

MICHAEL
MORPURGO'S
TALES
FROM
SHAKESPEARE

MACBETH

TEACHER PACK

ABOUT THIS PACK

This pack supports the RSC's 2021 performances of Michael Morpurgo's Tales from Shakespeare, Macbeth.

The activities provided in this pack are specifically designed to support KS1-3 pupils in their writing and offers a number of writing opportunities centred around Macbeth, exploring the story, characters and vocabulary.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

Notes from the production, background info or extracts



ACTIVITY

A practical or open space activity



WRITE

A classroom writing or discussion activity



LINKS

Useful web addresses and research tasks

ABOUT THE APPROACH

The practical activities which are described in this pack act as an important part of the writing process because they give pupils the content of their writing:

- a deep understanding of plots
- awareness of settings
- detailed understanding of characters and their relationships, dilemmas and motivations
- a rich vocabulary to use in their writing

The exploratory exercises, which use RSC rehearsal room pedagogy, help to provide a strong audience and purpose for writing, enabling pupils to write for effect on the reader. Each activity may take more than one session to complete but the time spent on these practical tasks is an investment in the pupils' writing because, when they come to write, much of the work of the writer is already done and pupils have, therefore, the cognitive capacity to write effectively.

Beneath each writing opportunity you will also find some classroom notes from Jan Anderson, one of the RSC's Associate Schools Teachers who has created this pack with us. These notes offer ideas and suggestions for how you might extend and adapt activities for pupils of different age groups, and come from experience of working this way with pupils to create writing around Shakespeare's texts.

ESTABLISHING SETTING



ACTIVITY 1: EXPLORING THE BATTLE

'The battle had been hard fought and hard won.'

Michael Morpurgo, *Macbeth*

In this activity, the pupils explore the battle at the start of the story and are introduced to two of the characters there. There are opportunities for writing reports of events at the battle. Pupils will need a space such as a hall or classroom cleared of some furniture to work in for the first part. Teacher will need a drum.

- Ask pupils to stand in their own space in the room and begin to slowly walk around, being careful to keep a distance from other people. Explain that they need to stop when you tell them to and walk when you tell them to.
- Invite pupils to stop when you ask, and this time create an image or freeze frame of a 'king'. Allow them a maximum of 15 seconds to do this, without talking.
- Ask half the pupils to relax and look at the other half. Reflect with them on what they notice about the kings, before asking the other half to share theirs.
- Repeat this exercise again, asking pupils to form groups of different sizes (for example, four or five) each time they stop, and to create:
 - a king with his army.
 - brave generals.
 - Generals who are also close friends
- Reflect with pupils on how the images are different. How is a king with an army different from a king? How did the generals change when they were friends?
- Invite pupils to then find a space in the room and imagine they are soldiers on a battlefield.
- Read The **Battle Description** (resources) aloud as the pupils stand, in role as soldiers, following the instructions on the sheet.
- Narrate, as pupils remain on 'the battlefield' after their battle moves, that a general called Macbeth and his friend called Banquo are leading the soldiers.
- Ask all the pupils to imagine that they are the general Macbeth and, as you tell them some of the things which Macbeth did in the battle, they should mime them and show what is being read.
- Read **Macbeth in Battle** (resources) giving pupils time to show each line of text before moving on.



WRITING OPPORTUNITY: THE WITCHES' BOOK

- Explain to pupils that, out of sight of the soldiers, three withered creatures have been watching the battle and have been particularly interested in Macbeth's part in it. They have two books (show images of Witches' Books – resources). On the front of one is Macbeth's name and Banquo's is on the other; under each name are the words ...'look into the seeds of time and say which grain will grow and which will not...'
- Explain that the creatures write in Macbeth's book.

- Explain to the pupils that they are going to write in role as one of these creatures, describing the battle and Macbeth's part in it for entry into his book.
- Provide pupils with highlighters and look back at the texts used in the drama work asking pupils to highlight words and sections of the text which might be useful in writing the creature's account of the battle and Macbeth's part in it.
- Encourage pupils to keep this selection limited to avoid duplicate copies of Shakespeare's text.
- **Ask pupils who the audience for this piece of writing is – (anyone who may read Macbeth's book).**
- Explain that, in this case, the tone of the writing should be formal as people who the creature does not know well may be reading the writing.
- Remind pupils of features of formality which have been taught (formal vocabulary – *battled bravely*, no contractions, use of the passive – *the rebel was unseamed*, use of the subjunctive – *if the King were at the battlefield*). This will, of course, be dependent on the age and ability of the pupils.
- **Ask pupils to suggest what the purpose of the writing is (to describe, to recount, to inform, to give detail – and pupils may suggest many more).**
- Explain that the writing, therefore, needs to be in chronological order, clear, descriptive, detailed and informative and discuss features that wouldn't be found in it. For example, it would contain reported rather than direct speech.
- Ask pupils to write the account of the battle focusing on Macbeth's part in it, picking out some good examples to read aloud to the class after a few minutes and supporting them with structure, tone and purpose as they write.
- Once writing is completed, ask pupils to take editing pens and work in pairs.
- Ask pupils to imagine that one of them is the creature and the other someone who reads their book, while the creature reads their account, ask their partner to listen carefully and consider if they know enough about everything that has happened to Macbeth, ask any further questions or clarify any points and make suggestions about improvements.
- Give each pair time, as they read, to edit and improve their writing then swap roles.

