

macbeth

chicago
shakespeare theater
on navy pier



Teacher Handbook

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Barbara Gaines Artistic Director
Criss Henderson Executive Director

Chicago Shakespeare Theater is Chicago's professional theater dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. Founded as Shakespeare Repertory in 1986, the company moved to its seven-story home on Navy Pier in 1999. In its Elizabethan-style courtyard theater, 500 seats on three levels wrap around a deep thrust stage—with only nine rows separating the farthest seat from the stage. Chicago Shakespeare also features a flexible 180-seat black box studio theater, a Teacher Resource Center, and a Shakespeare specialty bookstall.

In its first 23 seasons, the Theater has produced nearly the entire Shakespeare canon: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *Pericles*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater was the 2008 recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award. Chicago's Jeff Awards year after year have honored the Theater, including repeated awards for Best Production and Best Director, the two highest honors in Chicago theater.

Since Chicago Shakespeare's founding, its programming for young audiences has been an essential element in the realization of its mission. Team Shakespeare supports education in our schools, where Shakespeare is part of every required curriculum. As a theater within a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to a young and ethnically diverse audience of nearly 50,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare's programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of main-stage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year of one of the "curriculum plays." Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools.

The 2010-2011 Season offers a student matinee series for Chicago Shakespeare Theater's productions of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in the fall and *As You Like It* in the winter, as well as Alan Bennett's *The Madness of George III* this spring. Also this winter, Chicago Shakespeare presents especially for students a 75-minute abridged adaptation of *Macbeth*, at its theater on Navy Pier and on tour to schools and theaters across the region.

We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare's creative genius brought to life on stage. ■

Marilyn J. Halperin Director of Education

Erin Monahan Education Outreach

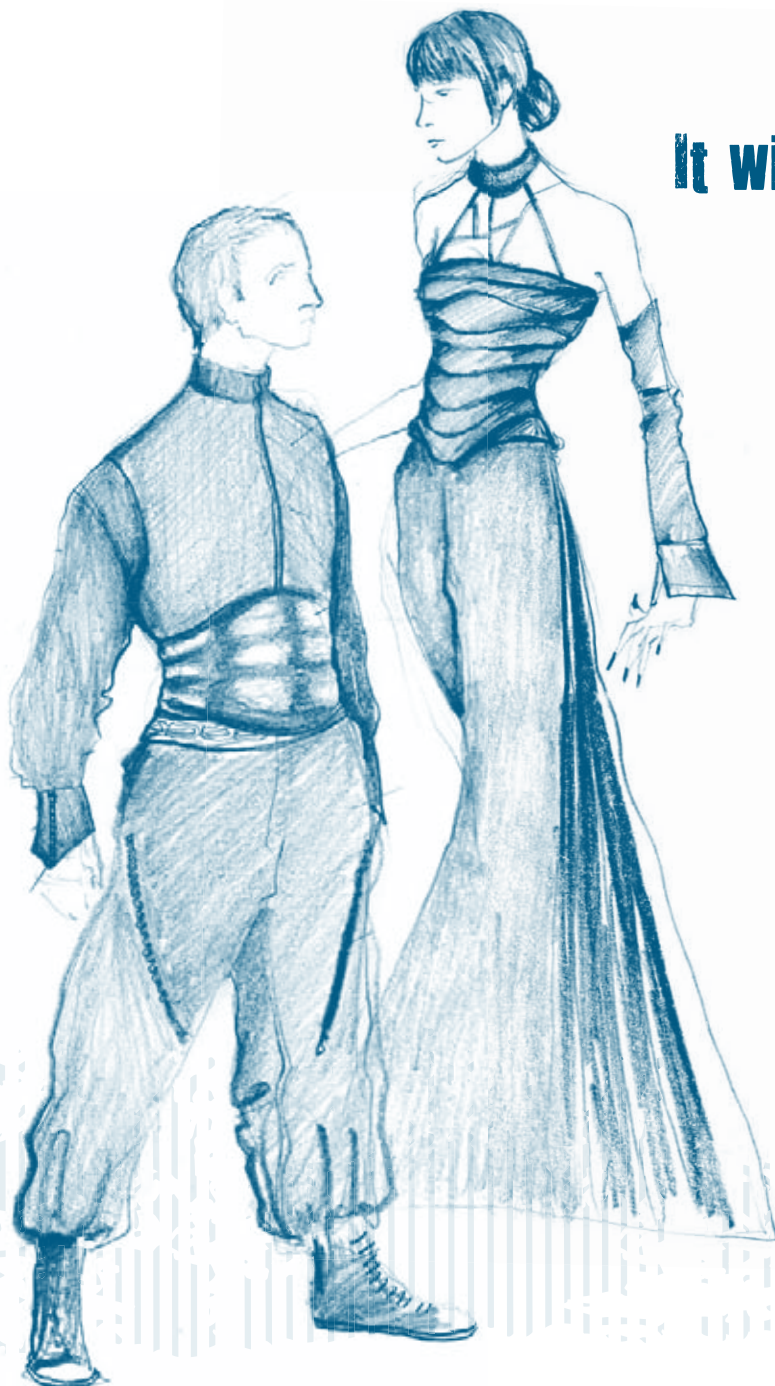
Danielle Gennaoui, Jason Harrington Education Associates

Lauren Eriks Education Intern

macbeth

written by
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

adapted and directed by
DAVID H. BELL



**It will have blood, they say.
Blood will have blood.**

M*acbeth* is a gripping eleventh-century power play and murder mystery. *Macbeth's* world is the world of nightmare. Where men's thoughts and acts are simultaneous. Where reality and unreality change places. Where fair is foul and foul is fair. Fear permeates this world—and the people who live in it.

It is the story of a man who isolates himself from his humanity. We watch as a human being wrestles with his conscience and chooses a tragic path of bloodshed. ■



Art That Lives

Drama, like no other art form, is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and together experience a play. Ancient cave paintings depict men disguised as animals. Since ancient times, impersonation and

imitation have served man in his effort to express himself and to communicate. The drama of western civilization has its roots in the ancient Greeks' religious rituals and observances. Until the Renaissance, when Shakespeare wrote, drama was closely tied to religious beliefs and practice.

Drama not only depicts human communication, *it is* human communication. In theater, unlike television or film, there is a two-way communication that occurs between the actors and their audience. The audience hears and sees the actors, and the actors hear and see the audience. We are used to thinking about the actors' roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing an important role in this living art. Because the art lives, each production is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience's response. Live drama is the sharing of human experience, intensely and immediately, in the theater, which momentarily becomes our universe.

A live theater production depends upon its audience. The best performances depend upon the best actors—and the best audiences. When the actors sense a responsive, interested audience, their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest, they, too, are distracted, and the play they create is less interesting.

One actor described the experience of live performance as a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller in the experience of live theater. We hope you'll enjoy your role—and help us give you a dramatic experience that you'll always remember.

[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely fused group, make it easy for the performance to 'take you out of yourself.' This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play... to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday.

—Tyrone Guthrie, 1962

HOW CAN YOU HELP US GIVE YOU THE BEST PERFORMANCE WE CAN?

- Please don't talk during the performance. Talking distracts the actors as well as the people sitting nearby.
- Respond naturally to our play. Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you'll laugh, cry and even gasp—but as a natural response to the story, and not in order to distract attention from the stage.
- Please keep all "noisemakers"—food, gum, cell phones, iPods, etc.—back at school or on the bus! In a quiet theater, wrappers and munching are heard by all, the actors included.
- No photographs of any kind, please! Flashbulbs can make the actors lose their focus and can be dangerous. Digital cameras, along with all other kinds of recording devices, are prohibited, including text-messaging.



Bard's Bio

The exact date of William Shakespeare's birth is not known, but his baptism, traditionally three days after a child's birth, was recorded on April 26, 1564. His father John Shakespeare was a tanner, glover, grain dealer and town official of the thriving market town of

Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother Mary Arden was the daughter of a prosperous, educated farmer. Though the records are lost, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended Stratford's grammar school, where he would have acquired some knowledge of Latin and Greek and the classical writers. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

Some skeptical scholars have raised doubts about whether Shakespeare, due to his relatively average level of education and humble origins, could have possibly written what has long been considered the best verse drama composed in the English language. But not until 1769, 150 years after Shakespeare's death, did these theories arise—and, to all appearances, Shakespeare's contemporaries and immediate successors never seemed to question whether William Shakespeare wrote the celebrated works attributed to him.

At 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. They had one daughter Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died at age 11. From 1585, the year in which the twins were baptized, until 1592, when he is first referred to as a dramatist in London, we know nothing of Shakespeare's life. Consequently, these seven years are filled with legend and conjecture. We may never know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of theater. The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright appears in 1592 and was made by Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, who attacked Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" for presuming to write plays (when he was only a mere actor) and copying the works of established dramatists.

Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and playwright, but also a partner in a new theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which soon became one of London's two principal companies. The company's name changed to the King's Men in 1603 with the accession of James I, and it endured until the Puritans closed the theaters in 1642. From 1599 the company acted primarily at the Globe playhouse, in which Shakespeare held a one-tenth interest.

During his career of approximately 20 years, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated in what most scholars now agree upon as 38 plays. His earliest plays, including *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *King John* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, were written between 1589 and 1594. Between 1594 and 1599, Shakespeare wrote both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* as well as other plays, including *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *As You Like It*. His great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last play traditionally categorized as comedy, *Measure for Measure*. The earlier histories, comedies and tragedies made way for Shakespeare's final dramatic form—the so-called "romances" which were written between 1606 and 1611 and include *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. These were the plays of a playwright no longer bound by the constraints of his earlier historical and tragic forms. Although single volumes of about half his plays were published in Shakespeare's lifetime, there is no evidence that suggests he oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, that 36 of his plays were published in the First Folio. Drama was only just beginning to be understood as "literature" as we view it today, and so it is not at all surprising that so little attention was given to Shakespeare's plays in published form until seven years after his death. However, we do know that Shakespeare oversaw the publication of three narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets.

Shakespeare seldom devised his own plots for his plays, but creatively borrowed here and there from histories, prose romances, poems, and plays of his own and others. Shakespeare was an ingenious dramatic artist with a vast imagination. He created masterpieces out of conventional and unpromising material. In Shakespeare's time, ancient stories were told and re-told. The important thing was not the originality of the plot but how the story was told. In the telling of a story, there are few writers who rival Shakespeare in theatricality, poetry, and depth of character.

By 1592, Shakespeare had emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright and part-owner of London's leading theater company. After living life in the theater for nearly 20 years, in 1611 he retired to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare was the man, who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.

—John Dryden, 1688



The First Folio

Chicago Shakespeare Theater utilizes the First Folio as its script and acting "blueprint."

The First Folio serves as the most authentic and effective manual available to Shakespearean actors nearly 400 years after its publication. Its punctuation gives clues to

our actors about what words to emphasize and about which ideas are important. In Shakespeare's own theater company, with only a few days at most to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential. Today, they can still help actors make the language much easier to understand—even though you're hearing language that's 400 years younger than ours. Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, not for publication. In Shakespeare's day, plays were not considered literature at all. When a play was published—if it was published at all—it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a "quarto," the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperbacks. It was not

until 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, when a contemporary of his, dramatist Ben Jonson, published his own plays in an oversized book called a "folio," that plays were viewed as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was chided as bold and arrogant for his venture.

Shakespeare, unlike Jonson, showed absolutely no interest or involvement in the publication of his plays, and during Shakespeare's own lifetime, only half of his plays were ever printed—and those quartos. It was only after the playwright's death when two of Shakespeare's close colleagues decided to ignore tradition and gather his plays for publication. In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, the First Folio, a book containing 36 of his 38 plays, was published. The First Folio was compiled from stage prompt books, the playwright's handwritten manuscripts, various versions of some of the plays already published—and from the memory of his actors. Its large format (much like a modern atlas) was traditionally reserved for the "authority" of religious and classical works.

Shakespeare's First Folio took five "compositors" two-and-one-half years to print. The compositors manually set each individual letter of type by first memorizing the text line by line. There was no editor overseeing the printing, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected but, due to the prohibitively high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the First Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, each slightly different. Chicago's Newberry Library contains an original First Folio in its rich collections.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater utilizes the First Folio as the basis for its playscripts. Its punctuation gives clues to actors about what words to emphasize and about what ideas are important. In Shakespeare's own theater company, with only a few days to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential. Today they still help actors make the language easier to break apart—even though you're hearing language that's 400 years younger than ours.

A key to understanding Shakespeare's language is to appreciate the attitude toward speech accepted by him and his contemporaries. Speech was traditionally and piously regarded as God's final and consummate gift to man. Speech was thus to Elizabethans a source of enormous power for good or ill... Hence the struggle to excel in eloquent utterance.

—David Bevington, 1980



Shakespeare's England

Elizabeth I ruled England for 45 years from 1558 to 1603 in a time of relative prosperity and peace. "Few monarchs," says Shakespearean scholar David Bevington, "have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp on it so permanently."

The daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child—and an illegitimate monarch. The politics of religion constantly threatened Elizabeth's reign, even though it was one of the most secure that England had known for hundreds of years. Religious conflict during the Tudors' reign pervaded every aspect of English life—particularly its politics.

Elizabeth had no heir, and throughout her reign the politics of succession posed a real threat to the nation's peace—and provided a recurrent subject of Shakespeare's plays. While Shakespeare was writing *Julius Caesar*, the Earl of Essex, one of the Queen's favorite courtiers, rebelled against her government. Shakespeare's portrayal of the forced abdication of a king in *Richard II* was censored in performance during Elizabeth's reign.

Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be subsequently. It had withdrawn from its extensive empire on the Continent, and its explorations of the New World had barely begun. There was a period of internal economic development as Elizabeth ignored the counsel of her advisors and kept out of war until the attempted invasion by Spain and the Great Armada in 1588. England's economy was still based in agriculture, and its farmers were poor and embittered by strife with rich landowners who "enclosed" what was once the farmers' cropland for pastures. Uprisings and food riots were commonplace in the rural area surrounding Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare grew up.

London, then the largest city of Europe, was a city of contrasts: the richest and the poorest of England lived there, side by side. While many bettered themselves in a developing urban economy, unemployment was a serious problem. It was a time of change and social mobility. A rising middle class for the first time in English history aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.

Under Elizabeth, England returned to Protestantism. But in her masterful style of accommodation and compromise, she incorporated an essentially traditional and Catholic doctrine

into an Episcopal form of church government that was ruled by the Crown and England's clergy rather than by Rome's Pope. Extremists on the religious right and left hated her rule and wanted to see Elizabeth overthrown. She was declared a heretic by Rome in 1569, and her life was endangered.

"Her combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending male admirers have become legendary," says David Bevington, and resulted in a monarchy that remained secure in the face of religious and political threats from many sides. In choosing not to marry, Elizabeth avoided allying herself and her throne with a foreign country or an English faction which might threaten her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout Early Modern Europe, governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords. The rule of monarchs, like Queen Elizabeth I was absolute. She and her subjects viewed the monarch as God's deputy, and the divine right of kings was a cherished doctrine (and became the subject of Shakespeare's history plays). It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against God, but could not protect Elizabeth from rebellion at home, even from her closest advisors, or from challenges from abroad.

Childless, Elizabeth I died in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England's King James I. James, ruling from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), clearly lacked Elizabeth's political acumen and skill, and his reign was troubled with political and religious controversy. He antagonized the religious left, and his court became more aligned with the Catholic right. It would be James' son, Charles I, who would be beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s. ■



The Renaissance Theater

A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare's, James Burbage,

built the first commercial theater in England in 1576, not much more than a decade before Shakespeare first arrived on the London theater scene—a convergence of two events that would change history. Burbage skirted rigid restrictions governing entertainment in London by placing his theater just outside the city walls, in a community with the unglamorous name of "Shoreditch." The name reflected the position of his theater, on the shore of the Thames River and just beyond the ditch created by the walls of London.

Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council by setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including London's brothels and bear-baiting arenas. Actors in Shakespeare's day were legally given the status of "vagabonds." They were considered little better than common criminals—unless they could secure the patronage of a nobleman or, better still, the monarch.

Shakespeare and his fellow actors managed to secure both. They became popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth's court as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and continued to enjoy court patronage after King James came to the throne in 1603, when they became the King's Men. Their success at court gave Shakespeare and his fellow shareholders in the Lord Chamberlain's company the funds to build the Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city's jurisdiction as one of the first public theaters in England.

Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching traveling acting troupes temporarily transform the courtyard of an inn or town square into a theater. When he was a boy growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon, acting troupes traveled around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, stage and storage for props and costumes. Their horses pulled the cart into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college. People gathered around to watch, some leaning over the rails from the balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

Many of these traveling performances staged religious stories, enacting important scenes from the Bible—the form of theater that endured throughout the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, the enacted stories became more secular. Public officials scorned the theater as immoral and frivolous. The theaters just outside London’s walls came to be feared as places where physical, moral and social corruption were spread. They were frequently shut down by the authorities during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the city was menaced by the plague or by political and social rioting. Even when the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word in a new play. The show could not go on until he gave his permission.

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers. A full house in the Globe numbered about 3,000 people. Though the same dimensions as the original structure, the reconstruction of the Globe holds 1,500 at maximum capacity—an indication of just how close those 3,000 people must have been to one another. They arrived well before the play began to meet friends, drink ale and snack on the refreshments sold at the plays. An outing to the theater might take half the day. It was more like tailgating at a football game, or going with friends to a rock concert than our experience of attending theater today.

Affluent patrons paid two to three pence or more for gallery seats (like the two levels of balcony seating at Chicago Shakespeare Theater) while the “common folk”—shopkeepers and artisans—stood for a penny, about a day’s wages for a skilled worker. They were diverse and demanding group, and Shakespeare depicted characters and situations to appeal to every level of this cross-section of Renaissance society. The vitality and financial success of the Elizabethan theater is without equal in English history.

There was no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. A throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action since Elizabethan plays were written to be performed without scene breaks or intermissions. When the stage directions for *Macbeth* indicate that “a banquet is prepared,” the stage keepers prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare’s plays were performed primarily in “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare’s time—regardless of their historical setting. The actors wore the same clothes on the stage as their contemporaries wore on

the street. Hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy provided the elegant costumes for the play’s royalty.

Most new plays were short runs and seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows but, due to the number of ongoing and upcoming productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a few days.

It was not until 1660 that women would be permitted to act on the English stage. Female roles were performed by boys or young men. Elaborate Elizabethan and Jacobean dresses disguised a man’s shape and the young actors were readily accepted as “women” by the audience.

In 1642, the Puritans succeeded in closing the theaters altogether. They did not reopen until the English monarchy was restored and Charles II came to the throne in 1660. A number of theaters, including the Globe, were not open very long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. During the eighteen years of Commonwealth rule, years where the English theaters were closed, many of the traditions of playing Shakespeare were lost. The new theater of the Restoration approached Shakespeare’s plays very differently, rewriting and adapting his original scripts to suit the audience’s contemporary tastes. It is

left to scholars of Early Modern English drama to reconstruct the traditions of Elizabethan theater from clues left behind. ■



AN ELIZABETHAN SKETCH OF THE ORIGINAL SWAN



Courtyard-Style Theater

David Taylor of Theatre Projects Consultants has devoted a great deal of energy and imagination to the question of what kind of space is best suited to presenting Shakespeare’s plays. Taylor,

who worked as one of the primary consultants on the design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater, feels that this unique performance space reflects elements of both the Globe playhouse and the courtyards-turned-theaters, in which the young Shakespeare might first have acquired his love of the stage.

The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599, was simple and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised

platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area with three galleries, one above the other. Both theaters use a thrust stage with an open performance area upstage; basically, the entire performance space is in the shape of a capital “T.” The audience sits on three sides of the thrust stage, so the play is staged in the middle of the audience—much like the Elizabethan Swan Theater’s design, for which a traveler’s careful sketch still remains. This immersion of the stage and the action performed on it creates a three-dimensional theater that demands three-dimensional directing, acting, and design elements.

The people sitting in the side seats have the closest interaction with the performers, and the performers with them. The play unfolds between the audience members seated along the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform.

“The backdrop and the scenery for Shakespeare is the human race,” Taylor notes, “so we’re putting Shakespeare into its proper context by making human faces the backdrop for those sitting in any seat in the theater.” “This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience,” according to Taylor. “The courtyard experience was about leaning out of windows. It was about throwing open the windows in the courtyard when the stage was brought through on a cart and leaning out and interacting.” Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the “leaning rails” to watch the players below—like those watching from an inn’s balconies centuries ago when a traveling troupe set up its temporary stage.

The actors and the audience share the experience of seeing and interacting with one another. Taylor thinks that actors benefit tremendously from the courtyard design: “They’re not looking at people sitting in straight rows, disconnected from everybody around them in big seats. There’s a sense of com-

munity in the space, a sense of embracing the performer on stage.” Actors are always fed by the energy generated from their audience. The design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater offers a feast of feedback to the actors on its stage.



CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER'S
COURTYARD THEATER

As an audience member, your facial expressions and body language serve both as the focal point of the actors’ energy and the backdrop for the other audience members seated across from you. “It’s important that we don’t lose the performer among the faces, but it’s essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what’s going on,” Taylor explains. “That’s the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design.”

Other theaters have been modeled upon the Elizabethan experience of courtyard theater, perhaps most notably the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan served as a model for Chicago Shakespeare Theater. With their deep thrust stages, both were designed to create an intimate relationship between actors and audience. Prominent architectural elements in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience and natural wood that creates a feeling of warmth. Brick is an aesthetic choice, but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustical choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls help diffuse sound, sending it in different directions throughout the theater. The sound, lighting and rigging systems are all state-of-the-art. Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s design accommodates a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space.

Shakespearean theater is about people. As Taylor concludes, “You’re the scenery. You’re the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front of, and out of, you.” ■



TEACHER RESOURCE CENTER

The Teacher Resource Center has many books relating to the physical theater of Shakespeare’s time—including many with illustrations, which make it easy for younger and older students alike to imagine how the plays were originally performed. The Center also offers periodicals and additional materials focusing on the reconstructed Globe Theatre in London, and Elizabethan architectural costume design.

