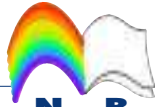


# Macbeth

William Shakespeare







**R A I N B O W S**

William Shakespeare

# Macbeth

Adaptation, dossiers and activities  
by Jole Pignet and Carla Aira



**edisco**

# Macbeth

*Project editor:* Raffaele Polichetti

*Revisor:* Stefan Cooper

*Cover:* Mauro Borgarello

*Design:* Manuela Piacenti

*Quality controller:* Paola Ghigo

*Page layout:* Costantino Seminara

*Computer to Plate:* Imago

*Printing:* M.P. Stampa - Mathi



All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

Every effort has been made to acknowledge correctly and contact the source and/or copyright holder of material used in this book. The publishers apologize for any unintentional errors or omissions and will be pleased to make corrections in future editions. All lyrics, music and films quoted are for review, study or critical purposes.

We would be happy to receive your comments and suggestions and give you any other information concerning our material.

Our email address: [info@edisco.it](mailto:info@edisco.it)

Our website address: <http://www.edisco.it>

Copyright © Edisco Editrice, Torino

Via Pastrengo 28

10128 Torino (Italy)

Tel. (+39) 011.54.78.80

Fax (+39) 011.51.75.396

Reprint

5 4 3 2 1

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

• <b>William Shakespeare</b> .....	4
BEFORE READING .....	7
<b>Chapter 1 – The Prophecy</b> .....	8
AFTER READING .....	15
• Extension: <i>History and fiction in Macbeth</i> .....	18
BEFORE READING .....	20
<b>Chapter 2 – A False Welcome</b> .....	21
AFTER READING .....	28
• Extension: <i>Macbeth on stage</i> .....	31
BEFORE READING .....	33
<b>Chapter 3 – A Night of Horrors</b> .....	34
AFTER READING .....	41
• Extension: <i>Paintings</i> .....	44
BEFORE READING .....	46
<b>Chapter 4 – A Tortured Mind</b> .....	47
AFTER READING .....	54
• Extension: <i>Macbeth in music</i> .....	58
BEFORE READING .....	60
<b>Chapter 5 – A Career of Blood</b> .....	61
AFTER READING .....	68
• Extension: <i>Macbeth on screen</i> .....	71
BEFORE READING .....	73
<b>Chapter 6 – Birnam Wood</b> .....	74
AFTER READING .....	81
• Extension: <i>The seeds of evil</i> .....	84
• <b>SUMMING-UP ACTIVITIES</b> .....	86
• <b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	91

# The author William Shakespeare



Facts and legend are mixed in Shakespeare's life. Church documents prove that he was baptized on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1564 at Stratford-upon-Avon and buried<sup>1</sup> there on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1616.

His family was well-known in the area as<sup>2</sup> his mother was the descendant of Thomas More, Henry VIII's Chancellor. Shakespeare's father was an eminent citizen, a merchant in skins<sup>3</sup>, wool and corn<sup>4</sup> and active in local government.

At the time, Stratford was an important commercial centre with a local Grammar School, where Oxford students acted as teachers. So Shakespeare, too, learnt reading and arithmetic, some history and a lot of Latin rhetoric, logic and literature.

On 27<sup>th</sup> November 1582, William Shakespeare, then eighteen, married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior, and the following May they had a daughter called Susanna; in 1585 twins were born, Hamnet and Judith. It was difficult for young Shakespeare to provide for a family of four; unfortunately one day he was found killing game<sup>5</sup> in a private estate<sup>6</sup> and was forced to leave Stratford in a hurry not to be imprisoned. In one sense he was glad to go away from a wife he no longer loved and to discover the world of London.

The capital of England was full of life and opportunities for enterprising<sup>7</sup> men: the Queen, her court and the nobles spent a lot of money enjoying themselves and encouraging the arts. The theatres were built in Shoreditch, on the left bank of the Thames and outside the city walls; they attracted all sorts of people, from the lower to the upper classes, and offered interesting and amusing entertainment.

