

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT OUR VISIT

1. DBS CHECKS FOR OUR PERFORMERS

We operate a rigorous selection process where the identity of all prospective performers is checked thoroughly. All of our performers are recently DBS checked to enhanced level, and they are all instructed to bring their DBS disclosure with them for every performance we do. They will also have Photo-ID with them. Under Data Protection law, we are not permitted to share personal data of our performers on their behalf, either prior to, or during their visit, ie. DBS disclosure numbers, dates of birth, photographs. However, should you wish to see this information on arrival, they will produce this for your inspection. We are equally happy to confirm their identity by telephone, should you require this, during the time that they are on your premises.

Please be aware that retention of and/or copying or photographing of our performers' personal data documents contravenes GDPR regulations and as such we politely request that you do not retain or replicate any such documents unless the following process is followed:

1. The performer consents in writing to their personal data being retained and/or copied.
2. The performer has their documents returned to them personally and witnesses any such copies being securely destroyed before departure from your premises.
3. You email brian@manactco.org.uk to confirm that this information has been consensually copied and furthermore securely destroyed.

2. PROFESSIONAL INSURANCE:

manACTco has Public and Employers Liability Insurance: Policy number 550.194.951; dated 24/09/2021, arranged with AXA Insurance UK plc, where the minimum amount of cover provided by the policy is no less than £5 million. Contact us if you would like to see a copy of the evidence of cover.

3. GENERAL RISK ASSESSMENT:

The performers will bring with them bags containing soft costumes and small props, but we do NOT use scenery, lighting rigs, or any equipment whatsoever. During set-up we have requested that we have the performance space to ourselves for preparation, therefore no children should be in the performance hall whilst we are setting up. It is important that this is adhered to. By the time we are ready to allow the audience into the performance space all the preparations will be complete without any risk to the children.

Please note that MANACTCO (Manchester Actors Company) is NOT responsible for the supervision of your children at any time; therefore your school must ensure that there is sufficient supervision throughout the performance, and that the performance hall is clear of children before and after the session.

4. USE OF RECORDING/PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT DURING THE PERFORMANCE:

UNDER THE LAWS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS , Video or other recording of the performance and workshop is strictly **NOT PERMITTED**. If you wish to take STILL PHOTOGRAPHS then this is possible, but must be arranged with the performers BEFORE the performance has commenced.

COVID-SECURE PRESENTATIONS 2022

Despite Government changes to the legal requirements with regard to COVID, things are still far from normal, and the risk from Covid-19 variants is ever-present, so our school presentations will continue to reflect the on-going risk associated with Covid-19. We have laid down some ground rules with regard to visiting schools to ensure that all of our visits are SAFE and COVID SECURE, in order to best protect school staff, students, and also our performers. These procedures have worked extremely well since we resumed touring back in early November 2021, and we will continue these procedures through for the foreseeable future. It is our intention that at all times the performers will have as little close contact as possible with students and school staff during the entirety of our visit, and we request that schools assist us to achieve that aim. Where we need action from school staff to achieve a secure visit then this will be highlighted below **in yellow**. These arrangements will remain in place for as long as necessary.

1. GENERAL:

All of our performers have been fully (double) vaccinated before contracted to work with us, and they will be routinely health-checked in Manchester each morning before setting off to visit schools. They will apply hand sanitiser BEFORE entering school premises, and will wear face-masks upon arrival at school and throughout their time on school premises, EXCEPT during the period of setting up the performance area; during the actual performance; and during the follow-up Q&A session. It is our intention throughout our visit that the performers will remain at least two metres from school staff when arriving at school and being escorted to and from the performance area; and will remain at least five metres from the audience during the whole presentation.

2. ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL RECEPTION:

In advance of our visit we will inform our school booking contact of the names of the performers who will be visiting you on the day, in order to make the signing-in process as easy as possible. All our performers have recently been DBS checked to enhanced level. They will bring with them their DBS certificate, and also relevant Photo-ID. As soon as the performers arrive at the school gates they will telephone the school reception to inform them of their arrival and to receive any instructions, if necessary, about entering the school building.

It is our intention that our performers have as little contact as possible with students and school staff during the entirety of our visit, and so **it would be extremely helpful that once the group arrives with you and have signed in, that they should be escorted to the performance area as quickly as possible, and not left in your school reception area unattended for any length of time.**

3. SETTING UP IN THE PERFORMANCE AREA.

There is no set to erect, and our group will arrive each with a bag containing costume changes and small props that are specific to each performer. During set-up we request that we have the performance space to ourselves for preparation, therefore no students and a minimum of staff should be in the performance hall whilst we are setting up. By the time we are ready to allow the audience into the seating area all the preparations will be complete. Our performance is presented front-on to the audience, and **we would request that the seating is arranged to accommodate this prior to our visit.** For our part, we will work to a maximum audience size of 240. Up to that number, how many you actually want to have attending the performance is entirely up to you: it's all a matter of how many you can fit into the performance seating area, and still maintain any social distancing rules your school has in place at the time of our performance. **We request that school staff are responsible for ensuring that the audience are seated correctly, and that our performers will not be involved in seating the audience.** It is our intention that the performers will remain a MINIMUM of 5 metres from the audience at all times, and so **we request that the front occupied row of the seating area is at least 5 metres from the performing area** to allow the performers the chance to keep their distance from the audience at all times. The performers will mark out a boundary on the performing area itself which we will not cross, to ensure that we maintain the minimum of 5 metres from the front of the audience throughout.

4. DURING THE PRESENTATION.

Each performance lasts approx. 60 minutes. Despite any restrictions, you can expect that our performers will present a robust, lively, powerful, well-spoken, well-acted professional performance of the play. After the performance there is an OPTIONAL Q&A session that can last up to a maximum of 30 minutes. This session will be directed by the performers, and will involve a dialogue with the audience, to encourage the students to delve deeper into the text, and ask any relevant questions that they would like to be answered. These Q&A sessions are often quite lively, but we will maintain our 5 metre minimum distance AT ALL TIMES.

5. AFTER THE PRESENTATION IS COMPLETE.

Once the presentation is complete then the performers will retreat to the rear of the performance area. **Often at schools, once the presentation has finished some students and staff members like to have quick chat with the performers, which we usually like to encourage, but under these current conditions we CAN NOT allow this to happen.** We want to maintain our distance at all times throughout our visit. Once the seating area is totally cleared of staff and students, our performers will start to pack up costumes and props, and prepare to leave the premises, replacing their face masks. **We request that one member of staff remains behind to safely escort our group back to the school reception and off the premises,** to ensure that we do not encounter other staff or students on the way.

These measures will ensure that our school visit will be as safe as possible for all parties, and also ensure that the presentation to the audience will be as robust as ever.

manchester actors company present



A WORKING GUIDE TO

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare



INFORMATION PACK

SPRING 2022

INTRODUCTION:

HELLO TEACHERS!

This is our Teachers' Pack to compliment the performance of 'MACBETH' that we will presenting at your school. Inside this pack there is lots of information about Shakespeare's dazzling action-and-adventure tragedy, and also about our version, which is a working guide to the play. In this pack you will find articles about the plot, characters and themes of the play, as well as detail about what you will see in our version; some background information about the origins of the play; about Shakespeare; and about Manchester Actors Company, as well as a quiz about the performance to do after we have left, and some famous quotes to identify..

The most important thing about our visit is to enable our young audiences to experience MACBETH as a piece of theatre, rather than an exercise in academic study, and to experience live theatre rather than watching a film or DVD of the play. No matter how excellent these may be, viewing a recorded version remains a largely passive exercise, and very different to the thrill of engaging moment-by-moment in live action, as this gripping story unfolds right there in front of you. We aim to give a dynamic, well-spoken performance, which will give a clear overview of the plot, making the play easy to understand, as a springboard to help students develop their responses to the themes, characters and plot of this world-famous tragedy. By bringing the text alive, we also hope to stimulate ideas for discussion and essays, projects and practical work. The ingredients of MACBETH - power and ambition, witches and ghosts, blood and thunder - make it one of the most exciting of Shakespeare's plays to study.

In MACBETH we see a man and his wife destroyed by submitting to forces of evil over which they have no control. We are moved by the sight of a good man, a loyal subject, becoming a traitor and a cruel tyrant: Shakespeare's powerful poetry confirms MACBETH's status as a tragic hero - making us feel both terror, and pity. We hope you enjoy the play.

