

INSIDE OUT

A STUDY GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS



FATE WILL FIND YOU

MACBETH

MACBETH SYNOPSIS

“Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires.”

Macbeth, I, iv.

Shakespeare’s “Scottish play” is a powerful tale of good and evil, and the perils of unbridled ambition. In the play, Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, is a victorious and honorable general who, with his compatriot Banquo, has just put down an invasion of Scotland and quelled a rebellion against Duncan, his king. On their way home from the wars, the two men encounter three ‘weird sisters’ who foretell that Macbeth will rise to become Thane of Cawdor and then King of Scotland. They further prophesy that Banquo’s descendants will also one day become kings. A messenger shortly arrives to announce that Duncan, in recognition of Macbeth’s service to the country, has appointed him Thane of Cawdor, a portent that the predictions are already coming to pass.

Lady Macbeth, hearing of the prophecy and of her husband’s promotion, resolves to hasten Macbeth’s ascent to the throne. When she learns that King Duncan will be staying the night at Inverness, their castle, she sees her opportunity. Convincing her reluctant husband to murder Duncan, Lady Macbeth drugs the grooms guarding Duncan’s door; Macbeth then uses the grooms’ daggers to kill the King. The crafty Lady then implicates the two unconscious grooms in the murder by smearing them with Duncan’s blood. When Macduff, Thane of Fife, a member of the king’s entourage, discovers Duncan’s dead body, Macbeth kills the drugged grooms before they can awaken and declare their innocence. Fearing for their own lives, King Duncan’s two sons flee -- Malcolm, heir to the throne, to England, and Donalbain to Ireland. The princes are presumed guilty of their father’s murder and Macbeth is proclaimed King.

Macbeth, recalling the prophecy that Banquo will be “father to a new line of kings”, conspires to have Banquo and his son Fleance murdered. Banquo is murdered but Fleance gets away. Lady Macbeth throws a royal banquet to celebrate Macbeth’s triumph, but Macbeth, deeply unnerved by the sight of Banquo’s bloody ghost sitting in his chair, drives the guests off. Desperate, he searches out the witches to learn more of his destiny. The witches warn Macbeth that Macduff, Thane of Fife, is a danger to him. But they further tell him that he need not fear ‘any man of woman born’ and state that he is safe until ‘Birnam Wood advances to



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SPACE THEATRE

Dunsinane Hill' -- the site of Macbeth's castle -- which sounds to Macbeth like pure nonsense. Finally, the witches repeat that it will be Banquo's descendants who will rule Scotland.

When Macbeth learns Macduff has fled to England, he orders Macduff's castle seized and his wife and children slaughtered. A grieving Macduff joins his troops with those of Malcolm, heir to Duncan's throne, who has raised an army to take down Macbeth. Matters continue to deteriorate, as Lady Macbeth, racked with guilt over her part in Duncan's murder, kills herself.

Finally, the combined forces of Malcolm and Macduff, camouflaged by tree branches from nearby Birnam

Wood, advance on Dunsinane Hill. Macduff comes face to face with Macbeth, grimly intent on killing the bloody tyrant. Macbeth still foolishly believes the witches' assurance that he will not be killed by 'any man of woman born', but as he squares off with Macduff, Macduff tells him that he "was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd", or born by caesarian section, and so technically is not 'of woman born'. Macduff slays Macbeth in hand-to-hand combat, fulfilling the witches' warning. Macduff declares a new and just reign over the people of Scotland.

BACKGROUND

The turn of the 17th century, when Shakespeare wrote the play, was a period of sweeping changes, affecting much of Europe. The Renaissance took root in Italy around 1300 A.D., gradually displacing the fear and ignorance that characterized the Dark Ages, and began to spread throughout Europe in the 1400's and 1500's.

During the Dark Ages, the pattern of life throughout Europe had largely consisted of great feudal estates or fiefdoms, owned by wealthy noblemen, while in the towns and cities, the merchant classes and guilds provided for trade and services. The great majority of people were serfs who farmed the land for their feudal lords, and lived for the most part in near-poverty and virtual slavery. Nearly every part of daily life was dominated by religious constraints; the Catholic Church was the most powerful force in Europe. The Catholic Popes had become worldly rulers, equal in power to kings and princes. They behaved like kings, but claimed spiritual authority as well as earthly power. The Church brought in revenue through selling "indulgences" to the faithful, claiming that such indulgences would shorten their time in Purgatory. Such abuses were widely recognized and resented by the common people, but went unchallenged for a long time, as the power of the Church was immense.