TIMELINE

1300

- 1326** Founding of universities at Oxford and Cambridge
- 1348** Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- 1349** Bubonic Plague kills one-third of England's population
- 1387** Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

1400

- ca.1440** Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press
- 1472** Dante's *Divine Comedy* first printed
- 1492** Christopher Columbus lands at Cuba
- 1497** Vasco da Gama sails around Cape of Good Hope

1500

- 1501-4** Michelangelo's *David* sculpture
- 1503** Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
- 1512** Copernicus' *Commentariolus* published, theorizing that Earth and other planets revolve around sun
- 1518** License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorens de Gominzot
- 1519** Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world
- 1519** Conquest of Mexico by Cortez
- 1522** Luther's translation of the New Testament

1525

- 1531** Henry VIII recognized as Supreme Head of the Church of England
- 1533** Henry VIII secretly marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated by Pope
- 1539** Hernando de Soto explores Florida
- 1540** G.L. de Cardenas "discovers" Grand Canyon
- 1541** Hernando de Soto "discovers" the Mississippi

1550

- 1558** Coronation of Queen Elizabeth I
- 1562** John Hawkins begins slave trade between Guinea and West Indies
- 1564** Birth of William Shakespeare and Galileo
- 1565** Pencils first manufactured in England
- 1570** Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth
- 1573** Francis Drake sees the Pacific Ocean

1575

- 1576** Mayor of London forbids theatrical performances in the City
Burbage erects first public theater in England (the "Theater" in Shoreditch)
- 1577** Drake's trip around the world
- 1580** *Essays* of Montaigne published
- 1582** Marriage license issued for William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway
Daughter Susanna Shakespeare christened
- 1585** Christening of son Hamnet and twin Judith
- 1587** Mary Queen of Scots executed
1588 Destruction of the Spanish Armada
- 1592** Shakespeare listed with the Lord Chamberlain's Men

Shakespeare's Plays

ca. 1592-1595

COMEDIES

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

HISTORIES

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

TRAGEDIES

- Titus Andronicus
- Romeo and Juliet

SONNETS

- probably written in this period

TIMELINE

- 1593-4** Plague closes London playhouses for 20 months
1595 Coat of arms granted to Shakespeare's father, John
1596 Death of son Hamnet, age 11
Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*
1597 Shakespeare, one of London's most successful playwrights,
buys New Place, one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon
1599 Globe Theatre opens, as home to the Lord Chamberlain's Men,
with Shakespeare as part-owner

1600

- 1602** Oxford University's Bodleian Library opens
1603 Death of Queen Elizabeth, coronation of James I;
Lord Chamberlain's Men become the King's Men upon endorsement of James I
1603-11 Plague closes London playhouses for at least 68 months (nearly 6 years)
1605 Cervantes' *Don Quixote Part 1* published
1607 Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall;
Founding of Jamestown, Virginia, first English settlement on
American mainland
1608 *A true relation of such Occurances and Accidents of Note as hath passed
in Virginia* by John Smith
Galileo constructs astronomical telescope
1609 Blackfriars Theatre, London's first commercial indoor theater,
becomes winter home of the King's Men
1611 *The Authorized "King James Version"* of the Bible published
1613 Globe Theatre destroyed by fire
1614 Globe Theatre rebuilt
1615 Galileo faces the Inquisition for the first time
1616 Judith Shakespeare marries Thomas Quinney
Death of William Shakespeare, age 52
1618 Copernican system condemned by Roman Catholic Church
1619 First African slaves arrive in Virginia
1623 The First Folio, the first compiled text of Shakespeare's complete works published

1625

- 1625** James I dies, succeeded by Charles I
1633 Galileo recants before the Inquisition
1636 Harvard College founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts
1642 Civil War in England begins
1642 Puritans close theaters throughout England until following the Restoration
of the Monarchy, 18 years later, with Charles II
1649 Charles I beheaded
1649 Commonwealth declared

ca. 1596-1600

COMEDIES

The Merchant of Venice
Much Ado About Nothing
The Merry Wives of Windsor
As You Like It
Twelfth Night

HISTORIES

Richard II
1,2 Henry IV
Henry V

tragedies

Julius Caesar

ca. 1601-1609

COMEDIES

Troilus and Cressida
All's Well That Ends Well

TRAGEDIES

Hamlet
Othello
King Lear
■ Macbeth
Antony and Cleopatra
Timon of Athens
Coriolanus
Measure for Measure

ca. 1609-1613

ROMANCES

Pericles
Cymbeline
The Winter's Tale
The Tempest
The Two Noble Kinsmen

HISTORIES

Henry VIII

MACBETH

Dramatis Personae

DUKE SENIOR *banished by his younger brother Frederick*

DUNCAN *King of Scotland*

MALCOLM *eldest son to Duncan*

DONALBAIN *second son to Duncan*

MACBETH *Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, later King*

LADY MACBETH *Macbeth's wife*

BANQUO *a nobleman of Scotland*

FLEANCE *son to Banquo*

MACDUFF *a nobleman Thane of Fife*

LADY MACDUFF *Macduff's wife*

LENNOX *a nobleman and thane*

ANGUS *a nobleman and thane*

ROSS *a nobleman and thane*

THE WEIRD SISTERS

**PORTER, DOCTOR, SOLDIERS, SERVANTS,
MURDERERS, MESSENGER, APPARITIONS**



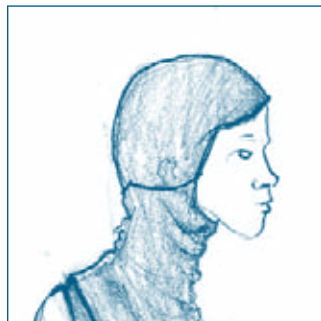
Shakespeare's Story

Three "Weird Sisters" await Macbeth and Banquo as the two warriors return home, victorious from battle. The Witches greet them with strange prophecies: Macbeth will be named Thane of Cawdor

and king, though it will be Banquo who fathers Scotland's future kings. The two friends learn that the first part of the prophecy is, indeed, true: the treasonous Cawdor is executed for treason, and Macbeth's bravery earns him the new title from the grateful King Duncan.

Macbeth returns home, where Lady Macbeth presses him to take destiny into his own hands, murdering the sleeping king, a guest in their home. In the morning, the king's body is discovered; Duncan's sons flee and Macbeth is crowned king. Still, Macbeth cannot stop thinking about the Weird Sisters' final prophecy: it will be Banquo who will father Scotland's royal line. Macbeth hires henchmen to slaughter Banquo and his son Fleance, but the boy narrowly escapes. That night, the ghost of Banquo appears before the guilty king.

Tortured by his fears, Macbeth seeks out the Weird Sisters, and again mistakes their cryptic prophecies as assurance of his success. Their paths covered in blood, Lady Macbeth is tormented into madness as Macbeth leads his country toward the abyss of civil war. And the Weird Sisters' prophecies prove true, each more dark and dire than the last. ■



ILLUSTRATIONS OF *MACBETH* CHARACTERS BY COSTUME DESIGNER ANA KUZMANIC



Act-by-Act Synopsis

ACT ONE

On a barren and wild heath in Scotland, the three Weird Sisters meet in thunder and lightning, and await Macbeth. At a battle camp, King Duncan of Scotland and his son Malcolm learn that Macbeth and Banquo's heroic fighting against the rebels was successful. The Thane of Cawdor, who led the rebels, will be executed, and his title given to Macbeth. Returning from battle, Macbeth and Banquo come upon the Weird Sisters. The witches address Macbeth as the Thane of Cawdor and the future king; they tell Banquo that it will be his heirs who will rule Scotland. Then they disappear. Ross and Angus arrive to bring the two men to the king, and report that Macbeth has been named Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth and Banquo are stunned that the witches' prophecy has come true, and Macbeth muses on the second part of their prediction that he will be king. Duncan receives the warriors warmly and arranges to visit Macbeth's castle. He then names his son Malcolm as heir to the throne—an obstacle in Macbeth's eyes on his way to seeing the second prophecy fulfilled. Lady Macbeth reads her husband's letter telling her of the Weird Sisters' half-fulfilled prophecy and the King's imminent visit to their home. Lady Macbeth thinks her husband too weak-spirited to usurp the crown, but thinks that Duncan's visit will provide them the opportunity. When Macbeth returns home, Lady Macbeth tells him of her plan to murder the king as he sleeps that night, a guest in their home. He recoils, and she tells him that she will take charge. Duncan arrives at Inverness where Lady Macbeth, greeting him hospitably, speaks of how much she and her husband owe to their king. Macbeth fears the consequences of murdering Duncan, but Lady Macbeth furiously defends the plan and insults his manhood in now rescinding what she calls an oath. Macbeth finally agrees to go ahead with the murder that night.

ACT TWO

While he awaits the appointed moment to kill the sleeping Duncan, Macbeth encounters Banquo. They speak of the Weird Sisters, and Banquo warns Macbeth against taking their prophecy seriously. Macbeth dismisses their legitimacy, but agrees with Banquo to speak of them again. Left alone, Macbeth hallucinates a bloody dagger, and fears the dire effects of murdering the king. The bell tolls midnight—the signal for Macbeth to proceed to the king's bedchamber. Having drugged Duncan's guards, Lady Macbeth awaits Macbeth's return from the king's chamber. He appears with the bloody daggers, and tells her that the deed is done. Furious that the murder weapons remain in his hand and that he cannot bring himself to return them to the scene of the crime, she takes the daggers back so that Duncan's guards will appear guilty of the crime. Hearing a knock at the castle door, they retreat to bed. The knocking continues and a drunken porter admits two noblemen, Macduff and Lennox. Macbeth appears to greet them, pretending to have been awakened by their arrival. Macduff heads to Duncan's chambers while Macbeth and Lennox talk about the night's horrific and unnatural storm. Macduff shouts out that the king is murdered. Macbeth goes to investigate, and while he is gone, Lady Macbeth, Banquo, and Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, all gather, awakened by the alarm. Macbeth returns to confirm Macduff's story and reports to the group that, in his rage, he has killed the guards for murdering the king. Malcolm and Donalbain fear that they are no longer safe in Scotland and agree to go their separate ways and flee the country. Macduff and others suspect Malcolm and Donalbain of paying the guards to murder their father, and their flight confirms their suspicions. Macbeth will be crowned king.



TEACHER RESOURCE CENTER

Looking for supplementary material of *Macbeth* for your class? Check out our Teacher Resource Center, located on the Theater's fourth level. Call the Education Department at 312.595.5676 to set up an appointment to visit our collection of resources for teaching Shakespeare.

MACBETH

ACT THREE

Banquo contemplates the truth of the Weird Sisters' prophecy about Macbeth, and wonders if what they said about him will also prove true. Macbeth joins Banquo to remind him of the royal feast that evening, and in answer to the king's questions, Banquo replies that he and his son Fleance plan to ride but will return for dinner. Alone, Macbeth wonders whether his accession to the throne was fruitless if Banquo's heirs are destined to take his place. He plots the deaths of Banquo and his son, sending for two henchmen to do the deed. Macbeth reveals to Lady Macbeth his desire to rid themselves of the threat posed by Banquo and Fleance, and alludes to their murder, then dismisses her summarily from his company. Three murderers assault Banquo and Fleance. Banquo is killed, but his son escapes. At the banquet that night, one of the murderers pulls Macbeth aside to report what has happened. When Macbeth returns to the table, he sees the ghost of Banquo take the last remaining chair. He reacts with astonishment and dread. Lady Macbeth explains that her husband is ill, and Macbeth recovers when the ghost vanishes, but is horrified moments later when it reappears. Lady Macbeth urges their guests to leave, and Macbeth tells his wife that he must immediately seek out the Weird Sisters and learn more. Outside the castle, Lennox and another Scottish nobleman discuss Duncan and Banquo's murders and the flight to England by Malcolm, Donalbain, and now Macduff, who has left to enlist help from King Edward in defeating Macbeth.

ACT FOUR

To respond to Macbeth's demands for more knowledge, the Weird Sisters conjure up three powerful spirits. One warns him that Macduff is a danger; the second tells him that no man born of a woman may harm him; the third tells him he will not fall until the woods at Birnam come to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth surmises from this that nothing can cause his downfall. But when he asks if Banquo's heirs shall ever lay claim to the throne, he is shown Banquo's line stretching out into an unforeseeable future. The witches disappear as Lennox arrives to tell Macbeth that Macduff has deserted. Macbeth decides to act immediately this time to kill Macduff's family as retribution. At Macduff's castle, Lady Macduff is outraged by her husband's flight, leaving his family unprotected. She tells her young son that his father is dead. A messenger tells her that she and her children are in grave danger and must flee—just moments before the murderers appear, killing all they can find in Macduff's unprotected castle. In England, Malcolm tries to assess Macduff's true loyalties. He slanders his own character, questioning his own fitness to rule Scotland because of his many vices. When Macduff cries out in fear for Scotland's future, Malcolm places his full trust in him. Ross seeks out Macduff to report that Macbeth has killed Lady Macduff and their children. Macduff swears revenge, and, with Malcolm, plans Macbeth's downfall.

ACT FIVE

A doctor and gentlewoman look on as Lady Macbeth, walking in her sleep, tries desperately to wash the memory of blood from her hands. She speaks of the murders of Duncan, Banquo, and Lady Macduff. Outside Dunsinane Castle, a group of Scottish rebels prepares to meet the English army led by Malcolm and Macduff, and converge to attack Macbeth's defense. Malcolm orders the soldiers to cut branches from Birnam Wood to use as camouflage as they march toward the castle. Bolstered by the Weird Sisters' predictions, Macbeth waves off news of the gathering troops. He dismisses the doctor's report of a deeply troubled Lady Macbeth; and soon after he is told that she has taken her own life, but he hears the news seemingly without feeling. A messenger reports that the woods appear to be moving toward the castle, and Macbeth recognizes a part of the prophecy now fulfilled. The English and rebel army approaches the castle, and Macbeth readies himself for battle. In hand-to-hand combat, he slays Siward, affirming that the youth, born of woman, is unable to kill him—just as the Weird Sisters prophesized. Macduff now challenges Macbeth. Macbeth, guilty of the murders of Macduff's family, urges him to turn away. Macduff reveals that he was removed from his mother's womb, and therefore not, in fact, born of a woman. Macbeth understands at last the witches' equivocation, and dies by Macduff's sword. With Macbeth's severed head, Macduff hails Malcolm as the new king. Malcolm decrees that all his supporters be made noblemen to celebrate Macbeth's defeat. ■

Something Borrowed, Something New Shakespeare's Sources

*He was more original than the originals.
He breathed upon dead bodies and
brought them into life.*

—Walter Savage Landor, 1846

The detection of [Shakespeare's sources] has its own fascination and is useful insofar as they illustrate the workings of Shakespeare's imagination, but the most notable feature of the play is the dramatist's inventiveness, brilliantly fusing scattered elements from legend, folklore and earlier books and plays into a whole that remains as fresh and original now as when it was composed.

—R.A. Foakes, 1984



As Shakespeare searched into Scotland's history for material for his play, he turned to Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, published in 1587, as he frequently did for his history lessons. Holinshed's history was in part mythology and the tales of oral history, but his stories proved a fertile ground for the active imagination of Shakespeare. Shake-

speare's *Macbeth* is drawn largely from two stories in Holinshed: one of King Duncan and the usurper Macbeth; the other, of King Duff, slain by Donwald with the help of Donwald's ambitious wife. Holinshed's Duncan was an ineffective ruler who depended upon the strength of his warriors—like the tough Macbeth. As in Shakespeare's tale, Macbeth and Banquo are greeted by the prophecies of witches, but in Holinshed, Banquo is an active accomplice to the murder of Duncan. Shakespeare gives Banquo (the reputed ancestor of James I, England's newly crowned king as Shakespeare wrote his new play) a more ambiguous role than did Holinshed. Though Shakespeare's Banquo knows of the prophecies, his character is not directly implicated in the murder, and can be interpreted as a noble foil to Macbeth's villainy. Prior to ascending to England's throne when James was still King James VI of Scotland, he traced his royal ancestry back to this "Banquo." Interestingly, there is no historical evidence that such a Banquo ever existed. He seems to first appear in a myth created by Boece in 1526. But in Shakespeare's time, this story of James's lineage was accepted fact. *Macbeth* retells this story to an England now interested in all things Scottish.



CAWDOR CASTLE, SCOTLAND

According to Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Macbeth was said to rule his country well for many years—a welcome contrast to Duncan's ineffective leadership. Only much later did Macbeth's rule become tyrannical, and his overthrow finally a reaction to his tyranny. Shakespeare crafted his *Macbeth* more darkly, with neither the years of peaceful and effective rule, nor the relief of his subjects who had suffered under the rule of King Duncan before him. Holinshed refers to Duncan's naming of his son as heir to the throne as a breach of Scottish law, which in the eleventh century determined succession by election rather than by primogeniture. Duncan overstepped his powers in naming his son Malcolm as his successor, and Macbeth's outrage was therefore historically more justified. As a powerful warrior and as close kin, Macbeth's own claim to the throne was strong. Shakespeare, however, makes no mention of Duncan's abuse of power here; he treats the King's appointment of his son as natural—as it would have been in Shakespeare's own time. Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth is another creation of the playwright's imagination—borrowed from another story in Holinshed's *Chronicles* of an ambitious Lady Donwald who assisted her husband in the murder of King Duff.



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



Another historical source for *Macbeth* credited by scholars was a book published about 25 years before Shakespeare wrote his play, entitled the *History of Scotland* by George Buchanan—a book that James I attempted to suppress during his reign as Scotland's king. Why such royal interest in this particular history? Buchanan asserts that sovereignty derives from, and remains with, the people: The king who exercises

SCHOLARS' PERSPECTIVES

power against the will of his people, says Buchanan, must be deposed. To James I, who believed in the absolute rule and divine right of a king, Buchanan's was a dangerous text. It was written to justify the 1567 overthrow of James's mother, Mary Queen of Scots, a lawful—and tyrannical—ruler. And it was to be used again in 1642 to depose James's son, Charles I, from the British throne in 1642. Many in Shakespeare's audience embraced the doctrine of divine right and absolute power, but in a country that just one generation later would behead its king, there were clearly dissenting views.

Why does Shakespeare use stories from history—and then add characters, ignore the facts, and play havoc with the passage of time? We can't be certain, but it's interesting to hypothesize about some possible answers. In this exploration, we can get glimpses into Shakespeare's creative genius. ■

FROM A SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE:

Hereafter



Stuart Sherman, who contributes this essay, is an Associate Professor of English and Associate Chair of the Department at Fordham University, and a specialist in eighteenth-century literature.

"When shall we three meet again?"

First line; weird move: Shakespeare opens *Macbeth* at just that point where an ordinary scene might end (conversation finished, meeting adjourned). The witches' question is all next, no now.

As, of course, is their pivotal prophecy: "All hail, Macbeth! That shalt be king hereafter." Hereafter: the word, ordinary enough, accomplishes extraordinary things. It muddles space (here) with time (after), and performs upon Macbeth a paralyzing temporal takeover. "Nothing is," he says to himself, "but what is not"; Samuel Johnson paraphrased the line this way: "Nothing is present to me but that which is really future." Here is nothing, after is all in all.

In *Macbeth's* dark music, hereafter works as both time signature and tonal center. It establishes the shapes of time through which we'll move, and the idea of time to which we'll restlessly return. Eerily, Lady Macbeth repeats the word even though she has not heard the witches speak it (is she somehow their collaborator?) when she greets her husband at his homecoming:

Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!

Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!

Echoing the witches, she also outpaces them in forward thrust. They hailed her husband; she hails the future itself:

Thy letters have transported me

Beyond the ignorant present, and I feel now

The future in the instant.

For her this is liberation, ecstasy; for Macbeth, shaken by these new tricks of time, the inescapable ignorance of the present remains intermittently worth clinging to. "We will proceed no further in this business," he declares, shortly before surrendering his stasis and colluding in their now-copular momentum. *Macbeth's* marriage scenes, among the most profound in any play, track the tensions and torments of two lovers differently disordered by the ways in which they have come unstuck in time.

It is a harrowing measure of their intimacy that, at play's midpoint, they switch derangements. He hurtles towards the future (the next desperate murder, the next deluding prophecy); she stays stuck in the past ("Out, damned spot"), with an obsessiveness that quickly draws her down to madness and annihilation. In the nightmare word-music with which Macbeth receives the news of her death, Shakespeare orchestrates the whole play's terrifying vision of what the mortal mind can do with time. He starts by tapping his keyword (once more, and for the last time) as though it were a tuning fork:

She should have died hereafter:

There would have been a time for such a word.—

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

To the last syllable of recorded time;

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death.

Macbeth here mourns not his wife so much as her mind's timings, which, in the hypnotic overlap and shuttle of the lines that follow, he will not only remember but relive. The ecstasy that Lady Macbeth savored at her husband's homecoming ("I feel now / The future in the instant") is here horrifically fulfilled: in Macbeth's merciless reckoning of ordinary time, the future perpetuates the blank ignorance of the present, invading each

SCHOLARS' PERSPECTIVES

instant in an ongoing usurpation, an endless, empty repetition. Though he mentions his wife only at the start, his soliloquy is nonetheless their marriage's monument: her all-hail hereafter has become first their shared and now his solitary hell.

Macbeth's marriage scenes, among the most profound in any play, track the tensions and torments of two lovers differently disordered by the ways in which they have come unstuck in time.

And by the logic of his language, our hell too. Tomorrow is hereafter's everyday incarnation. Repeating the word as relentlessly and obsessively as his wife once spoke of spots, Macbeth makes it encompass all the everyday processes of deferral—procrastination, hope, ambition, worry, fear, desire—by which we invite the future to distort, dissolve, or paralyze the present, transforming time's abundance into the vacancy of “all our yesterdays.” “I have supped full of horrors,” Macbeth declares, and by play's end so have we: witches, apparitions, murdered parents and slaughtered children. But running under all of these is a phenomenon perhaps more frightening because more familiar: the havoc wrought by the human mind as it makes its tortured way through ordinary time.

For this core horror, the stage itself (Macbeth and Shakespeare know) can serve as apt and painful proving ground:

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

Time always works strangely at the playhouse. Attending a new play, the audience dwells (like the characters) mostly in the here and now; only the actors know (scene by scene, line by line) what comes next. But *Macbeth's* long run (four centuries and counting) has intensified our susceptibility to its tragedy of time. Deeply schooled in its plot, we too know what happens next. Taking our seats, we enter willingly and even eagerly (this is one of the mighty mysteries of theatergoing) into a peculiar temporal contract: we will inhabit the here and the after simultaneously; we will bear the burden of foreknowledge as we watch Macbeth and his Lady make their agonizing way from all-hail to all hell; we will feel the force and terror of their future in the instant that the first witch speaks. ■

FROM A SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE: The Powers of Darkness



David Bevington is the Phyllis Fay Horton Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in the Humanities at the University of Chicago. His publications include: *Tudor Drama and Politics*; *Action Is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture*; *Medieval Drama*; *The Bantam Shakespeare* in 29 paperback volumes; and *The Complete Works of Shakespeare for Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.*

Macbeth is seemingly the last of four great Shakespearean tragedies—*Hamlet* (c. 1599-1601), *Othello* (c. 1603-1604), *King Lear* (c. 1605-1606), and *Macbeth* (c. 1606-1607)—that examine the dimension of spiritual evil as distinguished from the political strife of Roman tragedies such as *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. Whether or not Shakespeare intended *Macbeth* as a culmination of a series of tragedies on evil, the play does offer a particularly terse and gloomy view of humanity's encounter with the powers of darkness.

Macbeth, more consciously than any other of Shakespeare's major tragic protagonists, has to face the temptation of committing what he knows to be a monstrous crime. Macbeth understands the reasons for resisting evil and yet goes ahead with his disastrous plan. His awareness and sensitivity to moral issues, together with his conscious choice of evil, produce an unnerving account of human failure, all the more distressing because Macbeth is so representatively human. He seems to possess freedom of will and accepts personal responsibility for his fate, and yet his tragic doom seems unavoidable. Nor is there eventual salvation to be hoped for, as there is in *Paradise Lost*, since Macbeth's crime is too heinous and his heart too hardened. He is more like Doctor Faustus—damned and in despair.

