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REPRODUCIBLE SERIES

# LATITUDES<sup>®</sup>

Resources to Integrate Language Arts & Social Studies



# LATITUDES<sup>®</sup>

Resources to Integrate Language Arts & Social Studies

## **Macbeth**

by William Shakespeare

**Reproducibles  
and Teacher Guide**

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Rebels led by Macdonwald attack the King's messenger.

Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577)

# Acknowledgments

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# TEACHER INFORMATION

## Welcome to *Latitudes*

*Latitudes* is designed for teachers who would like to broaden the scope of their literature and history study. By providing fascinating primary source documents and background information, the *Latitudes* collection of reproducibles helps your students link a literary work with its historical framework.

Each packet also offers insights into the work as a piece of literature, including its creation, critical reception, and links to similar literature.

The *Latitudes* selections help readers draw on and seek out knowledge from a unique range of sources and perspectives. These sources encourage students to make personal connections to history and literature, integrating information with their own knowledge and background. This learning experience will take students far beyond the boundaries of a single text into the rich latitudes of literature and social studies.

## Purposes of This Packet

The material in this *Latitudes* packet for *Macbeth* has been carefully chosen for five main purposes.

1. to engage students' interest in the play
2. to familiarize students with Shakespeare's theater
3. to show how *Macbeth* reflects the beliefs and controversies of Shakespeare's time
4. to make criticism of *Macbeth* accessible and interesting to students
5. to encourage students to use strategies from social studies and literature to find meaning in a Shakespearean play

## Use of the Material

*Latitudes* offers you a varied selection of resources to enrich your teaching of *Macbeth*. You might

- reproduce selected pieces to provide historical background or introduce significant issues to the whole class
- support individual research with any relevant selection(s)
- design group projects around stimulating pieces adaptable to panel presentations, performance, or debate
- choose resources to use with a cross-disciplinary team

## Teacher Information *continued*

You'll find support for any pieces you teach to the class in "Using *Latitudes* in Your Classroom" on pages 45–53. "Student Projects" on pages 54–58 suggests several open-ended activities. These suggested activities may be used as alternative assessments or portfolio projects.

These resources and suggestions are simply tools to support your teaching of a challenging literary work. These selections will be most effective when you adapt them to your students' needs and your personal teaching style.

This chart identifies *Latitudes* selections that are related to specific passages in the play.

<b>Correlations to the Play</b>		
<b>ACT</b>	<b><i>Latitudes</i> Selection</b>	<b><i>Link to Play</i></b>
<b>1</b>	The Murder of King Duffe, p. 22 The Weird Sisters, p. 24 <i>Medea</i> , p. 39	Plot to kill Duncan Act 1 scene 1 1.5.45–61
<b>2</b>	Vaulting Ambition, p. 34 The Gunpowder Plot, p. 36	Macbeth's motivation (1.7.25–28) Porter's speech (2.3.1–16)
<b>3</b>	The Weird Sisters, p. 24 Macbeth...Last Celtic King, pp. 18–19	Act 3 scene 5 Macbeth's bloodlust (3.4.166–170)
<b>4</b>	A Scottish Witch, p. 33 <i>The Witch</i> , p. 38	Witches' powers (4.1.51–64) Incantation (4.1.1–47)
<b>5</b>	Baiting the Bear, p. 35	Macbeth's self-description (5.7.1–2)

The *Latitudes* sections listed below provide background information and suggested activities for incorporating *Macbeth Latitudes* into your curriculum.

<b>Teacher Support</b>	
<b>Synopsis</b>	This overview of the play can be used to preview the sections students are about to read.
<b>About the Author</b>	This short biography of Shakespeare provides facts relevant to his life and the writing of <i>Macbeth</i> .
<b>Reading <i>Macbeth</i></b>	This guide introduces students to comprehension strategies for reading Shakespeare.
<b>Bibliographies</b>	"Suggested Reading and Viewing List" encourages students to do further reading and identifies video resources. "Resources for Teaching <i>Macbeth</i> " lists professional resources for teaching and interpreting <i>Macbeth</i> .

# About the Author

**W**illiam Shakespeare is probably the most famous playwright in history. Unfortunately, most of what we know about him comes from secondhand sources.

Shakespeare never gave an interview. He never wrote his autobiography. Only a few of his letters survive. And of course, the people who knew him best had no idea how famous he would become.

William Shakespeare was born in April 1564. No one knows the exact date, but he was baptized on April 26 in the Stratford-upon-Avon church. His father, John Shakespeare, served as town chamberlain and as mayor.

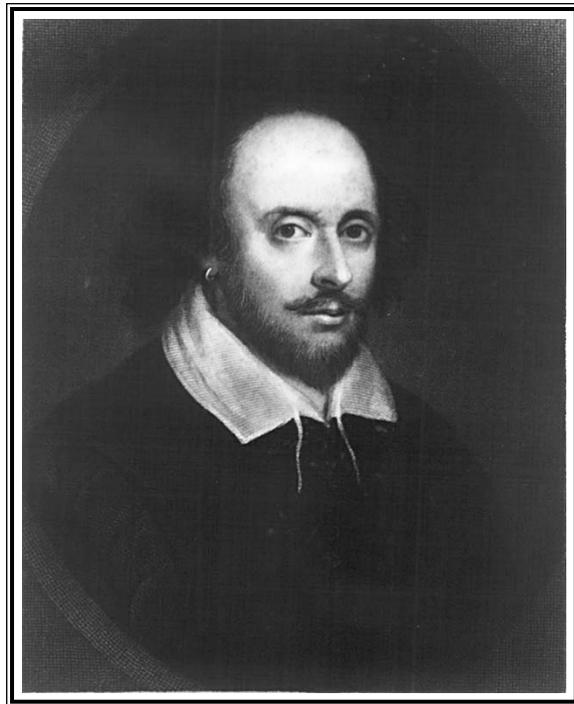
Young William probably attended grammar school in Stratford, where he learned Latin grammar and composition. In those days, anyone who wanted a professional career had to learn Latin first. Shakespeare probably read his first plays in Latin, including the popular (and bloody) tragedies of the Roman playwright Seneca. He also had the chance to watch traveling companies, groups of actors who went from town to town. Perhaps these experiences made him want to write plays.

In 1582, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. He was 18; she was 26. Their wedding date was moved forward because Anne was already expecting a baby. Their first daughter, Susanna, was born in May 1583. In 1585, the couple had twins, Judith and Hamnet.

Between 1585 and 1592, we lose track of William Shakespeare. At some point during that time, he decided to move to London and become an actor. His family stayed behind in Stratford, where Shakespeare visited them from time to time. Like most young actors, Shakespeare had to face the critics. One complained that not only was Shakespeare a terrible actor, but that he

was writing plays as well! Although he continued to act, Shakespeare became more and more interested in writing. At least five of his plays were written before 1595.

No one knows why Shakespeare chose a theater career, but his family probably wasn't very happy about it. In those days, people viewed actors much as we view professional wrestlers—as entertaining, but not exactly artistic. In fact, many people were opposed to even allowing theaters and plays. Ministers preached against plays in the strongest terms. Puritan preacher Thomas White thundered, "The cause of plague is sin. The cause of sin is plays. Therefore, the cause of plague is plays." In a city with at least one outbreak of plague every year, this was a serious accusation.



This is the only known portrait of Shakespeare that was painted while he was alive.

*continued*

## About the Author *continued*

However, Shakespeare and his friends were lucky. Queen Elizabeth I loved plays. She granted her protection to acting companies and gave them her permission to perform. Shakespeare wrote several plays to be performed for the Queen, including *Twelfth Night*. After Elizabeth's death in 1603, Shakespeare became one of the King's Men, a group of actors who performed for King James I. The King gave the group a license that read

*James by the Grace of God...Know ye that we have licensed and authorized...these our servants, Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare...freely to use and exercise the art and faculty of playing Comedies, Tragedies, Histories, Interludes...within...any city, university town or borough whatsoever within our said Realms....*

Perhaps to thank King James for his patronage, the Bard wrote *Macbeth*, a story of Scottish royalty. In this play, he cleverly linked the noble character Banquo to his royal descendant King James.

Unlike many theater people, Shakespeare actually earned a good living. By 1599, he was part owner of the Globe, one of the newest theaters in London. Such plays as *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* were probably performed for the first time at the Globe.

In 1610 or 1611, Shakespeare finally moved back to Stratford-upon-Avon.

He was almost 50 years old, well past middle age by 17th-century standards. Perhaps he wanted to spend the rest of his life in familiar surroundings. Over the years, he had invested in several pieces of property around Stratford. Having acquired a comfortable estate, it was time to enjoy his prosperity.

However, Shakespeare didn't give up writing. In 1611, his new play *The Tempest* was performed at Court. In

1613, his play *Henry VIII* premiered at the Globe. This performance was more dramatic than anyone expected. The stage directions called for an artillery salute to be fired when "King Henry" came onstage. The explosion set the stage on fire, and the entire theater burned to the ground.

Shakespeare died in 1616 at the age of 52. His gravestone carried this inscription, which some

scholars believe Shakespeare himself wrote for the occasion:

*Good friend for Jesus sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here!  
Blest be the man that spares these  
stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.*

Shakespeare's bones rest in his tomb to this day.



Young Will Shakespeare attended school in this room.

British Travel Association

# S Y N O P S I S

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## Setting

Scotland in the 1200s

## Characters

Duncan—honest and fair King of Scotland, murdered by Macbeth

Macbeth—brave Scottish general who is corrupted by ambition

Lady Macbeth—conspirator in Duncan's murder who goes insane with guilt

Banquo—Macbeth's friend and fellow general

Macduff—Scottish noble who suspects Macbeth of murder

Lady Macduff—Macduff's wife who is killed on Macbeth's orders

Malcolm—heir to Duncan's throne who flees after his father's assassination

Donalbain—Duncan's youngest son who also flees

Witches—three creatures who prophesy Macbeth's fate

## Situation

General Macbeth's victory against two traitors earns him the title Thane of Cawdor, but he and his wife have greater ambitions.

## Main Events

1. Macbeth and Banquo meet three witches who prophesy that Macbeth will become King of Scotland.
2. At Lady Macbeth's urging, Macbeth stabs the king and frames the guards. Duncan's sons flee, and Macbeth is crowned Duncan's successor.
3. When Banquo begins to suspect Macbeth's guilt, Macbeth arranges an ambush. Banquo is killed, but his son Fleance escapes. Macbeth then sees Banquo's ghost in the king's chair.
4. As opposition to the new king grows, Malcolm allies with Macduff and the Earl of Northumberland. The witches meet, and their leader Hecate calls for Macbeth's downfall.
5. The witches show Macbeth visions: an armed head that warns him against Macduff, a child covered in blood, and a child holding a tree. Finally, he sees eight kings followed by Banquo's ghost.
6. Macbeth learns of Macduff's alliance with Malcolm and, in revenge, sends assassins to murder Lady Macduff and her eight children. Macduff then vows to kill Macbeth.
7. Lady Macbeth begins to go insane with guilt.
8. Malcolm leads an attack on Macbeth's castle. His troops are camouflaged with tree limbs, fulfilling the witches' prophecy that Birnam Wood would come to Dunsinane.
9. Macbeth learns that his wife has died, but he must immediately go into battle.
10. As he fights Macbeth, Macduff reveals that he is not "born of a woman." Macbeth realizes he is facing the only man in the battle who can kill him, but he refuses to surrender.

## Resolution

Macduff kills Macbeth, takes the tyrant's head to Malcolm, and hails Malcolm as the new king.

# Critics' Comments

*When plays are published, critics watch and review them. The following statements are comments that have been made by critics of **Macbeth**.*

[Went] to the Duke's house, and there saw *Macbeth*, most excellently acted, and a most excellent play for variety.  
—Samuel Pepys (1666)

[*Macbeth*] neither interests the mind nor moves the heart, nor fills the imagination, as do *Hamlet* and *Othello* and *Lear*.  
—John Bailey (1929)

*Macbeth*...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.  
—William Hazlett (1818)

*Macbeth* defines a particular kind of evil—the evil that results from a lust for power.  
—L. C. Knights (c. 1905)

In the murderer, such a murderer as the poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred—which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look.  
—Thomas De Quincey (1823)

The majority of readers, I believe, assign to *Macbeth*, which seems to have been written about 1606, the pre-eminence among the works of Shakespeare. The great epic drama...deserves, in my own judgment, the post it has attained, as being, in the language of Drake, "the greatest effort of our author's genius, the most sublime and impressive drama which the world has ever beheld."  
—Henry Hallam (1854)

I regard the tragedy of *Macbeth*, upon the whole, as the greatest treasure of our dramatic literature.  
—Thomas Campbell (1834)

I think nothing equals *Macbeth*. It is wonderful....  
—Abraham Lincoln (*Complete Works*)

*Macbeth* has been extravagantly over-praised. [While it] contains excellencies which Shakespeare nowhere else surpassed,...it is the weakest of Shakespeare's great tragedies, and so full of blemishes that it is hard to believe that one man wrote it.  
—G. B. Harrison (1951)

# V

# oices from the Play

*The following quotes are from **Macbeth**.*

Fair is foul, and foul is fair.<sup>1</sup>  
(1.1.12)

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.  
(1.3.150–55)

Yet do I fear thy nature;  
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way.  
(1.5.16–18)

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.  
(1.5.47–50)

I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on th' other [side].  
(1.7.25–28)

I dare do all that may become a man,  
Who dares do more is none.  
(1.7.51–52)

These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.  
(2.2.45–46)

My hands are of your color, but I shame  
To wear a heart so white.  
(2.2.82–83)

A little water clears us of this deed.  
(2.2.86)

Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.  
(3.2.62)

I am in blood  
Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.  
(3.4.168–170)

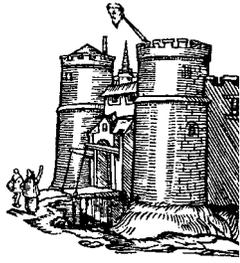
My strange and self-abuse  
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use.  
We are yet but young in deed.  
(3.4.174–176)

My way of life  
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,  
And that which should accompany old age,  
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
I must not look to have....  
(5.3.26–30)

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. Out, out brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.  
(5.5.20–31)

I 'gin to be aweary of the sun  
And wish th' estate o' th' world were now  
undone.  
(5.5.55–56)

<sup>1</sup> In citations from the play, the first number refers to the act, the second to the scene, and the last number(s) to the line(s). All references are to the New Folger edition of the play.



# GLOSSARY

*Understanding what the following terms mean may be helpful as you read **Macbeth**.*



**brinded:** spotted

**cloudy:** sullen

**dearest chuck:** affectionate nickname

**familiar:** evil spirit or demon that serves a witch. Familiars were believed to take the shape of small animals such as cats or toads.

