recommended films are based on theatrical productions and are available on DVD. The 1978 Thames Television presentation is adapted from Trevor Nunn's RSC production and stars Ian McKellen and Judi Dench. Production designer John Napier doesn't place the play in any particular period and uses costumes from a variety of periods. 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 main visual interest. The violence and its bloody aftermath is subdued and classroom-friendly. Produced for its HD video series, the Stratford Festival's 2016 production, directed by Antoni Cimolino, casts Macbeth and his Lady with younger actors. Production designers place the action in a dark and earthy medieval setting using the Festival Stage's thrust platform and a multi-level tiring house facade. The presentation of the Weird Sisters is particularly vivid and relies on various sleight of hand tricks to portray their sorcery. The violence and its aftermath are a bit more intense here than in the RSC version and a buff Macbeth appears shirtless in several scenes, but this version is still appropriate for classroom use.

	<b>Nunn/RSC</b>	<b>Cimolino/Stratford Festival</b>
Act I	0 - 33:09	0 - 33:55
Act II	33:10 - 58:18	33:57 - 57:30
Act III	58:19 - 88:50	57:31 - 80:58
Act IV	88:51 - 120:28	80:59 (4.1) - Intermission 0 (4.2) - 18:01
Act V	120:29 - 143:44	18:02 - 45:30

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## 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 these 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. ●



Michael F. Goldberg as Macbeth and Anthony Starke as Macduff in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's *Kabuki Lady Macbeth* in 2005, directed by Shozo Sato. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## Macbeth Film Finder

BY MARY T. CRISTEL

### TOP FIVE FILMS TO INVITE INTO YOUR CLASSROOM:

1. *Shakespeare: The Animated Tales - Macbeth* (1992 NR 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 plot, which can prepare students for reading the play or seeing a performance. Give students a viewing focus: to follow a particular character through this animated version and write a summary about the character's importance to the plot as a whole. Students become an "expert" on their character. Using that focus while reading the play or seeing the live performance can help students who may feel overwhelmed by the narrative or Shakespeare's language to gain control over one aspect of the text.

2. *Shakespeare Uncovered series Macbeth* (2012 NR 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 witches corrupt Macbeth or his own ambition? Did Macbeth always have the desire to seize the crown or did the witches plant that notion in his mind?

3. *Macbeth* (2016 NR 150 min) Shakespeare Festival, Stratford, Ontario  
Directed by Antoni Cimolino Starring Ian Lake, Krystin Pellerin

**A Muscular, Mysterious Macbeth:** This production is full of magic, mystery, and thrilling stage effects. This film adaptation places the viewer in the best seat in the Festival Theater to create an intimate connection between the viewer and the action. The physical and emotional chemistry between Macbeth and his Lady is particularly compelling. Ian Lake takes some effective risks in the title role, making the Thane of Cawdor at times unlikely and fully the tragic, anti-hero.

4. *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 nonwestern 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.

5. *Shakespeare Re-Told series Macbeth* (2005 NR 87 min.) BBC  
Directed by Mark Brozel Written by Peter Moffat

**Getting a Modern Makeover:** Shakespeare as an anthology television series

This adaptation begins with the Weird Sisters as male garbage collectors who prophesize Joe Macbeth's success in the world of haute cuisine. When his restaurant receives three Michelin stars as the collectors predict, Duncan, the celebrity chef/owner, charges Joe with preparing a celebratory feast that will be his last. 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.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

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

These versions offer diverse approaches to the play in terms of 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.

