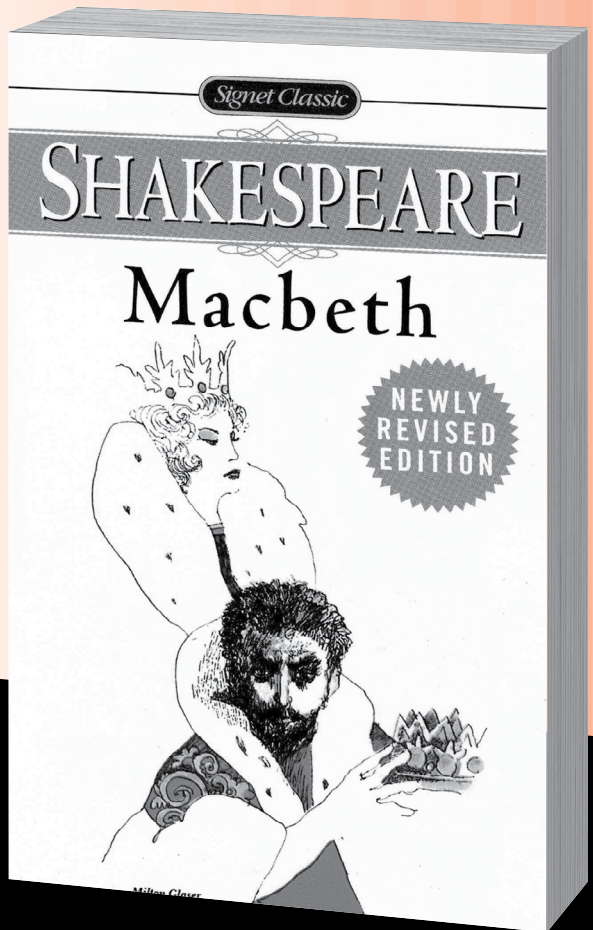


TEACHER'S GUIDE
A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF

MACBETH

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



TEACHER'S GUIDE
BY BRIDGET MORTON

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INTRODUCTION

How does power—or in Macbeth's case, the promise of power—affect us? Shakespeare explores this question in *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. As the drama begins, Macbeth has already been honored for his great victory on the battlefield. However, once he meets three witches who foretell that he will one day be King of Scotland, Macbeth becomes increasingly power-hungry, encouraged by his equally ambitious and scheming wife.

Human beings are driven by many factors, and among the most common is the desire for power. As Macbeth states, “I have no spur/ To prick the sides of my intent, but only/Vaulting ambition” (1.7.25-27). Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, the tragic figures of this play, are ultimately ruled by their ambition rather than their consciences. A cautionary tale like *Macbeth* is a powerful discussion tool for high school students, prompting them to consider: How far should a person go to achieve their goals? When is morality more important than success? What are the dangers of excessive ambition? What is gained or lost in the quest for success?

For adolescent students, gaining personal control is an important milestone on their journey to adulthood. However, *Macbeth* allows students to analyze how someone's life can be influenced by external factors. Macbeth decides to murder King Duncan in order to become king himself. Was this decision his alone? Was he influenced by the pressures of Lady Macbeth? Was his conscience blinded by the prophecy of the witches? Or was he a victim of fate?

Macbeth also provides opportunities to explore such topics as gender roles, the impact of a guilty conscience, and the nature of evil. Layering the discussion of power and individual control with the other themes embedded within the drama creates a dynamic, engaging learning environment for students.

This guide provides activities for introducing students to Shakespearean theater and language and specific strategies to guide students' reading of *Macbeth*. The guide includes a variety of individual and group work activities, along with discussion and essay questions for reading critically, and ends with extension activities involving film and partner texts.

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

REVIEWING SHAKESPEARE'S BIOGRAPHY

Shakespeare is an iconic author within the canon of British literature. Most students will already have a basic knowledge of his biography. In order to help students access their prior knowledge, have them play “The Game of Shakespeare's Life!” with a partner. This game is available online at: <https://goodticklebrain.com/home/2016/4/21/the-game-of-shakespeares-life>.

Before beginning, have students brainstorm a list of what they already know and can remember being taught about Shakespeare. After playing the game, ask students to go back to their lists and add key events that they learned.

SHAKESPEARE'S THEATRE

To prepare students to read the play and imagine the action, ask students to take a virtual field trip of the Globe Theatre at: <http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/playground/exploring-shakespeare>. Students can tour the stage, review historical background, learn about props, and hear the stories of various plays. Then ask students to free-write about the experience of a person attending one of the plays, giving details about what the person might see, hear, and feel.