**fell:** cruel, deadly

**from the nave to the chops:** from the navel to the throat

**golden round:** crown

**hurlyburly:** tumult, confusion

**incarnadine:** turn red, as with blood

**Norway himself:** the king of Norway

**scarf up:** blindfold

**seeling:** sewing up a hawk's eyes to help tame the bird

**sooth:** truth

**thane:** old Scottish title for the chief of a clan, roughly equal to an earl

**usurper:** someone who forcibly seizes power or position without any right to it

---

*These words had a different meaning in Shakespeare's time.*

**admired:** astonishing

**forced:** reinforced

**genius:** ruling spirit

**intelligence:** information

**mere:** absolute, unqualified

**nice:** trivial, insignificant

**office:** job or service

**owe:** possess or have

**posters:** swift travelers

**present:** immediate

**should:** may mean "will inevitably"

**still:** always

**straight:** straight away, immediately

**supp'd:** had enough of

**would be:** demands to be

# Reading *Macbeth*

## Look Ahead

*Macbeth* is a play about a murder, but there's no mystery about who did it. You'll find reading the play much easier if you have a general idea of the plot. If

your copy of the play has a summary of the plot, read it. Also, look over the list of characters at the beginning of the play.

## Get the Beat

Did people really talk the way Shakespeare wrote? In some ways, yes. The people of Shakespeare's time spoke more dramatically than we do. For example, a wife asked that her husband be forgiven for "age, want of memory, and multiplicity of business." The Elizabethans also had a talent for insults and ill-wishing. A person on trial defied the court, saying "A plague of God on you all."

However, ordinary speech was often long and rambling, without any logical order. Shakespeare typically used a rhythmic pattern called *iambic pentameter*. *Iambic* means that the first syllable is unstressed and the second is stressed. *Pentameter* refers to a series of five. You can feel the beat by clapping your hands according to the accents of the syllables in the line below.

O, **full** of **scorpions is** my **mind**, dear **wife!** (3.2.41)

## Move It

Shakespeare often changed the order of the words to fit his rhythm or rhyme

pattern. If a passage isn't clear, try changing some of the words around.

I'll fight till from my bones my flesh be hacked. (5.3.38)  
(*I'll fight until the flesh is hacked from my bones.*)

But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,  
Brandished by man that's of a woman born. (5.7.17–18)  
(*I smile at swords, laugh scornfully at weapons wielded by a man that is born of a woman.*)

In addition, Shakespeare often used apostrophes to represent omitted letters.

Adding a letter or two will often help you infer his meaning.

I 'gin to be aweary of the sun  
And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone. (5.5.55–57)  
(The missing letters for 'gin are *be*, the missing letter for o' is *f*, and the missing letter for th' is *e*.)

*continued*

### Say It

Plays are written to be acted, not read. Reading out loud—whether it’s with a group or alone—helps you “hear” the meaning. You might say a line several

ways until you find the voice a character would use. For example, would Macbeth say this line with genuine sorrow or pretended grief?

O, yet I do repent me of my fury,/That I did kill them. (2.3.124–125)

Playwrights often use punctuation marks to suggest how a line should sound. Use

these cues to help you interpret a play aloud.

. ! ?	,	: ;	?	!
stop completely	pause briefly	change your energy level	raise your vocal pitch	strengthen your voice

Other cues are given in stage directions. These are often found in brackets after the character’s name. For example, [*aside*] tells the actor to give the audience information that the other characters can’t hear.

Sometimes a character’s actions are

suggested by the lines themselves. For example, when Banquo’s ghost appears, Macbeth says, “Behold! Look! Lo! How say you?” He probably stares in horror at the ghost; he may even try to point it out to those who don’t see the bloody apparition.

### Note It

Shakespeare wouldn’t have known words like *space shuttle*. And he probably would expect a *computer* to be a person who does math. We, on the other hand, expect *straight* to mean “not crooked” rather than “immediately.” If you know the

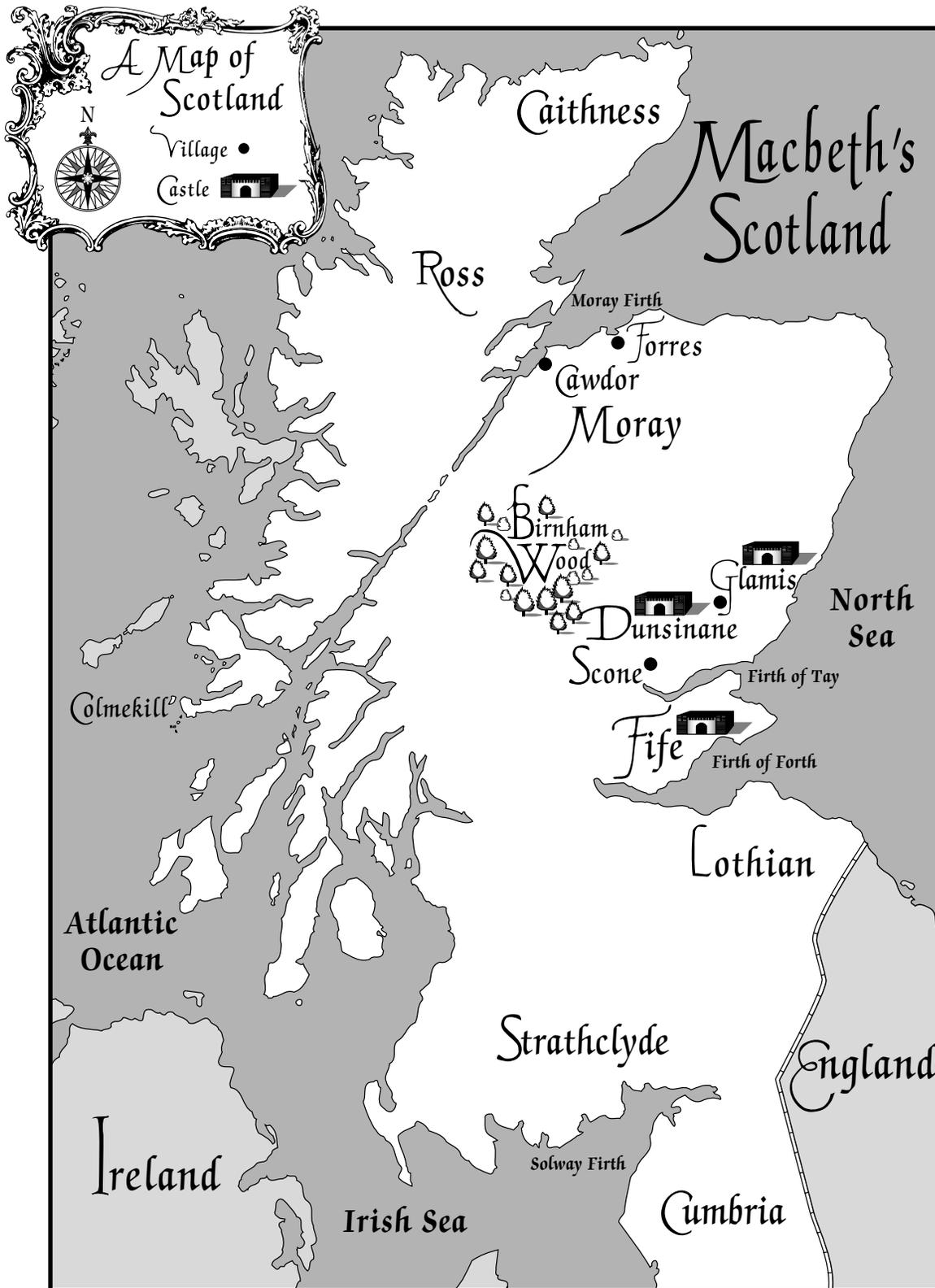
words, but a line still seems confusing, check the footnotes or the glossary. You may find that you’re reading *not nice* as “rude” when it meant “not trivial” to the people of Shakespeare’s time.

### Stick to the Point

If you can’t figure out every word, don’t get discouraged. The people in Shakespeare’s audience couldn’t either. For one thing, Shakespeare loved to play with words. He made up new combinations, like fat-guts and mumble-news. He often changed one part of speech to another, as in “cursing cries and deep

exclaims.” To make matters worse, the actors probably spoke at a rate of 140 words per minute. But the audience didn’t strain to catch every word. They went to a Shakespeare play for the same reasons we see a movie—for the story and the acting, for a great laugh or a good cry.

# The Geographical Picture



*The Kingdom of Alba (now called Scotland) was first united in 841, when Kenneth Mac Alpine became king of the Scots and Picts. The kingdom expanded again when Malcolm II conquered Lothian in 1018. More southern territory was*

*added when Malcolm's grandson Duncan inherited Strathclyde. By the time Macbeth claimed Duncan's crown in 1040, his kingdom's boundaries were close to those of present-day Scotland.*

# A Time in HISTORY



King James VI of Scotland also ruled England as James I. LOC

**1550**

William Shakespeare is baptized in Stratford-upon-Avon, probably two or three days after his birth (April 1554)  
Elizabeth I becomes Queen of England (November 1558)

**1560**

Shakespeare begins grammar school (1562)

Future King James I is born in Scotland (1566)

**1570**

**1580**

English sailor Sir Francis Drake is first man to sail around the world (1580)  
William Shakespeare marries Anne Hathaway (November 1582)

**1585**

Shakespeare disappears from public records; scholars refer to these as “the lost years” (1585–1592)  
Spanish Armada is defeated in its attempt to invade England (1588)  
Scottish witches confess to a plot to assassinate King James (1590)  
First recorded mention of Shakespeare as a London actor and playwright (1592)  
Plague closes all of London’s theaters; Shakespeare writes his two long poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1592–94)  
*Titus Andronicus*, probably written in 1589, becomes first Shakespeare play to be printed (1594)  
Shakespeare joins the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, a group of actors hired to present plays at Court (1594)  
King James publishes *Demonologie*, a book on witchcraft (1597)  
The Lord Chamberlain’s Men build the Globe Theatre; Shakespeare is part owner of the building (1599)  
Queen Elizabeth dies childless; King James VI of Scotland becomes King James I of England (1603)

**1605**

Gunpowder Plot to blow up Parliament is foiled (1605)

First recorded performance of *Macbeth* is given at Court for King James I and King Christian IV of Denmark (1606)

Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, written in 1598, are published for the first time (1609)

Shakespeare retires to Stratford (1610)

The Globe Theatre burns to the ground during a performance of *Henry VIII* (June 1613)

William Shakespeare dies at the age of 52 (April 1616)

Shakespeare’s wife Anne dies (August 1623)

The First Folio of Shakespeare’s plays is published (November 1623)

**1625**

# MACBETH: SCOTLAND'S LAST CELTIC KING

*Macbeth, who ruled from 1040 to 1057, was the last of Scotland's Gaelic-speaking kings. Like his Celtic ancestors, he was described as "fierce." If Macbeth had defeated Malcolm Canmore, today's relationship between Scotland and England might be very different.*

## THE CELTIC HERITAGE

Bronze Age burials in central Europe are history's first record of the Celts. In 1400 B.C., a people living near the Rhine began burying their dead in mounds called *tumuli*. Traces of the early Celts can also be found in place-names such as *briga* (hill), *dunum* (fortress), and *seno* (old). These names provide evidence that the Celts lived throughout central Europe, spreading into Italy, the British Isles, and even Asia Minor.

The historian Strabo (c. 63 B.C.—c. A.D. 24) gives one of the earliest written descriptions of the Celts. "The whole race, which is now called Gallic or Galatic, is madly fond of war, high-spirited and quick to battle, but otherwise straightforward and not of evil character....At any time or place and on whatever pretext you stir them up, you will have them ready to face danger, even if they have nothing on their side but their own strength and courage. On the other hand if won over by gentle persuasion they willingly devote their energies to useful pursuits and even take to a literary education...."

Strabo notes that "three classes of men [are] held in special honor: the Bards, the Vates, and the Druids. The Bards are singers and poets; the Vates [are] interpreters of [omens and natural events]; while the Druids...are [priests who are] believed to be the most just of men."

The Celts honored many deities. Some, such as Lug, are known only by name. Others, such as Mother Earth and the Three-Headed God, were worshipped under three aspects, or forms. Wells and rivers

had their own patron deities; rivers such as the Boyne and the Shannon were even considered goddesses. Animal deities included the bull god Tauros Trigaranus, the horse goddess Epona, and the boar god Moccus.

## THE ROMAN INVASION

The Celts probably brought their religion to Britain around 2000 B.C. Different tribes spread over the entire island. As many as 16 tribes are believed to have settled in Scotland. The Celts dominated all of Britain until Julius Caesar began a series of Roman invasions in 55 B.C. Some southern tribes were conquered by the invaders. But the Highland tribes took advantage of increasing Roman weakness to push the invaders southward. In 122 A.D., the harried Romans built Hadrian's Wall, a great stone barrier designed to contain the aggressive northern tribes. The wall, like all Roman attempts to subdue the Celts, ultimately failed. In the 5th century, the Celts were once again independent.

## THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

By this time, Christian missionaries such as St. Ninian and St. Columba had established monasteries on Scotland's eastern coast. There Celtic monks preserved their legends in beautiful illuminated manuscripts. They also offered free schooling to anyone who was willing to help with their work—fishing, farming, and copying manuscripts. Some of the students, inspired by St. Columba's conversion of the Picts of northern Scotland, became missionaries.

*continued*

## Macbeth: Scotland's Last Celtic King *continued*

Eventually, the Celtic Church consisted of a network of monasteries that preserved learning and spread the Christian faith. However, their isolation from the church's central government eventually led to conflict between the Celtic Church and the Roman Church.

### THE UNIFICATION OF SCOTLAND

In the 8th century, Viking raiders attacked coastal monasteries and villages. As the invaders penetrated into the interior of the country, some tribes were destroyed. Others found strength in unity. When Kenneth Mac Alpine became king of the Scots in 841, the neighboring Picts had suffered heavy losses from Danish pirates. Kenneth seized the opportunity to conquer them; in 844, he became the first king to rule both the Scots and the Picts.

Kenneth's successors continued to govern a unified kingdom. They tried to extend their borders to the southwest by conquering Edinburgh. But the most significant expansion of Scottish territory came when Malcolm II conquered the Angles living in Lothian in 1018. His attempts to extend his rule to the north met with less success, because many northern clan leaders resisted his authority.

### MACBETH'S PLACE IN HISTORY

Malcolm II, like most early Scottish kings, killed his predecessor. Malcolm was succeeded by his grandson, Duncan, whose rule lasted only six years. Duncan's right to the throne was disputed by many, including Macbeth. When Duncan's army marched north of the River Spey, he entered Moray lands. Macbeth, who was Earl of Moray, joined Thorfinn of Orkney in a fierce battle against Duncan. Macbeth killed Duncan near Elgin, then marched south to Scone where he was crowned.

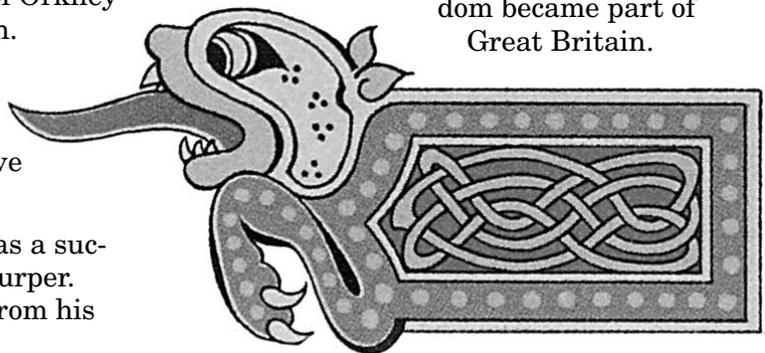
What impact did Macbeth have on Scottish history?