After the performance, of course, we have our 30-minute interactive workshop, 'Meet the Macbeths', which is a face-to-face interactive discussion, guided by actors in the company, where the audience can talk directly to these two fascinating characters, and ask any questions they may have and develop the plot and characters. This invaluable, practical teaching aid allows students to examine Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's contrasting personalities and motives, and helps to explain/expand/explore the play even more. This allows the students to better understand the motives of these characters, and to clarify parts of the story that students may otherwise not fully understand. It is a great opportunity for students to unlock the story and to examine it in greater detail. **Please, if there is any part of the play, or any specific characters that you would like this Q&A session to concentrate on, or any area you would specifically like us to mention, then let the actors know before the Q&A session begins, and we'll do our best to meet your needs.**

Many thanks for inviting us into your school this Spring. We hope you enjoy the performance and workshop, and trust that this pack will add value to our visit.

Regards,

MANACTCO

A HISTORY OF 'MACBETH'

THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH was most likely written in 1606, early in the reign of James I, who had been James VI of Scotland before he succeeded to the English throne in 1603. James was a patron of the arts, and especially of Shakespeare's acting company - originally named The Chamberlain's Men, and renamed The King's Men at the suggestion of King James himself - and of all the plays Shakespeare wrote under James's reign, *Macbeth* most clearly reflects the playwright's close relationship with the sovereign. In focusing on *Macbeth*, a figure from distant Scottish history, Shakespeare paid homage to his king's Scottish lineage, and also played along with James's long-lasting interest in witchcraft and the occult. Additionally, the witches' prophecy that Banquo will found a line of kings is a clear nod to James's family's claim to have descended from the historical Banquo.

In a larger sense, the theme of bad versus good kingship, embodied by *Macbeth* and Duncan, respectively, would have resonated at the royal court, where James was busy developing his English version of the theory of divine right of kings. By 1606 James had already survived three major plots to kill him, including the infamous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and *MACBETH* was developed in part to bolster the image of James I as a good king in the mould of King Duncan: wise and benign. Throughout his reign as King James VI of Scotland he had attended many trials for witchcraft, and was clearly intrigued by such things, so Shakespeare included the witches specifically to delight James.

Shakespeare borrowed the story of *Macbeth* from several tales in *Holinshed's Chronicles*, a popular history of the British Isles known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In *Chronicles*, a man named Donwald finds several of his family put to death by his king, King Duff, for dealing with witches. After being pressured by his wife, he and four of his servants kill the King in his own house. In *Chronicles*, *Macbeth* is portrayed as struggling to support the kingdom in the face of King Duncan's ineptitude. He and Banquo meet the three witches, who make exactly the same prophecies as in Shakespeare's version. *Macbeth* and Banquo then together plot the murder of Duncan, at Lady *Macbeth*'s urging. *Macbeth* has a long, ten-year reign before eventually being overthrown by *Macduff* and Malcolm. The parallels between the two versions are clear. Shakespeare changed the story so that *Macbeth* kills the king in *Macbeth*'s own castle, adding to the darkness of *Macbeth*'s crime as the worst violation of hospitality. Shakespeare made another revealing change. In *Chronicles*, Banquo is an accomplice in *Macbeth*'s murder of King Duncan. He also plays an important part in ensuring that *Macbeth*, not Malcolm, takes the throne in the coup that follows. In Shakespeare's day, Banquo was thought to be a direct ancestor of the King James I, though Banquo's Stuart descent was disproved in the 19th century. The Banquo portrayed in historical sources is significantly different from the Banquo created by Shakespeare, largely to portray the king's ancestor as a murderer would have been risky for him! Other authors of the time who wrote about Banquo, such as Jean de Schelandre in his *Stuartide*, also changed history by portraying Banquo as a noble man, not a murderer, probably for the same reasons.

Macbeth is not Shakespeare's most complex play, but it is certainly one of his most powerful and emotionally intense. Whereas Shakespeare's other major tragedies, such as *Hamlet* and *Othello*, fastidiously explore the intellectual predicaments faced by their subjects and the fine nuances of their subjects' characters, *Macbeth* tumbles madly from its opening to its conclusion. It is a sharp, jagged sketch of theme and character; as such, it has shocked and fascinated audiences for over four hundred years. *Macbeth* is an anomaly among Shakespeare's tragedies in certain critical ways. It is short: more than a thousand lines shorter than *Othello* and *King Lear*,

and only slightly more than half as long as Hamlet. This brevity has suggested to many critics that the received version is based on a heavily cut source, perhaps a prompt-book for a particular performance. That brevity has also been connected to other unusual features: the fast pace of the first act, which has seemed to be "stripped for action"; the comparative flatness of the characters other than Macbeth; the oddness of Macbeth himself compared with other Shakespearean tragic heroes.

The only eyewitness account of a performance of Macbeth in Shakespeare's lifetime was recorded by a Simon Forman, who saw a performance at the Globe in 1610 or 1611. The play's brevity and certain aspects of its staging (for instance, the large proportion of night-time scenes and the unusually large number of off-stage sounds) have been taken as suggesting that the text was revised for production indoors, perhaps at the Blackfriars Theatre, which the King's Men acquired in 1608. After Shakespeare's death, and the publication of the First Folio, Macbeth became regularly performed, especially after the restoration of Charles II, and it has remained one of the most universally popular of all Shakespeare's plays. Throughout the 20th Century there were countless productions on stage, plus two major Hollywood films (directed by Orson Welles and Roman Polanski), and various versions and reworkings on television. The brevity and fast pace of the play has made it very accessible, whilst the themes of power, corruption, ambition, cruelty, superstition and the supernatural remain universally attractive to audiences.

And the play has attracted its own superstition, and whilst many today would say that any misfortune surrounding a production is mere coincidence, actors and other theatre people often consider it bad luck to mention Macbeth by name whilst inside a theatre, and sometimes refer to it indirectly, for example as "the Scottish play", or "MacBee". This is because Shakespeare is said to have used the spells of real witches in his text, purportedly angering the witches of the day and causing them to curse the play. It was rumoured that an actor died on its first opening night! Thus, to say the name of the play inside a theatre is believed to doom the production to failure, and perhaps cause physical injury or death to cast members. Indeed, there are stories of accidents, misfortunes and even deaths taking place during runs of Macbeth over the centuries.

One particular incident that lent itself to the superstition was the Astor Place Riot in Manhattan in 1849. The cause of the riots was based on a conflict over two rival performances of Macbeth running simultaneously. One production featuring a British actor was targeted by rioters in a wave of anti-British sentiment, and the militia was sent out to stop the ensuing riot, and shots were fired into the crowd killing 25 and injuring over 120. In the aftermath of the riot New York newspapers attributed the deaths to the curse of the play! Maybe there is something in the superstition.....!?

THE PLOT

The play begins with the brief appearance of a trio of witches and then moves to a military camp, where the Scottish King Duncan hears the news that his generals, Macbeth and Banquo, have defeated two separate invading armies - one from Ireland, led by the rebel Macdonwald, and one from Norway. Following their pitched battle with these enemy forces, Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches as they cross a moor. The witches prophesy that Macbeth will be made thane (a rank of Scottish nobility) of Cawdor and eventually King of Scotland. They also prophesy that Macbeth's companion, Banquo, will beget a line of Scottish kings, although Banquo will never be king himself.

The witches vanish, and Macbeth and Banquo treat their prophecies sceptically until some of King Duncan's men come to thank the two generals for their victories in battle and to tell Macbeth that he has indeed been named thane of Cawdor. The previous thane betrayed Scotland by fighting for the Norwegians and Duncan has condemned him to death. Macbeth is intrigued by the possibility that the remainder of the witches' prophecy - that he will be crowned king - might be also true, but he is uncertain what to expect. He visits with King Duncan, and they plan to dine together at Inverness, Macbeth's castle. Macbeth writes ahead to his wife, Lady Macbeth, telling her all that has happened.

Lady Macbeth suffers none of her husband's uncertainty. She desires the kingship for him and wants him to murder Duncan in order to obtain it. When Macbeth arrives at Inverness, she overrides all of her husband's objections and persuades him to kill the king that very night. He and Lady Macbeth plan to get Duncan's two chamberlains drunk so they will black out; the next morning they will blame the murder on the chamberlains, who will be defenceless, as they will remember nothing. While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth stabs him, despite his doubts and a number of supernatural portents, including a vision of a bloody dagger. When Duncan's death is discovered the next morning, Macbeth kills the chamberlains - ostensibly out of rage at their crime - and easily assumes the kingship. Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain flee to England and Ireland, respectively, fearing that whoever killed Duncan desires their demise as well.