As the Renaissance spread, bringing in its wake greater access to ideas, arts, philosophy and education, kings and princes began to take over feudal lands and to establish national governments. Trade and commerce increased. From around 1450, the printing press became a vehicle for disseminating information and ideas, and at least 60 universities were either established or

expanded in the Western world. Education began to spread beyond the clergy to nobility and commoner alike, stirring new religious thought, debate, and study. Educated people began to question and challenge accepted religious teachings.

The Protestant Reformation began to weaken the supreme power of the Catholic Church. In 1517, at the age of 34, Martin Luther, a German priest, denounced the sale of indulgences, nailing his 96 Theses to the door of a local church. What began as a protest against the Church's practice of selling indulgences soon grew to become a serious challenge to Catholic doctrine and supremacy in general. In Switzerland under John Calvin, anti-Catholic influence spread from Calvin's native Geneva, across France to the Netherlands and Great Britain, where it took root particularly in Scotland. The Reformation brought radical change to Southern Germany, where thousands died in the resulting religious struggles between commoners and the Church. Paradoxically, the Church in Rome was strengthened by this counter-reformation. England and France survived these conflicts, scarred and shaken, but united. A new bond of unity now existed between England and Scotland, but new animosity rose between England and Ireland. By the middle of the 16th century, the Calvinists were the spearhead of the Protestant attack; the Jesuits the shield and sword of Catholic defense and counter-attack.

<http://stratfordfestival/history/teacher/learn>

A TIMELINE OF SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AND PLAYS

- 1564** Shakespeare born in Stratford-upon-Avon
- 1589** Shakespeare finds work as an actor in London; he lives apart from his wife Anne Hathaway for 21 years
- 1590-1591** Shakespeare writes *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Taming of the Shrew*
- 1591** *2 Henry VI, 3 Henry VI*
- 1592** *1 Henry VI, Titus Andronicus, Richard III*
- 1593** *The Comedy of Errors*
- 1594** Shakespeare becomes a shareholder of his theatre company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men
- 1594** *Love's Labour's Lost*
- 1595** *Richard II, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer's Night's Dream*
- 1596-97** *King John, The Merchant of Venice, 1 Henry IV*
- 1597-98** *The Merry Wives of Windsor, 2 Henry IV, Much Ado About Nothing*
- 1598** The Globe Theatre is built
- 1598-99** *Henry V, Julius Caesar*
- 1599-1600** *As You Like It*
- 1600-01** *Hamlet, Twelfth Night*
- 1602** *Troilus and Cressida*
- 1603** *Measure for Measure, Othello*
- 1604-05** *King Lear, All's Well that Ends Well, Timon of Athens*
- 1606** *Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra*
- 1607** *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*
- 1608** *Coriolanus*
- 1609** *The Winter's Tale*
- 1610** *King Lear, Cymbeline*
- 1611** *The Tempest*
- 1613** *Henry VIII, The Two Noble Kinsmen*
- 1613** Shakespeare retires to Stratford-upon-Avon
- 1616** Shakespeare dies in Stratford-upon-Avon
- 1623** The first folio of Shakespeare's collected works is published

<http://stratfordfestivalguide/hisst/learn/teacher>

THEMES OF THE PLAY

A major theme of the play is the devastation that results when ambition goes unchecked by moral constraints. This finds its most direct expression in the play's two main characters, Macbeth and his Lady. Macbeth at the outset is a valiant Scottish general not at all inclined to evil, yet he desires political power and advancement. He kills Duncan, his king, against his better instincts, and after the act, stewes in guilt and paranoia. Ambition, spurred by the prophecies of the weird sisters, is what drives the couple to commit ever more bloody atrocities. One murder leads to another and still another, as Macbeth strives to destroy his rivals and secure his throne. Lady Macbeth, for her part, coldly plots her husband's rise to the throne, orchestrating Duncan's murder, yet finally can't bear the consequences of her schemes. Though she first incites her husband to be strong and to kill the king, she is eventually driven mad by Macbeth's spiraling bloodshed and cruelty.