### **Stage productions**

Ian McKellen, Judi Dench	1978	Trevor Nunn/RSC
Patrick Stewart, Kate Fleetwood	2010	Rupert Goold/Chichester Festival/PBS
Joseph Millson, Samantha Spiro	2013	Eve Best/Shakespeare's Globe

### **Cinematic adaptations**

Orson Welles, Jeanette Nolan	1948	Orson Welles/Paramount Pictures
Jon Finch, Francesca Annis	1971	Roman Polanski/Columbia Pictures**
Sam Worthington	2006	Geoffery Wright/Union Station Media**
Michael Fassbender, Marion Cotillard	2015	Justin Kurzel/Studio Canal*

\*\*Rated R

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

*Macbeth: The Caribbean Macbeth* (2014 NR)

Directed by Aleta Chapelle | Screenplay by Aleta Chapelle

Starring Terence Howard, Sanaa Lathan, Evan Ross, Henry Lennix

Director Aleta Chapelle summarizes this modern adaptation: "After winning a gallant military victory over rebels who attempted to overthrow King Duncan, the adored ruler of the souvenir nation of Antibes, General Macbeth encounters the weird sisters, who are the spirit daughters of Mother Africa and reign over fire, water, earth and sky." (IMDB)

*Joe MacBeth* (1955 NR 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. And, the recognizable elements from Shakespeare's tragedy emerge.

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

*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 that 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)

*Lady Macbeth* (2017 R 90 min)

This version of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* sets the tragedy in rural 19th century England. It also features an interracial cast. Both its setting and plot invite comparison to *Wuthering Heights*.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ZON8ULhuUA>

NYT review: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/13/movies/lady-macbeth-review.html?mcubz=0>

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

*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 also integrates the witches as clairvoyants. That adaptation of a crucial element of the source material works exceptionally well in a modern context. Excerpts from this film work well to illustrate how a screenwriter and director bring the play into a contemporary setting and update the language into late 20<sup>th</sup> century vernacular.

Trailers:

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

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

*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 1970's. This treatment is certainly more comedy than tragedy with tasty dollops of satire and parody highlighted by Duncan murdered in a deep fryer. Might remind some viewers of the Coen Brothers' macabre sensibilities in their film, *Fargo*.

Preview clips: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDI2cnBORno>

*Maqbool* (2004 NR 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. In this version Maqbool/Macbeth is having an affair with the mob boss' 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.

*Never Say Macbeth* (2007 NR 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>

Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izv-CIVHRqs>

## **One More Way to Introduce Macbeth**

*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*.

# CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES & RESOURCES

## **Cinematic Curiosities**

Never Mention the “Scottish Play”!

A segment from an episode of the BBC series *Black Adder* hilariously addresses the superstition surrounding uttering “*Macbeth*” among theater folk. View it online at <http://www.ovguide.com/macbeth-9202a8c04000641f8000000006b06225>.

## **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 Beerbohm 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>

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/what-are-storyboards>

<http://www.the-flying-actor.com/storyboard-template.html>



Karen Aldridge as Lady Macbeth in Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s 2009 production of *Macbeth*, directed by Barbara Gaines. Photo by Liz Lauren.

# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

## Chicago Shakespeare Theater

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

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

[www.chicagoshakes.com/teacherhandbooks](http://www.chicagoshakes.com/teacherhandbooks)

## Comprehensive Link Sites

### **Absolute Shakespeare**

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

[absoluteshakespeare.com](http://absoluteshakespeare.com)

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

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.

[shine.unibas.ch/metasite.html](http://shine.unibas.ch/metasite.html)

### **Shakespeare Resource Center**

A collection of links and articles on teaching Shakespeare's plays.

<http://bardweb.net/index.html>

### **The Reduced Shakespeare Company: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged**

A comedy performance of abridged versions of all of Shakespeare's works.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vd4h16DWpdU>

## Teaching Shakespeare

### **A Teacher Guide to the Signet Edition**

This teachers' guide provides summaries of each act in addition to study questions to consider while reading the play and follow up writing prompts.

<http://penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/macbeth.pdf>

### **Shakespeare Online**

The full text of the play is provided with accompanying activities and information.

<http://shakespeare-online.com/plays/macbethscenes.html>

### **Absolute Shakespeare Art**

Paintings depicting scenes from *Macbeth* are linked to relevant excerpts from the text.