- His contemporaries saw him as a successful rebel rather than a usurper. Macbeth received the crown from his



peers, and his people prospered under his rule. As St. Berchan described his rule, "There was abundance in Alba east and west/Under the reign of the fierce Red One."

- Macbeth ended the conflict between the Scottish Church and the Pope. He and his wife generously supported monasteries, and Macbeth even made a pilgrimage to Rome.
- Macbeth honored Celtic tradition and resisted English influence. He was crowned at Scone and buried at Iona. His successor, who was educated in England and sought military alliances with the English, moved his palace and burial place to Dunfermline. Malcolm III replaced the old ways with the new Anglo-Norman culture. Eventually, his successors thought of themselves as more French than Celt, and his kingdom became part of Great Britain.



Ornament from a Celtic illuminated manuscript



# MACBETH'S CASTLE

*Did Macbeth wear a kilt when he fought Macduff? No one really knows for sure. Shakespeare simply had his actors dress like the nobles of his own time. He handled Dunsinane castle in much the same way, referring to its stone battlements. But Macbeth's actual stronghold was probably a fortress built of wood upon a mound.*

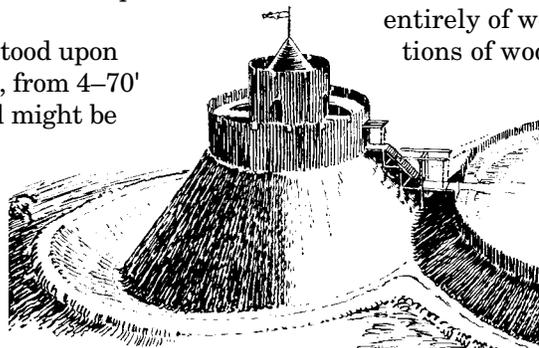
The earliest castles were not stately dwellings with stone towers and drawbridges, but fragile wooden structures that no longer stand. Over 1,000 of these wooden fortresses were built in the 11th and 12th centuries. Wood was cheap, and this type of castle could be built quickly.

These castles typically stood upon *mottes*, or earthen mounds, from 4–70' high. The top of the mound might be 17–35' across. The lord of the castle lived within a wooden fence at the top of the mound.

Earth for the mound came from the ditch that surrounded the motte. This ditch might

be 10–30' deep and up to 20' wide. A wooden bridge connected the motte to the *bailey*, or the area surrounded by the ditch. Fighting men could make camp within the bailey, which covered from 1 to 8 acres.

Most of these early castles were made entirely of wood. Some were combinations of wood and stone. Eventually, castles made entirely of stone replaced the motte-and-bailey castles. Even the best-built wooden fence lasted no more than 20 years, and attackers knew that wood was vulnerable to fire. Defenders came to prefer the lasting safety of 12–20' stone walls.



Typical motte-and-bailey castle



The Bayeux Tapestry chronicles William the Conqueror's invasion of England in 1066. The top panel shows William's troops building a castle at Hastings (left) and setting fire to an enemy castle (right). The lower panel shows the motte at Bayeux with its flying bridge.

# MOTIVES FOR MURDER



According to Shakespeare, Malcolm Canmore was the rightful heir to the Scottish throne. But according to history, Macbeth had the strongest right to succeed Duncan. M. C. Bradbrook explains how the Scottish throne was inherited in *“The Sources of Macbeth”* (Shakespeare Survey, 1951).

The ancient succession of Scotland had been by tanistry, that is, the monarchy was elective within a small group of kinsmen, the descendants of [Kenneth] Macalpine. In consequence, the king was almost as a matter of course assassinated by his successor, who chose the moment most favourable to himself to “mak siccar”<sup>1</sup> an inheritance that could never be regarded as assured. In spite of earlier attempts to make it hereditary, elective monarchy still persisted; by tanist law Macbeth had as good a claim [to the throne] as Duncan, and his wife a rather better one.<sup>2</sup> By nominating Malcolm as his heir, the historic Duncan committed a provocative act which Macbeth might not unreasonably resent.<sup>3</sup>

*The historical Lady Macbeth had several grievances against Duncan, as H. H. Furness Jr. suggests in **Macbeth: A New Variorum Edition**.*

[Duncan’s grandfather, Malcolm II, killed the prince of Ross, Macbeth’s father, in 1020.] Malcolm II also dethroned and moreover slew Lady Macbeth’s grandfather; on both sides of the house, therefore, there was a death to be avenged on the person of Duncan. But of the two, Lady Macbeth’s wrongs were far heavier than her husband’s, and might well fill her from crown to toe topfull of direst cruelty. Her name was Lady Gruoch and her first husband was Gilcomgain, the maormor of Moray, a prince of the highest rank and

next to the royal family; upon him Malcolm’s cruelty fastened, and he was burnt within his castle with fifty of his clan, and his young wife escaped by flight with her infant son Lulach. She naturally sought refuge in the neighboring county of Ross, then governed by Macbeth, and him she married. About a year after the death of her first husband, Lady Gruoch’s only brother was slain by the command of that same aged Malcolm II, whose peaceful death soon after...is not one of the least incredible traditions of that misty time.

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1040</b> | King Duncan marches north to put down Tofin’s rebellion; Macbeth kills Duncan in battle at Bothgowanan (1040)  |
| <b>1045</b> | Macbeth subdues Crinan’s revolt (1045)   |
| <b>1050</b> | Macbeth and his wife are the first Scottish rulers to make a large gift to the Roman Church (1050)   |
| <b>1054</b> | Siward’s English army invades Scotland and retreats after fierce battle at Dunsinane; Malcolm gains some territory between the Forth and Tweed Rivers (1054) |
| <b>1057</b> | Malcolm Canmore kills Macbeth in battle at Lumphanan (1057)  |
| <b>1058</b> | Malcolm becomes King of Scotland after defeating Lulach, who succeeded Macbeth as Maormor of Moray (1058)  |

<sup>1</sup> *mak siccar*: make secure

<sup>2</sup> Lady Macbeth’s father, Boite, was the son of King Kenneth III.

<sup>3</sup> Under tanist law, a king’s brothers or cousins had a stronger claim to the throne than his children. When a king died, a council of clan leaders would elect the best-qualified ruler from among his surviving relatives.

# THE MURDER OF KING DUFFE

*Shakespeare took many details of Duncan's death from an actual murder recorded in Holinshed's **Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Ireland** (1587). This excerpt describes the death of King Duffe (968–972), who was Lady Macbeth's great-grandfather.*

[No one knew why King Duffe kept losing weight until Donwald's soldiers found witches melting a wax image of the king over a fire. When the witches were executed, the king was immediately restored to health. He then led an army against rebels in the north of Scotland. He hanged many of the rebels, including some relatives of Donwald, the captain of Fores castle. Donwald had been loyal to Duffe; in fact, his soldiers had discovered the witches' plot against the king.]

Donwald...made earnest suite to the king to have begged [his relatives'] pardon; but having a plaine deniall, he conceived such an inward malice towards the king (though he shewed it not outwardlie at the first), that the same continued still boiling in his stomach, and ceased not, till through setting on<sup>1</sup> of his wife, and in revenge of such unthankfulnesse, hee found meanes to murther the king within the forsaid castell of Fores where he used to sojourne. For the king being in that countrie, was accustomed to lie most commonlie within the same castell, having a speciall trust in Donwald, as a man whom he never suspected.

...his wife perceiving [Donwald's grief at the death of his kinsmen]...bare no

lesse malice in her heart towards the king, [and] counselled him to make him away and shewed him the meanes whereby he might soonest accomplish it.

Donwald thus being the more kindled in wrath by the words of his wife, determined to follow her advice in the execution of so heinous an act....

Then Donwald, though he abhorred<sup>2</sup> the act greatlie in his heart, yet through instigation of his wife, hee called foure of his servants unto him (whom he had made privie to his wicked intent before, and framed to his purpose with large gifts) and now declaring unto them, after what sort they should worke the feat, they gladlie obeyed his instructions, & speedilie going about the murther, they enter the chamber (in which the king laie) a little before cocks crow, where they secretlie cut his throte as he lay sleeping, without any [sound] at all: and immediatlie by a posterne gate they carried forth the dead bodie into the fields, and throwing it upon an horse there provided readie for that purpose, they convey it unto a place, about two miles distant from the castell, where they [altered the course of a small river, buried the king in the river channel, and restored the river to its

*continued*

<sup>1</sup> *setting on*: encouragement

<sup>2</sup> *abhorred*: felt distaste or loathing

## The Murder of King Duffe *continued*

course]. This they did...for that the bodie should not be found, & by bleeding (when Donwald should be present) declare him to be guiltie of the murther. For such an opinion men have, that the dead corpse of any man being slaine, will bleed abundantlie if the murtherer be present.<sup>3</sup>

Donwald, about the time that the murther was in dooing, got him amongst them that kept the watch, and so continued in companie with them all the residue of the night. But in the morning when the noise was raised in the kings chamber...he with the watch ran thither...and finding cakes of blood in the bed, he forthwith slew the chamberleins as guiltie of that heinous murther, an then like a mad man running to and fro, he ransacked every corner within the castell.

...For the space of six months together, after this heinous murther thus committed, there appeered no sunne by day, nor moone by night in any part of the realme, but still was the skie covered with

continuall clouds, and sometimes such outrageous winds arose, with lightnings and tempests, that the people were in great feare of present<sup>4</sup> destruction.

Monstrous sights also that were seen within the Scottish kingdome that yeere<sup>5</sup> were these, horses in Louthian, being of singular beautie and swiftnesse, did eate their owne flesh, and would in no wise taste any other meate. In Angus there was a gentlewoman brought forth a child without eyes, nose, hand, or foot. There was a sparhawke also strangled by an owle.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare attributes this same fear to Macbeth (3.4.152–157).

<sup>4</sup> *present*: immediate

<sup>5</sup> *that yeere*: King Duffe was murdered in 972.

<sup>6</sup> See *Macbeth* 2.4.8–24. In *The Royal Play of Macbeth*, H. N. Paul suggests that these lines refer to Harpier, the familiar of the third witch. Paul believes that Shakespeare's repeated references to owls are intended "to keep the audience conscious of the presence of evil spirits who are working Macbeth's destruction."



Macbeth (Laurence Olivier) and his wife (Vivien Leigh) plot to kill the king in a 1950s production of the "Scottish play."



The story of Macbeth's meeting with the three witches was probably invented by the historian Hector Boece (c. 1465–1536). By Shakespeare's time, the story was accepted as historical fact.

Holinshed's  
*Chronicles* (1577)

# THE WEIRD SISTERS

*Shakespeare probably found the story of the witches' prophecies in Holinshed's **Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Ireland** (1587). This excerpt begins after Macbeth has rescued Duncan from a siege by defeating a Danish invasion force.*

**S**hortlie after happened a strange and uncouth woonder, which afterward was the cause of much trouble in the realme of Scotland.<sup>1</sup> [It happened that] as Makbeth and Banquho journied towards Fores, where the king [Duncan] then laie, they went sporting by the waie together without other company, save onlie themselves, passing thorough the woods and fields, when suddenlie in the midst of a laund, there met them three women in strange and wild apparell, resembling creatures of elder world, whome when they attentivelie beheld, woondering much at the sight, the first of them spake and said; All haile Makbeth, thane of

Glammis (for he had latelie entered into that dignitie and office by the death of his father Sinell). The second of them said; Haile Makbeth thane of Cawder. But the third said; All haile Makbeth that heereafter shalt be king of Scotland.

“Then Banquho; What manner of women (saith he) are you, that seeme so little favouraable unto me, whereas to my fellow heere, besides high offices, ye assigne also the kingdome, appointing

*continued*

<sup>1</sup> *Shortlie after...* Modern historians have found no record of King Sueno's supposed invasion of Denmark. They also suspect that Banquo and the three witches were invented by early historians of Scotland.

foorth nothing for me at all? Yes (saith the first of them) we promise greater benefits unto thee, than vunto him, for he shall reigne in deed, but with an unluckie end: neither shall he leave anie issue behind him to succeed in his place, where contrarilie thou in deed shalt not reigne at all, but of thee those shall be borne which shall govern the Scottish kingdome by long order of continuall descent. Herewith the foresaid women vanished immediatlie out of their sight. This was reputed at the first but some vaine fantastick illusion by Mackbeth and Banquho, insomuch that Banquho would call Mackbeth in jest, king of Scotland; and Mackbeth againe would call him in sport likewise, the father of manie kings. But afterwards the common opinion was, that these women were either the weird<sup>2</sup> sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie, or else some nymphs or feiries, indued with knowledge of prophesie by their necromanticall science,<sup>3</sup> because everie thing came to passe as they had spoken. For shortlie after, the thane of Cawder being condemned at Fores of treason against the king committed; his lands, livings, and offices were given of the kings liberality to Mackbeth.

The same night after, at supper, Banquho jested with him and said; Now Mackbeth thou hast obtained those things which the two former sisters prophesied, there remaineth onelie for thee to purchase that which the third said should come to passe. Whereupon Mackbeth revolving the thing in his mind, began even then to devise how he might attaine to the kindome; but yet he thought with himselfe that he must tarie a time, which should advance him thereto (by the divine providence) as it had come to passe in his former preferment.’...

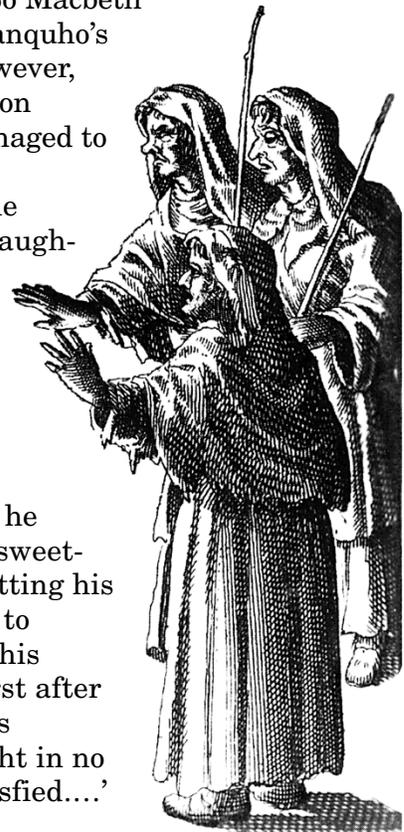
<sup>2</sup> *Weird* is related to the Anglo-Saxon word for fate, *wyrd*.

<sup>3</sup> *necromanticall science*: form of black magic supposedly used to call up the dead

‘The words of the three weird sisters also (of whom before ye have heard) greatlie encouraged him hereunto, but speciallie his wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she that was verie ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to beare the name of a queene. At length therefore, communicating his purposed intent with his trustie friends, amongst whome Banquho was the chiefest, upon confidence of their promised aid, he slue the king at Enuerns, or (as some say) at Botgosuane, in the sixth yeare of his reigne. Then hauing a companie about him of such as he had made privie to his enterprise, he caused himselfe to be proclaimed king, and forthwith went unto Scone, where (by common consent) he received the investure of the kingdome according to the accustomed maner.

[Macbeth ruled justly and well for ten years. But] the words also of the three weird sisters, could not out of his mind, which as they promised him the kingdome, so likewise did they promise it at the same time unto the posteritie of Banquho. [So Macbeth arranged Banquho’s murder. However, Banquho’s son Fleance managed to escape.]