Fearful of the witches' prophecy that Banquo's heirs will seize the throne, Macbeth hires a group of murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance. They ambush Banquo on his way to a royal feast, but they fail to kill Fleance, who escapes into the night. Macbeth becomes furious: as long as Fleance is alive, he fears that his power remains insecure. At the feast that night, Banquo's ghost visits Macbeth. When he sees the ghost, Macbeth raves fearfully, startling his guests, who include most of the great Scottish nobility. Lady Macbeth tries to neutralise the damage, but Macbeth's kingship incites increasing resistance from his nobles and subjects. Frightened, Macbeth goes to visit the witches in their cavern. There, they show him a sequence of demons and spirits who present him with further prophecies: he must beware of Macduff, a Scottish nobleman who opposed Macbeth's accession to the throne; he is incapable of being harmed by any man born of woman; and he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth is relieved and feels secure, because he knows that all men are born of women and that forests cannot move. When he learns that Macduff has fled to England to join Malcolm, Macbeth orders that Macduff's castle be seized and, most cruelly, that Lady Macduff and her children be murdered.

When news of his family's execution reaches Macduff in England, he is stricken with grief and vows revenge. Prince Malcolm, Duncan's son, has succeeded in raising an army in England, and Macduff joins him as he rides to Scotland to challenge Macbeth's forces. The invasion has the support of the Scottish nobles, who are appalled and frightened by Macbeth's tyrannical and murderous behaviour. Lady Macbeth, meanwhile, becomes plagued with fits of sleepwalking in which she bemoans what she believes to be bloodstains on her hands. Before Macbeth's opponents arrive, Macbeth receives news that she has killed herself, causing him to sink into a deep and pessimistic despair. Nevertheless, he awaits the English and fortifies Dunsinane, to which he seems to have withdrawn in order to defend himself, certain that the witches' prophecies guarantee his invincibility. He is struck numb with fear, however, when he learns that the English army is advancing on Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood. Birnam Wood is indeed coming to Dunsinane, fulfilling half of the witches' prophecy.

In the battle, Macbeth hews violently, but the English forces gradually overwhelm his army and castle. On the battlefield, Macbeth encounters the vengeful Macduff, who declares that he was not "of woman born" but was instead "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb (what we now call birth by Caesarean section). Though he realises that he is doomed, Macbeth continues to fight until Macduff kills and beheads him. Malcolm, now the King of Scotland, declares his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at Scone.

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Macbeth - Macbeth is a Scottish general and the thane of Glamis who is a brave soldier and a powerful man, but he is not a virtuous one. He is easily tempted into murder to fulfil his ambitions to the throne, and once he commits his first crime and is crowned King of Scotland, he embarks on further atrocities with increasing ease. His response to every problem is violence and murder.

Lady Macbeth - Macbeth's wife, a deeply ambitious woman who lusts for power and position. Early in the play she seems to be the stronger and more ruthless of the two, as she urges her husband to kill Duncan and seize the crown. After the bloodshed begins, however, Lady Macbeth falls victim to guilt and madness to an even greater degree than her husband. Her conscience affects her to such an extent that she eventually commits suicide.

The Three Witches - Three "black and midnight hags" who plot mischief against Macbeth using charms, spells, and prophecies. Their predictions prompt him to murder Duncan, to order the deaths of Banquo and his son, and to blindly believe in his own immortality. The play leaves the witches' true identity unclear - aside from the fact that they are servants of Hecate. They resemble the mythological Fates, who impersonally weave the threads of human destiny. They clearly take a perverse delight in using their knowledge of the future to toy with and destroy human beings.

Banquo - The brave, noble general whose children, according to the witches' prophecy, will inherit the Scottish throne. Like Macbeth, Banquo thinks ambitious thoughts, but he does not translate those thoughts into action. Banquo's character stands as a rebuke to Macbeth, since he represents the path Macbeth chose not to take: a path in which ambition need not lead to betrayal and murder. Appropriately, it is Banquo's ghost - and not Duncan's - that haunts Macbeth, reminding Macbeth that he did not emulate Banquo's reaction to the witches' prophecy.

King Duncan - The good King of Scotland whom Macbeth, in his ambition for the crown, murders. Duncan is the model of a virtuous, benevolent, and farsighted ruler. His death symbolises the destruction of an order in Scotland that can be restored only when Duncan's line, in the person of Malcolm, once more occupies the throne.

Macduff - A Scottish nobleman hostile to Macbeth's kingship from the start. He eventually becomes a leader of the crusade to unseat Macbeth. The crusade's mission is to place the rightful king, Malcolm, on the throne, but Macduff also desires vengeance for Macbeth's murder of Macduff's wife and young son.

Lady Macduff - Macduff's wife. The scene in her castle provides our only glimpse of a domestic realm other than that of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. She and her home serve as contrasts to Lady Macbeth and the hellish world of Inverness.

Malcolm - The son of Duncan, whose restoration to the throne signals Scotland's return to order following Macbeth's reign of terror. Malcolm becomes a serious challenge to Macbeth with Macduff's aid (and the support of England). Prior to this, he appears weak and uncertain of his own power, as when he and Donalbain flee Scotland after their father's murder.

Donalbain - Duncan's son and Malcolm's younger brother.

Hecate - The goddess of witchcraft, who helps the three witches work their mischief on Macbeth.

Fleance - Banquo's son, who survives Macbeth's attempt to murder him. At the end of the play, Fleance's whereabouts are unknown. Presumably, he may come to rule Scotland, fulfilling the witches' prophecy that Banquo's sons will sit on the Scottish throne.

The Murderers - A group of ruffians conscripted by Macbeth to murder Banquo, Fleance (whom they fail to kill), and Macduff's wife and children.

Lennox - A Scottish nobleman.

Ross - A Scottish nobleman.

Porter - The drunken doorman of Macbeth's castle.

MAIN CHARACTER PROFILES

MACBETH is a beloved Scottish general who bravely defends his king and country in battle, and ready to die for King Duncan in battle. However, the prophecies of the witches have a powerful effect on him, especially when he learns the first has come true, and he becomes the Thane of Cawdor. After hearing the three weird sisters' prophecy that he will one day rule Scotland, Macbeth commits heinous murder and other tyrannous acts in order to secure his position as king. When we follow Macbeth's journey in the play, we're invited to consider what it is, exactly, that makes a seemingly decent man commit an 'evil' act. Let's start from the beginning. When Macbeth hears the witches' prophecy, he is very interested in what they have to say. His thoughts also turn to 'murder' (in order to fulfil the prophecy). But Macbeth is also terrified by his 'horrible imaginings' - his hair stands on end and his heart races, knocking at his ribs. "My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical," says Macbeth, "Shakes so my single state". Macbeth knows that killing Duncan would be a terrible act and he is sickened by his own thoughts. So, what happens to Macbeth? What makes him kill Duncan and then order several other murders without batting an eyelash? Is it fate, or just reckless ambition? On the one hand, we can see Macbeth as a figure controlled by outside forces. After all, the three witches prophesise that Macbeth will become king, and they also know the exact circumstances of Macbeth's downfall, which suggests that Macbeth has no control over his own fate. What is more, the weird sisters' words clearly prompt Macbeth into action and we often get a sense that Macbeth is acting against his own will, as though he is in a trance: the first time Macbeth encounters the witches he is twice described as being 'rapt'. Even after this encounter Macbeth, at times, seems to move through the play in a dreamlike state, as when he follows a 'dagger of the mind' toward the sleeping king's room just before he commits his first murder. In light of this, it's easy to blame all of Macbeth's actions on the three witches and/or fate. Yet, we can also argue that Macbeth has a mind of his own and acts according to his own free will. In the play, we clearly see Macbeth deliberate about murder, and then make his own choices and put his plans into action. The witches never say anything to Macbeth about murdering Duncan. When Macbeth first hears the sisters' prophecy, his thoughts turn to 'murder' all on their own. In fact, the witches never say anything at all about HOW Macbeth will become king. So, perhaps Macbeth has had inside him a murderous ambition all along and the three witches merely awaken or embody a desire that's been dormant. We could argue, then, that 'fate' has nothing to do with Macbeth's life at all. We can also read Macbeth's character as a study of ambition and its ill effects. Once Macbeth murders Duncan, he becomes willing to do anything necessary in order to secure his position of power. It also becomes easier and easier for Macbeth to commit heinous crimes. Without thinking twice, he orders the murders of Macduff's family, including his children. According to Macbeth, he's got to look out for his own best interests: *"For mine own good all causes shall give way. I am in blood stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o'er"*. (Act III, Scene 4). By comparing his actions to wading through a bloody river, Macbeth suggests that once a man commits a murderous act for his own gain, it's impossible to stop. Turning back would be 'tedious.' Macbeth's selfishness, acting for his 'own good,' ultimately makes him a hated 'tyrant,' which is quite a long way from being the 'beloved' thane he once was. As the play progresses, Macbeth's justifications for his actions become increasingly thin and by the end, Macbeth seems like a shell of the man he once was - the entire kingdom looks forward to the day he'll be replaced by Malcolm. As things fall apart for him at the end of the play, he seems almost relieved - with the English army at his gates, he can finally return to life as a warrior, and he displays a kind of reckless bravado as his enemies surround him and drag him down. In part, this stems from his fatal

