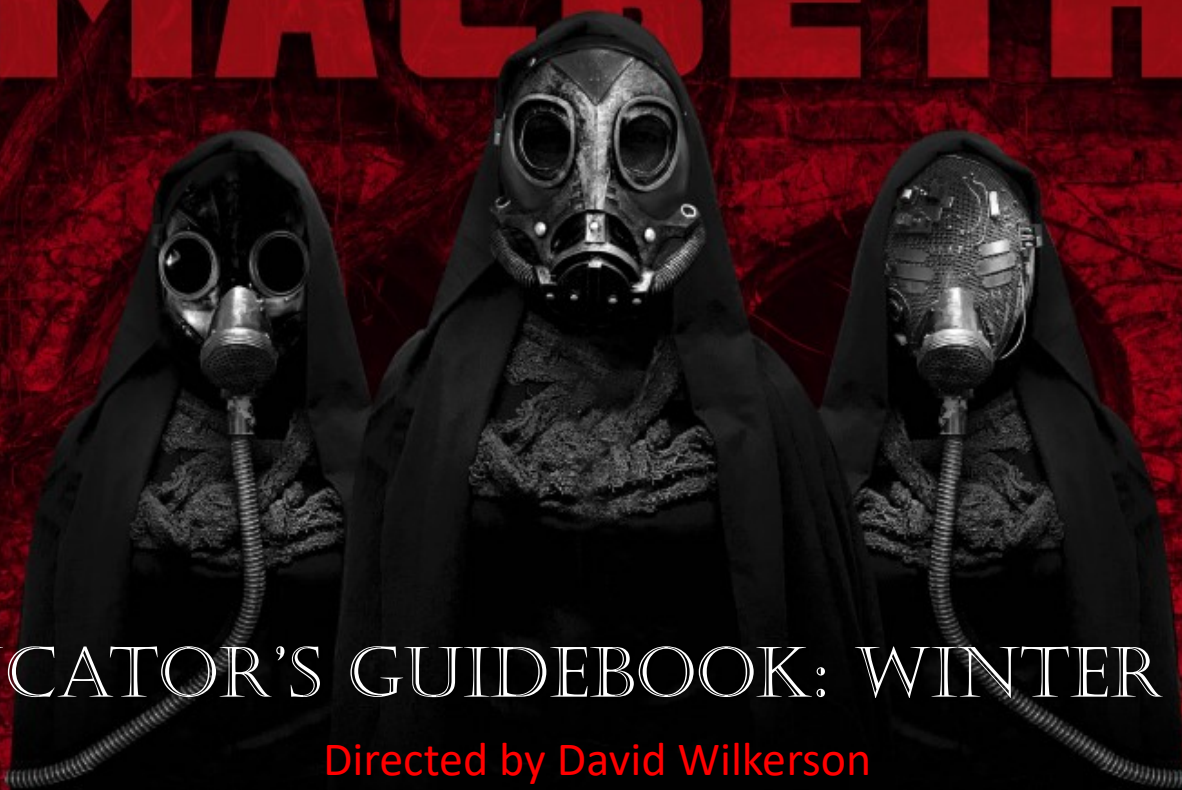




THE NASHVILLE
SHAKESPEARE
FESTIVAL

MACBETH



EDUCATOR'S GUIDEBOOK: WINTER 2020

Directed by David Wilkerson

Assistant Director: Laramie Hearn

Costume Design: Jocelyn Melechinsky

Set Design: Jim Manning

Lighting Design: Anne Willingham

Sound Design: Evan Wilkerson

Fight Choreography: Carrie Brewer and David Wilkerson



Table of Contents

[Letter from Artistic Director](#)

[Letter from Director](#)

[What to Expect](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Cast and Characters](#)

[Shakespeare's Timeline](#)

[Reading the Play in the Classroom](#)

[Ideas for the Classroom](#)

[Write a Review](#)

[Resources](#)

[About NSF](#)

[Guidebook Contributors](#)

[Winter Shakes 2020 Sponsors](#)

Letter from Executive Artistic Director, Denice Hicks

Welcome to the 33rd season of the Nashville Shakespeare Festival, and 13th annual Winter Shakespeare!

Thank you for choosing to experience live theater when you have so many options. Nashville is alive with thousands of entertainment offerings these days, including some very exciting new works projects, and multi-discipline collaborations. Thank you for choosing Shakespeare! When you decide to come see a Nashville Shakespeare Festival show, you are supporting an important part of the creative culture in this region. We employ dozens of theater artists every year, with contracts that are longer than most. This is all part of keeping the local talent and skill field growing and stable, which makes for better art for all!



And when I say “all,” I mean ALL! Presenting this production with affordable ticket prices for so many schools and communities is fulfilling our mission in rewarding and exciting ways. I believe that live theater is an integral part of a civilized society, and the immediacy of the experience unifies and enlivens each audience. That is not to say that we strive to create productions that everyone “likes.” Presenting art that provokes opinions, engenders wonder, and stimulates conversation is the ultimate goal.

Which brings us to this *MACBETH*. You won’t see Renaissance costumes or men playing all the roles. Director David Wilkerson has a strong vision for this play, and we as a company have done all within our power to bring his vision to life. David has much respect for Shakespeare’s language, and his edit of this work is done with great care and precision. I love the way that he has cleverly doubled and tripled the actors’ roles to assure that the story is thoroughly told.