...after the contrived slaughter of Banquho, nothing prospered with the foresaid Makbeth....  
...At length he found such sweetness by putting his nobles thus to death, that his earnest thirst after bloud in this behalfe might in no wise be satisfied....’





# Was Macbeth a Tyrant?

*Little is known of the real Macbeth's reign, but modern historians agree that he was a good king. However, histories written after Duncan's family regained power condemn Macbeth as an evil usurper. This biased account of Macbeth's reign comes from William Buchanan's **Rerum Scotticarum Historia** (1582).*

Edmund Kean plays Macbeth.

**M***ackbeth*, to confirm the ill-gotten Kingdom to himself, procured the favour of the Nobles by great Gifts....He determined to procure the favour of the [common people] by Justice and Equity....The publick Peace being thus restored, he applied his mind to make Laws, (a thing almost wholly neglected by former Kings) and indeed, he Enacted many good and useful ones....In a word, he so managed the Government for ten years, that, if he had not obtained it by violence, he might have been accounted inferior to none of the former Kings. But when he had so strengthened himself with the Aid and Favour of the Multitude, that he feared no Force to disturb him; the Murder of the King (as 'tis very probable) hurried his Mind into dangerous Precipices, so that he converted his Government, got by Treachery, into a cruel Tyranny.

He vented the first Shock of his Inhumanity upon Bancho, who was his Companion in the Kings Parricide. Upon that Murder, so cruelly and perfidiously committed, the Nobles were afraid of themselves, [and] mutual Fear and Hatred sprung up betwixt him and the Nobility.

*Mackbeth* reigned Seventeen Years. In the first Ten, he performed the Duty of a very good King; in the last Seven, he equalled the Cruelty of the worst of Tyrants.

*Historian Peter Berresford Ellis traces how the real Macbeth became a legendary monster in **MacBeth: High King of Scotland 1040–57 AD**.*

In 1040 MacBeth Mac Findlaech, Mormaer of Moray, overthrew the High King, Duncan Mac Crinan, who was slain in battle at Burghead in Moray. MacBeth was then acclaimed High King of Scotland and thus was created the basis of one of history's greatest myths—the murder of

*continued*

## Was Macbeth a Tyrant? *continued*

Duncan by MacBeth as set out in Shakespeare's play. Nothing could be further from the truth than Shakespeare's account. The overthrow of Duncan was the overthrow of an unpopular king who was intent upon pursuing an aggressive, expansionist war against England...—a war in which he soon showed himself to be...incompetent to retain the High Kingship.

Duncan was far from "the gracious king" of the play. Andrew of Wyntoun, in *The Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland*, tells us that Duncan was a vicious, bloodthirsty, selfish tyrant....Certainly, when Duncan was killed, no contemporary chronicler raised a voice in protest. The general consensus of opinion was that Scotland had changed its ruler for the better. It was not until three centuries later that historians began to use the terms "usurpation" and "murder."

...Hector Boece (c. 1465–1536) may be credited with many inventions to the MacBeth story and was the first Scottish historian who accused MacBeth of the slaughter of Macduff's wife and children. Boece also invented the character of Banquo, the poisoning of Duncan, the character of Lady MacBeth and the three weird sisters.

...Having established how the historical figure of MacBeth had become distorted by the sixteenth century, we can now ask what made Shakespeare choose this particular subject for a play? The principal reason for choosing a play with a Scottish theme was the union of the crowns of Scotland and England in the person of James Stewart. The Stewarts could trace their ancestry back to...[Duncan's son] Malcolm Canmore. They were hardly likely, therefore, to appreciate a flattering portrayal of the man their ancestor had overthrown. Boece's invention of Banquo as the founder of the Stewart line was probably an effort to win Stewart patronage, which certainly worked in his case. In using the mythical character of Banquo, Shakespeare, too, won the appreciation of the king.



A Scottish king is crowned at Scone, where the country's Celtic rulers traditionally assumed the throne.

Holinshed's *Chronicles*  
(1755)

# ONE DAY AT THE GLOBE

*Plays seemed immoral to many people in Shakespeare's time. The Bard's other problems included a shortage of actors and rowdy audiences.*



Pitkin Pictorials, London

Playgoers crossed the Thames River and walked by captive bears to see Shakespeare's plays at the Globe Theatre.

In Shakespeare's London, a day's entertainment often began with a favorite amusement, bear-baiting. A bear would be captured and chained to a stake inside a pit. A pack of dogs would be released, and they would attack the bear. Spectators placed bets on who would die first. Some bears, such as "old Henry Hunks," became crowd favorites. Many bear pits had to keep up to 120 dogs at a time, just to ensure enough healthy dogs for the day's "sport." The bear pits only cost a penny, so they were very popular with the working-class Londoners.

After the bear-baiting was over, another penny purchased admission to a play. Each theater had its own company of actors. These actors were often supported by a nobleman or a member of the royal family. For example, Shakespeare was a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men.

The Lord Chamberlain arranged entertainment for the Queen and her court.

When he wasn't at Court, Shakespeare was busy as part owner of the Globe Theatre. He wrote plays, hired actors, and paid the bills. Since the Globe presented a new play every three weeks, Shakespeare and his actors had little time to rehearse or polish their productions. To complicate matters even more, most actors played more than one part in a play. One troupe used only seven members to play 18 roles.

In order to overcome these problems, actors and managers had to improvise. If one cast member was sick, another took over. It didn't matter if the character was young or old, male or female. Makeup could make anyone look old, and young boys played all the female roles. Most acting companies had three or four young

*continued*

boys who were practically raised in the theater. They started acting as early as age seven and played female roles until they began shaving. Shakespeare had a favorite boy actor (probably named John Rice) who played Juliet, Cleopatra, and Lady Macbeth.<sup>1</sup> Actresses would not become part of the English theater for another 50 years.

Most plays were performed in the afternoon. That seems strange to us, but Elizabethan playgoers didn't have 9-to-5 jobs. One writer noted, "For whereas the afternoon being the idlest time of the day, wherein men who are their own masters (such as Gentlemen of the Court and the number of Captains and Soldiers about London) do wholly bestow themselves upon pleasure... either into gaming, following of harlots, drinking, or seeing a play, is it not better...they should betake themselves to the least [of these evils] which is plays?"

The audience crowded into the theater at about 2 P.M. The cheapest seats weren't seats at all, but standing room in front of the stage.

This area was occupied by "groundlings" or "penny knaves,"

who could be more trouble to the actors than they were worth. If the play was boring, people would throw rotten eggs or vegetables. They talked loudly to their friends, played cards, and even picked fights with each other. One bad performance could cause a riot. One theater

was set on fire by audience members who didn't like the play.

The stage was open to the sky, so if it rained or snowed, the actors were miserable. The stage was rather bare, with only a few pieces of furniture. Some theaters did add a few special effects. For example, Shakespeare had trapdoors installed at the Globe Theatre. He used them when he needed a ghost to rise up on the stage. Blood was also a big attraction at most theaters. During battle and murder scenes, actors hid "bags" of pig's

blood and guts under their stage doublets. When pierced with a sword, the bags spilled out over the stage and produced a realistic gory effect.

In addition to designing sets and finding actors, managers had to deal with the unexpected. In 1575, a group of players put on a pageant for Queen Elizabeth I.

Unfortunately, one of the actors had drunk too much ale. In the middle of his performance, he pulled off his mask and shouted, "No Greek God am I, your Grace!

Honest Harry Goldingham, that's me!" Luckily, Queen

Elizabeth thought it was a great joke.

Despite all these obstacles, theater became widely popular. By the time Shakespeare died in 1616, there were more than 30 theaters in and around London. Even today, English theaters are considered some of the best in the world.



Players on the Globe's apron stage were surrounded by the audience on three sides.

The Folger Shakespeare Library

<sup>1</sup> *Macbeth* was written during a time when Shakespeare's company had only three boy actors. This shortage of actors probably explains why no child of Lady Macbeth's is seen on stage.

# MACBETH AT THE GLOBE

*Dr. Simon Forman attended many of Shakespeare's plays during the poet's lifetime. His **Booke of Plaies and Notes thereof** describes a performance of **Macbeth** given on April 20, 1611, which might have been during the play's first season.*

...In Mackbeth at the glob, 1610, the 20 of Aprill, ther was to be obserued, firste, howe Mackbeth and Bancko, 2 noble men of Scotland, Ridinge thorowe a wod, ther stode before them 3 women feiries or Nimphes, And saluted Mackbeth, sayinge, 3 tymes unto him, haille mackbeth, King of Codon; for thou shalt be a kinge, but shalt beget No kinge, &c. then said Bancko, what all to mackbeth And nothing to me. Yes, said the nimphes, haille to thee Bancko, thou shalt beget kinges, yet be no kinge. And so the departed & cam to the courte of Scotland to Dunkin king of Scotos, and it was in the dais of Edward the Confessor. And Dunkin bad them both kindly wellcome, And made Mackbeth forth with Prince of Northumberland, and sent him hom to his own castell, and appointed mackbeth to provide for him, for he wold Sup with him the next dai at night, & did soe. And mackebeth contrived to kill Dunkin, & thorowe the persuasion of his wife did that night Murder the kinge in his own castell, beinge his gieste. And ther were many prodigies seen that night & the dai before. And when Mack Beth had murdred the kinge, the blod on his handes could not be washed of by any means, nor from his wives handes which handled the bloddi daggers in hiding them. By which means they became both much amazed & affronted. the murder being knowen. Dunkins

2 sonnns fled, the on to England, the [other to] Walles, to save them selves. They beinge fled, they were supposed guilty of the murder of their father, which was nothinge so. Then was Mackbeth crowned kinge, and then he for feare of Banko, his old companion, that he should beget kinges but be no kinge him selfe, he contrived the death of Banko, and caused him to be Murdered on the way as he Rode. The next night, being at supper with his noble men whom he had bid to a feaste to the which also Banco should have com, he began to speak of Noble Banco, and to wish that he were ther. And as he thus did, standing up to drincke a Carouse to him, the ghoste of Banco came and sate down in his cheier be-hind him. And he turning A-bout to sit down Again sawe the goste of banco, which fronted him so, that he fell in-to a great passion of fear and fury, Utteringe many wordes about his murder, by which, when they hard that Banco was Murdered they Suspected Mackbet.

Then Mack Dove fled to England to the kinges sonn, And soe they Raised and Army, And cam into scotland, and at dunston Anyse overthru Mackbet. In the mean tyme whille macdouee was in England, Mackbet slewe Mackdoues wife & children, and after the battelle mackdoue slewe mackbet.

'Observe Also howe mackbetes quen did Rise in the night, in the night in her slepe, & walke and talked and confessed all & the doctor noted her wordes.'

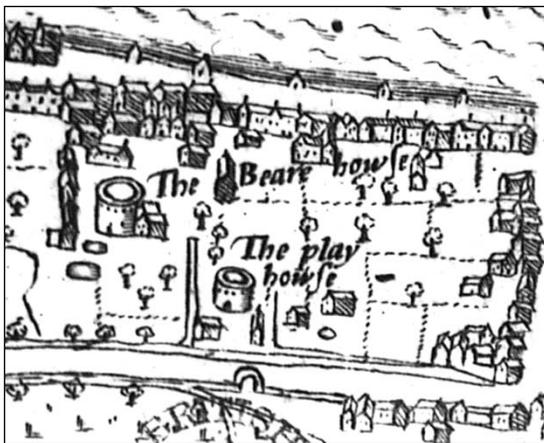
## Shakespearean Spelling

Spelling wasn't as important to the Elizabethans as it is to us. Dictionaries hadn't been invented, and most writers, including Shakespeare, made up words when they couldn't find one they liked.

Writers spelled his name

Sakspere  
Shakespert  
Schakosper  
Shexsper  
Saxpere  
Sashpierre  
Chacsper  
Sadspere  
Shakbye  
Shaxbee  
Shakeschafte  
Shakstaff

In fact, Shakespeare's grandfather spelled his own name as Shakyspere.



Early theaters were located south of the Thames River near the bear garden. (1593)

# SHAKESPEARE'S LONDON

About half a million people lived in Shakespeare's London. So many people had come to London that poor families were "heaped up together, and in a sort smothered with many families...in one small house or tenement." The city's narrow streets were often clogged with carriages and refuse.

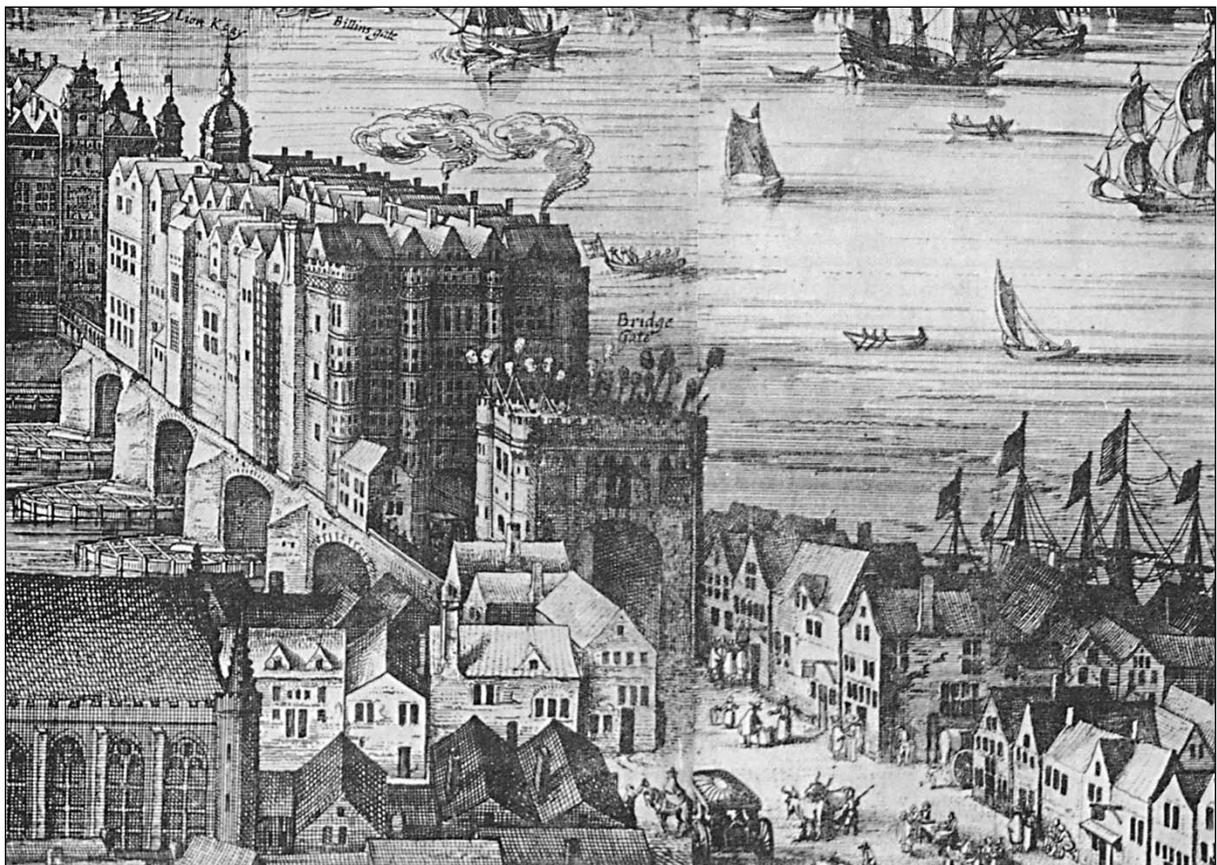
London Bridge was as congested as the city itself. Several stories of shops and houses were built above the arches that spanned the River Thames, as shown in the detail of a 1620 map below. Also visible are traitors' heads displayed on pikes.

