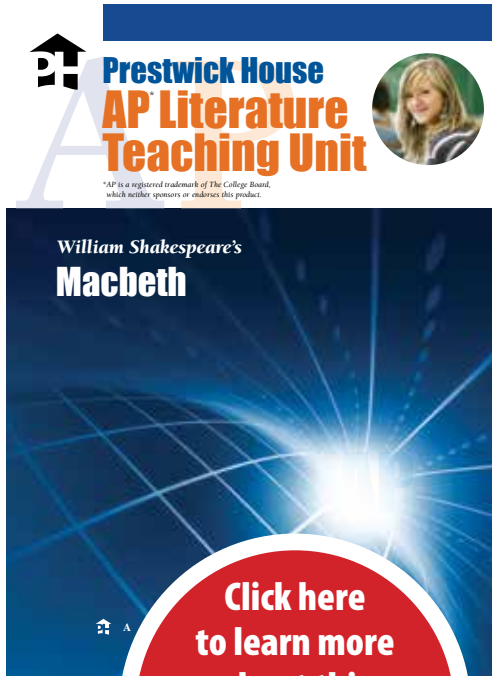




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Teaching Unit

**Macbeth**

by William Shakespeare



**Prestwick House**

Item No. 203006

# Macbeth

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. analyze the characters of Macbeth, Banquo, and Lady Macbeth and their relationships to each other.
2. trace the development of Macbeth's character from his first mention in the play until his last, noting how and why he changes.
3. trace the mental and emotional make-up of Lady Macbeth from the first time she appears until her death.
4. discuss the techniques Shakespeare uses to convey character and character relationships to his audience.
5. discuss the dramatic development of the play in terms of exposition, conflict, climax, resolution.
6. analyze the importance of literary elements like dramatic irony and foreshadowing on the development of the play.
7. discuss the frequent references to children in the play as characters, symbols, and elements of a metaphor.
8. analyze Shakespeare's use of language (verse, prose, rhythm, rhyme) and its importance in setting mood and establishing character.
9. identify and analyze the use of comic relief.
10. define by example the terms *tragedy*, and *tragic hero*.
11. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
12. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
13. offer a close reading of *Macbeth* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the play.

## Lecture

### SHAKESPEARE AND HIS TIMES

When William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) was born in Stratford-on-Avon, England, Queen Elizabeth I was the ruling monarch. It was a time of national strength and wealth, and the prevailing attitude was that life was exciting. It was an age of exploration, not only of the world but also of man's nature and the English language. Shakespeare's time was also considered the English Renaissance of 1500 – 1650. Some ideas that characterized this period that are important to this play are:

- Humans had potential for development.
- The idea of medieval Christianity, that this world is a preparation for eternal life, was questioned. Instead, people began to see everyday life as meaningful and an opportunity for noble activity.
- This was a time for heroes. The ideal Elizabethan man was a talented courtier, adventurer, fencer, poet, and conversationalist. He was a witty and eloquent gentleman who examined his own nature and the causes of his actions.
- Marriages were arranged, usually for wealth.
- Women had a lower social status than men.
- People were concerned over the order of things. They felt there was “a great chain of being.” This concept originated with Plato and expressed the idea that there is a proper order within all things, and among all things, based on complexity, from the tiniest grains of sand to heaven and God. When everything was in its proper position, there was harmony. When the order was broken, everything was upset and everyone suffered.
- People felt that their rulers were God's agents. To kill a King was a heinous crime; the heavens would show ominous signs when such evil was present.

### FEATURES OF SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF LANGUAGE

#### **Blank Verse:**

Shakespeare's essential pattern in his plays is **blank verse** (unrhymed iambic pentameter).

Therefore, whenever a reader notices a change in this pattern (a change in rhythm from iambic to trochaic; a shift in meter from pentameter to tetrameter; a shift from poetry to prose) there is a reason for the change.

With the change, Shakespeare is creating a mood, establishing character ... something.

# Macbeth

## Act I, Scene I

1. What effect is Shakespeare creating by beginning the play with this scene?

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2. What do you suppose is suggested by the line, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair”?

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3. What poetic device is used in this scene and to what effect?

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**Act I, Scene VI**

1. What is the purpose of this brief scene?

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2. How does this scene contribute to the “fair is foul” theme?

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**Act II, Scene II**

1. Compare Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's reactions immediately after the crime.

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2. Why does Lady Macbeth not commit the murder when she is in the room?

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3. Macbeth, apparently troubled by the murder he has just committed, tells Lady Macbeth what he saw and heard. She tells him, "These deeds must not be thought of this way." Why?

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4. Macbeth's response is frequently quoted. What is the sense of this response?

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5. How does Lady Macbeth get Duncan's blood on her hands?

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6. What does Macbeth's refusal to return to Duncan's chamber echo?

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**Act III, Scene IV**

1. One characteristic of Shakespeare's style is his play on words. How is this demonstrated in Macbeth's response to the murderer's saying it's Banquo's blood on his face?

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2. What wordplay is there in the murderer's reply that Banquo is "safe" now?

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3. The dagger Macbeth saw in Act II, Scene I was a hallucination. Banquo's ghost in this scene is not. How do we know?

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4. What does Lady Macbeth say to Macbeth?

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