

Sacramento Theatre Company

Study Guide



Macbeth

By: William Shakespeare

Study Guide Materials Compiled by Anna Miles

Sacramento Theatre Company

Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company, please visit us online:

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Macbeth

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Contents:

Information on the Play

Synopsis	4
Characters	5

Scholarly Articles on the Play

Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair	6
What Has Gotten Into You?	8
<i>Macbeth</i> and the Nature of Evil	10
What's a Thane to do?	11

Information on William Shakespeare

Shakespeare: Words, Words, Words	13
Not of an Age, but for All Mankind	14
Mr. Shakespeare, I Presume	16
Shakespearean Snapshots	17
Ghosts, Witches, and Shakespeare	18

Interactive Materials

Study Guide Questions and Activities: <i>Macbeth</i>	20
Vocabulary	20
Famous Lines and Phrases	22
Examining the Text	23
Activities	26
Elementary School Questions	27
Middle and High School Discussion Questions	29
Study Guide Questions: Engage With the Play*	30
Theatre Etiquette*	33
Additional Resources	34

*written for the Sacramento Theatre Company by Anna Miles

Synopsis: Macbeth

On a barren Scottish heath, three witches await the coming of Macbeth and Banquo, Scottish generals on their way home after a victorious battle. At the same time, on a battlefield not far away, a wounded soldier tells Duncan, king of Scotland, of Macbeth's great courage in battle, then the Thane of Ross arrives to inform the king of the traitorous actions of the Thane of Cawdor. The king immediately sentences the Thane of Cawdor to death and confers that title upon Macbeth, sending Ross to tell Macbeth of the new honor.

When Macbeth and Banquo arrive at the eerie site of the witches, the three prophesy that Macbeth (still uninformed of his new title) shall become the Thane of Cawdor and later on shall be king, while Banquo shall be the father of kings although not one himself. When the Thane of Ross arrives and addresses Macbeth with the new title, the witches' prophecies already seem to be coming true, and Macbeth begins to wonder if the kingship could really be within his reach. However, when he reports to King Duncan, the king announces two intentions: first, of visiting Macbeth's castle in gratitude of his valor and, second, of making his son Malcolm heir to his throne.

The scene switches to Macbeth's castle, where his wife, Lady Macbeth, is reading a letter from her husband detailing the witches' prophecies and their accuracy thus far. She sets her sights on becoming queen and plans to murder the king when he visits her home; she calls on the power of evil to help her stifle feminine weakness and spur Macbeth to action.

That evening, while the king sleeps in his home, Macbeth, with his wife's urging and assistance, carries out the act, murdering King Duncan in his bed. The king's sons flee the country in terror, and Macbeth is crowned king of Scotland. But he is haunted by the prediction that Banquo's children are to inherit the throne and fearful that Macduff, a noble suspicious of Macbeth's quick rise to power, will take matters into his own hands. Therefore, Macbeth brutally arranges for the murder of Banquo and his only son, Fleance; however, Fleance escapes the attack and flees the country. Macbeth gives a great dinner for the court and is about to take his seat when he sees the ghost of Banquo (invisible to the guests), and his frenzied and incriminating remarks break up the feast and raise Macduff's suspicions even more.

Macbeth goes now to consult the witches. They warn him to beware of Macduff. However, they also assure, much to his comfort, him that no man born of a woman can harm him and that he cannot be defeated until Birnam Wood, a medieval forest, comes to Dunsinane, the site of Macbeth's castle. After this, he is greeted with the news that Macduff has fled to England, whereupon Macbeth, in increasing paranoia orders the murder of Lady Macduff and her children. While this is all happening, Lady Macbeth, who before the king's murder appeared to be stronger than her husband, becomes completely overcome by remorse and guilt and, with an unsettled mind, dies, probably by her own hand.

Macduff, gathering forces with the escaped Malcolm in England, is in complete revolt now and leads an army against Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane, the soldiers covering their advance with branches cut from the trees of Birnam Wood, making it appear that Birnam Wood is coming to Dunsinane. Macbeth's nerves are shaken as he recalls the witches prophecies, but he still clings to their saying that he cannot be harmed by any man born of woman. However, the castle is attacked, and during his final hand-to-hand conflict with Macduff, Macbeth learns that his opponent was prematurely ripped from his mother's womb, a Caesarean birth. Macbeth realizes he is doomed but, rather than being captured alive, fights to his death. Macduff kills him, cuts off his head, and announces Scotland's freedom from

tyranny.

Characters: *Macbeth*

Duncan, King of Scotland: The father of Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan was a good king under whom the kingdom apparently flourished; however, his life was cut short by the murderous Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

Malcolm: The eldest son of King Duncan and brother of Donalbain, Malcolm is named the heir to the throne by his father (a definite stumbling block for Macbeth's new-found ambitions). Thinking his life in danger, he flees Scotland after his father's murder, placing suspicion initially upon himself, rather than Macbeth.

Donalbain: The son of King Duncan and brother of Malcolm, Donalbain flees with his brother after the murder.

Macbeth: The husband of Lady Macbeth, a general in the army, and later the king of Scotland, Macbeth is courageous and respected. He holds the title of Thane of Glamis before the play begins and is named Thane of Cawdor for his valor on the battlefield. However, he is also ambitious and becomes murderous when he sees his way (helped by his wife) to fulfill the witches' prophecies and become king.

Banquo: The father of Fleance and a faithful general in the Scottish army, Banquo initially is a good friend of Macbeth, but becomes an object of Macbeth's wrath when it appears he or his children could interfere with Macbeth's tenuous grasp on the throne. He is murdered by command of Macbeth because the witches prophesy his children will be kings.

Macduff: A Scottish nobleman, Macduff becomes increasingly suspicious of Macbeth, eventually mounting an uprising against the new king. In the end, it is Macduff that kills Macbeth in battle.

Lennox: A Scottish nobleman

Ross: A Scottish nobleman faithful to Duncan and Macduff, Ross is the first to address Macbeth by his new title, Thane of Cawdor, fanning the spark of ambition that quickly turns murderous.

Menteith: A Scottish nobleman.

Angus: A Scottish nobleman.

Caithness: A Scottish nobleman.

Fleance: Son of Banquo, Fleance escapes Macbeth's murderous rampage and flees to England where he helps Macduff mount the insurrection that unthrones Macbeth.

Siwald, Earl of Northumberland: General of the English forces, Siwald teams up with Malcolm, Macduff, and Fleance in their fight against Macbeth.

Young Siwald: The son of Siwald.

Seyton: An officer attending on Macbeth

Lady Macbeth: In contrast to her husband who initially resists his murderous impulses, Lady Macbeth seems to embrace them immediately, calling upon evil to fill her "from the crown to the toe, top-full / Of direst cruelty!" However, guilt and remorse eventually emotionally unhinge her, and she dies, probably by her own hand.

Lady Macduff: The wife of Macduff, she and all her children are killed by the now-ruthless Macbeth.

Three Witches: Referred to as the “weird sisters,” witches, and sometimes old hags, these three mysterious beings plant the seeds of murder and ambition in Macbeth, when they prophesy that he will become king. Some critics claim that they represent fate and that they truly prophesy, leaving Macbeth no choice in his actions. Others say that they are simply a catalyst for the brutality to come.

Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair

By Michael Flachmann

Written early in the reign of James I (1603-1625), Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* is a typical “Jacobean” tragedy in many important respects. Referred to superstitiously by actors as “the Scottish play,” the script commemorates James’s national heritage by depicting events during the years 1040 to 1057 in his native Scotland. The play also celebrates the ruler’s intense interest in witchcraft and magic, which was recorded in a book he wrote in 1597 entitled *Demonology*. Further topical allusions to the king include all the passages in the script mentioning sleeplessness, which are relevant since James was a well-known insomniac.

The most memorable references to Jacobean England in the play, however, are those which chronicle events of the notorious Gunpowder Plot--a conspiracy by Catholic sympathizers to blow up the Parliament building and all the heads of state on November 5, 1605, approximately one year before Shakespeare’s play was written. On that date, Guy Fawkes and his band of Jesuit-sponsored papists smuggled an immense amount of gunpowder into a vault under the Parliament, which would have killed everyone in the building in a fiery cataclysm had the king not detected the explosives prior to their detonation. According to a recent book by Garry Wills, *Witches and Jesuits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), James claimed to have discovered the plan by “inspiration” from God, who wished to save England from Rome’s “Popish plot.” Through popular mythology following the event, Jesuits were branded as “equivocators” who had tried to attack both England and the Reformation through a perverse use not only of gunpowder (“the devil’s invention”), but also of the very nature of language, which they employed in double and triple entendre to hide from the king and his court their fiendish intentions.

