

2018

WorldClass<sup>®</sup>  
Education  
Program



Macbeth

Wednesday, January 17, 2018  
10:15AM-12:45PM  
Sandler Center for the  
Performing Arts, Virginia Beach

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# AMERICAN SHAKESPEARE CENTER



The American Shakespeare Center celebrates the joys and accessibility of Shakespeare's theatre, language, and humanity by exploring the English Renaissance stage and its practices through performance and education. With its performances, theaters, exhibitions, and educational programs, the ASC seeks to make Shakespeare, the joys of theatre and language, and the communal experience of the Renaissance stage accessible to all. By re-creating Renaissance conditions of performance, the ASC explores its repertory of plays for a better understanding of these great works and of the human theatrical enterprise past, present, and future.

In its hometown of Staunton, Virginia, the ASC has constructed the Blackfriars Playhouse, the world's only re-creation of Shakespeare's original indoor theater, and also has plans to build an open-air replica of London's second Globe Theatre, which was built in 1614 after the original 1599 structure burned to the ground. By following the basic principles of Renaissance theatrical production, the ASC gives its audiences some of the pleasures an Elizabethan playgoer would have enjoyed.

In addition to giving performances at the Blackfriars, the ASC on Tour travels the United States and abroad with the same unique brand of Shakespeare that thrills, delights, and educates its audiences.

Source: Adapted from American Shakespeare Center  
[www.americanshakespearecenter.com](http://www.americanshakespearecenter.com)



Top: Annabelle Rollison, Hilary Caldwell, and Kyle Powell (Weird Sisters) in rehearsal for *MACBETH*. Photo by Jay McClure. Bottom: Kyle Powell, Hilary Caldwell, and Annabelle Rollison as the Weird Sisters in *MACBETH*. Photo by Michael Bailey.





Ally Farzetta as Lady Macbeth and Calder Shilling as Macbeth in *MACBETH*.  
Photo by Michael Bailey.

TYPE: **Tragedy**

FIRST PERFORMANCE: **1606**

FIRST PUBLISHED: **1623**

Blinded by ambition, driven by freaky fortune-telling, and pushed by his power-hungry wife, nobleman and war hero Macbeth commits multiple murders to grab and keep the Scottish throne—with horrific consequences. Throw in witches, bloody battles, supernatural goings-on, and a whole mess o' madness, and you've got what superstitious sorts will only call "the Scottish play." The drama's so powerful, it's a long-held tradition never to utter the name "*Macbeth*" inside a theater lest the play's spell-casting witches bring forth disaster. Yikes!

The story opens with those three witches huddled in a stormy field, planning to meet Macbeth as he returns from combat. Macbeth is a thane, a lord who serves Duncan, the king of Scotland. At his military camp, King Duncan receives word of the defeat of another Scottish lord—the traitorous Thane of Cawdor—by Macbeth's sword in a hard-fought

battle. To reward the heroic Macbeth, Duncan decides to give him Cawdor's title and property in addition to the territory Macbeth already rules, Glamis.

Meanwhile, on their way to the king's camp, Macbeth and another lord, Banquo, run across the three witches. The fortune-tellers hail Macbeth as Thane of Glamis but also of Cawdor; Macbeth, not yet aware of the new title the king has bestowed upon him, is dumbfounded. They also predict that Macbeth will one day be king, and that Banquo will be the father of kings, though he himself will never be one.

The witches vanish, and Macbeth and Banquo are greeted by two other noblemen, who announce that Macbeth is indeed the new Thane of Cawdor. Hey, those fortune-tellers were right! Later, King Duncan thanks Macbeth and Banquo for their loyalty and announces that he plans to make his son Malcolm his heir. Wait, didn't those witches say Macbeth would be king? Macbeth's thoughts go to a dark place as he ponders how that prophecy could be fulfilled sooner rather than later.

At the Macbeth castle, Lady Macbeth receives a letter from her husband describing the witches' amazing predictions. She too begins to wonder why he should wait to become king; why not take destiny into his own hands? But she worries that Macbeth doesn't have the courage to do what's required to seize the throne—kill King Duncan. When Macbeth arrives, he sees murder in his wife's eyes, and she in his. She urges him to act natural in front of the unsuspecting Duncan, who will soon arrive at their home.