Another theme of the play is that of gender roles. Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband by challenging his manhood, and doesn't contradict him when he says that a woman like her should give birth only to men. She shames her husband into murdering Duncan by scorning his lack of courage and strength. Though the

Lady has the appearance of beauty, frailty, and femininity, she declares that she would have defied her motherly instincts and killed her own infant if it stood in the way of her achieving her aims, and asks the "gods" to "unsex" her – give her the power of a man – so that she can murder Duncan herself. But she finally betrays some tenderness when she's unable to stab the king, because he looks like her sleeping father – forcing Macbeth to do the deed himself.

Both Macbeth and the Lady equate masculinity not only with naked aggression and violence, but with essential male virtue. Whenever they talk of masculine behavior, violence soon follows. Their concept of manhood leads the political order in the play to descend into chaos. Macduff on the other hand displays a softer side of manhood. When Macduff learns that his wife and children have been murdered, Malcolm urges him to "dispute it like a man." (IV, 3.) Macduff replies he will do so, "But first I must feel it like a man." (IV, 3), meaning that he will allow himself his grief and not just his desire for revenge.

<http://sparknotes.com/Shakespeare/Macbeth/themes/html>

LADY MACBETH

"Come, you spirits/ That tend on mortal thoughts
unsex me here/ And fill me from the crown to the
toe, top full/ Of direst cruelty"

Lady Macbeth, Act I, Scene V.

In her book *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*, Marjorie Garber notes that Sigmund Freud theorized that "Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are best regarded as split halves of a single character."¹ The qualities that seem to unite them (guilt, bloody hands, remorse or remorselessness) are aspects of one person.

Lady Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most famous and frightening female characters. When we first meet her, she is already planning Duncan's murder; her actions show us she is stronger, more ruthless and more ambitious than her husband. She is fully aware of this and knows she will have to push Macbeth into committing murder. The theme of their relationship

is one of ambition and the desire for power. Women, Shakespeare implies, can be as ambitious and cruel as men, yet social constraints deny them the means to achieve their personal ambitions.

Lady Macbeth's remarkable strength of will persists through the murder of the king; it is she who steadies her husband's nerves immediately after the crime. Afterward, she begins a slow slide into madness; now guilt consumes her more than ambition. By the close of the play, she is sleepwalking through the castle, signaling her inability to deal with the legacy of the crime, which leads her to suicide.

1. Garber, p. 51.

Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare and Modern Culture*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000.

www.sparknotes.com/Shakespeare/character/lady-macbeth

MACBETH AND THE NATURE OF EVIL

“If it were done when ’tis done, then ’twere well it were done quickly.”

Macbeth, Act I, scene 7.

Macbeth is a political play; it dramatizes a story about power and authority, order and disorder, and the violence of war versus the restoration of peace. At its center “lies the issues of kingship in its legitimate and illegitimate forms, including succession, the rightful transfer of authority from one ruler to the next, regicide, the wrongful seizure of the crown, and tyranny, the cruel abuse of power by a state ruler.”¹

Shakespeare scholar Irving Ribner would agree. In an essay on evil, he says Shakespeare “set himself to describe the operation of evil in all its manifestations, to define its very nature, to depict its seduction of man, and to show its effects upon all the planes of creation once it has been unleashed by one man’s sinful moral choice.”²

From the beginning, Macbeth is fully aware of the evil he commits. A sin conceived in pride and ambition was considered the worst of the medieval seven deadly sins. In the neatly ordered universe conceived by the Renaissance man, this aspect stood for a rebellion against the will of God and thus against the order of nature. Macbeth, through ambition, sets his will against that of God, for “the ambitious man will strive to rise higher on the great chain of being than the pace which God has ordained for him.”³ Thus, Macbeth repudiates nature and defies God. In addition, his choosing of evil closes the way of redemption for him, for in defying God and nature, he cuts off the source of salvation and forgiveness.

When Macbeth murders Duncan, the crime is both ethical and political, for Macbeth kills not only his kinsman

and guest, but his king as well. The physical universe is thrown out of balance as the night becomes unruly and chimneys are blown down. The order of nature is reversed; the sun was blotted out like night. Duncan’s horses “turned wild in nature and broke their stalls -- as if they make war against mankind.” (II, IV, 14-18.).

