

"The witches told Macbeth he could be king,  
and he wanted to be so he killed the old king.  
But he died in the end."  
Jasmine, 11



On a dark heath, Macbeth stumbles across three witches  
who can see into the future.

What he hears will change everything. Egged on by  
his wife, he decides to kill in order to gain the Scottish  
crown. How many people will have to die in Macbeth's  
pursuit of power?

With armies, ghosts and magic against him, will  
Macbeth survive in this tale of greed and betrayal?  
Getting the crown  
is one thing –  
keeping it is  
quite another.



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# THE CHARACTERS

## Macbeth and Lady Macbeth



Everything goes well for this successful pair, until they start craving more power, fame and riches. Will Macbeth stop at nothing to get what he wants?

## Banquo and Fleance

Banquo is Macbeth's friend, but is that enough to keep him and his son, Fleance, safe?



## Macduff

This Scottish lord is not easily taken in by the new king. What secret does he hold that could be Macbeth's undoing?



## Duncan, Malcolm and Donalbain

Duncan is the King of Scotland – until he goes to stay with the Macbeths. Will Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, escape their father's fate?

## The Witches

What the three witches tell Macbeth about his future sounds too good to be true. Should he believe what they say?



## Lennox and Ross

These two Scottish lords find their loyalties divided between the new king and the man they consider the rightful king. Which should they choose?





# MACBETH

## ACT ONE, SCENE ONE A DESERT HEATH

*First witch*

When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

*Second witch*

When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost or won.

*Third witch*

That will be ere the set of sun.

*First witch*

Where the place?

*Second witch*

Upon the heath.

*Third witch*

There to meet with Macbeth.

*All three witches*

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

*The witches leave.*

*Duncan, King of Scotland, and his son, Malcolm,  
enter and meet a soldier.*

**Duncan**

What bloody man is that? His open wounds  
Do show he comes fresh from the battlefield.

**Malcolm**

This is the sergeant,  
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought  
'Gainst my captivity. Hail brave friend!  
Say to the King, the knowledge of the fight  
As thou didst leave it.

**Captain**

Doubtful it stood, then did brave Macbeth  
(He well deserves that name) carve out a path  
With fiery sword towards the rebel fiend.  
Then was the merciless Macdonald slain.  
His head is now upon our battlements!

**Duncan**

O valiant cousin! Worthy Macbeth!

**Captain**

And yet no sooner was this victory won  
But Norway's king began a fresh assault.

**Duncan**

Dismayed not this  
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

**Captain**

In as much as sparrows frighten eagles!  
But I am faint. My gashes cry for help.

**Duncan**

Thou hast done well. Take him to a surgeon.

*Ross enters.*

**Malcolm**

The worthy Thane of Ross.

**Duncan**

What news?

**Ross**

The vast Norwegian army and their king,  
Assisted by that most disloyal traitor  
The Thane of Cawdor, bore down upon our men.  
But fearless, brave Macbeth confronted them  
And, to conclude, the victory fell on us.

**Duncan**

The Thane of Cawdor shall be put to death  
And, with his former title, greet Macbeth.

The Globe, where Shakespeare's company acted, was a round building that was open to the sky in the middle. 'Groundlings' paid a penny to stand around the stage in the central yard. They risked getting wet if it rained. Wealthier people could have a seat in the covered galleries around the edge of the space. Some very important people even had a seat on the stage itself. Unlike today's theatre-goers, Elizabethan audiences were noisy and sometimes fighting broke out.

There were no sets or scene changes in these plays. It was up to the playwright's skill with words to create thunderstorms or forests or Egyptian queens in the imagination of the audience.

Shakespeare wrote mostly in blank verse, in unrhymed lines of ten syllables with a *te-tum te-tum* rhythm. But unlike most writers of his time he tried to make his actors' lines closer to the rhythms of everyday speech, in order to make it sound more naturalistic. He used poetic imagery, and even invented words that we still use today.

His plays are mostly based on stories or old plays that he improved. *Macbeth* was inspired by a story about a real Scottish king called Macbeth, who reigned in the eleventh century. This story was told in a book called *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, published when Shakespeare was a boy, which he used as a source for many of his history plays.

## Finding out more

We recommend the following books and websites to gain a greater understanding of William Shakespeare and Elizabethan England:

### Books

- Marcia Williams, *Mr William Shakespeare's Plays*, Walker Books, 2009.
- Toby Forward and Juan Wijngaard, *Shakespeare's Globe: A Pop-Up Theatre*, Walker Books, 2005.
- Alan Durband, *Shakespeare Made Easy: Macbeth*, Nelson Thornes, 1989.