

Outreach & Education Department

A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF

the *Shakespeare To Go* 2012 Production of

Macbeth

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Preparing for the Performance

NCSHakes' production of *Macbeth* features seven professional actors playing all the roles in a 60-minute version of Shakespeare's classic play. Many actors play two or more roles. This performance also uses modern costumes and music, but the actors speak the language from Shakespeare's play.

Watching the Performance

- Hopefully you've had a chance to read *Macbeth* before seeing the Shakespeare To Go performance. Notice what things were changed in this 60-minute version of the play.
- If you haven't read the play, listen to and watch the actors carefully. Shakespeare can be difficult to understand for a modern audience, so don't get frustrated if you don't understand every word.
- Actors love it when the audience reacts to what they are doing. So, if you find something truly funny or frightening or moving, react. It will make the show that much better.
- Enjoy the show!

Historical Background

William Shakespeare, the English playwright was christened April 26, 1564, and according to an inscription on his tomb died April 23, 1616. Although the exact date of his birth is not recorded, it is traditional to celebrate his life on April 23, the Feast of St. George, the patron saint of

Fun Fact

Although William Shakespeare grew up in the small town of Stratford-upon-Avon in south-central England, he spent his professional years in London, the capital of a vibrant new empire.

England. A contemporary of Galileo, the Italian astronomer, Shakespeare lived in a time when the world underwent a fundamental change. Shakespeare experienced, or knew people who experienced, the Protestant Reformation, the exploration and colonization of a New World, the establishment of the Copernican theory, and the fundamental philosophical shift toward a human-centered universe: for as our understanding of the world changed, so did our understanding of ourselves in it.

Fun Fact

There were no actresses during Shakespeare's day. It was illegal for women to be onstage. Teenage boys performed the female roles. Male teenagers first performed *roles such as Juliet and Lady Macbeth*.

Shakespeare wrote, in addition to the 36 or 37 plays attributed to him, a sequence of sonnets and some longer poems. Some scholars think that Shakespeare treated these other writings as an opportunity to pick up some extra cash when the company could not perform.

Shakespeare was clearly a very successful theater professional, writing plays, acting, and investing in his theater company. When he returned to Stratford toward the end of his life he had become a man of considerable means, and when he died he left his widow and children a respectable estate.

Macbeth was written around 1605, during the later part of his career.

A Macbeth Who's Who

Duncan, *King of Scotland*
 Malcom, *Duncan's son*
 Donalbain, *Duncan's son*
 Macbeth, *a general*
 Banquo, *a general*
 Macduff, *a noble*
 Lennox, *a noble*
 Ross, *a noble*
 Menteith, *a noble*
 Angus, *a noble*
 Caithness, *a noble*

Fleance, *son of Banquo*
 Siward, *Earl of Northumberland*
 Young Siward, *his son*
 Seyton, *officer to Macbeth*
 Lady Macbeth
 Lady Macduff
 Hecate and Three Witches
 Boy, *son to Macduff*
 English Doctor

Scottish Doctor
 A Sergeant
 A Porter
 An Old Man
 Gentlewoman to Lady Macbeth
 Lords, Gentlemen
 Officers, Soldiers,
 Messengers and Attendants
 Murderers
 Banquo's Ghost, Apparitions



Macbeth from Shakespeare's Globe



The witches from Macbeth

Post-Show Lesson Plans: The Macbeths on Trial

Objective: Students will stage a court trial for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. They will play roles including prosecutors, defenders, judges, jury and characters from the play who will serve as witnesses. At the end of the trial the jury will decide the guilt and severity of punishment for the Macbeths.

Time: Two full class periods. One for planning the trial and another for performing it.

North Carolina Standard Course of Study:



Greasy Joan & Co.

5.01 Read and analyze various literary works by determining a character's traits from his/her actions, speech, appearance, or what others say about him or her.

5.02 Demonstrating increasing comprehension and ability to respond personally to texts by selecting and exploring a wide range of genres.

5.03 Demonstrate the ability to read, listen to and view a variety of increasingly complex print and non-print literacy texts appropriate to grade level and course literary focus, by providing textual evidence to support understanding of and reader's response to text.

Materials Needed: Several copies of the play *Macbeth*.

Day One:

Students should be assigned roles. The roles are as follows:

Prosecution (up to 3 students)

Defense (up to 3 students)

Defendants (Macbeth and Lady Macbeth)

Judge (1 or 2 students)

Jury (up to 12 students)

Witnesses – These can include Banquo, the Witches, the Murderers, etc.

Fun Fact

In Shakespeare's theatre, there were no electric lights, and the sun shone on actors and audience, lighting both equally. Characters spoke directly to the audience, and actors never pretended that the audience was not present.

Fun Fact

Many theatre people believe the play *Macbeth* is cursed. The superstition is that if you say the name of the play in a theatre, then something terrible will happen. That's why many theatre people call it "the Scottish play."

Students should research their roles using the play script, and their knowledge of the characters after seeing the Shakespeare To Go production. Prosecutors will build their case against the Macbeths using references from the play itself. The defenders build their case with the help of the students playing Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. It's important that students restrict their knowledge of the events of the story to what is **ONLY** in the play itself. Encourage student to use direct quotes from the play to support their arguments.

NOTE – During the research phase judge and jury members can be used as “paralegals” to study the play and help the prosecution and defenders build their respective cases.

Day Two:

Set up the classroom as a courtroom with a judge’s bench, a jury box and tables for the prosecution and defense. Prosecution and defenders begin with an opening argument summarizing their cases. Then each side will call witnesses which can be cross-examined by the other side. Prosecution and defense end their cases with a closing argument, which summarizes their evidence.

The judge (s) give the jury their instructions and the jury deliberates. The jury must decide guilt or innocence for the Macbeths individually, as well as punishments for each. Set a time limit for deliberations. NOTE: The jury must justify its verdicts with specific evidence from the play.

Final Class Discussion: After the verdict has been read, discuss if students opinions about the play and/or the main characters changed during the course of the trial. Did seeing the play change their feelings about the motivations of the Macbeths?

Macbeth Vocabulary:

Thane - a feudal lord or baron

Hecate- (Greek mythology) Greek goddess of fertility who later became associated with Persephone as goddess of the underworld and protector of witches

Tyrant - a cruel and oppressive dictator

Apparition - a ghostly appearing figure

Knell - the sound of a bell rung slowly to announce a death or a funeral or the end of something

Unsex - deprive of sex or sexual powers

Liege - a feudal lord entitled to allegiance and service

Nonpareil - model of excellence or perfection of a kind; one having no equal

Harbinger - something that precedes and indicates the approach of something or someone

Corporal - affecting or characteristic of the body as opposed to the mind or spirit



Lady Macbeth and Macbeth at Shakespeare’s Globe

Resources

The following web sites have excellent material for the study of Macbeth and other Shakespeare plays.

Fun Fact

NCSHakes, founded in 1977, is based in High Point, North Carolina and has performed in all 100 North Carolina counties.

The Folger Shakespeare Library
<http://www.folger.edu/>

PBS In Search of Shakespeare
<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/>

Absolute Shakespeare
<http://absoluteshakespeare.com/>

Shakespeare’s Globe
Theatre in London
<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/>

North Carolina
Shakespeare Festival
<http://www.ncshakes.org/>