

PRESTWICK HOUSE LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS

# MACBETH

by William Shakespeare



Includes  
Strategies for  
Understanding  
Shakespeare's  
Language

UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

# MACBETH



William Shakespeare



**Prestwick House**

LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS

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writing from the publisher. Manufactured in the United States of America.  
*Revised 2014*

ISBN 978-1-58049-589-9

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# Strategies for Understanding Shakespeare's Language

## 1. When reading verse, note the appropriate phrasing and intonation.

DO NOT PAUSE AT THE END OF A LINE unless there is a mark of punctuation. Shakespearean verse has a rhythm of its own, and once a reader gets used to it, the rhythm becomes very natural to speak in and read. Beginning readers often find it helpful to read a short pause at a comma and a long pause for a period, colon, semicolon, dash, or question mark.

Here's an example from *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene i:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd, (*short pause*)  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: (*long pause*) it is twice blest; (*long pause*)  
It blesseth him that gives, (*short pause*) and him that takes; (*long pause*)  
'Tis mightiest in the mighties; (*long pause*) it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown; (*long pause*)

## 2. Read from punctuation mark to punctuation mark for meaning.

In addition to helping you read aloud, punctuation marks define units of thought. Try to understand each unit as you read, keeping in mind that periods, colons, semicolons, and question marks signal the end of a thought. Here's an example from *The Taming of the Shrew*: Act I, Scene i:

LUC. Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move,  
And with her breath she did perfume the air;  
Sacred, and sweet, was all I saw in her.

TRA. Nay, then, 'tis time to stir him from his  
trance.

I pray, awake, sir: if you love the maid,  
Bend thoughts and wits to achieve her.

The first unit of thought is from "Tranio" to "air":  
He saw her lips move, and her breath perfumed the air.

The second thought ("Sacred, and sweet...") re-emphasizes the first.

Tranio replies that Lucentio needs to awaken from his trance and try to win "the maid." These two sentences can be considered one unit of thought.

3. In an **inverted sentence**, the verb comes before the subject. Some lines will be easier to understand if you put the subject first and reword the sentence. For example, look at the line below:

“*Never was seen so black a day as this:*” (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act IV, Scene v)

You can change its inverted pattern so it is more easily understood:

“*A day as black as this was never seen:*”

4. An **ellipsis** occurs when a word or phrase is left out. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Benvolio asks Romeo’s father and mother if they know the problem that is bothering their son. Romeo’s father answers:

“*I neither know it nor can learn of him*” (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, Scene i).

This sentence can easily be understood to mean,

“*I neither know [the cause of] it,  
nor can [I] learn [about it from] him.*”

5. As you read longer speeches, keep track of the subject, verb, and object—*who did what to whom*.

In the clauses below, note the subject, verbs, and objects:

Ross: The king hath happily received, Macbeth,  
The news of thy success: and when he reads  
Thy personal venture in the rebel’s fight... (*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene iii)

1<sup>st</sup> clause: *The king hath happily received, Macbeth, / The news of thy success:*

SUBJECT – The king

VERB – has received

OBJECT – the news [of Macbeth’s success]

2<sup>nd</sup> clause: *and when he reads / thy personal venture in the rebel’s fight,*

SUBJECT – he [the king]

VERB – reads

OBJECT – [about] your venture

In addition to following the subject, verb, and object of a clause, you also need to track pronoun references. In the following soliloquy, Romeo, who is madly in love with Juliet, secretly observes her as she steps out on her balcony. To help you keep track of the pronoun references, we’ve made margin notes. (Note that the feminine pronoun sometimes refers to Juliet, but sometimes does not.)

## Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

1. Look for incidents or comments that support these major aspects of the play:

- **Fate and Free Will**

Throughout the play, Macbeth believes the prophecies of the witches, and he is willing to murder those who would interfere in the fulfillment of the predictions. Does Macbeth have choices in his destiny, or is he a pawn of the witches? Can he truly change anything in his future, or is he restricted to a specific destiny, despite any action he takes?