As Lady Macbeth greets the king, her husband broods alone in another part of the castle. Macbeth's having second thoughts, and wonders if he can go so far as murder to achieve ultimate power. But Lady Macbeth holds him to their evil plot. She lays out a plan: she'll get the king's guards drunk, Macbeth will murder Duncan, and they'll blame the whole thing on the guards.



## Macbeth

Either in the heat of the moment or through some supernatural visitation, Macbeth sees a ghostly dagger indicating the way to the Duncan. Drawing his own weapon after seeing this apparition, he climbs to the king's chamber to do the deed. When the guilt-stricken Macbeth is unable to return the actual murder weapons to the crime scene, Lady Macbeth does it, planting the weapons on the guards and smearing the men with Duncan's blood.

When the murdered king is discovered in the morning, Lady Macbeth faints after Macbeth secretly kills the guards and claims the bloody daggers are proof of their guilt. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, suspect foul play and flee the country for their own safety.

With Malcolm gone, Macbeth takes the throne, and Banquo starts to wonder if the new king had something to do with Duncan's death. Macbeth—fearing Banquo's suspicions and the witches' prediction that Banquo will be the father of kings—sends assassins to kill his good friend. Banquo's son, Fleance, escapes; Banquo does not. Later, Macbeth hosts a banquet, where he sees Banquo's bloody ghost and starts to speak and act strangely. Is Macbeth's guilty conscience driving him crazy? Meanwhile, another nobleman, Macduff, rejects Macbeth's authority and takes off for England.

Desperate to learn more about his fate, Macbeth seeks out the witches again. This time they conjure spirits who offer three predictions: "Beware Macduff," "None of woman born shall harm Macbeth," and "Macbeth will not be defeated until the great Birnam Forest comes to Dunsinane Hill," two Scottish countryside landmarks. Macbeth interprets these signs as meaning that fate is on his side.

After his meeting with the witches, Macbeth learns that Macduff has turned against him—another witchy prophecy come true! In revenge, Macbeth sends troops to murder Macduff's family. When Macduff, meeting with Malcolm in England, hears of the terrible slaughter, he organizes an army to bring down Macbeth and return the throne to Malcolm.

Back in Scotland, Lady Macbeth's conscience—absent earlier—is now getting the best of her; she sleepwalks and tries desperately to wash the memory of blood from her hands. She ends her battle with conscience by committing suicide. As Macduff and Malcolm's army assembles to attack Macbeth at Dunsinane Hill, near the castle, the soldiers camouflage themselves with branches cut from the trees of Birnam Wood, fulfilling yet another of the witches' prophecies.

Macbeth meets Macduff in combat, assured that he'll be victorious because "none of woman born" will beat him. However, Macduff reveals that he was born via caesarean section—or surgically, and thus not "of woman born"—and slays and beheads Macbeth. Malcolm, the rightful heir, takes the throne of Scotland.

**Think about this:** The three witches in the first scene of *Macbeth* recite this line: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair." It means that what appears to be good is actually bad, and vice versa. It's a paradox—a seemingly contradictory statement that could be true—that Shakespeare weaves throughout the story. Since the line comes just as the play opens, it's also used as foreshadowing, or a warning about or hint of future events.

**Try this:** What do you think Shakespeare intended by placing that line at the very beginning of *Macbeth*? What events does the line possibly foreshadow? Can you find examples in the drama that illustrate the fair/foul paradox—people, things, ideas, or events that appear one way but are actually the opposite? Create a list, collage, or cartoon to support your examples.



## Who's Who in Macbeth

Need help remembering the friends, frenemies, and foes in *Macbeth*? Here's a handy guide.

**Macbeth:** A Scottish nobleman and war hero, also known as the Thane of Glamis, who is given the additional title of Thane of Cawdor by King Duncan. After being told by witches that he will someday be king, Macbeth eventually takes destiny into his own hands by murdering Duncan. Once Macbeth becomes king, he embarks on a brutal string of murders to maintain his position. He is ultimately stopped by Macduff, who beheads him.



Dimitri Tavazde

**Lady Macbeth:** Macbeth's wife. At the beginning of the play, she is the ambitious, cold-hearted one, convincing Macbeth to kill King Duncan so Macbeth will take the throne. But her guilty conscience consumes her; she commits suicide.

**Three Witches:** Supernatural figures who appear throughout the play to offer predictions about Macbeth's fate. Their prophecies seem to ignite and fuel Macbeth's evil intentions.

