

Macbeth

By William Shakespeare

*Especially for Grades 9 and up

Barter's Smith Theatre, Spring 2020

(NOTE: standards listed below are for reading *Macbeth* and seeing a performance as well as completing the study guide.)

Virginia SOLs

English – 9.1, 9.3, 9.4, 9.6, 10.1, 10.3, 10.4, 10.6, 12.1, 12.3, 12.4, 12.6

Theatre Arts – TI.8, TI.9, TI.10, TI.11, TI.12, TI.13, TI.16, TI.17, TH.9, TH.11, TH.12, TH.15, TH.16, TH.21, T3III.7, TH.8, TH.9, TH.12, TH.17, TIV.12, TIV.13

Tennessee Common Core State Standards

English/Language Arts - Reading Literacy: 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.6, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.10

English Language Arts – Writing: 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.6, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.6, 11-12.10

Tennessee Fine Arts Curriculum Standards

Theatre 9-12 – HS1.T.Cr1, HS1.T.R1, HS1.T.R3, HS2.T.Cr1, HS2.T.R1, HS3.T.Cr1, HS3.T.R1, HS4.T.Cr1, HS4.T.R1

North Carolina Common Core State Standards

English/Language Arts - Reading Literacy: 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.3, 9-10.4, 9-10.5, 9-10.6, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.3, 11-12.4, 11-12.5, 11-12.7, 11-12.10

English Language Arts – Writing: 9-10.1, 9-10.2, 9-10.4, 9-10.6, 9-10.9, 9-10.10, 11-12.1, 11-12.2, 11-12.4, 11-12.6, 11-12.10

North Carolina Essential Standards

Theatre Arts – B.C.2, B.A.1, B.AE.1, B.CU.1, B.CU.2, I.C.2, I.A.1, I.CU.1, I.CU.2, P.C.1, P.A.1, P.CU.2, A.C.2, A.A.1, A.CU.1, A.CU.2

Setting

Various locations in Dunsinane, Macbeth's castle, as well as other locations in Scotland.



Characters

Macbeth – Thane of Glamis, becomes the Thane of Cawdor

Lady Macbeth – his ambitious wife

Duncan – the King of Scotland

Malcolm – Duncan's son and heir to the throne

Banquo – Macbeth's best friend

Fleance – the son of Banquo

Macduff – the Thane of Fife; becomes suspicious of Macbeth

Lady Macduff – his wife

Ross – a Scottish nobleman

Weird Sisters – three witches who predict Macbeth's rise to power

Murderers – two henchmen hired by Macbeth

Note: Cast Size and Doubling of Actors

In this production of *Macbeth* we will be using only nine actors, with some actors playing more than one role. Doubling of actors requires distinction between characters. In this production, characters will be distinguished by costume, voice and other physical character traits.



Biography of the Playwright

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon in England, and his birthday is traditionally celebrated on April 23. At the age of eighteen he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children. By 1592, he was living in London and working as an actor and playwright. He was part owner of the acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later called the King's Men), which built and performed in the Globe Theatre. Over the course of his career Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, 154 sonnets and many other poems. He died on April 23, 1616, and was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.