Shakespeare told us that the purpose of playing is to hold a mirror up to the age and body of the time. *MACBETH* is a very dark tale, and David Wilkerson has directed it as a cautionary account of ambition without morals, clans without conscience. Shakespeare frequently refers to the missteps in this story as “unnatural.” As we humans continue to dissociate from our planet and our connection to each other, we can see how ghastly human behavior can become. *MACBETH* is a great jumping off point in studying the qualities of virtue, integrity, and morality.

In 2020, let’s all work toward peace.

Letter from the Director, David Wilkerson

Welcome to our world, a century-odd after the collapse of society. A makeshift civilization has risen in its place. Clans have banded together to take and hold what is needed to survive, where gender is now determined by attribute: fighters are automatically labeled as male and protectors or gestators as female.



Most of humanity's technological advancements have been lost, including the secrets to guns and bombs – but metal and fire remain. Death is commonplace; children are rare.

Otherworldly creatures feed off the corruption and sickness in the land. Strength and loyalty are critical; when one clan wins and claims the few remaining resources, there is no second place: There are the victors and there are the dead.

What things in our lives tempt us to deny the humanity in others, and by doing so, throw away part of our own?

Is what remains, in a post-civilization world where so much of our humanity has already been lost, even more precious?

What, in such a ravaged wasteland, could lead us to abandon those last cherished scraps of humanity?

And what would be the consequences?

A Note from Education Director, Katie Bruno

Thank you so much for finding your way to NSF's Educator Guidebook for *Macbeth* 2020.

We hope you'll find that this material sparks conversation and curiosity for you and your students.

It is my pleasure to create inspirational and exciting educational opportunities for Shakespeare enthusiasts in Nashville and beyond. I welcome your feedback, questions, and comments to help keep Nashville Shakes accessible, innovative, and fun!

Please feel free to email me at Katie@nashvilleshakes.org or call our office at 615-255-2273!



WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE TROUTT THEATER

The Troutt Theater on the Belmont University campus is a traditional proscenium stage theater seating approximately 300 people. The floor is raked, so all seats have a good view of the stage. The buses will drop you off at the front entrance to the building; you will go up one flight of stairs or use the elevator to take you to the second floor entrance to the theater. An usher will show you to your seats and provide with any instructions necessary as you enter the theater.



. . . DURING THE PERFORMANCE

The performance will begin promptly at 10:00 AM and conclude around 12:15 PM noon. There will be one ten-minute intermission following Act One of the play. Intermission provides you with a break to use the restroom, stretch, or check you mobile devices. Once intermission ends, turn all mobile devices back off and return to your seats as quickly and as quietly as possible for Act Two.

Shakespeare's plays are powerful and moving. Please remain respectful the actors and your fellow audience members throughout the performance. **Please turn off and put away all cell phones and digital devices before the show begins.** Ushers will ask you to put them away if they see devices in use during the performance. **Also, please remain in your seats and refrain from talking or whispering while the show is in progress.** Remember: The actors can see and hear you just as well as you can see and hear them!

Immediately after the performance, you will have an opportunity for a Talkback Question-and-Answer session with the actors and crew. Our cast and technicians are eager to answer YOUR questions about the play, Shakespeare, and life and careers in the theatre! Your teachers and NSF staff will be nearby and give you instructions should any emergency arises. Following the performance and Talkback, you will return to your bus or car and return to school with your group.

. . . AFTER YOU LEAVE

What new questions do you have about the characters and their story? How did the design of the production (the lighting, costumes, scenery, music and sound, etc.) help tell the story? Through colors, textures, patterns — what else?? Do you relate to any of the characters or anything that happened in this story? How? Why? Discuss these ideas with your friends and your teachers! How does this play relate to YOU?

Synopsis

Prologue: In a world where civilization as we know it disintegrated 100 years before, we see a battle between King Duncan's warriors and the savage clan of Macdonwald. Above we see the lonely Lady Macbeth following a personal tragedy.

At the edge of the war zone we see the Weyward Sisters, mysterious creatures who seem to be fed by the death and destruction of the battle. They have their sights set on Macbeth.

King Duncan and Lady Macduff protect Donalbain, the King's youngest son, from rebel attackers. The wounded Ross appears and reports that Macbeth, the Thane of Glamis, led the victory over the rebels, and reports that the Thane of Cawdor, one of Duncan's trusted captains, is a traitor. Duncan orders the Thane of Cawdor executed and give his title to Macbeth.

Still on the battlefield, Macbeth and Banquo, meet the three Weyward Sisters. They prophecy that Macbeth will be Thane of Cawdor and King, and that while Banquo will never rule, his children will be kings.

Ross and Macduff arrive to tell them that Macbeth is now Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth is charmed by the Weyward Sisters' prophecy, but Banquo is wary.

King Duncan personally thanks Macbeth for his bravery, and then announces that his oldest son Malcolm will inherit the throne.

Lady Macbeth reads a letter from her husband telling her about the Weyward Sisters' prophecy. When the news arrives that Duncan will spend the night at her castle, she asks for help from the dark spirits to murder him. Macbeth arrives home and, despite his reservations, they agree to kill the king that night. Macbeth commits the murder, but he is appalled by his deed.

The next morning, Macduff and Lennox come to greet the King and discover his body. Macbeth blames Duncan's servants and kills them. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, sense treachery and decide to split up and run away. Macbeth casts suspicion on them and is crowned king. Banquo suspects that Macbeth did the murder.