Publicly, Macbeth’s actions unleash the greatest evil Shakespearean audiences could conceive of: tyranny, civil war and an invading foreign army. The cruelty of Macbeth’s reign contrasts with the gentility and justice of Duncan’s rule. Privately, the relationship between Macbeth and his wife steadily deteriorates. Their closeness and intimacy declines in the terror of the murder. This evil severs Macbeth from the rest of humanity; it loosens and finally breaks his bonds with his wife.

It is upon the disintegration of Macbeth himself that Shakespeare gives most attention. At the beginning of the play he is a man of great stature, a hero and a savior of his country. He has natural feelings for his fellow man, but feels revulsion at the crime his ambition prompts him to do. But once the crime is committed, these feelings gradually disappear until at the end of the play, he is a symbol of an unnatural man, completely cut off from humanity and God. His desire to live is gone and he sinks into despair and apathy, which is the surest evidence of his damnation.

1. Nostbaken, p. 23.

2. Ribner, p. 245.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

Nostbaken, Faith. *Understanding Macbeth: a Student Casebook to Issues, Sources and Historical Documents*. London: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Ribner, Irving. “Macbeth: the Pattern of Idea and Action”. Scott, Mark W., ed. *Shakespeare for Students*. Detroit: Gale Press, Inc., 1992.

WITCHCRAFT

“Fair is foul and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy air.”

Macbeth, Act I, scene 1.

Although accusations of witchcraft reached epidemic proportions in 16th and 17th century Europe, belief in witchcraft flourished in many cultures, attempts to account for outsider or unusual behavior and events.

The English government had, since 1300, been concerned with witches because they might attempt to kill the king. James had become interested in witchcraft in Scotland in 1590 when 300 people were alleged to be witches. Confessions were extorted with the aid of torture; they pointed to a conspiracy directed by the Earl of Bothwell. James attended Bothwell’s trial out of curiosity and the desire to be in the intellectual vanguard. Though the “witch craze” was a remnant of medieval

superstition, it was also a topic of research by some of the foremost intellectuals of the day. Finally, when James became king, his interest in witchcraft became even more intense. If the king was God’s representative on earth, then who could be a more likely victim of the demonic arts than he?

When we first meet Macbeth’s witches they bustle onto a battlefield, there to collect the vital ingredients for witches’ work -- dead body parts. The use of corpses is called necromancy and this is the act the witches will perform in Act IV for Macbeth when they conjure up the visions of Macduff’s helmeted head, the bloody babe and the kingly child with the tree of fertility.

The witches have some power over Macbeth, but it is limited. They are supernatural agents of evil and as such, they reveal the capacities and incapacities that the Christian tradition has given to devils. They

prompt Macbeth to do evil and tempt with great subtlety, because they know that desire and ambition lurk within him. But they do not force him to commit murder; Macbeth choice comes from free will.

They speak in equivocations or double talk, a sort of reversible back and forth reality. The day is fair and foul; Malcolm is vicious and virtuous; morning is night; promises are true and false, and “nothing is but what

is not” (I, iii, 141 - 142). But they suggest no fate of evil-doing for Macbeth and never, even by inference, bid him to commit murder.

1. Wills, p. 35.

Farnham, Willard. “The Witches.” Hawkes, Terence, ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Macbeth*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977.

Wills, Garry. *Witches and Jesuits*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

SHAKESPEARE’S SOURCES

In 1606, when Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, he turned to three major historical works for his sources:

1. *The Chronicles of Robert Holinshed* (1577)
2. *De Origine Moribus et Rebus Gestis Scotorum* (History of the Character and Customs of the Scots) (1578) by John Leslie, Bishop of Rome and defender of Mary, Queen of Scots.
3. *Rerum Scotorum Historia* (1582) (History of the Scots) written by George Buchanan, tutor to both Queen Mary and her son, King James.

In these works, Shakespeare found a history of Scotland, as well as a “strange, bleak, haunted world -- where savage beings fulfill the passionate cycle of their dreadful lives as if in enchanted compulsion.”¹

According to Holinshed, King Duff, while a guest at Donwald’s castle, was murdered by four of Donwald’s servants at the behest of their master. Later, Donwald became King of Scotland after Malcolm II. He was said to be a weak ruler who allowed widespread crime to go unpunished; his incompetence led to civil war. Even with the aid of Macbeth and Banquo, he barely managed to save Scotland from rebels, who were in league with the Norwegians and the Danes.

