

1 – THE WITCHES

Why does Shakespeare start the play with the witches?

WHAT YOU NEED

- Some pieces of paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#) and [this page](#).
- A copy of Act 1 Scene 1 from Macbeth to read, either on the page or onscreen.
- A mobile phone or tablet with microphone ready to record sound.

ACTIVITY

- Look up the picture gallery of the witches in the RSC Learning Zone Character [Who's Who page](#). Which images look most like the witches you would choose if you were directing Macbeth?
- Watch [this clip](#) on iambic pentameter. Read Act 1 Scene 1 out loud, seeing how many of the lines fit this heartbeat rhythm. What does Shakespeare do with the rhythm in this short scene to affect the audience?
- Think of the different sounds in this scene - it is set on a heath in Scotland, after a great violent battle. If you have time, make a soundscape of this short scene, including lines from the text if you wish. Or you can play your soundscape and read the lines over the recording to see what it adds to your scene.
- Ask yourself: Where have the witches come from? What would Shakespeare's audience have made of the witches? How do we feel about such things today?

EXTENSION

- Design a witch puppet. This can be as simple or elaborate as you like. Decide what type of puppet it will be and draw out your design on some paper. Your witch could be a glove puppet, rod puppet, shadow puppet or marionette on strings. You can look up different kinds of puppets online for some ideas.
- Make your witch puppet and bring it to life! You could use modelling clay or paper mâché for the head and make clothes and hair out of scrap material and wool. You can be as ambitious as you like or keep it simple, your witch could be a wooden spoon with a face!
- Try out a voice for your puppet using lines from Act 1 Scene 1 or Act 1 Scene 3. Use your soundscape as background atmosphere. Try filming the results!

PRIMARY ACTIVITY

- Click on the witches in the Character Who's Who section on [this page](#). It opens up a gallery of images of witches in different productions of Macbeth. Which images look most like the witches you imagine?
- Watch [this clip](#) on the rhythm Shakespeare uses in his writing. Read Act 1 Scene 1 out loud, seeing how many of the lines fit this heartbeat rhythm. What effect does this rhythm have when you speak the lines? Do they speed up or slow down?
- Ask yourself: Where have the witches come from? What would Shakespeare's audience have made of the witches? How do we feel about witches today?
- Design a witch puppet! This can be as simple as you like. Decide what type of puppet it will be and draw out your design on some paper. Your witch could be a glove puppet, a shadow puppet or it can have sticks or strings to make it move. You can look up different kinds of puppets on a computer for some ideas.

PRIMARY EXTENSION

- Make your witch puppet and bring it to life! You could use modelling clay or paper mâché for the head and make clothes and hair out of scrap material and wool. You can be as ambitious as you like or keep it simple, your witch could be a wooden spoon with a face!
- Using a mobile phone or tablet, film your witch puppet. You can give it a voice using lines from the play!