Shakespeare soon became a favourite among theatre-goers as an actor, but mostly as an author of comic and dramatic plays. By 1592 he was already so famous that a jealous rival playwright<sup>8</sup> (Robert Greene, c. 1558-1592) attacked him, accusing him of plagiarism<sup>9</sup>.

1. *buried*: put under ground.

2. *as*: because.

3. *skin*: animal covering.

4. *corn*: grain.

5. *game*: wild animals and birds hunted.

6. *estate*: extensive areas of land owned

by a lord.

7. *enterprising*: full of courage and willing to do new things.

8. *playwright*: author of theatre plays.

9. *plagiarism*: using somebody else's ideas.

Between 1592 and 1594, the theatres were closed due to<sup>10</sup> the plague<sup>11</sup> and Shakespeare devoted himself<sup>12</sup> to poetry. He wrote two long poems (*Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*), some of his 154 *Sonnets*, and dedicated them to his protector and friend Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton.

In 1594, Shakespeare became a member of the theatrical company called the *Chamberlain's Men*, later the *King's Men*, when James I ascended the throne (1603). The company acted mainly at the Globe Theatre, a public playhouse built in Shoreditch and owned in part by Shakespeare.

Shakespeare's activities and theatre profits made him rich. In 1596 he obtained a coat of arms<sup>13</sup> for his family; the following year he bought New Place, the second largest house in Stratford, where he retired in 1611 and died on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1616.

Using Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577) as his source, Shakespeare started writing a series of **historical plays** (e.g. *Henry VI*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*), and then gradually evolved a more personal form of drama which also included comical scenes and characters (e.g. Falstaff in *Henry IV*). With Falstaff, Shakespeare's conception of **comedy** matured, and moved from the courtly<sup>14</sup> atmosphere of *Love's Labours Lost* to the romantic humanity of *The Taming of the Shrew*. All these early experiments combined to produce the magic of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare's most original and perfectly designed play. His later comedies, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night* show a world in which reality and laughing often clash<sup>15</sup>, and the romantic story risks becoming too serious.

Shakespeare's best production is mostly connected with his great **tragedies**, all composed between 1600 and 1608, beginning with *Hamlet* and including *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Coriolanus*.

Shakespeare's last **romances**, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, are half-allegorical and the theme of pardon and reconciliation is dominant. His poetical and psychological sensibility also appears in his 154 *Sonnets*, written from 1592 to about 1595.

Shakespeare's plays, which amount to thirty-six, were collected and published in 1623 by John Heminges and Henry Condell, in the first Folio<sup>16</sup>.

10. *due to*: because of.

11. *plague*: pestilence, infectious disease.

12. *devoted himself*: gave all his attention.

13. *coat of arms*: family emblem.

14. *courtly*: set in court.

15. *clash*: conflict, fight.

16. *Folio*: volume with pages half a sheet.

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

**Macbeth:** Thane of Glamis and Cawdor; General of the King's army

**Lady Macbeth:** Macbeth's wife

**Duncan:** King of Scotland

**Malcolm and Donalbain:** Duncan's sons

**Banquo:** Scottish nobleman and General of the King's army

**Macduff, Rosse, Lennox:** Scottish noblemen

**Fleance:** Banquo's son

**Witches:** supernatural creatures

The ghost of Banquo, and other apparitions

Lords, officers, soldiers, attendants, messengers, murderers

### **Setting**

Mostly in Scotland; in England at the end of Act 4

### **Action**

Apparently no more than two months, but certainly covering a period of years because Macbeth grows from youth to full maturity.







**BEFORE READING**

- 1 Look at the map of Scotland on p. 18 and answer the following questions.
- a. Where is Scotland situated? .....
  - b. Where is Forres, the old Scottish capital? .....
  - c. Is Scone far from Forres? .....
  - d. Is Dunsinane north or south of Inverness? .....
  - e. What is the capital of Scotland today? .....

- 2 Find out which words refer to the world of magic and which to the world of war and write them in the appropriate column.

*witch – battle – victory – cauldron – charm – soldier –  
potion – armour – prophecy – tent*

MAGIC	WAR

- 3 Match each of the words below to its definition given in scrambled order.

- |              |       |     |   |
|--------------|-------|-----|---|
| a. to shout  | ..... | 1.  | Ball of air or gas in a liquid.         |
| b. wound     | ..... | 2.  | A person who travels on a horse/bike.   |
| c. news      | ..... | 3.  | Natural smoky air produced by humidity. |
| d. rebel     | ..... | 4.  | Opposite of dead.                       |
| e. fog       | ..... | 5.  | Damage to the body.                     |
| f. rider     | ..... | 6.  | A person who brings a message.          |
| g. beard     | ..... | 7.  | A person who fights against authority.  |
| h. messenger | ..... | 8.  | To speak in a loud voice.               |
| i. bubble    | ..... | 9.  | Hair on the face around the mouth.      |
| j. alive     | ..... | 10. | Report of recent events.                |

# Macbeth

## The Prophecy

---

### Chapter 1 (Act I, Scenes II, III, IV)

It was the year 1040 of our Lord and in the military camp near Forres, Duncan, King of Scotland, was nervously waiting for news of the battle down in the county of Fife. The royal army was fighting against the rebels of Lord Macdonwald, who was supported by Sweno, King of Norway, and troops<sup>1</sup> from Ireland and the Hebrides.

Shouting voices outside his tent attracted his attention and soon Malcolm, his son, announced, “My Lord, a captain has just come from the battle. He is seriously wounded<sup>2</sup>, but he will speak to you!”

“Bring him here before the doctors look after his wounds. I want to know the latest news about the battle.”

The captain told him how Macbeth, the King’s cousin and Thane<sup>3</sup> of Glamis, had bravely<sup>4</sup> fought, killed many enemies and fixed Macdonwald’s head on the walls of their castle.

“But,” he went on, his voice now showing how tired he was, “when we thought the battle was over, the King of Norway launched<sup>5</sup> a new attack...”

“How did Macbeth and Banquo react?” asked the King.

“My Lord, they fought like lions...” Here the captain lost consciousness and was promptly carried away.

Another soldier entered the tent, it was the Thane of Rosse, just back from the battlefield to inform the King. “God save the King!” he said, “I’ve just come from Fife, where Macbeth has forced Sweno of Norway to accept humiliating terms of peace and captured the rebel Thane of Cawdor...”

“That Thane of Cawdor will no longer contrast our interests! We order his immediate execution and give his title to our brave cousin Macbeth!” commanded the king.

1. *troop*: group of soldiers.

2. *wounded*: hit, injured.

3. *Thane*: Scottish title corresponding to

Count.

4. *bravely*: courageously.

5. *launched*: started.



Macbeth meets the three witches (G. Romney, c. 1780).

Not far away from the battlefield, three witches<sup>6</sup> were assembled in an open place and Morgan, the eldest sister, asked,

“When shall we meet again, in thunder, lightning<sup>7</sup>, or in rain?”

“When the battle now in progress between the royal troops and the rebels is lost and won, then we’ll meet again,” replied Verina, the second witch.

6. *witch*: old ugly woman with magic powers.

7. *thunder, lightning*: sounds and flashes of light typical of a tempest.



“But where exactly are we going to meet?” inquired Luned, the youngest sister.

“On the heath<sup>8</sup>, to greet Macbeth,” explained Verina. Then the three sisters disappeared in the air and only an echo of their voices remained: “Fair is foul<sup>9</sup> and foul is fair, good and bad are mixed in air...”

Later that afternoon, when the battle was over, the three witches met again on the heath north of Fife, in thunder and lightning, and waited for Macbeth’s arrival.

“Where have you been since we last met? What have you done?” Luned asked her sisters.

“O, I got very angry, you know,” said Morgan while her long hooked<sup>10</sup> nose was turning red. “I saw a woman eating chestnuts<sup>11</sup> and asked her to give me one, but... she refused!”

“Oh, dear! Really?” exclaimed Verina, twisting a rebel lock<sup>12</sup> of her greynish hair. “And how did you punish her?”

“Well,” replied Morgan, “I didn’t really punish her...”

8. *heath*: wild flat land.

9. *fair is foul*: good is bad.

10. *hooked*: curved down.

11. *chestnut*: little brown nut.

12. *lock*: portion of hair.