confidence in the witches' prophecies, but it also seems to derive from the fact that he has returned to the arena where he has been most successful and where his internal turmoil need not affect him - namely, the battlefield. Unlike many of Shakespeare's other tragic heroes, Macbeth never seems to contemplate suicide: "Why should I play the Roman fool," he asks, "and die on mine own sword?" Instead, he goes down fighting, bringing the play full circle: it begins with Macbeth winning on the battlefield and ends with him dying in combat.

LADY MACBETH At the play's beginning, Lady Macbeth is a powerful figure: she is charming, attractive, ambitious, and seems to be completely devoted to her husband. She is also a bit worried that her husband isn't quite "man enough" to do what it takes to be king, "too full o' the milk of human kindness". If her husband is going to be the powerful figure she wants him to be, Lady Macbeth's got to take things into her own hands. Lady Macbeth calls on 'spirits' to aid her while she prepares to help her husband murder the king. What does Lady Macbeth actually mean when she asks the spirits to "unsex" her? Essentially, she is asking to be stripped of everything that makes her a reproductive woman, including menstruation or, the "visitings of nature." She also asks that her breast milk be exchanged for 'gall' or poison. In Lady Macbeth's mind, being a woman interferes with her evil plans. Lady Macbeth construes femininity as compassion and kindness and also suggests that masculinity is synonymous with 'direst cruelty.' Lady Macbeth will use her belief of Macbeth's "kindness" against him when she goads him to murder the king: "When you durst do it, then you were a man". It turns out that Lady Macbeth's attack on Macbeth's masculinity is the final nudge Macbeth needs to murder Duncan. All of this makes Lady Macbeth sound dangerous, pushing Macbeth into murderous action. In fact, Lady Macbeth's whole "unsex me" speech aligns her with witchcraft and the supernatural (calling on spirits and talking about "smoke of hell" and "murdering ministers"). Lady Macbeth sounds like a powerful figure and may evoke some fears about dominant women, but soon after Macbeth proves his 'manhood' by killing Duncan and becoming king, Lady Macbeth disappears into the margins of the story and becomes the kind of weak, enfeebled figure she herself would probably despise. When she learns that the king's dead body has been discovered, she grows faint and must be carried from the room, and later, when Macbeth decides to murder Banquo in order to secure his position of power, he excludes his wife from the decision making altogether. By Act V, Lady Macbeth has been reduced to a figure who sleepwalks, continuously tries to wash the imaginary blood from her hands, and talks in her sleep of murder. She's grown so ill that the doctor says there is nothing he can do to help her. "The disease," he says, "is beyond his practice," and what Lady Macbeth needs is "the divine" (a priest or, God), not a "physician". We can read this as a psychological breakdown. Lady Macbeth is so consumed by guilt for her evil acts that she eventually loses her mind. We can also say that her transformation (from a powerful and masculine figure into an enfeebled woman) is significant insofar as it re-establishes a sense of 'natural' gender order in the play: Lady Macbeth is put in her place as a woman - she is no longer the dominant partner in her marriage and Macbeth makes all the decisions while she sleepwalks through the palace. In the end, Lady Macbeth is all but forgotten. When Macbeth learns of her death, he says he has no "time" to think about her - "She should have died hereafter; There would have been a time for such a word"

MACDUFF is a loyal Scottish nobleman and the Thane of Fife. After Macbeth murders Macduff's family, Macduff grieves for his loved ones and then resolves to kill Macbeth in man-to-man combat. At the play's end, he triumphantly carries Macbeth's severed head to Malcolm, the future king. Macduff is not a man of many words, but he is one of the few characters in the play whose absence or silence speaks as much for him as his words. When Macduff speaks, you listen, because it's a rarity and because it's generally sensible and genuine. We first hear

Macduff as he expresses honest grief at the King's murder, which he discovered. As we get to know Macduff, who is a strong and courageous soldier, we can appreciate how awful and deeply he felt Duncan's murder. It takes a lot to make this kind of man explain his feelings. Macduff is additionally sharp and attentive; while everyone else panics and dithers about Duncan's death, Macduff is the one that asks why Macbeth killed the guards senselessly. He is also the first to see to the ailing Lady Macbeth, who cries for help upon hearing the news about the guards. Everyone else is too wrapped up in Macbeth's passion to do the practical thing and help the Lady. As the play unfolds, Macduff speaks with Ross about the effects of Macbeth's monarchy, and instead of elaborating his suspicions of the King, Macduff makes the quiet and powerful decision to just leave for England. This is not a cowardly act, but rather a brave one intended to aid Malcolm (who needs all the help he can get) in enlisting the English against Macbeth. It is clear from his talk with Malcolm that Macduff loves Scotland and is not willing to see her maligned by an evil king.

We truly discover the strength of Macduff's character when he meets with Ross and receives the terrible news of his family's murder. When Macduff hears of his loved ones' deaths, he is not afraid to express emotion and to grieve openly for his loss, despite Malcolm's insistence that he needs to be a 'man' and get revenge. This is because Macduff is the only person in the play who insists that being a 'man' means being able to 'feel' things. Everybody else in Macbeth seems to insist that masculinity is synonymous with violence and even cruelty. Not so, according to Macduff. Real men are able to express emotion.

DUNCAN is the King of Scotland. While spending the night as a guest at Inverness, he is murdered by Macbeth, who has aspirations to rule the country. In the play, Duncan is a benevolent old man. We never see him out on the battlefield, and he is always full of kindly words. He is also generous when bestowing honours on the soldiers and Thanes that protect him and his kingdom. Duncan is so sympathetic and likable a character that murdering him seems horrifying. His good nature, pronounced by Macbeth in his private thoughts, reminds us of what a terrible thing it is to murder him. Even Lady Macbeth, who says she would murder her own nursing babe, can't kill him because he resembles her father while sleeping. That Macbeth can murder this man exemplifies just how atrocious the act is. It's also a clear indication that Macbeth is far removed from human kindness and morality. King Duncan's character is also interesting insofar as it speaks to the play's representation of masculinity and power. In a time where manhood was synonymous with violence and cruelty, King Duncan is decidedly soft: heavily idealised, this ideally protective father is nonetheless largely ineffectual: even when he is alive, he is unable to hold his kingdom together, reliant on a series of bloody men to suppress an increasingly successful series of rebellions... For Duncan's androgyny is the object of enormous ambivalence: idealised for his nurturing paternity, he is nonetheless killed for his softness, his childish trust, his inability to read men's minds in their faces, his reliance on the fighting of sons who can rebel against him.

MALCOLM is elder son of King Duncan and newly appointed as Prince of Cumberland, heir to the throne. When we first meet Malcolm, he seems rather weak - he is standing around praising a brave and bloodied Captain for saving his life and rescuing him from capture. In other words, Malcolm is someone who seems to need rescuing. Malcolm's reaction to news of his father's death doesn't recommend him to be king yet, either; it only shows he is still feeling around for the best course of action. He seems to lack the experience to make him confident or capable. Only when he meets Macduff, who complements him in courage and experience, do we begin to see the seeds of power in Malcolm. In order to test Macduff's honour, Malcolm makes himself out to be a lecherous tyrant who is more interested in selfish gain than he is in the good of the kingdom. Everything makes sense again when Malcolm admits he is chaste and was just testing

Macduff to make sure he was true to the cause of Scotland. Malcolm's words at the end, praising and gifting his allies and damning his enemies, make it seem like he'll follow in the footsteps of Duncan: gracious and, for the most part, harmless.