During this war, according to the Chronicles, Macbeth and Banquo met three women in strange and wild apparel, resembling creatures of another world. Shakespeare borrowed the witches’ prophecies -- that Macbeth would become Thane of Cawdor and then become King, and

that Banquo would father kings -- almost word for word from Holinshed. Holinshed, however, drew a different picture of the prophecies’ effect on the two men. In his Chronicles, both men joked about the prophecy and did not take it seriously until Macbeth was made Thane of Cawdor. Still, Macbeth might have done nothing at all if Duncan had not named his young son, Malcolm, as his heir. Macbeth wanted to be king; indeed, the witches had told him he would gain the throne. According to Holinshed, Macbeth and Banquo kill King Duncan in a fair battle at Elgin; however, the play diverges from this history and has it that Macbeth murders Duncan while he is a guest in his home.

From Holinshed one learns that Macbeth was a good king for approximately ten years. What puzzled and intrigued chroniclers, historians and Shakespeare was that after such a benevolent reign, Macbeth became a tyrant. Shakespeare resolved the enigma in his play by ignoring the ten good years and focusing on Macbeth’s tyranny. Holinshed says that the reign was “counterfeit -- and that conscience caused him ever to fear -- the same fate that happened to his predecessor.”² The murder of the king turned Macbeth’s mind to dangerous thinking, so that he converted his government into a cruel tyranny. Thus, the murder of Banquo and the MacDuff family ensued.

1. Tate, p. 4.

2. *Ibid*, p. 5.

Tate, Hilary. *Illuminations*. “A Strange, Bleak Haunted World.” Stratford, Oregon. Oregon Shakespeare Festival, 1995.

KING JAMES I AND *MACBETH*

King James VI (1566-1625) of Scotland became King James I of England upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I and was crowned on March 24, 1603. The union of Scotland with England left foreign enemies with no ally to gain a foothold in the island. James had been titled James VI of Scotland since he was one year old, when his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was forced to abdicate.

Though his mother had been Catholic, James was immersed from his youth in a rigid Calvinistic upbringing. He was kidnapped by Protestant earls at the age of 16 to break up his romantic relationship with the Earl of Lennox, and later saw his mother executed at the age of 20. He was apprehensive and devious, but he was also a true intellectual and a fan of the theatre. Well educated in languages, especially Latin, James had an insatiable curiosity. He haunted the library at Oxford University and, at 18, wrote his first book, *Essays of a Prince in the Divine Art of Poetry*. In 1604, he convened a conference at Hampton Court to discuss a new translation of the Bible. It appeared seven years later (1611) as the *Authorized King James* version.

James fathered three children with his wife, Anne of Denmark, had an affair during his marriage with Anne Murray, but also had barely-concealed passionate relationships with three different men through his lifetime: Esmé Stewart, Robert Carr, and George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who was by James' side when he died.

James was impractical and unwise. He believed in his own divine right to rule and quarreled with the English Parliament. He defended the doctrine that declared that kings are appointed by God to rule,

yet he also came to believe that God holds kings responsible for their actions. James was intolerant of Protestant dissenters. He had come to England with set ideas about religion and the right of kings. However, England had changed. No longer was there strict obedience to a dynasty; the people began to judge their sovereigns by human standards.

Macbeth was most likely written to appeal to the vanity of King James. The King had taken Shakespeare's company under his patronage as The King's Men, and he doubled the fee they received for court performances as well as doubling the number of such performances. *Macbeth* was performed at Hampton Court when James entertained his brother-in-law, Christian IV of Denmark during a state visit in August 1606. James is provided with a whole line of ancestors in the character of Banquo and is assured that his line will continue "to the crack of doom." However, though James' son Charles I fathered Charles II of England, Charles II had only illegitimate children, though many of today's European royalty, including Elizabeth II of England, are in fact descended from James I one way or the other. So, Shakespeare's prediction of a royal line descended from Banquo is not far off the mark.