REVIEWING SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

Most students have been introduced to the basics of Shakespeare's language in middle school or early high school. However, before reading *Macbeth*, a review of the most prominent poetic elements can be helpful for easing students' anxiety. This resource from the Royal Shakespeare Company (<https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/macbeth/language>) provides brief videos and learning activities along with a self-guided review quiz.

SHAKESPEAREAN LANGUAGE LINE FESTIVAL

The language of Shakespeare is considered Modern English, and while students can decode the words on the page—unlike Middle English texts such as *The Canterbury Tales*—they will most likely struggle to understand the meaning of Shakespearean language. Allowing students to play with the language beforehand will facilitate their reading and lead to more enjoyment.

Before reading the play, compile a list of some of the most memorable or important quotes from Act 1. For a suggested list of lines visit <https://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/characters/charlines.php?CharID=macbeth&WorkID=macbeth>.

Divide students into groups of four and ask each group to choose four lines from the list of quotes. Students should write each quote on an individual notecard. Then below the quote, they will write a paraphrase using regular everyday language and add a direction suggesting how the line might be spoken.

Once groups have completed these steps for each of the four chosen quotes, each student will take one of the cards to perform during the “Line Festival.” Ask students to form a circle around the room. Then have each student perform, reading a single line with the desired objective of how they want the audience to think or feel. After students have shared, discuss what they have observed about Shakespearean language and performance.

POLITICAL CONTEXT OF MACBETH

Shakespeare wrote during the reign of two different rulers, Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. Most of the plays written during Queen Elizabeth's reign, such as *Midsummer Night's Dream*, embody an optimistic outlook. However, those written during King James' rule, such as *Macbeth*, are much darker, illustrating the insecurities of this period. *Macbeth* was written in 1606, just one year after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, a failed assassination attempt on King James I.

When Queen Elizabeth I died, she had no successor, and the throne was given to James VI of Scotland, a distant cousin, who became James I of Britain. He was not a popular choice—other relatives thought they deserved the throne, and although King James I was raised Protestant, the Catholic Church was hopeful that he would support their religion since his mother had been a staunch Catholic. When they realized he would remain Protestant, conspiracies began to arise, one of the most famous being the Gunpowder Plot. Have students visit the BBC iWonder interactive timeline of the Gunpowder Plot at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/timelines/z3hq7ty>, taking notes on the main events.

Then ask students, individually or in pairs, to write a news headline and summary paragraph that presents these events in a way that is favorable to the King. Remind students that Shakespeare's acting company was called “The King's Men” and that King James I sponsored the company; this required them to perform for dignitaries and at state events. Shakespeare's plays during this time had to delicately balance flattery toward the king and relevance in portraying the political climate of the time. After sharing headlines as a class, discuss the choices they made to favor the King.

Then have students read a brief article about Shakespeare's use of his source material at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/higher/english/macbeth/background/revision/1/>. Discuss what might have been in Shakespeare's mind when he wrote *Macbeth* and compare to their own choices.

INVESTIGATING THE INSPIRATION FOR *MACBETH*

In "Shakespeare Uncovered," actor Ethan Hawke researches the murder of the Thane of Cawdor, the true story which inspired Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and discusses Shakespeare's impressive illumination of the criminal mind (<http://www.pbs.org/video/shakespeare-uncovered-macbeth-ethan-hawke/>). This video is also available for download on iTunes. As students view Hawke's investigation into the mind of Macbeth, ask them to list and then discuss what they learn about Shakespeare's inspiration for writing the play.

Hawke also theorizes that the hardest thing about playing Macbeth is getting the audience to feel some sympathy for him. Have students reflect on this discussion using a two-column chart:

Reasons the audience struggles to feel sympathy	Methods of acting/writing that attempt to induce sympathy

ANTICIPATING THEMES IN *MACBETH*

OPENING SCENES

Students need to visualize the action that lends meaning to the words of Shakespeare's play. With this in mind, ask students to watch the opening scene of 3-4 movie adaptations of *Macbeth* in which directors and actors have interpreted Shakespeare's words. Ask them to note their reactions to the scene.

- What do they notice about the setting, mood, special effects?
- What is their overall reaction?
- What themes/ideas do these scenes suggest?

After viewing all the scenes, discuss with students their initial impressions about the play they are about to read. What do they now expect about the play? What do they anticipate?