BANQUO is a general in the King's army, the same as Macbeth, and is often seen in contrast to Macbeth. Banquo is the only one with Macbeth when he hears the first prophecy of the weird sisters; during the same prophecy, Banquo is told that his children will be kings of Scotland, though he will not be. How Macbeth plays his part of the prophecy to be fulfilled makes the play - and how Banquo does not, creates a contrast to Macbeth. From the very first time we meet Banquo, he sets himself apart from Macbeth, especially notable because both characters are introduced into the play at the same time: their meeting with the witches. While Macbeth is eager to jump all over the weird sisters' words, Banquo displays a caution and wisdom contrary to Macbeth's excitement. He notes that evil tends to beget evil. Though, we might want to keep in mind that in Banquo's last private speech, when he knows Macbeth has done wrong, he still thinks of what good might be coming to him as a result of the prophecy.

THE THREE WITCHES (often referred to as the weird sisters) set the action of the play in motion when they confront Macbeth and prophesise that he will be King of Scotland. We never see them apart and they often speak and act in unison so it's worth considering them here as a single unit. Lots of ambiguity and drama surrounds these figures. When we encounter them in the play's opening scene, we're not sure where they've come from, who/what they are, or what they have in mind when they say they plan to meet Macbeth. What we do know is that they've gathered amidst thunder and lightening and move about the fog and 'filthy' air, which seems just as murky and mysterious as they are. Even Banquo and Macbeth are unsure about the sisters' identity when they meet them on the heath. Appropriately, the witches deliver the infamous lines that set the tone for the play: "Fair is foul and foul is fair". In other words, nothing, including their identity, is certain in this play.

The witches spend most of their time gathered around a bubbling cauldron, chanting, casting spells, conjuring visions of the future, and goading Macbeth by making accurate predictions of the future before they vanish into thin air.

The sisters are called 'witches' only once in the play, as opposed to being referred to as 'weird' a total of six times. The term 'weird' comes from the old English term 'wyrd' meaning 'fate' so it seems that they are in some way associated with the three fates of classical mythology, which are supposed to control man's destiny, and one of the major questions in the play revolves around the issue of whether or not Macbeth's actions are governed by his own free will or by some outside force. It is possible that the weird sisters control Macbeth's actions and cause him to commit murder. On the other hand, it could be that they merely set things in motion and release Macbeth's latent murderous ambition.

THEMES

A theme is an idea that runs through a text. A text may have one theme or many. Understanding the themes makes the text more than 'just' a text - it becomes something more significant, because we're encouraged to think more deeply about the text, to work out what lies beneath its surface. There are several themes in *MACBETH*, these are:

The Corrupting Power of Unchecked Ambition

The main theme of *Macbeth* - the destruction wrought when ambition goes unchecked by moral constraints - finds its most powerful expression in the play's two main characters. *Macbeth* is a courageous Scottish general who is not naturally inclined to commit evil deeds, yet he deeply desires power and advancement. He kills Duncan against his better judgment and afterward stewes in guilt and paranoia. Toward the end of the play he descends into a kind of frantic, boastful madness. *Lady Macbeth*, on the other hand, pursues her goals with greater determination, yet she is less capable of withstanding the repercussions of her immoral acts. One of Shakespeare's most forcefully drawn female characters, she spurs her husband mercilessly to kill Duncan and urges him to be strong in the murder's aftermath, but she is eventually driven to distraction by the effect of *Macbeth's* repeated bloodshed on her conscience. In each case, ambition - helped, of course, by the malign prophecies of the witches - is what drives the couple to ever more terrible atrocities. The problem, the play suggests, is that once one decides to use violence to further one's quest for power, it is difficult to stop. There are always potential threats to the throne - *Banquo*, *Fleance*, *Macduff* - and it is always tempting to use violent means to dispose of them.

The Relationship Between Cruelty and Masculinity

Characters in *Macbeth* frequently dwell on issues of gender. *Lady Macbeth* manipulates her husband by questioning his manhood, wishes that she herself could be "unsexed," and does not contradict *Macbeth* when he says that a woman like her should give birth only to boys. In the same manner that *Lady Macbeth* goads her husband on to murder, *Macbeth* provokes the murderers he hires to kill *Banquo* by questioning their manhood. Such acts show that both *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth* equate masculinity with naked aggression, and whenever they converse about manhood, violence soon follows. Their understanding of manhood allows the political order depicted in the play to descend into chaos.

At the same time, however, the audience cannot help noticing that women are also sources of violence and evil. The witches' prophecies spark *Macbeth's* ambitions and then encourage his violent behaviour; *Lady Macbeth* provides the brains and the will behind her husband's plotting; and the only divine being to appear is *Hecate*, the goddess of witchcraft. Arguably, *Macbeth* traces the root of chaos and evil to women, which has led some critics to argue that this is Shakespeare's most misogynistic play. While the male characters are just as violent and prone to evil as the women, the aggression of the female characters is more striking because it goes against prevailing expectations of how women ought to behave. *Lady Macbeth's* behaviour certainly shows that women can be as ambitious and cruel as men. Whether because of the constraints of her society or because she is not fearless enough to kill, *Lady Macbeth* relies on deception and manipulation rather than violence to achieve her ends.

Ultimately, the play does put forth a revised and less destructive definition of manhood. In the scene where *Macduff* learns of the murders of his wife and child, *Malcolm* consoles him by encouraging him to take the news in "manly" fashion, by seeking revenge upon *Macbeth*. *Macduff* shows the young heir apparent that he has a mistaken understanding of masculinity. To *Malcolm's* suggestion, "Dispute it like a man," *Macduff* replies, "I shall do so. But I must also feel it as a man". At the end of the play, *Siward* receives news of his son's death rather

complacently. Malcolm responds: "He's worth more sorrow [than you have expressed] / And that I'll spend for him". Malcolm's comment shows that he has learned the lesson Macduff gave him on the sentient nature of true masculinity. It also suggests that, with Malcolm's coronation, order will be restored to the Kingdom of Scotland.

The Difference Between Kingship and Tyranny

In the play, Duncan is always referred to as a "king," while Macbeth soon becomes known as the "tyrant." The difference between the two types of rulers seems to be expressed in a conversation that occurs in Act 4, scene 3, when Macduff meets Malcolm in England. In order to test Macduff's loyalty to Scotland, Malcolm pretends that he would make an even worse king than Macbeth. He tells Macduff of his reproachable qualities - among them a thirst for personal power and a violent temperament, both of which seem to characterise Macbeth perfectly. On the other hand, Malcolm says, "The king-becoming graces / [are] justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness, / Bounty, perseverance, mercy, [and] lowliness". The model king, then, offers the kingdom an embodiment of order and justice, but also comfort and affection. Under him, subjects are rewarded according to their merits, as when Duncan makes Macbeth thane of Cawdor after Macbeth's victory over the invaders. Most important, the king must be loyal to Scotland above his own interests. Macbeth, by contrast, brings only chaos to Scotland - symbolised in the bad weather and bizarre supernatural events - and offers no real justice, only a habit of capriciously murdering those he sees as a threat. As the embodiment of tyranny, he must be overcome by Malcolm so that Scotland can have a true king once more.

The Supernatural

Another major theme is the supernatural - the idea that there are mysterious forces controlling what is happening in our lives. The very first characters we meet are the three witches, and their prophecies are what drives the story forward. In Shakespeare's time belief in witchcraft was very strong and many so-called witches were burnt at the stake. It is not surprising that his audience would have taken these ideas seriously and felt that Macbeth was somehow possessed. There are lots of references to this - he is unable to say 'Amen', he has visions, he is disturbed and even thinks no-one can kill him. The final battle scene also contains many elements of the supernatural. Macbeth believes he is invincible because many of the witches' prophecies appear impossible to fulfil - and yet just as the witches predicted Birnam Wood does indeed move to Dunsinane, and Macbeth is killed by Macduff because he is not 'of woman born'.