- **The Various Types of Rulers**

Characters in positions of influence and responsibility demonstrate several styles of leadership throughout the play. Try to determine what type of authority Duncan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, and Malcolm represent: tyrannical, regal, generous, democratic, etc. Does Macbeth fit the definition of a tragic hero?

- **Ambition as Evil**

Macbeth, at first a loyal and valiant servant to his king and country, finds himself caught in an unbreakable chain of events once he learns of his potential ascent to the throne. Why does Macbeth, a loyal and brave kinsman of Duncan's at the beginning of the play, become the embodiment of evil?

- **Guilt and Fear**

Is Macbeth troubled more by guilt over his evil acts or by fear of punishment? How do fear and guilt affect both him and Lady Macbeth?

2. Decide if Macbeth is inherently an evil person by considering what influences him more: his ambition, the prophecies of three witches, or Lady Macbeth's prodding. Why does he act as he does?

# MACBETH

William Shakespeare

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DUNCAN, King of Scotland  
MALCOLM, elder son of Duncan  
DONALBAIN, younger son of Duncan

MACBETH, Thane of Glamis and Cawdor, a general in the King's army  
LADY MACBETH, his wife

BANQUO, Thane of Lochaber, a general in the King's army  
FLEANCE, his son  
MACDUFF, Thane<sup>†</sup> of Fife, a nobleman of Scotland  
LADY MACDUFF, his wife

LENNOX, nobleman of Scotland  
ROSS, nobleman of Scotland  
MENTEITH, nobleman of Scotland  
ANGUS, nobleman of Scotland  
CAITHNESS, nobleman of Scotland

SIWARD, Earl of Northumberland,<sup>†</sup> general of the English forces  
YOUNG SIWARD, his son  
SEYTON, attendant to Macbeth  
Another Lord  
An English Doctor  
A Scottish Doctor  
A Sergeant  
Boy, Son of Macduff  
Gentlewoman attending on Lady Macbeth  
A Captain serving Duncan  
A Porter  
An Old Man  
Three Murderers of Banquo  
First Murderer at Macduff's castle  
Messenger to Lady Macbeth  
Messenger to Lady Macduff  
Servant to Lady Macbeth  
Servant to Lady Macduff  
Three Witches or weird sisters  
HECATE, Queen of the Witches  
Three Apparitions<sup>†</sup>  
(Lords, Gentlemen, Officers, Soldiers, Murderers, Attendants, and Messengers)

SCENE: Scotland and England

<sup>†</sup>Terms marked in the text with (†) can be looked up in the Glossary for additional information.



# ACT I

M A C B E T H

## ACT I

### SCENE I

[A desert place.]

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches.*

FIRST WITCH: When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

SECOND WITCH: When the hurlyburly's<sup>1</sup> done;  
When the battle's lost and won.

5 THIRD WITCH: That will be ere<sup>2</sup> the set of sun.

FIRST WITCH: Where the place?

SECOND WITCH: Upon the heath.<sup>3</sup>

THIRD WITCH: There to meet with Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH: I come, Graymalkin.<sup>4</sup>

10 SECOND WITCH: Paddock<sup>5</sup> calls. Anon!<sup>6</sup>

ALL: Fair is foul, and foul is fair.

Hover through the fog and filthy air.

*Exeunt.*

### SCENE II

[A camp near Forres.]

*Alarum within. Enter King [Duncan], Malcolm, Donalbain, Lennox, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding [Sergeant].*

DUNCAN: What bloody man is that? He can report,  
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt  
The newest state.

MALCOLM: This is the sergeant,

5 Who, like a good and hardy soldier fought  
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!  
Say to the King the knowledge of the broil<sup>7</sup>  
As thou didst leave it.