Shakespeare would have been aware of the King's interest in witchcraft, a commonly-held belief in the era, and it is possible he read James's *Daemonologie* (1597), the King's tract on witchcraft and black magic. James sat in on several witch trials and personally supervised the torture of some accused women, but eventually developed a healthy skepticism about matters supernatural.

Paul, Henry N. *The Royal Play of Macbeth*. New York: Macmillan Co., 1950.

THE CURSE OF "THE SCOTTISH PLAY"

Macbeth has been considered unlucky since its very first production -- perhaps because the text contains an actual witch's incantation; the famous "Double, double, toil and trouble/ Fire burn and cauldron bubble."

From the beginning, unpleasant and uncanny events are reported to have accompanied performances of the play. At its first production in 1606, legend has it that the young man playing Lady Macbeth died backstage, and that Shakespeare himself had to assume the role. In 1934 at the Old Vic, the play went through four different *Macbeths*. The actors either became ill or were fired. In the 1937 Old Vic production starring Laurence Olivier and Judith Anderson, the founder of the Old Vic, Lillian Baylis, lost her favorite dog; the next day she herself died. Olivier was nearly brained by a falling sandbag, and accidentally wounded various Macduffs in the final sword fight scene.

The most curious incident of bad luck occurred with a 1936 John Houseman-Orson Wells production of *Voodoo*

Macbeth in New York, featuring African drummers along with an authentic native shaman. Percy Hammond, drama critic for the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote a scathing review calling the performance "an exhibition of government boondoggling." (The production was funded by the Federal Theatre Project).¹ Shortly after the review appeared, John Houseman was visited by the production's African drummers, who wanted to know if Hammond was an evil man. Houseman assured them that indeed Hammond was. The next morning the theatre manager told Houseman and Welles that the basement had been filled all night with unusual drumming and weird chants. When the pair read the afternoon paper, a brief item announced that Hammond had fallen ill from pneumonia. He died a few days later.

1. Epstein, p. 430.

<http://stratfordfestiva;/history/learn/teacher>

Epstein, Norrie. *The Friendly Shakespeare*. New York: Penguin Books, 1983.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT: A REAL-LIFE QUEST FOR POWER

“I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself,
And falls on the other. “
- *Macbeth*, I, 7, 25-28.

“It is a terrible curse to want anything so much as Mr.
Nixon wanted power.”
- George Will, *Washington Post*, Friday, August 9, 1974.

Watergate is among the great scandals in recent United States political history. Like *Macbeth*, it is a story about ambition and power that resulted in far-reaching political corruption. It began in June 1972, with a failed break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Washington Watergate office complex. Five men affiliated with the CIA and James McCord, security director of Nixon’s 1972 re-election campaign, were caught inside the DNC office with bugging equipment and photographs.

These illegal activities involved breaking and entering, phone tapping, undercover investigations of

private citizens, canceling Democratic rallies, forging letters and planting spies. The whole operation was funded by a “security fund” controlled by the Committee to Re-Elect the President. Like *Macbeth*, those involved in the conspiracy were anxious to hide their guilt at all cost so they could retain power.

For *Macbeth*, murder begot still more murder as he tried to destroy witnesses who might expose his crimes. For the Watergate conspirators, the cover-up included perjury in court, bribery with hush money, and the obstruction of justice by the CIA, the FBI and presidential privilege. Eventually, the search led to the Oval Office where the discovery of a set of audio tapes of Nixon’s damaging conversations with his conspirators led to impeachment charges and President Nixon’s resignation from office on August 9, 1974. Similar investigations today are looking into the possible conspiracy of the Trump White House with Russian agents to swing the election to the Republican candidate.

<http://www.9news.com/nation-now/the-same-and-what's-different/>

Nostbaken, Faith. *Understanding Macbeth*. London: Greenwood Press, 1997.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Pre-Performance Questions

1. What prior knowledge do you have about *Macbeth* the play and Macbeth the character? Which moments from his reign do you expect to see highlighted in the play?
2. Why does Shakespeare include violence in his plays? Is there a parallel to contemporary entertainment?
3. Why do you think superstition surrounds the play *Macbeth*?