The following films work well with students:

- 1948 Orson Welles, Director (starring Orson Welles)
- 1978 Philip Casson, Director (starring Sir Ian McKellen)
- 2007 Geoffrey Wright, Director (starring Sam Worthington)
- 2015 Justin Kurzel, Director (starring Michael Fassbender)

CAROUSEL DISCUSSION

Ask students to free write a 3-5 sentence response to each of the following questions as a homework assignment:

- Is evil inherent in human nature? Are some people born evil, or do evil tendencies develop based on circumstances and environment?
- Are the events of our lives determined by fate or by the individual choices that we make?
- Is redemption possible? In other words, is it possible to participate in an act of evil and recover one's integrity afterward?
- If a person uses morally evil actions to achieve a goal, is his success forever tainted by the evil actions it took to arrive at that goal?

At the next class period, have each question displayed around the room on posters. Divide students into small groups to share their responses to one question and then construct a 3-5 sentence group response to write on the poster. Rotate groups, and ask the new group to read the poster response and either agree or disagree, providing reasons/ examples. Once groups have rotated to each poster and returned to the original, ask the groups to synthesize the class responses on the poster and choose one speaker to share. Use the group speaker to begin a class discussion on each of these major questions pertaining to *Macbeth*.

CONNECTING WITH MYTHOLOGY

Assign groups to read each of the myths listed below and respond to the guiding questions for each text. After groups complete their reading and engage in small group discussion, bring the whole class back together to discuss what themes they might expect in *Macbeth* based on these myths.

Story of Icarus – The story of Daedalus and Icarus demonstrates that the power of man has limits. The myth is available at <http://www.auburn.edu/allynbaconanthology/documents/Icarus%20and%20Daedalus.pdf>.

- When King Minos becomes angry with Daedalus, what does he do?
- What happens to Icarus?
- According to the myth, is it better to play it safe or try to achieve your loftiest goals?

Story of Medea – The story of Medea is one that overlaps with *Macbeth* in two areas: prophecy and gender roles. Medea has the gift of prophecy and uses this gift to help her husband, Jason. When Jason deserts her in order to pursue his political ambitions, she takes revenge by killing their children. She is also known for other “unwomanly” actions such as cutting her own brother into pieces and throwing him in the ocean.

A synopsis of the story of Medea is available at http://www.ancient-literature.com/greece_euripides_medea.html.

- Compare and contrast Medea and Jason's arguments about the demise of their marriage. Whose perspective do you find most convincing? Why?
- What is the cost of love for Medea? What does she sacrifice in order to follow Jason? What does Jason gain from Medea's devotion? What does he lose? How would you describe the dynamics of their relationship?
- Why does Medea kill her children? Do you believe she was genuinely conflicted? Why or why not?

Story of Oedipus Rex – One of the most provoking questions in *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is the question of fate versus free will. Are we in control of our lives? What role does fate play in our choices? The myth of Oedipus Rex allows students to explore this idea as Oedipus attempts to avoid the prophecy foretold that he will kill his father and marry his mother. A summary of the myth is available at <https://www.greekmythology.com/Myths/Mortals/Oedipus/oedipus.html>.

- How do various characters attempt to avoid prophecies coming true?
- What is the story about King Laius' death? What is Queen Jocasta's reaction?
- What does Oedipus do when he realizes that he has killed his father and married his mother? What does his reaction reveal about his character?

DURING READING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discussion questions help students deepen their understanding of the play and its literary elements. Students can answer the questions individually, they can work as groups to answer a series of questions, or one student can work exclusively on a single question to become the class expert who then shares their expertise with peers. Questions can be adapted for whole class discussions, written responses, dialectical journals, or individual homework assignments.

ACT 1

1. In the opening scene, the three witches plan to meet Macbeth. What do they mean in line 10 “Fair is foul, and foul is fair”? What could be foreshadowed by this expression?
2. What do you notice about the syntax (the rules and patterns of sentence structure) and the syllable count in the lines of the dialogue in Act 1.1 vs. Act 1.2? What is the impact of having different characters speak in different meters?
3. What information is King Duncan seeking at the beginning of 1.2? How does the information he gains affect him?
4. In 1.2 lines 16-40, how is Macbeth characterized? What is our sense of Macbeth before meeting him in the play?
5. At the beginning of 1.3, what predictions do the witches give regarding Macbeth and Banquo's future? How do the men respond to these prophecies?
6. What news do Ross and Angus bring in lines 89-107 of scene 3? How do Macbeth and Banquo respond to the news and what does this reveal about their characters?
7. In the aside spoken by Macbeth to himself near the end of scene 3, he says that the information from the witches “Cannot be ill, cannot be good” (l. 131), and then he explains his reasoning. Paraphrase this reasoning. What “suggestion” is he hesitant about in line 134? How does this aside echo Banquo's warning in line 123 “to win us to our harm”?
8. Describe the exchange between the king and Macbeth in scene 4. How does the king view Macbeth? How does Macbeth claim to view the king, looking specifically at lines 22-27? How does Macbeth actually view the king, looking at his response to Malcolm's new title, Prince of Cumberland?