**Banquo:** Another nobleman and Macbeth's close friend. Banquo also receives a favorable prediction from the witches—that he will be the father of kings—but he refuses to take action to see that destiny fulfilled. After a paranoid Macbeth has Banquo murdered, his bloody ghost returns to haunt his former friend.

**Fleance:** Banquo's young son. When Macbeth sends assassins to kill Banquo, Fleance escapes. Because Fleance survives the attack, Macbeth fears that he will fulfill the witches' prediction about Banquo's children becoming kings and ruling Scotland.



Dimitri Tavazde

**King Duncan:** The good and virtuous ruler of Scotland, who rewards Macbeth with an additional noble title for killing a disloyal lord. Trusting and naïve, Duncan never suspects that Macbeth and his wife are plotting his death when he stays at their castle.

**Malcolm:** King Duncan's oldest son and heir to the Scottish throne. Malcolm is everything a king should be: virtuous, pious, chaste, modest, and loyal. With Macduff's help, Malcolm becomes the Scottish king at the end of the play.

**Macduff:** An honorable lord who opposes Macbeth. He leads the fight against Macbeth and supports Malcolm as the new king, but only after determining that the prince is worthy. Since Macduff was delivered from his mother's womb surgically, by caesarean section, he fulfills the witches' prophecy that "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth" when he kills Macbeth.





## Who's Who in Macbeth

To borrow from another of Shakespeare's tragedies (*Romeo and Juliet*), what's in a name? In the case of *Macbeth*, a bit of history. Shakespeare based this play on actual events recounted in Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. First published in 1577, the *Chronicles* include the story of an eleventh-century Scottish king named Macbeth. But if you compare Shakespeare's version to the one in the *Chronicles*, you'll find many changes. Here are some:

- In the *Chronicles*, **Duncan** was not an old and popular king, but a young and feeble ruler.
- The historical **Macbeth** had a right to be angry when Duncan chose his son as his heir. In eleventh-century Scotland, the throne didn't automatically pass to a king's son. In fact, the real Macbeth had a fair claim to the throne.
- The historical **Banquo** was one of Macbeth's accomplices in the murder of Duncan, along with several other lords. Shakespeare takes his story of the wife who helps murder a king from a different episode of the *Chronicles*.
- The historical Macbeth was a good and successful king for ten years before he was overthrown.

Some of the most memorable scenes in *Macbeth* were not from the *Chronicles* at all. Here are some of Shakespeare's inventions:

- The image of the "air-drawn dagger" (act 2, scene 1)
- The banquet in which Banquo's ghost appears (act 3, scene 4)
- Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene (act 5, scene 1)
- Lady Macbeth's suicide (act 5, scene 4)

Source: Adapted from *Macbeth Educator's Guide*, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/macbeth-educators-guide/1023>.



"Macbeth: the apparition of the kings"  
by Théodore Chassériau.

**Think about this:** Why do you think Shakespeare made these changes? What's the effect of his new scenes and incidents?

**Try this:** Shakespeare often based his plays on historical events or figures. But he wasn't always true to the historical facts. Can you think of any book, movie, TV show, or comic based on history but not necessarily true to it? Make a chart listing which aspects of the story are historically accurate, which the story's creator tweaked, and what purpose those changes might serve—for example, to heighten tension? Add humor? Create conflict? Improve narrative flow? Change the reader's/audience's perceptions or preconceptions?

Now choose an event or person from history that you're interested in. Can you write a story or play, or create a comic strip or piece of artwork based on that history but include your own historically inaccurate twist? Why did you make the choices you did in depicting your historic event or person? Make a chart for your own creation.



### . . . and Why Should I Care?

Though he's considered possibly the greatest and most influential writer of all time, William Shakespeare remains largely a man of mystery. The scant details of his life come from his works, court and church records, and accounts from his peers. Scholars and historians have filled in the blanks with their best educated guesses.

Take Shakespeare's birth date. There is no definitive record of his birth—only his baptism, which occurred on April 26, 1564, in the English town of Stratford-upon-Avon, one hundred miles outside of London. Since the tradition of that time was to baptize a newborn three days after birth, it's assumed that Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564.

We do know that William was the third child of John and Mary Arden Shakespeare. He had seven brothers and sisters; only four survived to adulthood. William's father was a glove maker and businessman, and his mother came from an affluent farming family.