Thousands of fishermen worked and even lived on the Thames (above right). The river also provided jobs for the watermen who ferried people across the Thames. Their services were popular because London Bridge was the



Visser's Map of London (1620)

only bridge over the Thames until 1750. The wooden buildings on top of the Bridge were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666.



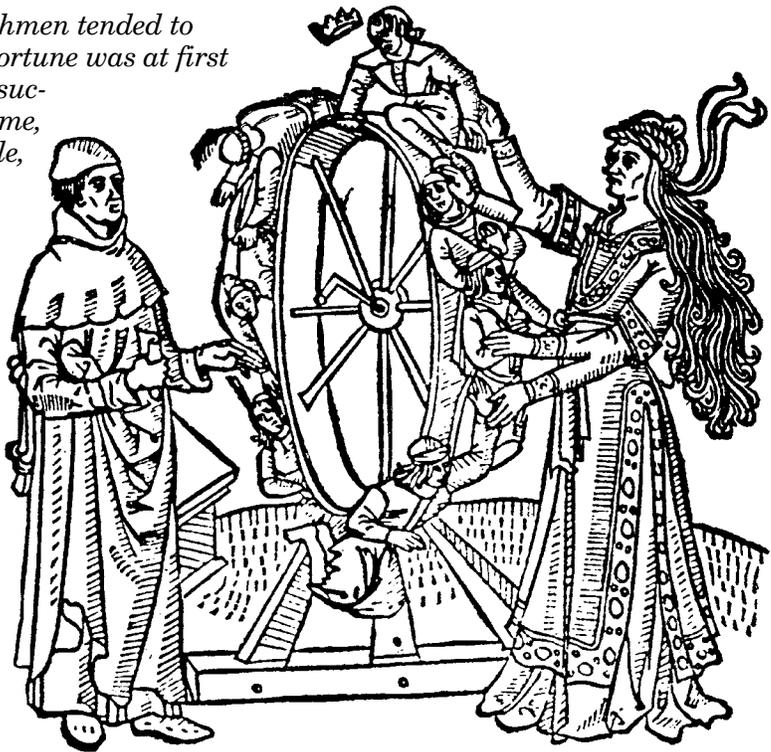
Visser's Map of London (1620)

# FORTUNE'S WHEEL

Ancient Romans and Elizabethan Englishmen tended to blame Dame Fortune for their troubles. Fortune was at first thought of as a goddess who could bring success or cause disaster. In Shakespeare's time, Fortune was still considered unpredictable, but her workings were often seen as an instrument of God's will.

Fortune's wheel was a popular image in medieval and Renaissance times. The wheel was a reminder that good luck is never permanent. As Shakespeare wrote in *Henry V*: "Fortune is painted blind, with a muffler afore her eyes, to signify to you that Fortune is blind; and she is painted also with a wheel, to signify to you...that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and variation; and her foot, look you, is fixed upon a spherical stone, which rolls, and rolls, and rolls.... Fortune is an excellent moral."

*The Fall of Princes* (1494)



Fortune was one of the most popular goddesses in ancient Rome. Her name appears to have come from the words *fors* (chance or luck) and *fero* (I bring). But, as the 1st-century historian Pliny points out, people considered this goddess "wayward, inconstant, fickle in her favours and favouring the unworthy."

Fortune's influence spread with the Roman Empire. Temples to her were built in ancient Rome, eastern France, and northern England. Pliny, however, was not one of her devotees. He complained that "we are so much at the mercy of chance that Chance herself, by whom God is proved uncertain, takes the place of God."

Later Christian writers agreed with Pliny. They tried to reconcile the idea of Fortune or luck with the idea of divine providence. One of the most influential was the Italian author Boccaccio, who wrote a history of Fortune. His *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (c. 1355) describes how Biblical and classical heroes were brought low by simple misfortune or by their sins, such as pride.

So many other works described the rise and fall of famous people that a new type

of literature, the *de casibus* tragedy, became popular. One of the most famous examples in Shakespeare's time was *The Mirror for Magistrates*. This popular book was intended to be a "mirror" in which readers could see "the slyppery deceytes of the wavering lady, and the due reward of all kinde of vices."

Shakespeare, like many writers of his time, found that "Fortune is an excellent moral." His English and Roman history plays show Fortune's workings in the past. His audience watched these historical examples to see how they themselves should live and govern. They saw "histories [as] the schole of wisdom, to fashion mens understanding...by marking diligently by what lawes, maners and discipline, Empires, Kingdomes and dominions, have in old time bene established and afterward maintayned and increased: or contraiwise changed, diminished, and overthrown."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This quotation is from Amyot's preface to *Plutarch's Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans*. North's translation of Amyot's work was Shakespeare's most important source for *Julius Caesar*.

# A SCOTTISH WITCH

*Belief in witchcraft was widespread during Shakespeare's time. Laws against using spells to harm another person were passed in 1604, shortly before the play was written. Shakespeare's patron, King James I, wrote a book called **Demonologie** and personally investigated several cases of suspected witchcraft. The king's interest in the subject may have come from a plot against his life in 1591. In this extract from **Newes from Scotland**, Agnes Sampson confesses the spells she worked against the king as he sailed home from Denmark.*

Agnes Sampson...by the devil's persuasion...confessed that she took a black toad, and did hang the same up by the heels three days, and collected and gathered the venom as it dropped and fell from it in an oyster shell, and kept the same venom close covered, [saying] that if she had obtained any one piece of linen cloth which the King had worn and fouled, she had bewitched him to death, and put him to such extraordinary pains, as if he had been lying upon sharp thorns and ends of needles. Moreover she confessed, that at the time when his Majesty was in Denmark, she being accompanied by the parties before specially named, took a cat and christened it, and afterwards bound to each part of that cat, the chiefest part of a dead man, and several joints of his body: and that in the night following, the said cat was conveyed into the midst of the sea by all these witches, sailing in their riddle or sieves, as is aforesaid, and so left the said cat right before the town of Leith in Scotland. This done, there did arise such a tempest in the sea,

as a greater hath not been seen; which tempest was the cause of the perishing of a boat or vessel coming from the town of Brunt Island to the town of Leith, wherein was sundry jewels and rich gifts, which should have been presented to the now Queen of Scotland, at her Majesty's coming to Leith. Again, it is confessed, that the said christened cat was the cause that the King's Majesty's ship, at his coming forth of Denmark, had a contrary wind to the rest of his ships then being in his company; which thing was most strange and true, as the King's Majesty acknowledge, for when the rest of the ships had a fair and good wind, then was the wind contrary and altogether against his Majesty; and further, the said witch declared, that his Majesty had never come safely from the sea, if his faith had not prevailed above their intentions.

King James was more skeptical of witchcraft than many of his contemporaries. When he first heard the confession of Sampson and her accomplices, he called them "all extreme liars." After Sampson recounted his conversation with Queen Anne on their wedding night, the king was more inclined to believe her story.

*Newes from Scotland* (1590)



# VAULTING AMBITION



*In Shakespeare's time, everyone was required to listen to sermons on "Obedience" and "Disobedience and Rebellion," which were read once a year. These extracts from the **Homilies of the English Church** show how Shakespeare's contemporaries would have judged Macbeth.*

**K**ings, Queens, and other Princes...are ordained of God, and [are] to be obeyed, and honoured of their subjects: such subjects as are disobedient or rebellious against their Princes, disobey God and procure their own damnation.

**T**ake away Kings, Princes, Rulers, Magistrates, Judges, and such estates of Gods order, no man shall ride or go by the high way unrobbed, no man shall sleep in his own house or bed unkilld, no man shall keep his wife, children and possession in quietness, all things shall be common, and there must needs follow all mischief, and utter destruction both of souls, bodies, goods and Common-wealths.

**W**hen the Subjects unnaturally do rebel against their Prince, [the effect of their disobedience is] to bring in all trouble, sorrow, disquietness of minds, and bodies,...to turn all good order upside down, to bring all good laws in contempt,...and to set...all vicious, and wicked men at liberty to work their wicked wills.

**T**here are two chief causes of Rebellion: [ambition and ignorance]. So are there specially two sorts of men in whom these vices do reign, by whom the Devil, the authour of all evil, doth chiefly stir up all disobedience, and Rebellion.

The restless ambitious, having once determined by one means or other to achieve to their intended purpose, when they cannot by lawful, and peaceable means clime so high as they do desire, they attempt the same by force, and violence: wherein when they cannot prevail against the ordinary authority, and power of lawful

Princes, and Governours themselves alone, they do seek the aid, and help of the ignorant multitude, abusing them to their wicked purpose.

**W**here most Rebellions and Rebels be, there is the express similitude of Hell, and the Rebels themselves are the very figures of fiends and devils, and their Captain the ungracious pattern of Lucifer, and Sathan, the prince of darkness; of whose Rebellion as they be followers, so shall they be of his damnation in hell undoubtedly be partakers.



# BAITING THE BEAR

*As Macbeth prepares to defend his castle, he compares himself to a bear “tied to a stake...who must fight the course.” Those who heard these lines at the Globe might have heard fights from a nearby bear garden at the same time. The popular sport of bear-baiting is described in Paul Hentzner’s **Travels in England** (1598).*

Without the city are some theatres, where English actors represent almost every day comedies and tragedies to very numerous audiences; these are concluded with variety of dances, accompanied by excellent music and the excessive applause of those that are present. Not far from one of these theatres, which are all built of wood, lies the royal barge, close to the river Thames. It has two splendid cabins, beautifully ornamented with glass windows, painting and gilding; it is kept upon dry ground, and sheltered from the weather.

There is still another place, built in the form of a theatre, which serves for the baiting of bears and bulls. They are fastened behind, and then worried by those great English dogs and mastiffs, but not without great risk to the dogs from the teeth of the one and the horns of the other; and it sometimes happens that they are killed upon the spot. Fresh ones are immediately supplied in the places of those that are wounded or tired. To this entertainment there often follows that of whipping a blinded bear, which is performed by five or six men, standing in a circle with whips, which they exercise upon him without any mercy. Although he cannot escape from them



Dogs attack a bear to entertain crowds at an Elizabethan bear garden.

because of his chain, he nevertheless defends himself, vigorously throwing down all who come within his reach and are not active enough to get out of it, and tearing the whips out of their hands and breaking them. At these spectacles and everywhere else, the English are constantly smoking the Nicotian weed which in America is called Tobaca—others call it Pætum—and generally in this manner; they have pipes on purpose made of clay, into the farther end of which they put the herb, so dry that it may be rubbed into powder, and lighting it, they draw smoke into their mouths, which they puff out again through their nostrils, like funnels, along with it, plenty of phlegm and defluxion from the head. In these theatres, fruits, such as apples, pears and nuts, according to the season, are carried about to be sold, as well as wine and ale.



# THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

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The conspirators who plotted to blow up Parliament are identified in this contemporary Dutch engraving.

*Those who believe that **Macbeth** was written in 1606 argue that the play contains many references to a plot to blow up the English Parliament. The conspiracy was discovered when a warning letter was sent to Lord Monteagle. However, officials allowed the plot to proceed until it could be “discovered” by King James. This account of the plot is from a letter by the Earl of Salisbury to Sir Charles Cornwallis dated November 9, 1605.*

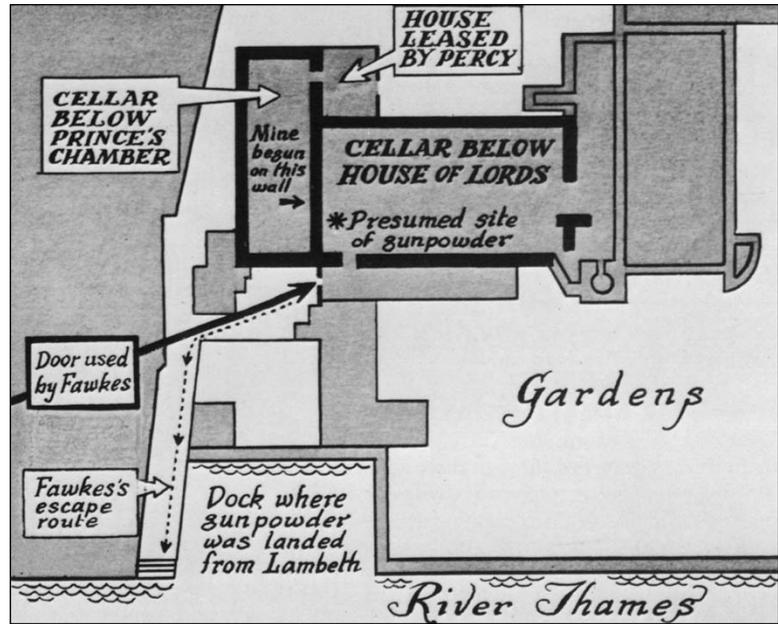
**I**t hath pleased Almighty God out of his singular Goodness, to bring to light the most cruel and detestable Conspiracy against the Person of his Majestie and the whole State of this Realme that ever was conceived by the Hart of Man, at any time or in any Place whatsoever. By the Practise there was intended not only the Exterpation of the King’s Majestie and his royal Issue, but the whole Subversion and Downfall of this Estate; the Plott being to take away at one instant the King, Queen, Prince, Councill, Nobillitie, Clergie, Judges, and the principall Gentlemen of the Realme, as they should have been altogether

assembled in the Parliament-House in *Westminster* the 5th of *November* being *Tuesday*. The Meanes how to have compassed so great an Acte, was not to be performed by Strength of Men, or outward Violence, but by a secret Conveyance of a great Quantitie of Gunpowder in a Vault under the Upper House of Parliament, and soe to have blowne up all at a Clapp, if God out of his Mercie and just Revenge against so great an Abomination had not destinated it to be discovered, though very miraculously, even some twelve Houres before the Matter should have been put in Execution....

*continued*

**The Gunpowder Plot** *continued*

Since the Writing of this Letter we have assured News that those Traytors are overthrowne by the Sherriff of *Worcestershire*, after they had betaken themselves for their Safetie in a Retreat to the House of *Stephen Littleton* in *Staffordshire*. The House was fired by the Sherriff; at the issuing forth *Catesby* was slaine, *Percy* sore hurt, *Graunte* and *Wrighte* burned in their Faces with Gun-powder; the rest are either taken or slaine. *Rookewood* and *Digby* are taken.