9. In Lady Macbeth's opening lines, how does she describe her husband? How is this characterization different than what we have seen of him through his actions up to now? What does her description of Macbeth reveal about her character?
10. In Lady Macbeth's soliloquy in scene 5, lines 39-54, she awaits the arrival of King Duncan. What is she preparing herself to do? How do her words of preparation reveal gender roles of the time?
11. In the opening soliloquy of scene 7, Macbeth considers why he should not go ahead with the king's murder. Summarize the reasons that he provides. What is the one reason he provides for moving forward with the murder?
12. What techniques does Lady Macbeth use to persuade Macbeth to continue with the plan to murder King Duncan? Cite specific examples.
13. What is Lady Macbeth's plan for murdering King Duncan? What detail does Macbeth add to this plan? What does this detail reveal about Macbeth's character?

ACT 2

1. Describe the contrast in Banquo's words and thoughts regarding the prophecies to that of Macbeth's actions.
2. In Macbeth's soliloquy at the end of scene 1, what is revealed about his awareness of the deed he is about to commit?
3. Why does Lady Macbeth choose not to kill King Duncan? How is this a commentary on gender roles?
4. After Macbeth kills the king, how does he act with Lady Macbeth? How do his actions convey guilt or madness? What is Lady Macbeth's response to Macbeth's actions?
5. What is the porter's role within the play? Who does he suggest will be at the door when he opens it? Who is actually at the door?
6. How does Lennox' speech foreshadow the coming discovery of Duncan's murder?
7. Describe each character's reaction to news of Duncan's murder. How do Macbeth and Lady Macbeth conceal their guilt?

ACT 3

1. What is the relationship between Macbeth and Banquo at the beginning of Act 3? How has their relationship changed since the beginning of the play?
2. In Macbeth's soliloquy (lines 47-70), he reveals his mindset since becoming king. What fears does he have? How does he intend to deal with his predicted fate?
3. What does Lady Macbeth mean when she says "Nought's had, all's spent/ Where our desire is got without content" (2. 4-5)? How is she feeling and what is her advice to Macbeth?
4. Summarize the events of scene 3. Did the plot go as planned?
5. How does Macbeth react to the news brought by the murderer in the opening of scene 4?

6. Describe Macbeth's reaction to Banquo's ghost in scene 4. What do his actions and words reveal about his emotional and mental state?
7. What do his final words in scene 4, "We are yet but young in deed," imply about Macbeth's plan for the next day?
8. What causes Hecate's anger in scene 5? Where does she ask the witches to meet her the following day? Why? What does this reveal about Macbeth's fate?
9. What events do Lennox and the lord discuss in scene 6? What important fact is revealed within this discussion?

ACT 4

1. How does Macbeth behave toward the witches in 4.1? How is he different from the first time he encountered them? What does this say about his mental state?
2. Explain each of the four apparitions that Macbeth sees in this scene. How does Macbeth react? What could this foreshadow?
3. After Lennox tells Macbeth that Macduff has fled, what does Macbeth resolve to do in his final aside of the scene? What do his plans reveal about his mental state?
4. Why is Lady Macduff angry at the opening of scene 2? What does the motivation for her anger reveal regarding gender expectations?
5. In scene 3, how do Malcom and Macduff feel about Macbeth's kingship? What are the two vices Malcolm states about himself making him unfit to be a king? How do these vices connect with Macbeth's rise to kingship and actions while ruling?
6. Immediately after naming his vices, Malcom recants in lines 114-137. What is his purpose?
7. What conclusion do Macduff and Malcolm reach at the end of this scene? What motivates this conclusion?

ACT 5

1. In the opening scene of Act 5, describe Lady Macbeth's actions. What does this reveal about her mental health and conscience? How does the sleepwalking relate to Macbeth's statements about sleep in Act 2.2 just after he kills Duncan?
2. In scene 3, how does Macbeth use the witches' prophecies to bolster his courage?
3. Very often Shakespeare allows his characters to give some final words about their deeds and life as they die, but not Macbeth. Why do you think Shakespeare did not allow him this final speech? Which speech prior to his death do you feel is most revealing about his life and character?
4. Focus on Macbeth's lines after he is told that Lady Macbeth has died, specifically scene 5, lines 24-28. How do these lines relate to events of the play? Why is Macbeth saying them now?
5. What is Malcolm's plan to restore order to the kingdom?