Paranoid and sleep-deprived, Macbeth sends murderers after Banquo and his son, Fleance. Banquo dies, but Fleance escapes.

Synopsis Continued

Macbeth goes to the Weyward Sisters' lair. They tell him three things: first, to fear Macduff; second, that Macbeth will never be harmed by any man born of woman; and third, that he will not be defeated until Birnam Wood moves to his castle. At his insistence, the witches show Macbeth a vision of Banquo as father to a line of kings. Macbeth hears that Macduff has joined Malcolm who is amassing an army. Macbeth sends assassins who slaughter Macduff's entire family.

Macduff hears the news; his grief makes him even more determined to overthrow the tyrant Macbeth.

Macbeth's followers are deserting him; his wife has gone mad. But the Weyward Sisters' predictions give him confidence that he will prevail.

In Birnam Wood Malcolm orders his warriors to cut branches from trees to use as camouflage as they advance on Macbeth's fortress.

Lady Macbeth commits suicide. Macbeth has no time to grieve as he hears that Birnam Wood is coming toward Dunsinane.

Malcolm's army arrives and the battle begins. Macbeth's men hardly put up a fight, but Macbeth battles like a trapped animal.

Macbeth comes face to face with Macduff. Macbeth states that no man born of woman can harm him. Macduff reveals he was "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb in a caesarean delivery. Macduff kills him.

The people turn to Malcolm as their rightful king.



Photo by Rick Malkin, Sam Ashdown as Macbeth

Mariah Parris as Lady Macbeth



THE NASHVILLE
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MACBETH

DIRECTED BY DAVID WILKERSON



Sam Ashdown*

MACBETH



Lucy Buchanan

MALCOLM



Kit Bulla

WITCH



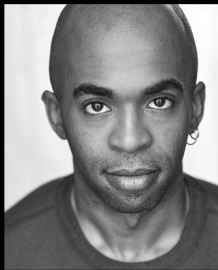
Jonathan Contreras

LENNOX



Elyse Dawson

MACDUFF



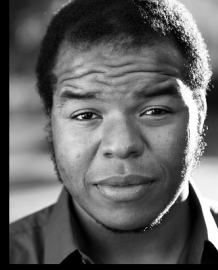
Jordan Gleaves

BANQUO



Joy Greenawalt-Lay

LADY MACDUFF



DeYonte Jenkins

ROSS



Andrew Johnson

SEYTON



Delaney Keith

WITCH



Mariah Parris

LADY MACBETH



Natalie Rankin

WITCH



Brian Russell*

DUNCAN



Micah Williams

DONALBAIN

* member of Actors Equity Association



MACBETH

(Sam Ashdown)

A Scottish General and Thane of Glamis, soon to become Thane of Cawdor. Heavily influenced by his wife, Lady Macbeth, and the Witches to pursue the throne of Scotland through betrayal, violence, and murder.



DUNCAN

(Brian Russell)

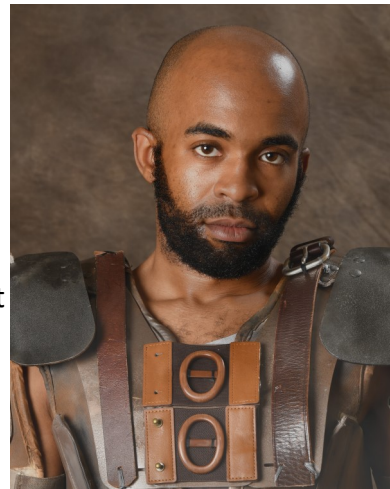
King of Scotland, whom Macbeth murders for the throne.



LADY MACBETH

(Mariah Parris)

The ambitious wife of Macbeth who encourages him in his sinister deeds, instigating his first murder. Later falls to madness.



BANQUO

(Jordan Gleaves)

A noble Scottish general and friend to Macbeth, whose children will inherit the throne according to the witches' prophecy.

Killed by Macbeth.

Haunts Macbeth by appearing as a ghost.

ROSS

(DeYonte Jenkins)

A Scottish nobleman who opposes Macbeth.



LENNOX

(Jonathan Contreras)

A Scottish nobleman who opposes Macbeth.

LADY MACDUFF

(Joy Greenawalt-Lay)

The wife of Macduff and a foil to Lady Macbeth's dark nature.

Macbeth later has her and her children murdered.



MACDUFF

(Elyse Dawson)

A Scottish nobleman who opposes Macbeth's tyranny and later kills him in revenge of his family, whom Macbeth murdered.



MALCOLM

(Lucy Buchanan)

Duncan's eldest son, eventually seizes the Scottish crown.

DONALBAIN

(Micah Williams)

Duncan's second son, flees to Ireland.

THE WITCHES

(Natalie Rankin, Kit Bulla, Delaney Keith)

These supernatural beings predict Macbeth's and Banquo's futures.



SEYTON (Andrew Johnson)

An officer, tells Macbeth of the Queen's death.

FLEANCE (Joy Greenawalt-Lay)

Banquo's son, successfully flees from murderers.

PORTER (Delaney Keith)

Speaks to Macduff outside of Macbeth's castle. A drunkard.

The Porter functions as comic relief after King Duncan is killed.

A metaphor for the gatekeeper of hell.

