



William Shakespeare

MACBETH



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**Audio
Files**

Book brief

- 1 *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy and he probably wrote it between 1603 and 1607, when King James VI of Scotland also became King James I of England.
- 2 Set in medieval Scotland and England, it's based on a true story.
- 3 In the 11th century, there really was a King Macbeth of Scotland but he was good, not like the Macbeth in Shakespeare's play.
- 4 The play is about Macbeth, a brave Scottish general, who is told by three witches that one day he'll become King of Scotland. Their words lead Macbeth to commit many terrible crimes.
- 5 Main themes include kingship, superstition, ambition and guilt.

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MAIN CHARACTERS

.....



MACBETH
A Scottish Thane (Lord)



LADY MACBETH
His wife



DUNCAN
King of Scotland



MALCOLM
DONALBAIN
Duncan's sons



HECATE
The goddess of witchcraft



THE THREE WITCHES
Hecate's servants



BANQUO
A Scottish Thane



FLEANCE
Banquo's son



MACDUFF



ROSS



LENNOX
Scottish Thanes

Before you Read

Vocabulary

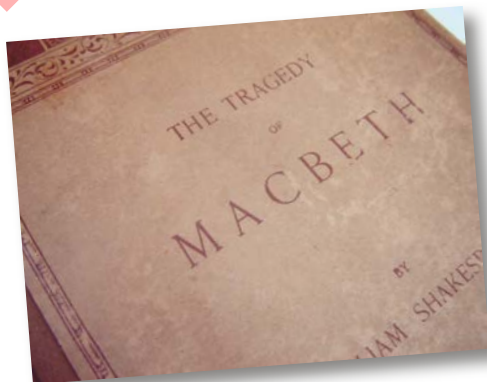
- 1 The following words all appear in the story. Match the words to the dictionary definitions. Use your translation dictionary to help you find the English definition.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 ☐ dagger / 'dæg.ər / noun [C] | a A person whose job is to fight. |
| 2 ☐ sword / sɔ:d / noun [C] | b A wall around the top of a castle that you can walk around. |
| 3 ☐ battlefield / 'bæt.əl.fi:ld / noun [C] | c A short type of knife used in fighting. |
| 4 ☐ battlements / 'bæt.əl.mənts / noun [plural] | d A large group of people whose job is to fight. |
| 5 ☐ soldier / 'səʊl.dʒər / noun [C] | e The place where people fight. |
| 6 ☐ army / 'ɑ:mi / noun [C] | f A very long type of knife used in fighting. |

Reading B1 Preliminary

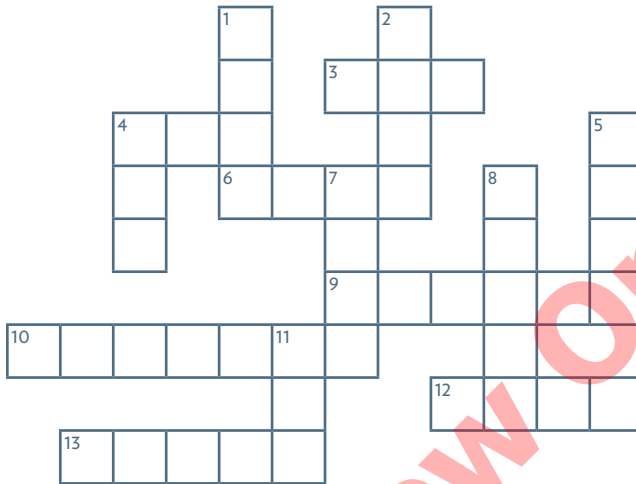
- 2 Complete the text about Shakespeare with one word for each space.

The first plays Shakespeare wrote (1) historical.
Then he changed to comedies with stories about love and with a happy ending. Finally, he wrote his great tragedies (2) *Macbeth*.
In Shakespeare's tragedies, and in *Macbeth* (3), themes include people going mad and death. There (4) a huge variety of characters in his plays, (5) all different social classes and the action often involves family relationships. This can also be seen in *Macbeth* where the relationship (6) Macbeth and his wife is a very important part of the play



Grammar

- 3 Use the clues below to complete the irregular verb crossword. Use the first letter of the verb to help you. Then read chapter one and check your answers.



Clues Across

- 3 Donalbain **r**..... towards his brother. (3 letters)
 4 King Duncan's men **w**..... the battle. (3 letters)
 6 The soldiers **t**..... their stories about the day. (4 letters)
 9 Macbeth was brave in the battle. He **f**..... like a lion. (6 letters)
 10 Macbeth **t**..... about his conversation with the witches. (7 letters)
 12 Ross **k**..... a lot about the battle. (4 letters)
 13 Macbeth and Banquo **h**..... a strange noise. (5 letters)

Clues Down

- 1 King Duncan **s**..... Lord Ross to tell Macbeth the news. (4 letters)
 2 The King of Norway **p**..... 10,000 gold pieces to be free. (4 letters)
 4 The sun **w**..... low in the sky. (3 letters)
 5 The King of Norway **l**..... the battle. (4 letters)
 7 Macbeth **l**..... the room. (4 letters)
 8 Macbeth **b**..... to realise something. (5 letters)
 11 The witches **h**..... nothing more to say. (3 letters)

“When will we three meet again?”

- ▶ 2 It was a dark time and a dark place. In ancient Scotland, rebellions* were usual and kings didn't live long. Duncan, King of Scotland, was in his palace at Forres in the far north. King Duncan was a good man and a fine king, but rebels* were trying to take his throne*. The rebel leader was a rich, powerful man, the Thane* of Cawdor. The battles were hard and bloody* and Duncan was worried about his sons. Malcolm, the older son, was fighting at that very moment. Fortunately, the younger son, Donalbain, was safe with Duncan, for now.

‘News,’ said King Duncan anxiously*, We need news about the battle. It's hard to sit here, safe at Forres, while my men are fighting.’

‘I know father, but we must be patient,’ replied Donalbain, with a heavy heart.

The Thane of Cawdor was a very powerful man indeed.

Away from the King's palace, in an open field, there was a very strange sight indeed. Three shapes were visible*. They were old women, ugly old women and they were wearing black rags*. The three women were witches and they were making a terrible plan.

‘When will we three meet again?’ said one witch, ‘In thunder, lightning or in rain?’

rebellion (here) action against the King
rebel (here) the person who acts against the King
throne the position of being king or queen
Thane a Scottish word for Lord

bloody with a lot of blood
anxiously in a worried way
visible that can be seen
rag an old piece of cloth

At the time when Shakespeare wrote this play, James I was King and many people wanted to kill him. For example, with the Gunpowder Plot (1605) rebels tried to blow up Parliament and the royal family, but they weren't successful. This day is still celebrated in the UK on 5 November and is known as Guy Fawkes Night.

Macbeth

‘When the battle’s lost and won!’ laughed the second.

‘Before the setting of the sun*!’ added the third.

‘Where, sisters? Where shall we meet?’

‘Near! Near here.’

‘Who, sisters? Who shall we meet?’

‘Let’s meet Macbeth!’

‘Macbeth!’ they cried together, ‘Let’s meet Macbeth. In fog and filthy* air!’

An hour or two later, King Duncan and Donalbain were still waiting for news about the latest battle. Suddenly, two men appeared on the horizon*.

‘Look father! It’s Malcolm! He’s with a soldier. I think he’s hurt.’ Donalbain ran towards his brother. ‘What’s happened? Are you hurt?’ he cried.

‘No, brother, I’m fine. This soldier is hurt, but he saved my life. I was almost captured* by the Thane of Cawdor’s men,’ he turned to the King, ‘Hello father. There’s no need to worry, I’m well and we won the battle. We won! It was long and terrible and this man here, this soldier, is a hero.’

‘Malcolm. Thank God,’ whispered* the King, embracing* his son, ‘And thank you,’ Duncan turned to the soldier.

‘I’m not a hero, Sire*,’ said the soldier quietly, ‘Lord Macbeth was the true hero today.’

Lord Macbeth, the Thane of Glamis, was the King’s cousin.

‘My brave cousin,’ said the King, ‘He’s such a fine man.’

‘Yes,’ said the soldier, ‘He fought like a lion. The battle was hard

When Macbeth was written, James I was King of Scotland and England, (1603-1625). He very much believed in witches and the number of people who were executed for being ‘witches’ grew enormously while he was king.

setting of the sun when the sun goes down in the evening

filthy very dirty

horizon the line where the earth and the sky appear to meet

capture take someone prisoner

whisper speak very, very quietly

embrace hold someone in your arms

Sire an old word used when talking to a king

William Shakespeare

and the King of Norway was helping the Thane of Cawdor. Their army was larger than ours too. They attacked again and again, but Macbeth and Banquo were good generals*. Scotland is safe, Sire, Scotland is safe!

The soldier sat down heavily in a chair. 'I'm sorry, Sire,' he whispered.

'Get a doctor for this brave man,' called Duncan, 'Quickly.'

The other thanes and soldiers were beginning to return to the royal palace from the battlefield*. They told their stories of the day and everyone agreed that Macbeth was the real hero. The Thane of Ross, another of the Scottish lords, knew more details about the battle. 'God save the King!' he called, 'I've come from Fife. We captured the King of Norway! Here, here are the ten thousand gold pieces he paid for his freedom*. We took the money and he's gone back to Norway.'

'What about the rebel leader?' asked King Duncan, 'Tell me about the Thane of Cawdor.'

'We captured him too. What shall we do with him?'

'Execute* him. Execute him now. Then I want you to go and find Macbeth. Tell him that I've executed the Thane of Cawdor and tell Macbeth that he's now the new Thane. My brave cousin will now have two titles; Thane of Glamis and Thane of Cawdor! That's his reward*.'

'Immediately, Sire! It'll be a great pleasure to tell the brave Macbeth!' Ross left, calling for his horse.

Macbeth himself was riding across the open fields with his friend, Banquo. They were tired from the battle, but very elated*. It was

general an officer in the army who tells his soldiers what to do

battlefield the place where soldiers fight

freedom being free, not a prisoner

execute kill

reward a prize for doing something good

elated very happy

Macbeth

getting dark and the sun was low in the sky. As they were riding along, a sudden mist* came up. Their horses stopped, afraid of something. Through the fog, the two men could just see three strange shapes, black and dark. Then they heard three women call out to them.

‘Hail*!’

‘Hail!’

‘Hail!’

Macbeth and Banquo stared* at each other and at the three witches.

‘Who are they?’ whispered Banquo, ‘Let’s ride on. We must be near to Forres by now.’

‘No, wait,’ said his friend, ‘Perhaps they have a message for us.’

‘Hail Macbeth! Thane of Glamis!’ cried the first witch.

The two men were silent.

‘Hail Macbeth, the new Thane of Cawdor!’ cried the second witch.

‘Hail Macbeth, the future King of Scotland!’ cried the third.

Macbeth remained* silent, trying to understand what the witches were saying, but Banquo wanted to know more.

‘You have a lot to say about my friend Macbeth. You say he’ll be Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland’, he said boldly*, ‘but what about *me*? What can you tell me about *my* future? What will happen to *me* in the future? Will *I* be as lucky as Macbeth?’

The witches answered in turn*.

‘You’ll be less than Macbeth, but you’ll be greater.’

‘You won’t be as lucky as Macbeth, but you’ll be luckier.’

‘You won’t be king, but your children will be kings.’

‘Hail Macbeth! Hail Banquo!’ the witches said together.

‘No, wait!’ cried Macbeth, ‘What do you mean? You’re right, I *am*

mist another word for fog

Hail Hello

stare look at something with your eyes wide open

remain stay

boldly bravely

in turn one after the other



Thane of Glamis, that's my title. But I can't be Thane of Cawdor, because there's already a Thane of Cawdor. He's a rebel, but he's alive. And King of Scotland? I can't be king, because we already have a good king and we're loyal* to him. So tell me, who are you and why have you met us here to tell us these strange prophecies*? Tell me!

The witches had nothing more to say. They simply disappeared into the fog.

'Where have they gone?' said Banquo to Macbeth.

'It seems they've vanished into thin air*', his friend replied, 'And I want to know why they went away so suddenly. I had more to ask them.'

'Were they witches? Or are we going mad?'

'Don't worry, your children will be kings!' Macbeth joked.

'And you'll be king too!' his friend replied.

'Oh yes. And Thane of Cawdor as well, don't forget that! Shh. Just a minute, I can hear horses.'

The sound of the horses came nearer and nearer.

'Who is it?' whispered Macbeth.

'It's Lord Ross!' cried Banquo.

'Macbeth!' Lord Ross called out, 'I have news from the King! Your royal* cousin is well and happy with your victory*. He sent me to congratulate you and to thank you. King Duncan has decided to give you a reward. You're now the new Thane of Cawdor. Hail Macbeth, Thane of Cawdor!'

'They *were* witches!' whispered Banquo to Macbeth, 'And, it looks like they were telling the truth.'

Macbeth was confused*. He turned to Ross. 'What do you mean? The Thane of Cawdor is still alive.'

loyal be a trusted friend of someone

prophecy what someone says will happen in the future

vanish into thin air disappear suddenly or in a strange way

royal being King or a member of the King's family

victory winning a battle

confused how you feel when you don't really understand what's happening



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‘Yes, but he’s a traitor* and he’s confessed*. King Duncan has ordered his execution.’

‘So I’m both Thane of Glamis and Thane of Cawdor,’ Macbeth was surprised, but a little excited. He turned again to Banquo, ‘But they made a second promise. Will I be King of Scotland one day? Will your children also be royal?’

‘Be careful, Macbeth. Perhaps it was a trick. Perhaps they were evil* spirits,’ his friend replied.

Macbeth was thinking hard. The witches were right. Their prophecy was right. Now he *was* the new Thane of Cawdor. Perhaps they were also right about the future. Could he also become King of Scotland? But what about King Duncan? Macbeth began to realise that *he* wanted to be King of Scotland. Very much.

‘Macbeth! We’re waiting for you!’ said Banquo.

‘Sorry Ross, sorry Banquo,’ he said to his friends, ‘I was lost in thought. Let’s ride to King Duncan.’

Back in the palace at Forres, King Duncan was very much in command*. ‘Have they executed Cawdor yet?’

‘Yes, father,’ said Malcolm, ‘They say he was very brave and honest. He confessed his treason* and asked you to forgive him. He was very sorry.’

A door opened and Macbeth, Banquo and Ross walked in.

‘My dear cousin!’ called the King, ‘Congratulations to you. I must thank you.’

He walked over to Macbeth and shook his hand warmly. He did the same to Banquo.

traitor (here) a person who goes against the King

confess say that you’ve done something wrong

evil very bad

be in command be in control and tell others what to do

treason the crime of trying to destroy the ruler head (here, the king) of your own country

Macbeth

‘Sire,’ said Macbeth, ‘we simply did our duty*. You’re our king and we’re loyal to you.’

‘Welcome, welcome!’ replied the King. ‘Come and see my son, Malcolm.’

The King turned to talk to all the thanes in the room. ‘Thanes of Scotland,’ he said, ‘I thank you all for your loyalty to Scotland. I think it’s time to name my heir*. Malcolm, my eldest son, has served me well. Today, I’ve made him Prince of Cumberland. He’ll be the next King of Scotland after me. And now, Macbeth, Thane of Cawdor, I’ll stay at your castle tonight, so we can talk more.’

‘That’s an honour*, Sire,’ replied Macbeth, ‘I must send a message to my wife.’ He bowed* to the King and left the room. He was thinking very hard. In truth, he was a little disappointed. ‘Malcolm is the new Prince of Cumberland, so he’ll be King before me. Perhaps the witches were wrong. Their first prophecy was right, but now Malcolm is in my way*.’

Back in the hall, King Duncan was still talking to the thanes. He was talking about Macbeth, his bravery and his loyalty. ‘Macbeth is a perfect cousin,’ said the King.

to do one’s duty to do what is right
heir the person who takes your position after you die
honour great pleasure because you feel respect for the person

bow lower your head or your body as a way of showing respect
be in someone’s way stop someone going forward or doing something

Reading Comprehension

1 Choose the best answer – A, B or C.

1 Why was King Duncan worried?

- ☐ **A** Because he was losing the battle.
- ☐ **B** Because Donalbain was fighting.
- ☐ **C** Because he was waiting for news.

2 Who were the three strange women?

- ☐ **A** Wives of the soldiers.
- ☐ **B** Nurses.
- ☐ **C** Witches.

3 What's Macbeth to King Duncan?

- ☐ **A** He's his brother.
- ☐ **B** He's his uncle.
- ☐ **C** He's his cousin.

4 What did all the Scottish lords say about Macbeth?

- ☐ **A** That he was a hero in the battle.
- ☐ **B** That they don't know where he was.
- ☐ **C** That he was a friend of the Thane of Cawdor.

5 What do the strange women say to Macbeth and Banquo?

- ☐ **A** That Macbeth will be king.
- ☐ **B** That Banquo will be Thane of Cawdor.
- ☐ **C** That King Duncan will leave Scotland.

6 Where did the strange women go?

- ☐ **A** They went to the castle.
- ☐ **B** They disappeared in the fog.
- ☐ **C** They followed Macbeth home.

7 What title did King Duncan give to his son?

- ☐ **A** Thane of Glamis.
- ☐ **B** Thane of Ross.
- ☐ **C** Prince of Cumberland.

Grammar

- 2 Complete the sentences with the comparative or superlative form of the adjectives in brackets.**

- 1 King Duncan is (powerful) than the Thane of Cawdor.
- 2 The Thane of Cawdor is the (rich) man in Scotland.
- 3 The three witches are the (ugly) women that Macbeth has ever seen.
- 4 Macbeth will be (lucky) than Banquo.
- 5 Malcolm is (old) than Donalbain.
- 6 The King thinks Macbeth was the (good) man in the battle.

Speaking - Pair Work

21st Century Skills

- 3 In Chapter 1, we see that Macbeth believes the witches' prophecies. Discuss these questions with a partner. How much do you agree with each other?**

- 1 Why does Macbeth believe what the witches say?
- 2 How do you think their prophecies will change his relationship with the King? Why?
- 3 Do you think that some people can tell the future? Why? / why not?
- 4 How often do you read your horoscope? Why?
- 5 How do you imagine your future?



Pre-Reading Activity • Chapter One

Speaking

21st Century Skills

- 4 Three of the following things happen in the next chapter. Which three? Tell your partner your ideas.**

- King Duncan stays at Macbeth's castle.
- King Duncan invites Lady Macbeth to his castle.
- Macbeth kills King Duncan.
- King Duncan has a strange dream.
- Banquo sees Lady Macbeth with blood on her hands.
- Macbeth is frightened to go into the King's room.