

Macbeth - Leader Copy

A 20 minute condensed version of *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

Additional narration and editing by Angela Christie

for Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan's

#ShakespearesaskLive

Recommended for mature students ages 10+ (Warning: lots of death and murder)

Recommended for use on Zoom, but could be adapted for other platforms

To prepare prior to the reading:

1. Do a little bit of research or discussion about Shakespeare, the Elizabethan era, and the play. (Resources available under "Study Guide" on Shakespeare on the Saskatchewan website) A lot of prior knowledge is NOT necessary in order to understand this play, but always adds to the experience.
2. Assign roles. There are 22+ roles in this version of *Macbeth*, but it would be possible to do it with less than 22 participants if they are willing to play multiple roles - this can be done by changing costume or holding up character name cards.
 - a. A strong reader is necessary for the Narrator role, or the leader may choose to read this character themselves. Either way, the leader should be available and able to help participants with pronunciation and comprehension throughout the reading.
 - b. If you have more than 22 participants, multiple people can play the same role by splitting up the lines and holding up Character name cards while speaking, or the rest of the group can play the very important role of "audience". Depending on your group's age, you could also plan to do the play twice, switching characters, or add a reading of *The Tempest*.
3. Ask participants to think about their assigned character description and put together a minimal costume and any needed props (suggestion next to character descriptions).
4. Encourage participants to have fun acting and reacting during the reading.
5. Remind participants of Zoom etiquette and Zoom operation suggestions listed below.
6. The play reading should take approx. 20-30 minutes, so plan your time together accordingly.
7. For readings using electronic devices: Ask the participants to consider how they will read the script during the reading:
 - a. From the same device?
 - b. From a second device?
 - c. From a printed script?

Optional: You may want to give participants access to the script ahead of time so that they can practice their lines.

Suggestions for death scenes:

When we do the workshops in-person, we bring a big bag of red fabric cut up into strips. Whenever a character dies in the play, the facilitators throw a handful of red fabric strips onto the student. In order to achieve the same idea during a reading using a video platform, such as Zoom, I suggest having each student playing a character that dies (noted in character descriptions), act out their death briefly while waving some sort of red fabric in front of their camera when the stage directions indicate "*(blank) dies*".

Tips if using Zoom for the reading:

1. The actor playing the Narrator can stay unmuted and keep their video on throughout the reading.
2. All other actors should operate their own audio and video by turning audio and video ON when the script says their character “enters” and by turning audio and video OFF when the script says their character “exits”.
3. If there are extra participants who will play the part of the audience, their audio and video should be turned off for the duration of the reading.
4. All participants can click on the three “...” in the upper right hand corner of a participant’s window and then again on “hide non-video participants video” - this will help focus everyone’s attention on what’s going on in each scene.
5. While reading, the Narrator should wait to speak until all necessary characters are on-screen.

Character descriptions, number of lines, and suggested props/costumes:

Narrator - many lines

Porter - one monologue (may be condensed or cut), like a butler (a tattered, dirty shirt)

Macbeth - 5 lines (to start - a sword, later - a crown, red fabric), starts out as Thane of Glamis and a general in the king’s army

Banquo - 0 lines (to start - a sword, red fabric, later - a white sheet to become a ghost), a friend of Macbeth’s, also a general in the army

3 witches - 4 or 5 lines (cloaks), different productions of the play portray these characters very differently - from nurses to hags, to

Lady Macbeth - 3 lines (later - a crown, red fabric), Macbeth’s wife

Messenger - 0 lines (a letter), a messenger

King Duncan - 0 lines (a crown, red fabric), the King

Malcolm - 1 line, (later - a crown) Duncan’s eldest son

Donalbain - 0 lines, Duncan’s second son

Macduff - 3 lines, also a Thane, like Macbeth, friends with King Duncan

2 Servants - 0 lines (daggers, red fabric), guard King Duncan while he sleeps

2 Murderers - 0 lines (swords), hired by Macbeth to do his dirty work

Fleance - 0 lines, Banquo’s son

Lady Macduff - 0 lines (red fabric), Macduff’s wife

Macduff children - 0 lines (red fabric), children of Macduff and Lady Macduff

Doctor - 0 lines (doctor’s coat or stethoscope), sent to witness Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking

Seyton - 2 lines, Macbeth’s servant

Script begins now:

Macbeth

(Enter: Narrator)

NARRATOR: Macbeth is Shakespeare's only thriller. At times it is a bloodbath. A story of power, ambition, and ultimately loss. The play takes place in Scotland.

(Enter: Macbeth and Banquo)

NARRATOR: Macbeth and Banquo are both generals in King Duncan's army. They've fought a huge battle together. They're bloody, dirty, and tired.