Not surprisingly, Shakespeare’s play reflects these topical Jacobean events through its word choice, plot, and themes in an intriguing blend of Scottish history, contemporary political events, and authorial creativity. The language of the play, for example, includes a litany of references to the Gunpowder Plot that would have been familiar to all the king’s loyal subjects in 1605. Such terms as “vault,” “mine,” “blow,” “devils,” “fuse,” “powder,” “confusion,” “corpses,” “spirits,” and “combustion” set up a linguistic landscape through which Macbeth and the witches kill a king and take over his throne in a mirror image of the aborted Popish plot during James’s reign. Similarly, the play’s riddling prophecies mimic the ease with which Jesuits equivocated between truth and falsehood, good and evil. If fair is foul and foul is fair, the deaths of King James and his entire Parliament would have seemed “fair” indeed to the Romish conspirators, though “foul” to anyone in the English nation.

In [the 1996] Utah Shakespeare Festival production of the play, director Robert Cohen [sought] to capitalize on the Jacobean origins of *Macbeth* by placing its action in the early seventeenth century. Scenic Designer Dan Robinson’s elegant, refined set dominated by the open timbers, painted ceilings, and grotesque Tarot images of affluent Scottish castles has created a sophisticated dramatic universe in which the evil of *Macbeth* stands in stark contrast to its opulent, polished surroundings. By focusing their production upon the time the play was written rather than upon the chronology of its

eleventh-century source material, the director and his designers have created a world not unlike our own where we are more susceptible to moral depravity because it lurks innocently behind the thin veneer of civilization. Macbeth and his lady are not barbarians living within a primitive, medieval era; instead, they are refined, successful aristocrats whose degenerate ambition seems savagely out of place in this modern Jacobean milieu.

Set within its updated seventeenth-century context, many of the play's principal themes take on fresh clarity within this sophisticated environment. The tragedy's powerful oxymorons, for example, attain renewed emphasis through the marked distinction between Macbeth's brutality and the polished, cultured society which has nurtured it. In a world which is both "fair" and "foul" at the same time, a number of other important opposites stand out in stark contrast to each other—including dark/light, sin/grace, salvation/damnation, discord/concord, desire/performance, good/evil, angel/devil, and heaven/hell—all of which help to characterize a play which was itself suspended precariously between the extremes of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Similarly, Dean Mogle's exquisite early Jacobean costume designs—including ruffs, high collars, and a slightly looser silhouette than previous Elizabethan styles—delineate a society in which sumptuous and colorful courtly clothing masks the depravity within many of the principal characters. "Mock the time with fairest show," Macbeth warns his wife prior to the killing of Duncan; "False face must hide what the false heart doth know" (1.7.82-83). A further important clothing motif can be seen in all the ill-fitting garment images in the play. Usurping a great king's throne, Macbeth has literally and figuratively stepped into clothes that are too big for him. As Angus says toward the end of the play, Macbeth feels his title "Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe / Upon a dwarfish thief" (5.2.21-22). These and other prominent clothing images in the script take on a new emphasis in the Utah production's seventeenth-century costuming that would not have been so apparent in a more traditional medieval setting for the play.

Other important themes likewise find renewed definition within this production's more modern world. The sexual inversion, for instance, in which Macbeth gradually takes on more "womanly" characteristics while his wife assumes the dominant male role, seems somehow more appropriate in this post-medieval, pre-feminist updated society, while all the references to fathers and sons telescope reality from the eleventh century to the Jacobean era through the witches' pageant of successive kings. This same time travel is also evident in Macbeth's oft-stated desire to see into the future so that he can control his own fate. In addition to his reliance upon the witches' prophecies, Macbeth has a number of other moments in the play during which he looks forward in time. Having been named Thane of Cawdor in act 1 scene 3, he exclaims in an aside about the kingship that "the greatest is behind" (117); and later, in act 5 scene 5, informed by Seyton that his wife is dead, he replies that "She should have died hereafter" (17). In fact, his entire "tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" speech which follows is an ironic realization that all his attempts to forecast and control the future have been in vain. Similar references to sickness and medicine, the divine right of kings, sexual energy, pregnancy, blood, death, omens, beast imagery, innocence, the corruptions of power, the loss of faith, and knowing one's "place" in society all likewise gain renewed strength through director Robert Cohen's decision to update his production to Jacobean Scotland.

In the final analysis, this movement forward in time brings the play several steps closer to our own world, which makes Shakespeare's early seventeenth-century script of an eleventh-century historical story more accessible and meaningful than other more traditional productions of the play. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are like us in their ambition, love of power, and desire to manipulate their own future. Consequently, the "newness" of the set and costumes invites us into a world very like our own, where evil is seductive and believable, yet reprehensible nonetheless.

What Has Gotten Into You?

By Diana Major Spencer

My grandmother used to say, “Di-AN-a! WHAT’S gotten INto you!” Could she have known something I didn’t? Could my behavior have been caused by some mysterious outside force that invaded my spirit and made me a “naughty girl”? I didn’t know it at the time, but Grandma Emma’s locution has a long history in the English language, long enough, in fact, that our understanding of and sympathy for Macbeth, for example, can be enriched by asking the same question of him: “Really, Macbeth, what HAS gotten into you?”

Shakespeare uses four words in the course of Macbeth which, interpreted in sixteenth-century terms, reveal a man of nobility waylaid by conjurers: noble, charm, weird, and wicked. For maximum tragic effect, Macbeth must be noble (in a sixteenth-century sense); he must also be charmed and wicked (in a sixteenth-century sense) by the Weird (in the sixteenth-century sense) Sisters. In contrast, many productions minimize the weird and wicked and aim the early scenes in the direction of unfettered ambition and bloody cruelty, culminating in mad scenes for both Macbeth and his lady. If the mad scenes are mad enough, the entire motivation of the play lies in the insanity of its two primary characters—not very tragic.

If, however, Macbeth is a noble man (not merely a nobleman) caught up in something beyond his control, he is a sympathetic, tragic figure. Noble implies a code of behavior as well as rank of birth. A person earns the respect paid to Macbeth in act 1, scene 2: “brave Macbeth . . . Valor’s minion” (The Riverside Shakespeare [Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974], 16-20); “O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!” (24); and “What [the former Thane of Cawdor] hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won” (67). Even Lady Macbeth “fear[s his] nature, / [as] too full o’ the milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way” (1.5.15-17). Macbeth begins as a brave and noble warrior who counts kindness and gentility among his virtues. He is noble by birth and noble of character.

In the first scene, however, the Weird Sisters agree to meet Macbeth, whom they have singled out for their attention. Act 1, scene 3 enumerates the miseries they will unleash upon him as they cast this magical spell: “The weird sisters, hand in hand, / Posters of the sea and land, / Thus do go, about, about, / Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine, / And thrice again, to make up nine. / Peace, the charm’s wound up” (1.3.32-37).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the original meaning of charm was “to sing [magic] into,” as in two other French versions of the Latin, *in-cant-tation*, and *en-chant-ment*: “chanting or recitation of a verse supposed to possess magic power or occult influence” (The Compact Edition [New York: Oxford UP, 1971], 1.383). Prospero in *The Tempest* ends his magical career with “My charms I’ll break, [my captives’] senses I’ll restore” (5.1.31). Romeo and Juliet are “alike bewitched by the charm of looks (2.Prologue.6).

Magic, witchcraft, and spells are consistently associated with charms. By extension, to say someone is charming, enchanting, or bewitching as metaphors for attractive, or that one is spellbound by a person’s charms, implies something metaphorically magical, though not usually occult. Macbeth later

says he leads a “charmed life” (5.8.12), meaning that he is “rendered invulnerable by a spell or charm” (OED 1:383).

The OED’s primary meaning of weird, moreover, is “the principle, power, or agency by which events are pre-determined” (2:3731). The Weird Sisters correspond to the Three Fates, who spin, weave, and cut the thread of life. Like the oracle in *Oedipus Rex*, they bring confusion to the issue of responsibility: How can Oedipus be responsible for his actions when they have already been determined by the gods or the Fates? How can Macbeth? Is the Fates’ power absolute? Or do they merely have the power of prophecy? Maybe foreknowledge is the same as causality. When Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, weird characters were deemed capable of prophecy. Macbeth makes the association when he asks why the sisters “stop our way / With such prophetic greeting?” (1.3.76-78). We moderns, though, hear the modern denotation of weird, which, incidentally, dates from its use to describe these bearded ladies who vanish into the air. Formerly, weird ladies—i.e., those endowed with prophetic powers—were presumed to have magical powers as well; now, ladies who think they have magical powers are presumed to be weird—i.e., strange, peculiar.

If we are to enjoy a tragic sympathy for Macbeth, he must be good without being quite perfect, and he must contribute to his own downfall. Banquo notices that the sisters have deeply affected his companion: “Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?” (1.3.51-52). Macbeth’s aside confirms his own misgivings: “If good, why do I yield to that suggestion / Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair / And make my seated heart knock at my ribs, / Against the use of nature [i.e., against the normal habit of my nature]?” (1.3.134-37). What in his character makes him vulnerable to the Weird Sisters? Ambition, perhaps; but Shakespeare has not established unreasonable ambition as Macbeth’s normal state.