To an extent not found in the other tragedies, the issue is stated in terms of salvation versus damnation. He, like Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* before him, has knowingly sold his soul for gain. And, although as a mortal he still has time to repent his crimes, horrible as they are, Macbeth cannot find the words to be penitent. “Wherefore could not I pronounce ‘Amen’?” he implores his wife after they have committed the murder. Macbeth's own answer seems to be that he has committed himself so inexorably to evil that he cannot turn back.

SCHOLARS' PERSPECTIVES



THE WEIRD SISTERS IN CST'S 1994
TEAM SHAKESPEARE PRODUCTION OF *MACBETH*

Macbeth is not a conventional morality play (even less so than *Doctor Faustus*) and is not concerned primarily with preaching against sinfulness or demonstrating that Macbeth is finally damned for what he does. A tradition of moral and religious drama has been transformed into an intensely human study of the psychological effects of evil on a particular man and, to a lesser extent, on his wife. A perverse ambition seemingly inborn in Macbeth himself is abetted by dark forces dwelling in the universe, waiting to catch him off guard.



**Character is fate; they know
Macbeth's fatal weakness and
know they can "enkindle" him
to seize the crown by laying
irresistible temptations before him.**



Among Shakespeare's tragedies, indeed, *Macbeth* is remarkable for its focus on evil in the protagonist and on his relationship to the sinister forces tempting him. In no other Shakespearean play is the audience asked to identify to such an extent with the evildoer himself. *Richard III* also focuses on an evil protagonist, but in that play the spectators are distanced by the character's gloating and are not partakers in the introspective soliloquies of a man confronting his own ambition. Macbeth is more representatively human. If he betrays an inclination toward brutality, he also humanely attempts to resist that urge. We witness and struggle to understand his downfall through two phases: the spiritual struggle before he actually commits the crime and the despairing aftermath, with its vain quest for security through continued violence. Evil is thus presented in two aspects: first as an insidious suggestion leading Macbeth toward an illusory promise of gain, and then as a fren-

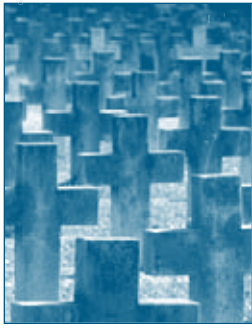
zied addiction to the hated thing by which he is possessed.

If we consider the hypothetical question, what if Macbeth does not murder Duncan, we can gain some understanding of the relationship between character and fate; for the only valid answer is that the question remains hypothetical—Macbeth does kill Duncan, the witches are right in their prediction. Character is fate; they know Macbeth's fatal weakness and know they can "enkindle" him to seize the crown by laying irresistible temptations before him. This does not mean that they determine his choice but, rather, that Macbeth's choice is predictable and therefore unavoidable, even though not preordained. He has free choice, but that choice will, in fact, go only one way.

He is as reluctant as we to see the crime committed, and yet he goes to it with a sad and rational deliberateness rather than in a self-blinding fury. For Macbeth, there is no seeming loss of perspective, and yet there is total alienation of the act from his moral consciousness. Who could weigh the issues so dispassionately and still choose the wrong? Yet the failure is, in fact, predictable; Macbeth is presented to us as typically human, both in his understanding and in his perverse ambition.

We can only hope that the stability to which Scotland returns after his death will be lasting. Banquo's line is to rule eventually and to produce a line of kings reaching down to the royal occupant to whom Shakespeare will present his play, but, when *Macbeth* ends, it is Malcolm who is king. The killing of a traitor (Macbeth) and the placing of his head on a pole replicate the play's beginning in the treason and beheading of the Thane of Cawdor—a gentleman on whom Duncan built "an absolute trust" (1.4.14). Most troublingly, the humanly representative nature of Macbeth's crime leaves us with little assurance that we could resist his temptation. The most that can be said is that wise and good persons such as Banquo and Macduff have learned to know the evil in themselves and to resist it as nobly as they can.

This essay from Longman Publisher's "The Complete Works of Shakespeare" (5th Edition, 2004), edited by David Bevington, is excerpted and reprinted here with permission of the publisher. ■



Shakespeare, Tragedy and Us

We all know something about tragedy. We've lost someone we love; we must leave a place we don't want to leave; we make a mistake

of judgment leading to consequences we never wanted. Tragedy is part of our lives.

But what's the point of picking up a book we know to be full of doom and, by choice, enter so dark a world? Clearly, it's more fun to spend time with an episode of *The Simpsons* than with Act I of *Macbeth*. So why do it?

We respond to stories that show us people who are somehow like us. We can understand the characters because they bear some resemblance to us. We get interested in them and may empathize with them, but when a story is communicating to us, it goes beyond touching our sympathy. As we come to understand the people within it, we can also reach some understanding about our own world outside the story—about ourselves and about the people we know—and about the tragic circumstances we have to face in our own lives.

None of us will ever face the same tragedy that Macbeth, a warrior in eleventh-century Scotland, faces. We don't live in castles. We don't honor kings. We don't think about killing them. And most of us don't believe in witches. So where do we find our story in his?



We will never face the same choices Macbeth does. But it is very likely that we will have to face choices in our lives that seem too big for us.



In this thing we call "tragedy," characters often face some very difficult choices, and we watch as they wrestle with their decisions. In *Macbeth*, we see that choice made early in the play, and we experience the terrible assault upon a man because of the choices he made. In tragedy, the hero faces some "fearful passage"—a path traveled for the first time where old answers and old behaviors don't work. The stakes are high and the risk to the individual—and sometimes to an entire society, as in *Macbeth*—is great. Russ McDonald, a Shakespeare scholar, points out that we must not look at the tragic hero as an inher-



photo by Liz Lauren

BEN CARLSON AS MACBETH IN CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER'S 2009 PRODUCTION OF *MACBETH*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES.

ently weak individual who "gets what he (or she) deserves." The heroes of tragedy typically display great strengths, says McDonald. Their tragedy lies not so much in a weakness of character, but in a "kind of tragic incompatibility between the hero's particular form of greatness and the earthly circumstances that he or she is forced to confront." Macbeth was a courageous and violent warrior who served his king and protected Scotland. But the strengths of a great warrior are not necessarily those of peacetime, or of a country's ruler.

We will never face the same choices Macbeth does. But we are likely to face choices in our lives that seem too big for us. That we will be required to go through some "fearful passage" of our own, where old ways of thinking and behaving don't work. That we will face head-on the consequences of choices we've made—and wish desperately that what's done could somehow be undone.

What makes art different from life is exactly that: what's done can be undone. The tragedy is temporary. We close the book. We leave the theater. As we enter that world and come to know its characters, we also come to know something about ourselves. We learn. The damage that is permanent and irreversible to tragedy's heroes is reversible and temporary for us as onlookers. And when our own "fearful passage" comes along, something we have learned along the way about ourselves and the nature of others may help us make our choice. ■

MACBETH



1606 and All That

The first years of a new century were pivotal ones in England's history. In 1603 the great Queen Elizabeth's 45-year rule came to an end. The "Virgin Queen" died without children and left the supremely important question of succession unanswered until her final days. In a country whose entire system of law and government centered around its monarch, the absence of an heir to Elizabeth was a source of pervasive anxiety, instability and fear throughout her long reign, but particularly in her final years as her subjects faced the unknown ahead. No general election could solve this problem. Only Elizabeth could resolve it peaceably, and she withheld her decision.

After her death, Elizabethan England became Stuart England with the accession of the new king, James I, formerly King James VI of Scotland. James was the son of the devout Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, who, claiming her right to the English throne in 1595, was beheaded by order of her cousin, Queen Elizabeth. Some scholars suggest that the beheadings that bookend *Macbeth* echo the horrible public death of the king's own mother. It is clear that this very Scottish play was inspired by this very Scottish king, who had recently begun his reign over an uncertain England.

James I became the royal patron of Shakespeare's acting company, which was then renamed the "King's Men" in 1604. Traditionally scholars have looked at *Macbeth* as a play written by Shakespeare to flatter his new king and patron. Banquo, one of the play's main characters, was reputed to be the ancestor of James I (or so the legend goes), and *Macbeth* retells the moment in Scottish history when the royal line was passed to James's family by prophecy. (See "Something Borrowed, Something New.") But scholarship in more recent years suggests a very different reading of the relationship between the events of James's accession and Shakespeare's imaginative journey in *Macbeth*.

When James VI of Scotland ascended the British throne to become King James I of England, he was the first non-English king since the Norman Invasion in the eleventh century, more than 500 years before. He brought with him a hope for unity and peace in unsettled times fraught with anxiety. The Catholics, Anglican Protestants, and Puritan extremists all demanded a voice in the political life of England. In a society where opposing ideas became radical and absolute, the bloody civil wars resulted less than a half-century later in total social and

political breakdown. The Elizabethan Age, for so long viewed by historians as a time of great stability, has come to be seen by contemporary scholars as a time of ferment and fear.

James came to England in 1603, equipped with a future that his three predecessors on the English throne had notably lacked: three children—and an heir to assure stability and the transfer of power. History, however, proved otherwise. It was James's son, Charles I, who was to be beheaded a generation later in the civil wars.

Who was this foreign king upon whom the English placed such hopes—and fears? He had been crowned once before: as a one-year-old, the infant James became King James VI of Scotland after his father was brutally murdered and his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, was driven into English exile. The history of sixteenth-century Scotland was a bloody one. As James VI grew up, he watched as those nearest him were assassinated. As a teenager, he began to rule Scotland on his own, but was himself captured and held hostage for several months by a group of Scottish lords. The perilous nature of Scotland's politics and the power of its noblemen is reflected in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

James I came to England proclaiming his lineage, his rightful claim to the English throne. A genealogy published in 1604, the year of his coronation, traced the new king's lineage back through Fleance, the son of Banquo in Shakespeare's play. One of the great triumphal arches constructed for his coronation procession depicts James I receiving the royal scepter from his English ancestor, King Henry VII. He was there, in other words, by "Divine Right"—a doctrine that greatly interested James, as it had his predecessor, Elizabeth. Both viewed the monarch as God's deputy on earth and rebellion as an act of disobedience against God. James wrote and published a book on his political philosophy, defending the power of the absolutist state and its ruler.



photo by Liz Lauren

KAREN ALDRIDGE AS LADY MACBETH IN CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER'S 2009 PRODUCTION OF *MACBETH*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

MACBETH

On November 5, 1605 (perhaps just months before Shakespeare began to write *Macbeth*), security forces discovered a secret cache of gunpowder below the Houses of Parliament, powerful enough to destroy the entire government of Britain.

Gunpowder—considered the devil's invention, revealed to a friar-scientist—had the eerie and numinous reputation in the Renaissance that atomic weaponry acquired in the 1950s... Though monks or friars had killed single rulers, never had the destruction of a whole court or class been attempted at one blow.

—Garry Wills, 1995

According to Alan Sinfield, the violence of Guy Fawkes and the other Catholic revolutionaries was a response to years of state violence against Catholic resistance to the state's efforts to centralize control of religious institutions. During the trial, one Jesuit conspirator invoked a rhetorical device of half-truths in his own defense, which became widely known as “equivocation” (see the Porter's reference to equivocators in Act 2.3), and was the subject of angry public debate at the same time that Shakespeare was writing a story of spoken half-truths—and their power over Macbeth's imagination.

Guy Fawkes and his co-conspirators were convicted and the Gunpowder Plot aborted, but the age of modern terrorism was born—a terrible reminder to King James I and his subjects that no government or king, even one with legitimate heirs, is truly secure. In the months following the Gunpowder Plot, Shakespeare wrote his *Macbeth*—a tale of political terrorism, of half-truths, and of kings and governments unseated. And England, which at long last had its monarch seated with heirs in place, came to understand that political security was still out of reach. The Gunpowder Plot is still celebrated in England each year on November 5: Guy Fawkes dummies are burned in effigy and fireworks and bonfires blaze across the country.

The Weird Sisters that inhabit *Macbeth's* untamed heath were not the stuff of fairy tale to James I and his contemporaries; they were something to be feared and eradicated. King James I himself had written a book about witchcraft. During his reign, witch hunts and the persecution of suspected practitioners were commonplace. The King followed the court proceedings closely, and at one trial cross-examined the defendants himself. Witches, with their power over the rational side of man, were viewed as real danger, an evil to be expunged from a law-abiding society.

In the sixteenth century, European governments evolved from medieval feudalism to the absolutist state that characterized the Renaissance. In a feudal state, the king held authority among a group of peers who were his equals—much as we see represented in *Macbeth's* eleventh-century Scotland. But in an absolutist state, according to historian Alan Sinfield, power became centralized in the monarch. The aristocracy as well as other groups contested this loss of power, and in England the absolutist state was never fully realized. But the question



photo by Liz Lauren

PHILLIP JAMES BRANNON AS MALCOLM IN
CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER'S 2009 PRODUCTION
OF *MACBETH*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

of how much power rested in the king and how much remained outside the monarch's domain was still a contested doctrine in Stuart England as Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* and presented it to the new Stuart king. James I, like his predecessor Elizabeth, had strong views about a monarch's absolute power. And while many in Shakespeare's audience would have embraced the absolutist views of their new king, many did not. Those dissenting voices would lead to a civil war 40 years later that would dethrone and execute James's son, Charles I.

What Shakespeare himself believed is a topic of much debate. Is *Macbeth* a play intended to celebrate divine right and the absolute power of the monarchy—and hence, to flatter James? Or is it instead a subtle warning, carefully encoded in the lines of its text to beware of the absolute power of any ruler over his subjects? Shakespeare scholars continue to argue this point. Perhaps he intended no single message at all but wanted instead to engage in a dramatic portrayal of the questions. If that was the playwright's intention in 1606, it is still working today, 400 years later. How much power do we give to those who rule us? How should that power be divided? How much power remains with the people ruled by a government? And when—and how—must the abuse of power by a ruler be curbed? *Macbeth* leads us to explore these questions for ourselves, in a world vastly different from the one he knew. ■

MACBETH



Dueling Macbeths Erupt in Riots!

Do you believe that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* incited one of the most violent riots in American history? Though it is a play swirling in superstition and violence, all that stays on stage, right?

Not on the night of May 10, 1849 in New York City, when a theater performance provoked rocks and bricks hurled in rage and language as hateful as any on the stage.

Why such passionate and chaotic anger? The altercation stemmed from a longstanding argument between two famous Shakespearean actors claiming to be the best—the Englishman Charles Macready and the American Edwin Forrest. The English Macready's acting style was intellectual, refined, and by American standards, more affected. By contrast, the American Forrest's style was emotional and explosive. An attractive, well-built man, he expressed the characters he played in a very physical manner. Each man was fiercely loyal to his own country. Macready believed Americans to be ignorant, vulgar and lacking in taste. Forrest resented the influence of English actors on the American stage. He once wrote to a friend that, "An American needs to reside in Europe only a few months to feel his own country is blessed beyond all others." The two routinely took turns trading insults and jibes. In Edinburgh, Forrest was booed from the audience at Macready's performance of *Hamlet*. Then, when Macready began his American tour, Forrest followed him from city to city, booking the nearest theater and performing the same roles. The competing tours took on the tone of a sports rivalry, one Macready could not hope to win against Forrest's "home field advantage."

The rivalry came to a climax in New York. On May 7, 1849, Macready opened *Macbeth* at New York's new Astor Place Opera House. Forrest opened his *Macbeth* just one mile away. The audience booed Macready from the moment he took stage. But he continued to perform until a hurled chair narrowly missed him and forced the remaining orchestra members out. Macready bowed to the audience and informed the theater that he had "fulfilled his obligation." He planned to leave America on the next boat, but was flattered into staying by a petition signed by 47 prominent citizens, including noted American writers Washington Irving and Herman Melville. Macready decided to stay, and *Macbeth* was scheduled again for three days later.

In the following days flyers and handbills flooded the streets proclaiming: "Workingmen! Shall Americans or English rule the city?" The handbills were printed by the "American Committee," a jingoistic group that favored "America for Americans," and played to the public's prejudice against the growing number of immigrants competing for employment in the United States.

City officials ordered 325 local policemen and 200 members of the Seventh Regiment to keep the peace surrounding the theater. As police rushed in to remove people for throwing trash and rocks on stage, the battle escalated outside. Rioters began throwing bricks through the theater windows.

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**In the following days flyers and handbills flooded the streets proclaiming: "Workingmen! Shall Americans or English rule the city?"**  
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Protesters trying to set the Opera House on fire were arrested. The mob pressed closer, trying to force their way into the Opera House where Macready was acting. Finally, the police and soldiers fired on the crowd. The riot broke up and the theater was saved from destruction. Between twenty-two and thirty-one people died, and more than 100, including police, soldiers and innocent onlookers, were wounded.

And what happened to Charles Macready? Disguised, he left the theater with the fleeing audience. Catching a train to Boston, he left America by boat twelve days later and never returned. The night of the riot Edwin Forrest was performing *Spartacus* and, although authorities urged him to cancel his performance, he insisted that the show must go on. ■

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

1600s *To the playhouse, where we saw Macbeth, which, though I have seen it often, yet is it one of the best plays for a stage, and a variety of dancing and music, that ever I saw.*

—SAMUEL PEPYS, 1667

In reading some bombast speeches of Macbeth, which are not to be understood, [Ben Jonson] us'd to say that it was horror, and I am much afraid that this is so.

—JOHN DRYDEN, 1667

1700s *[As You Like It] begins with a reflection on the first, and I may add the principal, concern in life, the education of children. Men are often more sedulous in training the brutes of their kennels, their mews and their stables, than they seem to be about the heirs of their blood, their fortunes, or their honours. In sad truth it may be said that we seldom meet with a jockey, an huntsman, or a sportsman, who is half so well-bred as his horse, his hawks, or his hounds...*

—ELIZABETH GRIFFITH, 1775

To say much in the Praise of this Play I cannot, for the Plot is a sort of History, and the Character of Mackbeth (sic) and his Lady are too monstrous (sic) for the Stage. But it has obtained, and in too much Esteem with the Million for any Man yet to say much against it.

—CHARLES GIDDON, 1710

The Arguments by which Lady Macbeth persuades Her Husband to commit the Murder afford a Proof of Shakespeare's Knowledge of Human Nature. She urges the Excellence and Dignity of Courage, a glittering Idea which has dazzled Mankind from Age to Age, and animated sometimes the Housebreaker and sometimes the Conqueror; but this Sophism Macbeth has for ever destroyed by distinguishing true from false Fortitude in a Line and a half, of which it may almost be said that they ought to bestow Immortality on the Author though all his other Productions had been lost. "I dare do all that may become a Man, / Who dares do more is none."

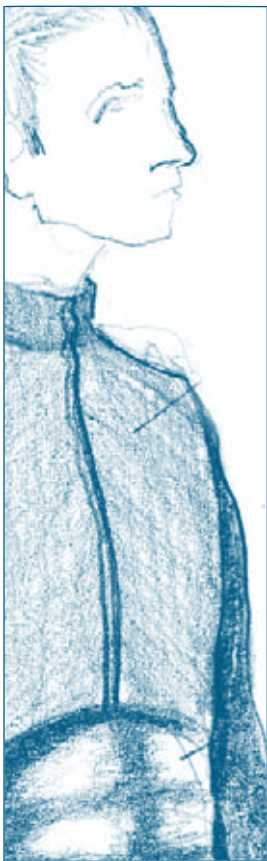
—SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1745

This nation has in all ages been much more addicted to folly and superstition than any other whatever. The belief of GHOSTS and APPARITIONS is at present as strongly implanted in the minds of the major part of the inhabitants of this kingdom as it was in the days when ignorance and want of knowledge and experience blinded the eyes of man. I have always looked upon this foible as the creation of guilt or weakness. FEAR is at the centre of both... In the tragedy of Macbeth the bard has finely pictured the condition of a guilty mind, and the scene when MACBETH goes to murder DUNCAN is one of the strongest proofs that a GHOST or APPARITION proceeds either from GUILT or FEAR, or is a mixture of both.

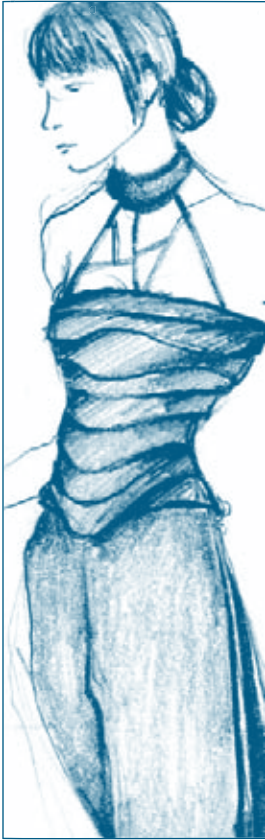
—ARTHUR MURPHY, 1754

...the poet has given to Macbeth the very temper to be wrought upon by such suggestions. The bad man is his own tempter. Richard III had a heart that prompted him to do all that the worst demon could have suggested, so that the witches had been only an idle wonder in his story; nor did he want such a counselor as Lady Macbeth... But Macbeth, of a generous disposition, and good propensities, but with vehement passions and aspiring wishes, was a subject liable to be seduced by splendid prospects, and ambitious counsels... Macbeth's emotions are the struggles of conscience; his agonies are the agonies of remorse. They are lessons of justice, and warnings to innocence. I do not know that any dramatic writer, except Shakespear, (sic) has set forth the pangs of guilt separate from the fear of punishment.

—ELIZABETH MONTAGU, 1769



WHAT THE CRITICS SAY



Every Play of Shakespere (sic) abounds with instances of his excellence in distinguishing characters... but because the contrast makes the distinction more apparent; and of these none seem to agree so much in situation, and to differ so much in disposition, as RICHARD THE THIRD and MACBETH. Both are soldiers, both usurpers; both attain the throne by the same means, by treason and murder; and both lose it too in the same manner, in battle against the person claiming it as lawful heir. Perfidy, violence and tyranny are common to both; and those only, their obvious qualities, would have been attributed indiscriminately to both by an ordinary dramatic writer. But Shakespere, in conformity to the truth of history, as far as it led him, and by improving upon the fables which have been blended with it, has ascribed opposite principles and motives to the same designs and actions, and various effects to the operation of the same events upon different tempers.

Richard and Macbeth, as represented by him, agree in nothing but their fortunes... Ambition is common to both; but in Macbeth it proceeds only from vanity, which is flattered and satisfied by the splendour of a throne: in Richard it is founded upon pride; his ruling passion is the lust of power. But the crown is not Macbeth's pursuit through life: he had never thought of it till it was suggested to him by the witches... The crimes Richard commits are for his advancement, not for his security: he is not drawn from one into another; but he premeditates several before he begins... A distinction still stronger is made in the article of courage, though both are possessed of it even to an eminent degree; but in Richard it is intrepidity, and in Macbeth no more than resolution: in him it proceeds from exertion, not from nature; in enterprise he betrays a degree of fear, though he is able, when occasion requires, to stifle and subdue it.

—THOMAS WHATELY, c. 1772

This short dialogue between Duncan and Banquo, whilst they are approaching the gates of Macbeth's castle (1.6.1-10) has always appeared to me a striking instance of what in painting is termed repose. Their conversation very naturally turns upon the beauty of its situation... The subject of this quiet and easy conversation gives that repose so necessary to the mind after the tumultuous bustle of the preceding scenes, and perfectly contrasts the scene of horror that immediately succeeds. It seems as if Shakespeare asked himself, What is a prince likely to say to his attendants on such an occasion? Whereas the modern writers seem, on the contrary, to be always searching for new thoughts, such as would never occur to men in the situation which is represented.