It's not known for certain if William attended the King's New School, which educated the boys of Stratford. Since his father was prominent in the community, it's assumed that he did. There, he would have received an education rooted in the classics: up to ten hours a day studying grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music—most of it in Latin!

Records reveal that in 1582, when William was eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway. Together, they had three children, Susanna and twins Judith and Hamnet. Hamnet, William's only son, died in 1596 when he was just eleven. There is no conclusive documentation of William's whereabouts between 1585 and 1592, a period commonly called Shakespeare's "lost years."

Scholars estimate that Shakespeare arrived in London around 1588 and began working as an actor and playwright. By 1594 he was acting and writing for the Lord Chamberlain's Men, a



William Shakespeare, associated with John Taylor - oil on canvas, feigned oval, circa 1600-1610. National Portrait Gallery, Given by Francis Egerton, 1st Earl of Ellesmere, 1856.

performance troupe. The company was later known as the King's Men, after King James I took the throne upon Queen Elizabeth I's death in 1603. Until 1642, when the religious Puritans closed the theaters, the King's Men troupe was a favorite with both royalty and the public.

Shakespeare's acting company performed at the Globe Theatre, built by the troupe around 1599. Evidence suggests that the venue was a polygonal, three-story, open-air amphitheater that could accommodate an audience of three thousand. From 1609 the King's Men performed at the Globe during the summer months and at Blackfriars, a second indoor theater owned by the troupe, in the winter.





## Who Was Shakespeare . . .

William's plays were in such demand that they were published and sold in "penny-copies" to his more literate fans. This was a major accomplishment; no playwright before him had become so popular that his plays were sold as literature. William retired from the King's Men in 1611 at age forty-seven and returned to Stratford. He died on April 23, 1616.

In his lifetime, it's estimated that William Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, 154 sonnets, 2 narrative poems, and added more than 2,000 words to the English language. Today, 400 years after his death, Shakespeare's works are read, studied, performed, and enjoyed all over the world. As playwright and poet Ben Jonson, one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, once wrote, "He was not of an age, but for all time."

Those new to Shakespeare may wonder what all the hoopla is about. Sure, he's one of the world's most popular playwrights and poets, but what makes him so special?

Perhaps the most important reason Shakespeare is revered is the way he makes us think about life's big-picture issues, things most everyone grapples with sooner or later. In *Macbeth*, for example, the playwright asks us to ponder the relationship between fate and free will: Do the witches foretell an unavoidable destiny, or do they merely give Macbeth an opportunity to reveal his true character and create his own triumph or downfall? And what about that fair/foul paradox? With *Macbeth*, Shakespeare asks us to consider how it is we discern what's real, what's true: How can we tell good from evil, friends from foes? Sometimes your kind hosts aren't as welcoming as you might think—just ask King Duncan! And speaking of evil, Shakespeare gets us thinking about the nature of evil in *Macbeth*, as well. Is evil some sort of external "witchy" force, or is it part of human nature? How do evil deeds affect those who perpetrate them—even when they're not caught? As Shakespeare shows us, things didn't go so well for the murderous Macbeth and his wife.

Other reasons Shakespeare remains timeless include his remarkable storytelling—his works still inspire modern authors, playwrights, filmmakers, even dancers and artists—his complex and dimensional characters, who are fun to read and challenging for actors to play, and his ability to turn an elegant or colorful phrase. Many of the best-known phrases in the English language, words we hear every day, came from the mind of Shakespeare: *for goodness' sake, neither here nor there, the short and long of it, dead as a doornail, in a pickle, love is blind, heart of gold*, plus many more. And from *Macbeth*, *one fell swoop, a sorry sight, what's done is done*, and this age-old favorite: *Knock knock! Who's there?*

**Think about this:** With many of his plays, and most certainly with *Macbeth*, Shakespeare asks us to contemplate the effect of guilt on the human mind. Is it possible for people to take actions they know are wrong and remain unaffected? Are *Macbeth* and his wife changed by their actions? How?

**Try this:** Imagine you're a guest at the banquet when Macbeth sees Banquo's bloody ghost, or you're an attendant at the door as Lady Macbeth hallucinates the blood on her hands. Write a journal entry in that person's voice about what you witnessed—how would you react to the Macbeths as people, as political figures? What should you do—inform the authorities? Keep quiet? Why?