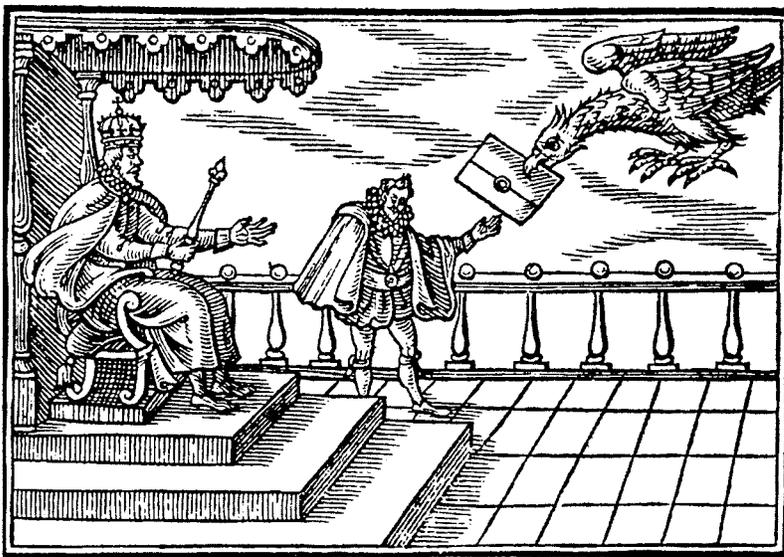


Guy Fawkes' role in the Gunpowder Plot was discovered before he could use his escape plan.

*This letter warning of the conspiracy to blow up Parliament may have been the first bomb threat in history. The letter was delivered to Lord Montague on October 26, 1605. On November 5, Guy Fawkes planned to detonate the gunpowder he had hidden in the cellars of Parliament House. Historians suspect that government officials knew of the plot but allowed the King to "discover" it.*

My lord out of the love i beare to some of your friends i have a caer of your preservation therefor i would advyse youe as youe tender yourerlyf to devyse some excuse to shift your attendance at this parliament for god and man hathe concurred to punishe the wickedness of the tyme and think not slightlye of this

advertisement but retyere your self into your contee whence youe maye expect the event in safti for thowghe there be no apparence of anni stir yet I saye they shall receyve a terrible blowe this parliament and yeat they shall not seie who hurts them this coucel is not to be contemned because it maye do youe good and can do youe no harme for the dangere is passed as soon as youe have burnt this letter and I hope god will give youe the grace to mak good use of it to whose holy proteccion i commend youe.



The gallant *Eagle*, soaring vp on high :  
 Beares in his beake, *Treasons* discouery.  
 MOUNT, noble *EAGLE*, with thy happy prey,  
 And thy rich *Prize* to th' King with speed conuay.

Mischeefes Mystery (1617)

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# THE WITCH

*Macbeth* was the first English play to actually show witches' rituals on the stage. Several other dramatists followed Shakespeare's lead, and witches became a popular subject for plays. This excerpt is from Thomas Middleton's tragicomedy *The Witch*, which was probably written about 1613.

*Hecate.* Stir, stir about, whilst I begin the charm.  
Black spirits and white, red spirits and gray,  
Mingle, mingle, mingle, you that mingle may!  
Titty, Tiffin,  
Keep it stiff in;  
Firedrake, Puckey,  
Make it lucky;  
Lizard, Robin,  
You must bob in.

Round, around, around, about, about!  
All ill come running in, all good keep out!

*First Witch.* Here's the blood of a bat.

*Hec.* Put in that, O, put in that!

*Sec. Witch.* Here's libbard's-bane.

*Hec.* Put in again!

*First Witch.* The juice of a toad, the oil of adder.

*Sec. Witch.* Those will make the younker<sup>1</sup> madder.

*Hec.* Put in—there's all—and rid the stench.

*Fire.* Nay, here's three ounces of the red-hair'd wench.

*All the witches.* Round, around, around, about, about!

All ill come running in, all good keep out!

*Hec.* So, so, enough: into the vessel with it.

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# THE USURPER

*Shakespeare's portrait of Macbeth is based on the histories of England and Scotland that were popular in his time. This typical view of Macbeth is from William Warner's A Continuance of Albions England (1606).*

One *Makebeth*, who had traitrously his sometimes Sovereigne slaine,  
And like a Monster not a Man usurpt in *Scotland* raigne,  
Whose guiltie Conscience did itselfe so feelingly accuse,  
As nothing not applide by him against himselfe he vewes,  
No whispring but of him, gainst him all weapons feares he borne,  
All beings jointly to revenge his Murthers thinks he sworne,  
Wherefore (for such are ever such in selfe-tormenting mind)  
But to proceed in bloud he thought no safetie to find.

<sup>1</sup> *younker*: youngster

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# MEDEA

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*The blood-filled tragedies of the Roman playwright Seneca were often imitated in Shakespeare's time. Some scholars believe that Shakespeare's *Lady Macbeth* is partially based on Seneca's **Medea**.*

*Medea is mythology's worst mother. She has borne two children by Jason, who won the Golden Fleece with the help of her magic. Now Jason is to wed Creusa, and Medea is to go into exile. In act 4, Medea chants the prayer of vengeance excerpted below. She then kills her two sons before their father's eyes and flees to Athens.*



Library of Congress

Venom from the snake-haired Medusa is part of Medea's poisonous brew.

Silent hordes and gods of death, I call upon you all in prayer...  
Hecate,<sup>1</sup> star of night, I call you to my ritual. Come now,  
you have three faces you can threaten vengeance with;  
put on your worst.

...Vulcan<sup>2</sup> gave me fire hidden in powdery sulphur.  
Phaethon,<sup>3</sup> like me, kindled from fire, supplied  
bolts of living flame. And I have gifts  
from medial parts of dragon Chimaera,<sup>4</sup>  
flames ripped from seared throat of fire-breathing bull,  
mixed with Medusa's gall.<sup>5</sup> These I control;  
they work my evil will in total silence.

Hecate, stiffen my poison's potency,  
and keep its seminal fire deep buried in  
my gifts. They must deceive the eye and trick  
the touch. The heat must surge into her breast,  
come into veins, her limbs must melt,  
her bones must smoke, the new bride's hair must burn  
outshining the torches of her wedding night.

<sup>1</sup> *Hecate*: classical goddess of magic and witchcraft, whose three faces are Virgin, Mother, and Crone

<sup>2</sup> *Vulcan*: god of fire and metalworking. The Romans believed his forge was inside a volcano, Mount Aetna.

<sup>3</sup> *Phaethon*: son of Apollo, the sun god. Phaethon insisted on driving his father's chariot, which carried the sun across the sky. He could not control the horses, so Zeus

killed him with a thunderbolt before fire consumed both heaven and earth.

<sup>4</sup> *Chimaera*: fire-breathing monster with the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a snake

<sup>5</sup> *Medusa's gall*: poison from the monster Medusa, who had snakes for hair and whose glance could turn humans into stone

# SINEAD CUSACK ON PORTRAYING LADY MACBETH

*Shakespearean actress Sinead Cusack describes how she prepared to play the role of Lady Macbeth. Her interview with Carol Rutter is excerpted from **Clamorous Voices: Shakespeare's Women Today.***

**S**hakespeare used to frighten the wits out of me because I was too reverent about it; I didn't smile because I thought that would be wrong. I approached each speech as a "speech" and I looked at the syntax and the verbal shapes, and as a result I was one of the

most boring Shakespearean actors in the world.

And then I had a Saul on the road to Damascus number<sup>1</sup> in the BBC TV production of *Twelfth Night*. I was playing Olivia, doing a scene with Viola, and I began to *talk*, and suddenly I thought, 'She's real, this person is real', and I started to smile and cough and scratch my ear and do normal things. Since then I've never dared approach a text in the analytical way I used to, in case I slip back. Now I only look for a woman.

**Early in the 1986 Stratford season, Sinead Cusack told the director of *Macbeth*, Adrian Noble, that some elements in the role of Lady Macbeth would be problematic for her.**

He said, 'What do you mean?' and I said, 'I've just given birth! I have another baby. I'm going to find that area of her very difficult...'. He told me not to worry, but I was very worried, because every time I came to that line

*continued*



Lady Macbeth sleepwalks in this engraving from Hammer's 1743–44 edition of the play.

The Folger  
Shakespeare  
Library

<sup>1</sup> *Saul on the road to Damascus*: In the Acts of the Apostles, Saul has a powerful vision of Jesus Christ that knocks him off his horse. Afterward, he no longer persecutes Christians, but dedicates his life to converting people to Christianity.

'I have given suck, and know/How tender 'tis...'—I can't say it even now—I thought, 'I'm never going to be able to speak that line. Not while I'm nursing my own baby.'

***...Sinead had strong images of Lady Macbeth and her relationship with Macbeth.***

I wanted people to see someone who had warmth and fecundity; I liked the idea of her hair being fair. I didn't see her as a very clever woman—she is a grasper of opportunity.

She knows she has Macbeth in thrall and she can make him do anything. And yet she has no knowledge of the hell that she's letting loose in his mind and his life, and what he will become. Never for a second does she have a notion of that.

***In fact, she had begun imagining her Lady Macbeth when she was still a teenager.***

From about the age of fifteen, when I first read the play. I wanted to play her very young because I had a sense of a Lady Macbeth I had never seen. I wanted her to be young, very beautiful, and to have a sort of amorality, a complete ignorance of right and wrong, the sort of blinkered vision of a child who grabs what it wants with no thought of the consequence. I wanted a woman in white.

...I told Adrian about this vision of mine and we thought how we might bring an element of it to bear. One of the things I was adamant about right from the beginning was that the first view you would have of the Macbeths would be of a successful, blessed couple. I wanted the audience to be drawn to them right from

Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh, who were married in real life, played Macbeth and Lady Macbeth on the London stage.

the beginning of the play. Macbeth—a poet, warrior, philosopher, and extraordinary man of vision, adored by everyone around him. They all speak of him in hushed tones. Married to this beautiful woman. Macbeth and his wife are the golden couple—like the Kennedys—who have everything.

...Lady Macbeth knows that she loves Macbeth. She knows that she has tenderness and vulnerability where he is concerned. She knows that that is her weakness, that she is capable of love. Love of a child, love of a man. So now, when all the signs are saying, 'The time is right,' and pointing her the way she must urge him to go, she says, 'I can't do it. I've got to get help from outside. I can't do it on my own because my love will let me be weakened into letting him fail.' She invokes the spirits to make her strong. Not 'unsex me'—make me an un-woman, a pseudo-man; but 'unsex me'—make me invulnerable to love. And then Macbeth walks on stage and she plays the old games.



# Suggested Reading and Viewing List

*If you enjoyed reading **Macbeth**, you may want to explore some other works about ambition and Shakespeare's life and times. The following list offers some suggestions for further reading and viewing.*

## Fiction and Short Works

***The Beggar Queen*** by Lloyd Alexander. Chaos reigns in the kingdom of Marianstat as Duke Conrad plans to overthrow the government and steal the throne of Queen Mickle. Dell, 1984. [RL 5 IL 5–10]

***Catherine, Called Birdy*** by Karen Cushman. In the year 1290, a spirited 14-year-old girl keeps a diary of her life in an English manor and the suitors who ask for her hand in marriage. A fascinating glimpse into life in medieval times. HarperCollins, 1994. [RL 6 IL 7+]

***Doctor Faustus*** by Christopher Marlowe. Powerful drama of a man who sells his soul to the Devil. Signet, 1969. [RL 5 IL 8+]

***In the Hall of the Dragon King*** by Stephen Lawhead. The mighty king Eskevar has been imprisoned by a craven usurper. It's up to a young priest to save his king in this first volume of a fantasy trilogy. Avon, 1982. [RL 7 IL 8+]

"The Macbeth Murder Mystery" from ***My World and Welcome to It*** by James Thurber. A woman who doesn't like Shakespeare's solution to Duncan's murder uses clues from the play to create her own version of events. HBJ, 1969. [RL 7 IL 7+]

***Medea*** by Euripides. Medea's love turns to hatred when she is betrayed by her ambitious husband. Perfection Learning, 1985. [RL 7 IL 10+]

***A Murder for Her Majesty*** by Beth Hilgartner. Agents are trying to assassinate Queen Elizabeth I. Only Alice Tuckfield knows who they are. In order to stay alive, she hides in Yorkshire Cathedral by disguising herself as a choirboy. Houghton Mifflin, 1986. [RL 6 IL 5–10]

***A Parcel of Patterns*** by Jill Paton Walsh. In 1665, a parcel of dress patterns spreads the plague to a small English village. Sixteen-year-old Mall is forced to live through the horror of mass illness and separation from her love. Farrar, 1983. [RL 7 IL 7–12]

***The Poems*** by William Shakespeare. This collection includes all of his sonnets, as well as the long poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. Bantam, 1988. [RL 9 IL 9-12]

## Nonfiction

"Afterword" in ***The Witchcraft of Salem Village*** by Shirley Jackson. The author examines King James I's belief in, and fight against, witches and witchcraft. Random, 1987. [RL 9 IL 6+]

***Elizabethan England: Living Through History*** by Geoffrey Regan. Fifteen brief biographies of such famous Elizabethans as Christopher Marlowe, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Mary, Queen of Scots. Includes illustrations, maps, and a glossary. Batsford, 1990. [RL 7 IL 7+]

*continued*

## Suggested Reading and Viewing List *continued*

**James I** edited by Chelsea House. A lively biography of England's first Scottish king, illustrated with period art and artifacts. Chelsea House, 1990. [RL 7 IL 7+]

**Readings on the Tragedies of William Shakespeare** edited by Clarice Swisher. Twenty-four critical essays explore Shakespeare's universal appeal, his portrayal of women characters, and aspects of individual plays. Greenhaven, 1996. [RL varies IL 9+]

**Shakespeare A to Z: The Essential Reference to His Plays, His Poems, His Life and Times, and More** by Charles Boyce. An informative and easy-to-use reference book that includes more than 3,000 entries, covering each play and poem, every character, theater terms, and more. Dell, 1990. [RL 9 IL 9+]

**Shakespeare Alive!** by Joseph Papp and Elizabeth Kirkland. Rediscover the world of Shakespeare in this captivating book that describes his world and takes the reader along with a touring company of actors. Bantam, 1988. [RL 8 IL 8+]

### Videos

**The Elizabethan Age.** Brought to life with period art and music, this program gives students an overview of the life and times of England's greatest ruler. 1994. Social Studies School Service.

**Hamlet.** Shakespeare's story of royal revenge, featuring the Prince of Denmark. 1990. Perfection Learning Corporation.

**Julius Caesar.** The Roman Republic as seen through Shakespeare's eyes. As Caesar becomes more powerful, conspirators plot his death. 1970. Perfection Learning Corporation.

**The Lion in Winter.** King Henry II and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine battle each other over which of their sons will inherit the kingdom. 1968. PBS Video.

**Macbeth.** Perhaps the most famous version of Shakespeare's Scottish play, starring Orson Welles. 1948. Perfection Learning Corporation.

**The Tragedy of Macbeth.** Jeremy Brett and Piper Laurie star in this version of the play. 1989. Kultur Heritage.

**William Shakespeare.** Filmed on location at Stratford-upon-Avon, this film provides a valuable introduction to the life and works of Shakespeare. 1958. Social Studies School Service.

