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Macbeth

SAMPLE



Shakespeare in Three Steps

by Rebekah Shafer

*An enjoyable and simple approach to
some of the greatest literature ever written—
the plays of William Shakespeare!*

Now you can help your students become familiar with Shakespeare's imaginative stories, memorable characters, and brilliant lines in **three simple steps: read the story, hear the script, and watch the play.**

Shakespeare in Three Steps provides everything you need:

- **A well-written story version of the play** by E. Nesbit or Charles and Mary Lamb—classic narratives that have been providing a wonderful introduction to Shakespeare's plays for decades;
- **The complete script of the play** with helpful notes to explain unusual terms or add to your understanding of Shakespeare's stories, characters, and lines;
- **An outlined plan for walking through the script**, divided into manageable portions with quick recaps, scene introductions, and summaries that will guide you each step of the way;
- **Script highlights**, featuring well-known or just ponder-worthy lines, that will gently introduce the Bard's genius and cultivate an appreciation for his wonderful way with words;
- **Parental advisories** to give you a heads-up on scenes that may contain material inappropriate for children;
- **Helpful lists** of the characters in the scenes and the number of lines each one speaks, so you can assign parts knowledgeably for reading sessions or acting roles;
- **Candid reviews** of several video recordings of the play to save you time previewing and help you select a suitable presentation for your students to watch and enjoy.

“To become intimate with Shakespeare in this way is a great enrichment of mind and instruction of conscience”—Charlotte Mason

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Shakespeare in Three Steps
Macbeth

by Rebekah Shafer

Recommended for Grades 9–12
Tragedy

Summary: Set in Scotland before English rule, *Macbeth* is a tragic drama. Macbeth and his friend Banquo are on their way home from subduing a rebellion when they meet three witches. The witches make a prediction that Macbeth will become king. Macbeth wonders if he can believe what they say, but his wife pushes him with such fanatical extent that the two of them murder King Duncan and seize the throne for themselves. Their resulting reign slides downhill quickly, with both Macbeth and his wife succumbing to madness and guilt that leads them to commit murder after murder, including that of Macbeth's friend Banquo. Finally, one of Duncan's sons rallies an English army, marches back into Scotland, and overthrows the tyrant Macbeth.

Shakespeare in Three Steps: Macbeth
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Shakespeare in Three Steps

Understand and enjoy Shakespeare's plays by following these three steps.

Step 1: Read the story.

Read aloud the story version of the play to get familiar with the main characters and plot.

Step 2: Hear the script.

Listen to each scene on the audio dramatization and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves.

Step 3: Watch the play.

Enjoy a live or recorded presentation of the play.

Step 1: Read the story.

Explain that scholars aren't sure exactly when to date the creation of the play (and a few irregularities in its length and structure suggest that it was modified throughout performance), but it seems to have been released shortly after King James succeeded Queen Elizabeth, and James' ancestors traced back to Banquo, one of the characters represented in the play.

Macbeth and King Duncan were real people, although the play takes some strong deviations from actual history. First, King Duncan was in fact a usurper himself. Second, Macbeth's wife was actually the one in line for the throne before Duncan's seizure. And third, historically speaking, Macbeth actually became quite popular after killing Duncan.

Read aloud the story version of *Macbeth* below to get familiar with the main characters and plot. Feel free to divide the story in half, reading half now and the rest next time. If desired, help the students create a list of the main characters with a brief description of who each one is to help them keep everybody straight in their minds as you go along.

Macbeth

(from *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare for Children* by E. Nesbit)

When a person is asked to tell the story of Macbeth, he can tell two stories. One is of a man called Macbeth who came to the throne of Scotland by a crime in the year of our Lord 1039, and reigned justly and well, on the whole, for fifteen years or more. This story is part of Scottish history. The other story issues from a place called Imagination; it is gloomy and wonderful, and you shall hear it.

A year or two before Edward the Confessor began to rule England, a battle was won in Scotland against a Norwegian King by two generals named Macbeth and Banquo. After the battle, the generals walked together towards Forres, in Elginshire, where Duncan, King of Scotland, was awaiting them.