DURING READING ACTIVITIES

EXPLORE CHARACTER MOTIVATION

At the end of Act 2, Macbeth has ascended to the throne just as the witches predicted in Act 1. Before moving forward, take time with your students to review the context of each quote and to explore character motivation using the chart below.

Character & Quote	What does the character want, based on this quote, or what do you know at this moment in the play?
Banquo: "I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:/ To you they have showed some truth" (2.1.20-21).	
Banquo: "So I lose none (honor)/ In seeking to augment it, but still keep/ My bosom franchised and allegiance clear" (2.1.27-29).	
Macbeth: "One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other,/ As they had seen me with these hangman's hands:/ List'ning their fear, I could not say 'Amen;' / When they did say 'God bless us.' . . . But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen?'" (2.2.26-31).	
Macbeth: "To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself./ Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!" (2.2.72-75).	
Banquo: "Look to the lady./ And when we have our naked frailties hid,/ That suffer in exposure, let us meet/ And question this most bloody piece of work/ To know it further" (2.3.127-131).	
Malcolm: "This murderous shaft that's shot/ Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way/ Is to avoid the aim. Therefore to horse;/ And let us not be dainty of leave-taking./ But shift away" (2.3.144-147).	

PIE CHART OF RESPONSIBILITY

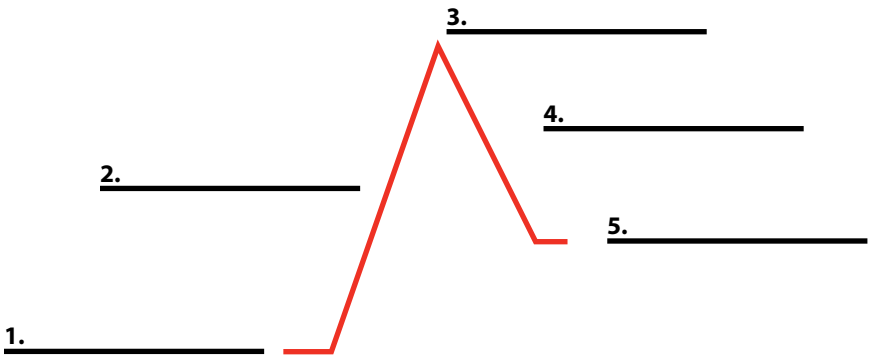
As students read, have them keep a list of quotes that assign responsibility for Macbeth's downfall to various causes. This can be a simple T-chart (on the left side, the student writes the quote, and on the right side, the student explains how this contributes to Macbeth's downfall). At the end of the play, have students review all their statements and create a color code, assigning one color to each cause (for example, Fate, Lady Macbeth's persuasion, Ambition, etc.). Then students will convert their notes into a Pie Chart of Responsibility and write an evidence-based paragraph in response to the following question: What are the forces that determine Macbeth's destiny? What roles do fate and free will play in Macbeth's destruction?

TRAGEDY PLOTLINE

Macbeth is a tragedy, a genre first developed by ancient Greek dramatists such as Euripides and Sophocles. This genre has the following important features:

- The main character (or protagonist) is a hero who is initially celebrated and admired; usually a member of the nobility.
- The tragic hero possesses a fatal flaw leading to a terrible error of judgment.
- Society falls into conflict and disarray as a result of this error, eventually leading to the hero's downfall.
- Society is purged of its corrupt elements, leading to a release of tension (*catharsis*) and a new beginning.

Have students create a plot diagram while reading, recording all of the main events. They can add more than five, but should try to follow the basic shape of a plot diagram. In addition to diagramming the plot, ask students to label events as they correspond to the elements of Tragedy.



STAGING A SCENE

Assign student groups a scene to stage, or you can have students choose a scene, depending on their ability level. In order to prepare them to stage their scene, begin with discussions involving how characters communicate with one another, how to set the atmosphere of the scene, and various ways to portray individual characters. Begin by viewing “The Language of Trauma” https://scetv.pbslearningmedia.org/asset/shak13_vid_langtrauma/. After viewing the clip, have groups consider the following questions regarding their scene:

- What emotions are the characters experiencing in this scene?
- How does their language reflect this emotion?
- How should their body language represent this emotion?
- What message is Shakespeare portraying in this scene? What is most important for the audience to understand about this moment in the play?

