



"Reading" a Performance: *Macbeth*

CCSS Alignment

In this activity, students will...

- Close read three productions of *Macbeth* and compare the artistic choices in each production.
 - CCSS R.7: "Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words."
 - CCSS R.9: "Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take."
- Describe specific details that they've observed and use a range of vocabulary to articulate subtle differences between performances.
 - CCSS R.6: "Acquire and use accurately a range of general and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level."

Macbeth YouTube Playlist

- ▶ [Macbeth, directed by Marti Lyons \(2019\): https://youtu.be/PFJt5nZFaaE](https://youtu.be/PFJt5nZFaaE)
- ▶ [Macbeth, directed by David H. Bell \(2011\): https://youtu.be/9LuNY401vNI](https://youtu.be/9LuNY401vNI)
- ▶ [Macbeth, directed by Aaron Posner and Teller \(2018\): https://youtu.be/NJHw5fXxwbw](https://youtu.be/NJHw5fXxwbw)

Activity

1. Distribute the "**Reading" a Performance** worksheet. Review the explanation of what it means to "close read" a performance, emphasizing the importance of noticing specific details.
 - Tip: Get students thinking about specific details by having them brainstorm in small groups the various aspects of a performance (lighting, choreography, costumes, blocking, facial expressions, etc.) that they could observe.



2. Ask students to imagine the “weird sisters” before they watch any of the Chicago Shakespeare clips. In Box 1 of their worksheet, students sketch/describe what they’re imagining. When they’re done, ask students to share what they’re picturing.
 - Tip: You might introduce the idea that the word “weird” comes from an older English word—“wyrd”—that means “fate.” For that reason, the three “weird sisters” may remind some people of the three Fates—the destiny goddesses—from Greek mythology.
3. Watch the first video clip—the performance of *Macbeth* directed by Marti Lyons. In Box 2 of their worksheet, students sketch/describe what they observed. If you have time, you might watch the clip twice—you notice more when you reread!
4. Repeat with the remaining video clips.

Discussion

After watching all three clips, facilitate a discussion about what the students observed.

(You may also want to intersperse discussion between the clips.) Here are some ideas for questions you might discuss:

- How did these weird sisters compare to what you were imagining?
- Which version of the weird sisters did you find the most interesting? Why?
- Describe one specific choice that the director/actor made in order to characterize the weird sisters.
- How would you describe the gender identity of the weird sisters in the different productions? What might the gender identity of the weird sisters suggest about our culture’s assumptions about women, men, and other genders?
- How would you describe the racial identity of the weird sisters in the different productions? What might the racial identity of the weird sisters suggest about our culture’s assumptions about people of different races?



Transferability

You can create your own version of this activity for whatever play you're studying!

- Instead of weird sisters, students can imagine fairies, ghosts, or other figures.
- Instead of using our worksheet with 4 boxes, students can divide a piece of blank paper into 4 quadrants.
- Instead of using our clips from *Macbeth*, students can close read other "embodied" versions of Shakespeare, including videos, paintings, graphic novels, or photographs.
- Check Team Shakespeare Digital again soon for additional clips from Chicago Shakespeare's past productions!

Citing Productions in MLA Style

Macbeth. By William Shakespeare, adapted and directed by Marti Lyons, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 2019, The Courtyard at Chicago Shakespeare, Chicago. 4.1. 00:57:44-1:00:26.

Macbeth. By William Shakespeare, adapted and directed by David H. Bell, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 2011, The Courtyard at Chicago Shakespeare, Chicago. 1.1. 00:01:23-00:02:15; 4.1. 00:48:25-00:50:05.

Macbeth. By William Shakespeare, adapted and directed by Aaron Posner and Teller, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 2018, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, Chicago. 1.3. 00:05:27-00:07:44.



Shakespeare and the art of theater open exciting, creative paths of learning. One of the largest arts-in-education programs in the country, Team Shakespeare brings Shakespeare's plays to life for middle and high school students. Team Shakespeare's expansive efforts to share Shakespeare with young people aims to empower them as interpreters, widen the scope of their imagination, and offer authentic opportunities to explore the complexities of human nature.



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