Reality and Appearance

The contrast between what is real and the appearance of something is also used by Shakespeare. The classic dagger scene, when Macbeth is not sure if he can trust his eyes, is only one of many references to this theme. For instance, he sees Banquo's ghost at the banquet and Lady Macbeth imagines blood on her hands.

The contrast between reality and appearance is also shown with all the references to thoughts, dreams and actions. Banquo talks about the 'cursed thoughts' he has had and his dreams of the witches. Macbeth talks of the world of thought and dreams and sometimes is stuck there. For instance, Lady Macbeth is critical of Macbeth's 'foolish thoughts' and talks of him being 'lost' because of this.

Sleep is another theme associated with reality, because characters view it as vital to life, but like death or being in another world. Macbeth is told he has murdered sleep and will 'sleep no more' whilst Lady Macbeth thinks of sleep as death, calling it the sternest 'goodnight'.

MOTIFS AND SYMBOLS

MOTIFS are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes:

Hallucinations

Visions and hallucinations recur throughout the play and serve as reminders of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's joint culpability for the growing body count. When he is about to kill Duncan, Macbeth sees a dagger floating in the air. Covered with blood and pointed toward the king's chamber, the dagger represents the bloody course on which Macbeth is about to embark. Later, he sees Banquo's ghost sitting in a chair at a feast, pricking his conscience by mutely reminding him that he murdered his former friend. The seemingly hardheaded Lady Macbeth also eventually gives way to visions, as she sleepwalks and believes that her hands are stained with blood that cannot be washed away by any amount of water. In each case, it is ambiguous whether the vision is real or purely hallucinatory; but, in both cases, the Macbeths read them uniformly as supernatural signs of their guilt.

Violence

Macbeth is a famously violent play. Interestingly, most of the killings take place offstage, but throughout the play the characters provide the audience with gory descriptions of the carnage, from the opening scene where the captain describes Macbeth and Banquo wading in blood on the battlefield, to the endless references to the bloodstained hands of Macbeth and his wife. The action is bookended by a pair of bloody battles: in the first, Macbeth defeats the invaders; in the second, he is slain and beheaded by Macduff. In between is a series of murders: Duncan, Duncan's chamberlains, Banquo, Lady Macduff, and Macduff's son all come to bloody ends. By the end of the action, blood seems to be everywhere.

Prophecy

Prophecy sets Macbeth's plot in motion - namely, the witches' prophecy that Macbeth will become first thane of Cawdor and then king. The weird sisters make a number of other prophecies: they tell us that Banquo's heirs will be kings, that Macbeth should beware Macduff, that Macbeth is safe till Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and that no man born of woman can harm Macbeth. Save for the prophecy about Banquo's heirs, all of these predictions are fulfilled within the course of the play. Still, it is left deliberately ambiguous whether some of them are self-fulfilling - for example, whether Macbeth wills himself to be king or is fated to be king. Additionally, as the Birnam Wood and "born of woman" prophecies make clear, the prophecies must be interpreted as riddles, since they do not always mean what they seem to mean.

SYMBOLS are objects, characters, figures, and colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts:

Blood

Blood is everywhere in Macbeth, beginning with the opening battle between the Scots and the Norwegian invaders, which is described in harrowing terms by the wounded captain in Act 1, scene 2. Once Macbeth and Lady Macbeth embark upon their murderous journey, blood comes to symbolise their guilt, and they begin to feel that their crimes have stained them in a way that cannot be washed clean. "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?"

Macbeth cries after he has killed Duncan, even as his wife scolds him and says that a little water will do the job. Later, though, she comes to share his horrified sense of being stained: "Out, damned spot; out, I say . . . who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" she asks as she wanders through the halls of their castle near the close of the play. Blood symbolises the guilt that sits like a permanent stain on the consciences of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, one that hounds them to their graves.

Half-Truths.

The drunken Porter responds to the knocking at the castle's gates just after Macbeth has murdered King Duncan. As he does so, he imagines there's a Catholic "equivocator" at the door "who committed treason enough for God's sake". On the one hand, an "equivocator" is a person who speaks ambiguously or doesn't tell the whole truth, which shows up over and over in Macbeth. The witches tell partial truths when they make predictions; Macbeth frequently bends the truth as he deliberates about whether or not it's OK to murder the king; he equivocates when he justifies (to his henchmen) that murdering Banquo is acceptable; and even Banquo has some ambiguous thoughts about the prophecy that he'll father kings.

On the other hand, the word "equivocator" is most likely an allusion to the treatise written by the Jesuit Henry Garnet, who encouraged Catholics to speak ambiguously or, "equivocate" when they were being questioned by Protestant inquisitors (so they wouldn't be persecuted for their religious beliefs). Henry Garnet was tried and executed for his role in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, when a group of Catholics planned to blow up the King and Parliament (they stored kegs of gunpowder in a nearby building). The plot failed, but it was an extremely upsetting experience for everyone involved - and it's likely that a lot of the original audience members would have associated the scene of Macbeth returning from the room where he's murdered the sleeping king with this terrorist plot.

The Weather

As in other Shakespearean tragedies, Macbeth's grotesque murder spree is accompanied by a number of unnatural occurrences in the natural realm. From the thunder and lightning that accompany the witches' appearances to the terrible storms that rage on the night of Duncan's murder, these violations of the natural order reflect corruption in the moral and political orders.

THE LANGUAGE

We can better appreciate the language used in Macbeth by looking at the techniques Shakespeare used. Some of these techniques (and names) might seem difficult at first. If that's the case, just think about what the play would sound like if the technique was not used. For instance, when we meet the witches at the start, imagine that they said: "Thing's aren't what they seem, you know" Well, yes, it is easy to understand but it is not something unusual or interesting, and it doesn't seem to be something a witch might want to say anyway. So instead, they say: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" Suddenly it's not so obvious what Shakespeare is getting at. This is also a lot more complex and interesting - opposing ideas are put together and the actual meaning seems to be a paradox - how can something fair be foul, and something foul be fair?

We know the witches are in the middle of a storm and perhaps they are saying that they like this; they are witches so they enjoy bad things and are on the side of evil. However, they could also be saying that what we think looks attractive (or 'fair') is actually bad (or 'foul'). In other words, our ambitions can be our downfall. Or they could be warning us of things to come in the play - Macbeth is tempted by their predictions and enters a confused, unnatural world, where he cannot trust what he sees and cannot bear what he is.

Perhaps now we can appreciate Shakespeare's skill as a writer - many of his characters say things which are ambiguous. This means that you can interpret them in different ways, so the witches might be talking about the weather, or they might mean something completely different. Another example of ambiguity is when Lady Macbeth says the daggers 'must lie there' - she could mean the daggers must be placed there, but also that the daggers will hide the truth and pin the blame on the servants.

Imagery is used a lot in Macbeth. This is when strong pictures or ideas are created in our minds. For instance, the play has lots of references to darkness, to sleep, to disease and even to blood. Imagery often describes one thing in terms of another, and there are three main ways this happens:

Metaphors- when one thing is called something else. For instance, when Macbeth wants to defend his lands against others, he uses metaphors from medicine - he wants to find the 'disease' in Scotland, to restore it to 'health' and to use a 'drug' against others.

Personification- where something is described as if it is human, so the "Dark night strangles the travelling lamp".

Similes- when a direct comparison is made (with 'as', 'than' or 'like'), so Banquo says that the witches "look not like the inhabitants o' the 'earth" or Macbeth says something "moves like a ghost".

Opposite words or ideas are also frequent in Macbeth - they highlight conflicts in the story such as appearance and reality, choice and fate or good and evil. At times the opposites are in terms of single words, such as 'heaven' or 'hell'. The technical term for this is antithesis, when words are deliberately chosen to contrast. For instance, we have 'foul' and 'fair' from the witches and even Lady Macbeth says what has 'quenched' the servants has given her 'fire' (she means it's made them tired, but made her alert).

Repetition is also used frequently in Macbeth - repeating a word or phrase draws attention to it. For instance, in Act II, Scene 2 we have:

Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care

In fact the word 'sleep' is repeated 8 times in just 10 lines. Again, this is no accident - Shakespeare really wants the audience to be aware of what sleep means to his characters - sleep is like death, but it's also an escape from the worries of the world. By concentrating on the word 'sleep' we can see how Macbeth has put Duncan to sleep (he's killed him) and now will no longer sleep (or relax) again.

