

Macbeth

Macbeth is an old play by a man called William Shakespeare. It was written in 1606. Some of Shakespeare's plays are funny, but Macbeth is a terribly tragic story. The story takes place in Scotland. It all begins with three witches...

Thunder booms and lightning flashes. In a secret and lonely place, the witches meet. They want to find Macbeth.

'We will wait until his battles are over,' they decide. 'We will meet him on his way home.'



Macbeth has a good friend called Banquo. They are both tough leaders in King Duncan's army. They have been fighting two long wars, and they have won! Tired but happy with winning, they are going home.

A strange and dark storm is all around them. As they trudge through the rain, they see the three witches.

'Macbeth will be Lord of Cawdor!' calls out one of the ugly witches.

'Macbeth will be king!' cries another.

Macbeth and Banquo do not understand. Who are these witches? Could they really know the future? Macbeth is so shocked he cannot speak!

'What about me?' asks Banquo. 'Tell me my future!'

'Your own future is not as happy,' moan the witches. 'But your story ends better than Macbeth's. In a little time your children will rule Scotland!'

Macbeth and Banquo are still very confused. They really want to ask more questions but the witches leave without telling them anything else. The two friends do not know if they should believe what they have heard. But as they begin to march home again, they meet some men who have come from King Duncan. The men carry a special message. The King has made Macbeth the Lord of Cawdor! Macbeth is shocked; the witches are right!

Macbeth wants to know if the witches will be right about everything else. Will he become the King? He writes a short letter to his wife to tell her the story.

Later on, Macbeth and Banquo get back to Macbeth's home. King Duncan comes too.

Macbeth's wife has read the letter and knows what she wants.

'Kill the King!' whispers Macbeth's wife. 'Don't worry. No one will know the truth. You will be the new king!'

Macbeth is not sure, but his wife keeps pushing and pushing him to do it and so he agrees to murder the King. Macbeth and his wife come up with an evil and clever plan. Macbeth creeps into the King's bedroom and kills him while he sleeps. When the body is found, Macbeth tells everyone that the King's servants did it. The dead King has two sons called Malcolm and Donalbain. They are very scared and run away. Donalbain hides in Ireland and Malcolm goes to England. With no one left to follow King Duncan, Macbeth becomes the new King of Scotland! The witches are right again!

Macbeth knows the witches were right. But rather than enjoying being King, he is more worried than ever. If the witches were right about him, could they be right about Banquo's children ruling over Scotland? Will Banquo and his son kill him? Full of fear, Macbeth pays some men to try to kill Banquo and Banquo's son Fleance. Banquo is killed but Fleance escapes. When he finds out his plan has gone wrong, Macbeth is even more scared, and later that night he sees Banquo's ghost! People begin to think he is losing his mind.



Macbeth really needs to find help. Will he lose his crown and his life? Searching for answers, he goes back to the three witches. He finds them in a huge cave, sitting around a bubbling pot.

'Help me!' he begs. The witches show him three strange creatures, and each one gives him a different message.

'Watch out for Macduff!' moans the first creature, and Macbeth is worried.

'You can't be hurt by any man who has been born from a woman!' cries the second creature. Macbeth is pleased. Surely he will never be hurt!

'You are safe until trees move to your castle!' laughs the third creature, and Macbeth is very happy. Everybody knows that trees do not move!

Macduff understands how evil and dangerous Macbeth has become and runs away to England to find an army. He plans to make Scotland safe again by killing Macbeth. Soon he finds Malcolm, who is living as a guest of the English king and has gathered an army.

'Macbeth murdered my father!' cries Malcolm sadly.

'We will fight Macbeth together!' says Macduff. He joins Malcolm and his army. They and thousands of men march to Scotland to fight Macbeth.

Macbeth is still in Scotland, waiting in a strong castle. Lady Macbeth is full of worries that their guilt will be discovered. Soon she goes mad, and is seen sleepwalking and rubbing her hands. She believes they are covered in blood which she cannot wash off. Full of pain and guilt she dies, and when Macbeth hears what has happened he is sad. But he remembers what the witches said.

'I am still safe,' he thinks.



But then Malcolm and Macduff arrive leading their huge army. To hide how many soldiers are with them, they have made every man hold a leafy tree branch. The trees are moving to Macbeth's castle!

Macbeth is shocked and his confidence begins to fall. But he knows no man can hurt him. The witches said so! They have been right about everything else!

'The only sword I'm afraid of is one carried by a man without a mother!' screams Macbeth.

There is a huge and horrible battle. Macbeth is winning every fight. Macduff searches for him, and in the middle of the battle they find each other.

'Don't even try fighting me! You might as well stab the air! I can't be wounded by any man who has been born!' laughs Macbeth.

'Ha! Then be afraid Macbeth! I was not born the normal way!' shouts Macduff.

His last hope gone, Macbeth knows now that he will die. With a last desperate cry he runs at Macduff. Their swords and shields crash together! They fight on and on and in the end Macduff kills Macbeth, chopping off his head. The witches are right for the last time!

Macbeth

Put these events in the order that they happen in the story.

- A. Macbeth is killed.
- B. Macbeth and Banquo see the witches.
- C. Macbeth's wife goes mad.
- D. Macbeth kills the king.
- E. Macbeth sees the witches.

The witches only say one thing to Banquo, but it scares Macbeth.

1. Why would Macbeth be worried about Banquo's children becoming kings?

2. Why would Fleance's escape make Macbeth even more scared?

Why does Macbeth go to the witches for a second time?

In the whole play the witches say that six things will happen or be true in the future.

1. What is the sixth thing they say?

2. What happens which shows the sixth thing they say is true?

Macbeth is a play full of interesting characters.

1. Who do you think is the best or nicest character in the play? Why?

2. Who do you think is the worst or meanest character in the play? Why?

Two of these sentences about the story are true and two are false. Put 'True' or 'False' next to the right sentences.

- A. The story takes place in Ireland. _____
- B. William Shakespeare wrote the play. _____
- C. Macduff was not born the normal way. _____
- D. Macbeth kills Macduff. _____

In this story the writer shows that every time a person decides to do something, other things happen because of what they do. What do you think is the biggest decision made by a character in the story? Why is the decision so important? Remember to think about what the decision leads to.

Whose body is found before Macbeth blames the servants?

The text you have just read does not just tell a story. Find and explain one way that the writer has used a different type of writing.

When she is speaking to Macbeth about killing King Duncan, Macbeth's wife 'whispers' to him. What does the word 'whispers' tell you about the plan and how she is feeling?

Macbeth

Put these events in the order that they happen in the story.

- A. Macbeth is killed. 5
- B. Macbeth and Banquo see the witches. 1
- C. Macbeth's wife goes mad. 4
- D. Macbeth kills the king. 2
- E. Macbeth sees the witches. 3

The witches only say one thing to Banquo, but it scares Macbeth.

1. Why would Macbeth be worried about Banquo's children becoming kings? **The other things the witches said have come true. If Banquo's children are going to become kings, they will have to get rid of Macbeth and his children.**
2. Why would Fleance's escape make Macbeth even more scared? **Fleance escaping means that there is still a chance that what the witches said will come true. There is still someone from Banquo's family who could become king, and who might kill Macbeth to do it.**

Why does Macbeth go to the witches for a second time? **He needs their help and is worried.**

In the whole play the witches say that six things will happen or be true in the future.

1. What is the sixth thing they say? **That Macbeth is safe until trees move towards his castle.**
2. What happens which shows the sixth thing they say is true? **Macduff and Malcolm's army arrives at Macbeth's castle carrying tree branches.**

Macbeth is a play full of interesting characters.

1. Who do you think is the best or nicest character in the play? Why? **Various answers; must be justified.**
2. Who do you think is the worst or meanest character in the play? Why? **Various answers; must be justified.**

Two of these sentences about the story are true and two are false. Put 'True' or 'False' next to the right sentences.

- A. The story takes place in Ireland. **False**
- B. William Shakespeare wrote the play. **True**
- C. Macduff was not born the normal way. **True**
- D. Macbeth kills Macduff. **False**

In this story the writer shows that every time a person decides to do something, other things happen because of what they do. What do you think is the biggest decision made by a character in the story? Why is the decision so important? Remember to think about what the decision leads to. **Various answers; must be justified.**

Whose body is found before Macbeth blames the servants? **King Duncan's body**

The text you have just read does not just tell a story. Find and explain one way that the writer has used a different type of writing. **The writer has written a factual/non-fiction introduction before starting the fictional narrative.**

When she is speaking to Macbeth about killing King Duncan, Macbeth's wife 'whispers' to him. What does the word 'whispers' tell you about the plan and how she is feeling? **She wants the plan to remain a secret and is nervous/concerned about being overheard and discovered. She knows how terrible it would be for their treachery to be discovered.**