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/macbeth.htm>

### **Royal Shakespeare Company**

This resource from the RSC provides a wealth of information on the play, including reviews of notable productions.

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/macbeth/education>

# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

## **The Curse of the Play**

This article describes the history of the curse.

<http://austinchronicle.com/arts/2000-10-13/78882/>

## **Macbeth Background and Plot Summary/Study Guide**

This resource provides a summary of the play along with information about characters and themes.

<http://cummingsstudyguides.net/xMacbeth.html#Macbeth>

## **Teaching Resources for Macbeth**

This resource provides a summary along with study guides, descriptions of adaptations and additional helpful links.

<http://shakespearehigh.com/library/surfbard/plays/macbeth/>

## **An Analysis of Shakespeare's Sources for Macbeth**

This site provides a discussion of the sources Shakespeare used for writing *Macbeth*.

<http://shakespeare-online.com/sources/macbethsources.html>

## **The History of Macbeth and King Duncan I of Scotland**

This site provides a brief account of the historical figures relevant to the play.

<http://ise.uvic.ca/Library/SLTnoframes/history/macbeth.html>

## **The Anglo Saxon Chronicle**

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.

<http://www.britannia.com/history/docs/asintro2.html>

## **Folger Library Educational Resources**

This site provides extensive resources and links for teaching *Macbeth*.

<https://www.folger.edu/macbeth>

## **BBC Shakespeare Animated Tales Macbeth**

This animated version of the play covers the entire story in about 20 minutes.

Part 1: <http://vimeo.com/65811990>

Part 2: <http://vimeo.com/65812041>

# Shakespeare and Elizabethan England

## **The Elizabethan Costuming Page**

Read articles on what Elizabethan woman and men wore, with drawings.

<http://www.elizabethancostume.net/>

## **Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend**

This web-based exhibit is a companion to The Newberry Library's 2003/2004 Queen Elizabeth exhibit.

<http://publications.newberry.org/elizabeth/exhibit/index.html>

## **The Elizabethan Theatre**

Read a lecture on Elizabethan Theatre by Professor Hilda D. Spear, University of Dundee, held at Cologne University.

[uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare](http://uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare)

# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

## **Life in Elizabethan England: Betrothal and Wedding**

This site contains information on marriage contracts of the time, as well as links to other aspects of Elizabethan life.  
<http://elizabethan.org/compendium/9.html>

## **The Map of Early Modern London Online**

This resource includes a detailed, searchable map of Shakespeare's London and an evolving encyclopedia of the places listed.  
<http://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/index.htm>

## **Proper Elizabethan Accents**

A guide to speaking like an Elizabethan.  
<http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html>

## **Queen Elizabeth I**

Learn more about Queen Elizabeth and the people, events and concepts key to the study of the Elizabethan Age.  
<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm>

## **The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust**

Learn more about Shakespeare's life and birthplace through an extensive online collection.  
<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/home.html>

## **Shakespeare's Globe Theatre**

The Encyclopedia Britannica's entry includes a detailed biography, contextual articles on Elizabethan literature, art, theaters and culture, and brief entries on famous Shakespearean actors, directors and scholars.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Globe-Theatre>

## **Designing Shakespeare Collections**

This link offers many production photos focusing on design practice at the Royal Shakespeare Company and other British theaters. The photos can be enlarged and used for a myriad of classroom activities and research. *Macbeth* has eighty-two productions listed.  
<http://ahds.rhul.ac.uk/ahdscollections/docroot/shakespeare/playlist.do>

## **The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider**

View costume illustrations of different social classes and cultures from various historical times.  
<http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html>

## **The Internet Broadway Database**

This online database of Broadway plays is a great place to search for 'Shakespeare' and learn about some productions of the Bard's works. This will only give information about shows performed on Broadway.  
<https://www.ibdb.com/>

## **The Internet Movie Database**

Similar to IBDB, utilize this online movie database to search for 'Shakespeare' and learn about the different cinematic versions of his plays.  
<http://www.imdb.com/>

## **Shakespeare's Staging**

This website surveys staging of Shakespeare's plays, from Shakespeare's lifetime through modern times.  
<http://shakespearestaging.berkeley.edu/>

## Shakespeare in Art

### **The Faces of Elizabeth I**

Access a collection of paintings of Queen Elizabeth spanning her lifetime.