Post-Performance Questions

1. How do the scenic elements of set design, costuming, lighting, and sound help tell the story? Which are the most effective and why?
2. Explain if the conceptual framework of the production helps or detracts from the story?
3. What role does the supernatural play in this story? How does the concept of foretelling the future manifest in the play?
4. How would you describe the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth?
5. What reasons does Macbeth use to justify his actions? Are the Macbeths justified in their pursuit of the crown?
6. How would you describe the relationship between Banquo and Macbeth? What changes happen to this relationship and why?
7. What purpose does the character of the Porter serve in the play?
8. Why do Malcolm's sons flee from Scotland? What would you do in their situation?
9. Who is Hecate and what purpose does this character serve in the play?
10. Describe the parallel of Lady Macduff and her family and Lady Macbeth and her family?
11. What purpose does the character Siward have in the play? What parallels can be drawn between the journey's Macbeth and Siward take?

ACTIVITIES

Contemporizing *Macbeth*

1. Pick a scene from the play *Macbeth* to contemporize. Either individually or in a small group, pick a scene from *Macbeth* to contemporize.
2. By utilizing stage directions and dialogue, create/adapt a new scene that sets the scene in the 21st Century.
 - a. Discuss what changes from the play would need to be made. How do the costumes change? How do the underlying themes change in your version? How does the way your characters speak differ from Shakespeare's?
 - b. How does your scene differ from the scene from the play?
3. After writing the scene, have different students read the parts of the scene.
 - a. How can you improve the scene to make it easier to understand?
 - b. How does the scene change by updating the scene?
 - c. Explain what the adapters did to contemporize the scene without changing Shakespeare's original scene.

Colorado Writing PG: Effectively use content-specific language, style, tone and text structure to compose or adapt writing for different audiences and purposes.

Colorado Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

Colorado Drama and Theatre Arts PG: Employ drama and theatre skills, and articulate the aesthetics of a variety of characters and roles.

Perspective Writing-Personal Narratives for Characters

1. The other characters in *Macbeth* only have a partial view of what is happening during the play. Select an important moment from a play that has more than one person in attendance. For example, both Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches for the first time. Write a short narrative from Banquo's perspective about this meeting.
2. From this moment, the students are to pick a character from the story and to give the character's perspective and attitude of what transpired. Explanations of how they felt about this moment and how it effects them should be explored.
3. Each person will write a short monologue describing the moment from the character's perspective of what they experienced.
4. Compare the monologues about the event from other characters that were involved. Discuss the similarities and differences that arose during the writing process. Was there general agreement of what happened or marked differences? Why were the moments similar or different? Were they subtle or obvious variations? Did the class agree on what was important to include and why? If not, how would the elimination of some elements change the way the story would be understood when read?

Colorado Writing PG: Articulate the position of self and others using experiential and material logic.

Colorado Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

ACTIVITIES

Columbian Hypnosis

1. Students should pair up and stand two feet from each other. Student A places the palm of his/her hand six to eight inches from Student B's face. THE STUDENTS ARE NOT TO TOUCH AT ANY TIME and the exercise should be performed in total silence. The students are to pretend that a string runs from the palm of Student A to the nose of Student B.
2. Student A explores the space with his/her palm by moving it back and forth or up and down and around and B must follow so that imaginary string will not break. Start by having students mirror each other but then encourage movement in the space without collisions. Have a Student A manipulate Student B into grotesque shapes and images.
3. After the initial exploration, switch positions. Student B now leads Student A.
4. Discussion Questions
How did it make you feel when you were the person leading or the person following? What do you think would happen if you add another person and had to follow and lead at the same time? Where are some of the places that we see a power struggle take place in *Macbeth*?

Colorado History PG: Analyze and practice rights, roles and responsibilities of citizens.

Colorado History PG: Analyze the origins, structure, and functions of governments and their impacts on societies and citizens.

Character Mapping

This activity looks at the internal and external characteristics of a certain character. Start with a circle in the middle of a piece of paper. As there will be writing inside and outside the circle, be careful to leave space. At the top of the page, either place a generic title such as "Soldier," "Porter," etc. or the name of a character from the play. If this activity is played before seeing the production, start with generic titles. Inside the circle, write descriptive words, phrases, or draw pictures that describe the characters' perceptions of themselves. These descriptions are traits that we know and are the essential characteristics and also those that cannot be changed. For example, Macbeth is male, a soldier, and is has been bestowed with a title of honor. Outside the circle, write descriptive words to describe how the characters are perceived by the other characters. These would be immediate qualities that are obvious or those traits that characterize the character. After seeing the production or reading the text, create another circle for a specific character. For example, if the character is Malcolm, in the circle, write quotes that Malcolm uses to describe himself. On the outside of the circle, write quotes that the other characters use to describe him.