(Enter: Witches)

NARRATOR: From nowhere three witches appear. They tell the men their fates (like their horoscopes).

WITCHES: *"A drum, a drum, Macbeth doth come."*

MACBETH: *"So foul and fair a day I have not seen."*

WITCH 1: *"Hail to thee, thane of Glamis."*

NARRATOR: Thane is a title, like Duke or Mayor, and means that they have land. And Glamis is a location in Scotland. Macbeth already holds this title, so he's like "Hi" back to the Witches.

WITCH 2: *"Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor."*

NARRATOR: Somebody else is Thane of Cawdor, so Macbeth wonders why they're calling him this name.

WITCH 3: *"All hail Macbeth that shalt be king hereafter."*

NARRATOR: Does anyone know how someone becomes king? By being the son of a king. Macbeth is not the son of the current King Duncan, so this also strikes Macbeth as odd.

WITCH 1: Banquo, you won't be king but your kids will be.

NARRATOR: The witches vanish.

(Exit: Witches)

(Enter: Messenger)

NARRATOR: A messenger gives the generals a letter telling Macbeth that he has been given a promotion and has been appointed the Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth now wonders if the witches other prophecy will come true. Will he also become king?

(Exit: Macbeth, Banquo, Messenger)

(Enter: Lady Macbeth)

NARRATOR: Meet Lady Macbeth, the wife of Macbeth. She is very driven and incredibly tough. When Macbeth writes to her of his promotion she is both surprised and excited. And fearful...that he will be unwilling to kill the present King Duncan (because that's obviously the only way that he will become King). She appeals to the spirits to make her determined, more like a man - because back in Shakespeare's days, they were a bit sexist.

LADY MACBETH: *"Unsex me here, And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty!"*

(Enter: Duncan, Malcolm, Donalbain, Macduff, Macbeth)

NARRATOR: Macbeth arrives back home to his wife, along with King Duncan, his sons Malcolm and Donalbain, and his friend Macduff. Lady Macbeth quickly tries to convince her husband that the King must be killed tonight (they don't know how long he's staying, so this might be their only chance).

LADY MACBETH: *"Look like th' innocent flower, but be the serpent under 't."*

NARRATOR: She's telling him to be two-faced: act kind to him, knowing that you're going to kill him later. Macbeth wavers but then agrees.

Now it's night time, so Malcolm, Donalbain and Macduff go off to sleep elsewhere in the castle.

(Exit: Malcolm, Donalbain & Macduff)

Duncan is joined by 2 servants who guard him while he sleeps.

(Enter: Servants with daggers)

Lady Macbeth gives the servants a sleeping potion. Then, Macbeth enters the King's chambers, kills the old king (*Duncan dies*) and returns to his wife with the servants' daggers.

MACBETH: *"I have done the deed."*

NARRATOR: Lady Macbeth orders him to return the daggers - if the servants don't have their daggers, they can't be blamed for the king's death. Macbeth cannot. Finally she grabs them herself and plants them back at the crime scene, smearing the drugged guards in the king's blood. Now Macbeth and his wife can go to sleep. Sweet dreams.

(Exit: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth)

(Enter: Porter, Macduff)

NARRATOR: In the morning the king's general Macduff arrives. The porter (kind of like a butler) goes to let him in and delivers this monologue as a bit of comedic relief after that brutal murder.

PORTER: *(Knocking within.)*
 "Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key.
(Knocking within)
 Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer, that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty: come in time; have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat for't.
(Knocking within)
 Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven: O, come in, equivocator.
(Knocking within)
 Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither, for stealing out of a French hose: come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose.
(Knocking within)
 Knock, knock; never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire.
(Knocking within)
 Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter."

NARRATOR: And when Macduff goes to wake the King, he finds his butchered body.

MACDUFF: *"Horror horror horror!"*

(Enter: Macbeth, Malcolm, Donalbain)

NARRATOR: Which wakes up everyone in the castle. Including Macbeth, who rushes to the crime scene. In a feigned fit of rage, he slaughters the servants.

(Servants die)

Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain run away thinking “someone’s just killed our dad, we might be next”.

(Exit: Malcolm, Donalbain)

Macduff is also suspicious - why would Macbeth kill the only witnesses? So, he runs away too.

(Exit: Macduff, Duncan, 2 servants)

(Lady Macbeth and Macbeth put on crowns)

NARRATOR: Macbeth is now king and Lady Macbeth his queen. But Macbeth is restless, full of doubt. He is terrified that Banquo's son Fleance will replace him. Why would he think that?...Because of the witches’ final prophecy.