While they were crossing a lonely heath, they saw three bearded women, sisters, hand in hand, withered in appearance and wild in their attire.

"Speak, who are you?" demanded Macbeth.

"Hail, Macbeth, chieftain of Glamis," said the first woman.

"Hail, Macbeth, chieftain of Cawdor," said the second woman.

"Hail, Macbeth, King that is to be," said the third woman.

Then Banquo asked, "What of me?" and the third woman replied, "Thou shalt be the father of kings."

"Tell me more," said Macbeth. "By my father's death I am chieftain of Glamis, but

Notes

Another interesting note is that this play was created and performed right before the time that magic and the supernatural became very popular on the stage in England. It's been suggested that some of the sections involving the witches and Hecate were added by other authors in later years as the popularity levels increased, but that has not been proven.

Notes

*We recommend
The Arkangel
Shakespeare audio
dramatizations.*

Step 2: Hear the script.

Make a copy of the script on pages 41–133 for each student who can read. Work your way through the script over several sittings, as outlined on the following pages. Each session will follow a sequence similar to the one below:

- Use the notes to introduce each scene. Highlight the featured lines if desired.
- Listen to the scene(s) on the audio dramatization and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves.
- Invite any questions or comments, then set it aside until next time.

Act I, Scenes 1–3

Notes

- Ask students what they recall from last time’s reading of the story of *Macbeth*. Explain that the play divides the story into five parts, called Acts. Some of the acts are divided into smaller portions, called Scenes. Today they will listen to Act I, Scenes 1–3. Read the scene summary to give students the context for the lines they will be hearing.

Scene Summary: The play opens with three witches setting the stage, then we move to the battlefield, where a wounded captain relates to King Duncan how the war against a traitor is proceeding. He tells the king how Macbeth acquitted himself well on the field of battle, and when a chief enters to tell them the battle is won, King Duncan orders that Macbeth be given the traitor’s old lands and titles.

Meanwhile, Macbeth and Banquo stumble across the witches, who give them each a prediction of their potential futures, then vanish without giving any further information. The two men aren’t sure whether to take the witches’ words seriously until two chieftains, sent by King Duncan, arrive and fulfill a portion of the fortune laid on Macbeth. Banquo is concerned, but Macbeth begins to feel the stirrings of destiny within him, for, he thinks, how can the witches’ words bring ill when they spoke of great things?

- Distribute a copy of the script to each student who can read.
- (Optional) Take a sneak peek at these lines from the script and enjoy Shakespeare’s wording.
 - » Scene 2, Lines 3–9: An injured Captain gives a report to his superiors on how the battle rages.

MALCOLM This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend;
Say to the king the knowledge of the broil
As thou didst leave it.

CAPTAIN Doubtful it stood,
As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art.

- » Scene 2, Lines 25–41: He continues.

Shakespeare wrote the lines of his plays in both prose (conversational speaking) and poetry.

PERSON: Prose lines will look like this.

*PERSON
Poetry lines will look like this.*

Sometimes Shakespeare would split a line of poetry between two characters. The Captain’s line, “Doubtful it stood,” finishes Malcolm’s previous line, so it is moved to the right to visually show that completion.

CAPTAIN

As whence the sun gins his reflection
Shipwracking storms and direful thunders,
So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come
Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark.
No sooner justice had, with valor armed,
Compelled these skipping kerns to trust their heels
But the Norwegian lord, surveying vantage,
With furbished arms and new supplies of men,
Began a fresh assault.

KING DUNCAN Dismayed not this
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

CAPTAIN Yes,
As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.
If I say sooth, I must report they were
As cannons overcharged with double cracks,
So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.
Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,
Or memorize another Golgotha,
I cannot tell—

- » Scene 3, Lines 79–88: After the witches vanish, Macbeth is left brooding, while Banquo appears less burdened.

BANQUO

The earth hath bubbles as the water has,
And these are of them. Whither are they vanished?

MACBETH

Into the air, and what seemed corporal melted
As breath into the wind. Would they had stayed!

BANQUO

Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?