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm>

### **Folger Shakespeare Library Digital Image Collection**

In August 2014, over 80,000 images from Folger's collection were released for use in the public domain. Images include production photos, books, manuscripts and art.

<http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/all>

### **Shakespeare Illustrated**

Harry Rusche, English professor at Emory University, created this website that explores nineteenth-century paintings depicting scenes from Shakespeare's plays. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* has twenty-two linked works of art; the website is searchable by play title and artist name. [english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare\\_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html](http://english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html)

### **Tudor and Elizabethan Portrait Gallery**

England's National Portrait Gallery's Tudor and Elizabethan collection contains portraits from 1485-1603. These portraits are viewable on this website.

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/explore/by-period/tudor.php>

## Texts and Early Editions

### **The First Folio of William Shakespeare (University of Virginia)**

Access *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and others of Shakespeare's plays online in their first folio additions.

<http://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/003081548>

### **Folger Digital Texts**

All of Shakespeare's plays are available to download here in a variety of file formats from this site. Great for downloading plays into a Word document and cutting the text!

<http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/download/>

### **The Internet Shakespeare Editions**

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.

<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Foyer/plays/>

### **Introduction to the First Folio: Creating the First Folio**

This video by the Royal Shakespeare Company explains how Shakespeare was published during his lifetime and the creation of the First Folio after his death.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_vCC9coaHY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_vCC9coaHY)

### **Making a Folio**

This video demonstrates how to make a folio like Shakespeare's First Folio.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MmGmv6Ys1w>

# TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

## **Shakespeare's First Folio**

This page from the British Library provides an easy to understand introduction to the First Folio.  
<http://onlinegallery/onlineex/landprint/shakespeare/>

## **Shakespeare Online**

The full text of the play is provided with accompanying activities and information.  
<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/tamingscenes.html>

## **Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto**

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.

<http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html>

## **What Is a Folio?**

This image shows how to read a Folio text; part of Massachusetts Institute of Technology's website "Hamlet on the Ramparts."

<http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm>

## Words, Words, Words

### **Open Source Shakespeare Concordance**

Use this concordance to view all the uses of a word or word form in all of Shakespeare's works or in one play.

<http://www.opensourceshakespeare.com/concordance/findform.php>

### **Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary**

Part of Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library and created by Alexander Schmidt.

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079>

### **Shakespeare's Words Glossary and Language Companion**

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.

[shakespeareswords.com](http://shakespeareswords.com)

# SUGGESTED READING

**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 READING

**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. Ötchen. *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 READING

**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 READING

**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.

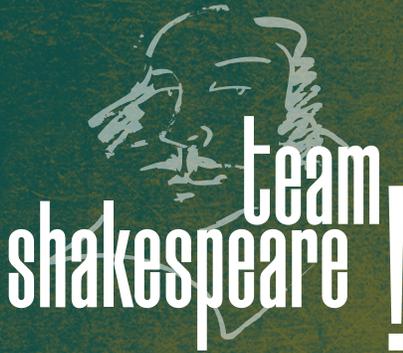
**Wilson, Edwin, ed. *Shaw on Shakespeare: An Anthology of Bernard Shaw's Writings on the Plays and Production of Shakespeare*. New York: Dutton, 1961.** George Bernard Shaw was one of Shakespeare's most outspoken critics—and also one of the most humorous. Students who know of Shaw's work, too, may enjoy 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.



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