Baker Street Readers

Great reads for all ages

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.

Lexile® Level	AR Level	Word Count
610L	4.6	5,055

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- BBC R4, Open Book

MACBETH

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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Illustrated by Charly Cheung

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Accelerated Reader

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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?

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.
- Leon Garfield, *Shakespeare Stories*, Victor Gollanz, 1985.
- Stewart Ross, *William Shakespeare*, Writers in Britain series, Evans, 1999.
- Felicity Hebditch, *Tudors*, Britain through the Ages series, Evans, 2003.

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