NOTES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Younger pupils could write sentences using the stem, 'I was on the battlefield and I...' describing some of the things which they did, saw or heard.

The word carpet and Macbeth in battle would be useful resources to support the pupil's writing but be wary of giving pupils a copy of the battle description as they may be over-reliant on this for their own writing.

This writing could be supplemented with illustrations for inclusion in the Witches' book (which of course, could be made).

Editing pairs can work well as mixed ability pairs or matched ability pairs – I find that it is often dependant on pupils who work well together as it is the process of reading the writing aloud to an audience which makes the pupils spot their own errors and add improvements rather than the partner's suggestions. With less able pupils, the editing process can be supported by adults.

EXPLORING THE CHARACTERS



ACTIVITY 2: MEETING THE WITCHES

'...three dark figures...neither real nor unreal.'

Michael Morpurgo, Macbeth

In this activity, the pupils explore Macbeth and Banquo's first meeting with the witches and their prophesies. There are opportunities for the writing of descriptive narrative.

Pupils will need a space such as a hall or classroom cleared of some furniture to work in for the first part.

- Spread the '**Witches word carpet**' (resources) out on the floor, each phrase on a separate piece of paper and ask the pupils to walk around the space and, at a signal, stop by one that they like, making a frozen image of the word or phrase.
- Ask some pupils, one at a time, to say their word out loud whilst remaining frozen and continue until most of the phrases have been heard.
- Explain that these phrases and words describe three witches who come into the story after the battle.

THE HEATH AND THE WITCHES

- Invite pupils to sit in a large circle and, as you narrate the following, write the underlined words on separate pieces of paper and place them in the circle.
- Narrate that:

After the battle, the two generals, Macbeth and Banquo, begin to travel back to Macbeth's castle in Glamis where he is the thane (lord). The weather is 'foul' as they walk across a 'blasted heath'. The 'thunder' rumbles over the 'windswept moor' and these two generals were making their weary way in the 'half-dark' and lost in the 'mist'. (adapted from Michael Morpurgo: Macbeth)
- Ask the pupils to imagine that they are Macbeth or Banquo on that moor and listen as you read the words in the circle again.
- Collect suggestions for other things that the generals can see, hear and feel about the place and weather, writing them on separate pieces of paper and adding them to the ones in the circle.
- Ask pupils to listen once more to all the words with their eyes closed so they can visualise the setting.
- Choose three pupils to sit in the centre of the circle and tell them that, on a signal from you, they should stand up and make the frozen images of the witches which they made in the warm-up.
- Organise the remaining pupils in the circle into two groups, asking one half to pretend to be Macbeth and the other half Banquo.
- Narrate that, as they walk across the blasted heath Macbeth says: 'So fair and foul a day I have not seen.' Ask the pupils playing Macbeth to repeat the line. Discuss why he thinks the day is fair and why he thinks it is also foul.
- Ask the pupils playing Macbeth to repeat the sentence once more and ask the three pupils in the centre to stand up in their frozen image when they have finished speaking.
- Whilst the 'witches' are in their image, distribute '**Witches description**' (resources) and ask all the pupils playing Banquo to read chorally from the sheet.

Ask the pupils playing Macbeth to repeat after you: 'Speak if you can: what are you?'

THE PROPHECIES

- Arrange pupils into groups of five with copies of **Witches' prophecy** (resources). (If you need some groups of six, one pupil could direct).
- Ask each group to read through the text together and decide who will play each part.
- Ask pupils to consider how they will say each line, how they will move and their facial expressions.
- Allow time for pupils to practice and then share some, or all, of the scenes depending on time.
- Discuss with pupils what the witches predicted for Banquo and for Macbeth, ensuring that this is understood.



WRITING OPPORTUNITY: PUCK'S SPEECH

- Share with pupils the images of the **'witches' books'** (resources Activity 1) and explain that the prophecies for both Macbeth and Banquo are written in their books – in fact, the witches predicted everything about the day from the weather to how Macbeth and Banquo would react to their prophecies.
- Read **'Banquo's prophecy'** (resources) as a model and ask pupils to write, in role as one of the witches, Macbeth's prophecy.
- Provide pupils with highlighters and look back at the text used in the drama work asking pupils to highlight words and sections of the text which might be useful in writing Macbeth's prophecy.
- Encourage pupils to keep this selection limited to avoid duplicate copies of Shakespeare's text.
- **Ask pupils who the audience for this piece of writing is – (Macbeth).**
- Explain that, in this case, the tone of the writing should be formal as Macbeth is a rich and influential thane.
- Remind pupils of features of formality which have been taught (formal vocabulary – *prophecy*, no contractions, use of the passive – *will be crowned*, use of the subjunctive – *if Macbeth were to become King*). This will, of course, be dependent on the age and ability of the pupils.
- **Ask pupils to suggest what the purpose of the writing is (to inform, to give detail, to entice, to predict – and pupils may suggest many more).**
- Explain that the writing, therefore, needs to be clear, descriptive, detailed and informative and discuss features that wouldn't be found in it – eg – dialogue.
- Re-read the model of Banquo's prophecy pointing out any features discussed and consider the structure of this model.
- Ask pupils to write Macbeth's prophecy, picking out some good examples to read aloud to the class after a few minutes and supporting them with structure, tone and purpose as they write.
- Once writing is completed, ask pupils to take editing pens and work in pairs.
- Ask pupils to imagine that one of them is the witch and the other Macbeth, while the witch reads the prophecy, ask Macbeth to listen carefully and ask any further questions or clarify any points and make suggestions about improvements.
- Give each pair time, as they read, to edit and improve their writing then swap roles.