### Software/Multimedia

**Editions and Adaptations of Shakespeare.** Displays several versions of Shakespeare's plays, from the First Folio through 25 contemporary editions. CD-ROM. Chadwyck-Healey, Inc. (1-800-752-0515)

**Karaoke Shakespeare: Macbeth.** Select a character and speak that character's lines in recorded scenes from the play. CD-ROM. IBM. (1-800-426-7235)

**Shakespeare's Life and Times.** Explores the social and literary background of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. Includes text, sound bites, musical passages, and illustrations. Hypertext. Intellimation. (1-800-346-8355)

**SHAKSPER.** An electronic seminar that includes reviews of films or plays, controversial topics, and updates on current research. E-mail address: SHAKSPER@utoronto.bitnet

**Voyager Shakespeare, Volume 1.** Includes textual analysis of *Macbeth*, a complete performance by the Royal Shakespeare Company, and clips from other performances. CD-ROM. Creative Multimedia Corporation. (1-800-262-7668)

# Resources for Teaching *Macbeth*

## Critical Approaches to *Macbeth*

Convenient anthologies of critical opinion include *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Macbeth* and *Shakespeare Survey*, volume 19. 1966.

John Peck and Martin Coyle provide guidance in writing a critical opinion in *How to Study a Shakespeare Play*. Macmillan, 1985.

On-line resources include SHAKSPER, an electronic seminar at this E-mail address: SHAKESPER@utoronto.bitnet and Teaching Shakespeare Forum, NCTE Bulletin Board, America Online. (1-800-827-6364)

## Reading Aloud/Performing

Michael Tolaydo suggests that students do multiple line-by-line readings of a scene. He gives suggestions on preparing scripts and discussing the readings in "Three-Dimensional Shakespeare," an article in The Folger Library's *Shakespeare Set Free: Teaching Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth, and A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Pocket Books, 1993.

Peter Reynolds approaches the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth by juxtaposing lines from these two characters. He also suggests that students do "walk throughs" of the play in *Practical Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare*. Oxford University Press, 1991.

Other classroom-tested approaches to teaching the Shakespeare canon are presented in *Teaching Shakespeare Today: Practical Approaches and Productive Strategies*, edited by James E. Davis and Ronald E. Salomone. (NCTE, 1973).

## Shakespeare's England

One of the liveliest, most accessible treatments of Shakespeare's world is *Shakespeare Alive!* by Joseph Papp and Elizabeth Kirkland. Bantam, 1988.

Excellent visual resources are provided in *The Reader's Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*, edited by Campbell and Quinn (Crowell, 1966), and Maurice Hussey's *The World of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: A Visual Approach*. Heinemann, 1978.

Detailed descriptions of special effects at the Globe are available in Hodge's *The Third Globe*. Wayne State University Press, 1979.

Fascinating details about Renaissance beliefs in the supernatural are recounted in *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* by Garry Wills (Oxford University Press, 1995) and H. N. Paul's *The Royal Play of Macbeth*. Macmillan, 1950.

## Shakespeare's Language

Several worksheets to help students deal with early modern English are available in Randal Robinson's *Unlocking Shakespeare's Language: Help for the Teacher and Student*. NCTE: Theory and Research into Practice series, 1989.

An interesting discussion of "Elizabethan Speech and Shakespearean Language Use" is available in Mary Ann Rygiel's *Shakespeare among Schoolchildren: Approaches for the Secondary Classroom*. NCTE, 1992.

# Using Latitudes in Your Classroom

*The following discussion topics and activities are suggestions for incorporating pieces from **Latitudes** into your curriculum. Most suggestions can be adapted for independent, small-group, or whole-class activities. In addition, the list includes activities that can be done before, during, and after reading the novel. The variety of choices allows you to modify and use those activities that will make **Macbeth** meaningful to your students.*

## About the Author

1. Before students read this selection, explore what they already know about Shakespeare and the preconceptions they have about the man and his plays. After students have read the biography, discuss whether their views have changed.
2. Encourage students to speculate about what kinds of works Shakespeare might write today and which current playwright he might be most like.
3. Scholars have argued for centuries about whether William Shakespeare really wrote the plays published under that name. Explore whether knowing who wrote *Macbeth* makes any difference to students' appreciation of the play.

## Critics' Comments

1. Encourage students to define what makes a literary work a "classic." Then ask them to apply their criteria to *Macbeth*.
2. Ask students to identify possible reasons for the wide range of critical views about *Macbeth*.
3. After students have read the play, invite them to write their own critical statements about *Macbeth*. Remind them to support their opinions with evidence from the play. Then post unsigned comments written on large sheets of paper around the room. The class can discuss the different reactions.
4. Michael Platt believes that "Shakespeare's plays turn around certain questions. Sometimes the question is voiced aloud in the play by one or more of the characters. More often it is the tacit or explicit answers the characters offer which betray the unvoiced questions they struggle with. Hence it is the task of the interpreter to discover the questions and to ask the questions." Invite students to identify the question(s) in *Macbeth*. (Platt's comment is from his *Rome and Romans According to Shakespeare* in *Jacobean Drama Studies* 51, 1976.)

## Voices from the Play

1. Share one or more of these quotations with students before they read the play. Encourage them to make inferences about the speakers and predictions about the plot.

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2. Ask students to identify the speaker of each quotation in a timed competition or on a test.
3. Suggest that students write a paragraph or critical essay about how one of these passages applies to the character who speaks it.

### **Reading *Macbeth***

1. You might give your students a preview of the key events of each act before they read the play.
2. Help your students get the beat. Challenge them to find the rhythmic pattern in the words to their favorite music or to convert a passage from the play to a rap. Students might also record a conversation among themselves and then try converting their dialogue to iambic pentameter.
3. To help students interpret the play orally, you might direct their attention to passages where two characters share an iambic pentameter line. For example, you might read the conversation between Macbeth and Banquo at the beginning of act 3 with awkward pauses, then with the characters' lines alternating more quickly as if in a conversation. Students might then try reading the discussion among the murderers in act 3 scene 3.
4. You might show an introductory scene from the play on video. See how much students can deduce simply from the words they are able to catch and nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expression, and tone of voice.
5. Preparing special scripts may help your students become comfortable with reading Shakespeare. Michael Tolaydo recommends multiple line-by-line readings of a scene in "Three-Dimensional Shakespeare," an article in The Folger Library's *Shakespeare Set Free* (Pocket Books, 1993). Peter Reynolds describes "walking through" a play in *Practical Approaches to Teaching Shakespeare* (Oxford University Press, 1991).
6. As students read the play, invite them to compile their own tips and suggestions to help next year's class handle Shakespeare.

### **The Geographical Picture**

1. Encourage students to trace geographic references in *Macbeth* on the map.
  - act 3 scene 1: Forres, Glamis, Cawdor
  - act 1 scene 3: Scone, Colmekill (where Duncan was buried, now known as Iona)
  - act 4 scene 1: Fife (Macduff's castle in eastern Scotland)
  - act 5 scene 2: Birnam Wood and Dunsinane Hill
2. You might use this selection with "Macbeth's Castle," page 20, to help students visualize the motte-and-bailey castle at Dunsinane.
3. Encourage students to speculate about whether Scotland might have remained independent of English influence had Malcolm enlisted England's help to regain his crown.
4. Macbeth was actually killed at the Peel of Lumpanan, which is about five miles from Lumpanan. Find the location of his death on a contemporary map of Scotland.

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## A Time in History

1. If you wish to provide additional historical background for students, a useful summary of the political plots of the time can be found in Mary Ann Rygiel's *Shakespeare among Schoolchildren* (NCTE, 1992).
2. The dedication of the 1611 "King James" Bible refers to the translators' relief "when we beheld the Government established in Your Highness, and Your hopeful Seed, by an undoubted Title, and this also accompanied with peace and tranquility at home and abroad." Invite students to use information on the timeline to speculate about why the translators felt such relief at the prospect of an orderly succession.
3. As students read the play, encourage them to watch for allusions to events or political situations on the timeline. For example, the procession of kings in act 4 scene 1, with "twofold balls and treble scepters" is a tribute to the union of Great Britain and Scotland under King James.

## Macbeth: Scotland's Last Celtic King

1. Before students read this selection, you might ask if any of them are of Celtic ancestry. The Celts are descended from people who speak one of the Celtic languages: Breton, Irish, Welsh, and Scottish Gaelic. Encourage students to identify traditions and characteristics that today are considered typical of Celtic peoples.
2. Invite students to speculate about how Scottish history would have been different if Macbeth had been able to keep the country free of English influence.
3. After students have read the play, ask them if they consider the historical Macbeth a tragic figure. Then have them compare the historical Macbeth to Shakespeare's tragic hero.
4. Historians consider Macbeth's death the end of an era in Scottish history. Students might make a timeline of important dates in the country's history, from prehistory to modern times.
5. Encourage students to compare Macbeth to champions of the "old ways" living today, such as conservative politicians and Native Americans trying to preserve their spiritual traditions.

## Macbeth's Castle

1. Lady Macbeth refers to her castle "battlements" (1.5.47). After students have read this selection, ask students to suggest reasons that Shakespeare might have referred to a stone castle rather than to the wooden structure actually used in Macbeth's time.
2. Explore with students how references to Macbeth's castle are used to create atmosphere in the play. See especially Lady Macbeth's soliloquy (1.5.45–61), Duncan's description (1.6.1–9), the Porter's reference to "hell gate" (2.3.2), the Doctor's comment (5.3.75–76), and Macbeth's remarks (5.5.1–3).

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### **The Murder of King Duffe**

1. Before students read this selection, you might encourage them to adapt a source into dramatic form. Students might choose sources such as newspaper articles or a description of a historic event. They could then write dialogue based on their source or describe how the source might be adapted into a TV show.
2. As students read this selection, have them underline details that they think Shakespeare will include in the play. As they read the play, students can check the accuracy of their predictions.
3. Make a chart comparing Shakespeare's treatment of the story of King Duffe to Holinshed's.
4. After students have read the play, discuss the effect of the alterations Shakespeare made to his source. Students might rate the dramatic effectiveness of each change on a scale of 1 to 10. They could also compare the types of changes Shakespeare made to those made to a currently popular book that's been made into a movie.
5. Interested students might consult Holinshed's *Chronicles* or a collection of Shakespeare's sources to find out the gruesome fate suffered by Donwald and his wife.

### **The Weird Sisters**

1. Ask students to use information in this selection to infer what people in Renaissance England commonly believed about witchcraft, becoming a king, and being a good ruler. Students might make a chart with their conclusions in one column and supporting evidence in the other.
2. After students have read this selection, invite them to agree or disagree with Holinshed's observation that Macbeth's meeting with the witches was "the cause of much trouble within the realme of Scotland."
3. Use this selection to spark a discussion of Macbeth's motivations. Holinshed suggests that the adjective *weird* comes from the Saxon *wyrd* (for fate), so that the weird sisters become the "goddesses of destinie." Explore whether Macbeth's downfall comes because he is a victim of the witches or for some other reason.
4. View and critique a live or videotaped performance of Shakespeare's dramatization of this scene in act 1 scene 3.

### **Was Macbeth a Tyrant?/Motives for Murder**

1. Before students read these pieces, you might invite them to speculate about what the real Macbeth was like. Then suggest they read one or both selections to discover whether "what everyone knows" about Macbeth is true.
2. Encourage students to contrast the historical reasons for Macbeth's murder of Duncan with the way Shakespeare presents the character's motives. Discuss why Shakespeare might have altered the historical facts.

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3. Some critics suggest that the dramatic power of *Macbeth* comes from the contrast between Macbeth's evil and his potential for good. Explore with students whether the "real" Macbeth would have been an interesting tragic hero.
4. Discuss with students why Macbeth's character has been so misrepresented by historians. In addition to reasons suggested in the passages, students might consider that the only histories of Scotland available to Shakespeare were written by Englishmen who did not understand the Gaelic language or the way Scottish kings were chosen.
5. Shakespeare compresses the ten years of Macbeth's reign. Look for other instances of compression of time in the play.

### **One Day at the Globe**

1. Historian Edith Hamilton believes that "there is no better indication of what the people of any period are like than the plays they go to see." After students have read this selection, ask them to draw conclusions about what Shakespeare's audience would have expected from his plays.
2. Discuss with students how conditions at the Globe would have influenced the performance of Shakespeare's plays. For example, how does Shakespeare deal with the problem of creating Macbeth's dark and gloomy atmosphere during a performance in broad daylight?
3. Invite students to write a piece about how Americans entertain themselves today from the perspective of someone living 300 years in the future.

### ***Macbeth* at the Globe**

1. Invite students to write a brief plot synopsis of *Macbeth*. Then compare the events which seem most important to them with those recorded by Forman.
2. Have students compile a list of the scenery that would have been necessary for the production of *Macbeth* that Forman saw. If students have seen a modern stage or film production, have them compare the scenery used in the modern production to that used in Shakespeare's day.
3. Forman suggests that Macbeth murdered Duncan because of "the persuasion of his wife." Speculate with students about whether Macbeth and Lady Macbeth would be arraigned on the same charges if they were tried for murder today.
4. Suggest that students note characteristics that mark this piece as early modern English. They might then see if any characteristics they noted in the language of primary sources from Shakespeare's time are also evident in his plays. (Mary Ann Rygiel, in *Shakespeare among Schoolchildren*, gives several examples of everyday speech that parallel Shakespeare's "explosive quality" and "command of picturesque words and phrases.")

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## Shakespeare's London

1. Ask students to examine the maps for visual evidence of what life was like in Shakespeare's London. (Pertinent details include the executioner's display of heads on the Tower of London, the animals in the streets, and the number of ships that call at this important trade center.)
2. Discuss what details students would include if they created a detailed map of their street or school.

## Fortune's Wheel

1. Shakespeare wrote in *Henry V*: "Fortune is painted blind, with a muffler afore her eyes, to signify to you that Fortune is blind; and she is painted also with a wheel, to signify to you...that she is turning, and inconstant, and mutability, and variation; and her foot, look you, is fixed upon a spherical stone, which rolls, and rolls, and rolls...Fortune is an excellent moral." Invite students to comment on how Fortune's "moral" applies to *Macbeth*.
2. Suggest that students use a rough sketch of Fortune's Wheel to graph the plot of *Macbeth*.
3. Stories about people of high rank whose faults brought them to disaster were considered tragic in the Renaissance. Encourage students to develop their own definitions of a *tragic hero* and apply them to *Macbeth*.
4. Encourage students to develop modern proverbs or metaphors that express the ideas symbolized in Fortune's Wheel.

## A Scottish Witch

1. Students might be interested to know that *Macbeth* was the first play to show witches actually performing rites and ceremonies on stage. Suggest that they make a chart comparing Sampson's confession to the powers Shakespeare's witches claim. (See especially act 4 scene 1.)
2. Discuss with students how beliefs about witchcraft might influence the way the witch scenes might be played in the early 1600s and the late 20th century.
3. Encourage students to debate whether Lady Macbeth is the "fourth witch" of the play. (In *Witches and Jesuits*, Garry Wills points out that Lady Macbeth's invocation in 1.5.45–61 "is full of 'witch talk'" such as her request that the spirits "unsex" her. She is associated with a raven, which was believed to be a common familiar of witches. And in her sleepwalking scene, Lady Macbeth carries a large candle and walks barefoot, as did the Duchess of Gloucester when she publicly repented of witchcraft.)