Doctors, Murderers, Messengers

Shakespeare's Timeline

- 1558 Queen Elizabeth ascends to the throne.
- 1564 April 23, birth of William Shakespeare, in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 1572-76 Formation of theater companies in London and building of The Theatre by James Burbage, the first free-standing commercial theatre.
- 1579 Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* published; Shakespeare's major source for *Julius Caesar* and other Roman plays.
- 1582 Marriage of Anne Hathaway and William Shakespeare.
- 1583 Susanna Shakespeare born.
- 1585 Twins Hamnet and Judith Shakespeare born.
- 1586-88 (?) Sometime in the late 1580s, most likely, Shakespeare leaves Stratford-upon-Avon for London, perhaps with a company of players.
- 1590 Shakespeare appears to be writing plays by this time. Early plays include *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2, 3*.
- 1592 Plague closes London theaters; Shakespeare turns to writing verse.
- 1595-96 Likely date of staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *Romeo and Juliet* likely written and staged about the same time.
- 1598-99 The Burbages and Shakespeare and others finance the building of the Globe Theater on the south bank of the Thames, just outside the city of London. *Julius Caesar*, *Henry V*, and *As You Like It* may have been among the plays to open the Globe Theatre.
- 1603 Queen Elizabeth dies; James the VI of Scotland ascends the throne of England and becomes James I of England. James becomes the patron of Shakespeare's theater company (now known as "The King's Men").
- 1605-06 *King Lear* likely written; first record of court performance is Christmas 1606.
- 1606 *Macbeth* likely written; perhaps written almost the same time as *King Lear*.
- 1612-14 Shakespeare "retires" to Stratford; however, he continues to collaborate with others writing plays.
- 1616 April 23, Shakespeare dies and is buried at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 1623 First Folio—a collected "coffee table" edition of 37 plays—published by Shakespeare's fellow actors, John Hemings and William Condell.

Useful resources on Shakespeare's biography:

Bate, Jonathan. *Soul of the Age: A Biography of the Mind of William Shakespeare*. New York: Random House, 2010.

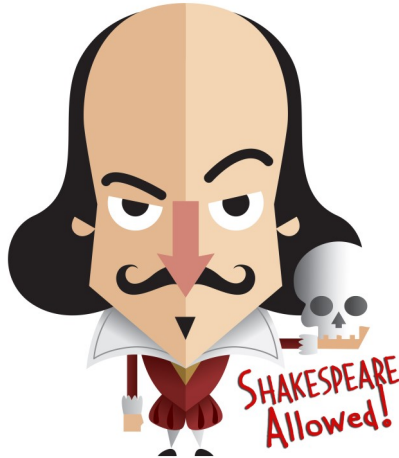
Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York: Norton, 2004.

Schoenbaum, Samuel. *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1975.

Folger Shakespeare Library: <http://www.folger.edu/shakespeares-life>

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/faqs.html>

Reading the Play in the Classroom



Nashville Shakespeare Festival's Shakespeare Allowed model:

Often a simple exercise of reading key scenes aloud can make Shakespeare's words meaningful. The Nashville Shakespeare Festival sponsors a Shakespeare Allowed round-table read of a play the first Saturday of each month at the main Nashville Public Library. In this format, everyone at the table (or in a desk in a classroom) reads in sequence, rather than taking roles. Everyone participates and gets to try his or her hand at reading the text.

Teachers may emphasize that the effort is primary. Teachers can select a scene or short segment to read aloud as an exercise to lay the groundwork for a class discussion or another class activity.

Staged readings model:

Students with limited exposure to or experience with theater can benefit from an effort to read a scene or segment of a play aloud, using basic blocking and interaction among roles. In this model, students select a scene or part of a scene (~ 50 lines makes a good length) to read in roles. Working with their classmates, they can decide upon a few simple movements to dramatize the action. The emphasis is on students' making sense of the language and beginning to envision how interactions are shown on stage. Thus, rehearsal time should be short (15-20 minutes), and the students can rehearse and stage the scenes in one class period. One effective strategy is to have two groups of students stage the same scene, and invite the class members to comment on differences.

Creating multi-vocal readings of poetry and passages:

Help students develop a sense of meaning and of shifts in tone or poetic diction by having students work in groups of 3-4 to read a single passage. This project can begin with a sonnet; a typical Shakespearean sonnet divides along quatrains (4 lines, with rhyme) and ends with a couplet: 4- 4- 4- 2. Students can decide pace, inflection, emphasis, and tone. Ask students to think of themselves as a jazz group, or a quartet, or a rap group, using their voices to convey meaning.

Ideas for the Classroom

Introduction

Macbeth comes with many reputations: Shakespeare's shortest and most poetic tragedy; Shakespeare's compliment to the Scottish heritage (a descendent of Banquo) of James VI as James I of England, Scotland, and Wales; Shakespeare's link of witchcraft (a topic of interest to James I as well as much of the audience) with Macbeth's rise to power; the theatrical bad luck that has led to "The Scottish Play" as the preferred informal title in theatrical culture. While most of these qualities of *Macbeth* are rooted in its historical moment of the early 1600s, the play itself has mesmerized audiences for over 400 years, and often tops lists of favorite plays of Shakespeare, indeed favorite plays of all time. It is political, psychological, even sci-fi! In this play, Shakespeare explores the dynamic between forces, or spirits, of evil and the internal choices of Macbeth as he strides towards power.