Students should submit their group answers as a formative assessment to the teacher.

Next, view the clip “Who Is Your Lady Macbeth?” (<https://unctv.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/shak13.ela.lit.gender/gender-roles-in-shakespeare/?#.WyR7fCAnBIU>) and have students return to their groups to discuss the following questions regarding their scenes:

- What are different ways to portray your main characters?
- Which view do you want to take of each main character?
- How will these interpretations of the character affect the presentation of your scene?

Again, students should submit their group answers to the teacher in order to allow teacher reflection on each group's thinking process.

Give students time to rehearse their scenes. “How to Stage a Scene” from the Folger Shakespeare Library can provide a helpful guide to students as they prepare performances: https://d43fweuh3sg51.cloudfront.net/media/media_files/How_to_Stage_a_Scene.pdf. Encourage groups to look up all the words they don't know using the Shakespeare word finder: <https://www.shakespearewords.com/>.

Then have a Scene Festival where students perform their scenes. Students can either perform individual scenes as the class arrives at that moment in their reading, or wait until the play has been finished and perform all scenes in sequence. Teachers or students may choose scenes, but a list of suggested scenes for performance is included below:

- Act 1 Scene 2 “The Bloody Captain” (5 speaking parts)
- Act 2 Scene 3 “Macduff Discovers Duncan Murdered” (8 speaking parts)
- Act 3 Scene 3 “The Murder of Banquo” (4 speaking parts and 1 silent part)
- Act 3 Scene 4 “Banquo's Ghost at the Banquet” (6-8 speaking parts)
- Act 4 Scene 1 “Macbeth Visits the Witches Again” (8 speaking parts)
- Act 4 Scene 2 “The Murder of Lady Macduff” (6 speaking parts)

After performances, have students individually reflect on their interpretation of the scene. Students should consider the following questions:

- How did your understanding of Shakespeare change when performing rather than reading or viewing?
- What was difficult about performing the text?
- What was interesting or fun about performing the text?
- How accurately do you feel that you portrayed your character's objectives within this scene?

THE DEATH CLOCK

As with all Shakespearean tragedies, the death count in *Macbeth* is high. Asking students to keep count of who dies and in what order provides a concrete task that gives them a clear purpose for reading. See an example “Death Clock” here: <https://goodticklebrain.com/home/2015/8/2/the-macbeth-death-clock>.

After students have finished reading the play and collected this information, they have a great visual representation of the death order, providing a tool for guided discussion on the purpose

of each person's death within the structure of the play. With a partner, have students use their "Death Clocks" to complete the chart below.

Character Speaking	Line that Describes Death	Impact on Plot Development	Author's Purpose
Captain	"Till he unseamed him from the nave to th'chops,/ And fixed his head upon our battle-ments" (1.2.22-23).	Macbeth gains the king's respect.	Illustrates Macbeth's ruthlessness from the earliest scenes.

Students will need some clarification between "Impact on Plot Development" and "Author's Purpose" so working through the first three deaths together might provide the needed scaffolding.

AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

COMPARISON TO PRIMARY SOURCE

Raphael Holinshed's second edition *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* was Shakespeare's primary source for most of his histories and many of his other plays, including *Macbeth*. Refer to pages 103-120 of the Signet Classics edition to read a brief background on Shakespeare's discovery of the Macbeth plot. After reading the play, have students examine the scenes in the play that connect with the Holinshed account.

Begin by examining one scene together and using think aloud strategies to help students know what to look for and how to proceed through a comparison of these texts. Then assign different excerpts from Holinshed to each group and have these small groups find alterations, omissions, or additions to Shakespeare's version of *Macbeth*, using a three column chart to record their thoughts on these changes. Return to whole group discussion and share, looking for patterns on how Shakespeare changed the primary source into the dramatic tragedy of *Macbeth*. Consider the purpose for these changes and how they create the tone, mood, and atmosphere of the play.

NEWSPAPER REPORTS

Macbeth is a drama full of "headline stories" similar to ones we see today. Explore some current events from your local paper and discuss features of news-writing. Then have students choose three newsworthy events from the *Macbeth* tragedy and construct a front-page story with a headline that both paraphrases the event and also grabs the reader's attention. Students should include at least three quotes from the play in each story. This is a great way to assess student

understanding of plot events and character interactions, while also reinforcing important writing skills such as tone, word choice, and embedding quotations. Students can use this free collection of newspaper templates for a more authentic production: <http://www.make-mynewspaper.com/newspaper-templates-for-students>. Additionally, this is a great opportunity for students to explore artistic interpretations of scenes from *Macbeth* and choose appropriate images through a Google search.