—JOSHUA REYNOLDS, 1780

The late Mr. Whately's Remarks... have shown with the utmost clearness of distinction and felicity of arrangement, that what in Richard III is fortitude, in Macbeth is no more than resolution. But this judicious critic having imputed the cause of Macbeth's inferiority in courage to his natural disposition, induces me to dissent in one particular... Throughout such parts of this drama as afford opportunities for a display of personal bravery, Macbeth sometimes screws his courage to the sticking place but never rises into constitutional heroism. Instead of meditating some decisive stroke on the enemy, his restless and self-accusing mind discharges itself in splenetic effusions and personal invectives on the attendants about his person. His genuine intrepidity had forsaken him when he ceased to be a virtuous character. He would not deceive himself into confidence, and depends on forced alacrity, and artificial valour, to extricate him from his present difficulties.

—THOMAS DAVIES, 1784

1800s

Though some resemblance may be traced between the Charms in Macbeth, and the Incantations in [Middleton's The Witch], which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakspeare (sic). His Witches are distinguished from the Witches of Middleton by essential differences. [Middleton's] are creatures to whom man or woman plotting some dire mischief might resort for occasional consultation. [Shakespeare's] originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet with Macbeth's, he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. [Middleton's] Witches can hurt the

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body; [Shakespeare's] have power over the soul. Hecate in Middleton has a Son, a low buffoon; the hags of Shakspeare have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul Anomalies, of whom we know not whence they are sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending... The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth.

—CHARLES LAMB, 1808

The low porter soliloquy I believe written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakespeare's consent—and that finding it take, he with the remaining ink of a pen otherwise employed just interpolat-ed it with the sentence, 'I'll devil-porter it no further...' Of the rest not one syllable has the ever-present being of Shakespeare.

—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, c. 1813

Macbeth (generally speaking) is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakespear's (sic) plays. It moves upon the verge of an abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death. The action is desperate and the reaction is dreadful. It is a huddling together of fierce extremes, a war of opposite natures which of them shall destroy the other... The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under our feet. Shakespeare's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion.

—WILLIAM HAZLITT, 1817

Macbeth has forgot that he was born of woman... In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers and the murder must be insulated—cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs—locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested, laid asleep, tranced, racked into a dread armistice, time must be annihilated, relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is that, when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended it.

—THOMAS DE QUINCEY, 1823

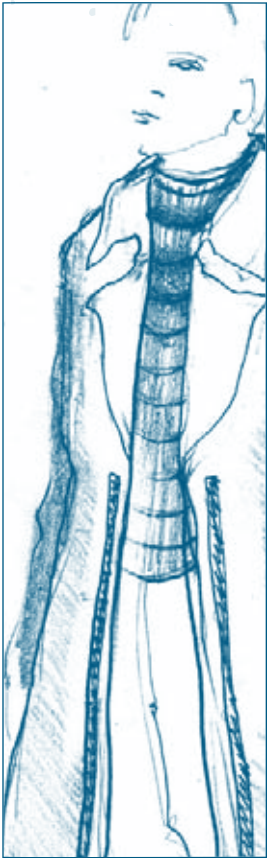
We must then bear in mind, that the first idea of murdering Duncan is not suggested by Lady Macbeth to her husband: it springs within his mind, and is revealed to us before his first interview with his wife—before she is introduced, or even alluded to... It will be said, that the same 'horrid suggestion' presents itself spontaneously to her on the reception of his letter; or rather, that the letter itself acts upon her mind as the prophecy of the Weird Sisters on the mind of her husband, kindling the latent passion for empire into a quenchless flame... The guilt is thus more equally divided than we should suppose, when we hear people pitying 'the noble nature of Macbeth,' bewildered and goaded on to crime, solely or chiefly by the instigation of his wife.

—ANNA BROWNELL JAMESON, 1833

The poet has endowed these creatures [the weird sisters] with the power to tempt and delude men, to entangle them with oracles of double meaning, with delusion and deception, and even to try them, as Satan in the book of Job, with sorrow and trouble, with storms and sickness; but they have no authority with fatalistic power to do violence to the human will. Their promises and their prophecies leave ample scope for freedom of action; their occupations are 'deeds without a name.' They are simply the embodiment of inward temptation; they come in storm and vanish in air, like corporeal impulses, which, originating in the blood, cast sisters only in the sense in which men carry their own fates within their own bosoms. Macbeth, in meeting them, has to struggle against no external power, but only with his own nature; they bring to light the vile side of his character... He does not stumble upon the plans of



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his royal ambition, because the allurements approaches him from without; but his temptation is sensibly awakened in him, because those plans have long been slumbering in his soul. Within himself dwell the spirits of evil which allure him with the delusions of his aspiring mind.

—G.G. GERVINUS, 1849-50

The weird sisters, says Gervinus, 'are simply the embodiment of inward temptation.' They are surely much more than this. If we must regard the entire universe as a manifestation of an unknown somewhat which lies behind it, we are compelled to admit that there is an apocalypse of power auxiliary to vice, as real as there is a manifestation of virtuous energy... The history of the race, and the social medium in which we live and breathe, have created forces of good and evil which are independent of the will of each individual man and woman. The sins of past centuries taint the atmosphere of to-day. We move through the world subject to accumulated forces of evil and of good outside ourselves.

—EDWARD DOWDEN, 1881

Macbeth is not an historical play, though the chief personages that appear in it have a place in history. On the contrary, its soul is mythical, and it belongs to an age of fable as thoroughly as Oedipus. Even in Holinshed, the chronicler from whom the poet derived almost wholly the outer body of his drama, the narrative is mythical, changing suddenly from the dry fact into a Marvelous Tale... But Shakespeare has taken these mythical outlines, and filled them with human motives and actions... We must grasp the very heart of the poet's conception: the Weird Sisters are both outside and inside the man. They are twofold, yet this twofoldness must be seen at last in unity, as the double manifestation of the same ultimate spiritual fact. So all mythology must be grasped: the deities of Homer are shown both as internal and external in relation to the action person. So too Religion teaches: God is in the world, is its ruler, but He is also in the heart of man... Such is the grand mythical procedure of the poet, itself two-sided, and requiring the reader to be two-sided; he must have two eyes, and both open yet one vision.

—DENTON J. SNIDER, 1887

If you want to know the truth about Lady Macbeth's character, she hasn't one. There never was no such person. She says things that will set people's imagination to work if she says them in the right way: that is all. I know: I do it myself. You ought to know: you set people's imaginations to work, don't you? Though you know very well that what they imagine is not there, and that when they believe you are thinking ineffable things you are only wondering whether it would be considered vulgar to have shrimps for tea, or whether you could seduce me into ruining my next play by giving you a part in it.

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, 1921 LETTER TO ACTRESS MRS. PATRICK CAMPBELL

We are confronted by mystery, darkness, abnormality, hideousness: and therefore by fear. The word 'fear' is ubiquitous. All may be unified as symbols of this emotion. Fear is predominant. Everyone is afraid. There is scarcely a person in the play who does not feel and voice at some time a sickening, nameless terror. The impact of the play is thus exactly analogous to a nightmare, to which state there are many references.

—G. WILSON KNIGHT, 1930

Macbeth surrendered his soul before the play begins. When we first see him he is already invaded by those fears which are to render him vicious and which are finally to make him abominable. They will also reveal him a great poet.

—MARK VAN DOREN, 1939

But Macbeth is at bottom any man of noble intentions who gives way to his appetites. And who at one time or another has not been that man? Who, looking back over his life, cannot perceive some moral catastrophe that he escaped by inches? Or did not escape. Macbeth reveals how close we who thought ourselves safe may be to the precipice. Few readers, however, feel any such kinship with Macbeth as

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they do with Hamlet. We do not expect to be tempted to murder; but we do know what it is to have a divided soul. Yet Hamlet and Macbeth are imaginative brothers. The difference is that Macbeth begins more or less where Hamlet left off.

—HAROLD C. GODDARD, 1951

That the man who breaks the bonds that tie him to other men... is at the same time violating his own nature and thwarting his own deepest needs, is something that the play dwells on with a special insistence.

—L.C. KNIGHTS, 1959

The actor, who impersonates Macbeth, is the priest whose duty it is, with a liturgy of words and gesture, to commemorate the sacrifice of a crowned king. He is directly connected by historical sequence with his forerunners, who, as priests at the altar, shed the blood of human sacrifice. The bloodshed now is symbolical, imaginary; but the ritual is still concerned with sacrifice.

—TYRONE GUTHRIE, 1962

Macbeth is not a play about the moral crime of murder; it is a play about the dramatically conventional crime of killing the lawful and anointed king. The convention gives a ritual quality to the action, and the element of reversed magic to the imagery that enables the poet to identify the actors with the powers of nature.

—NORTHROP FRYE, 1965

This is the work of time; as usual in Shakespeare, evil, however great, burns itself out, and time is the servant of providence. Nowhere is this clearer than in Macbeth.

—FRANK KERMODE, 1972

Macbeth appeals to us, even as he repels us, by his unspoken and perhaps unspeakable intuitions of a life within himself and beyond himself to which we too respond, and tremble as we do.

—MAYNARD MACK, JR., 1973

In simplest terms, what has been shown is that killing the king is almost inevitably to be attempted and yet is almost inevitably unperformable. The king can be killed, but the whole world, human, natural, and supernatural, reacts to offer a new king. Regicide is finally in some strange way impossible, for better and for worse.

—MAYNARD MACK, JR., 1973

Why had the severed head to be brought back? Precisely because it too focuses our response: we no sooner see it than we decide, if only unconsciously, that this is not Macbeth. The head, from which life has fled, represents the tyrant, the outer man; it serves as a ghastly reminder that there was an inner man. No one of the survivors can speak for the Macbeth of the soliloquies: we, the audience, have to do so for ourselves, and the play's tragic effect depends upon our accepting this challenge.

—E.A.J. HONIGMANN, 1976

Critics who chide me for dwelling on unpleasant and even bloody subjects miss the point: art shows us how to get through and transcend pain, and a close reading of any tragic work (Macbeth comes immediately to mind) will allow the intelligent reader to see how and why the tragedy took place, and how we, personally, need not make these mistakes. The more violent the murders in Macbeth, the more relief one can feel at not having to perform them. Great art is cathartic; it is always moral.

—JOYCE CAROL OATES, c. 1980



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A world that maintains itself by violence must, for the sake of sanity, fence off some segment—family, the block, the neighborhood, the state—within which violence is not the proper mode of action. In this 'civilized' segment of the world, law, custom, hierarchy, and tradition are supposed to supersede the right of might. Although this inner circle is no more 'natural' or 'unnatural' than the outer one... the play insists that the inner world is bound in accordance with a principle of nature which is equivalent to a divine law.

—MARILYN FRENCH, 1981

Shakespearean tragedy constitutes an extraordinary balancing act in which the theater explores the most mystifying contradictions in human experience; and, unlike later attempts by dramatists and literary critics alike to explain away the mysteries, it has come down to us not only as our heritage but as our contemporary.

—NORMAN RABKIN, 1984

In a fairy tale such wishes would cost us dearly, and justly; yet we cannot really feel guilty for having them. In his susceptibility to conventional human desires, and his momentary willingness to forget the reasons they must be suppressed, Macbeth is one of us.

—ROBERT WATSON, 1984

A claim to a monopoly of legitimate violence is fundamental in the development of the modern State; when that claim is successful, most citizens learn to regard State violence as qualitatively different from other violence and perhaps they don't think of State violence as violence at all... Macbeth focuses major strategies by which the State asserted its claim at one conjuncture.

—ALAN SINFIELD, 1986

At the end of the banquet scene I remember sitting watching him across that table—we couldn't have been farther apart, and there's such a lot of time for Lady Macbeth to watch him in the scene—watching, and knowing that in my attempt to give him what I believed he wanted, I had unleashed a monster. He was completely gone from me and he would never come back. It was a feeling of absolute hopelessness.

—SINEAD CUSACK, 1998 (LADY MACBETH IN THE 1986 RSC PRODUCTION)

In its self-conception, in its stage history, in the doubleness of its final tableau, Macbeth seems almost paradigmatically to be a play that refuses to remain contained within the safe boundaries of fiction. It is a tragedy that demonstrates the refusal of tragedy to be so contained. As it replicates, it implicates. Things will not remain within their boundaries: sleepers and forests walk; the dead and the deeds return; the audience stares at forbidden sights. This is what the plot of Macbeth is about.

—MARJORIE GARBER, 1987

What he suffers from is the first form of fear... the fear of beginning or entering the process that will bring things to fruition, the fear of his own ability to make things happen, to bring the future to birth. Fear in this sense is inseparable from hope; it is even a form of hope. It is what the future inspires you with when you feel your power to shape the future at its height. Fear possesses Macbeth as a passion amounting to a belief that the future is not something which will simply happen of its own accord, but something which he can and perhaps must make happen.

—ADRIAN POOLE, 1987

He cannot bear to wait. He cannot endure the 'interim.' Pondering interims is exactly what Macbeth cannot abide. That is why he is associated throughout the play with prematurity, with getting there or doing something before something or somebody else. This is a valuable quality in a warrior, in a life-or-death emergency. But Macbeth is always in an emergency, desperate to overtake, to leap over, to outrun.

—ADRIAN POOLE, 1987



WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

1900s
continued

Lady Macbeth and her society confuse womanhood with humanhood. In rejecting that which she has been made to think is weak and womanly within her in order to become cruel and manly, she moves away from her humanity toward the demonic, toward becoming a life-denying witch.

—ROBERT KIMBROUGH, 1990

The relationship between Lord and Lady Macbeth has been one of mutuality and sharing; yet they are prevented from attaining and maintaining a full range of human character traits because of cultural attempts to render some exclusively feminine and some exclusively masculine... The drama of Macbeth contains a fierce war between gender concepts of manhood and womanhood played out upon the plain of humanity. In a metaphoric sense, as well as in the final dramatic siege, Macbeth loses the battlefield.

—ROBERT KIMBROUGH, 1990

Macbeth is one of the Shakespearean plays nearest to the Greeks in its concept of Fate, and reaches forward to the twentieth century in its psychological insight.

—ROBERTSON DAVIES, 1990

The reason that Macbeth can never be seen simply as a butcher, a vile renegade, or a foolish warrior who is henpecked by his wife and hoodwinked by some witches is because the complexity and subtlety of his mind are realized, through his language, to a remarkable degree.

—DAVID YOUNG, 1990

The key difference between Macbeth and Malcolm seems to be that the one cannot encounter the disposition to evil within himself without an accompanying compulsion to act it out, while the other can put it into words, which are retractable and, in this case, harmless. Malcolm will presumably be less corruptible in power because he can contemplate his own potential for sin, articulate it to himself and others, and then draw back from it. The word-deed distinction, crucial to reasonable human behavior, will be restored under his regime. Language will be less magical, behavior less compulsive.

—DAVID YOUNG, 1990

Macbeth is dealt a hand of cards with a king in it, but how he is to play his hand is left entirely up to him. ... It is Macbeth himself who must make the fatal choice. Macbeth is thus a tragedy about fate and free will, about a man choosing a morally wrong way to fulfill a fate and the tragedy that results from this exercise of free will.

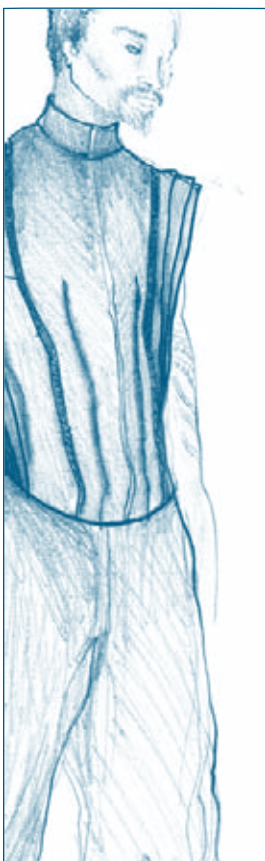
—JERRY CRAWFORD, 1990

His awareness and sensitivity to moral issues, together with his conscious choice of evil, produce an unnerving account of human failure, all the more distressing because Macbeth is so representatively human. He seems to possess freedom of will and accepts personal responsibility for his fate, and yet his tragic doom seems unavoidable.

—DAVID BEVINGTON, 1992

Macbeth's error is that he misinterprets to his advantage the prophecies and warnings of the witches; he does, in other words, precisely what all of us do every day—he misreads a text, only we do it with literary texts, and so the consequences for us are relatively minor. The text that Macbeth misreads is the text of the world, of the shadowing moral world of good and evil in which misunderstanding can have fatal results.

—RUSS McDONALD, 1993



WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

He comes out of [Duncan's bedchamber] a changed man. Never can he be the same man again. There is not a single moment that he enjoys the thought of killing. It torments him, though it also impels him. And never does he enjoy the fruit of his killing. He comes out of that room demented. He went into it terrified, as he says all the time; he comes out of it crazy. Lady Macbeth has never before seen the man who comes out of that door; he is a stranger to her. They have stopped communicating and there is no way that they will ever communicate again... Had she been other than she was he would not have done it. The thought may have been present, but so was the fear of the thought: the first time we seem him think it his hair stands on end. Always the thought strikes fear into him... He does the murder for her, and it destroys them both.

—DEREK JACOBI, 1998 (MACBETH IN THE 1993-4 RSC'S PRODUCTIONS)

2000s

To say something was wicked meant literally to Shakespeare's audience that it was under the spell of a witch (wicca). Something "had gotten into" Macbeth—the inner disturbance induced by whatever has the power to witch, bewitch or charm: the Weird Sisters. Interpretations of the disturbance range all the way from total infestation by supernatural powers to the mere catalyzing of Macbeth's latent seed of ambition.

—DIANA MAJOR SPENCER, 2000

It is surely impossible to deny that certain words—'time,' 'man,' 'done'—and certain themes—'blood,' 'darkness'—are the matrices of the language of Macbeth. In the period of the great tragedies these matrices appear to have been fundamental to Shakespeare's procedures. One might guess they took possession of him as he did his preparatory reading. That they are thereafter used with conscious intention and skill seems equally certain. They are one aspect of the language of the plays that show deliberation... In these echoing words and themes, these repetitions that are so unlike the formal repetitions of an earlier rhetoric, we come close to what were Shakespeare's deepest interests. We cannot assign them any limit. All may be said to equivocate, and on their equivocal variety we impose our limited interpretations.

—FRANK KERMODE, 2000

...the play itself equivocates, from the misleading riddles and half-truths of the weird sisters to the tortuous syntax and paradoxical phrasing that characterizes the protagonist's most famous speeches. The play's ambiguities and uncertainties infect almost every line so that nothing, be it the definition of masculinity or femininity, the natural world, or the basic laws of friendship, kinship and hospitality, can be considered reliable or stable. In this play everything...is subject not just to change, but to inversion. As is often the case in Shakespearean tragedy, then, the restoration of order at the final curtain is largely a hopeful illusion, the playwright leaving more than enough loose ends to entangle the future.

—ANDREW JAMES HARTLEY, 2000

What ensues is a study in the deterioration of humanity. In Shakespeare's time 'conscience' was indistinguishable from what we now call 'consciousness,' and what Macbeth experiences in the aftermath of his crime is a process by which both are corrupted beyond redemption.

—JOHN ANDREWS, 2001

The Weird Sisters present nouns rather than verbs. They put titles on Macbeth without telling what actions he must carry out to attain those titles. It is Lady Macbeth who supplies the verbs...[S]he persuades him by harping relentlessly on manly action. That very gap between noun and verb, the desired prize and the doing necessary to win it, becomes a way of taunting him as a coward.

—SUSAN SNYDER, 2002



WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

2000s
continued

We see Duncan exulting not only in the victory but in the bloodshed, equating honor with wounds... Yet the mild paternal king is nevertheless implicated here in his society's violent warrior ethic, its predicating of manly worth on prowess in killing. But isn't this just what we condemn in Lady Macbeth? Cultural analysis tends to blur the sharp demarcations, even between two such figures apparently totally opposed, and to draw them together as participants in and products of the same constellation of social values.

—SUSAN SNYDER, 2002

*For Shakespeare, tragedy will not easily give way to the efforts to deny it. In its endings, the exhausted survivors will inevitably seek to convince themselves that the tragedy has not only passed but also that its causes have been banished and the experience has at least taught worthy lessons. But the plays insist that tragedy is something far less reassuring, as the most seemingly reassuring of them, *Macbeth*, makes us see. Tragedy tells us that human cruelty is terrible and its consequences are not easily contained.*

—DAVID SCOTT KASTAN, 2003

It is certainly the swiftest play of Shakespeare's, the play with the least amount of subplots, but it is deceptively swift and full of contradictions. People behave one way and then immediately question what they're doing, or they think they know what they're doing and find out they don't. Someone can be noble and ambitious. Someone can be angry at her husband and still be in love. All of those contradictions are very modern for me.

—MICHAEL KAHN, 2004

*What makes this tragedy so frightening—why it continues to lodge itself so deeply in our imaginations—is our inability full to explain it. Like *Macbeth*, we too find our answers always slipping away from us. The force of this tragedy in performance finally lies in its ability to entangle in uncertainties a character and an audience, both of whom search in vain for answers that remain as elusive as the weird sisters...*

—MARGARET JANE KIDNIE, 2004

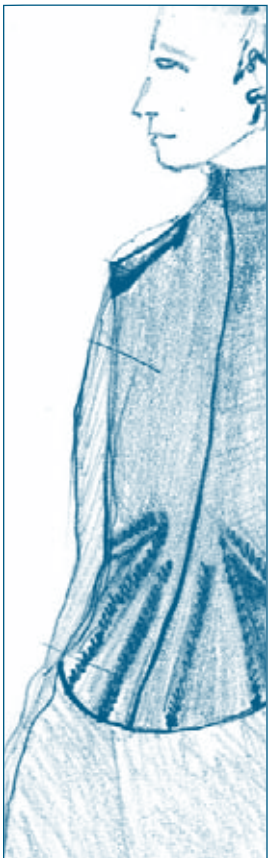
*In Shakespeare's tragic universe, it does not take long—one night—to transform a hero into a murderer, especially if he has already spent the day killing. A bit of prophecy and a determined wife can for a few precious hours overcome conscience and piety, honor and decency. Once overcome, Lady Macbeth blithely claims, 'A little water clears us of this deed.' *Macbeth* knows better; somehow in that moment he knows that for the rest of his life he will wash his hands in blood.*

—SUSAN WILLIS, 2004

*The brilliant Polish critic, Jan Kott, asserts that no one can understand Shakespeare who has not been awakened by the secret police at 3 o'clock in the morning. For Kott, it's all about being behind the Iron Curtain, about living in fear. The themes of Shakespeare become so profoundly resonant when you live in that kind of vivid desperation, like the vivid desperation of so many of the characters in Shakespeare. And in *Macbeth*, bully and coward can coexist; it's that wonderful mix of vulnerability and invulnerability. That is what the journey is for him. He is taunted by that moment when he feels himself courageous, only to be followed immediately by that emotional letdown of realizing that now he is even more vulnerable, which then in turns feeds the invulnerability and the paranoia.*

—DAVID BELL, 2006

Shakespeare uses the supernatural world as a device in his early plays and then returns to it again in his late plays. There is this wonderful, supernatural compelling of what is, in fact, a human frailty—the human frailty of ambition. And yet in allowing the witches' presence, there is also an affirmation that this is more than simply one man's weakness. It is a weakness that allows for a human history of political manipulation. It allows us to be manipulated by our fates and destiny—to be, in the very big picture, led



WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

2000s

continued

down the wrong path by 'keeping the word of promise to our ears and breaking it to our hope.' The witches become representative of all those things that manipulate people in our world.