This section of the Guidebook will provide background information, discussions, and class exercises to explore genre, setting, characters, and themes. All quotations are from The Internet Shakespeare, an easily accessible, scholarly edition of the plays: *Macbeth*, ed. Anthony Dawson and Gavin Paul.

<https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Library/Texts/Mac/>

Folger editions are also accessible online:

<https://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Mac&loc=p7>



ABOVE (L-R): Jonathan Contreras as Lennox, Delaney Keith as the Porter, & Elyse Dawson as Macduff.

RIGHT: Brian Russell as Duncan, King of Scotland.



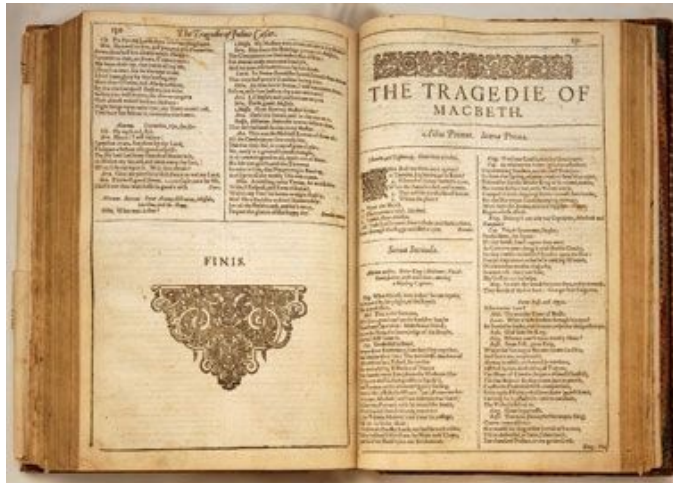
ABOVE: DeYonte Jenkins (R) as Ross & Jonathan Contreras as Lennox.

All photos by Rick Malkin.

Sources and Early Text

Based on a reference to “equivocation” in the Porter’s speech in Act 2.3, which was a term in circulation because of the trial of conspirators involved in the Gunpowder Plot (an effort to destroy the Houses of Parliament and the monarchy), the play was likely written or completed in the summer of 1606. A record of a performance at the Globe Theater in 1611 confirms its presence in the public repertory of The King’s Men, the theater company in which Shakespeare was an investor. 1606 puts the play clearly in the reign of King James I and suggests that Shakespeare is choosing a subject that would be of interest to both monarch and public audiences. A date of 1606 places *Macbeth* as the last of Shakespeare’s “great four” tragedies: *Hamlet* (1600), *Othello* (1604), *King Lear* (1605)

Text: The play appears among the tragedies in the First Folio, and this is our only text of the play.



Macbeth in the First Folio of 1623

Sources: As with *King Lear*, Shakespeare turns to British history for his subject and plot. The history of Macbeth is recounted in Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577 & 1587). Shakespeare follows the general trajectory of Macbeth’s rise and then fall from power. However, he makes many striking additions to the narrative, particularly the expansion of the witches and the role of Lady Macbeth. In Holinshed’s *Chronicle*, the witches are “either the weird sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie, or else some nymphs or feiries, indued with knowledge of prophesie by their necromantickall science”; Shakespeare makes them harbingers of the world of the play, “fair and foul.”

For a study of *Macbeth* in its historical context, see:

Shapiro, James. *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015.

Class Project: The Holinshed Project has made the text of the *Chronicles* easily accessible. Students may want to compare the actions and characters in the play with this key source, and also with the image that appears in the *Chronicles*, below: <http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/extracts2.shtml>





Genre: Tragedy

Shakespeare's creative art ran the gamut from comedy to tragedy to history to romance. Thus, very few of his plays are purely of one genre—*Hamlet* has clever, funny lines; *Othello* has the same plot as a comedy (father who opposes the marriage of a daughter to the man she loves); *King*

Lear should be a gentle romance about retirement! Even *Macbeth* has the comedy of the Porter scene right on the heels of the murder of King Duncan. Because Shakespeare's tragedies are diverse—some focused on power politics, some on love—no one set of qualities defines Shakespearean tragedy. However, in virtually all his tragedies, the major figures confront a new reality about themselves or the world they live in (often both), and that clash between what they know and what they face produces not only exciting drama, but also enables Shakespeare to engage his audiences in profound, meaningful questions.

Macbeth differs from Shakespeare's three other major tragedies, and most resembles the early tragedy of *Richard III*, in making the character who should be the hero—Macbeth—into a figure who begins heroically (assisting Duncan in the defeat of an invading force), yet who slides into the role of villain, the antagonist of the play. This shift in the way the main figure is developed gives Shakespeare the opportunity to explore a human soul caught between its ambitions and its conscience. *Macbeth* is one of the first great psychological tragedies

As with the character Hamlet, we have a character who speaks with us, the audience, frequently. Macbeth's soliloquies give us unique insight into his internal debates and deliberations. Thus, while we may ultimately recoil from the horrors he inflicts on Scotland and her people after he becomes king, we have also been privy to the internal journey from battlefield hero to the hardened and despairing Macbeth at the end. And we have to weigh the relationship of his own choices to the influence of other characters, particularly Lady Macbeth, and the malign power that haunts the play.

Unlike *King Lear*, the tragedy that immediately preceded *Macbeth* and ends bleakly, *Macbeth* ends with a reassertion of the forces for good, by "the grace of Grace" (Malcolm's concluding speech), and the reassertion of right rule and a blessed time. We are reminded that even as tragedy can explore an individual psyche, it also tells the story of a people (a nation or community).