Now imagine that you're the one who's done something illegal and gotten caught. You have a choice to either admit that you did it or tell a lie to cover it up. How far would you be willing to go to cover up your own wrongdoing? How do fear, guilt, or remorse play in your choice of action? What other considerations weigh in your decision? Write an imaginary journal entry about your decision and why you made it.





## The Elizabethan Age

Shakespeare lived during one of the most remarkable periods in English history, the Elizabethan Age. Queen Elizabeth I ascended to England's throne in 1558, six years before Shakespeare was born. Her reign until 1603 was a time of extraordinary achievement for the country, marked by relatively stable politics, a flourishing of the arts, and England's emergence as the military and commercial leader of the Western world.



Queen Elizabeth

When Elizabeth became queen, she upheld many of the Protestant edicts of her late father, King Henry VIII, whose relationship with the Catholic church had ruptured. She shrewdly managed to avoid a rebellion by making concessions to Catholic sympathizers. She was a firm and canny leader whose navy defeated the attacking Spanish Armada in 1588, establishing England as a world superpower. She supported Sir Francis Drake, first to circumnavigate the globe, and funded Sir Walter Raleigh, whose exploration of the New World, with its vast resources of tobacco and gold, brought tremendous riches to England.

Under Elizabeth, the arts in England blossomed. The queen was fond of the theater, and many of the country's most important playwrights worked during her reign, including, along with Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe. Elizabeth permitted construction of professional theaters for the first time in the country's history. In London, a city with a population of nearly two hundred thousand, fifteen thousand people a week attended the theater.

London became a center of both commerce and culture, hosting an explosion of learning and creativity, including masterpieces of literature like Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*. It was in this hothouse environment that Shakespeare lived and wrote, adding the Shakespearean sonnet to the great literary forms of the day, including the Spenserian stanza and Marlowe's blank verse.

Elizabeth's successor upon her death in 1603 was King James I, who was already the king of Scotland. James had a great love for the literary arts, especially drama. It was at his invitation that Shakespeare's acting company, Lord Chamberlain's Men, was rechristened the King's Men. Scholars believe that by writing *Macbeth*, "the Scottish play," Shakespeare was paying a compliment to his new king, especially since James was generally believed to be a descendant of the Banquo mentioned in Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. In *Macbeth*, the witches prophesy that Banquo's offspring will be kings.

King James was an accomplished writer himself, having penned pamphlets and books, including one on supernatural creatures, a hot topic of the day, called *Daemonologie*. James commissioned an English translation of the Bible so that more people could read it, since only the educated classes knew Latin. The King James Version of the Bible, completed in 1611, is believed to be the world's bestselling book.



King James's big-spending lifestyle and untrustworthy colleagues ultimately landed him in hot water with the Parliament, though, then controlled by the strictly religious Puritans. Relations between the monarchy and Parliament worsened when Charles I, son of King James, ascended to the throne upon his father's death in 1628. A brutal civil war followed, which King Charles I lost to the Puritans; Charles was executed in 1649.



James I, Portrait by Paul van Somer, c. 1620.

Among the many reforms enacted by the Puritans at the height of the civil war was the closing of all theaters. In 1660 Charles I's son was restored to the throne of England. King Charles II allowed theaters to reopen, but by then the curtain had fallen on the heyday of English drama.

**Try this:** The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was a failed plan to assassinate King James I, perpetrated in part by a dissenter named Guy Fawkes. In England every November 5, Guy Fawkes Night is an annual celebration of the king's escape, though "celebrations" throughout time have often been controversial with political and religious tensions frequently surfacing.

Guy Fawkes masks have long been part of the festivities, and more recently figured into the *V for Vendetta* graphic novel and movie, and also were adopted by the hacktivist group Anonymous and other antigovernment/antiestablishment protests around the world. Write a research paper about the Gunpowder Plot and its legacy, even today.





## Witchcraft in Shakespeare's Time

In act 1, scene 3, of *Macbeth*, the three witches call themselves “the weird sisters.” This name Shakespeare likely took from his historical source for the play, Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*. In the *Chronicles*, Holinshed refers to these creatures in various ways, as “weird sisters,” “fairies,” “nymphs,” “goddesses of destiny,” and “women in strange and wild apparel.” In illustrations from the *Chronicles*, they appear as elegantly dressed ladies, not the bearded hags of the play. In fact, they’re never termed “witches” at all in the *Chronicles*.