MACBETH: “*O full of scorpions is my mind dear wife!*” (I have bad thoughts)

(Exit: Macbeth, Lady Macbeth)

(Enter: 2 Murderers, Banquo, Fleance)

NARRATOR: Macbeth hires two murderers to kill both Banquo and his son Fleance. They manage to murder Banquo (*Banquo dies*) but Fleance escapes into the night.

(Exit: 2 Murderers and Fleance)

(Banquo put on ghost sheet)

(Enter: Macbeth, Lady Macbeth)

NARRATOR: At a banquet that same night Macbeth is told of Banquo’s murder. He looks around to an empty seat and sees Banquo, bloodied, staring at him. Macbeth points at the apparition, screams. The banquet guests imagine that the new King Macbeth is mad. His wife tries to calm him but he sees the ghost again and again. Lady Macbeth clears the room. She tries to talk sense into Macbeth, but he no longer listens to her. He is plagued by guilt and fear.

(Exit: Lady Macbeth)

(Enter: Witches)

NARRATOR: Macbeth seeks out the witches. He wants to know what is next for him?

WITCHES: *"Double, double, toil and trouble, fire burn and cauldron bubble."*

WITCH 1: *"Beware Macduff."*

NARRATOR: Macbeth thinks: thanks for that - I'll keep an eye out for him.

WITCH 2: *"None of woman born shall harm Macbeth"*

NARRATOR: Isn't everyone born of woman? So, they're saying he's safe, right?

WITCH 3: *"Macbeth shall never vanquished be until Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him."*

NARRATOR: Great Birnam Wood is the name of the forest and Dunsinane Hill is where Macbeth's castle is. So, they're saying "You'll stay King until the forest moves up to the castle". Well, forests can't move, right? So, again, he thinks he's safe.

(Exit: Macbeth, Witches)

(Enter: 2 Murderers, Lady Macduff and children)

NARRATOR: Remembering the part about Macduff, Macbeth orders an attack on Macduff's castle. But Macduff isn't there (you'll find out where he is in a moment), so the murderers kill Lady Macduff and all of her children.

(Lady Macduff and children die)

(Exit: All except Narrator)

(Enter: Malcolm and Macduff)

NARRATOR: So, where was Macduff? He's with Malcolm (King Duncan's son) planning to raise an army against Macbeth. Macduff is hungry for revenge - Macbeth killed his family!

MALCOLM: *"Come, go we to the king. Macbeth is ripe for shaking."*

(Exit: Malcolm, Macduff)

(Enter: Lady Macbeth, Doctor)

NARRATOR: Since the King's murder, Lady Macbeth has been sleepwalking every night. She imagines that her hands are always covered in blood. She washes them repeatedly. But she cannot rid herself of the stench and vision of the blood. A

doctor watches Lady Macbeth and hears her confession as she sleepwalks.

LADY MACBETH: *“Out damned spot, out I say. Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.”*

NARRATOR: Who’s she talking about, what old man? The King. So, Doctor, what’s your opinion, is she crazy?

DOCTOR: Yes.

(Exit: Doctor)

(Enter: Macbeth and Seyton)

NARRATOR: Back to Macbeth - he arms himself against the oncoming army. He is confident. Every man is born of woman. And whoever saw a forest walk? He is superhuman. He hears noises (*Lady Macbeth scream*) and asks his servant Seyton what it is.

SEYTON: *'It is the cry of women, my good lord.'*

NARRATOR: Seyton investigates.

SEYTON: *'The Queen my Lord is dead.'*

(Lady Macbeth dies)

(Exit: Seyton, Lady Macbeth)

NARRATOR: The invading army revert to camouflage. They cut down Birnam Wood and advance with the branches shielding them. Macbeth is told that the forest is moving towards him. (Get it?) Impossible! The castle is stormed.

(Enter: Macduff)

NARRATOR: Macduff finds Macbeth and shouts to him:

MACDUFF: *“Turn, hell-hound, turn!”*

MACBETH: *“Of all men else I have avoided thee.”*

NARRATOR: They fight, both of them brilliant soldiers. But Macbeth still imagines he is god-like. He taunts Macduff.

MACBETH: *“I bear a charmed life, which must not yield to one of woman born”*

MACDUFF: *“Despair thy charm; and let the angel whom thou still hast served tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd.”*

NARRATOR: Loophole - Macduff was born by caesarian section! Macduff strikes at Macbeth... a fatal blow that kills the tyrant.

(Macbeth dies)

Macduff takes the crown and brings it to Malcolm and his army, victorious.

(Enter: Malcolm, Donalbain)

(Malcolm put on crown)

NARRATOR: Tyranny is defeated. Scotland will be free once more.

(cheer)

The End