Class Project:

If students have read other tragedies, whether by Shakespeare or from other time periods, they can be invited to compare and contrast the tragic worlds, the heroes and villains, the key themes, and the structure of the plays. Also, as Shakespeare sees a tragedy in a historical narrative, students might also be invited to consider what historical events or persons (even within their lifetimes) might be subjects for tragedy.

Setting

Though the geographic location of *Macbeth* is familiar—Scotland—the world of the play is mysterious and haunting. We move from battlefield to castle, and back to battlefield—the familiar landscapes of military and political power. Yet we also are drawn into a world pervaded by witches, or by beings that are both “corporeal” and “as breath into the wind,” as Macbeth says after first meeting the witches in Act I, scene 3.

The setting of a play becomes tangible in the hands of a set designer. Set designs can tell us both where a scene is located, but more importantly, what the atmosphere of that place is like. Consider the set design for Nashville Shakespeare Festival’s winter production. What does the set communicate to you about what it feels like to be in this Scotland of *Macbeth*?



The setting also includes the political protocols that define the power relations in the play. These are made visible in Act 1, scene 4, when King Duncan thanks those who have fought for him and announces his successor to be his son, Malcolm. It is this “normal” political world that Macbeth will usurp.

The depiction of the witches also determines the atmosphere, indeed the world, of this play. Shakespeare begins this play with an atmospheric opening, which may recall the opening of *Hamlet* with the Ghost. In Shakespeare’s day, audiences may have been more likely to associate the witches with the existence of a supernatural force of evil in the universe, separate from yet capable of influencing human beings. In our more modern era, the witches and the world they suggest have often been interpreted on a psychological level or as a menacing force, but not necessarily linked with divine providence.

This play takes place mainly at night and inside dank and dark castles in Scotland. Shakespeare needs to make his audience imagine the events in the shadows of dusk. Yet, Shakespeare's theater, The Globe, was a daytime theater, and audiences stood under the sun.

Shakespeare turns to poetry and imagery to create the atmosphere of night. Sometimes it is a psychological state, as when Macbeth, contemplating the murder of Duncan, says "Stars, hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires" (Act I, scene 4).

Often it is truly nighttime, as when Macbeth images the darkness falling on Banquo and Macbeth's hired assassins: "light thickens; and the crow / Makes wing to the rooky wood" (Act III, scene 2).

This essay from the British Library provides an extensive description and discussion of

how Shakespeare creates darkness in this play; <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/conjuring-darkness-in-macbeth>



Class project:

Students can engage the play through many angles of the setting: Scotland as a political nation; the darkness that pervades the play; the atmosphere and world view suggested by the witches. In addition to considering the NSF's set design, students can research other film and stage versions to consider how the set design supports the action of the play.

Students can also explore Shakespeare's language of darkness and consider how the language "creates" nighttime, even for the original daytime audience.

Students can also try their own hand at set design!

The Royal Shakespeare Company website includes images and lessons for setting, staging, and set design: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/macbeth>

The Witches

Although Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are fascinating, few of Shakespeare's creations have drawn attention the way the witches have! Playgoers, scholars, and students have puzzled over their reality, their influence, their gender fluidity, their connections to the witchcraft beliefs of Shakespeare's day, and their evidence of a malign power in the universe. The witches appear in few scenes, but they haunt the play. Because of their few appearances, students can focus on their appearances and Macbeth and Banquo's reactions, and even undertake close readings of their lines. Witches' scenes: Act 1, scene 1; Act 1, scene 3; Act 4, scene 1. (Some scholars believe that Act 4, scene 1 is an interpolated scene, that is, not written by Shakespeare but by another playwright to extend the witches' presence. Lines from this scene ("eye of newt / toe of frog") have become iconic, however, and are now hard to separate from the play.)



Shakespeare's age did persecute women believed to be practicing witchcraft. However, even in Shakespeare's day, there were those (including Holinshed of Chronicles fame) who were skeptical of the accusations of witchcraft, noting instead that the women identified were often older or outcast and thus scapegoats for a community.

For background on witchcraft in 16th century England, see this essay by Diane Purkiss on the British Library website: <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/witches-in-macbeth>

As noted above, the witches help create the setting, in terms of the world of the play. Students should be invited to debate the ontological (the "being") status of the witches—are they representative of a providential force that is evil, malign? If so, what is the meaning of that force inserting itself into the time and place of *Macbeth*? If we consider the witches as some sort of extension of Macbeth's (and Lady Macbeth's) consciousness, then are the witches a symbol of a madness or criminality within Macbeth? On the one hand, the witches have lines, so Shakespeare intends for them to be actors. On the other hand, we have Lady Macbeth, who has not directly seen them, call on them or something like them ("you Spirits") to "fill me . . . top-full / Of direst cruelty" (Act I, scene 5).

The Class Projects related to Sources (above) can be used to focus on Shakespeare's creation of the Witches as characters and also as forces within the play.

Lady Macbeth

Because of the fascination that the character of Lady Macbeth holds, it is somewhat surprising that Shakespeare did not give this play a title like “Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.” He will write *Antony and Cleopatra* within the next year, and of course had written *Romeo and Juliet* about a decade earlier, so Shakespeare is attuned to the dynamics between men and women, lovers and spouses.