Vocabulary Words

hurly-burly

heath

plight

revolt

thane

minion

battlement

treason

consequence

harbinger

estate

chastise

valor

remorse

compunctious

gall

beguile

dispatch

sovereign

purveyor

faculties

ambition

enterprise

chamberlain

wassail

mettle

entreat

cleave

augment

allegiance

prate

knell

surfeit

sacrilegious

suborn

posterity

verity

indissoluble

sundry

cloistered

infirmity

oracle

cauldron

entrails

potent

resolute

vanquished

exploits

judicious

unsanctified

treacherous

credulous

whetstone

epicure

siege

equivocation

Synopsis

Upon hearing of Macbeth's valor in battle, Scottish King Duncan bids Ross to find Macbeth and inform him that he will be awarded the title Thane of Cawdor. But before Ross can do so, the Weird Sisters appear to Macbeth and his friend Banquo and prophesy that not only will he be named Cawdor, but he will also become King. The Weird Sisters also predict that Banquo will be the father of future kings. Macbeth and Banquo dismiss these prophecies as folly until Ross shows up and informs Macbeth that he is, indeed, the Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth presents himself to King Duncan, and Duncan takes the opportunity to announce that his son Malcolm is next in line to the throne. Macbeth writes of these events to Lady Macbeth, his wife, also informing her that Duncan will be spending the night with them. Macbeth arrives home to find Lady Macbeth encouraging him to kill Duncan and Malcolm, thus fulfilling the prophecy. Duncan and Malcolm, along with Banquo and his son Fleance, arrive at Macbeth's castle. That night, Lady Macbeth drugs Duncan's guards. After they fall asleep, Macbeth steals in and stabs Duncan to death. In a panic, he forgets to leave the dagger with the guards, thus foiling Lady Macbeth's plans to frame them. Furious, Lady Macbeth takes the dagger and places it there herself. As a result, her hands are covered in blood. There is a knocking at the gate. Macduff has arrived to see Duncan. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth wash the blood from their hands as Macduff goes in to see Duncan. When he finds him dead, the alarm is sounded. Malcolm, fearful that whoever killed his father will kill him next, flees for his life. In his absence, Macbeth is made King. The only one he now fears is Banquo, who was privy to the Sisters' prophecy and may therefore suspect Macbeth of foul play. Macbeth hires murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance, but Fleance is able to escape with his life. Banquo's ghost begins to haunt Macbeth. He seeks out the Weird Sisters for a consultation; one sister warns him to beware Macduff, another assures him that he will remain King as long as the trees in Birnam Wood do not move to Dunsinane, and the third informs him that no man born of woman shall harm him. Macbeth then learns that Macduff has fled to England to meet with Malcolm and raise an army against him. Macbeth, determined to strike the first blow, orders the murder of Lady Macduff and her children. When Macduff learns of this, he and Malcolm head back to Scotland seeking revenge, leading an army of 10,000 English soldiers. Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth, guilt-ridden over her complicity in Duncan's murder, kills herself. Macbeth learns of this at the same time he gets word that Malcolm and Macduff are leading an army against him. Given the Weird Sister's prophecy, he is not too concerned until Malcolm orders his soldiers to cut boughs from the tree of Birnam Wood and use them as shields to mask their numbers. The result: the trees in Birnam Wood appear to be moving to Dunsinane. Still, Macbeth is unalarmed; according to the Weird Sister, no man born of woman shall harm him. Then Macduff engages Macbeth in combat and informs him that he was not "born;" rather, he was ripped from his mother's womb (today we call it a C-section). They fight, and Macduff kills Macbeth. Malcolm then is crowned King of Scotland.





A Brief History

Barter Theatre was founded during the Great Depression by Robert Porterfield, an enterprising young actor. He and his fellow actors found themselves out of work and hungry in New York City. Porterfield contrasted that to the abundance of food, but lack of live theatre, around his home region in Southwest Virginia. He returned to Washington County with an extraordinary proposition: bartering produce from the farms and gardens of the area to gain admission to see a play.

Barter Theatre opened its doors on June 10, 1933 proclaiming, “With vegetables you cannot sell, you can buy a good laugh.” The price of admission was 40 cents or the equivalent in produce, the concept of trading “ham for Hamlet” caught on quickly. At the end of the first season, the Barter Company cleared \$4.35 in cash, two barrels of jelly and enjoyed a collective weight gain of over 300 pounds.

Playwrights including Noel Coward, Tennessee Williams and Thornton Wilder accepted Virginia ham as payment for royalties. An exception was George Bernard Shaw, a vegetarian, who bartered the rights to his plays for spinach.

Today, Barter Theatre has a reputation as a theatre where many actors performed before going on to achieve fame and fortune. The most recognized of these alumni include Gregory Peck, Patricia Neal, Ernest Borgnine, Hume Cronyn, Ned Beatty, Gary Collins, Larry Linville and Frances Fisher. The list also included James Burrows, creator of *Cheers*, Barry Corbin, and the late Jim Varney.

Robert Porterfield passed away in 1971. His successor, Rex Partington, had been at Barter in the 1950s as an actor and in the 1970s as stage manager. Rex returned as chief administrator from 1972 until his retirement in 1992. In March 2006, he passed away.

Richard Rose was named the Producing Artistic Director in October 1992. During his tenure, attendance grew from 42,000 to more than 163,000 annual patrons. Significant capital improvements were also made, including renovation of the main stage (now Gilliam Stage) in 1995 and the 2006 addition of The Barter Café at Stage II (now the Smith Theatre). Rose retired in December of 2019 and Katy Brown, who had been at Barter since 1998 as the Director of the Barter Players and as an Associate Artistic Director, was named the fourth Producing Artistic Director – and is the first woman to hold the position.

Barter represents two distinct venues of live theatre: Barter Theatre’s Gilliam Stage, and Barter’s Smith Theatre. Gilliam Stage, with over 500 seats, features traditional theatre in a luxurious setting. Barter’s Smith Theatre offers seating for 167 around a thrust stage in an intimate setting and is perfect for more adventurous productions. Barter Theatre is also home to The Barter Players, a talented ensemble of actors who produce plays for young audiences throughout the year.

History is always in the making at Barter Theatre, building on legends of the past; Barter looks forward to the challenge of growth in the future.

Questions/Activities

1. Macbeth is the only Shakespeare play set in Scotland. Scholars believe this has something to do with the fact, a few years before the play was written, Queen Elizabeth I had died and King James VI of Scotland was crowned King James I of England. Since all plays were performed at the discretion of the monarch, Shakespeare had a vested interest in writing a play that would please him.

ACTIVITY

Individually or in groups, research the history of one of the following Scottish topics:

Bagpipes Famous Clans Auld Lang Syne

Loch Ness Monster Robert Burns

Famous Castles Mary, Queen of Scots

Edinburgh Haggis Glasgow

Kilts/Tartans Gaelic Language Crofters

Highland Games Presbyterian Church



Present your findings to the class!

tragedy: A drama or literary work in which the main character is brought to ruin or suffers extreme sorrow, especially as a consequence of a tragic flaw, moral weakness, or inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances.

2. Using the definition above, explain why *Macbeth* is a tragedy. **Cite passages from the play to support your reasoning.** What is Macbeth's tragic flaw? **Discuss.**

The bigger they are, the harder they fall...

Those who embark on the journey to gain power for power's sake often find themselves facing a disastrous end. Consider the historical figures below:



Adolph Hitler



Napoleon Bonaparte



Julius Caesar

Pick one of them and **write a paper comparing and contrasting** that person's rise to power and subsequent fall with Macbeth's. What roles, if any, did their wives/partners play?

3. The Weird Sisters are referred to as "witches" only once in *Macbeth*, but they are called "weird" six times. The word "weird" comes from the Old English term "wyrd" meaning "fate." Research the Three Fates of classical mythology – **write a paper persuading your audience** that Shakespeare either did or did not base his Sisters on these mythical creatures.

Double, double toil and trouble...

Blank Verse

Shakespeare wrote most of *Macbeth* in “blank verse.”

blank verse: unrhymed verse having a regular meter, usually of iambic pentameter.

iambic pentameter: a common meter in poetry consisting of an unrhymed line with five feet or accents, each foot containing one **unaccented** syllable followed by one **accented** syllable, like this:

ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM

Consider the line where Lady Macbeth urges her husband to wash his hands after he has murdered King Duncan:

“And wash this filthy witness from your hand...”

Can you count the five stressed accents in the line? Do you notice how the word “And” at the beginning of the line is unstressed?

**What is the difference between poetry and prose?
How does Shakespeare use both?**

ACTIVITY

Below is the letter Macbeth wrote to Lady Macbeth. Rewrite it in blank verse!

“They met me in the day of success, and I have learned by the perfectest report they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it came missives from the king, who all-hailed me ‘Thane of Cawdor,’ by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of time with ‘Hail, king that shalt be!’ This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou might’st not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.”



Did you know...?

It is considered bad luck to say “Macbeth” in a theatre. Instead, it is referred to as “the Scottish play.”

4. How would knowing the geography and history of Scotland better help you understand this play? How does knowledge of the different poetic styles and meters – and Shakespeare’s use of them – make the play more accessible? **Discuss how the various subjects studied in school often overlap.**

5. Characters in a play or a book always have a reason for doing what they do. This is referred to as their “motivation.” What motivates Lady Macbeth to urge her husband to murder? What is Macduff’s motivation for fleeing Scotland?

Make a list of the characters in *Macbeth*. Next to each name write that character’s primary action in the play and their motivation. **Cite passages from the play to support your reasoning.** Did interactions with the other characters change or alter their motivations? If so, how did this affect the plot?

6. Define “protagonist.” Who is the protagonist of *Macbeth*? Why? **Discuss.**

7. How many characters are in *Macbeth*? How many characters are in this adaptation? Did you think the story was still told in spite of the fact that several scenes and characters were eliminated?

8. How many actors performed this play? What did the actors change, besides their costumes, to become new characters? How were the various locations in the play represented? **Discuss.**

9. **Write a critique of Barter’s production of *Macbeth*.** Be sure to include descriptions and analyses of the individual performances, the directing/staging choices, and the design elements (costume, set, props, sound). Why do you think some of these artistic choices were made? How would you have done it differently?



10. Breaking into groups, **pick a scene from *Macbeth*, rehearse it and perform it for your class.** Now **pick another scene and rewrite it** in contemporary English for a contemporary setting. Rehearse and perform it for your class. Compare the two experiences.

Back in the olden days...

Macbeth was written and first produced in 1606. Using the internet, research how the original production would have looked – set, costumes, acting style, etc. How does it **compare and contrast** to The Barter Player's production?

11. What was your personal response to this production of *Macbeth*? Were you entertained? What did this play teach you about the human experience? **Discuss.**

12. Pick your favorite scene from *Macbeth* and **design a set** for it. Keep in mind time, place and location. Is it Birnam Wood? Is it Dunsinane Castle? Is it day or night? Also consider the entrances and exits of your characters. How do they enter the scene? How do they exit? Draw a picture of what your set should look like. Then make a model of it and present it to your class, explaining how it will work when built.



13. *Holinshed's Chronicles* are considered source material for several Shakespeare plays, especially *Macbeth*. Research these chronicles and write a paper explaining how Shakespeare drew on it and transformed it to create *Macbeth*.

Suggested Reading/Links

Books about William Shakespeare

Shakespeare: The Biography by Peter Ackroyd

Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare by Stephen Greenblatt

Shakespeare: An Ungentle Life by Katherine Duncan-Jones

Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare by Jonathan Bate

Shakespeare Links

To find out more about William Shakespeare, his life and his works, check out the links below...

Folger Shakespeare Library

<http://folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=863>

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>