



SANTA CRUZ SHAKESPEARE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Introduction to *Macbeth*

Below you will find an overview of William Shakespeare, some lessons to start your work on *Macbeth*, and streaming opportunities of the play.

If you would like to share your work or any of your students' work on this platform, we would love to engage with you! Send questions or comments to education@santacruzshakespeare.org.

About The Playwright

Considered as one of the greatest playwrights in the world, William Shakespeare's texts have been performed all over the world for nearly 430 years! He has written and collaborated on approximately 39 dramatic works and 154 sonnets. How many Shakespeare plays have you read or seen performed?

Click [HERE](#) for a full timeline of Shakespeare's life



and works, and visit [Shakespeare's Globe](#) for some extra tidbits on the famous playwright.



Melinda Parrett (Lady Macbeth) in SCS's Macbeth.
Photo by rr jones.

20 Seconds Of Shakespeare To Recite While Washing Your Hands

Out, damned spot! out, I say!--One: two: why,
then, tis time to do't.--Hell is murky!--Fie, my
lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we
fear who knows it, when none can call our power to
account?--Yet who would have thought the old man
to have had so much blood in him.
The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?--
What, will these hands ne'er be clean?

Lady Macbeth
ACT V SCENE I
Macbeth by William Shakespeare

Intro To Macbeth

We recommend The Folger Shakespeare Library edition of *Macbeth*, and for a limited time only, you can listen to a free audio recording of *Macbeth* until July 1 at shakespeare.folger.edu. Or if you'd like to watch the play performed, see the streaming options listed below in the section [Stream Macbeth At Home](#).

In Shakespeare's bloody classic, Macbeth and his lady welcome the old king into their castle, only to murder him in his sleep. Medieval Scotland plunges headlong into chaos, where no head is safe, least of all one that wears the crown. Who has earned the right to rule, and who will be undone by grasping at power? Many will meet a brutal end before the real truth of the witches' prophesy is revealed and natural order is restored to the world.



The 'Witches' Mary Cavett, Patty Gallagher, and Suzanne Sturn in SCS's *Macbeth*. Photo by rr jones.

Before the Play Begins... Aided by warriors from the Western Isles, Macdonald is leading a rebellion against Duncan, King of Scotland. Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, leads the Scottish forces to victory, and then defeats the King of Norway. Duncan grants Macbeth the title Thane of Cawdor as a reward, a politically and socially advantageous honor. Meanwhile, three Weird Sisters see into Macbeth's - and Scotland's - future. Explore the characters of *Macbeth* and their motives behind the madness using [this interactive site](#) provided by Shakespeare's Globe.

Notes from SCS Dramaturg Mara Sherman... Shakespeare probably wrote *Macbeth* in 1606, soon after *King Lear*, and three years after King James VI of Scotland, a man who traced his descent from Banquo, became King James I of England. It was in Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Ireland, and Scotland*, his source for his English histories, that Shakespeare found the story of Macbeth and Banquo's

encounter with the Weird Sisters and their prophecies.

In the play's second scene, multiple characters report on the events of a recently concluded battle, establishing that Macbeth is a brave warrior and an honorable man. Subsequently, King Duncan rewards Macbeth with a new title, although Macbeth first learns of his advancement from the three Weird Sisters. Their prophecy, that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor and then King, awakens his latent ambition and provokes him to regicide.

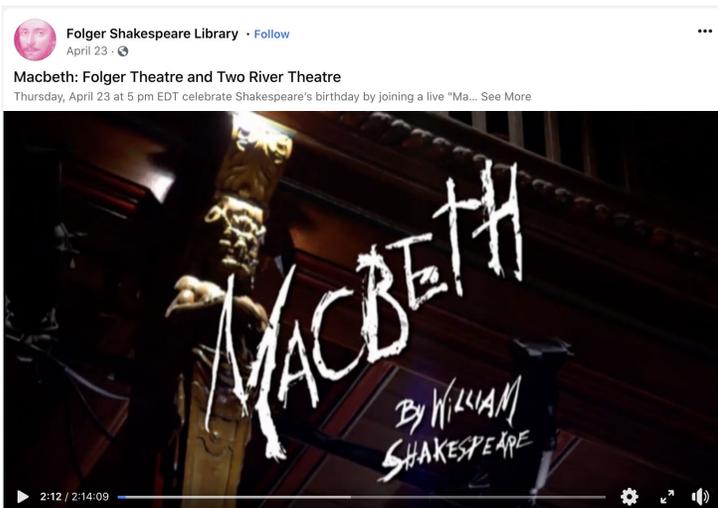
The main action of the play follows Macbeth and his Lady in their rise to power and eventual downfall. Encouraged by his wife, who is more than his equal in both ambition and ruthlessness, Macbeth commits a series of violent acts to first gain, then keep, political power. The couple's guilt, which is paralleled only by their deep affection for one another, plunges them into both physical and spiritual distress, driving the play towards its tragic conclusion.

Despite *Macbeth's* singular focus on its central character, the play is not uniformly dark. The comic interlude with the drunk Porter is made all the funnier by its proximity to violence. Moreover, a virtuous counterpoint to the depravity of the Macbeths is provided by Malcolm, Donalbain, and the Macduff family. The play ends, in the words of the Weird Sisters, with a battle "lost and won," and on a note of cautious optimism.

Explore plot, themes, character motivation and development through a comparative analysis with Holinshed's book listed above in Folger Shakespeare Library's lesson ["They Smack of Honor Both": Macbeth and a Nonfiction Source](#).

Stream Macbeth At Home

Though it is always important to read Shakespeare's text, his plays were really meant to be performed on stage. Take a look at some of our favorite *Macbeth* performances by Santa Cruz Shakespeare alumni and enthusiasts!



SCS veteran actors Kate Eastwood Norris, Cody Nickell, Ian Merrill Peakes, and Karen Peakes perform in *Macbeth*, a co-production between the Folger and Two River Theatre Company and is available for FREE [streaming on Facebook or Youtube](#) through July 1st.

SCS Advisory Board Member, Sir Patrick Stewart, stars as Macbeth in Rupert Goold's 2003 movie version of *Macbeth*. Click [HERE](#) to watch for free with your library card. Don't have a library card yet? Sign up for one at your local library and find a plethora of Shakespeare resources! Local Santa Cruz residents can apply for a library card at santacruzpl.org.



Special Thanks

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