Lady Macbeth’s speeches are the best way of exploring her character. While as a female, even one who becomes Queen, she would be the subordinate to Macbeth, many students and scholars of the play see her as the much more active and aggressive character in the first half of the play. Chart her involvement in the murder of King Duncan.

After Macbeth becomes King, he seems to need Lady Macbeth less, and leaves her out of his planning for actions to preserve his power. Our last image of Lady Macbeth is of her in madness, with the famous line: “Out, damned spot” (Act 5, scene 1). What does her decline tell us? Also, notice how in her madness, she replays the highlights of the play: spots of blood that Macbeth felt would not be washed out, the ghost of Banquo, the knocking at the gate (Act 5, scene 1).



Class projects:

Act 1, scene 5, introduces Lady Macbeth. Students can undertake a close reading of her soliloquy in response to the letter she reads from Macbeth, and then her dialogue with Macbeth when he arrives. How does she see Macbeth? What seems to motivate her? How does she link with the witches?

Lady Macbeth is a choice role for actors. In addition to considering Mariah Parris’s interpretation of the role for the NSF Winter production, research other Lady Macbeths in film versions and by using stills from stage productions. If you could cast anyone in this role, who would you cast? Why? How would you costume Lady Macbeth?

Sandra Gilbert, a noted feminist scholar of literature, provides a short essay on Lady Macbeth:

<https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/unsex-me-here-lady-macbeths-hell-broth>

Kingship and Succession

In Shakespeare's time, it was believed that names and titles stayed within the family and were to be passed down from first son to first son in perpetuity, referred to as the right of primogeniture. This concept held true for even the lowest of titles and the smallest pieces of land; however, the higher your rank or class, the more important it was to keep your titles and lands within your family and to have sons to ensure that this happened. Thus, unsurprisingly, kings held the notion of primogeniture quite dear and as such considered sons a necessity.

The common public, too, depended on notions of primogeniture in their nobility, believing that kingship was a divine office. Known as the Divine Right of Kings, it was believed that the king received his right to rule directly from Heaven. This guaranteed the public's faith in and support of the monarchy and ensured that rebellions would be kept at bay— if the public believed that to be king you must be in touch with and chosen by God, then only somebody else in touch with God (a virtual impossibility) could usurp the king.

James himself, for whom the play was most likely written, said that a king must “acknowledgeth himself ordained for his people, having received from the God a burden of government, whereof he must be count-able.”

What this tells us is that to rule a kingdom, you had to have a legitimate claim to the throne, i.e., one that was sent from the angel. Yet, as we will see in *Macbeth*, the Macbeths' ambitions are so high that they believe they can triumph over a centuries old system and usurp the Kingdom of Scotland from King Duncan and his *two* sons, despite having no claim to the throne beyond a group of witches' prophecies.



CLASSROOM DISCUSSION QUESTION: Sir Phillip Sidney, a prominent courtier, poet, and literary critic of the Elizabethan era, says in his essay, *The Defence of Poesy* (1582), that tragedy should “maketh kings fear to be tyrants.” Do you think *Macbeth* communicates that message to its audience?

If so, is it still relevant to an audience today?

For further readings, see Ernst Kantorowicz's *The King's Two Bodies*.



Macbeth

At the conclusion of the play, we can say what Macbeth has done. It is harder to say what, or who, Macbeth is. Indeed, the verb for this play is “to do,” in contrast to “to be,” which is the Hamlet verb. Shakespeare creates a character with a vivid imagination and the language of a poet; yet this character ends up killing a king, killing children (in a Herod-like way), and creating social and political chaos.

One of the best ways into Macbeth’s head is through his speeches and soliloquies. Students can study the progression in Macbeth’s thinking from his first encounter with the witches, when he reacts with a “horrid image,” to his last, famous soliloquy, “Tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow.”

Here are the major speeches and soliloquies for analysis:

Act 1, scene 3: Macbeth and the witches. Review Macbeth’s response, ll. 130-end of scene. What might the “horrid image” (l. 138) be that enters Macbeth’s head? Note Macbeth’s conclusion that “chance may crown me / Without my stir.” Macbeth’s response is complex—he seems to think regicide and passive waiting within the short span of this scene.

Act 1, scene 7: “If it were done” soliloquy. Note the setting—the backdrop is a dinner party celebrating King Duncan’s presence. Macbeth’s language is complex, reflecting his unsettled state of mind, yet it is also concrete. Students can explore the specific images to gain insight into Macbeth’s mental and moral debate, and they can outline the debate within the speech:

lines 1-7: pro—*if there are no consequences in our earthly lives, it is worth doing* // **lines 7-12: con**—*we would only make it legitimate for others to act as we do; we could become victims of our own actions* // **lines 12-16: con**—*he is a kinsman and a guest, and trusts me; it would be a violation of social bonds* // **lines 16-end: con**—*there may be heavenly and eternal consequences; Duncan’s innocence may lead to Macbeth’s eternal damnation*

Then Lady Macbeth enters . . . and challenges him as a man to “screw your courage to the sticking place” (l. 60).

Act 2, scene 2, ll. 33-end of scene: “Is this a dagger” soliloquy. Students can debate whether the dagger should be shown somehow on stage, or be presented as a figment of Macbeth’s imagination. Consider the consequences of this director’s choice. Students can also debate whether the dagger is a warning to Macbeth of the dangers of regicide, or an image that lures him further. Does Macbeth willfully dismiss the image? Or does it vanish of its own accord? We get only the line: “There’s no such thing” (l. 47).