## Vaulting Ambition

1. Share this comment written by John Wooton in 1576 with students: "Assuredly furies doe alwayes pursue and chase the wicked...with horrores of Conscience, and anguish of minde,...not suffering them

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- to pause one momente from trembling and feare.” Then discuss how this concept of conscience relates to the excerpts from the *Homilies* and to the character of Macbeth.
2. Assign students to compare selected passages from *Macbeth* with the ideas in the homilies. They might compare references to
    - hell with the Porter’s speech (2.3.1–16)
    - disorder with these passages: 2.3.61–70, 2.4.1–19, 4.1.51–62, 5.5.58–59
    - condemnation of ambition with Macbeth’s soliloquy in act 1 scene 7
  3. Discuss this problem with students: Macbeth is portrayed as a man who knowingly chooses to commit evil acts. How does Shakespeare maintain sympathy for his main character?
  4. Some critics see the play as a contrast between the good king Duncan and the tyrant Macbeth. Encourage students to prove or disprove this critical opinion with evidence from the play. Students who disagree should develop another explanation for the organization of the play.

### Baiting the Bear

1. As his enemies approach, Macbeth compares himself to a baited bear (5.7.1–2). Discuss the appropriateness of this metaphor. Then encourage students to develop other figures of speech about Macbeth and/or his situation.
2. After students have read this article, discuss how Shakespeare’s audience might have reacted to the violence in *Macbeth*. Explore students’ own feelings about the amount of blood in the work. For example, you might ask students what rating, such as PG-13 or R, a movie version of *Macbeth* should receive.
3. Invite students to comment on an artwork that shows a Renaissance sporting event. You might use *Children’s Games* or *Return of the Hunters* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. A good source is Maurice Hussey’s *The World of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: A Visual Approach* (Heinemann, 1978).

### The Gunpowder Plot

1. Before students read this selection, invite them to describe the most catastrophic thing that could befall our government. (Garry Wills, in *Witches and Jesuits*, suggests that the closest American equivalent to the Gunpowder Plot would be a conspiracy to blow up the Capitol while the President is addressing both branches of Congress with the justices of the Supreme Court in attendance.)
2. Share this information with students: Several plays written in 1606 might be considered “Gunpowder plays.” Each makes references to the Gunpowder Plot (although the allusions are veiled because of censorship). The plot of each centers around the destruction of a kingdom, and the overthrow of legitimate rulers is to be accomplished by secret plots with the help of witches. Then invite students to consider whether *Macbeth* fits these characteristics of a “Gunpowder play.” (This theory is more fully developed in Garry Wills’ *Witches and Jesuits*.)

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3. Guide students through a close reading of topical allusions in the Porter's speech in act 2 scene 3. If the footnotes in the students' edition of the play are not helpful, see the Arden edition of the play or "Hell-Castle and its Door-Keeper" in *Shakespeare Survey*, 19, 1966.

### ***The Witch***

1. Thomas Middleton was one of many dramatists who followed Shakespeare's lead in actually showing witches' rituals on the stage. Invite students to compare this selection from Middleton to act 4 scene 1 in *Macbeth*. They might rate both dramatists on a scale of 1 to 10 and then defend their judgments.
2. The source in which Shakespeare found the story of the witches suggests that they are "the weird sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie." (See page 25.) Invite students to compare the dramatic effect of Middleton's and Shakespeare's witches.
3. Some scholars suggest that Middleton later added several lines to Shakespeare's play, such as the references to the "dead butcher and his fiend-like queen" in Malcolm's final speech. Interested students might consult a critical edition of the play and share what they learn about other suspected additions to the play.

### **The Usurper**

1. Suggest that students paraphrase this selection in their own words. A suggested paraphrase follows.  
Macbeth, who traitorously killed his king,  
Ruled Scotland like a monster instead of a man.  
His conscience made him so aware of his guilt  
That he became suspicious of everyone  
And feared that everyone conspired to avenge his murders.  
Like all those tormented by their own guilt,  
He thought his only safety lay in further bloodshed.
2. Ask students to find passages from the play to support each line of this characterization of Macbeth. Then discuss whether this author omitted any important aspects of Macbeth's character or motivation.
3. Ask students to identify contemporary figures who fit this description of a "self-tormented mind."

### ***Medea***

1. Invite students to compare this excerpt to Lady Macbeth's invocation to the spirits (1.5.47–61). Encourage students to elaborate likenesses and differences between the two characters and the language in the selections.
2. Shakespeare's audience knew the story of Medea. Explore with students what Shakespeare might have intended to suggest about Lady Macbeth by associating her with Medea.

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### **Sinead Cusack on Portraying Lady Macbeth**

1. Invite students to react to Cusack's comment that "Shakespeare used to frighten the wits out of me because I was too reverent about it."
2. Encourage students to experiment with reading some of Lady Macbeth's lines as a "speech" and as a real person might say them. Appropriate passages include her soliloquy in act 1 scene 5 and the sleepwalking scene in act 5 scene 1.
3. Many actresses have played Lady Macbeth as a "fiend-like queen." Encourage students to speculate about which interpretation would be most moving to a 20th-century audience.
4. Encourage students to conduct their own interviews with someone who has acted in or directed a Shakespearean play. Students might ask how the person established an interpretation of the play and about any special difficulties and delights they encountered while working with Shakespeare.

# Student Projects

*The suggestions below will help you extend your learning about Shakespeare and the history behind **Macbeth**. The categories give choices for researching, writing, speaking, and visual activities. You are also encouraged to design your own project.*

## The Historian's Study

1. Suppose that you are asked to be a consultant for a production of *Macbeth*. The director wants the costumes to be as historically accurate as possible. Prepare some guidelines for authentic *Macbeth* costuming.
2. Present a live broadcast of an event that might have made news during Shakespeare's time. Resources such as *Chronicle of the World* or Grun's *The Timetables of History* are helpful.
3. Compare Shakespeare's portrayal of the witches with descriptions in *Compendium Maleficarum* or Reginald Scot's *The Discovery of Witchcraft*. Note where Shakespeare followed the common belief and where he heightened the powers of his witches.
4. Prepare a report or display about the tactics used to attack and defend castles.
5. Explore whether Lady Macbeth can truly be called the "fourth witch" in Shakespeare's play. Consider whether she uses any language that was commonly used by witches and the resemblance between her sleepwalking scene and the witches' public repentance. *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's **Macbeth*** by Garry Wills (Oxford University Press, 1995) is an excellent source.
6. Find out more about one of the topical references in *Macbeth*, such as
  - the Gowrie Conspiracy
  - the murder of Lord Darnley
  - the Ruthven conspiracy
  - the Gunpowder Plot
7. Shakespeare referred to the King's Touch to please King James. Write an explanation of the King's Touch that could be used to interpret lines 162–165 in act 4 scene 3.
8. Act 5 scene 3 has several references to medical diagnosis and treatment during Shakespeare's time. Prepare a report or display about Renaissance medicine.
9. Create a timeline showing what was happening around the world at the time Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*.
10. Explore ideas about witchcraft in the early 1600s. Sources you might use include Reginald Scot's *The Discovery of Witchcraft*, King James' *Demonologie*, and Fr. Gerard's autobiography.

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## Student Projects *continued*

11. Explore how fears about a Catholic uprising against England's Protestant rulers influenced popular reaction to the Gunpowder Plot. You might compare these fears to American fears of Communist insurrection in the 1950s.
12. Compare the way the entrance to Macbeth's castle is described in act 2 scene 1 to the way medieval morality plays depict the gates of Hell. Glynne Wickham's article on "Hell-Castle and its Door-Keeper" in *Shakespeare Survey* 19, 1966, is a helpful source.
13. King James' ideals of the good king are found in his *Basilicon Doron* and speeches made to Parliament on the divine right of kings. Speculate about how the monarch's ideals might have influenced the way Shakespeare portrays the character of Duncan.
14. Create a display or multimedia production on the stage history of *Macbeth*. You might include famous actors and directors associated with the play. You could also concentrate on one production, such as Orson Welles' all-black version in 1936.

## The Artist's Studio

1. Create a model of Macbeth's castle. Historically, his castle would have been a *rath*, or set of fortified wooden buildings. You might model a rath, your idea of how Macbeth's castle would have been presented at the Globe, or a castle that might be used in a modern production.
2. Create a musical or artistic composition that shows the tension between order and disorder in *Macbeth*.
3. Provide music to accompany a production of *Macbeth*. You might compose music for a particular scene of the play or select several existing pieces and identify when they would be played.
4. Make a diagram or model of a set that could be used in a production of *Macbeth*.
5. Create a visual organizer that shows the structure of the play. One structure that you might use is Order/Complication/Resolution.
6. Draw one of Macbeth's hallucinations.
7. Create a portrait of one of the characters in *Macbeth*. Indicate which passages in the play influenced your portrayal of the character.
8. Draw or paint Shakespeare's shield of arms.
9. Make a model that shows how a particular special effect might have been created at the Globe Theatre. You might explore how trapdoors, painted screens, and lever-operated cloud thrones were used. Hodges' *The Third Globe* (Wayne State University Press, 1979) is an excellent source.
10. Find several different portraits of Shakespeare. (Two of the most famous, by Chandoes and Droeschout, are reproduced in Campbell and Quinn's *The Readers' Encyclopedia of Shakespeare*. Display the portrait(s) you feel are most representative of what Shakespeare was really like. Include an explanation of why you chose the portrait(s) you did.

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## The Writer's Workshop

1. List several current slang expressions. Then see if you can find expressions that have similar meanings in Shakespeare. You could also make a dictionary of Shakespearean expressions.
2. Trace an image throughout the play. Look for repeated references to a particular topic, such as disorder, alarm bells, sickness, light, dark, blood, deceit, treachery, healing the country, or disarranged garments. Then explain what these references contribute to the meaning of the play.
3. Shakespeare wrote in iambic pentameter. Experiment with other forms of syllabic verse. You might write a *haiku*, with five syllables in line 1, seven syllables in line 2, and five syllables in line 3. You could also create a *tanka*, which is a haiku plus two more lines of seven syllables each. Other syllabic verse forms include *sept* (1, 2, 3, 4, 3, 2, 1 syllables), *septet* (3, 5, 7, 9, 7, 5, 3 syllables), and *lanternes* (1, 2, 3, 4, 1 syllables). You might also invent your own form of syllabic verse.
4. Write a prequel to the play that explains how Macbeth developed his ambition to be king.
5. Listen to music based on the story of Macbeth, such as the symphonic poem by Richard Strauss or Verdi's opera. Then write a review about how the mood and themes of the musical work compare to those of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.
6. Read James Thurber's short story "The Macbeth Murder Mystery" from his *My World and Welcome to It*. Then write your own creative response to the story. You might write a response to the American lady who complains about *Macbeth*. You might also write your own original short story about the play or people's reactions to it.
7. Write an essay exploring why Lady Macbeth has such influence over her husband.
8. Shakespeare's audience would expect Macbeth to be damned because of his involvement in rebellion and conjuring the dead. Compare Shakespeare's *Macbeth* with another work about someone who made a pact with the devil, such as Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster," or a drama about Dr. Faust.
9. Read one of the classic accounts of Medea—plays by Euripides or Seneca or Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Then compare Medea to Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth.
10. Write an introduction to *Macbeth* that prepares other students to read and understand the play.
11. Macbeth describes how he kills the grooms in act 2 scene 2. Rewrite this description so that the murder scene is acted out rather than talked about. Then give your opinion about why Shakespeare chose to describe rather than show these murders.
12. Read any one of Richard Armour's *Twisted Tales from Shakespeare* except "Macbeth." Then write your own "twisted" version of the Scottish play.
13. Write a diary entry that Lady Macbeth might have written shortly before her sleepwalking scene.

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14. Read Thomas De Quincey's essay "The Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*," available in editions of his works and numerous critical anthologies. Then write an essay on your reaction to one aspect of the play, using De Quincey's comments as your model.
15. Write a dialogue about a modern-day problem using language that Shakespeare might have used. Try to include some of Shakespeare's favorite rhetorical devices, such as puns, insults, and elaborate comparisons.

### **The Speaker's Platform**

1. Shakespeare expresses many ideas about political order in a speech by Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* (1.3.78–134). Prepare an oral interpretation of the speech. After you perform the speech, lead a discussion about how its ideas apply to *Macbeth*.
2. Create and conduct a game show such as *Jeopardy!* based on the play. You might include such categories as Famous Shakespearean Quotations (FSQ's), characters, and plot developments.
3. Prepare an infomercial to encourage other students to read *Macbeth*. You might videotape your performance for next year's classes.
4. Suppose that you are directing a new production of *Macbeth*. Prepare some remarks for the first rehearsal explaining your idea of the play and the atmosphere you want to create.
5. Create an eyewitness news report based on a scene from the play.
6. Organize a talk show with Lady Macbeth as a guest. You might want to include her husband and a marriage counselor.
7. With a classmate, conduct a Siskel-and-Ebert-style review of *Macbeth*.
8. Choose a prop that you think would be important to a modern production of *Macbeth*. Explain why you chose this prop, and demonstrate how it might be used.
9. Explain how a scene from *Macbeth* might be presented on a modern stage. Use visuals or models to illustrate your concept.
10. Conduct a trial of one of the characters in the play. Determine the charges, choose classmates to play the roles of prosecutor, witnesses, and judge, and perform the trial for your class.
11. Introduce the witches into another scene of the play. Keep Shakespeare's original text, but add the witches' comments about what's going on. For example, you might add the witches' observations about what's going on at the banquet scene to act 3 scene 4. You could then invite your classmates to read your adapted version aloud.
12. Pantomime Macbeth's encounter with Banquo's ghost or Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene. Be ready to describe how you developed the facial expressions and body language you used for your role.
13. Choose a scene from the play that is open to several interpretations. For example, does Macbeth really see Banquo's ghost? Then direct a performance of the scene according to your interpretation. If possible, present your scene with another director's interpretation of the same scene.

*continued*

## Student Projects *continued*

14. Present a performance of music used in Shakespeare's plays. Harbage's *Shakespeare's Songs* is a good source; local colleges and universities may also have helpful resources.
15. Plan the staging of act 1 scene 3. Issues to consider include
  - whether the witches are simply figments of Macbeth's imagination
  - the extent of any supernatural powers the witches might have
  - special effects to use
16. Suppose that you are going to act the part of a character in *Macbeth*. Choose one scene or act from the play and create stage directions for your character. Include instructions for tone of voice and physical movement.
17. Present a review of a performance of *Macbeth*, whether on video or onstage. You might work with a partner to present a program similar to Siskel and Ebert's. Topics to consider include
  - believability of character portrayal and motivation
  - pacing—did parts of the performance drag or move too quickly to be understood?
  - themes (such as evil, loyalty, and the nature of a good king)
  - qualities that make this performance a good (or bad) production, such as staging, lighting, and costuming

**Sample selections from  
*Macbeth* LATITUDES®**

**About the Play**

About the Author  
Synopsis  
Critics' Comments  
Voices from the Play  
Glossary

**Macbeth's World**

Macbeth: Scotland's Last Celtic King  
Macbeth's Castle  
Motives for Murder  
The Murder of King Duffe  
The Weird Sisters  
Was Macbeth a Tyrant?

**Shakespeare's World**

One Day at the Globe  
*Macbeth* at the Globe  
Shakespeare's London  
Fortune's Wheel  
A Scottish Witch  
Vaulting Ambition  
Baiting the Bear  
The Gunpowder Plot

**Comparative Works**

*The Witch*  
The Usurper  
*Medea*  
Sinead Cusack on Portraying Lady Macbeth  
Suggested Reading and Viewing List  
Resources for Teaching *Macbeth*