Colorado Writing PG: Effectively use content-specific language, style, tone and text structure to compose or adapt writing for different audiences and purposes.

Colorado Writing PG: Write with clear focus, coherent organization, sufficient elaboration, and detail.

PERSPECTIVES

Make your experience unforgettable when you join us for one of these insightful, educational events:

Creative Team Perspectives

Sep 15 | 6:00pm | The Jones

Get an exclusive insider's perspective before the show when you join us for a free, professionally-moderated discussion with the creative team.

Theatre & Theology Perspectives

Sep 26 | 6:30pm

Join Pastor Dan Bollman of the Rocky Mountain Evangelical Lutheran Synod after the performance to examine each show through a theological lens.

Cast Perspectives

Oct 15 | 1:30pm

Join a fun and engaging discussion with the actors after the matinee.

Higher Education Perspectives

Oct 22 | 1:30pm

Participate in a topical discussion led by members of our academic community after the matinee.

Theatre Thursday

Oct 26 | 6:30pm | Helen Bonfils Lobby

Theatre Thursdays are a new, fun way to make your night at the theatre even more memorable. Enjoy festive pre-show parties including a cocktail and live music. Even better? It's all included with your show ticket, for a special price with promo code THURSDAY.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

The Denver Public Library recommends these library resources to enhance your theatre experience.

Read!

Toil and Trouble by Mairghread Scott (2016), illustrated by Kelly and Nichole Matthews. This colorful and richly illustrated graphic novel gives a retelling of the “Scottish Play,” but with the Weird Sisters cast at the center of the narrative. Author Mairghread Scott portrays the iconic witches as behind-the-scenes guardians of Scotland, both as manipulators and kingmakers, but with a schism between them over the fate of Macbeth. The Weird Sisters maneuver against each other, influencing battles, sowing divisions, and most tragically, letting fallible humans make their own flawed decisions. Scott weaves a tale of family, regret and reconciliation into the well-known fabric of Shakespeare’s original.

Watch!

Throne of Blood (1957), directed by Akira Kurosawa. Not a direct adaptation of Macbeth, but a masterful synthesis of Noh theater traditions, Japanese feudal history and folklore, all composed as a mirror through which Macbeth is reflected. Beautifully filmed in black and white, with a measured exposition punctuated by moments of startling violence, *Throne of Blood* is one of director Akira Kurosawa’s finest films. This eloquent film is brought to life by the intense performances of Isuzu Yamada as Asaji (Lady Macbeth) and Toshiro Mifune as Washizu (Macbeth), and their portrayals of the family Macbeth’s descent into madness and dissolution. Ultimately, Director Kurosawa’s achievement with this film was to offer a commentary on the universality (whether it be feudal Japan or medieval Scotland or the world of today) of the dangers of greed, naked ambition, and the recourse to violence, themes that the Bard himself would have recognized.

Listen!

Macbeth performed by Alan Cumming (2012). An updated version in its own right is the one-man rendition of “the Scottish play” by the ever talented Alan Cumming. Set in a psychiatric unit, the action all tumbles forth from Cummings’ mouth as we journey through this harrowing tale of ambition, betrayal, suspicion and madness. Originally presented at the National Theatre of Scotland in Glasgow, Scotland’s own native son brings the flavor of the Highlands and the heath to this brutal classic.

Download!

Royal Road to Fotheringhay by Jean Plaidy. Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, was considered by many to also be the TRUE queen of England. Was Mary Stuart a real life Lady Macbeth? After the mysterious death of her husband, she quickly married the man most suspected of his murder. Then when the people of Scotland rose up against her she fled to England hoping to be received with open arms by her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I. Instead she was arrested and kept in various castles and homes around England by the crown until she was convicted of plotting an assassination and finally beheaded. While this novel is set later than Macbeth it is filled with echoes of royal intrigue, assassinations, and misguided aspirations to rule. This title is available for download at denver.overdrive.com.



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