Act 2, scene 3, ll. 88-93: The brief “Had I but died an hour before” speech. Notice how soon after the murder of Duncan, Macbeth is sensing his inner life has changed. Is this the speech of someone coveting the kingship enough to risk committing an assassination for it?

Act 3, scene 1, ll. 50-74: The “to be safely thus” soliloquy. Notice how flat this soliloquy is. Do we have the debates or complex imagery of the earlier soliloquies? How would you describe Macbeth’s state of mind now?

Act 5, scene 5, ll. 19-28: The “tomorrow” soliloquy. In a few brief lines, Macbeth conveys what it feels like to be himself at this nadir of his life. Shakespeare draws some of the imagery from the theater: “a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage.” Invite students to consider what that image communicates about Macbeth’s perspective on his life—what should have been grandeur and glory (kingship) is instead a mockery of that. The line “a tale told by an idiot” brings up the question who is telling this tale? Is it Macbeth’s tale of his life? Or some outside, malign power? Students who have read William Faulkner’s novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, will recognize the source of the title.



Write / Blog / Podcast your Review!

Productions of all kinds are regularly reviewed in the mainstream media, on blogs, in specialty publications, and in conversation. A formal review needs to present a justification for its rating of a production. Create a rating, and then, in a page or so, provide your justification. You may enjoy debating a classmate, as Siskel and Ebert used to do about movies.

- Using stars of another image, provide a rating of this production of *Macbeth*.
- Because not all readers of your review have seen the play, provide a brief plot overview and the basic details about the production.
- List, with explanations, the three main reasons for your judgment. These should focus on this specific production (casting, acting, set design, costume, concept, clarity of language and action, music, and lighting).
- Cite at least three specific moments in the production that support your judgement. Discuss the themes or issues that this play and this production raise for an audience.
- Conclude by considering the value of this production or of theater in general. If you have aspirations to be an artist of any kind, consider what a reviewer might say that would enable you to grow as an artist.

For further reading about *Macbeth* and Shakespeare:

Facsimiles (with translations and transliterations) of documents about Shakespeare's life and career: Shakespeare Documented: <https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/>

Folger Shakespeare Library: From the home page, search for items related to *Macbeth*: <https://www.folger.edu/>

British Library: Lots of material in the British Library Shakespeare page: <https://www.bl.uk/works/macbeth>

Royal Shakespeare Company: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/macbeth/>

Chicago Shakespeare: https://www.chicagoshakes.com/plays_and_events/macbeth

Teller (of Penn & Teller) co-directed this production

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/shakespeares-plays/macbeth/>

Shakespeare's London Theaters: for information about the original Globe: <http://shalt.dmu.ac.uk/locations/globe-1599-1642.html>

Nashville Shakespeare Festival (information about production and educator's guidebook): <https://www.nashvilleshakes.org/>

Books:

Shapiro, James. *The Year of Lear: Shakespeare in 1606*. Simon & Schuster, 2015.

Wills, Gary. *Witches & Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth*. Oxford U P, 1995.

Macfarlane, Alan. *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*. Waveland Press, 1991.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World*. Norton, 2004.



Right: Sam Ashdown
as Macbeth

Left: Elyse Dawson as
Macduff

More Online Resources

Internet Shakespeare (many of these editions have been edited, making them among the most reliable on the internet): <https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/Annex/Texts/Mac/index.html>

Folger Shakespeare Library: (text plus additional resources) <https://www.folger.edu/macbeth>

Open Source Shakespeare: <https://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/playmenu.php?WorkID=macbeth>

Shakespeare Resource Center: (a good, general info site for Shakespeare) <http://www.bardweb.net/index.html>

Ted-Ed YouTube Video: Why should you read “Macbeth”? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rD5goS69LT4>

Royal Shakespeare Company: <https://cdn2.rsc.org.uk/sitefinity/education-pdfs/teacher-packs/edu-macbeth-teacherpack-2018.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

PBS Learning Media: <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/macbeth/>

BBC Teach Videos: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/class-clips-video/english-ks2-macbeth/zdt42sg>

ABOUT THE NASHVILLE SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

The mission of the Nashville Shakespeare Festival is to educate and entertain the Mid-South community through professional Shakespearean experiences.

The Festival enriches and unifies our community with bold, innovative and relevant productions, along with empowering, participatory educational programs, setting the community standard of excellence in educational outreach and performances of Shakespeare's plays.

The Festival will host Summer Shakespeare 2019 at ONEC1TY and Winter Shakespeare 2020 at the Troutt Theater at Belmont University, Academy Park Performing Arts Center, the Tucker Theatre at MTSU, Tullahoma High School and Montgomery Central High School.

The Festival also sponsors numerous workshops, educational outreach programs, and public events.

Please visit our website for specific information: <http://www.nashvilleshakes.org>



NSF Apprentice Company

ApCo training is an intensive for aspiring theatre lovers age 13+ led by the Artistic Director and Education Director, along with guest artists hired from the professional talent in Nashville. Apprentices receive over 70 hours of performance training in movement, voice and diction, acting, text analysis, and character work, and then perform supporting roles in the Summer Shakespeare production.

Auditions for the 2020 Apprentice Company will be announced in February.

Visit our website for more details!

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