<sup>1</sup>turmoil

<sup>2</sup>before

<sup>3</sup>a tract of open land with sparse vegetation

<sup>4</sup>the first witch's familiar, an evil-spirit servant in the form of a cat

<sup>5</sup>the second witch's familiar, a toad

<sup>6</sup>Soon

<sup>7</sup>battle

<sup>8</sup>exhausted<sup>9</sup>i.e., drown each other<sup>10</sup>Hebrides (islands west of Scotland and Ireland)<sup>†</sup><sup>11</sup>foot soldiers<sup>†</sup><sup>12</sup>armed horsemen<sup>†</sup><sup>13</sup>condemned<sup>14</sup>i.e., granted him special favors<sup>15</sup>Macdonwald<sup>16</sup>cut him open<sup>17</sup>navel<sup>18</sup>jaw<sup>19</sup>i.e., as after the equinox, there are storms<sup>20</sup>fleeing<sup>21</sup>king of Norway<sup>22</sup>seeing an opportunity<sup>23</sup>shining<sup>24</sup>charges of gun-powder<sup>25</sup>unless<sup>26</sup>make the place memorable as<sup>27</sup>the site where Jesus was crucified<sup>†</sup>

SERGEANT: Doubtful it stood,

- 10 As two spent<sup>8</sup> swimmers that do cling together  
 And choke their art.<sup>9</sup> The merciless Macdonwald—  
 Worthy to be a rebel, for to that  
 The multiplying villainies<sup>†</sup> of nature  
 Do swarm upon him—from the western isles<sup>10</sup>  
 15 Of kerns<sup>11</sup> and gallowglasses<sup>12</sup> is supplied;  
 And fortune, on his damned<sup>13</sup> quarrel smiling,  
 Show'd like a rebel's whore,<sup>14</sup> but all's too weak;  
 For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—  
 Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,  
 20 Which smoked with bloody execution,  
 Like valor's minion carved out his passage  
 Till he faced the slave,<sup>15</sup>  
 Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,  
 Till he unseam'd him<sup>16</sup> from the nave<sup>17</sup> to the chaps,<sup>18</sup>  
 25 And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN: O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!

- SERGEANT: As whence the sun 'gins his reflection  
 Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break,<sup>19</sup>  
 So from that spring whence comfort seem'd to come  
 30 Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark:  
 No sooner justice had, with valor arm'd,  
 Compell'd these skipping<sup>20</sup> kerns to trust their heels,  
 But the Norway lord,<sup>21</sup> surveying vantage,<sup>22</sup>  
 With furbish'd<sup>23</sup> arms and new supplies of men,  
 35 Began a fresh assault.

DUNCAN: Dismay'd not this  
 Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

SERGEANT: Yes,

- As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.  
 40 If I say sooth, I must report they were  
 As cannons overcharged with double cracks,<sup>24</sup>  
 So they  
 Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.  
 Except<sup>25</sup> they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,  
 45 Or memorize<sup>26</sup> another Golgotha,<sup>27</sup>  
 I cannot tell—  
 But I am faint; my gashes cry for help.

DUNCAN: So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;  
 They smack of honor both. Go get him surgeons.  
[Exit attendant.]

50 Who comes here?

*Enter Ross and Angus.*

MALCOLM: The worthy Thane of Ross.

LENNOX: What a haste looks through his eyes! So should he  
 look

That seems to speak things strange.

55 ROSS: God save the King!

DUNCAN: Whence camest thou, worthy Thane?

ROSS: From Fife, great King,

Where the Norway banners flout<sup>28</sup> the sky  
 And fan our people cold.<sup>29</sup>

60 Norway<sup>30</sup> himself, with terrible numbers,  
 Assisted by that most disloyal traitor  
 The Thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict,  
 Till that Bellona's bridegroom,<sup>31</sup> lapp'd in proof,<sup>32</sup>  
 Confronted him with self-comparisons,<sup>33</sup>  
 65 Point<sup>34</sup> against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm,  
 Curbing his lavish<sup>35</sup> spirit; and, to conclude,  
 The victory fell on us.