MACBETH

Your children shall be kings.

BANQUO You shall be king.

MACBETH

And Thane of Cawdor too. Went it not so?

BANQUO

To the selfsame tune and words.

- Listen to Act I, Scenes 1–3, on the audio dramatization (approx. 15 minutes) and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves. If you are assigning students to read aloud, the following list might be helpful; it details the characters who speak and the approximate number of lines each one has in this scene.

- First Witch (40 lines)
- Second Witch (18 lines)
- Third Witch (19 lines)
- King Duncan, King of Scotland (14 lines)
- Malcolm, the king's son (6 lines)
- Captain (35 lines)
- Lennox, Scottish chief (2 lines)
- Ross, another chief (34 lines)
- Macbeth, a chieftain (52 lines)
- Banquo, a chieftain and friend of Macbeth (43 lines)
- Angus, another chief (12 lines)

Step 3: Watch the play.

Now that you and your students are familiar with the story line and the script, you are ready for the best part of this study: watch a presentation of the play! Check for any local live performances that you could attend, or watch a video recording. (See video reviews below.)

Video Recording Reviews

- Winner of the Silver Screen Award and 30th U.S. International Film Festival, the 1996 Stratford Shakespeare Company version with Jason Connery and Helen Baxendale, directed by Paul Farrer, is a major film production authentically set in 11th century Scotland. Most of the cast speak with enough of a brogue to reinforce the Scottish feel but not too thick to hinder the viewer's understanding. The movie opens with an intense battle scene, featuring Macbeth's exploits. Some lines and scenes are omitted, including most of the presumed non-Shakespearean ones. Unfortunately, one scene is added for "boo" effect. When Lady Macbeth re-enters the room where Duncan's body lay, he starts up and grabs her hand. She, in response, finishes the murder. The ghost of Banquo is gruesome, covered in blood. To keep the storyline clear and moving along, this version skips the scenes in other countries and . . .

Additional complete reviews are found in the full book.

Notes

Be sure to do your research to avoid any unpleasant surprises when watching Shakespeare productions. Unfortunately, some directors feel compelled to add unnecessary visual elaborations on the text. Preview any video presentation and check with someone who is directly involved with any live production to find out how it aligns with the original script and how appropriate it is for children.

The Tragedy of Macbeth

Notes

Act I, Scene 1

Setting: A deserted place.

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches.

FIRST WITCH

When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

SECOND WITCH

When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

THIRD WITCH

That will be ere the set of sun.

5

FIRST WITCH

Where the place?

SECOND WITCH

Upon the heath.

THIRD WITCH

There to meet with Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH

I come, Graymalkin!

SECOND WITCH

Paddock calls.

10

THIRD WITCH

Anon!

ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair.
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Exeunt.

Shakespeare wrote the lines of his plays in both prose (conversational speaking) and poetry.

PERSON: Prose lines will look like this.

*PERSON
Poetry lines will look like this.*

Notes

Sometimes Shakespeare would split a line of poetry between two characters. Malcolm's line, "This is the sergeant," finishes King Duncan's previous line, so it is moved to the right to visually show that completion.

The Western Isles are the Hebrides and Ireland.

"Kerns and galloglasses" were Irish mercenary soldiers.

"From the nave to the chops" means "from navel to jaws."

Act I, Scene 2

Setting: A camp near Forres.

Alarum within. Enter King Duncan, Malcolm, Donalbain, Lennox, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding Captain.

KING DUNCAN

What bloody man is that? He can report,
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
The newest state.

MALCOLM

This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend;
Say to the king the knowledge of the broil
As thou didst leave it.

5

CAPTAIN

Doubtful it stood,
As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villanies of nature

10

Do swarm upon him—from the Western Isles
Of kerns and galloglasses is supplied;
And Fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,
Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak:
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valor's minion carved out his passage

15

Till he faced the slave;
Which ne'er shook hands nor bade farewell to him
Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chops
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

20

KING DUNCAN

O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!

CAPTAIN

As whence the sun gins his reflection
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders,
So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come
Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark.
No sooner justice had, with valor armed,

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