Another important technique in Macbeth is the use of soliloquies. These are speeches but they are meant to be heard only by the audience. They tell us directly about a character's thoughts and feelings and they are very important in Macbeth, because we can understand exactly what is going through a character's mind. Perhaps the most famous is in Act 2, Scene 1, which starts: "Is this a dagger I see before me". Without this soliloquy, we would have no idea just how confused Macbeth is.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE BIOGRAPHY

Details about William Shakespeare's life are sketchy, mostly mere surmise based upon court or other clerical records. His parents, John and Mary (Arden), were married about 1557; she was of the landed gentry, he a yeoman - a glover and commodities merchant. By 1568, John had risen through the ranks of town government and held the position of high bailiff, similar to mayor. William, the eldest son, was born in 1564, probably on April 23, several days before his baptism on April 26, 1564. That Shakespeare also died on April 23, 52 years later, may have resulted in the adoption of this birthdate. William no doubt attended the local grammar school in Stratford where his parents lived, and would have studied primarily Latin rhetoric, logic, and literature. At age 18 (1582), William hastily married Anne Hathaway, a local farmer's daughter eight years his senior. Their first daughter (Susanna) was born six months later (1583), and twins Judith and Hamnet were born in 1585.

Shakespeare's life can be divided into three periods: the first 20 years in Stratford, which include his schooling, early marriage, and fatherhood; the next 25 years as an actor and playwright in London; and the last five in retirement back in Stratford where he enjoyed the moderate wealth gained from his theatrical successes. The years linking the first two periods are marked by a lack of information about Shakespeare, and are often referred to as the "dark years"; the transition from active work into retirement was gradual and cannot be precisely dated.

John Shakespeare had suffered financial reverses from the time of William's teen years until well into the height of the playwright's popularity and success. In 1596, John Shakespeare was granted a coat of arms, almost certainly purchased by William, who the next year bought a sizable house in Stratford. By the time of his death, William had substantial properties, both professional and personal, which he bestowed on his theatrical associates and his family.

Shakespeare probably left school at 15, which was the norm, and took some sort of job, especially since this was the period of his father's financial difficulty. Numerous references in his plays suggest that William may have in fact worked for his father, thereby gaining specialized knowledge. At some point during the "dark years," Shakespeare began his career with a London theatrical company - perhaps in 1589 - for he was already an actor and playwright of some note in 1592. Shakespeare apparently wrote and acted for Pembroke's Men, as well as numerous others, in particular Strange's Men, which later became The Chamberlain's Men, with whom he remained for the rest of his career. When, in 1592, the Plague closed the theatres for about two years, Shakespeare turned to writing book-length narrative poetry. Most notable were "Venus and Adonis" and "The Rape of Lucrece," both of which were dedicated to the Earl of Southampton, whom scholars accept as Shakespeare's friend and benefactor despite a lack of documentation to support this. During this same period, Shakespeare was writing his sonnets, which are more likely signs of the time's fashion rather than actual love poems detailing any particular relationship. He returned to play writing when theatres reopened in 1594, and published no more poetry. His sonnets were published without his consent in 1609, shortly before his retirement.

Amid all of his success, Shakespeare suffered the loss of his only son, Hamnet, who died in 1596 at the age of 11. But Shakespeare's career continued unabated, and in London in 1599, he became one of the partners in the new Globe Theatre, built by the Chamberlain's Men. This group was a remarkable assemblage of "excellent actors who were also business partners and close personal friends, including famed actor Richard Burbage, who all worked together as equals.

Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 and was succeeded by her cousin King James of Scotland. Two years later King James himself renamed the Chamberlain's Men as The King's Men, and Shakespeare's productivity and popularity continued uninterrupted. He invested in London property and, one year away from retirement, purchased a second theatre, the Blackfriars Gatehouse, in partnership with his fellow actors. His final play was Henry VIII, two years before his death in 1616. Amazingly, in the 23 years between 1590 and 1613 his work, including some collaborations, consist of about 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, two epitaphs on a man named John Combe, one epitaph on Elias James, and several other noted poems. Incredibly, most of Shakespeare's plays had never been published in anything except pamphlet form, and were simply acting scripts stored at the Globe. Only the efforts of two of Shakespeare's company, John Heminges and Henry Condell, preserved his 36 plays (minus Pericles, the thirty-seventh) in the First Folio of his work. Heminges and Condell published the plays, they said, "only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was our Shakespeare". Theatre scripts were not regarded as literary works of art, but only the basis for the performance.

Present copies of Shakespeare's plays have, in some cases, been reconstructed in part from scripts written down by various members of an acting company who performed particular roles. Shakespeare's plays, like those of many of the actors who also were playwrights, belonged to the acting company. The performance, rather than the script, was what concerned the author, for that was how his play would become popular - and how the company, in which many actors were shareholders, would make money.

William Shakespeare died on April 23, 1616, and was buried two days later in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church where he had been baptized exactly 52 years earlier.

Shakespeare was a respected poet and playwright in his own day, but his reputation did not rise to its present heights until the 19th century. The Romantics, in particular, acclaimed Shakespeare's genius, and the Victorians worshipped Shakespeare with a reverence that George Bernard Shaw later called "bardolatry". In the 20th and 21st centuries, his work has been repeatedly adopted and rediscovered by new movements in scholarship and performance. His plays remain highly popular today and are constantly studied, performed, and reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the world. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Shakespeare's work has made a lasting impression on later theatre and literature. In particular, he expanded the dramatic potential of characterisation, plot, language, and genre. Until *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, romance had not been viewed as a worthy topic for tragedy. Soliloquies had been used mainly to convey information about characters or events; but Shakespeare used them to explore characters' minds. His work heavily influenced later poetry. In Shakespeare's day, English grammar, spelling and pronunciation were less standardised than they are now, and his use of language and the invention of scores of new words helped shape modern English. Samuel Johnson quoted him more often than any other author in his *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Expressions such as "with bated breath" (*Merchant of Venice*) and "a foregone conclusion" (*Othello*) have found their way into everyday English speech. Without doubt, Shakespeare is one of the greatest influences on the development of the modern English language which, in turn, is England's greatest contribution to the world: sometimes described as the first global language, English is the dominant language, or in some instances even the required international language, of communications, science, information technology, business, seafaring, aviation, entertainment, radio and diplomacy. Shakespeare's influence remains all around us on a daily basis.

A LIST OF CHARACTERS IN OUR PLAY

The *Manchester Actors Company* presentation of William Shakespeare's 'MACBETH' is an action-packed 60-minute abridged version of the entire play, concentrating on key scenes, characters and confrontations, and flows seamlessly. Our version is presented by using 3 actors: here is a list of the characters that you will see in our abridged version, cross-referenced by the actor playing them:

NARRATOR 1

NARRATOR 2

NARRATOR 3

DUNCAN, King of Scotland

MACBETH, first a General, later King of Scotland

LADY MACBETH, his wife

MACDUFF }

ROSS } Noblemen of Scotland

BANQUO }

LADY MACDUFF

WITCH 1 }

WITCH 2 } Who also appear as APPARITIONS 1,2,3

WITCH 3 }

A MURDERER

A DOCTOR

A MESSENGER

SERVANT 1 }

SERVANT 2 } In Macbeth's castle

SERVANT 3 }

ACTOR 1 plays: Macbeth / A Messenger / Witch 3 / Servant 1 / Narrator 1

ACTOR 2 plays: Lady Macbeth / Ross / Lady Macduff / Witch 1 / Servant 3 / Narrator 2

ACTOR 3 plays: Duncan / Macduff / Banquo / Murderer / Doctor / Witch 2 / Servant 2 / Narrator 3

THE PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL

The performance you will see is Shakespeare's text in condensed form. Bearing in mind that *MACBETH* is Shakespeare's shortest play, that there is no sub-plot, and that the action of the play moves forward very briskly as it gathers momentum towards Act V (the battle of Birnam Wood, and Macbeth's final duel with Macduff), the text is surprisingly easy to condense, without damaging the dazzling effect of Shakespeare's imagery-soaked language, or losing any of the famous scenes and great speeches/soliloquies in the play. Above all, our adapted version of the text for three actors should retain all the thrilling and scary atmosphere of this great tragedy. The text used in performance brings to life material from the following scenes in the original play:

ACT I	Scenes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
ACT II	Scenes 1, 2, 3
ACT III	Scenes 1, 2, 4
ACT IV	Scenes 1, 2
ACT V	Scenes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

Here is an easy-to-follow guide to the sequence of events you will see in the performance:

Macbeth meets three witches on a heath as he retreats from the battlefield, leading an army that has successfully fought off an invasion. The weird sisters predict a great future for him, saying that he will be both Thane of Cawdor - and soon King of Scotland.