Instead, Macbeth is wicked (“By the pricking of my thumbs / Something wicked this way comes” [4.1.45-46]). We do not understand the sentence, Macbeth was wicked by the weird sisters; yet the adjective wicked derives from the passive of a dialect variant of (be)witched. To say something was wicked meant literally to Shakespeare’s audience that it was under the spell of a witch (wicca). Something “had gotten into” Macbeth—the inner disturbance induced by whatever has the power to witch, bewitch, or charm: the Weird Sisters. Interpretations of the disturbance range all the way from total infestation by supernatural powers to the mere catalyzing of Macbeth’s latent seed of ambition. Nevertheless, the witches have done something to Macbeth.

For catharsis, the ultimate goal of tragedy, the tragic hero must recognize his role in his own downfall. As wickedly as Macbeth behaves, he never completely loses his traces of his nobility. Two crucial speeches suggest sorrow and futility rather than satisfaction with his bloody actions. In his sleep-deprived “in blood stepped in so far” (3.4.136-7), he is so clearly guilty of crimes he’s worse off trying to make amends than trying to complete the task, futile as it may be. Hence, he is resolved to bloodier actions. In “tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” (5.5.19), he acknowledges that he and Lady Macbeth have spent “all [their] yesterdays . . . light[ing] fools [i.e., themselves] the way to dusty death” (5.5.22-23). Macbeth makes for exciting drama even as a bloodbath prompted by a fourth witch—Lady Macbeth. But the play has the potential to engage the emotions at a deeper and more universal level. Macbeth needs to undergo crisis and change during the course of the play, which can best be achieved, I believe, by playing the Weird Sisters at face value as other-world powers that seduce the hero from his truest nature.

Macbeth and the Nature of Evil

By Elaine Pilkington

Macbeth examines the nature of evil and the corruption of the human soul. In *Macbeth*, evil is the opposite of humanity, the deviation from that which is natural for humankind, yet evil originates in the human heart. Supernatural and unnatural forces are the agents of human beings, not their instigators. The witches' words do not seduce Macbeth. He is compelled by his own ambition and his wife's ruthlessness. Similarly, spirits do not solicit Lady Macbeth; rather she invokes their aid for her purposes.

The character Macbeth, like the play itself, is a collection of contradictions. His wife believes that his "nature / . . . is too full o'th' milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way" (1.5.15-17, all references are to Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, eds., *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988]). At the beginning of the play, he seems the epitome of a loyal subject, valiantly fighting the rebel forces to protect the king and preserve his power. Described as an almost superhuman warrior on the field of battle, brave Macbeth "carv'd out his passage" (1.2.20) through the enemy till he reached the traitor Macdonald, "unseamed him from the nave to th' chops, / And fix'd his head upon ... [the] battlements" (1.2.22-23).

When we actually meet Macbeth and Banquo, however, we see interesting contrasts that belie the great hero. His first words, "So fair and foul a day I have not seen" (1.3.36) echo the "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (1.1.10) of three witches in scene one and immediately link him to them. Upon his bidding, the witches speak, greeting him with three titles: Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and king hereafter (1.3.46-48). Macbeth hears their words not with the detached skepticism of Banquo but with a kind of fear. For him, this is not a revelation of the future but an invasion of his private, hidden thoughts. His first reaction is like one who has been discovered. Banquo asks him, "Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear / Things that do sound so fair?" (1.3.49-50).

After Ross and Angus inform him that Duncan has bestowed upon him the title of the Thane of Cawdor, validating the witches' second title, Macbeth analyzes their words: "This supernatural soliciting / Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill, / Why hath it given me earnest of success / Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor. / If good, why do I yield to that suggestion / Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair / And make my seated heart knock at my ribs / Against the use of nature?" (1.3.129-36). The witches' words were neutral. It is Macbeth that puts a moral value to them, concluding that he must perform an unnatural act to acquire the title of king.

But the clear knowledge that killing a king, a kinsman, and a guest in his house is against all social propriety, natural order, and human or humane behavior puts Macbeth at war with himself. As he says, he dares to "do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none" (1.7.46-47). It is impossible to murder Duncan, a man of great virtue and sound leadership, and remain human. His desire for the crown and his revulsion at the means he must use to obtain it cause him to vacillate. At Lady Macbeth's urging, he agrees, "I am settled, and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat" (1.7.79-80), putting aside his earlier refusal, "We will proceed no further in this business" (1.7.31).

Having performed the act, he is immediately filled with remorse. His bloody hands are a “sorry sight” (2.2.19). He cannot voice an amen to an overheard prayer, “I had most need of blessing, and ‘Amen’ / Stuck in my throat” (2.2.30 31), having made himself no longer a man, no longer worthy of blessing. He imagines a voice crying, “‘Sleep no more, / Macbeth does murder sleep’” (2.2.33 34). He is incapable of returning to Duncan’s chamber to put the bloody daggers with the grooms. Hearing the knocking at the gate, he says, “Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would thou couldst” (2.2.72).

Despite his profound remorse, he does nothing to right the wrong. His fear of earthly justice compels him to make more inhuman choices. He proceeds with the plan to place the blame upon the grooms and kills them before they can establish their innocence. He believes Banquo suspects him and attempts to have Banquo and Fleance killed, succeeding only with Banquo’s death and Fleance’s escape. Murder becomes his primary tool of leadership. Having missed the opportunity to kill Macduff, he resolves to kill Lady Macduff, her children, “and all unfortunate souls / That trace him in his line” (4.1.168 69). By the end of the play, Macbeth is a bloody tyrant, disappointed in all aspects of his life—his reign, his marriage, a family for a potential dynasty—and damned for eternity in his death.

Lady Macbeth’s decline mirrors her husband’s. Denying her humanity, she too turns against human nature. To contemplate such horror and steel Macbeth to kill Duncan she calls upon spirits “that tend on mortal thoughts [to] unsex . . . [her] / And fill . . . [her] from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty” (1.5.40 42), turning her into an unnatural creature like the witches, who are neither male nor female. Her denial of her essential nature is unsuccessful. She cannot bring herself to murder Duncan for the human reason that he resembled her father as he slept. Despite her assurance that “A little water clears us of this deed” (2.2.65), she cannot forget her actions. The innocent dead haunt her dreams as she walks through the castle in her sleep, washing her hands, trying to remove the stain of her inhuman acts. But no water can clear the blood from her hands; no power can free her from her guilt. “What’s done cannot be undone” (5.1.65).

The evil of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is so great that ultimately it destroys both of them. The human soul cannot endure such evil. One way or another evil destroys the soul. Knowing he is doomed to lose, Macbeth still battles against Macduff, the representative of virtue and the redresser of the play. Lady Macbeth is defeated by madness and death. Evil is incompatible with humanity.

What's a Thane To Do?

By Amanda Caraway

William Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is unique in both story and presentation. Shakespeare was a great entertainer who knew his audience, and the primary audience member for *Macbeth* was King James I. This young and energetic King of Scotland took the English throne in 1603, and Shakespeare’s company was renamed the King’s Men that year in honor of James.

Throughout *Macbeth*, Shakespeare pays tribute to the king’s homeland, his people, and his beliefs. Some of the characters in the play are thought to be direct relatives of the king, and a number of situations in the play mirror the king’s own life experiences. *Macbeth* is also a product of its setting as Shakespeare wrote the play in a frightening political climate.

Macbeth is set in Scotland during the reigns of Duncan and Macbeth, who were kings of Scotland between 1037 and 57 C.E. Shakespeare alters the historical accounts in order to write a story that will flatter King James. *The Chronicles of Holinshed*, Shakespeare’s primary source for *Macbeth*, links Banquo to the Stuart line of Kings, from which James I is descended (Evans, G. Blakemore, *The*

Riverside Shakespeare, 2nd edition [Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997], 1356). In the play, Shakespeare glorifies Banquo and his son Fleance, founder of the Stuart line.

While Macbeth and his lady are barren, much is made of Banquo's seed, and his lines are filled with images of fertility. In act one, scene three, Banquo addresses the witches with "If you can look into the seeds of time, / And say which grain will grow, and which will not, / Speak then to me" (1.3.58–60). The witches respond that Banquo's sons will be kings, an idea that haunts Macbeth and prompts him to murder Banquo. When Banquo converses with King Duncan, who calls him "noble" and "valiant," their language is filled with the imagery of healthy growth. The king speaks of his wish to enfold Banquo to his heart and Banquo replies with "There if I grow, / The harvest is your own" (1.3.32–33). By contrast, Macbeth wears a "fruitless crown" and holds a "barren scepter" (3.1.60–61).

In the play, Fleance escapes Macbeth's clutches and is able to avenge his father by siring a long line of kings. The Show of Kings in act four, scene one represents the posterity of the Stuart line, which stretched to King James. In the scene, the eighth king enters holding a glass, which was thought to reflect the image of James seated in the audience: "and yet the eight appears, who bears a glass / Which shows me many more" (4.1.119–120).

In addition to the identifiable characters from Scottish history, Macbeth's story of ambitious and murderous Scottish lords was relatable for James I. Ruthless nobles repeatedly threatened the king's mother, Mary Queen of Scots, and his father, Lord Darnley. When his mother was six-months pregnant with James, her secretary was murdered by Scottish nobles in the queen's presence in her own apartments (Fraser, Antonia, *Mary, Queen of Scots* [New York: Delacorte Press, 1969], 252–253). Within a year after James's birth, Scottish earls murdered his father and the king's house at Kirk o'Field was destroyed with gunpowder (*Mary, Queen of Scots*, 302–303). Shortly after, Mary was abducted and raped by one of her noblemen (*Mary, Queen of Scots*, 315–316). Scottish lords imprisoned her until she was able to flee to England, never seeing her son again.

The play also centers on many of the king's beliefs and interests. James thought of himself as a fighter of evil and a true man of God with the Divine Right to Rule. He is remembered for ordering a new translation of the Bible, known as the *King James Version of the Bible*. He considered himself to be a "scholar of witches and witchcraft," (Garber, Marjorie B, *Shakespeare After All, 1st ed.* [New York: Pantheon Books, 2004], 697), and he authored the book *Daemonologie*, which was driven by his concern to explain evil phenomena. James had Parliament replace the 1563 act against "Conjuracions, Inchantments, and Witchcraft" with harsher laws (Lee, Christopher, *1603: The Death of Queen Elizabeth I, the Return of the Black Plague, the Rise of Shakespeare, Piracy, Witchcraft and the Birth of the Stuart Era, 1st Edition* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004], 247). Under the new law, people accused of witchcraft faced execution rather than imprisonment, and simple intent to use sorcery was punished as well. During James's rule, hundreds of men and women were put to death for witchcraft.

In addition to curing the land of witchcraft, King James also thought he could cure disease. He believed he could cure scrofula, also known as "the king's evil," by touching the victim (Shakespeare After All, 718). Edward the Confessor, the English King in *Macbeth*, was the first to practice this "cure." In *Macbeth*, the Doctor says heaven has given King Edward's hand "sanctity" (4.3.144), and Malcolm tells Macduff that there is "miraculous work in this good king" that has a "heavenly gift of prophecy" and is "full of grace" (4.3.141–159). King Edward is a strong foil to King Macbeth who is described as a tyrant unfit to rule.

Although Shakespeare was prohibited from writing about modern politics and religion, *Macbeth* is filled with concealed political and religious concerns of the time. Take for example the language of equivocation that fills the script. The word was a "technical term used to describe mental reservations of Jesuits who could tell untruths or partial truths under interrogation without breaking their word to God" (*Shakespeare After All*, 699). Throughout the play, the language of the three witches, who speak in

charms and riddles, is dominated by equivocation. It is seen in the famous phrase “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (1.1.11), and in their prophecies to Banquo: Lesser than Macbeth, and greater / Not so happy, yet much happier / Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none (1.3.65–68).

The Porter talks much of equivocation in his monologue in act two, scene three, and Macbeth speaks of equivocation when he finally recognizes the deceit of the witches and his imminent doom: “th’ equivocation of the fiend, / That lies like truth” (5.5.42–43).

The issue of equivocation in England came to a head in 1606 with the famous Gunpowder Plot. The English Roman Catholics planned to blow up Parliament as well as the king’s family on Nov. 5, 1605, to protest the King’s stance on religion (*Shakespeare After All*, 699). The plot was uncovered in time, and those involved were tortured and executed. Lennox’s speech in act three, scene four talks of a court in turmoil just like James’s court at the time the play was written. Lennox prays that a swift blessing will come from the court of England to help their “suffering country” (3.4.45–49). This speech also serves to link England and Scotland as a compliment to James who was king of both.

Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* in the wake of a recent conspiracy knowing that it would be presented to a suspicious king who feared treason. By writing a play meant to flatter the king, Shakespeare was able to show his allegiance to the court and gain favor for himself and the King’s Men. Shakespeare also knew that *Macbeth* would be presented by candlelight at Hampton Court. This gave Shakespeare the perfect setting for a spooky tale filled with witchcraft and murder, intended to enthrall a superstitious king.

Shakespeare: Words, Words, Words

By S. S. Moorty

“No household in the English-speaking world is properly furnished unless it contains copies of the Holy Bible and of The Works of William Shakespeare. It is not always thought that these books should be read in maturer years, but they must be present as symbols of Religion and Culture” (G.B. Harrison, *Introducing Shakespeare*. Rev. & Exp. [New York: Penguin Books, 1991], 11).

We, the Shakespeare-theater goers and lovers, devotedly and ritualistically watch and read the Bard’s plays, not for exciting stories and complex plots. Rather, Shakespeare’s language is a vital source of our supreme pleasure in his plays. Contrary to ill-conceived notions, Shakespeare’s language is not an obstacle to appreciation, though it may prove to be difficult to understand. Instead, it is the communicative and evocative power of Shakespeare’s language that is astonishingly rich in vocabulary—about 29,000 words—strikingly presented through unforgettable characters such as Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Othello, Rosalind, Viola, Iago, Shylock, etc.

In the high school classroom, students perceive Shakespeare’s language as “Old English.” Actually, Shakespeare’s linguistic environment, experience, and exposure was, believe it or not, closer to our own times than to Chaucer’s, two hundred years earlier. Indeed, the history and development of the English language unfold as follows: Old English, 449-1100; Middle English 1100-1500; and Modern English 1500-present. Shakespeare was firmly in the Modern English period.

At the time Shakespeare wrote, most of the grammatical changes from Old and Middle English had taken place; yet rigid notions about “correctness” had not yet been standardized in grammars. The past five centuries have advanced the cause of standardized positions for words, yet the flexible idiom of Elizabethan English offered abundant opportunities for Shakespeare’s linguistic inventiveness. Ideally, it is rewarding to study several facets of Shakespeare’s English: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, wordplay, and imagery. The present overview will, however, be restricted to “vocabulary.”

To Polonius's inquisitive question "What do you read, my lord?" (Hamlet, 2.2.191) Hamlet nonchalantly and intriguingly aptly replies: "Words, words, words" (2.2.192). This many-splendored creation of Shakespeare's epitomizes the playwright's own fascination with the dynamic aspect of English language, however troubling it may be to modern audiences and readers. Shakespeare added several thousand words to the language, apart from imparting new meanings to known words. At times Shakespeare could teasingly employ the same word for different shades of thought. Barowne's single line, "Light, seeking light, doth light of light beguile" (Love's Labour's Lost, 1.1.77), as Harry Levin in his General Introduction to The Riverside Shakespeare (9) explains, "uses 'light' in four significations: intellect, seeking wisdom, cheats eyesight out of daylight."

Another instance: Othello as he enters his bedroom with a light before he smothers his dear, innocent Desdemona soliloquizes: "Put out the light, and then put out the light" (Othello, 5.2.7) Here 'light' compares the light of Othello's lamp or torch to Desdemona's 'light' of life.

In both instances, the repeated simple ordinary word carries extraordinary shades of meaning. "Usually such a tendency in a Shakespeare play indicates a more or less conscious thematic intent." (Paul A. Jorgensen, Redeeming Shakespeare's Words [Berkeley and Los Angeles; University of California Press, 1962], 100).

Living in an age of the "grandiose humanistic confidence in the power of the word" (Levin 9), Shakespeare evidently felt exuberant that he had the license to experiment with the language, further blessed by the fact that "there were no English grammars to lay down rules or dictionaries to restrict word-formation. This was an immeasurable boon for writers" (Levin 10). Surely Shakespeare took full advantage of the unparalleled linguistic freedom to invent, to experiment with, and to indulge in lavishly.

However intriguing, captivating, mind-teasing, beguiling, and euphonious, Shakespeare's vocabulary can be a stumbling block, especially for readers. "In the theater the speaking actor frequently relies on tone, semantic drive, narrative context, and body language to communicate the sense of utterly unfamiliar terms and phrases, but on the page such words become more noticeable and confusing" (Russ McDonald, The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare: An Introduction with Documents [Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996], 184).

Unlocking the meaning of Shakespeare's vocabulary can prove to be an interesting challenge. Such words include those which "have dropped from common use like 'bisson' (blind) or those that the playwright seems to have created from Latin roots . . . but that did not catch on, such as conspectuities' (eyesight or vision) or 'unplausible' (doubtful or disapproving). Especially confusing are those words that have shifted meaning over the intervening centuries, such as 'proper' (handsome), 'nice' (squeamish or delicate), 'silly' (innocent), or 'cousin' (kinsman, that is, not necessarily the child of an aunt or uncle)" (McDonald 184). Because of semantic change, when Shakespeare uses 'conceit,' he does not mean 'vanity,' as we might understand it to be. Strictly following etymology, Shakespeare means a 'conception' or 'notion,' or possibly the 'imagination' itself.

Perhaps several Shakespeare words "would have been strange to Shakespeare's audience because they were the products of his invention or unique usage. Some words that probably originated with him include: 'auspicious,' 'assassination,' 'disgraceful,' 'dwindle,' 'savagery.'" Certainly a brave soul, he was "a most audacious inventor of words." To appreciate and understand Shakespeare's English in contrast to ours, we ought to suspend our judgment and disbelief and allow respect for the "process of semantic change, which has been continually eroding or encrusting his original meaning" (Levin 8).

Shakespeare's vocabulary has received greater attention than any other aspect of his language. Perhaps this is because it is the most accessible with no burdensome complications. Whatever the cause, Shakespeare's language will forever be challenging and captivating.

Not of An Age, But for All Mankind

By Douglas A. Burger

After an enormous expenditure of money and effort, Shakespeare's Globe Theater has risen again, four centuries later, on London's south bank of the Thames. Designed as a faithful reconstruction of the original, it uses the building methods of the time and traditional materials (oak timbers, plaster walls, wooden pegs, water-reeds for thatching the roof). From above, the shape seems circular (actually, it is twenty-six sided) with three covered tiers of seats surrounding a central area which is open to the sky. There the "groundlings" may stand to see the action taking place on the stage, which occupies almost half of the inner space. There are no artificial lights, no conventional sets, no fancy rigging.

Seeing a Shakespeare play in the afternoon sunlight at the new Globe must come very close to the experience of those early-day Londoners, except, of course, that we in the twentieth-century behave better. We don't yell insults at the actors, spit, or toss orange peels on the ground. We also smell better: the seventeenth-century playwright, Thomas Dekker, calls the original audience "Stinkards . . . glewed together in crowdes with the Steames of strong breath" (Shakespeare's Globe: The Guide Book [London: International Globe Center, 1996], 42). And we are safer. The first Globe burned to the ground. The new theater has more exits, fire-retardant insulation concealed in the walls, and water-sprinklers that poke through the thatch of the roof.

That hard-headed capitalists and officials would be willing, even eager, to invest in the project shows that Shakespeare is good business. The new Globe is just one example. Cedar City's own Utah Shakespeare Festival makes a significant contribution to the economy of southern Utah. A sizable percentage of all the tourist dollars spent in England goes to Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford-on-Avon, which would be a sleepy little agricultural town without its favorite son. The situation seems incredible. In our whole history, what other playwright could be called a major economic force? Who else--what single individual--could be listed along with agriculture, mining, and the like as an industry of a region? Why Shakespeare?

The explanation, of course, goes further than an attempt to preserve our cultural traditions. In an almost uncanny way, Shakespeare's perceptions remain valuable for our own understandings of life, and probably no other writer remains so insightful, despite the constantly changing preoccupations of audiences over time.

The people of past centuries, for example, looked to the plays for nuggets of wisdom and quotable quotes, and many of Shakespeare's lines have passed into common parlance. There is an old anecdote about the woman, who on first seeing Hamlet, was asked how she liked the play. She replied, "Oh, very nice, my dear, but so full of quotations." She has it backward of course. Only the King James Bible has lent more "quotations" to English than Shakespeare.

Citizens of the late nineteenth century sought in the plays for an understanding of human nature, valuing Shakespeare's character for traits that they recognized in themselves and in others. The fascination continues to the present day as some of our best-known movie stars attempt to find new dimensions in the great characters: Mel Gibson and Kenneth Branagh in Hamlet, Lawrence Fishburn in Othello, Leonardo de Caprio in Romeo, to name just a few.

Matters of gender, class, and race have preoccupied more recent audiences. Beatrice sounds a rather feminist note in Much Ado about Nothing in her advice to her cousin about choosing a husband: Curtsy to your father, but say "Father, as it please me." Coriolanus presents a recurring dilemma about class relations in its explorations of the rights and wrongs involved in a great man's attempt to control

the masses. Racial attitudes are illuminated in Othello, where the European characters always mark the hero by his race, always identify him first as the "Moor," are always aware of his difference.

London's new/old Globe is thus a potent symbol of the plays' continuing worth to us. The very building demonstrates the utter accuracy of the lines written so long ago that Shakespeare is not "of an age" but "for all time."

Mr. Shakespeare, I Presume

By Diana Major Spencer

Could the plays known as Shakespeare's have been written by a rural, semi-literate, uneducated, wife-deserting, two-bit actor who spelled his name differently each of the six times he wrote it down? Could such a man know enough about Roman history, Italian geography, French grammar, and English court habits to create Antony and Cleopatra, The Comedy of Errors, and Henry V? Could he know enough about nobility and its tenuous relationship to royalty to create King Lear and Macbeth?

Are these questions even worth asking? Some very intelligent people think so. On the other hand, some very intelligent people think not. Never mind quibbles about how a line should be interpreted, or how many plays Shakespeare wrote and which ones, or which of the great tragedies reflected personal tragedies. The question of authorship is "The Shakespeare Controversy."

Since Mr. Cowell, quoting the deceased Dr. Wilmot, cast the first doubt about William of Stratford in an 1805 speech before the Ipswich Philological Society, nominees for the "real author" have included philosopher Sir Francis Bacon, playwright Christopher Marlowe, Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Walter Raleigh, and the earls of Derby, Rutland, Essex, and Oxford--among others.

The arguments evoke two premises: first, that the proven facts about the William Shakespeare who was christened at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564, do not configure a man of sufficient nobility of thought and language to have written the plays; and, second, that the man from Stratford is nowhere concretely identified as the author of the plays. The name "Shakespeare"--in one of its spellings--appears on early quartos, but the man represented by the name may not be the one from Stratford.

One group of objections to the Stratford man follows from the absence of any record that he ever attended school--in Stratford or anywhere else. If he were uneducated, the arguments go, how could his vocabulary be twice as large as the learned Milton's? How could he know so much history, law, or philosophy? If he were a country bumpkin, how could he know so much of hawking, hounding, courtly manners, and daily habits of the nobility? How could he have traveled so much, learning about other nations of Europe in enough detail to make them the settings for his plays?

The assumptions of these arguments are that such rich and noble works as those attributed to a playwright using the name "Shakespeare" could have been written only by someone with certain characteristics and that those characteristics could be distilled from the "facts" of his life. He would have

to be noble; he would have to be well-educated; and so forth. On these grounds, the strongest candidate to date is Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

A debate that has endured its peaks and valleys, the controversy catapulted to center stage in 1984 with the publication of Charlton Ogburn's *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*. Ogburn, a former army intelligence officer, builds a strong case for Oxford—if one can hurdle the notions that the author wasn't Will Shakespeare, that literary works should be read autobiographically, and that literary creation is nothing more than reporting the facts of one's own life. "The Controversy" was laid to rest—temporarily, at least—by Justices Blackmun, Brennan, and Stevens of the United States Supreme Court who, after hearing evidence from both sides in a mock trial conducted September 25, 1987 at American University in Washington, D.C., found in favor of the Bard of Avon.

Hooray for our side!

Shakespearean Snapshots

By Ace G. Pilkington

It is hard to get from the facts of Shakespeare's life to any sense of what it must have been like to have lived it. He was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon and died there in 1616. The day of his birth is not certain, but it may have been the same as the day of his death—April 23—if he was baptized, as was usual at the time, three days after he was born. He married Anne Hathaway in the winter of 1582 when he was eighteen, and she was twenty-six. He became the father of three children. The first was Susannah, who was born around May 23, close enough to the date of the wedding to suggest that the marriage was not entirely voluntary. Shakespeare's twins, Hamnet and Judith, were baptized on February 2, 1585. Hamnet died of unknown causes (at least unknown by us at this distance in time) in 1596. Shakespeare's career as an actor, theatre owner, manager, and, of course, playwright began in the vicinity of 1590 and continued for the rest of his life, though there are clear indications that he spent more and more time in Stratford and less and less in London from 1611 on. His work in the theatre made him wealthy, and his extraordinary plays brought him a measure of fame, though nothing like what he deserved or would posthumously receive.

It's hard to get even the briefest sense of what Shakespeare's life was like from such information. It is probably impossible ever to know what Shakespeare thought or felt, but maybe we can get closer to what he saw and heard and even smelled. Perhaps some snapshots—little close-ups—might help to bring us nearer to the world in which Shakespeare lived if not quite to the life he lived in that world. In Shakespeare's youth, chimneys were a new thing. Before that, smoke was left to find its way out through a hole in the roof, often a thatched roof, and there were even some who maintained that this smoky atmosphere was better than the newfangled fresh air that chimneys made possible—along with a greater division of rooms and more privacy.

In the year of Shakespeare's birth, Stratford had more trees than houses—"upwards of 400 houses as well as 1,000 elms and forty ashes" (Peter Thomson, *Shakespeare's Professional Career* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 1). Peter Levi says, "The town was so full of elm trees that it must have looked and sounded like a woodland settlement. For example, Mr. Gibbs's house on Rothermarket had twelve elms in the garden and six in front of the door. Thomas Attford on Ely Street had another twelve. The town boundaries were marked by elms or groups of elms (*The Life and Times of William Shakespeare* [New York: Wings Books, 1988], 7). Shakespeare's "Bare ruined choirs where

late the sweet birds sang" becomes a far more majestic image with the picture of Stratford's elms in mind. And the birds themselves had a sound which modern ears no longer have a chance to enjoy. "We must realize that it was ordinary for . . . Shakespeare to hear a dawn chorus of many hundreds of birds at once. . . . as a young man thirty years ago I have heard a deafening dawn chorus in the wooded Chilterns, on Shakespeare's road to London" (Levi 10).

Exactly what Shakespeare's road to London may have been or at least how he first made his way there and became an actor is much debated. He might have been a schoolmaster or fifty other things, but he may well have started out as he ended up—as a player. We can then, in John Southworth's words, "Picture a sixteen-year-old lad on a cart, growing year by year into manhood, journeying out of the Arden of his childhood into ever more unfamiliar, distant regions, travelling ill-made roads in all weathers, sleeping in inns, hearing and memorising strange new dialects and forms of speech, meeting with every possible type and character of person; learning, most of all perhaps, from the audiences to which he played in guildhalls and inns" (Shakespeare the Player: A Life in the Theatre [Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2000], 30). At some time in his life—in fact, many times—Shakespeare must have known theatrical tours very like that.

In London itself, the new Globe, the best theatre in (or rather just outside of) the city, was in an area with a large number of prisons and an unpleasant smell. "Garbage had preceded actors on the marshy land where the new playhouse was erected: 'flanked with a ditch and forced out of a marsh,' according to Ben Jonson. Its cost . . . included the provision of heavy piles for the foundation, and a whole network of ditches in which the water rose and fell with the tidal Thames" (Garry O'Connor, William Shakespeare: A Popular Life [New York: Applause Books, 2000], 161). The playgoers came by water, and the Globe, the Rose, and the Swan "drew 3,000 or 4,000 people in boats across the Thames every day" (161). Peter Levi says of Shakespeare's London, "The noise, the crowds, the animals and their droppings, the glimpses of grandeur and the amazing squalor of the poor, were beyond modern imagination" (49).

England was a place of fear and glory. Public executions were public entertainments. Severed heads decayed on city walls. Francis Bacon, whom Will Durant calls "the most powerful and influential intellect of his time" (Heroes of History: A Brief History of Civilization from Ancient Times to the Dawn of the Modern Age [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001], 327), had been "one of the persons commissioned to question prisoners under torture" in the 1580s (Levi 4). The opportune moment when Shakespeare became the most successful of playwrights was the destruction of Thomas Kyd, "who broke under torture and was never the same again," and the death of Christopher Marlowe in a tavern brawl which was the result of plot and counterplot—a struggle, very probably, between Lord Burghley and Walter Raleigh (Levi 48).

Shakespeare, who must have known the rumors and may have known the truth, cannot have helped to shudder at such monstrous good fortune. Still, all of the sights, smells, and terrors, from the birdsongs to the screams of torture, from the muddy tides to the ties of blood, became not only the textures and tonalities of Shakespeare's life, but also the information and inspiration behind his plays.

Ghosts, Witches, and Shakespeare

By Howard Waters

Sometime in the mid-1580s, young Will Shakespeare, for reasons not entirely clear to us, left his home, his wife, and his family in Stratford and set off for London. It was a time when Elizabeth, "la plus fine femme du monde," as Henry III of France called her, had occupied the throne of England for over twenty-five years. The tragedy of Mary Stuart was past; the ordeal of Essex was in the future. Sir

Francis Drake's neutralization of the Spanish Armada was pending, and rumors of war or invasion blew in from all the great ports.

What could have been more exciting for a young man from the country, one who was already more than half in love with words, than to be headed for London!

It was an exciting and frightening time when the seven gates of London led to a maze of streets, narrow and dirty, crowded with tradesmen, carts, coaches, and all manner of humanity. Young Will would have seen the moated Tower of London, looking almost like an island apart. There was London Bridge crowded with tenements, and at the southern end, a cluster of traitors' heads impaled on poles. At Tyburn thieves and murderers dangled, at Limehouse pirates were trussed up at low tide and left to wait for the water to rise over them. At Tower Hill, the headsman's ax regularly flashed, while for the vagabonds there were the whipping posts, and for the beggars, there were the stocks. Such was the London of the workaday world, and young Will was undoubtedly mentally filing away details of what he saw, heard, and smelled.

Elizabethan people, in general, were an emotional lot, and the ferocity of their entertainment reflected that fact. Bear-baiting, for example, was a highly popular spectator sport, and the structure where they were generally held was not unlike the theatres of the day. A bear was chained to a stake in the center of the pit, and a pack of large dogs was turned loose to bait, or fight, him. The bear eventually tired (fortunately for the remaining dogs!), and, well, you can figure the rest out for yourself. Then there were the public hangings, whippings, or drawing and quarterings for an afternoon's entertainment. So, the violence in some of Shakespeare's plays was clearly directed at an audience that reveled in it. Imagine the effect of having an actor pretend to bite off his own tongue and spit a chunk of raw liver that he had carefully packed in his jaw into the faces of the groundlings!

Despite the progressing enlightenment of the Renaissance, superstition was still rampant among Elizabethan Londoners, and a belief in such things as astrology was common (Ralph P. Boas and Barbara M. Hahn, "The Age of Shakespeare," *Social Backgrounds of English Literature*, [Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1931] 93). Through the position of stars, many Elizabethans believed that coming events could be foretold even to the extent of mapping out a person's entire life.

Where witches and ghosts were concerned, it was commonly accepted that they existed and the person who scoffed at them was considered foolish, or even likely to be cursed. Consider the fact that Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was supposedly cursed due to the playwright's having given away a few more of the secrets of witchcraft than the weird sisters may have approved of. For a time, productions experienced an uncanny assortment of mishaps and injuries. Even today, it is often considered bad luck for members of the cast and crew to mention the name of the production, simply referred to as the Scottish Play.

In preaching a sermon, Bishop Jewel warned the Queen: "It may please your Grace to understand that witches and sorcerers within these last few years are marvelously increased. Your Grace's subjects pine away, even unto death; their color fadeth; their flesh rotteth; their speech is benumbed; their senses bereft" (Walter Bromberg, "Witchcraft and Psychotherapy," *The Mind of Man* [New York: Harper Torchbooks 1954], 54).

The Elizabethans recognized ghosts in three basic varieties: the vision or purely subjective ghost, the authentic ghost who has died without the opportunity of repentance, and the false ghost which is capable of many types of manifestations (Boas and Hahn). When a ghost was confronted, either in reality or in a Shakespearean play, some obvious discrimination was called for (and still is). Critics still do not always agree on which of these three types haunts the pages of Julius Caesar, Macbeth, Richard III, or Hamlet, or, in some cases, why they are necessary to the plot at all. After all, Shakespeare's ghosts are a capricious lot, making themselves visible or invisible as they please. In *Richard III* there are no fewer than eleven ghosts on the stage who are visible only to Richard and Richmond. In *Macbeth*, the

ghost of Banquo repeatedly appears to Macbeth in crowded rooms but is visible only to him. In *Hamlet*, the ghost appears to several people on the castle battlements but only to Hamlet in his mother's bedchamber. In the words of E.H. Seymour: "If we judge by sheer reason, no doubt we must banish ghosts from the stage altogether, but if we regulate our fancy by the laws of superstition, we shall find that spectres are privileged to be visible to whom they will (E.H. Seymour "Remarks, Critical, Conjectural, and Explanatory on Shakespeare" in *Macbeth A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare* [New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1963] 211).

Shakespeare's audiences and his plays were the products of their culture. Since the validity of any literary work can best be judged by its public acceptance, not to mention its lasting power, it seems that Shakespeare's ghosts and witches were, and are, enormously popular. If modern audiences and critics find themselves a bit skeptical, then they might consider bringing along a supply of Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief." Elizabethans simply had no need of it.

Vocabulary: Macbeth

Since *Macbeth* was written, many words in English have changed their meaning, and some are no longer used. If you remember the slang you used a few years ago, it seems dated. Who now uses the word "groovy"? Shakespeare used the rich vocabulary of his day within his plays. Below you will find just a sample of words we don't often see today and an example of how it might be used today.

hurly-burly: commotion, uproar

"When the hurly-burly's done, when the battle's lost and won." Second Witch 1.1.3
When this commotion of war is over and we know who has won and lost.

chaps: jaws, like our usage of chops

"...Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chaps..." Captain 1.2.22
Split him in two, from his belly-button to his head.

aroint thee: be gone, go away

rump-fed: well-fed, pampered

ronyon: a trash eater

"Aroint thee, witch! The rump-fed ronyon cries." First Witch 1.3.7
"Get out of here, witch!" That pampered trash-eater cried.

thane: Scottish nobleman

"By Sinel's death I know I am thane of Glamis. But how of Cawdor?" Macbeth 1.3.72
I know I am Mayor of Glamis because I inherited the title from my father when he died. But how am I mayor of Cawdor?

soliciting: inciting, persuading

"This supernatural soliciting cannot be ill..." Macbeth 1.3.134
This persuasion from another world cannot be bad.

harbinger: forerunner, one who goes before

“I’ll be myself harbinger and make joyful the hearing of my wife with your approach.” Macbeth 1.4.47
I’ll go ahead before you and tell my wife who will be so happy.

incarnadine: make blood-red

“No! This, my hand, will rather the multitudinous seas in incarnadine, making the green one red.”
Macbeth 2.2.62

The blood on my hand would make all the green seas of the world blood-red.

prate: chatter, noise

“Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts.” Macbeth 2.1.61

As I walk, the noise of my feet on the rocks reveals where I am.

marshall’st: directs, leads

“Thou marshall’st me the way that I was going.” Macbeth 2.1.43

You tell me which way I’m going.

weird: from Old English “wyrð” meaning fate.

“The weird sisters, hand in hand, posters of the sea and land...” Witches 1.3.32

We weird sisters, hand in hand, travelers of the sea and land...

physic: cures, having to do with physicians or doctors

“Throw physic to the dogs, I’ll none of it.” Macbeth 5.3.49

Leave medicine to the dogs, I won’t have anything to do with it.

play the Roman fool: commit suicide the way the Romans did

“Why should I play the Roman fool...” Macbeth 5.8.1

Why should I kill myself?

tied to a stake: for sport, bears were tied to stakes and dogs were allowed to attack the trapped bear.

“They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, but bear-like, I must fight the course.” Macbeth 5.7.1

I cannot escape so I must fight on.

knell: funeral bell

“Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell that summons thee to heaven or to hell.” Macbeth 2.1.66

Don’t listen to the bell because it is either summoning you to heaven or to hell.

missives: messengers

“Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it came missives from the king...” Lady Macbeth 1.5.1

While I stood amazed from the news of it came messengers from the king.

Famous Lines and Phrases

“Fair is foul, and foul is fair.”

— Witches, 1.1.12

“Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it.”

— Malcolm, 1.4.8–9

“Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?”

— Macbeth, 2.1.42–3

“We have scotched the snake, not killed it.”

— Macbeth, 3.2.15

“After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well.”

— Macbeth, 3.2.24–5

“It will have blood, they say: blood will have blood.”

— Macbeth, 3.4.152–53

“Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.”

— Witches, 4.1.10–1

“I’ll make assurance double sure.”

— Macbeth, 4.1.93

“At one fell swoop.”

— Macduff, 4.3.256

“Out, damned spot! out, I say!”

— Lady Macbeth, 5.1.31

“What’s done cannot be undone.”

— Lady Macbeth, 5.1.62–3

“Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.”

— Macbeth, 5.5.21

Examining the Text

Figurative Language

Shakespeare uses figurative language as he speaks with metaphors, similes, and personification. Recognizing when his characters are speaking figuratively helps in understanding the play.

In the following text, Macbeth compares the danger he and his wife are in to a serpent.

*“We have scorched the snake, not killed it.
She’ll close and be herself whilst our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth.”*
— Macbeth 3.2.15

Symbols

Symbols are used throughout Shakespeare’s plays. For example in Macbeth, they talk of how dark it has become, owls prey where once it was light. Continuing with the bird image Shakespeare builds a wonderful symbol with the death of Lady Macduff.

Before her death she complains about her husband leaving:

*“Wisdom! To leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion and his titles in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;
He wants the natural touch. For the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is the fear and nothing is the love,
As little is the wisdom, where the flight*

So runs against all reason.”

— Lady Macduff 4.2.6

As she talks to her son about her husband being gone:

“How will you live?”

— Lady Macduff 4.2.31

“As birds do, Mother?”

— Son 4.2.32

As the murderers attack them, one man calls Macduff’s son an egg and a fry (a small bird) as he is killed.

“What, you egg? Young fry of treachery!”

— First Murderer 4.2.78

The symbol continues as Macduff hears of the death of his family:

“My wife kill’d too? All my pretty ones.

Did you say all?—O hell-kite! All?

What, all my pretty chickens and their dam

At one fell swoop?”

— Macduff 4.3.216

By using a bird and her flock, Shakespeare creates a powerful image. When the symbol is understood, the line makes more sense. A hell-kite (kites are scavenging birds) killing Macduff’s chicks and their dam (mothering hen).

In one fell swoop (fell means scalping and swoop is a flying attack.) The image fully conveys the attack and the helplessness of the victims. A person can better understand it when they understand the symbol.

Shakespeare’s Language: Prose vs. Verse

Many students—and adults, for that matter—find Shakespeare difficult to read and hard to understand. They accuse him of not speaking English and refuse to believe that ordinary people spoke the way his characters do. However, if you understand more about his language, it is easier to understand. One idea that may help is to remember that his plays are written in two forms: prose and verse.

Prose

Prose is the form of speech used by common, and often comic, people in Shakespearean drama. There is no rhythm or meter in the line. It is everyday language. Shakespeare’s audiences would recognize the speech as their language. When a character in a play speaks in prose, you know that he is a lower class member of society. These are characters such as criminals, servants, and pages. However, sometimes important characters can speak in prose. For example, the majority of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is written in prose because it deals with the middle-class. The following section is from the porter in *Macbeth*. He is a servant in the castle and therefore speaks as the lower class do.

An Example of Prose

“Faith sir, we were carousing till the second cock: and drink, sir, is a great provoker of three things... Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir, it provokes, and unprovokes; It

provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance...”

— The Porter 2.3.24

Verse

Most of Shakespeare’s characters speak in what is called “blank verse.” It contains no rhyme, but each line has an internal rhythm with a regular rhythmic pattern. The pattern most favored by Shakespeare is iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter is defined as a ten-syllable line with the accent on every other syllable, beginning with the second one. The rhythm of this pattern of speech is often compared to a beating heart. Examine this line from Lady Macduff.

“What had he done to make him fly the land?”

Place the words with syllabic count:

1-2 3-4 5-6 7-8 9-10

Replace the words with a ‘da’ sound to hear the heart beat:

da-DA da-DA da-DA da-DA da-DA

Now put the emphasis on the words themselves:

What-HAD he-DONE to-MAKE him-FLY the-LAND

An Example of Verse

*“Then live, Macduff. What need I fear of thee?
But yet I’ll make assurance double sure,
And take a bond of fate. Thou shalt not live,
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder. What is this...”*

— Macbeth 4.1.85

Breaking the Rules

For the most part Shakespearean verse is written in iambic pentameter, but in special cases, he breaks his own rules. The Witches in Macbeth have one of the most famous speeches in the show, and it is written in trochaic tetrameter. A trochee is the exact opposite of an iamb. Instead of following the unstressed-stressed (da-DUM) pattern it goes stressed-unstressed. (DUM-da) And a tetrameter is eight syllables per line. So what we end up with is a chant that sounds eerily different from everything else in the show.

*“Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.”*

— The Witches 4.1.10

Shakespeare does this to add another clue that the witches are not like anyone else in the show. Because they rarely had rehearsals for his plays he had to write clues like this into the speeches for the actors.

Activities: *Macbeth*

Double, Double...

Read the “eye of newt” speech out loud. How do you think this would taste? What ingredients would you put in a spell or magic recipe?

You’re the Playwright

Write or improvise a scene involving any of the characters from the play. Examine their relationships from a modern perspective. How could they communicate differently? Is there another way the play could have ended? Are there other complications that could have arisen?

A Witch by Any Other Name...

If you were directing *Macbeth*, would you want the witches to be scary or pretty? Draw a picture or find in a magazine your idea of the perfect Macbeth witch.

You’re the Designer

Create costume designs that show the differences between the characters in the play. Pay attention to the meaning or feelings behind the colors you pick. Consider what era you want to set the play in and what impact that will have on the play.

Preparing the Castle

Decide how you would prepare the castle for Duncan's arrival, and how many servants it would take. How many people would Duncan bring with him? Would people in the castle have to wear special clothes to meet the king? What about feeding the horses? What kind of food would be served at the banquets in the play?

Elementary School Discussion Questions: Compare and Contrast

Compare and Contrast

1. Shakespeare's women are not slaves or subordinates to the men in some of Shakespeare's plays. They are complete characters in their own right; they influence other characters, and by so doing they influence the plot; they have dreams, ambitions, feelings, and desires; they are capable of sin and guilt, as well as joy and love; they (like men) can become tragic figures. With specific reference to scenes and events in the play, discuss how much of this is true for Lady Macbeth. Then compare her to another tragic heroine in Shakespeare, Ophelia. How are they similar? How are they different?
2. How is the story of Macbeth unique in its themes in Shakespeare? Plenty of plays have tragedy, death, and power, what makes Macbeth different?

Relational

1. Macbeth has not been a scoundrel all of his life. Instead, he is a good man who has gone wrong. This is a real tragedy. Discuss this statement by focusing on Macbeth's good qualities some of which are used for the wrong purposes.
2. Banquo seemed to be Macbeth's best friend at the beginning of the play. Discuss how and why Macbeth turned on his friend. Do you think if they had not met the witches Banquo would have survived the play? Who is really to blame for his death?

Textual

1. Themes or messages are very important to Shakespeare's plays. Discuss fully the development of one major theme or message the play has for its audience. Use evidence from the text to support your theory.
2. One of the themes of Macbeth is that wrongdoing has serious consequences. Discuss this statement with careful reference to the play and the decline of both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth.
3. A writer such as Shakespeare was able to create in the reader a feeling (such as respect, sympathy, love, hate, admiration, or several of these together towards one or more characters. Choose a character in the play and write your feelings towards that character and explain how the author managed to make you feel as you do.
4. Shakespeare not only presents the actions of characters but also helps us to understand what motivates characters to act in the way that they do. Discuss the factors that motivate Macbeth's own ambitions. Use excerpts from the text to base your argument on.

Shakespeare's World

1. In 1603 King James I became king of England. He was also King of Scotland and as a result the English subjects were unhappy with the idea of a Scottish man on the throne. Macbeth is thought to have been written in 1606. How does Macbeth reflect what may have been the attitude of Shakespeare and the rest of the English people?
2. It is well known that Richard Burbage, a well-known dramatic actor in Shakespeare's troupe, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, may have been the first person to play Macbeth. What does this tell us about Shakespeare's writing process? How would writing for specific actors affect the types of characters he wrote?
3. How do you think the actors (all male) would have overcome the challenges of performing this very dramatic script to a widely diverse audience (some very rich and some very poor), in the middle of the day, with no special effects? What would they have to do to keep their attention? How does Shakespeare's arrangement of the action help?

Middle/High School Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how two of the following influenced Macbeth's actions in the play *Macbeth*: the witches, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth's own ambitions
2. Shakespeare's women are not slaves or subordinates to the men in the plays. They are complete characters in their own right; they influence other characters, and by so doing they influence the plot; they have dreams, ambitions, feelings, and desires; they are capable of sin and guilt, as well as joy and love; they (like men) can become tragic figures. With specific reference to scenes and events in the play, discuss how much of this is true for Lady Macbeth.
3. Sometimes a person's actions are determined largely by some aspect of his character, sometimes by some external force or forces exerting pressure on him, and sometimes by a combination of both. Using the character of Macbeth, illustrate whether the motivations for the actions of the character are internal, external, or both. Refer to specific incidents in the play and support your answer.
4. Themes or messages are very important to Shakespeare's plays. Discuss fully the development of one major theme or message the play has for its audience.
5. The idea of deception—that is, things are not always as they seem—is presented in *Macbeth*. Using specific references, trace the theme of deception as it is presented in the play.
6. To what extent is Lady Macbeth responsible for Macbeth becoming king of Scotland? Use specific evidence from the play to support your answer.
7. Below is a passage taken from the play. Answer the following questions about it: Who is speaking? What is the situation in which this passage is spoken? In your own words, summarize what is being said. Finally, with specific references to the plot of the play, explain the significance this passage has to the theme and the character.

*“I have almost forgot the taste of fears;
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair
would at a dismal treatise rouse, and stir
As life were in it; have supp'd full with horrors:
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
Cannot once start me.”*

8. One of the themes of *Macbeth* is that wrongdoing has serious consequences. Discuss this statement with careful reference to the play and to the decline of both Lady Macbeth and Macbeth.
9. The misfortunes that befall us are sometimes due to our own acts and sometimes due to fate or ill luck. By referring to Macbeth explain the situation the character finds himself in and the extent to which the character is responsible.
10. By referring to Lady Macbeth's actions, thoughts and words and the things that are said about her, develop a character sketch of her.
11. One of the themes of *Macbeth* is that our actions have certain consequences, and that some of these consequences can be terrible and unexpected. Discuss this statement with reference to both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.
12. A writer such as Shakespeare was able to create in the reader a feeling (such as respect, sympathy, love, hate, admiration, or several of these together towards one or more characters. Choose a character in the play and write your feelings towards that character and explain how the author managed to make you feel as you do.
13. Macbeth has not been a scoundrel all of his life. Instead, he is a good man who has gone wrong. This is a real tragedy. Discuss this statement by focusing on Macbeth's good qualities some of which are used for the wrong purposes.
14. Shakespeare not only presents the actions of characters but also helps us to understand what motivates characters to act in the way that they do. Discuss the factors that motivate Macbeth's own ambitions.

Study Guide Questions: Engage With the Play

By Anna Miles

Take charge of your theatre-going experience and make it your own by asking yourself questions before, during, and after watching a play.

Questions to ask before the play:

If you **HAVE** read the play:

How did you envision the set, or the visual world of the play, while reading?

How did you imagine the characters looked while reading the play?

What themes did you notice repeating throughout the play?

What images jumped out at you while reading the play?

How would you describe the central theme of the play in one sentence?

If you **HAVEN'T** read the play:

Do you know anything about the play? If so, what do you know?

In General:

When you think about "theatre," what impressions come to mind? What does "theatre" mean to you?

What do you expect your experience to be when you watch a play? Do you expect to be bored? Excited? Engaged? Curious? Angry? Tired?

Questions to ask after the play:

If you **READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the production set differ from what you had imagined while reading the play? How was it similar? How did these changes affect your understanding of the story?

Did the characters look different from how you envisioned them looking while reading the play? Did they sound different? Act differently? How did these changes affect your understanding and opinion of each character? How did these changes affect your understanding of the overall story?

How did the themes and images you noticed while reading translate to performance? Did the same themes and images jump out at you? Did you notice new ones?

Did this particular production seem to have the same central theme or a different central theme from the one you discovered while reading? What elements of the staging, acting, or design helped convey the theme?

Did they play gain or lose anything in performance? Did you enjoy reading it more, or watching it?

If you **DIDN'T READ THE PLAY BEFORE SEEING IT:**

How did the play live up to your expectations? Did it turn out the way you thought it would? Was your knowledge of the play correct?

Were you able to follow the story?

Which part of the story did you most respond to? What themes and images jumped out at you?

Which character did you most relate to? Why?

In General:

How did this production change or confirm your original impressions of "theatre"?

How did your experience watching the play differ from how you expected it would go?

In your own words, how would you summarize the plot of the play? How is the plot different from the story, or the thematic implications, in the play?

Did you feel the story was relevant to your life? How and why?

Did you feel the story said something about our society, or about the world at large? If so, what?

Do you feel this story is an important one to tell and keep telling? How and why?

What kind of stories do you most respond to?

Theatre Etiquette

-Arrive at the theater on time.

-Visit the restroom before the performance begins.

-Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.

-Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.

-Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to participate.

-Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.

-Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap. It can also be a violation of an actor's contract.

-Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.

-Do not eat or drink in the theater.

- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over, as this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).
- Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.

Additional Resources

ArtsEdge

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/>

ArtsEdge offers free, standards-based teaching materials for use in and out of the classroom, as well as professional development resources, student materials, and guidelines for arts-based instruction and assessment.

Utah Shakespeare Festival Education Website

<http://www.bard.org/education.html>

Expand your horizons, your outlook, your understanding with our myriad of educational resources, not just for students, but for students of life.

ProjectExplorer, Ltd.

<http://www.projectexplorer.org/>

ProjectExplorer, Ltd. is a not-for-profit organization that provides an interactive global learning experience to the kindergarten through twelfth grade community. Providing users globally the opportunity to explore the world from their own computer, it is a free, all-inclusive site that uses story-based learning to spark students' imaginations.

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare

<http://shakespeare.met.edu/>

The web's first edition of the complete works of William Shakespeare. This site has offered Shakespeare's plays and poetry to the internet community since 1993. Downloadable plays are available by scene or in their entirety.

Absolute Shakespeare

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com/>

Absolute Shakespeare provides resources for William Shakespeare's plays, sonnets, poems, quotes, biography and the legendary Globe Theatre. Absolute Shakespeare also offers a review of each character's role in each play including defining quotes and character motivations for all major characters.

Royal Shakespeare Company

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/learning/Learning.aspx>

This site provides resources materials for teachers and students from Royal Shakespeare Company.

Folger Shakespeare Library

<http://www.folger.edu/>

The Folger Shakespeare Library, located on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., is a world-class research center on Shakespeare and on the early modern age in the West. It is home to the world's largest and finest collection of Shakespeare materials and to major collections of other rare Renaissance books, manuscripts, and works of art.