—DAVID BELL, 2006

Macbeth follows a path where violence becomes more and more apparent as an easy, immediate solution. But a path that ends in what? Death and damnation and a horrible, tormented death. So, like all Jacobean dramas, it is surrounded in a violent, paranoid world. That's where we thrust our audience, but it all ends in Macbeth's death, and the return to world order. The wages of sin is death. The price of death is death. 'It will have blood, they say, blood will have blood!' We know where it's going to end much earlier than Macbeth does, and indeed it does end there. So it's a very moralistic tale in that way, as all Jacobean drama was. It's not an allegory, it's not Pilgrim's Progress, but Jacobean, those wrongdoers, get their own. But there needs to be something compelling about it. We need to identify with Macbeth's world if we're going to understand his journey at all. That journey we need to see through his own eyes.

—DAVID BELL, 2006

Directed, shaped, and redirected by a potent environment, Macbeth frequently appears to have little control over his passions, desires, or thoughts—a lack of control that raises critical questions about his free will. As the play progresses, Macbeth's prior fantasy of possessing a 'single state of man' (I.3.139) increasingly gives way to internal fragmentation and the competing agencies of those internal parts.

—MARY FLOYD-WILSON, 2006

Lady Macbeth recognizes that her husband could act otherwise when she worries that his nature is 'too full of the milk of human kindness' (I.5.15); she anticipates that he may be easily swayed by feelings of kinship or pity, which are the very emotions that cause him to waver in I.7. Despite his status as a warrior, which might suggest a resilient or hardened nature, Macbeth initially proves exceedingly passible—receptive to the witches' temptations, to Duncan's virtues, and to his wife's spirited rhetoric.

—MARY FLOYD-WILSON, 2006

Shakespeare has a tendency to register sin in olfactory terms... The opposition is most poignantly illustrated in Lady Macbeth's remark that, 'Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand' (V.1.42-43). The 'smell of the blood' may be imperceptible to audiences, but it is certainly not just a metaphor to Lady Macbeth. Smell is...an index of inner moral truth.

—JONATHAN GIL HARRIS, 2007

[Macbeth] is interested in the irrevocable act...that act from which you can never go back. I think in some senses we can all relate to that – the pitying finality of that, or the tragic finality of that.

—RUPERT GOOLD, 2007

The most economical feat of dramaturgy ever, the place where most is done in the least time, is not, as might be thought, 'Let him be Caesar' in Julius Caesar. It is in Macbeth and it lasts less than a second. It is the famous 'start' when Macbeth is told by the Weird Sisters that he will be king thereafter. Shakespeare makes sure that we don't miss this minute bodily reaction by making Macbeth's companion say, 'Why do you start and seem to fear things that sound so fair?' What does the start mean? Some say that is simply signifies surprise. Others more shrewdly say, 'No, it means recognition.' If he had merely been surprised, Macbeth would have said, in Jacobean English, 'Why on Earth do you say that?' The companion, Banquo, is himself puzzled, as he would never have been by simple amazement, and detects a note of fear. Macbeth's start means, 'How do they know that I have already thought about this happening?'...There is no expert manipulator here, no lingo to coax the malleable psyche to the desired outcome. This time the crucial element, ambition, clearly pre-exists the moment of external activation. The effect of the prophecy of the Weird Sisters is simply to translate thought into action. They are a trigger. A gun is fired that might have remained safely in the cupboard.

—A.D. NUTTALL, 2007



WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

At first glance, this Macbeth does not look like a fellow given to self-reflection. On the battlefield he is every inch a soldier, with a ramrod posture and hard, appraising gaze that promise to keep wayward impulses in check. And yet you're soon conscious of a raw susceptibility – to errant thoughts more appropriate for a poet or a philosopher than for a military commander – that sets him apart.

–BEN BRANTLEY, 2008

Shakespeare's bullet of a play embodies the substantial paradoxes that we seem to be living with on a daily basis. As an audience, via the focusing device of Shakespeare's intelligence and eloquence, we are allowed access to simultaneous sympathy, dismay and schadenfreude during the journey of the play. These emotions are triggered not only by the seemingly unstoppable trajectory of Macbeth and his wife, but also by the actual state of impermanence that the play implies is the human condition.

–ANNE BOGART, 2008

Interpretation and its risks and dangers are at the heart of the play, and provide the keyword for Macbeth in modern culture. From the witches' prophecies to the 'equivocation' invoked by the drunken Porter, ambivalence and double meanings are everywhere.

–MARJORIE GARBER, 2008

Macbeth offers the best example in Shakespeare of a character who seems to age considerably in the course of the action... At the beginning of the play Macbeth is represented as a young, heroic warrior... By act 5, scene 3, Macbeth is 'sick at heart' and reflecting actively on images of his own doom.

–MAURICE CHARNEY, 2009

The play starts in war and ends in war. In the battlefield there are no rules. All the systems we've put in place to be moral beings don't count there. But where does the battlefield end and civilized society begin?

–GALE EDWARDS, 2009

Macbeth begins and ends in war. Duncan's regime is attacked by rebels from within and by invaders from abroad. Civil war and foreign invasion threaten the existence of his country. The fighting is fierce and brutal... It is important to remember that Macbeth is introduced, not as a villain, but as a war hero who saves a country under the rule of a weak king.

–DES MCANUFF, 2009

On a domestic level, the Macbeths are familiar as a contemporary childless couple who replace baby with career and fiercely pour all of the love and hope normally associated with an infant into their single-minded partnership. Macbeth is an especially intimate (though grotesquely twisted) love story sandwiched between epic historical events.

–DES MCANUFF, 2009

The play is so much about time. As the audience, we don't know if the events are happening a day or two days later, or a year later. It really is about creating a dramatic sense of time, not linear time.

–BLANKA ZIZKA, 2010

I always thought it was principally about a man and a woman – a married couple who conspire to commit a murder. But I think what strikes me, thinking about it again, is that it's not so much about the fact that they commit the murder. I think the central event in Macbeth is watching them realize that they have committed a murder. Which is what's so disturbing about it. It's not so much about the doing. It's all about the realization of what we have done—and its terrifying lines: 'What's done cannot be undone.'

–DECLAN DONNELLAN, 2010



A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

A Look Back at “Macbeth” in Performance

Whether his dramas should be taken as plays or as literature has been disputed. But surely they should be taken as both. Acted, or seen on the stage, they disclose things hidden to the reader. Read, they reveal what no actor or theater can convey.

—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

Through its 400-year history, *Macbeth* has remained one of Shakespeare’s most enduring and popular plays. Half the length of *Hamlet*, it is the shortest of Shakespeare’s tragedies. *Macbeth* maintains what some scholars have called “an intensity of tragedy,” which never lets up from the play’s dark beginning to its ambiguous conclusion.

Macbeth is also a play whose stage history has been shrouded in mystery and superstition. So strong is the belief among actors that the play carries a magic of its own that taboos still exist today against speaking the name “Macbeth” in the theater (outside the play’s text itself). Those who break the rules must perform time-honored rituals to undo the curse: leave the room, turn around three times, spit, knock on the door three times and beg to be readmitted!

The performance history of this play reveals a series of bad fortunes that could be viewed as being cursed. In its first production outside England in 1672, the Dutch actor playing Macbeth

was having an affair with his Lady Macbeth—who happened to be the wife of the actor playing Duncan. One evening, the murder scene was particularly bloody, and Duncan did not return for his curtain call. Macbeth served a life sentence for his all-too-realistic murder. When Lawrence Olivier played the title role in 1937, he narrowly escaped death as a heavy weight swung from the fly loft above, crushing the chair where he had been seated moments before.

A 1942 production directed by and starring John Gielgud had four fatalities during its run, including two of the witches and Duncan: the set was quickly repainted and used for a light comedy—whose lead actor then died suddenly. When Stanislavsky, the great Russian director, mounted an elaborate production, the actor playing Macbeth forgot his lines during a dress rehearsal and signaled to the prompter several times, but with no success. Finally, he went down to the prompt box and found the prompter dead, clutching his script. Stanislavsky cancelled the entire run immediately.

The first documented performance for which any written record still exists appeared in 1611, but we know that *Macbeth* was performed by 1607, when references to it in other plays appeared. Scholars are fairly certain that *Macbeth* was written and first performed in 1606—the year that Father Garnet, a Jesuit priest on trial for conspiracy in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, used “equivocation” to protect himself in his famous trial. (See “1606 and All That.”) The first published text of *Macbeth* appeared in 1623 with the First Folio—seventeen years after it was first performed and seven years after the playwright’s death. Like many of the other texts compiled by Heminge and Condell for the First Folio, *Macbeth*’s text was based upon the “prompt copy” used by Shakespeare and his actors in actual performance. A few passages in the Folio’s texts (and CST’s today, which are based on the Folio) are attributed to a contemporary playwright named Thomas Middleton, who was appealing to the special interest in witchcraft among his Jacobean audience. The witch named Hecate is, according to scholars, entirely Middleton’s creation, as are the songs of the witches in 3.5 and 4.1.

In England, Early Modern theater was eyed with suspicion by public authorities, who feared not only the spread of the plague among the gathered crowds, but also its influence upon an impressionable population. But to religious extremists, the theater’s pageantry was viewed as sacrilegious, an unnecessary evil that should be outlawed. It was banned in 1642 following Cromwell’s overthrow of King Charles I (the son of King James I). When theater was once again legal eighteen years later after the restoration of the monarchy, Shakespeare, dead for nearly two generations, was considered old-fashioned—and ripe for adaptation. William Davenant (Shakespeare’s godson, who also claimed to be his godfather’s illegitimate son) adapted *Macbeth* for his Restoration audiences. The songs and dances



photo by Liz Lauren

CELESTE WILLIAMS AS LADY MACBETH IN CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER’S 1994 TEAM SHAKESPEARE PRODUCTION OF *MACBETH*

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of the witches assumed far greater prominence. Davenant's adaptation made sense out of what Shakespeare refused to. No longer did the audience see the world from Macbeth's point of view. Macduff became the play's hero and Macbeth its irrefutable villain, motivated by unbridled ambition.

For nearly a century, Davenant's adaptation held the stage, and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* disappeared entirely from production. It has been suggested that the ambiguity of Shakespeare's own text appealed more to an audience who, before the outbreak of civil war, was still wrestling with their own answers to the questions the play raises about absolute power, about violence, and about loyalty. It was not until 1744, approximately 150 years after Shakespeare first wrote *Macbeth*, that his play returned to the stage in the production by the famous actor and director of London's theater, David Garrick. But Garrick, too, added lines that made Macbeth a less ambiguous character than originally drawn by Shakespeare.

The 1800s were marked by lavish Victorian productions of Shakespeare, and *Macbeth* was no exception. It was not until the early 1930s that a modern-dress production was staged in Birmingham, England. In Harlem in 1936, a young Orson Welles staged a modern all-black production of *Macbeth*—a "Voodoo" *Macbeth*, where the king ruled over a nineteenth-century colonial Haiti.

The most prevalent interpretation of Shakespeare's play portrays a royal couple who act alone, motivated by their own internal psychologies, with one or the other of the partners controlling the action. Another approach to *Macbeth's* text in performance places the human world against a powerful supernatural sphere in which Macbeth's Weird Sisters dwell. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, as well as their counterparts in a human and corrupt society, are portrayed as insignificant players in a world controlled by Fate and evil forces.



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



A third interpretation of Shakespeare's text in performance understands *Macbeth's* tragedy as familial and intimate. The Macbeths are governed by their relationship with one another and with those near to them. Trevor Nunn's celebrated 1976 production by England's Royal Shakespeare Company starred Ian McKellan and Judi Dench as the tragic couple who lose each other along the way. First staged in the RSC's most



photo by Liz Lauren

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER AND COMPAGNIA MARIONETTISTICA CARLO COLLA E FIGLIO'S 2007 PRODUCTION OF *MARIONETTE MACBETH*

intimate space and on a very limited budget, the action took place within a small chalk circle, in which the couple moved in a counter-clockwise direction, signaling the play's demonic associations.

Macbeth is said by some to be the Shakespeare play that reads most like a film script. Akira Kurosawa's famous film, *Throne of Blood*, explores a fourth interpretation, with human society as the determining and overriding force. The Macbeths act—but in response to their world shaping their behavior. Kurosawa widens his scope through the use of hundreds of supernumeraries to embrace an entire political and social realm of violence and counter-violence. Society and human history are the root cause of tragedy in this sociological interpretation of Shakespeare's text.

Shakespeare's play has also inspired several other television and film adaptations, including Ken Hughes's gangster film, entitled *Joe Macbeth* (1955), in which a Tarot card-reader tells Joe that he will first become Lord of the Castle and later, King of the City. In 1991, writer-director William Reilly returned to the gangster genre in his modern-day retelling, *Men of Respect*. The Weird Sisters are portrayed as gypsies watching a

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TV cooking show featuring a recipe for lamb's head stew, and Lady Macbeth frantically attempts with a can of bleach to make her bloodied hands guiltless. In 1997, the co-founder of the English Shakespeare Company, Michael Bogdanov (who that same year guest-directed CST's production of *Timon of Athens* at the Ruth Page Theatre), directed the play with residents of a government-subsidized housing project in Birmingham; the documentary was aired on the BBC.

Macbeth was first staged by Chicago Shakespeare Theater as a full-length production in 1992. Directed by the Czechoslovakian director Roman Polak the production was one of the first that the young company staged. Polak conducted the entire rehearsal process with his all-Chicago cast through the use of a translator, and the production was woven together by a series of visual images. Macbeth (played by Kevin Gudahl) and Banquo, returning from the battlefield covered in filth, stripped to loin clothes to shower in a rainstorm before returning to home and civilization. It was the company's first "water effect"—of many to follow. Polak covered his other-worldly witches in white gauze from head to toe, and cast his leading couple as young, virile, impulsive lovers seduced by their passions.



GEORGE KEATING AS WITCH IN SHOZO SATO'S
2005 ADAPTATION OF *MACBETH*, *KABUKI LADY MACBETH*

photo by Michael Brosilow

In 2005, Chicago Shakespeare Theater staged the world premiere of an adaptation based on Shakespeare's play, entitled *Kabuki Lady Macbeth*. Conceived and directed by Master of Zen Arts Shozo Sato, and written by New York playwright Karen Sunde, this retelling focused on the journey of Lady Macbeth, portrayed as the force behind Macbeth's downfall. Sato told the story through the 400-year-old Japanese theater tradition of Kabuki, which utilizes traditional Japanese dress, vocalization patterns, and the sound of the wooden "ki" to punctuate the story's forward drive. Performed in the 200-seat theater Upstairs at Chicago Shakespeare, the production was an intimate, cross-cultural experience for both the performers and their audience.

Then in 2007, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, in collaboration with one of Italy's oldest marionette theaters, Compagnia Marionettistica Carlo Colla e Figli, created a new production, *Marionette Macbeth*, combining the 300-year-old artistry of Colla e Figli with the voices of Chicago Shakespeare Theater actors. With more than 100 three-foot-tall, hand-carved puppets, the story of *Macbeth* was enacted by this troupe of Milanese master puppeteers. The production toured subsequently to The New Victory Theater in New York City.

From 2007 to 2008, breakthrough director Rupert Goold toured a lauded production of *Macbeth* featuring Patrick Stewart and Kate Fleetwood. Set entirely in a white-tiled space that functioned as field hospital, kitchen, and abattoir, Goold's Soviet-era production overlaid a harsh, terrifying political landscape with a surreal, claustrophobic emotional effect. Banquo's execution in a railway car was just one reminder of the modern-day plausibility of *Macbeth*'s political portrait of slowly escalating terror.

The Stratford Shakespeare Festival staged a similarly minded version of the play in 2009, which placed the action in a war-torn African nation. Director Des McAnuff used security monitors, press conferences, and ear-splitting weapons effects to create an Orwellian atmosphere that evoked memories of heroes-turned-dictators in the Sudan and Rwanda.

Chicago Shakespeare's Artistic Director, Barbara Gaines, took CST's 2009 production of *Macbeth* to then-present-day Chicago, in a modern restaging that spared no squeamish stomachs in its brutal treatment of eviscerations, stabbings, and butchery. Set in stark contrast to this soldier's world of blood and carnage, Gaines's modern Macbeths moved in a circle of the urban wealthy, plotting murders at cocktail parties filled with the tinkle of jazz pianos. Featuring a Malcolm who bore a stunning resemblance to President Barack Obama, CST's production invited audiences to entertain very immediate political parallels.

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In 2010, Gaines returned to *Macbeth*, this time to direct an operatic version (composed by Verdi, 1842-1850) at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Channeling damning visions of *Eve and the Fall*, Verdi's Lady Macbeth is more single-minded than Shakespeare's: here, she is the power-hungry, controlling demon that drives the weaker-willed Macbeth to his great crime. This interpretation represents a variation on earlier fate vs. free will readings, with the wife as an almost supernatural source of evil and her husband a more human, flawed will.

The same play has been understood and brought to life in countless ways through four centuries. The never-ending search for meaning in Shakespeare's poetry and characters is testament to the playwright's power and genius. Each time a director approaches Shakespeare, he or she hopes to bring to light something previously hidden. And what's quite remarkable about Shakespeare's art is that, 400 years later, directors still succeed in doing that. ■

AN INTERVIEW WITH Director David H. Bell



David H. Bell is one of the leading directors in America today. With this production, he returns to Chicago Shakespeare, where he has directed the Team Shakespeare abridged productions of The Comedy of Errors, Macbeth and The Taming of the Shrew. In past seasons, Bell has directed CST's full-length productions of The Comedy of Errors (1998), Much Ado About Nothing (1999), As You Like It (2002), The Taming of the Shrew (2003), and The Three Musketeers (2007). His extensive work as a director, choreographer and writer has earned him nine Jeff Awards. Internationally, he has staged productions in London, Paris, Berlin, Zurich, and the closing ceremony for the Barcelona Olympics. Here in the following pages, David Bell talks with Director of Education Marilyn J. Halperin.

The director of a play approaches a text with his or her own vision. Shakespeare's words, like those of other playwrights, are written on a page for us to read and speak aloud. But a play's words, like most human communication, are open to interpretation. Plays are written to be enacted. It is the work of a director and her designers and her actors to "decode" the play and bring the play creatively to life.

The director reads the play closely and, from the printed words on the page, begins to create a living, visual image—or rather, a series of images that eventually unfold before us, alive on stage. He develops a "concept," a basic, central interpretation that helps us approach the play and enter its world with both feet—and our imaginations.

He plans closely with her designers—the artists who visually create the world of the play—through stage settings, costumes, lighting and sound. Working together, the director and designers "physicalize" the abstract ideas and make them a concrete part of the theatrical experience that surrounds the actors and us.

Q You've directed *Macbeth* a number of times, though not for several years. What continues to fascinate you about this play?

A *Macbeth* and *The Comedy of Errors*, which I directed last year for CST's student production, are the two Shakespeare plays I've directed most frequently. Like *The Comedy of Errors*, *Macbeth* has a single-mindedness of plot, which makes a very exciting forum in which to explore its characters. That single-mindedness allows you to create a theatricalization for the play's violence, which becomes, in its own way, an element of beauty. There is a kind of beauty to its relentless violence as the play progresses downward into a world of disorder. This production is going to be extraordinarily theatrical in a way that still tells the story well. As always with Shakespeare, you revisit the play and its meanings each time and discover it anew, in terms of life experiences, as well as in light of the current world in which we live.

Q *Macbeth* is categorized as a "tragedy" rather a history play. How does that affect Shakespeare's storytelling?

A The histories are very much a social fabric of the time, but in *Macbeth*...it's that guy, it's that journey, it's that descent. Here, you have a descent, a journey by one man. You want him to see different things as this emotional "travelogue" moves forward. It doesn't have the same social complexity of Shakespeare's history plays. It has a through-line that focuses on this one's man's descent into the excesses of ambition and paranoia and where that leads, and in that, it's much more modern and contemporary.

A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

Q It's interesting to hear you talk about the play's laser focus on Macbeth's descent. Where does Lady Macbeth fit into your story?

A To me, she's a satellite. Once you get to Act II, she's no longer a player. By the time you get to the banquet scene, she's gone—that's Act III, and it's halfway through the show. She understands the cost of the journey that she and Macbeth are on much earlier than Macbeth, who keeps going ahead because he doesn't know how to turn back. By contrast, she drops out, and eventually kills herself. Lady Macbeth is that person who couldn't complete the journey, Macbeth is the person who does. She's there really to define Macbeth.

Q But isn't Macbeth also afraid?

A You know, I go back to the statement by the brilliant Polish critic, Jan Kott, no one can understand Shakespeare who has not been awakened by the secret police at 3 o'clock in the morning. I love that, because what Kott is saying is, that for him, it's all about being behind the Iron Curtain, about living in fear. The themes of Shakespeare become so profoundly resonant when you live in that kind of vivid desperation, like the vivid desperation of so many of the characters in Shakespeare. And in *Macbeth*, bully and coward can coexist; it's that wonderful mix of vulnerability and invulnerability. That is what the journey is for him. He is taunted by that moment when he feels himself courageous, only to be followed immediately by that emotional letdown of realizing that now he is even more vulnerable, which then in turns feeds the invulnerability and the paranoia. It is like an addict who needs the high, but can't survive the down, so needs the high again.

Q Every director must decide what role the witches play in Macbeth's journey, who they are, and what they are responsible for.

A Shakespeare uses the supernatural world as a device in his early plays and then returns to it again in his late plays. There is this wonderful, supernatural compelling of what is, in fact, a human frailty—the human frailty of ambition. And yet in allowing the witches' presence, there is also an affirmation that this is more than simply one man's weakness. It is a weakness that allows for a human history of political manipulation. It allows us to be manipulated by our fates and destiny—to be, in the very big picture, led down the wrong path by 'keeping the word of promise to our ears and breaking it to our hope.' It is the witches who keep the word of promise to Macbeth's ear, and he is led by them down a primrose path into a world of disorder. The witches become representative of all those things

that manipulate people in our world. The role of Warwick in the *Henry VI* trilogy, for example, is about the king-maker as much as the king, and here in *Macbeth*, the witches are their own version of the kingmaker.

Q You and set designer Scott Davis wanted to create an "urban contemporary" look for this production. Can you talk about how you see the concept supporting the story of *Macbeth*?

A There is a completely modern sense of fear and paranoia that pervades Shakespeare's story of *Macbeth*; it is surprisingly complex and current. In working with my designer, we were looking for a visual world full of the hostile industrial look of an urban slum. What Scott arrived at was a steel structure that is part medieval castle and part construction site. The construction mesh that covers the scaffolding is intended to create a ghostly, foreboding atmosphere; at the end, with the mesh stripped away, the structure is seen left exposed, raw and rusted.

Our design co-exists with the *As You Like It* set, designed by Kevin Depinet and which plays concurrently with our production of *Macbeth*. The sixty-foot tree is sculptural and ageless. Like the witches, the tree offers a contemporary interpretation of the timeless and mysterious, and adds visual complexity to the world of our *Macbeth* beautifully.



photo by Peter Bosy

MARK L. MONTGOMERY AS MACBETH IN CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER'S *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! MACBETH* IN 2011, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL

A PLAY COMES TO LIFE

Q David, you've talked in production meetings about your decision to double-cast not only the actors in this production, but to double-cast characters as a way of telling the story of *Macbeth* in a particular way. Can you speak more about how you plan on using double-casting in your interpretation of the play?

A Our approach to double-casting in this production of *Macbeth* is rather unique. It was initially prompted by necessity—having twelve actors to cast in twice that many roles. But as I got to work creating our adaptation, I became tremendously excited by the idea of merging the roles and functions of different characters into one. It helped me think through how to theatrically realize my understanding of this play—how its forces are not lodged in one single character or another, but are instead shared and “jointly held.” It goes back to some of the basic questions of interpretation we have to raise in approaching this play: are the witches a separate, cosmic force working upon Macbeth, or are they integral to his psychological framework? Does the responsibility for Macbeth's violence reside in him, or is it shared by a violent culture?

And so as I worked through the script, I began to see that instead of the usual approach—having our thirteen actors embody all twenty-plus characters in Shakespeare's script—I conceived this production to tell the story of *Macbeth* with fewer characters. The doubled roles represent two characters woven into the fabric of our retelling as a single character—though they are amalgams of two or more “scripted” characters in Shakespeare's original text. Our costume designer Ana Kuzmanic will be creating costumes that clearly signal to the audience when the characters are meant to be an amalgam, and when they truly are two different characters, who just happen to be played by the same actor!

Q Can you give an example or two for students to look out for, and explain more about the interpretation behind your decision?

A The first example they'll see is moments after the opening scene in our show. Two of the three witches are actually the soldiers Ross and Angus, who are ritualistically “raised from the dead” on the battlefield that will open our production. They then function throughout the show as Ross/Witch and Angus/Witch, supporting Macbeth in the choices that will lead him further and further down the path of evil. Similarly, the two Murderers of Banquo are thanes attending the royal banquet immediately after the murder, and not separate identities; they are the same people who have just done the dreadful deed. I want to create a dramatic immediacy and cohesion to the storytelling, and I see.



photo by Peter Bosy

MARK L. MONTGOMERY AS MACBETH AND PATRICK SARB AS MACDUFF IN CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER'S *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! MACBETH* IN 2011, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL

Q We haven't talked about Banquo's role in this story. Where does he fit in to all this?

A Again, there is a single-mindedness to all of this; no one has an agenda outside of how it relates to Macbeth. It is almost expressionistic, like the beginning of German expressionism in 1927 when you see the entire world through the viewpoint of the lead character. So you're not looking for a realistic tapestry of a social fabric; you're looking for a central, often demented, vision of what the world is. The world in this play and the plot revolve around Macbeth. There's not a thing that happens that isn't directly connected to how it affects him, or how he affects them. Banquo is there as leitmotif, to be the person who doesn't take the choices that Macbeth does. There is something archetypal about the nature of these characters. Banquo is the friend. Duncan is the king. He doesn't need to be much more than the king, but he has to be the king, the source of order whose murder descends the world into chaos. And because Banquo, too, heard the witches' prophecies, Macbeth needs to kill Banquo. And because people suspect that he killed Banquo, he has to kill more people. That is the charted path that we are on. But again, all of this is fairly single-mindedly in the orbit of Macbeth.

A PLAY COMES TO LIFE



photo by Peter Bosy

MARK L. MONTGOMERY AS MACBETH AND LESLEY BEVAN AS LADY MACBETH IN CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER'S *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! MACBETH* IN 2011, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL

Q Do you see this kind of plot structure in any other Shakespeare play?

A I don't find anything else in the canon that actually is structured quite this way. It's one of the reasons I love the play. *Hamlet* is the closest. There's a real life to Gertrude and Claudius, but again, all in relationship to Hamlet. Hamlet really is the orbit point around which everyone functions as a satellite. And like *Macbeth*, there is an early link to the supernatural that allows his journey to be externally motivated by the appearance of his father's ghost. But I see in *Hamlet* a much more complex social fabric than I see in *Macbeth*. *Macbeth* doesn't emerge out of that same kind of social fabric. He is tempted, and then his own thoughts, riffs, and actions based on that temptation are what make the plot reveal itself. It's unique among Shakespeare's plays in this way.

Q The role that violence plays in *Macbeth* is very different from in *Hamlet*.

A Yes, without question. In terms of the violence, *Macbeth* is a lot more like *Titus Andronicus*. You have to remember that this play is emerging from a Jacobean theater tradition. Jacobean theater, like 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, was all blood-motivated, and bloody. If you see a Jacobean drama and people are not covered in blood at the end of it, you're not seeing

a good one! I once saw a brilliant production at the RSC where they actually cut a tongue out onstage and threw it across the stage. That is the essence of Jacobean drama, the period of King James I's reign, immediately following Queen Elizabeth's.

Q How do you plan on theatricalizing the violence in this production?

A I want us to create a language of violence for this production that is more metaphorical and abstract than it is realistic. We're planning on using a full-stage red silk cloth that billows down over peoples' heads. It obscures them and reveals them, and each time you're in another part of the battle with different people. So we abstract a lot of the violence. And then that same cloth of blood becomes Macbeth's coronation robe.

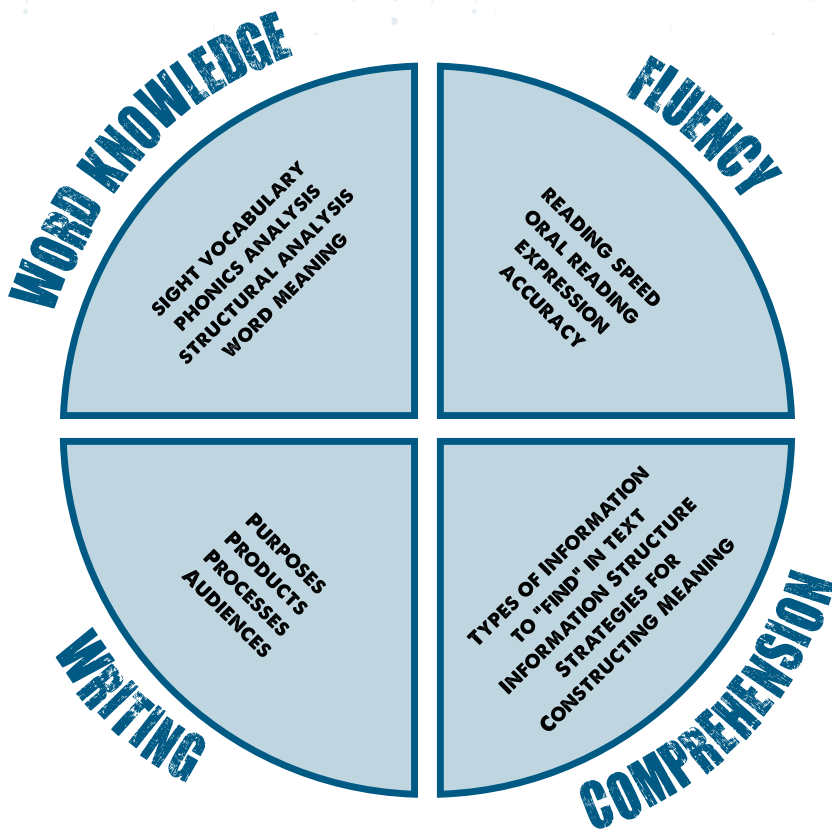
The death of Banquo needs to be different from the death of Duncan, which needs in turn to be very different from the battle scenes at the end. There is horror in the death of Duncan; by the time of Banquo's murder, Macbeth is inured to the process. One way to theatricalize that shift is to stage the subsequent murders more balletically, if you will. By contrast, the murder of Duncan needs to be the most realistic of all.

Macbeth's journey is covered with action and violence—a comic book, hero-type action. We're casting a fellow from the World Wrestling Foundation as one of the murderers and to create the fight choreography with me. And one of the other cast members is a percussionist who will be performing the production's music live. This production will be very visceral and immediate.

Q Is this a play that you see embracing violence?

A It is, as *Macbeth* follows a path where violence becomes more and more apparent as an easy, immediate solution. But a path that ends in what? Death and damnation and a horrible, tormented death. So, like all Jacobean dramas, it is surrounded in a violent, paranoid world. That's where we thrust our audience, but it all ends in Macbeth's death, and the return to world order. The wages of sin is death. The price of death is death. "It will have blood, they say, blood will have blood." We know where it's going to end much earlier than *Macbeth* does, and indeed it does end there. So it's a very moralistic tale in that way, as all Jacobean drama was. It's not an allegory, it's not *Pilgrim's Progress*, but Jacobean, those wrongdoers, get their own. But there needs to be something compelling about it. We need to identify with Macbeth's world if we're going to understand his journey at all. That journey we need to see through his own eyes. ■

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITY INDEX

The Reading Instruction Framework is an easy-to-use template, developed in 2001 for the Chicago Reading Initiative, committed to strengthening literacy in the Chicago Public Schools, K-12.

The framework categorizes instructional methods into the four chief components of literacy.

THEATER WARM-UPS

BEFORE YOU READ THE PLAY

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CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

THEATER WARM-UPS

A brief physical and vocal warm-up can help your students move from a “classroom mode” to a “studio mode.” It sets the tone for a student learning Shakespeare in a theatrical sense as well as a literary sense.

Every actor develops his/her own set of physical and vocal warm-ups. Warm-ups help the actor prepare for rehearsal or performance not only physically, but also mentally. The actor has the chance to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and beginning to assume the flexibility required to create a character. The body, the voice and the imagination are the actor’s tools.

Physical Warm-ups

- create focus on the immediate moment
- bring students to body awareness
- help dispel tension
- gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness
- increase physical and spatial awareness

Getting Started

Begin by asking your students to take a comfortable stance with their feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Ask them to inhale deeply through their noses, filling their lungs deep into their abdomen, and exhale through their mouths. Repeat this a few times and ask them to notice how their lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

Warm-up from the top of the body down

- Begin by doing head-rolls to the left and to the right, about four times each way, very slowly. Then do a series of shoulder rolls to the back and to the front, again very slowly, and emphasizing a full range of motion.
- Stretch each arm toward the ceiling alternately, and try to pull all the way through the rib cage, repeating this motion six to eight times.
- Next, with particular care to keep knees slightly bent, twist from the waist in each direction, trying to look behind. Again, repeat six to eight times.
- From a standing position, starting with the top of the head, roll down with relaxed neck and arms until the body is hanging from the waist. Ask the students to shake things around, making sure their bodies are relaxed. From this position, bend at the knees, putting both hands on the floor. Stretch back up to hanging. Repeat this action about four times. Then roll back up—starting from the base of the spine, stack each vertebra until the head is the last thing to come up.
- Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Ask the students to bring their feet together, bend their knees, and keeping their knees together ask the students to rotate their knees in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.
- Pick up the right foot, rotate it inward six to eight times, and then do the same with the left foot. Repeat with outward rotation of the foot. Take a few moments and shake out the entire body.

(This entire process should take about seven to ten minutes.)

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Stage Pictures

- show how varied interpretation is: there is no wrong answer
- encourage the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies
- begin to show how the body interprets emotion

You will need a list of very strong descriptive, colorful, emotional words from the script for this activity. Ask your actor-students to begin walking around the room. Ask them to fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like to be a different weight, a different height, and ask them to move the center of their body into different places. Encourage them to see if they feel any emotional differences within these changes. Giving them about three minutes to explore these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. Encourage these discoveries without necessarily drawing focus to individual students, as this is a self-reflective activity, but perhaps suggest to the group they might “Try what it feels like if you slow your pace, hunch your shoulders, droop your head, and move your center into your knees.”

After a few minutes of this exploration, ask your actor-students to find a “neutral” walk. Explain that they are going to create a stage picture as an entire group. You will give them a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, you will say freeze, and they must create a photograph of the word you have given them, with their entire bodies, collectively. Comment on the emotions you feel from their stage picture. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, encouraging the audience’s reactions after each tableau. This might be a good time to discuss balance, stage direction, and the use of levels as effective variation for the audience’s visual interpretation. (This activity should take about ten minutes.)

Shakespeare’s characters are often very physically broad. There were crippled characters, old people, clowns, star-crossed lovers, and more. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in a big fat belly? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character’s body.

Mirroring

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

Either ask your actor-students to partner up, or count them off in pairs. Ask them to sit, comfortably facing their partner, in fairly close proximity. Explain to them that they are mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. Explain to the actor-students that they must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that their partner can follow. Encourage the partners to make eye-contact and see each other as a whole picture, rather than following each other’s small motions with their eyes. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, ask the actor-students to stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, tell them that they should keep going, but there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss. (This activity should last about ten minutes.)

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part, making it come out of their mouths as if for the first time is the hard part, especially with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can sound like a song, but how do you make it sound like real people talking to each other? Actors listen to each other, and try to respond to what they hear in the moment of the play. Listening is a very important part of acting; it keeps the moment real.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Vocal Warm-up

- helps connect physicality to vocality
- begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities

Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly

- Ask students to gently massage and pat the muscles of their faces. This will help wake up the facial muscles.
- Ask students to stick their tongues out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This process will probably seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. When students see you going through these exercises with commitment, that’s often all they need to draw them in.) Repeat this exercise once or twice.
- Ask students to put their lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a “raspberry.”
- Next, hum, quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Explore all the resonating spaces in the body, by moving the sound around. Humming helps to lubricate
- Create the vowel sounds, overemphasizing each shape with the face –A, E, I, O, and U—with no break.
- Choose two or three tongue-twisters—there are some listed below. Again overemphasizing the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles, begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually speed up, repeating until the speed is such that the enunciation is lost. (This entire process should take about seven minutes.)

Tongue Twisters

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

One of the actors at Chicago Shakespeare Theater likes to describe the experience of acting Shakespeare as the “Olympics of Acting.” Shakespeare’s verse demands a very flexible vocal instrument, and an ability to express not only the flow of the text, but the emotional shifts which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words, some of which are rarely—if ever—used in modern vocabulary, the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor acting Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. This requires a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.



TEACHER RESOURCE CENTER

If you have an activity or lesson plan that was a classroom success with your students, we want to hear about it! Consider donating your lesson plan to the Teacher Resource Center, and become part of our ever-growing, permanent collection! Or, if you are looking for the perfect activity or “proven” lesson plan, stop by the Center and see what other educators have offered us. A lesson plan cover sheet is inserted into this handbook—please consider donating a favorite idea of yours to others!

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Theater Exercises

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand your students' imaginations, increase their sense of "ensemble" or teamwork, and bring them "into the moment." These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor's training. Their imaginations will allow them to believe the situation of the play, their sense of ensemble will bring them together with their scene partners to create the relationships necessary to the movement of the play, and their willingness to be in the moment will allow them to live in the play in such a way as to make it believable to their audience. In each of these exercises the use of students as audience, and constructive reflection from that audience, will be helpful to the ensemble of your classroom. Remember, there is no wrong answer, only different interpretations—encourage them!

Zing! Ball

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

This exercise requires a soft ball about 8-12 inches in diameter.

Ask the students to stand in a circle, facing in. Explain that the ball carries with it energy. This energy is like a feedback loop that increases the energy, speed, and focus of the entire group by the amount that each actor-student puts into the ball. The idea is to keep the ball moving in the circle without letting the energy drop. There should be no space between throw and catch. There should be no thought as to whom the actor-student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, the actor-student must make eye contact with the person he is throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the throwing actor-student should say "Zing!" Note: Encourage the actor-students to experiment with the way they say "Zing!" It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way they wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy. (This activity lasts about five minutes.)

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. An ensemble must have the trust in each other to make a performance believable, without any of the actors getting hurt. They must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure. Shakespeare wrote many clues about his characters in his text, but the actor must be given license to find his character, and his relationship with the rest of the characters in the script.

Zing! Ball without a Ball

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

This exercise builds on Zing! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zing! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using "Zing!," toss the ball to an actor-student across the circle, and as it floats down, ask the actor-student to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then ask that actor-student to recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how they've changed it. In the same way as Zing! Ball, work around the circle. (This activity takes five to seven minutes.)

The wide range of vocabulary in Shakespeare's plays can often be intimidating as one reads the scripts. The actor's job is to make the language clear, and this is often accomplished by very specific physical gesturing.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

BEFORE YOU READ THE PLAY

As a Class

1

Macbeth Bulletin Board

As a class, create the skeleton framework of a bulletin board for *Macbeth*, which you'll add to as you read and watch the play the performed. Start by putting up pictures or words that represent anything you know or think about this play's story before you start to read. Look for pictures of some of the play's prominent ideas and actions: ambition, wives in power, the supernatural, treason, assassination, succession (to name just a few...). As you read the play, add images, quotes, headlines, poetry that remind you of characters, events, key objects, words—anything that you feel is relevant to your responses and thoughts about *Macbeth*. As a class, discuss your additions in the context of the play. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)a, 2A(2-5)b, 5A(2-5)a**

2

Disembodied Lines

(To the teacher: Excerpt 30 lines from the play that are rich in Shakespeare's language or are descriptive of character. Distribute a line or several lines to each student on a slip of paper, not revealing the character who spoke it.) Look at your line/s and, as you walk around the room, say it aloud again and again without addressing anyone. Now walk around the room and deliver your line directly to your classmates as they do the same. Regroup in a circle, each reading his/her line aloud in turn. Sit down in the circle and discuss the lines. What questions do you have about the words? Imagine what this play is about based upon some of the words you've heard its characters speak. What do you imagine about the character who spoke your line? Did you hear lines that seemed to be spoken by the same character? All ideas are encouraged, and none can be wrong! This is your time to listen to the language and begin to use your imagination to think about the world of the play you've just entered... **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a**

3

Summary in Action

Still playing with dolls? Yes, when it helps, so have fun with it! Using action figures, Legos, etc., to represent the characters from the dramatis personae, as one person reads through the play's synopsis out loud, the others use the figures to enact the story. Repeat this activity a few times, bringing all the creativity and enthusiasm you can to your play. Keep the figures on hand as you study the play for enacting certain scenes or simply as a reference. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b**

In Small Groups or Pairs

4

How Insulting!

You know how it just makes you feel better when you've said a word or two to someone in anger? Language developed to help us express feelings—and release feelings (and some words just by their very sound accomplish this better than others). In groups of 4-6: practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—the insults below that characters from *Macbeth* sling at one another. If the meaning of a word is not clear, don't get stuck! Keep repeating the insult and you'll be closer to its meaning than you might think. Once you've slung enough dirt at each other, do it again in turn, and after someone has hurled an insult, it's a race among the rest to imagine a contemporary situation that might provoke

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

such a rebuke! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)a, 2A(3-5)d, 4A(2-5)a**

The multiplying villainies of nature/Do swarm upon him.	1.2.11-12
[You] rump-fed runyon!	1.3.6
You should be women / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so.	1.3.45-47
[Your] horrid image doth unfix my hair.	1.3.135
Pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell.	1.5.51
Your face is as a book, where men / May read strange matters.	1.5.62-63
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.	1.7.83
This is a sorry sight.	2.2.20
Infirm of purpose!	2.2.51
Go the primrose way to th'everlasting bonfire.	2.3.20-21
Where we are, there's daggers in men's smiles.	2.3.139-140
Tis said, they eat each other.	2.4.18
Ay, in the catalog ye go for men / As hounds, and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs / Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves, are cleft / All by the name of dogs.	3.1.91-94
Thou art the best o' th'cut-throats.	3.4.16
Never shake / Thy gory locks at me.	3.4.49-50
[You are] quite unmann'd in folly.	3.4.72
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold.	3.4.93
How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!	4.1.48
What, you egg! / Young fry of treachery!	4.2.82-83
Fit to govern? / No, not to live.	4.3.102-103
Those he commands move only in command. / Nothing in love.	5.2.19-20
Go, prick thy face, and over-red thy fear / Thou lily-liver'd boy.	5.3.14-15
[This] is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.	5.5.26-28
Thou call'st thyself a hotter name than any is in hell.	5.7.6-7
Turn, hell-hound, turn!	5.8.3
Thou bloodier villain / Than terms can give thee out!	5.8.7-8

5 Punctuation Exploration

In writing his plays, Shakespeare moved back and forth between prose and verse. It's easy to see on the page: the prose has margins justified (or aligned) on both the left and right; the verse has shorter lines, justified on the left margin only, and with capitalization at the beginning of each new line. There is no hard-and-fast rule that dictates Shakespeare's choices, but sometimes prose characterizes the speech of commoners; and verse, the nobility. But he also uses the two forms to set a different mood, or to indicate a change in the character's state of mind. In pairs, read aloud the verse passage below that has been stripped of all punctuation. Read it again several times aloud, listening for the rhythm and to discover its sense. When you feel you've grasped the meaning, punctuate and compare with the edited text you are using in class. The words are spoken by Macbeth, 1.3.129-141. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1B(2-5)b, 2A(3-4)d, 4B(2-5)b**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill cannot be good if ill
Why hath it given me earnest of success
Commencing in truth I am Thane of Cawdor
If good why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
Against the use of nature present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings
My thought whose murder yet is but fantastical
Shakes so my single state of man that function
Is smothered in surmise and nothing is
But what is not

6 Photo Captions

(To the teacher: Find four to five (or more!) production photos from various *Macbeth* film/television/theater interpretations (try the Internet Movie Database [www.imdb.com], or Google “*Macbeth* production stills.” You can use this to introduce the play’s themes, or after the students have gotten into the text and have started thinking about the themes themselves.) In groups of three to four, write newspaper headlines and captions for the photos. Imagine what the people are saying and what they’re thinking; figure out the relationship among the people in the photo, who they might be. After you’ve worked to write a headline, present your picture and caption to the class and explain your headline.

Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)a, 4B(2-5)b

7 Creative Definitions

In small groups, leaf through the script to find three words that you’re pretty sure will be unfamiliar to everyone, including you! Then, using the footnotes (or a lexicon if you have one in the classroom), look up and write out the definition that seems to make the most sense in the context of the story. Next, make up two other convincing definitions for each word that your classmates are sure to believe. Now in your group, first read aloud the line in which the word appears. Then read your three possible definitions for the word, including the right one, while you try to stump the others! So often in Shakespeare (as in other texts), the context will help lead you to a word’s meaning—even if you’ve never heard the word before. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)a, 1A(2-5)b, 2A(3-5)d, 4B(2-5)a**

On Your Own

8 Personalizing *Macbeth*

Before you read *Macbeth*, it’s helpful to think about some of the play’s central ideas as they relate to your own life and personal experience. Jot down some of your thoughts about one of the following situations. Don’t worry about your writing style—these papers will be collected, but not graded or shared. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3A(2-5), 3B(2-4)a, 3C(2-5)a**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- Can you remember a time that someone you know predicted that something would happen in your life that seemed very unlikely—and then it did happen? Did you act differently or make any different decisions after this person said what he/she did to you? Do you think the predicted event would have happened anyway if you hadn't been told that it might? How do you think this person was able to predict something about you that you yourself had not?
- Think about a time in your life when you were in the middle of a very tough situation. To keep going on the same course seemed impossible, but so did backtracking. What did you do? Were there other possibilities that you considered? Looking back, can you see some options that didn't seem possible then? If so, how come?
- Have you ever wanted something that was out of your reach and been tempted to go after it, even if it meant doing something you felt you shouldn't in order to obtain it? Describe the situation. What did you want, and who or what was in your way? How did you decide what course to take, and what did you do in the end?