MACBETH'S CONTINUUM OF CHANGE

Have students carefully examine Macbeth's demise by re-reading the play, looking for evidence that accurately illustrates how Macbeth is changing in each act.

	Word to describe Macbeth's character	Quote #1	Quote #2
Act 1			
Act 2			
Act 3			
Act 4			
Act 5			

Students should use the information collected in this chart to respond to the following essay question: How does Macbeth change? What does this change suggest about human nature?

CHARACTER COMPARISON

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are tragic heroes of the drama. While they are similar in motivation, there are specific differences between their reactions to the events of the tragedy. Have students trace the reactions of these two characters throughout key events in the drama. Using the chart below, ask students to choose four key events and record the reaction of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. After students have completed the first three columns of the chart individually, partner students to discuss Shakespeare's point of view and record their thoughts in the final column.

Key Event	Macbeth's Reaction	Lady Macbeth's Reaction	Shakespeare's Commentary
Key ideas from Bradley:			

After completing the chart, ask students to read A.C. Bradley's commentary on pp. 130–144 of the Signet Classic Edition of *Macbeth* (For struggling readers, the teacher could choose a few key passages from Bradley's commentary). Ask students to highlight and then paraphrase any key ideas that Bradley discusses which help them better understand Shakespeare's purpose in comparing and contrasting the two tragic figures in *Macbeth*.

ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION

Ask students to view and describe their reactions to Henry Fuseli's, "Lady Macbeth Seizing the Daggers" at <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/fuseli-lady-macbeth-seizing-the-daggers-t00733>.

The following questions will help guide students through an analysis of the artwork:

- What do you see? List all the objects, people, shapes, and colors that you notice.
- How would you describe the movement of the lines in the painting?
- What emotions are the subjects feeling in the painting? How do you know?
- What words would you use to describe the atmosphere of the painting?

Then ask students to use this work of art as an inspiration to create an original artistic response to one of the scenes in the play.

SYNTHESIZING ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. According to Northrup Frye, "Tragic heroes are so much the highest points in their human landscape that they seem the inevitable conductors of the power about them, great trees more likely to be struck by lightning than a clump of grass. Conductors may of course be instruments as well as victims of the divine lightning" ("The Mythos of Autumn: Tragedy" in *The Question of Tragedy*, edited by Arthur B. Coffin, 1991). Explain how Macbeth acts as an instrument to the suffering of others and how this affects him.
2. One of the strongest human desires is a desire for power. Explain, using details, how this desire for power propels Macbeth forward within the play, at times going against his own sense of morality. How does the power Macbeth gains eventually lead to his destruction?
3. Which character bears the most responsibility for the tragedy of Macbeth? Provide textual evidence to support your argument.

- Who is in control? After reading *Macbeth*, write an essay that addresses the question and analyzes to what extent Macbeth has control over his own actions and the tragic events in the play. Consider to what extent he leads and to what extent he follows. Support your analysis with specific details from the play.
- Compare and contrast the characters of Macbeth and Macduff. Consider their personalities, relationships, and motivations. Is one man good and the other evil, or are they both good or both evil based on the influence of outside sources? What kinds of relationships do they have with their families? How are their views on life similar or different?

ANALYZING FILM ADAPTATIONS OF *MACBETH*

- View three different versions of Macbeth's soliloquy from Act 2 Scene 1:
 - Ian McKellan in 1978 Version of *Macbeth*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cA0NyeFpCY8>
 - Sir Patrick Stewart in 2010 PBS version of *Macbeth*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pusU90ov8pQ>
 - 2015 Finalist to the Stratford upon Avon "Filming Shakespeare" Short Film Competition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yDibBr4CGg>

As students view the film clips, have them complete the chart below to analyze the actors' interpretations of various aspects of the speech.

	1978 <i>Macbeth</i>	2010 <i>Macbeth</i>	2015 <i>Macbeth</i>
Influence of the Supernatural			
Ambition			
Nature of Evil			
Internal Conflict			
Physical Staging			

After viewing, have students perform an analysis of the speech using the following questions to guide their thinking:

- Why begin the speech with a question?
- What symbolism is within the speech?
- Where does the reader see Macbeth struggle between his conscience and his desire?
- What role does personification play in the second half of this soliloquy?

2. Choose one of the film versions below (or another of your favorite productions). Divide students into groups of three while viewing. Each student in the group will take on the role of director, costume designer or scenic designer. While viewing students should critique the film based on their specific roles. Use the chart of questions below to help students engage in this critical viewing process. After viewing, have students compare their insights, based on their “role.”