NOTES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Younger pupils could record what Macbeth's prophecies were.

Having a similar model for writing instead of 'what a good one looks like', sets the tone and level of detail required but pupils are more likely to produce a more independent piece of writing.



ACTIVITY 3: A MESSENGER FROM KING DUNCAN

'...they were met by the king's messenger with ... news...'

Michael Morpurgo, Macbeth

In this activity, the pupils will discover the next part of the story. There are opportunities for narrative writing in the form of a diary.

Pupils will need a space such as a hall or classroom cleared of some furniture to work in for the first part.

- Explain to pupils that the prophecies are a secret between Macbeth and Banquo and that, even though the witches said that Macbeth would be Thane of Cawdor and King, the Thane of Cawdor is alive and well, as is King Duncan and King Duncan also has two sons who would become King after him if he should die.
- Ask two pupils to make a frozen image of Macbeth and Banquo in the centre of the circle and repeat the last two lines from the Active story-telling:
 - Macbeth: Your children shall be kings.
 - Banquo: You shall be King.
- Discuss what each character is thinking now. Do they trust each other?
- Ask the two pupils in the centre of the circle to remain there as Banquo and Macbeth and pass the **King's message to Macbeth** (resources) around the circle.
- Inform pupils in the circle that they are all messengers from King Duncan and chorally read the message on the sheet together. (Teacher could play messenger for younger pupils.)
- Discuss with pupils what the message is and what it means.
- Explain that King Duncan has discovered that the Thane of Cawdor was helping his enemy, the King of Norway, during the battle and, as a traitor to his King, will lose his money, land and title. And the King has decided to give that title to Macbeth instead! Remind pupils of the witches' first prophecy for Macbeth as they discover this.
- Ask pupils to pretend to be Macbeth and write down (younger pupils can discuss) answers to the following questions:
 - What was the message from the King?
 - What do you think about the witches' prophecies now?
 - What do you think might happen in the future?
 - What do you think Banquo might be thinking?



WRITING OPPORTUNITY: MACBETH'S DIARY

- In the classroom, read '**Banquo's diary**' (resources) as a model.
- Tell pupils that they are going to write in role as Macbeth, writing an entry for his diary describing what has happened during the battle, his meeting with the witches and his message from the King and detailing his thoughts and feelings about those events.
- **Ask pupils who the audience for this piece of writing is – (Macbeth / himself).**
- Explain that, in this case, the tone of the writing should be informal because the writer is writing for themselves.

- Remind pupils of features of informality which have been taught (informal vocabulary - 'so ugly', use of contractions, use of dashes and exclamation marks, use of question tags – 'Banquo will believe the witches now – won't he?'). This will, of course, be dependent on the age and ability of the pupils.
- **Ask pupils to suggest what the purpose of the writing is (to describe events and the writer's feelings and thoughts, to give detail – and pupils may suggest many more).**
- Explain that the writing, therefore, needs to be detailed and needs to focus on the feelings and thoughts of Macbeth and should focus on the events which would be important to him; discuss features that wouldn't be found in it. For example, it would contain reported rather than direct speech.
- Re-read the model of Banquo's diary pointing out any features discussed and consider the structure of this model.
- Ask pupils to write their diaries, picking out some good examples to read aloud to the class after a few minutes and supporting them with structure, tone and purpose as they write.
- Once writing is completed, ask pupils to take editing pens and work in pairs.
- Ask pupils to imagine that one of them is Macbeth and the other a friend reading their private diary, while Macbeth reads their diary entry to the friend, ask them to listen carefully and consider if they know enough about what has happened to Macbeth and his feelings, ask any further questions or clarify any points and make suggestions about improvements.
- Give each pair time, as they read, to edit and improve their writing then swap roles.

NOTES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Younger pupils could write sentences answering the questions asked in the activity or sentences describing Macbeth's feelings.



ACTIVITY 4: MEETING LADY MACBETH

'...a woman who was ... ambitious for power...'

Michael Morpurgo, Macbeth

In this activity, the pupils will be introduced to Lady Macbeth. There are opportunities for the writing of a letter.

Pupils will need a space such as a hall or classroom cleared of some furniture to work in for the first part and would benefit from a warm up exercise that reminds them of the characters they have met so far.

- Arrange pupils in a large circle and ask one confident pupil to stand in the centre pretending to be Lady Macbeth and holding a piece of paper.
- Explain to them that she is waiting for her husband, Macbeth, to return home from the battle and she is holding a letter in her hand from Macbeth which describes the battle, the meeting with the witches, the prophecies and the message from the King.
- Tell pupils that Lady Macbeth is married to Macbeth, that they have no children and that she would like them both to have more power than they do.
- Ask the pupils in the circle to write, on a piece of scrap paper, one piece of news that Macbeth would include in his letter to his wife, for example, 'it was a long and hard battle'.
- Taking turns around the circle, say that news out loud to Lady Macbeth in the centre.

- Ask pupils to consider if there is any news which they have missed out and if so, to tell Lady Macbeth that news.
- Discuss how Lady Macbeth feels when she hears all this news, asking the pupil in the centre to reflect as well. Are there pieces of news that stand out or are more shocking?



WRITING OPPORTUNITY: MACBETH'S LETTER TO LADY MACBETH

- Explain to pupils that they will be writing in role as Macbeth. They will write his letter to Lady Macbeth detailing everything that has happened since the start of the battle.
- Ask pupils to think about the order of thoughts in Macbeth's letter– would it be in chronological order?
- Organise, as a class, the messages given to Lady Macbeth during the drama work into an order for their writing and either scribe these onto a flip chart or allow pupils time to make notes.
- **Ask pupils who the audience for this piece of writing is – (Lady Macbeth).**
- Explain that, in this case, the tone of the writing should be quite informal because she is Macbeth's wife.
- Remind pupils of features of informality which have been taught (informal vocabulary - '*will be home soon*', use of contractions, use of dashes and exclamation marks, use of question tags – '*Be ready for me-won't you?*'). This will, of course, be dependent on the age and ability of the pupils.
- **Ask pupils to suggest what the purpose of the writing is (to inform, to excite, to describe – and pupils may suggest many more).**
- Explain that the writing, therefore, needs to be personal, descriptive and detailed and discuss features that wouldn't be found in it. For example, it would contain reported rather than direct speech.
- Ask pupils to write Macbeth's letter, using the notes to help with the structure, picking out some good examples to read aloud to the class after a few minutes and supporting them with structure, tone and purpose as they write.
- Once writing is completed, ask pupils to take editing pens and work in pairs.
- Ask pupils to imagine that one of them is Macbeth and the other Lady Macbeth, while Macbeth reads their letter to his wife, ask 'Lady Macbeth' to listen carefully and consider if they know enough about what has happened to Macbeth, ask any further questions or clarify any points and make suggestions about improvements.
- Give each pair time, as they read, to edit and improve their writing then swap roles.

NOTES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Younger pupils could write the main events with the help of a story-map with images which they could create together.



ACTIVITY 5: LADY MACBETH'S PLAN

'She knew of old how to make her husband do whatever she wanted...'

Michael Morpurgo, Macbeth

In this activity, the pupils will explore Lady Macbeth's plan. There are opportunities for the writing of a persuasive letter.

Pupils will need a space such as a hall or classroom cleared of some furniture to work in for the first part.

- Remind pupils that Lady Macbeth would like to have more power for herself and her husband.
- Ask one confident pupil to sit in the centre and in role as Lady Macbeth and read aloud one of the letters from Macbeth that was written at the end of Activity 4. (For younger pupils, the teacher could retell the events from the story map which was created in Activity 4.)
- Narrate that Lady Macbeth now knows four things:
 - The witches have prophesied that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor.
 - The witches have prophesied that Macbeth will be King of Scotland.
 - The witches have prophesied that Banquo's children will be kings.
 - The first of the witches' predictions has come true already.
- Discuss what Lady Macbeth might be thinking now.

- Narrate that a messenger arrives as Lady Macbeth has just finished reading Macbeth's letter. He says, 'The King comes here tonight.'
- Arrange pupils in a circle. Hand out **Lady Macbeth's soliloquy** (resources) but tell them that they are not allowed to look at it yet.
- Allow pupils ten seconds to look at the text and choose one word from it which stands out to them.
- Ask pupils to devise an action to go with their word and perform these words and actions, one at a time, around the circle.
- Explain that this text is what Lady Macbeth is thinking and planning after she has read Macbeth's letter and heard that King Duncan is coming to stay at their castle that night. Can pupils say what she might be thinking yet?
- Arrange the class into eight groups and give each group one part of **Lady Macbeth's soliloquy**.
- Ask each group to read their part of the text, pick out key words and create actions for those words.
- Invite each group to practice performing their section of the text with the actions and text.
- Allow pupils the opportunity to share these performances in order from one to eight.
- Discuss if pupils have any more thoughts about what Lady Macbeth is thinking, feeling or planning.



WRITING OPPORTUNITY: LADY MACBETH'S REPLY

- In the classroom, tell pupils that they are going to write in role as Lady Macbeth who is going to write a reply to Macbeth's letter telling him her plan and trying to persuade him to agree to it.
- Choose a good letter of Macbeth's written during activity four and read it to the pupils as a model (have it scanned if possible so that pupils can refer back to it.)
- Provide pupils with highlighters and look back at the text 'Lady Macbeth's soliloquy' (resources) asking pupils to highlight words and sections of the text which might be useful in writing Lady Macbeth's letter.
- Encourage pupils to keep this selection limited to avoid duplicate copies of Shakespeare's text.
- **Ask pupils who the audience for this piece of writing is – (Macbeth).**
- Explain that, in this case, the tone of the writing should be quite informal because he is Lady Macbeth's husband.

- Remind pupils of features of informality which have been taught (informal vocabulary - 'we must be brave', use of contractions, use of dashes and exclamation marks, use of question tags – 'You deserve to be King – don't you?'). This will, of course, be dependent on the age and ability of the pupils.
- **Ask pupils to suggest what the purpose of the writing is (to persuade, to excite, to entice, to praise – and pupils may suggest many more).**
- Explain that the writing, therefore, needs to be persuasive, descriptive and detailed and discuss content that wouldn't be found in it. For example, would Lady Macbeth mention what might happen if the plan fails?
- Ask pupils to write Lady Macbeth's letter, using the model to help with the structure, picking out some good examples to read aloud to the class after a few minutes and supporting them with structure, tone and purpose as they write.
- Once writing is completed, ask pupils to take editing pens and work in pairs.
- Ask pupils to imagine that one of them is Lady Macbeth and the other Macbeth, while Lady Macbeth reads their letter to her husband, ask 'Macbeth' to listen carefully and consider if he knows enough about his wife's plan, ask any further questions or clarify any points and make suggestions about improvements.
- Give each pair time, as they read, to edit and improve their writing then swap roles.

NOTES FOR THE CLASSROOM

The youngest pupils could stop after part three and write all the tasks which Lady Macbeth has to do to prepare for the arrival of the King at her home.

Further writing opportunities

The series of five activities are designed to be carried out with pupils before watching the active story-telling; they introduce the main characters, setting, themes and vocabulary so that pupils can access the stories and be excited to find out how the story unfolds.

Further writing opportunities could be created during and after the performance and could include the following:

- Morpurgo describes how Macbeth is the hero of the hour after the battle: pupils could write the King's description of Macbeth.
- Morpurgo describes the battle with Norway: pupils could write a report of the battle for the King.
- Morpurgo describes how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth contemplate the murder of the King: pupils could write a double diary entry of their thoughts at this point in the story; one of Macbeth's and one of Lady Macbeth's.
- Morpurgo describes how Lady Macbeth 'knows the art of persuasion': pupils could write her speech persuading Macbeth to murder the King.
- Morpurgo describes the murder of King Duncan: pupils could write an eye-witness account of the murder imagining that the porter had seen everything.
- Morpurgo describes how the murder of the King is discovered and his sons are suspicious of Macbeth: pupils could write an account of that morning from the point-of-view of the King's son Malcolm.
- Morpurgo describes how Banquo becomes suspicious of Macbeth: pupils could write Banquo's diary entry at this point.
- Morpurgo describes how Macbeth sets 'a murderous trap' for Banquo and his son: pupils could write a play script of the conversation between Macbeth and the hired assassins.
- Morpurgo describes the attack on Banquo and his son, Fleance: pupils could write the assassin's report for Macbeth.
- Morpurgo describes the banquet to celebrate Macbeth's coronation and how Macbeth acted strangely there: pupils could write a diary entry of one of the dinner guests describing the banquet.

- Morpurgo describes how the ghost of Banquo behaves at Macbeth’s banquet: pupils could write what the ghost would say if he could speak or an account of the evening from the ghost’s point-of-view.
- Morpurgo describes the witches ‘chanting their charms’ as Macbeth meets them for a second time: pupils could write their spells and list ingredients for them.
- Morpurgo describes how the witches show Macbeth Banquo’s descendants as Kings: pupils could write Macbeth’s soliloquy after seeing this, detailing his plan.
- Morpurgo describes how Macbeth came to be openly ‘loathed and feared’: pupils could write Macduff’s description of Macbeth at this point of the story and pupils could compare this to King Malcolm’s description of him at the start of the story.
- Morpurgo describes how Macbeth still ‘longs to be loved and honoured’: pupils could write Macbeth’s broadcast to the nation.
- Morpurgo describes how Lady Macbeth becomes ill: pupils could write a diary entry for her at this point of the story or a doctor’s report of her behaviour for Macbeth to read.
- Morpurgo describes how Malcolm and Macduff gather forces to fight Macbeth: pupils could write two speeches asking and persuading the people of Scotland to help them fight: one from Macduff and one from Macbeth.
- Morpurgo describes the final battle between Macduff’s army and Macbeth’s: pupils could write a report of this battle.

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RESOURCES

'Battle Word Carpet'

Cry for help

Point against point

Arm against arm

Swarm

Good and hardy soldier

Rebel

Gashes

Bathe in reeking wounds

Redoubled strokes

Foe

Bloody execution

Fresh assault

Unseamed from the nave to the chops

Faint

Bloody man

Norwegian banners

Battle description

(Read aloud to pupils)

The soldiers tensed on the barren battle field as they stared grimly at the enemy, waiting for the signal from their leaders...the signal to begin the fight...the signal that may hasten the end of their lives.

The seconds stretched into minutes as cold hands grasped cold weapons and the icy wind threatened to tear the Norwegian banners to shreds.

Still, the signal did not come; the only sounds to break the dreadful silence were the occasional thud of a horse's hoof as it shifted nervously on the frozen earth and the quiet murmur of prayers.

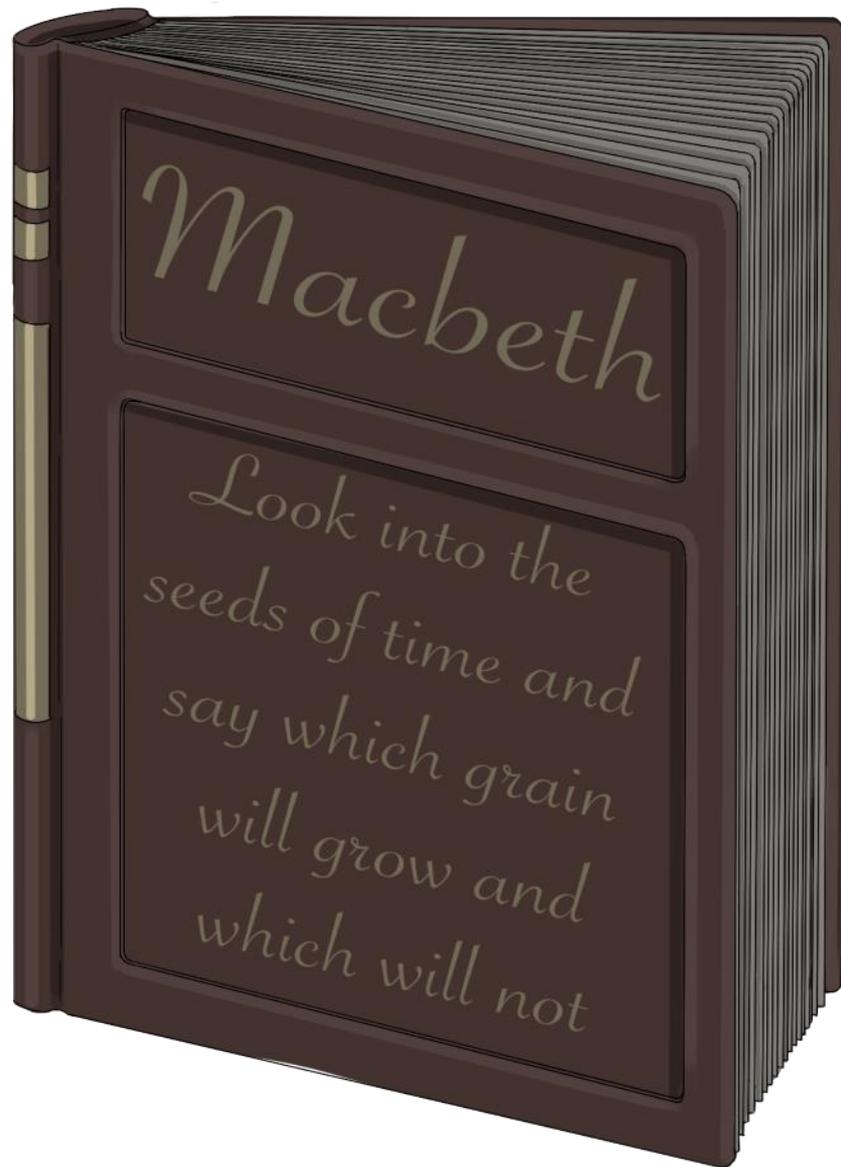
Hands began to shake and foreheads prickled with beads of sweat despite the frozen air. Thoughts returned to homes, to firesides and to loved ones and then it came – shattering those images. The drum which signalled the start of battle.

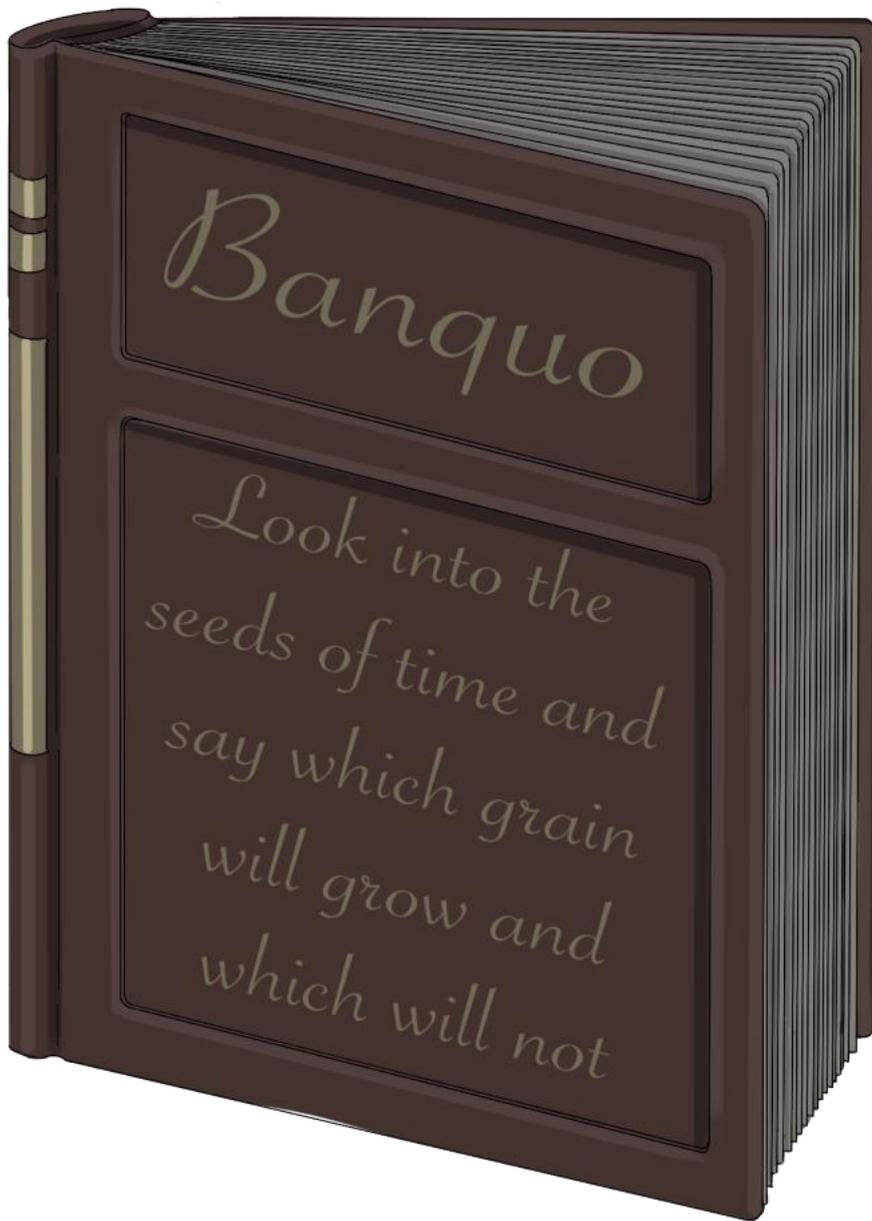
(Beat the drum slowly 5 times whilst pupils perform their battle moves and words.)

Macbeth in battle

- Brave Macbeth
- With his brandished steel
- Carved out his passage
- Till he faced the slave
- Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chops
- And fixed his head upon our battlements

Image of witches, books





Witches -word carpet

Withered

Wild in their attire

Not like the inhabitants of the earth

Witch

Weird sister

Choppy fingers

Skinny lips

Fantastical

Imperfect speakers

Witches –description

Banquo: What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants of the earth
And yet are on it? - Live you, or are you aught
That man may question?

Active story-telling –Witches’ prophecy

Macbeth (*select pupil*) and Banquo (*select pupil*) had fought hard that day and felt weary but triumphant as they walked across the blasted heath together after the battle. The wind blew cold and both men pulled their cloaks around them tighter as the rain lashed down. Thunder rolled in the clouds above them and mists swirled in the valleys below them as Macbeth spoke (*ask pupil playing Macbeth to repeat*) ‘So fair and foul a day I have not seen.’

Suddenly, in the misty air before them, appeared three figures (*select three pupils*) who were so withered and wild in their appearance that Banquo asked (*ask pupil playing Banquo to repeat*) ‘What are these?’

Macbeth asked them to speak and the first one said (*ask pupil playing first witch to repeat*) ‘All hail Macbeth, hail to thee Thane of Glamis!’

Macbeth and Banquo were surprised: how could these creatures know his name and his title?

Then the second witch began to speak and she said, (*ask pupil playing second witch to repeat*) ‘All hail Macbeth: hail to thee Thane of Cawdor!’

Now, Macbeth and Banquo both knew the Thane of Cawdor and he was alive and well and they knew that Macbeth had no chance of taking his title, money and land from him and becoming the Thane of Cawdor!

Immediately after, the third witch spoke and what she had to say astounded Macbeth and Banquo (*ask pupil playing third witch to repeat*) ‘All hail Macbeth that shall be King hereafter.’

King! How could Macbeth ever become King? King Duncan was alive and well and even if he were to die, he had two sons to take his place. Surely, these three creatures were speaking lies? But before Macbeth could leave, Banquo asked them to tell him what the future held for him. What they said seemed like a riddle. The first witch said, (*ask pupil playing first witch to repeat*) ‘Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.’

The second witch said (*ask pupil playing second witch to repeat*) ‘Not so happy, yet much happier.’

And finally, the third witch told him that although he would never be King himself, his children would become kings.

Then the witches disappeared (*witches sit*) and Macbeth and Banquo stared at each other, puzzled and unsure. Macbeth said (*ask pupil playing Macbeth to repeat*) ‘Your children shall be kings.’

And Banquo replied (*ask pupil playing Banquo to repeat*) ‘You shall be King.’
(*All sit!*)

The witches' prophecy

MACBETH: So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

BANQUO: What are these,
So withered and so wild in their attire.
That look not like the inhabitants of the earth
And yet are on it?

MACBETH: Speak if you can: what are you?

FIRST WITCH: All hail, Macbeth: hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH: All hail, Macbeth: hail to thee, Thane of Cowdor!

THIRD WITCH: All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter!

BANQUO: If you can look into the seeds of time
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak to me then, who neither beg nor fear
Your favours or your hate.

FIRST WITCH: Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

SECOND WITCH: Not so happy, yet much happier.

THIRD WITCH: Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.
(*Witches vanish*)

MACBETH: Your children shall be kings.

BANQUO: You shall be King.

Banquo's prophecy

Looking into the seeds of time for the loyal Banquo, we see him wandering across the blasted heath with his friend Macbeth, after fighting valiantly and being victorious in the battle with Norway.

Before he has travelled far, the winds will blow strong, the thunder will sound in the sky, the rain will carve up the earth below his feet and the mists will swirl. Banquo will struggle to continue on his journey and, pausing, he will see us, rising from the mists before his very eyes.

He will wonder what we are, whether we are alive and if we are able to speak and of course, we will. When we have delivered our message to Macbeth, which will leave Banquo astonished, we will speak to him.

He will first hear that he will be lesser than Macbeth, but greater. Then, he will discover that he will be not as happy as Macbeth, yet happier. Finally, we will reveal that, although he will never be King of Scotland himself, his children will become kings eventually. Before he can question us further, we will disappear.

The seeds will be planted and the charm wound up.

King's message to Macbeth

MESSENGER: The king hath happily received, Macbeth, the news of thy success and we are sent to give thee thanks and greater honour. He bade me call thee Thane of Cawdor.

Banquo's diary

Banquo

The battle could not have been more successful today! We slayed the Norwegian army-unseamed them from the nave to the chops and mounted their severed heads on our standards. Macbeth and I were jubilant and most of our brave armies survived with very few injuries, ready to return to their families.

My friend Macbeth and I began the ride home in high spirits until, suddenly, I saw the strangest of sights in the distance. At first, we could not tell what it was but as the mist cleared it became obvious that three withered and deformed figures were circling, chanting and performing strange motions. Our curiosity was strong so we approached; I was unsure if these weird creatures were even living but Macbeth, feeling brave after our victory, demanded that they speak and asked them what they were.

The first of the weird sisters – for that is how they seemed to me – greeted him as the Thane of Glamis, the second told him that he would become Thane of Cawdor and the third informed him that he would be King! Of course, I believed their predictions to be nonsense – the Thane of Cawdor lives as does the King and he has two healthy sons: Malcolm and Donalbain. Feeling shocked at their soothsaying, I spoke out to them and asked them to tell my future.

They told me that my children would one day be Kings! How can these things be true? As suddenly as they had appeared, the three witches vanished leaving us confused, shocked and buried in our own thoughts but before we had dwelled on those thoughts for too long, a messenger from the King rode up to us.

He looked at Macbeth and congratulated him on his success in the battle and informed us that King Duncan had discovered that the Thane of Cawdor was a traitor and that the king was honouring Macbeth with the title! The witches' prediction was coming true and it follows that, if they were correct about Cawdor, they could be correct about the King... I stared at my friend, both pleased for him and worried for him at the same time; I wonder what thoughts are occupying his mind now and hope that there is no danger in them.

Lady Macbeth's soliloquy

1. Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promised:
2. Yet do I fear thy nature:
It is too full of the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way.
3. Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition.
4. Hie thee hither,
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round.
5. The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements.
6. Come, you spirits
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty.
7. Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
8. That my keen knife see not the wound it makes.

'Lady Macbeth's soliloquy: interpolated questions (teacher's copy)'

(Teacher) So, I am Thane of Glamis and Thane of Cawdor now?

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be

(Teacher) Shall be what?

What thou art promised:

(Teacher) You mean be King of Scotland?

Yet do I fear thy nature:

(Teacher) What's wrong with my personality?

It is too full of the milk of human kindness

(Teacher) I'm too kind for what?

To catch the nearest way.

(Teacher) You mean to take the quickest way of becoming king?

Thou wouldst be great,

Art not without ambition.

(Teacher) Yes, I want to be great, but what do you want?

Hie thee hither,

That I may pour my spirits in thine ear

(Teacher) You want me to listen to your plan?

And chastise with the valour of my tongue

All that impedes thee from the golden round.

(Teacher) You want to get rid of everything that will prevent me from becoming King?

The raven himself is hoarse

That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan

(Teacher) Fatal? You think that the king will die?

Under my battlements.

(Teacher) He will die here, in our home?

Come, you spirits

(Teacher) Why do you need spirits?

And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full

Of direst cruelty.

(Teacher) Why do you need to be full of cruelty?

Come, thick night,

(Teacher) What do you plan to do that can't be done in day light?

And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,

(Teacher) Do you need smoke to hide what you will do?

That my keen knife

(Teacher) Your knife? Why do you need a knife?

see not the wound it makes.

(Teacher) Who will your knife wound?