In the First Folio—the first published collection of Shakespeare’s plays, printed in 1623—“weird” is spelled “wayward,” which comes from the Old English word *wyrd*, meaning fate. In *Macbeth*, the link between “the weird sisters” and fate is clear—the witches seem to predict the fates of several of the characters.

Shakespeare’s use of “the weird sisters” as possible predictors of fate is understandable, then. But why are his “weird sisters” the ugly crones of witchcraft lore instead of the elegant ladies of the *Chronicles*? A likely answer might be that he was playing to the interests of both his audience and his king. The existence of witches was a hotly debated subject in Shakespeare’s time; there were 247 witch trials during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

King James I himself was a firm believer in witches, and in his book *Daemonologie* asserted that witches were almost always women with unnaturally masculine features like facial hair, that they were evil, and that their most dangerous work was conjuring images of people and cursing them. James also recounted the trial of a group of witches in his pamphlet *The Newes from Scotland*. In it, he gives his account of his interrogation of one of the accused witches, describing how she journeyed over the sea in a “cive” (possibly a sieve) and joined with other witches to dance and sing “in one voice.” Any of these things sound familiar after reading or seeing *Macbeth*? It’s likely that Shakespeare drew from his king’s notions of witchcraft to write his play.

Other common beliefs about witches from Shakespeare’s day:

- Witches typically had “familiars,” demonic servants that took the form of animals, including cats, dogs, frogs, and apes.
- Witches could fly through the air.
- Witches could control the winds and weather.
- Witches cooked up charms and potions from herbs and demonic ingredients.
- Witches cast spells that sickened animals and dried up crops.
- Witches were able to make people go mad.

**Try this:** What lines in *Macbeth* refer to these common beliefs about witchcraft? Keep a list as you read. Now imagine that Shakespeare had characterized his “weird sisters” as the “fairies” of Holinshed’s *Chronicles*. How would the significance of these lines change coming from a fairy instead of a witch? Test your predictions by teaming up with classmates to deliver the “witchy” lines, first as the old crones of Shakespeare’s text, then as Holinshed’s elegant ladies. Were your hypotheses correct?

Source: *Macbeth* Educator’s Guide, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gper/macbeth-educators-guide/1023/>; Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, eds., *Macbeth* (London: Macmillan, 2009).

The Weird Sisters, Henry Fuseli.



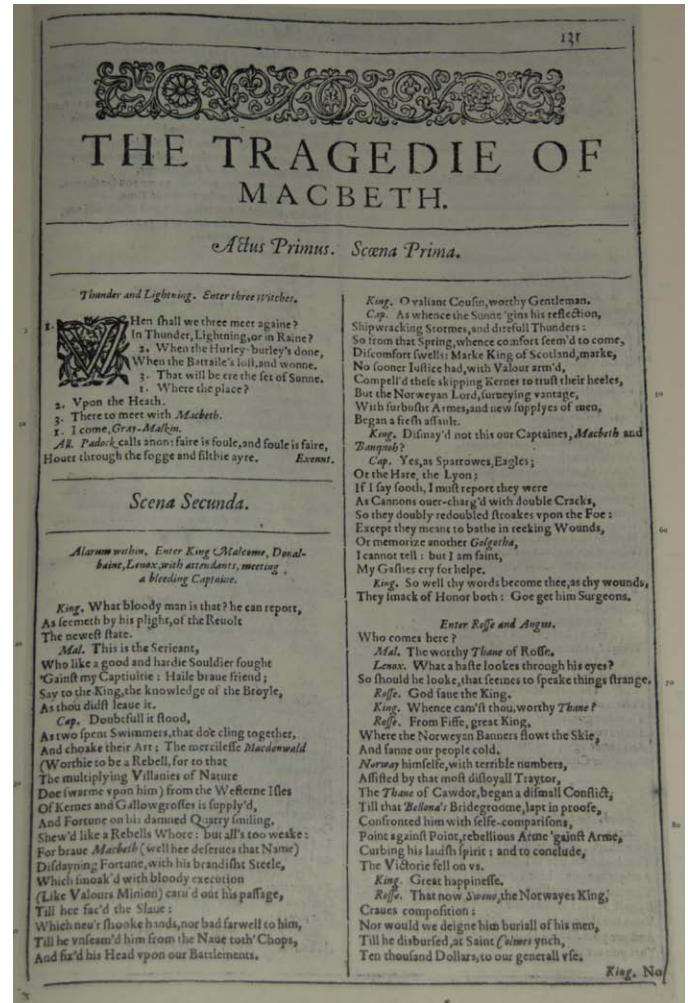
Does reading *Macbeth* feel like reading one super-long poem? That's because Shakespeare—nicknamed the Bard, another word for poet—included loads of verse in his plays. Verse is language with a set rhythm, also known as poetry. Why would Shakespeare do that? Two main reasons: tradition and memorization. Since the beginning of theater, plays had been written in verse, and verse is easier to memorize than prose—kind of like how a song lyric or rap rhyme can get stuck in your mind. Shakespeare generally used verse, a formal way of speaking, for the dialogue of nobility and other important people.