Director	Costume Designer	Scenic Designer
1) What themes are being highlighted in each scene? How is this made clear? 2) How does the film connect with modern day viewers? 3) What emotion is dominant in the main character? How do the actions of the character convey this emotional state?	1) What colors are used in the costumes? Are the colors significant? 2) How do the costumes help transform characters who are playing more than one role? 3) How is Macbeth's costume different than other characters?	1) What is happening in the background of each scene? 2) How are the characters spaced on stage? 3) How are color, light, and music used? 4) What details of setting make this production different from the original script?

Film Versions:

- *Macbeth*. Justin Kurzel. Michael Fassbender, Marion Cotillard, and Paddy Considine. 2015. The Weinstein Company. British Production of Shakespeare's play. The film begins with a scene not in the original drama, as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth mourn at the funeral of their child. The film then jumps into Macbeth's victorious battle scene, described in Shakespeare's play, where his future is foretold by three women and a child observing the battle. From this point forward, the film stays true to the plot of the original script.
- *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Roman Polanski. Jon Finch, Francesca Annis, and Martin Shaw. 1971. Columbia Pictures. Polanski was motivated to produce the film version of *Macbeth* after the murder of his pregnant wife and several of his friends by members of the Manson family. Polanski co-wrote the screenplay with Shakespeare expert Kenneth Tynan. According to Tynan, the film has “exactly the right combination of violence and fantasy.” The two writers took extreme care to portray the events from Macbeth's perspective.
- *Macbeth* — Digitally Remastered. Paul Almond. Sean Connery and Zoe Caldwell. 2009. TGG Direct. Originally produced in 1961, this remastered film is truest to the original script, running for 1 hour and 20 minutes. This was originally broadcast on television in 5 installments but then re-edited into a 90-minute single episode.
- *Macbeth*. Geoffrey Wright. Sam Worthington, Chloe Armstrong, Kate Bell, and Miranda Nation. 2006. Film Finance. Australian film that uses a modern gangster setting, with lines delivered in Australian accents. Original lines of the play are mostly preserved. This film can help students move the themes and events from an ancient setting into contemporary situations that are still concerned with ambition and power.

3. As an alternative to the activity above, divide the class into groups in which each student has one specific lens for viewing a scene. Ask students to take notes only on that film technique. After the viewing, have small groups discuss their specific findings and reach a conclusion about the intent of the director and whether each of these elements conveys that intent. Then have students switch roles and view the same scene from a different film version, engaging in a similar discussion of the impact of the director's choices.
 - Focus on Sound: Students turn their backs during the scene and take note of music, background noises, and special sound effects.
 - Focus on Cinematic Effects: Students analyze lighting, camera angles, point of view, and camera movements.
 - Focus on Script: Students follow the original text while viewing and make note of additions, omissions, pauses, and stressed words in order to determine closeness to the original script.
 - Focus on Set and Costuming: Students describe the props, costumes, and settings, paying special attention to colors and symbols.

RELATED READING

LITERATURE CIRCLES USING YA NOVELS ABOUT AMBITION

Organize students in literature circles based on the novels listed below with set roles for each student, such as discussion leader, quote collector, illustrator or travel tracer. (Detailed description of how to use literature circles can be found in *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schick Noe, and Janine A. King: <http://www.litcircles.org/LCRGblurb.html>). If you are using literature circles for the first time, online role sheets are available at: https://www.ipadlitcircles.com/uploads/1/0/6/6/10664962/lit_circles.role_sheets.pdf

During their discussions, ask students to focus on key passages related to themes of ambition, achieving success, and personal sacrifice in order to achieve a goal. At the completion of the literature circles, have groups create an oral presentation that examines the results of ambition and how it affects the protagonist as well as the other characters. Then, as a class, discuss what individuals are willing to do to achieve status and success.

- What is the cost of ambition?
- What are you willing to sacrifice to achieve your goals?
- What is the definition of success in our culture? Who constructs that definition?
- To what point are you in control of your own success?
- Is there a difference between ambition and greed?

YA Novels:

- *Enter Three Witches* by Caroline Cooney, 2007
- *As I Descended* by Robin Talley, 2016
- *Reconstructing Amelia* by Kimberly McCreight, 2013
- *Lady Macbeth's Daughter* by Lisa Klein, 2009
- *Long May She Reign* by Rhiannon Thomas, 2017
- *One of Us is Lying* by Karen M. McManus, 2017
- *Age of Order* by Julia North, 2017

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