9

Descriptive Writing

Shakespeare was a descriptive writer—something any of us can also achieve when we know and observe our subject very closely. Choose a place to sit and write for 10 minutes on your own. Pick a location that is active, like a school hallway, the cafeteria, or the gym. Keep writing throughout, and don't stop writing until the time is up. Just write what you see, hear, smell, and how the place feels. Make your words as descriptive as possible. Poets like Shakespeare rely on metaphors—comparisons of seemingly dissimilar things (like love and food) to describe abstract emotions and sensory experience. Test out your metaphorical skills! **Illinois English Language Arts**

Goals 2A(2-4)a, 4A(2-5)b

AS YOU READ THE PLAY

As A Class

1

Defining Words

Shakespeare will use words in his plays that are no longer part of modern American English. He was also making up so many words that were completely new to the English language that his own audiences wouldn't have known many of their meanings either! But in performance, now or then, actors use vocal expression as well as body language to help communicate their meaning to their audience, who might otherwise be left in the dark. As you're reading, jot down three words that aren't used in modern-day English. Then look your words up in the text's glossary or a lexicon to make sure that you understand them! Now, standing in a circle, say your word and definition. Say your word again, this time making a strong verbal "choice" as you recite it. Pass the word to the person next to you, who repeats that same word, first with your inflection, then with his or her own vocal choice. Once the word makes its way around the circle, the person who chose it will repeat the definition one last time and then the next student will continue on with his/her selected word and definition. **Illinois English Language Arts**

Goals 1A(2-5)b, 4A(2-5)b

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

In Small Groups or Pairs

2

In Their Own Words

In pairs, as an actor and understudy for a part, select a character from the dramatis personae to explore through the play. Skim through the play and mark speeches or lines that appear characteristic. Select three or four small segments that seem to best portray your character and prepare to present to the class—and defend your ideas! Elizabethan actors had to learn their lines and come to know their characters, having no more than their own part in front of them. They were given just their own lines with the cue lines that preceded theirs, and were never handed an entire script. (At the end of your study, go back and repeat this exercise with the same character. Present again and discuss the differences now that you've read the play.) **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5) a, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-4)c, 4B(2-5)a**

3

Adopt a Character

(To the teacher: Select several students to lie on large sheets of paper to trace their profile.) In small “adopt-a-character” groups, draw, cut-and-paste or attach costumes to these life-size portraits. As you read through the play, use “caption bubbles” to attach quotes from the text that have particular significance for this character. Continue to costume the portrait and add caption bubbles, developing your character throughout the study of the play. **Illinois Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)e**

4

Shared Synopsis

This is a good refresher to do after you've finished reading an act—or finally, the entire play. Sitting in a circle, choose a leader. The leader begins to describe the action from Act I (or II or III...) until he/she has come up with three plot points, or can't think of what comes next. Then the story passes to the next person, who adds the next few actions. You can use the “Act-by-Act” synopsis included in this book as a place to check your own story against! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)c, 2B(3-4)c, 4B(2-5)b**

On Your Own

5

Character References

Choose a character to follow through the play. Keep a journal of text references for that character—both their lines and other characters' lines about them. What does s/he feel about the other characters? How do they feel about him/her? Can you see any of the play's themes reflected in your character's lines? (This exercise can be followed up after reading the play with a small group and class activity.) **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-4)c, 3C(2-5)a**

6

Actor's Journal

Contemporary scripts often give a summary of a character's personality before the play even opens. But in Shakespeare, much of the detective work had to be done by the actor. Many actors keep an “actor's journal” to gather information and ideas about their characters. As you start to be introduced to the different characters in *Macbeth*, select one to keep an actor's journal about. Record the following clues:

- what the character says about himself (or herself)
- what other characters say about him/her
- what your character does in the play

Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(3-4)c, 3C(2-5)a

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

7 First Impressions

First—and last—impressions are often great insights into character development and relationships. Using the *dramatis personae* and the text, make a list of a character's first lines and their context as you come across each new important character. What predictions can you make from these first impressions? Then return to your predictions at the end of the play. Go back and see what the characters' final lines are. What has changed? How close were your predictions? What deeper meanings are in these lines now that you've read the entire play? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)a, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(2-5)a**

8 Character Diary

Choose a character to follow throughout the play. Imagining yourself to be that character, create a personal diary. Your daily entries might focus on how the other characters feel about you, and how you feel about them. What do you wish to do, or wish you had done, or hope will happen? What do you most fear? Most want? Use text references and lines to supplement your journaling and personal thoughts. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(4-5)a, 1C(4-5)d, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(4-5)a, 3A(4-5), 3B(2-4)a, 3C(2-5)a**

ACT ONE

As A Class

1 Introducing Shakespeare's Language

Actor Michael Tolaydo developed the following exercise as a way to introduce Shakespeare's language and style to students unfamiliar with his work. Tolaydo emphasizes that Shakespeare's plays are not always just about the plot, but are an exploration of human nature and the use of language. Most importantly, his plays were written to be performed, not simply read. This activity may take two class sessions to complete, but is well worth it! The exercise is a performed group scene, involving five or more characters from the play. This is not a "staged" performance, so there should be no heavy focus on acting skills; rather, this should be approached as a learning experience involving exploration of plot, character, language, play structure, and play style.

For our purposes, the second scene from Act I of *Macbeth* will work very well; though the characters are all male, the students reading the parts need not be male. The script should be photocopied and typed in a large font (at least 13 point), with no text notes or glossary, and enough copies for every student in the classroom. In selecting readers for the speaking roles (with as many "attendants" as you can handle) it is important to remember that the play is not being "cast," but rather that the students are actively exploring the text; your students need not be aspiring actors in order to learn from this exercise! While the scene is being read for the first time, the rest of the class should listen rather than read along, so no open books! Don't worry about the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words or phrases. Encourage your students to say them the way they think they would sound. (Later, you can take a class vote on the pronunciation of any words that cannot be located in the dictionary.)

The first reading should be followed by a second one, with new students reading the parts—not to give a "better" reading of the scene but to provide an opportunity for the students to expand their familiarity with the text, and possibly gain new information or clearer understanding of a particular passage. This second reading should be followed by a question-and-answer session. Answers to the questions asked should come only from the scene being read, and not rely on any further knowledge of the play outside the scene at hand. Some examples of the

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

questions to be discussed: Who are these guys? Where are they? Why are they there? What are they doing? What are their relationships to each other? Also, this is a good time to address any particular words or phrases that are not understood. Give the students the answers to a few, but have them look up the majority as homework. (*The Oxford English Dictionary* and C.T. Onions's *A Shakespeare Glossary* are good sources.) Encourage them to ask questions about anything they don't understand in the scene. If there is disagreement, take a class vote. Majority rules! Remember, there is no one right answer, but a myriad of possibilities—as long as the students' conclusions are supported by the text. After this, you may choose to read the scene a few more times, with new sets of readers, followed by more questions.

The “fast read-through” is next. Ask your students to stand in a circle; each student reads a line up to a punctuation mark (commas don't count) and then the next student picks up. The point of this is to get as smooth and as quick a read as possible, so that the thoughts flow, even though they are being read by more than one person—much like the passing of a baton in a relay race.

The final step is to put the scene “on its feet.” Select a cast to read the scene, while the rest of the class directs. No one is uninvolved. There are many ways to explore and stage this scene—there is no one “right” way, and everyone's input is important. Some questions to consider during this process are: Where does the scene take place? What time of year? What's around them? Use available materials to set up the scene. Establish entrances and exits. (This should all come from clues in the text!) In making your decisions, remember to use the ideas you discovered from the earlier readings. After the advice from the “directors” has been completed, the cast should act out the scene. After this first “run-through,” make any changes necessary, then do the scene again using the same cast or a completely new one. Ask the students to comment on the process.

The process of getting the scene off the page and on its feet enables students to come to an understanding of Shakespeare's text on their own, without the use of notes or explanatory materials. They will develop a familiarity with the scene and the language, begin a process of literary analysis of the text, and establish a relationship with the play and with Shakespeare. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)a, 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 2B(2-4)c, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)b**

2

Group Soliloquy

Soliloquies were important tools in Shakespeare's dramatic “toolbox.” The soliloquy is ideally suited to a thrust stage, where the actors can approach the audience and speak intimately with them, as if one-on-one. On the proscenium stage, where there is much greater distance between the actor and the audience, the soliloquy tends to become a moment when the character talks aloud to himself. The soliloquy allows the audience to learn about the character and his/her motivations privately—we learn what other characters cannot. It allows us to get as close to the essence of a character as he/she can psychologically permit. And the soliloquy, because it is spoken to us alone, is wrapped in a kind of intimacy, serving to build the relationship between that character and us. Using Macbeth's soliloquy at the beginning of 1.7, walk around the room as a group, saying the words aloud, but to yourself. Next, repeat the exercise, but this time change your direction by at least 90 degrees at every punctuation mark. As a group, discuss any differences you may have sensed the second time around. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(2-5)a**

3

Persuading Angels

Discuss how Lady Macbeth may have come to the decision that Duncan needed to be eliminated. If she were to have two angels appear on her shoulders (one good, one bad), what would each say and how would each try to influence her decision? With nine students at the front of the class, one student will play Lady Macbeth, four will alternate as “the Good Angel,” the other four as “the Bad Angel.” Lady Macbeth should be seated in the middle,

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

with her angels on opposing sides. As the angels attempt to persuade her, Lady Macbeth may choose to listen to or reject the angels' statements. After a couple of minutes, Lady Macbeth must make her decision. It need not be the decision that Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth makes! Discuss when she was convinced and what/who convinced her. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(2-4)c, 4A(2-5)b**

In Small Groups or Pairs

4 Dreams and Prophecy

Take a moment to write down three personal dreams or wishes—anything is possible and nothing is too far-fetched! Exchange your paper with a partner. Take turns “prophesizing” your partner’s dream list as though you were...

- his/her best friend
- the President of the United States
- a fortune teller

Now choose one of these same three roles and try prophesying your partner’s list with three different intents:

- to scare
- to reassure
- to tempt

Which prophecy did you most believe? Which prophecy made you most skeptical? How does each interpretation affect your confidence in your dream?

Now in a group of five, read aloud 1.3, assigning everyone a part. Try reading the scene a few times, having the witches act out the three different intents above—or come up with your own! Discuss how each interpretation might make Macbeth and Banquo feel. Which interpretation works best? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 3C(2-3)a, 4B(2-5)b**

5 Cutting Words

Shakespeare used “duologues”—the conversation between two people—to heighten a play’s intensity and to reveal information about each character and about the complexity of the relationship between them. Often, the two are left alone together on stage. The duologue can have the feel of a duel between two combatants whose “swords” are their words. Working in pairs, take the duologue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, 1.7.29-82 (“He has almost supped...”) Explore the movement of a duologue by standing up and each taking a part. But this time, read silently to yourself. As you read your lines, move in relation to the other character. Begin to get a feel for the way the lines position for attack and retreat, and as you move, imagine that your weapon is a dagger, perhaps, rather than the words you speak. The lines, like two swords, “cut and thrust.” **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)a, 1A(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(2-4)c, 4A(2-5)b, 4A(2-5)b**

6 Witches’ Echo

Look at the Witches’ lines in 1.1 and 1.3. Make a list of their words in these two scenes that might stick in Macbeth’s memory, haunting him and eventually influencing his decision to murder Duncan. As one person from the group reads aloud Macbeth’s speech, 1.7.1-28, the others choose places to echo the witches’ words. Be creative, adding sounds and movement! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)a, 1A(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

On Your Own

7

Fair or Foul?

One of the best ways to get into a new play is to imagine its opening scene in detail by “getting it up on its feet.” The opening scene of *Macbeth* is a great one for trying this out. How do the witches move? Are they old? Young? Male? Female? How are they dressed? Are they all similar in appearance, or distinctive somehow from one another? What do their voices sound like? What pitch? What pace? Are they loud? Do they whisper? What props do you want to include in your scene? Are they carrying objects with them? What would they wear? How do they enter the scene? Together? Separately? Think of sound effects that help set the mood—using Shakespeare’s script for your clues! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a**

8

Compare and Contrast

In 1.4, Macbeth’s six lines spoken to Duncan (lines 22-27), followed later by the six lines he says to himself (lines 48-53) are very different and stand in sharp contrast. Read both of Macbeth’s speeches aloud, and with each polysyllabic word (i.e. a word with more than one syllable), spread your arms out wide. Then read Macbeth’s second speech again, and rap your fist whenever you come to a monosyllabic word (i.e. a word with only one syllable). Next, read Macbeth’s lines to Duncan again, smiling and bowing every time you speak a word about loyalty or kingship. Finally, return to Macbeth’s lines to Duncan a second time, making a stabbing gesture each time Macbeth voices a word conveying his evil intentions. What do you notice? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1B(3-4)b, 1C(2-5)a, 2A(3-4)d, 4A(2-5)b**

ACT TWO

In Small Groups or Pairs

1

Hear the Words

In Shakespeare’s day, audiences talked about going to “hear a play” rather than going to “see” one, as we do. (Look at the Latin root of the word “audience”!) The Elizabethans loved language. New words were being created all the time (thousands by Shakespeare alone!) and the language was still so fluid that many spellings of words weren’t agreed upon yet. So what does this have to do with us? It means that the way we come to know the words in a play (in reading a text or watching a performance) is a very different approach from the one used by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. It’s not hard to switch over—it just takes some “muscle building”! In pairs, take Macbeth’s famous “Is this a dagger” soliloquy (2.1.33-64). With one person reading the script aloud, breaking apart lines as necessary in small, manageable “chunks,” the other person (without a script in hand) listens to the chunks and repeats them aloud. The person who is listening closes his/her eyes and is led slowly around the room by his/her partner—the two are “connected” by only the lightest touch of their index fingers. This isn’t a race, so go slowly, use manageable chunks of text, and really listen to the sound of Macbeth’s words. Then switch roles and read the passage again. Does hearing (and speaking) Macbeth’s words change the “climate” of the soliloquy for you? What did it feel like to be saying Macbeth’s words but not reading them? Did the power of the words change at all? (Some actors memorize this way, by “feeding in” their lines to one another.) **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)a, 1A(2-5)b, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

2 Typical Gesture

Look back through Acts I and II and create a typical gesture for each of the characters you've already met. **Illinois Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a**

On Your Own

3 Poetry from Verse

Shakespeare often gives his comic characters prose instead of verse to speak. You can tell what's written in prose by just glancing at a page—the type is printed on the page, aligned on both ends (verse will look more like a poem). In a play with little comic relief, the Porter in *Macbeth* is no exception. Read, and re-read the Porter's opening passage in 2.3, then adapt his language into poetry. Notice his repetition, his imagery, and any other conventions that catch your eye as poetic. You can cut whatever you choose, and reorganize whatever you like, as long as you're using the lines from the speech. There's no wrong way to do it! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 2A(2-4)c, 2A(3-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 3B(2-4)a**

ACT THREE

As A Class

1 Ghost Guess Who

Imagine that the ghost, spirit or invisible image of a famous contemporary figure (a rock or film star, a politician, etc.) has just entered your classroom—visible only to you! As the rest of your classmates look on and try to guess at the identity of your unseen guest, you have a one-sided conversation with this vision, using information you know about him/her to give your classmates clues to the invisible identity. Start with tough clues, and use more well-known information as you go along. While you interact with your ghost, think about 3.4 in *Macbeth* when the ghost of the murdered Banquo appears at Macbeth's feast, visible only to him. Watch how Macbeth reveals information about the ghost's identity to his other guests who watch him in amazement. See if you can duplicate that sense of horror and fright as you converse with your uninvited guest! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2B(2-5)b, 4A(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)a**

In Small Groups or Pairs

2 Stage Directions

Shakespeare is known for brevity—at least when it comes to writing stage directions! He rarely indicates more than an entrance or exit, so get to work writing what the Bard left out! *Macbeth* has many scenes you could use to add your own stage directions: the first time Macbeth and Banquo meet the Weird Sisters (1.3), the arrival of Macduff to Dunsinane and the uproar after he finds Duncan murdered (2.3), Fleance's escape after the murderers kill Banquo (3.3). In groups of three, write your own stage directions. To get started, think of specific details: How old are the characters, and how will age effect their movements? What are some of the sounds or smells we would experience? Will the characters' clothes effect their movements? What are their states of mind during the scene? After writing your stage directions, present your scene in all the detail you imagined, and explain your reasons for staging it the way you did. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-4)a, 3C(2-5)a, 5C(2-3)b**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

3

Soliloquy for Two

Approaching a soliloquy with a partner can help unlock a character's emotional state (or states) since often a character uses those moments alone on stage with his/her audience to wrestle with a difficult problem and reveal his/her conflicted and/or private thoughts. It is as though one part of the character converses with another! *Macbeth* is filled with a number of good examples: Macbeth in 1.7.1-28, 2.1.33-64, and 3.1.49-73; Lady Macbeth in 1.5.36-52. With your partner, take one of these soliloquies, and read it aloud, changing readers each time you come to a punctuation mark. Then, reread the passage together, but starting with the other person, so that you've switched "chunks" with one another. What does reading a soliloquy aloud with a partner help to clarify? Did rereading it bring any other ideas to mind? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2A(3-4)d, 4A(2-5)b**

4

Descriptive Lines

In groups of 4-5, choose a character from the play and find a series of lines that tell about him/her, either through the character's own words, or through words said about him/her by other people. Cite the passages. As a group, decide how you will present your character to the class. You can recite the lines in a row, take parts, repeat and echo certain lines while others are being spoken, move around, etc. Then, be prepared to answer questions, and defend your choices of characteristic lines! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1B(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)a, 4B(2-5)b, 5B(2-5)a**

ACT FOUR

In Small Groups or Pairs

1

One Word Headline

Look back at Act IV in your small group and come up with just one word that describes the mood or atmosphere of each scene. Then title each scene, choosing a "headline" that reflects both the mood and the action. How does each scene inform the scene that comes before it? The one that comes after it? (This is an exercise that can be used throughout the play.) **Illinois Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1B(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b**

2

Word Web Tableaux

(To the teacher: Using a word web, have your class brainstorm together on a theme for Act IV [violence, deceit, man/wife, power...]. Then split the class into groups of four to create a tableau—a "snapshot" using still-life bodies to sculpt an idea, theme, or relationship. Assign each group a different idea from the word web.) Your tableau should use multiple levels, and there should be some physical contact (a hand on a shoulder, foot-to-foot, etc.). Once all groups have finished, present your tableau and invite the rest of the class to interpret based on the picture they see. Then explain your own interpretation to the rest of the class. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)a, 1B(2-5)b, 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)b**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

On Your Own

3 Character Wants

For homework, make a list in your notes or reading journal of all the significant characters you have met so far in *Macbeth*. Add a second column in which you describe as specifically as you can what each of these characters wants (which may change as the story progresses). In a third column, note the act, scene and line numbers that created this impression for you. Which characters get what they want? Does it seem likely that they will keep it? Why or why not? As you go through the play act by act, return to your list, filling it in with new characters you meet, and making notes in a fourth column to indicate when they (or you) have changed their mind. **Illinois Language Arts Goals 1B(2-4)b, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(3-4)c, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-4)a**

ACT FIVE

In Small Groups or Pairs

1 Choices in Action

What would have happened in the play if the characters made different choices? How would those choices have impacted the story? In groups of three to five, create a chart for a single scene in *Macbeth*. For every action that drives the plot, offer an alternative. In one color write the moment in the play, and below write out a different choice in a second color. For example, as Malcolm and Donalbain flee for safety, an alternative could have been that Malcolm and Donalbain stay to avenge their father's murder. Compare your chart with others. A writer has countless choices that he or she can make in crafting a story, but the choices have to make sense in terms of the characters and they have to help you follow the arc of the storyline you're creating. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 2B(3-4)c, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)b, 4A(2-5)a, 4B(2-5)a**

On Your Own

2 Guilty Letters

Imagine that out of guilt, Macbeth decides to write letters to the family members of those that he has killed in pursuit of the crown. Using your own words, write one of these letters as if you were Macbeth. If the letter is addressed to a character that doesn't exist within the text (e.g. Banquo's wife), be specific about the person's relationship to the deceased. What would Macbeth say? Does he try to explain himself? Is the letter clear, or is it muddled because of Macbeth's emotional distress? Is the letter an attempt to apologize, or to clear his conscience? Once you've written the letter, share it with the class. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 2B(2-5)a, 2B(3-4)c, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-4)a**

3 Inspiring Speeches

In Act V, scene ix, Malcolm delivers a post-battle speech in which he refers to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as the "dead butcher and his fiend-like queen." You'll find other inspirational monologues in the speeches of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, William Wallace in *Braveheart*, or even sports movies like *Any Given Sunday*, or *Remember the Titans*. Read the monologue and/or play it on a DVD/videotape, then write a comparison to Malcolm's speech. What are the similarities? Are words repeated, or does the speaker set up words that have opposite meanings (antitheses)? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)c, 1C(2-5)e, 2B(2-5)a, 2B(3-4)c, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-4)a**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

AFTER READING THE PLAY

As a Class

1

Macbeth Jeopardy

Time to play *Macbeth* Jeopardy! (To the teacher: this activity works well as a review session. It's set up like the TV game show, and does take some preparation—but it goes more quickly than you might think. A few students can set up the game for extra credit. First, choose several categories. For example: Duncan's Thanes, The Weird Sisters, Quotes, Masters and Servants, Travel in *Macbeth's* Scotland, etc. Then leaf through the text to find eight answers at least per category. The more specific and exclusive the information is, the less ambiguous the game will be. Organize the answers by range of difficulty and create a point-value sheet. An overhead projector works well, allowing the whole class to see the categories being marked off as the game progresses.)

Once divided into teams, one student from the team chooses a category: "The answer is..." A member of one of the opposing teams must frame the correct question, winning points for their team with a correct question. Then the next team chooses a category, etc. Don't chime in with the correct "question" when the wrong one is given, so that the next group can choose the same category! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)b, 1B(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)b**

2

Macbeth Charades

Each person writes down a single event from the play on a note card. Separate into two large teams and combine your cards with the others from your team. One person from the first team starts with a card from the opposite team, such as "Lady Macbeth tells her husband to return the bloody daggers to Duncan's bedchambers." That person has to mime the event (no words!) until his/her own team guesses correctly—or until the clock strikes two minutes. Then it's the other team's turn. The team scores one point if it guesses correctly. **Illinois Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A4d**

In Small Groups

3

Macbeth Soundtrack

Imagine you're creating a compilation CD to serve as the soundtrack for Macbeth's character. Would you use rock? Pop? Hip-hop? Would the tone of your album be sad, or angry? Would the music be slow, or eerie, or something powerful to get the listener energized and ready to go to battle? Choose 10 songs (lyrical or instrumental) to include on your CD. Be ready to explain all of your choices, and play at least one song during the next class period. Choose songs that follow Macbeth's character arc, and tell his story through the songs' lyrics, or the sounds of the music itself.

Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 3B(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)a, 3C(2-4)b

4

Behind the Mask

Frequently in *Macbeth*, characters portray a particular feeling in public while they are thinking something very different underneath. They hide behind a mask. Lady Macbeth even tells Macbeth, "Away, and mock the time with fairest show / False face must hide what false heart doth know." Choose a line in *Macbeth* where a character is "acting"—saying one thing for public consumption while hiding his/her true feelings. With your partner standing

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

behind you, hold a mask up to your face while he/she says your line in your “public voice.” Then step from behind the mask, and using your face and voice, communicate how you truly feel as you repeat the line. In your own life, when is your public behavior different from how you act or feel in private? Think of a situation where you would have to act differently from how you actually feel, and write a short scene. Say the lines as if you were in that public situation, and then again how you would say them if you were alone. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(2-5)a, 2B(2-4)c, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-4)a**

5 Character Questions

Macbeth is a play that is filled with people asking questions—to one another and to themselves. G. Wilson Knight suggests that this play may contain more questions asked by its characters than any other play written by Shakespeare. “These questions,” writes Knight, “are threads in the fabric of mystery and doubt which haunts us in *Macbeth*. All the persons are in doubt, baffled.” In groups of 5-7, retrace the questions that people ask throughout the course of the play’s action. Devise a dramatic way to present some of these to the rest of the class. Consider repetition, choral reading, echoing. See if in your presentation you can re-create the sense of mystery and doubt that Knight suggests. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(3-4)d, 2B(2-5)a, 4B(2-5)b, 5C(2-4)b**

On Your Own

6 Letters from Inverness Jail

If Macbeth committed his crimes today... Imagine that Macbeth has been imprisoned and is writing a letter to his lawyer. Would he be truthful, or would he lie? Would he express remorse? Or would he stand his ground and defend his actions? Would he implicate his wife? The Weird Sisters? Remember to keep your audience in mind, and also that Macbeth is sitting in a jail cell. What is his state of mind while he writes the letter? Is he claustrophobic? Scared? Angry? How is he writing the letter? Have they given him paper and pencil? Can he use a typewriter? Use every aspect of your imagination. Volunteers can share with the rest of the class. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 2B(3-4)c, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-4)a, 3C(2-5)a**

7 Five Years Later

Write an epilogue (a short passage/essay) to *Macbeth*. What’s happening to the main characters five years following the conclusion of Shakespeare’s play? Is Malcolm a fair and good king? Do Ross, Macduff, and the others remain loyal to Malcolm? What has happened to Fleance? Do the Weird Sisters reappear, and if so to whom and bearing what message? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)a**

8 Epitaph

If you had to describe Lady Macbeth in a phrase for her tombstone, what would it be? How should she be remembered? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 2B(2-5)a, 2B(3-4)c, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-5)a**

9 Obituary and Last Words

We learn of Lady Macbeth’s suicide by report, but never see it on stage. Write her dying speech—either as Shakespeare might have written it, or in everyday language. Then write an official “press release” issued by the palace announcing her death. You’ll need to think through (as every good PR person must!) just how much of the truth you’re willing to reveal—and how much you have to spin... **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)d, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)a**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

10

Horoscopes

Choose a specific day in the story of *Macbeth*. You are a renowned astrologer, whose horoscopes appear in the *Dunsinane Daily*... Write a horoscope for the play's main characters. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)a**

11

Travel Brochure

Create a travel brochure for Shakespeare's Scotland as portrayed in *Macbeth* which would entice tourists to plan their vacations there... You might include magazine photos, illustrations from the Internet, or draw your own images. It's helpful to do some research first on Scotland's terrain, weather, famous places that we're introduced to in *Macbeth*, and perhaps even some medieval customs! (The real King Macbeth lived 1,000 years ago.) **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3A(2-5), 3B(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)b, 5A(2-5)a, 5B(2-5)a**

12

Quote Book

Create a quote book. After you read *Macbeth*, go back and pull out quotes that have particular meaning to a character—or to you personally. Treat them graphically with accompanying photos, illustrations, words from newspaper headlines or magazine ads, etc. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(3-4)b, 2B(2-5)a, 3B(2-5)a, 3C(2-4)b, 5B(2-5)a**

13

Wants and Fears

In just one sentence, write the conclusion of these two sentences for each of the main characters:

“What I most want is...”

“What I'm most afraid of is...”

Take a risk—there's not just one right answer. Could it be that two characters want (or fear) the same thing? Could one character want and fear the same thing at the same time? Compare your ideas with your classmates! **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 3A(2-5)**

14

One Important Question

Choose one question that's of importance to you in *Macbeth* and answer it, using the text and performance as your resources. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3A(2-5), 3B(2-5)a, 5B(2-5)a**

PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE

Just to Think About

1

In Full View

In traditional Shakespearean theater, members of the audience (unlike those in a more modern auditorium) are always in view of each other. The experience of theater is one of community. We all are present and watching together a story that has been enacted many, many times for hundreds of years and in hundreds of places all over the world. The thrust stage at Chicago Shakespeare Theater is much like the stages of Elizabethan theaters—and situates the action of the play with members of the audience facing each other around the stage. When during the performance do you become aware of other audience members? How does this affect your own experience? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A4d**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

As a Class

2 Time and Place

Macbeth has been set in a number of periods and settings from classical to modern times. Imagine that your class is producing *Macbeth*. Discuss as a class what period and/or setting you would choose to place it in. Do certain settings give the play a lighter or darker tone? How does a different period or setting affect the characters? Once you have chosen a setting as a class, put the act and scene numbers for each scene in the play on slips of paper, and mix them up in a hat. Pick one scene out of the hat. Imagine that you are designing the class's production of *Macbeth*. What does your scenic design look like? What kinds of costumes are your characters wearing? What is the lighting like? Some questions to get you started:

- Where does the scene take place?
- What props are helpful in setting the mood?
- What is the weather like? What time of day is it?
- What's the overall tone of the scene?
- Who's in the scene? Where are they from?

It may help to make a designer's collage—that is, a large piece of poster-board with swatches of fabric, copies of paintings or photographs that have an element of what you envision, and anything else that illustrates the scene for you. Magazines and art books are often a good source of ideas. When you've finished your collage, pick the line or lines from the scene that are essential to your design concept. As a class, do a "show and tell" in order of scenes (designers often do this for the cast on the first day of rehearsal).

After you see the play at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, discuss as a class the setting and costume designs that the director and his design team chose. Why do you think they made these choices? What was useful or helpful about CST's design elements? What was distracting or not believable to you? How did the director's choice of period and/or setting compare with your class' choice? Are there similar elements to some of the designs you saw as a class?

Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 1C(2-5)e, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a, 4B(2-5)a

In Small Groups

3 Offstage Action

Often in Shakespeare, you may notice that he chooses to communicate information by reporting it. We hear about it instead of seeing it enacted in front of us. *Macbeth* is filled with examples of offstage action that we learn about by another character's report—or by a letter read aloud. As a class, think back and reconstruct as many points in the play as you can where we as the audience is given information about events we don't actually witness on stage. Often, a film or stage director will choose to enact an offstage scene. A great example of this is in Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* when he stages the offstage seduction scene between Borachio and, supposedly, Claudio's fiancée, Hero. Two key examples of offstage action in *Macbeth* are Duncan's murder and Lady Macbeth's suicide. In your small groups, talk together about the possible gains and losses of staging one of these two scenes. If you were directing the play, would you choose to stage either death? Why? Return to this activity once you've seen Chicago Shakespeare's production of *Macbeth* and seen the choices that the director made. Have your answers to these questions changed at all? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)d, 4B(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)d**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

4

Casting *Macbeth*

Before you see the characters of *Macbeth* brought to life on stage by the vision of a director, spend some time imagining your own versions. Then after you see the play, contrast your vision to that of the director and the actors. Take, for example, Lady Macbeth. Go back to the text and look for clues that suggest what she might look like and how she might act. What stars might you cast in this role? In other key roles in the play? When you see Chicago Shakespeare's production, how does its interpretation of some of the characters you've cast compare to yours? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 2A(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a, 4B(2-5)a, 5A(2-5)b**

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

AFTER SEEING CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER'S *Macbeth*

As a Class

1

Setting and Costume

Discuss as a class the setting and costume designs that the CST director chose for the play you just saw. Why do you think he might have made these choices? What was useful or helpful about the design elements of Chicago Shakespeare's production of *Macbeth*? What was distracting or not believable to you as an audience? How did the choices affect your experience of the play? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)a, 1C(2-5)d, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)b**

2

Macbeth's Character

Every director must decide how his/her Macbeth will be portrayed. As a man driven by ambition? As a man who is inherently evil, or one gradually corrupted? A man trying to escape his own fears? Is Macbeth larger than life? Or quite small and helpless against the larger forces against him? Thinking back to the production you've just seen, how would you characterize this Macbeth? What was he like? What motivated him? How does this production support its interpretation of Macbeth's character? Compare with your own interpretation—or with another director's vision whose Macbeth you might have watched in class. If you can, be very specific about the places where you remember the differences. What moments in the play were treated differently by this Macbeth? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)d**

3

Supernatural

Discuss as a class the way that the world of the supernatural is portrayed in this production. Is it merely a figment of Macbeth's imagination? Something real of flesh and blood, but without vast power? Or is it dominant, strong and willful, a force much greater than the human world it controls? Think about the clues in the production you saw that gave you these impressions. What did the director, his actors and designers do to play out their own particular interpretation of this question in Shakespeare's play? Have you seen other productions that handled those same elements in a different way? Which was more believable for you—and why? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)b**

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

4

Marriage

How did this production approach the personal relationship between the Macbeths? Is it a marriage that begins as intimate and significant to the partners? Or one that has failed even before we meet them? Productions portray the relative strength of each partner in various ways. How did Chicago Shakespeare portray the strength of each? Who dominated—and when? Did that change? If so, when?—and how were you made aware of the change? Did the casting of these two actors make a difference in your point of view, even in their physical appearance? Compare to other productions you might have seen, or to the image you had in your mind before you came to the theater. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)b**

5

Your Perspective

Did your views about the play or any of the characters change after seeing this live production? If so, how? Try to be very specific about moments in the action that affected you. **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 2B(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)b, 4B(2-5)b**

In Small Groups or Pairs

6

News Ad

Working in groups of three, brainstorm your ideas and write an ad for the *Chicago Tribune* about the play you saw. Remember that you must characterize the play and attract a large audience in just a few words. What visual image from the play would you choose for your photo? **Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C(2-5)b, 1C(2-5)d, 1C(2-5)e, 2B(2-5)a, 3A(2-5), 3B(2-5)a, 3C(2-5)a, 4A(2-5)a**

TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's Website

<http://www.chicagoshakes.com/>

Check out our new website for more information about CST and *Short Shakespeare! Macbeth*, along with our other 2010–11 productions.

COMPREHENSIVE LINK SITES

William Shakespeare and the Internet

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

A fabulous site featuring biographical information on Shakespeare, links to Shakespearean criticism, historical information on the British Renaissance period, and links to other recommended sites, including current Shakespeare Festivals.

Shakespeare in Europe Sh:in:E (Basel University)

<http://www.unibas.ch/shine/home>

Touchstone Database (University of Birmingham, UK)

<http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/welcome.html>

Absolute Shakespeare

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com>

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

The Folger Shakespeare Library

<http://www.folger.edu/education>

ShakespeareHigh.com (Amy Ulen's revamped "Surfing with the Bard" site)

<http://www.shakespearehigh.com>

Web English Teacher

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/shakespeare.html>

Proper Elizabethan Accents

<http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html>

The English Renaissance in Context: Multimedia Tutorials (University of Pennsylvania)

<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.htm>

The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider

<http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html>

TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

The Costumer's Manifesto (University of Alaska)

<http://www.costumes.org>

Rare Map Collection (The University of Georgia)

<http://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/maps/index.html>

Spark Notes

<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/>

Shakespeare Resource Center

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

MACBETH

The Curse of the Play

http://www.austinchronicle.com/issues/dispatch/2000-10-13/arts_feature2.html

A Lesson Plan for Teaching Macbeth

<http://www.eastdonsc.vic.edu.au/home/pgardner/teaching/Macbeth2000.htm>

An Introduction to Macbeth

<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/eng366/lectures/macbeth.htm>

Macbeth Background and Plot Summary/Study Guide

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

Teaching Resources for Macbeth

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

An Analysis of Shakespeare's Sources for Macbeth

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

Legends. Shakespeare's Stories. Macbeth

<http://bestoflegends.org/shakespeare/macbeth.html>

The History of Macbeth and King Duncan I of Scotland

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

The Anglo Saxon Chronicle

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

TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

SHAKESPEARE & ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>

The Elizabethan Theatre

<http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/index.html>

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet — Biography

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

Queen Elizabeth I

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

Shakespeare and the Globe: Then and Now (Encyclopedia Britannica)

<http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/index2.html>

Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend (The Newberry Library's Queen Elizabeth exhibit)

<http://www.newberry.org/Elizabeth/exhibit/index.html>

Shakespeare's GlobeLink Online Resources

<http://www.globelink.org>

History of the British Monarchy

<http://www.royalinsight.gov.uk/output/Page5.asp>

British History

<http://www.britannia.com/history/>

TEXTS AND EARLY EDITIONS

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Massachusetts Institute of Technology site)

<http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html>

Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto (British Library)

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

The First Folio and Early Quartos of William Shakespeare (University of Virginia)

<http://etext.virginia.edu/frames/shakeframe.html>

Furness Shakespeare Library (University of Pennsylvania)

<http://dewey.lib.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/>

SUGGESTED READINGS

The Internet Shakespeare Editions (University of Victoria, British Columbia)

<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/plays.html>

Shakespeare: Subject to Change (Cable in the Classroom site)

<http://www.ciconline.org/Shakespeare>

What Is a Folio? (MIT's "Hamlet on the Ramparts" site)

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

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Alexander Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary

(Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library site)

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3atext%3a1999.03.0079>

Shakespeare's Words

<http://www.shakespeareswords.com>

Word Frequency Lists (Mt. Ararat High School)

<http://www.link75.org/mta3/curriculum/english/shakes/index.html>

SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE

The Internet Movie Database: William Shakespeare

<http://www.us.imdb.com/find?q=Shakespeare>

SHAKESPEARE IN ART

Shakespeare Illustrated (Emory University)

http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html

The Faces of Elizabeth I

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

Tudor England: Images

<http://www.marileecody.com/images.html>

Absolute Shakespeare

http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare_pictures.htm

SUGGESTED READINGS

Suggested Readings

Barton, John. *Playing Shakespeare*. London, 1986.

A bible for Shakespearean actors, this classic book by John Barton (of Royal Shakespeare Company fame) offers any reader with an interest in Shakespeare's words an insider's insight into making Shakespeare's language comprehensible.

Bevington, David. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. New York, 1992.

A compendium of Shakespeare's complete works, with an excellent, readable introduction and clearly written footnotes.

Brockbank, Philip, ed. *Players of Shakespeare, Volumes 1–6*. Cambridge (through 2007).

Written by famous actors about the Shakespearean roles they have performed on the English stage, this collection of personal essays offers the reader a privileged look inside the characters and the artist's craft.

Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. New York, 1975.

The classic reference detailing Shakespeare's sources. Out of print, this multi-volume resource is well worth searching for in a library.

Chrisp, Peter. *Shakespeare*. London, 2002.

Part of DK Eyewitness Books' "children's book series," this title, plus a number of others (*Costume, Arms and Armor, Battle, Castle, Mythology*) offers students of any age beautifully illustrated background information to complement a classroom's Shakespeare study.

Crystal, David and Crystal, Ben. *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary and Language Companion*. London, 2002.

An informative, easy-to-use one-volume dictionary devoted to Shakespeare.

Fincher, Jack. "Raising the Curtain On a Bloody Riot and Stark Mayhem." *Smithsonian*, October 1985.

Fincher's article served as the primary source for the essay in this Handbook on the 1849 riot in NYC.

Garber, Marjorie. *Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality*. New York, 1987.

Marjorie Garber is one of the leading Shakespeare scholars today, whose most recent book, entitled *Shakespeare*, has earned her a wide following outside the Academy.

Gibson, Rex, ed. *Cambridge School Shakespeare: "Macbeth."* Cambridge, 2005.

This unparalleled series, used extensively as a resource in CST's education efforts, includes most of Shakespeare's plays, as well as a book devoted to the Sonnets. Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully thanks Cambridge University Press for its permission to include various classroom activities annotated throughout this Teacher Handbook.

Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge, 1998.

As "missionary" and inspiration to the "active Shakespeare" movement worldwide, Rex Gibson compiles into one incomparable resource activities that encourage students to playfully and thoughtfully engage with Shakespeare's language and its infinite possibilities.

Goddard, Harold C. *The Meaning of Shakespeare*. Chicago, 1951.

A classic, post-war critical analysis, which is both readable and humanistic, devoting a chapter to each play.

Grant, Cathy, ed. *Macbeth: Audiovisual Shakespeare*. London, 1992.

A detailed listing of audiovisual resources available for teaching Shakespeare through film and video (with an introductory essay by Rex Gibson).

Grun, Bernard. *The Timetables of History*. New York, 1991.

This book is a must-have resource for anyone who loves to place Shakespeare, his writing, and his royal characters in an historical context.

Hawkins, Harriet. *Twayne's New Critical Introductions to Shakespeare*. Boston, 1987.

This very reliable, accessible series of Shakespearean criticism is a good resource for many plays in the canon. Each is a single scholar's voice, as opposed to a compilation of various shorter essays.

Hills and Ötchen. *Shakespeare's Insults: Educating Your Wit*. Ann Arbor, 1991.

The editors combed the canon for lines that will incite any classroom to speaking Shakespeare with wild abandon!

SUGGESTED READINGS

Kimbrough, Robert. *Shakespeare and the Art of Humankindness*. New Jersey, 1990

One of the most eloquent academic writers, Kimbrough here addresses the question of prescribed (and proscribed) gender roles in several of Shakespeare's plays, including *Macbeth*.

Kliman, Bernice. *Shakespeare in Performance: "Macbeth."* Manchester, 1992.

This excellent series focuses upon performance history and details varying interpretations of past film and stage productions.

Mack, Maynard. *Killing the King: Three Studies in Shakespeare's Tragic Structure*. New Haven, 1973.

Maynard Mack's writings are readable, thought-provoking, and illuminating.

McDonald, Russ. "The Flaw in the Flaw," in *Shakespeare Set Free*. Peggy O'Brien, ed. New York, 1993.

McDonald's essay offers an illuminating lens through which to read and revisit Shakespeare's tragedies.

Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage*. Chicago, 1988.

Among the myriad of books written about the Elizabethan stage, Mullaney's is one of the best.

O'Brien, Peggy. *Shakespeare Set Free*. New York, 1993.

This three-volume set, edited by the Folger Library's Director of Education is a treasure chest of creative and comprehensive lesson plans.

Parsons, Keith and Mason, Pamela. *Shakespeare in Performance*. London, 1995.

A beautifully illustrated book detailing the performance history of Shakespeare's plays, both on the stage and in cinema.

Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy*. London, 2000.

Not for the prudish, Partridge's classic work offers an alphabetical glossary of the sexual and scatological meanings of Shakespeare's language. It will help the reader (including even the most Shakespeare-averse) understand another reason for this playwright's broad appeal on stage...

Peacock, John. *Costume 1066–1990s*. London, 1994.

Among the many excellent costume books available, Peacock's offers hundreds and hundreds of annotated sketches—an essential resource (from our point of view) for every English classroom's study of Shakespeare.

Poole, Adrian. *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example*. Oxford, 1987.

Poole's book is an erudite and a challenging read, but is well worth the effort, particularly in light of an exploration of *Macbeth*.

Rosenthal, Daniel. *Shakespeare on Screen*. London, 2000.

An excellent illustrated resource.

Schmidt, Alexander. *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*. New York, 1971.

No self-respecting cast of Shakespearean actors would be left alone in a rehearsal room without this fundamental, two-volume tome. Also online free of charge

Scott, Mark W. *Shakespeare for Students*. Detroit, 1992.

This excellent three-volume set (Book One includes *Macbeth*) is a collection of critical essays on 23 of Shakespeare's plays plus the Sonnets, and edited for secondary school students.

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*. Abridged Edition. London, 1990.

This abridged version of Stone's magnum opus presents his treatise about the evolution of the family in England from the impersonal, economically tied group to the smaller, affectively tied nuclear family.

Wills, Garry. *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth*. New York, 1995.

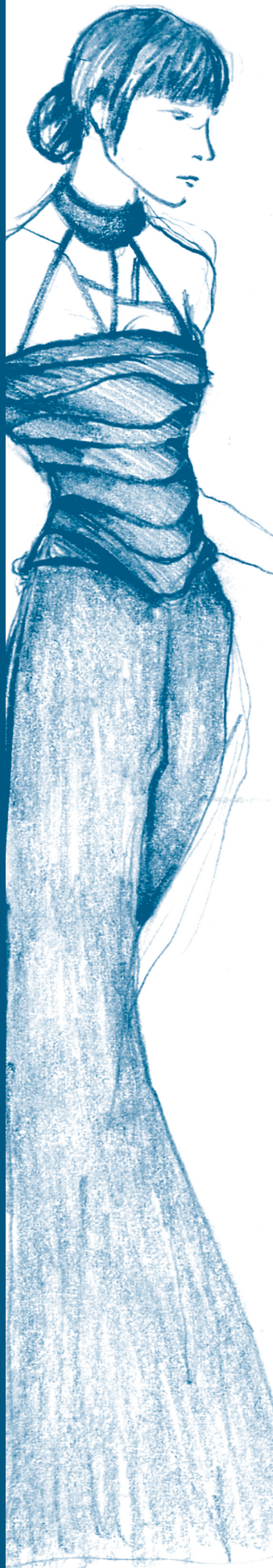
Pulitzer Prize-winning scholar Garry Wills addresses the relationship between the Gunpowder Plot and Shakespeare's timely story.

Wilson, Edwin, ed. *Shaw on Shakespeare*. New York, 1961.

George Bernard Shaw was one of Shakespeare's most outspoken critics—and also one of the most humorous. Students who know of Shaw's work, too, may enjoy having him as an ally!

Wilson, Jean. *The Archeology of Shakespeare*. Gloucester, 1995.

Among many books on early modern theater in England, this one is particularly interesting as it traces the roots of the first public theaters in England.



Team Shakespeare!

Shakespeare and the art of theater open up many and varied paths of learning. Through one of the largest arts-in-education programs in the entire country, Team Shakespeare brings Shakespeare's works to life for middle and high school students. Team Shakespeare is an expansive effort to share Shakespeare with young people and to celebrate the work of this great playwright, who embraced the limitless scope of imagination and the exploration of our complex human nature.



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