Shakespeare used a verse form called blank verse. While blank verse doesn't rhyme, each line does have an internal rhythm, like a heartbeat. That rhythm of blank verse is called *iambic pentameter*. Sounds fancy, but it's pretty easy to understand. Let's break that name down. An *iamb* is one short, unstressed syllable followed by one long, stressed syllable. It's that heartbeat rhythm: da DUM, da DUM, da DUM (or i AM, i AM, i AM, for an easy way to remember what an iamb is). *Penta* means five, like the number of sides on a pentagon. And *meter* means a rhythmic pattern. So iambic pentameter is a rhythmic pattern made up of five iambs—or heartbeats, or da DUMs (or i AMs)—per line.

Check it out with *Macbeth*'s line from act 1, scene 3 of the play:

So **foul** and **fair** a **day** I **have** not **seen**

Hear the five heartbeats, the five da DUMs (i AMs)? That's iambic pentameter. This is how the folks of high station—the rich and the rulers—usually speak in Shakespearean drama.



**Think about this:** In Shakespeare, lines of verse begin with capital letters, while prose appears in paragraph form. Why do you suppose that is?



But ol' Shakespeare liked to mix it up; he was one of the first playwrights to use both verse and prose—language without a set rhythm or structure—when it suited him. Prose is the form typically used by the common citizens in Shakespeare's works; it's closer to informal, everyday language, speech Shakespeare's audiences would easily identify with. Yet sometimes Shakespeare would have nobility speak in prose to reflect intense emotion or turmoil, creating a multidimensional character rather than a stiff stereotype of a rich, powerful person.

Check out the drunken porter in act 3, scene 1:

Here's a knocking indeed. If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key. Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' the name of Beelzebub?

**Think about this:** There is relatively little prose in *Macbeth*. Why do you suppose that is?

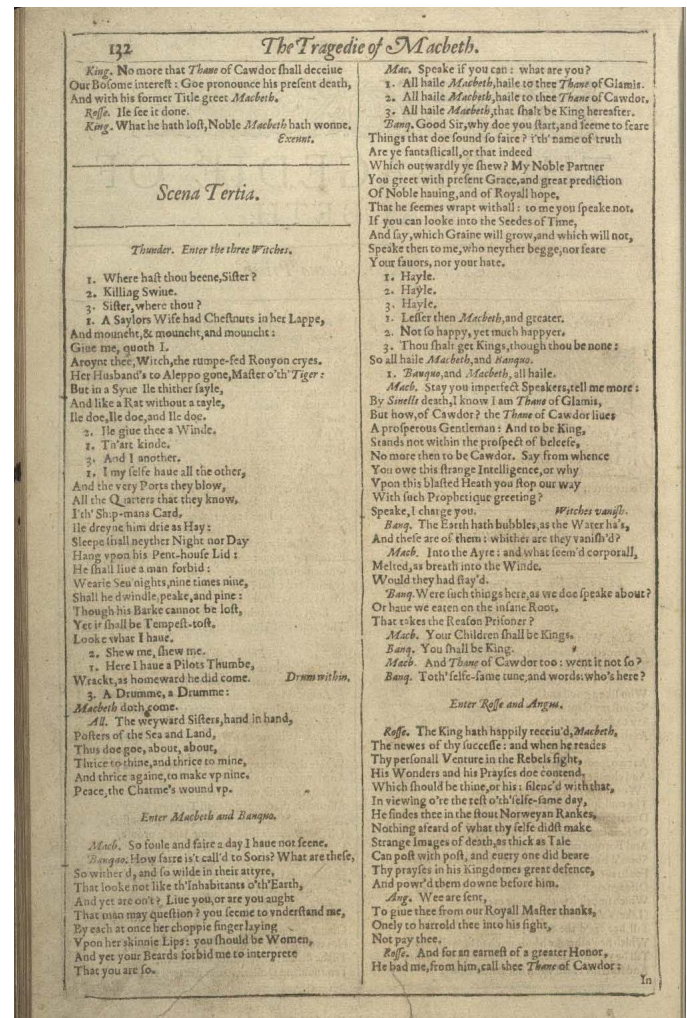
And speaking of mixing it up, in *Macbeth* Shakespeare throws in another type of rhythmic verse, *trochaic tetrameter*. Like an iamb, a trochee (pronounced TRO-key) is another type of poetic foot, or basic unit of a poem's meter. Its pattern of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable is the exact opposite of an iamb: TA dum (or TRO key). Compared to an iamb, this felt surprisingly unnatural to English-language speakers in Shakespeare's day, so he often used trochees for his supernatural characters. In *Macbeth*, the witches' spells are in trochaic tetrameter—that is, a line of poetry containing four (*tetra* meaning four; think of video game *Tetris*'s four-tile pieces) trochaic feet.

Here's a famous example, the witches from act 4, scene 1:

**Dou ble, dou ble toil and trou ble**

**Try this:** Tap out the rhythm of iambic pentameter, then tap out the rhythm of trochaic tetrameter. How does each one feel? Does one feel faster or easier than the other? Which one do you think more naturally represents the way we speak today?

**Try this:** Got skills? Try your hand at writing in Shakespearean verse. Write in iambic pentameter, trochaic tetrameter—or both!



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[nfs.sparknotes.com](http://nfs.sparknotes.com)

### Shakespeare Online

Named one of Microsoft's top ten websites for students, Shakespeare Online provides free, original, and accurate information on Shakespeare to students, teachers, and Shakespeare enthusiasts.

[www.shakespeare-online.com](http://www.shakespeare-online.com)

### William Shakespeare Info

Vast online resource for Shakespeare's works and biographical and background information.

[www.william-shakespeare.info](http://www.william-shakespeare.info)

### Macbeth Study Guides

Free comprehensive, downloadable *Macbeth* study guides:

[http://artsalive.ca/pdf/eth/activities/macbeth\\_guide.pdf](http://artsalive.ca/pdf/eth/activities/macbeth_guide.pdf)

<http://www.phillyshakespeare.org/learn/educational-resources>



## VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING

English: 9.4; 10.4; 12.4

Theatre Arts: TI.8-13, 16-18; TII.9-13, 15-17, 20-21; TIII.8-9, 11-12, 17-19; TIV.12-13, 17; TT.17, 21, 25





## Feedback Form

We need your feedback to make our Education Programs even better! Please take a moment to complete this form and either return it to the Virginia Arts Festival office at 440 Bank Street, Norfolk, VA 23510, fax it to (757) 605-3080, or e-mail your answers to [education@vafest.org](mailto:education@vafest.org).

WorldClass® Event: \_\_\_\_\_

How did your students respond to the performance?

How did you prepare your students for this performance? Did you use the Education Guide? If so, how? Did students enjoy the material?

How did this performance contribute to experiential learning in your classroom?

What role do the arts play in your school? In your classroom?

If you could change one thing about this experience, what would it be?

Please include quotes and comments from your students as well!

(Optional)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Would you like to be part of our database?  Yes  No



# 2018 Season



**Macbeth**  
January 17, 2018



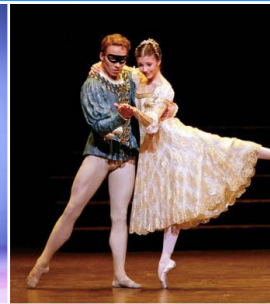
**Charlotte Blake Alston**  
February 8, 2018



**Rhythm Live!**  
February 23, 2018



**Alvin Ailey®**  
American Dance Theater  
March 2, 2018



**Romeo and Juliet**  
April 20, 2018



**Virginia International Tattoo**  
April 25-27, 2018

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PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

Virginia Arts Festival  
440 Bank Street  
Norfolk, VA 23510

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**Robert W. Cross**  
Executive & Artistic Director

**Christine Foust**  
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