DUNCAN: Great happiness!

ROSS: That now

70 Sweno, the Norway's king, craves composition;<sup>36</sup>  
 Nor would we deign him burial of his men  
 Till he disbursed, at Saint Colme's Inch,<sup>37</sup>  
 Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

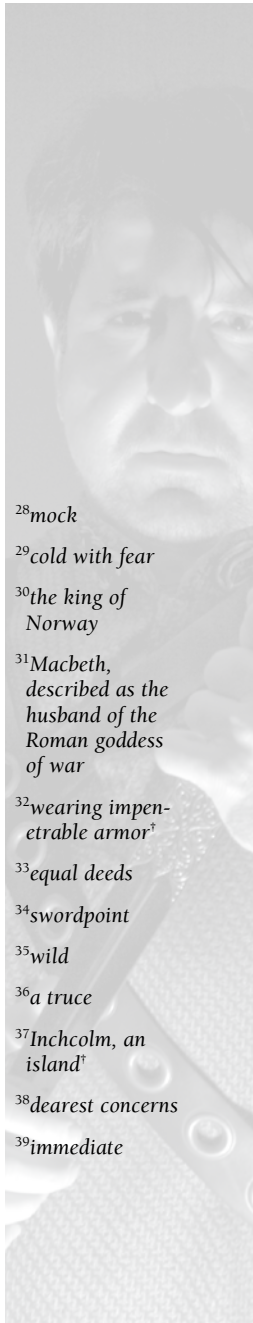
DUNCAN: No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive

75 Our bosom interest.<sup>38</sup> Go pronounce his present<sup>39</sup> death,  
 And with his former title greet Macbeth.

ROSS: I'll see it done.

DUNCAN: What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.

*Exeunt.*



<sup>28</sup>mock

<sup>29</sup>cold with fear

<sup>30</sup>the king of  
 Norway

<sup>31</sup>Macbeth,  
 described as the  
 husband of the  
 Roman goddess  
 of war

<sup>32</sup>wearing impen-  
 etrable armor†

<sup>33</sup>equal deeds

<sup>34</sup>swordpoint

<sup>35</sup>wild

<sup>36</sup>a truce

<sup>37</sup>Inchcolm, an  
 island†

<sup>38</sup>dearest concerns

<sup>39</sup>immediate

# VOCABULARY AND GLOSSARY

## **Dramatis Personae**

**thane** – a feudal Scottish title equivalent to baron

**Northumberland** – the northernmost county in England

**Apparitions** – ghostly figures

## **Act I, Scene I**

—

## **Act I, Scene II**

**plight** – an unfortunate or difficult situation

**villainies** – treacherous acts; the Sergeant uses this term in reference to the mercenaries hired by the Norwegian king to invade Scotland.

**Hebrides** – a group of islands of northwestern Scotland; Norwegians conquered the islands and ruled until 1266, and Scottish chieftains ruled until the sixteenth century.

**kerns** – lightly armed, medieval Scottish or Irish footsoldiers

**gallowglasses** – heavily armed Irish horsemen

**disdaining** – regarding with contempt; feeling scornful

**minion** – a servile follower

**battlements** – a parapet on top of a castle wall with notches through which weapons can be fired in defense

**direful** – causing fear or dread; the time after the spring equinox is also the season of storms.

**Golgotha** – a hill near Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified, also known as Calvary; it is usually translated as “place of skulls.”

**dismal** – causing depression; dreary

**proof** – armor heavy enough to deflect arrows

**deign** – to do something that one considers to be below oneself; to condescend to

**disburse** – to pay out; to expend

**Saint Colme’s Inch** – Inchcolm, an island in the Firth of Forth in Scotland

**firth** – a long, narrow inlet of the sea