Duncan, King of Scotland, receives reports of Macbeth's victory. To reward him, the King announces that Macbeth is to be made Thane of Cawdor - and the treacherous, disloyal Cawdor is to be executed immediately.

Back on the heath, Ross arrives to tell Macbeth about his new title. Macbeth speculates to himself about what the future could hold for him.

In the royal palace, Duncan praises Macbeth warmly for his heroism. He announces that Malcolm, his eldest son, is heir to the throne, and gives him the title Prince of Cumberland. Macbeth realises that this is an obstacle to his ambition. The King declares he will travel to Inverness, to Macbeth's castle. Macbeth sets out to take news to his wife of the royal visit.

Lady Macbeth reads a letter from Macbeth describing his meeting with the witches. She relishes the idea of their predictions, but thinks Macbeth is too timid and kind to seize the throne. She calls to the evil spirits to fill her with cruelty and the strength and resolve to see Duncan killed. Duncan and his entourage arrive at the castle. At first, Macbeth falters at the idea of killing the King, but his wife persuades him to banish all weak thoughts. Eventually he is resolved, and steels himself to commit murder.

It is after midnight in the castle, and Banquo is preparing for bed. He feels uneasy when he meets Macbeth. Now left on his own, Macbeth's imagination conjures up a ghostly dagger out of the air - but he cannot grasp it. He goes to Duncan's bedchamber to kill him.

Lady Macbeth has drugged Duncan's servants, and she now waits for the completion of the murder - when Macbeth appears he is panicky and unsteady. Lady Macbeth rebukes him - he

has brought the bloody daggers out of the bedchamber instead of leaving them there as planned, and now is incapable of returning to the scene of the crime. Lady Macbeth takes the daggers back, spreading more blood around the bedchamber. They both hear knocking at the door. Macbeth is led off by his wife to wash off the blood.

It is now early morning. Macduff has arrived at the castle. He goes to waken the King, returns with the news of his murder, and raises the alarm. Macbeth relates shockingly how he killed the blood-covered servants in his fury. Fearing for their own lives, we hear that Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, have fled to England and Ireland respectively.

Macbeth and his wife are now established as King and Queen of Scotland. Publicly, Macbeth and Banquo are seen to be polite and diplomatic, but Macbeth fears that he could pose a threat. Banquo leaves to go riding. Macbeth arranges for the murder of Banquo and his son, Fleance - this fills Lady Macbeth with horror and disbelief.

Because Banquo has grown suspicious that Macbeth is abusing his power, he is killed. But Fleance escapes!

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are welcoming guests to a banquet. Banquo's ghost appears - visible only to Macbeth, who is rendered helpless by the apparition. Lady Macbeth tries to calm her husband, and keep control of the situation. When the ghost appears for a second time, she is forced to bring the feast to a humiliating close. Macbeth tells her he will now seek out the witches, and continue to eliminate all opposition.

The witches already expect Macbeth, and agree to answer his questions. Three apparitions appear: the first, an armed head, warns him against Macduff; the second, a bloody child, tells him he cannot be harmed by anyone 'born of woman'; and the third, a crowned child carrying a tree branch, who guarantees Macbeth's safety until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill. The magic show ends with a parade of eight Kings - Banquo's descendants, and then the witches disappear. Macbeth gets news that Macduff has fled to England - and, demonstrating Macbeth's total paranoia, he decides to kill every member of Macduff's family.

Lady Macduff and her children are murdered by Macbeth's men. These killings mark the lowest point in Macbeth's moral decline - they serve no purpose and represent brutality for its own sake: the complete tyranny and evil of Macbeth.

Back in Dunsinane Castle, a servant attending Lady Macbeth brings a doctor to watch the queen sleepwalking. Lady Macbeth enters, constantly rubbing her hands, as if struggling to clean them. She refers to the deaths of Duncan, Banquo, and Lady Macduff. The doctor, shocked, cannot help.

We learn that Malcolm has persuaded the angry, grief-stricken Macduff to return to Scotland, ready to attack Macbeth and save the country. Scottish rebel forces join Malcolm's English army near Birnam Wood. The doctor gives a bleak diagnosis of Lady Macbeth's condition. Malcolm has ordered the army to cut down branches from Birnam Wood, to camouflage the number of soldiers as they move on Dunsinane Castle. Lady Macbeth commits suicide. A servant tells Macbeth that Birnam Wood is actually moving towards Dunsinane. Macbeth is trapped, but decides to die fighting. Battle commences and, finally, Macbeth and Macduff prepare to fight a duel. When Macbeth tells him he is invulnerable, Macduff tells him that he was born to a Caesarian birth. He kills Macbeth. Malcolm, the new King of Scotland, is hailed as the bringer of peace and order in the kingdom once again.

PERFORMANCE QUIZ

Here's some quiz questions directly related to the performance of 'MACBETH' presented by MANCHESTER ACTORS COMPANY.

- PLACES IN THE PLAY:
 - Where is King Duncan's Castle?
 - Where is Macbeth's Castle?
 - Duncan bestows a title on Malcolm, Prince of?
 - What is the name of the hill where to wood appears to move?
 - What is the battle at the end of the play known as?
 - What is the place where Kings of Scotland are crowned?
- At the start of the play, how do the witches sum up that it will be hard to tell the difference between good and evil? - Quote the line.
- The play was written in 1606, (a) for which King?, and (b) what was the King so passionately interested in that features in the play?
- What do we call a solo speech delivered on stage?
And now complete the following, all from Macbeth's famous solo speeches:
 - "Stars, hide your fires -----"
 - "If it were done when 'tis done -----"
 - "Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell -----"
 - "I will not be afraid of death and bone -----"
 - "It is a tale told be an idiot -----"
- ODD ONES OUT: which of the following do NOT appear in the text of Macbeth:
 - Bellona's bridegroom
 - skinny lips
 - dusty death
 - Pandora's box
 - Greymalkin
 - Golgotha
 - lend me your ears
 - Sweno
 - cruel parricide
 - the tall poplars
 - all the perfumes of Arabia.
- When Lady Macbeth talks to the 'murdering ministers' summoning up evil spirits, can you name three things she asks them to do?
- In the final confrontation between Macbeth and Macduff, Macbeth boasts that he has no reason to fear Macduff, for he cannot be killed by any man born of woman. Macduff declares that he was "from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd", (i.e., born by Caesarean section) and was not "of woman born". This is an example of a LITERARY QUIBBLE. Explain what is a literary quibble, how it is used, and think of other examples.

8. Correct the following quotes from the play:
- (a) "Stay, you perfect speakers, tell me more"
 - (b) "Look how our partner's wrapped"
 - (c) "There's no art to find the mind's construction in the head"
 - (d) "They met me in the day of excess"
 - (e) "Pour in cow's blood, that hath eaten her nine farrow"
 - (f) "It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus rubbing her hands"
 - (g) "Turn, hell-cat, turn"
9. 'He that's coming must be provided for' says Lady Macbeth, talking about Duncan. Explain the irony of this line.
10. TRUE OR FALSE?
- (a) Macbeth defeats Norwegian invaders
 - (b) The witches do nothing to make their prophecies come true, and they always speak the truth.
 - (c) When Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle he realises he is walking into hell.
 - (d) Lady Macbeth taunts her husband mercilessly, and accuses him of being weak when he falters about the idea of killing the King.
 - (e) The witches pour the blood of a hanged man into their cauldron.

QUIZ ANSWERS

Here's the answers to the performance quiz:

- Forres
 - Inverness
 - Cumberland
 - Dunsinane
 - Birnam Wood
 - Scone
- 'Fair is foul and foul is fair'
- King JAMES I, who was interested in witchcraft and the supernatural.
- A soliloquy
 - ".....let not light see my black and deep desires"
 - "..... then twere well if were done quickly"
 - "..... that summons thee to heaven - or to hell"
 - "..... till Birnam Forest come to Dunsinane"
 - "..... full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"
- The 'odd ones out' that do not appear in the text of Macbeth are:
 - Pandora's box
 - lend me your ears
 - the tall poplars
- