



Macbeth

Performance Guide

In Cincinnati Shakespeare Company's chilling adaptation of Shakespeare's darkest tragedy, the power-hungry Macbeth encounters supernatural forces and a prophetic destiny. Macbeth's quest for the throne becomes a wickedly entertaining escapade filled with ghostly encounters, mischievous schemes and a dash of otherworldly mischief. Whispers of prophecies come to life, plunging the characters into a realm of mayhem where loyalties crumble and the line between reality and the supernatural blurs. Brace yourself for a journey into the heart of darkness!

This performance guide includes:

- Artist bios
- A warmup activity and discussion prompt
- Background information
- Shakespearean vocabulary & locations
- Suggested Q & A questions
- Post-show discussion questions
- EdPuzzle activity
- Related Ohio Learning Standards

BEFORE THE SHOW

Meet the Artists

Cincinnati Shakespeare Company (CSC) is a resident ensemble theatre company bringing Shakespeare and the Classics to life for all. CSC's educational touring company brings Shakespeare's plays directly to students throughout Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. CSC engages and invites young voices to join the conversation about Shakespeare, the classics, drama, and more. Find Cincinnati Shakespeare Company at www.cincyshakes.com.

The 2024-2025 Educational Touring Company:



Jordan Whittaker

MACBETH



Zoë Peterson

LADY MACBETH / FIRST WITCH



Tess Wyrick

SECOND WITCH / ROSS / SEYTON / PORTER / MALCOLM



Malik Smith

THIRD WITCH / BANQUO / MACDUFF / DOCTOR

Classroom Warmup

As a class: Watch four different interpretations of Macbeth's witches.

1. [The Everyman Theatre 2011 stage production](#) (1:19)
2. [The Tragedy of Macbeth 2021 film](#) (4:17)
3. [Verdi's Macbeth: Act III Witches' Chorus](#) (1:43)
4. [Disney's Trick or Treat 1952 cartoon](#) (play approx. 40 sec.)

Individually: Imagine three witches appearing before you. What do they look like? How do they move? What do their voices sound like? Write or sketch your ideas. Be creative—your witches can be creepy, playful, non-human, ancient, or even futuristic!

In groups: Share your ideas and then combine your visions to create your own version of the three witches. Decide on their appearance, movements and voices. Rehearse your characters while reading the "Song of the Witches" on page 5 of this guide.

As a class: Perform your version of the "Song of the Witches" for the class. After each performance, discuss how each interpretation made you feel. How did different choices change the mood? What did you find most surprising or interesting?

Think While You Watch



Macbeth is a **tragedy** that explores ambition, power, and guilt. Tragedies feature a flawed hero, internal and external conflicts, fate versus free will, supernatural elements—and death! The supernatural challenges the characters’ perceptions of reality and fate, deepening the sense of inevitability and doom. The purpose of these elements is to create tension, provoke fear, and explore moral consequences.

What tools and techniques do the Cincy Shakes actors use to convey elements of tragedy in *Macbeth*? (Think about their timing, gestures, vocal delivery, props, costumes, etc.)

Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth: Out-damned spot. by John Thorntonwaite, 1784.
https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1931-0509-190

Macbeth Synopses

1. The Royal Shakespeare Company offers leveled interactive text-based plot summaries here: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/shakespeare-learning-zone/macbeth>
2. The Extra History YouTube channel offers an amusing animated synopsis with a bit of history: <https://youtu.be/jg6cSJS0NaI?si=Sa6wSbm334aI56Mr> (Stop at 7:23)

The Weird Sisters

Double, double toil and trouble...

Resembling the Fates of classical myth, these “wither’d and wild” sisters foretell Macbeth’s destiny. They have been depicted in art many times, including this famous painting by Henry Fuseli. Can you see the moth hovering in the background? What might it symbolize? Why did the artist choose to depict this scene?

Learn more about how the English king’s fear of witchcraft influenced (and possibly even cursed!) the play itself:

<https://www.rsc.org.uk/macbeth/about-the-play/the-scottish-play>



The Three Witches, c. 1783, oil on canvas by Henry Fuseli. The Kunsthhaus Zürich.
<https://collection.kunsthhaus.ch/en/collection/item/1107/>

Locations in *Macbeth*



1. **Inverness** – Macbeth’s castle before he becomes king
2. **Cawdor** – Land given by King Duncan to Macbeth after winning a battle
3. **Birnam Wood** – A forest near Dunsinane where Malcolm’s men disguise themselves with tree branches
4. **Dunsinane** – The castle where Macbeth stays to await Malcolm’s troops
5. **Glamis** – The land owned by Macbeth at the start of the play

Shakespearean Vocabulary

- **Avouch:** Affirm or assert
- **Beguile:** To attract or charm
- **Bodements:** An omen
- **Chastise:** To display criticism
- **Ere:** A shortened form of “ever”
- **Fie:** An exclamation of disgust or disapproval
- **“From his mother’s womb / Untimely ripped”** Meaning that Macduff was born by caesarean section
- **Hurly-burly:** Commotion, uproar
- **Metaphysical:** The supernatural and the idea that fate controls people’s lives
- **Potent:** Powerful, persuasive
- **Thane:** Title for a Scottish lord who held land given by the king
- **Usurpers:** People who wrongfully seize power
- **Weird:** From Old English “wyrd” meaning fate

The Q & A

Artists love to answer thoughtful questions! If you are having trouble thinking of a question, here are some that are sure to be well-received.

- Which is your favorite Shakespeare role to perform?
- Who are you inspired by?
- What kind of training/education did you complete?
- What’s your favorite (or least favorite) part about this work? Why?
- What advice would you have for someone wanting to follow in your footsteps?

Song of the Witches

Double, double toil and trouble;

Fire burn and caldron bubble.

Fillet of a fenny snake,

In the caldron boil and bake;

Eye of newt and toe of frog,

Wool of bat and tongue of dog,

Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,

Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,

For a charm of powerful trouble,

Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

Double, double toil and trouble;

Fire burn and caldron bubble.

Cool it with a baboon's blood,

Then the charm is firm and good.

Notes:

Macbeth: IV.i 10-19; 35-38

Source: The Random House Book of Poetry for Children (1983)

Found online at: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43189/song-of-the-witches-double-double-toil-and-trouble>

AFTER THE SHOW

Post-Show Classroom Discussion

Discuss or write a reflection: Review the “Think While You Watch” prompt. How did the actors use timing, gesture, line delivery, props, and other elements of the stage to create a convincing tragedy?

Follow-up Questions

- Several of the actors played multiple characters. How did that adaptation impact the story and your experience?
- Did the play change your expectations of Shakespeare? Why or why not?
- Why does Macbeth agree to do what Lady Macbeth wants?
- What role does the supernatural play in *Macbeth*? Is it good, evil, both, or something else?
- Does Macbeth deserve our sympathy? Why or why not?

Student Survey



Tell us about your experience at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RCLZCOX> (or scan the QR code).

We want to hear from you!

Macbeth: Fact or Fiction?



In this EdPuzzle, you’ll watch a five-minute video to learn about the real Scottish history that (loosely) inspired Shakespeare’s tragedy. You’ll be asked to consider and respond to several questions.

Student Link (no account or name required):

<https://edpuzzle.com/open/kunowah>

Student answers are submitted anonymously to Muse Machine.

Teacher Preview Link: <https://edpuzzle.com/media/67be0e2adb46b095305abcbf>

Teachers can copy the EdPuzzle into their own account and edit the questions to better suit their class’s learning objectives. Student answers are submitted to the teacher, not to Muse.

FOR TEACHERS

Related Ohio Learning Standards

The following standards are linked to the artist’s performance, students’ participation as audience members, and the activities in the performance guide. Teachers may be able to make additional connections.

Drama

Creating (CE)	
6.3	Examine the basic principles and elements of various theatrical genres.
6.6	Engage in ensemble-building activities to build character, emotion, mood, and tone.
7.2	Develop physical and vocal character traits in improvised scenes and throughout a rehearsal process.
HSP.3	Explain how theatrical artists create meaning to convey a playwright’s intent.
Performing (PE)	
6.1	Create and perform improvisations and scripted scenes based on personal experience and imagination.
6.3	Examine and demonstrate how theatrical artists conceptualize and convey an idea or message.
Responding (RE)	
6.1	Express and compare personal reactions to various theatrical elements using appropriate theatrical vocabulary and terminology.
6.3	Determine the effectiveness of a specific artistic choice in communicating a theatrical work.
7.4	Critique a personal rehearsal or performance on the basis of technique, vocal quality, facial expression, and gestures.
8.5	Identify ways actors and designers adjust aspects of performance to adapt to different settings, audiences, and contemporary social influences.
HSP.3	Examine traditional and nontraditional interpretations of a theatrical work.
Connecting (CO)	
6.1	Investigate the time period and place of a drama or theatre work to better understand performance and design choices.
6.2	Explain how the actions and motivations of characters in a drama or theatre work impact perspective of a community or culture.
7.1	Examine artifacts from a time period and geographic location to better understand performance and design choices in a dramatic or theatrical work.
8.7	Investigate opportunities for further theatrical or dramatic arts involvement and instruction in the community.
HSP.5	Research and report on career opportunities in theatre and drama; investigate the level of discipline, knowledge and skill required for career preparation in drama and theatre.

Reading Literature

CCR Anchor Standard 6	(Grade 8) Analyze how differences in the points of view and perspectives of the characters and the audience or reader create effects such as suspense or humor.
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CCR Anchor Standard 7	(Grade 8) Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.
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Writing

CCR Anchor Standard 4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
CCR Anchor Standard 10	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Speaking and Listening

CCR Anchor Standard 1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
CCR Anchor Standard 2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
CCR Anchor Standard 3	Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Social and Emotional Learning

Self-Awareness	A4: Demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility, confidence, and advocacy
Relationship Skills	D1: Apply positive verbal and non-verbal communication and social skills to interact effectively with others and in groups D2: Develop and maintain positive relationships
Responsible Decision-making	E4: Explore and approach new situations with an open mind and curiosity while recognizing that some outcomes are not certain or comfortable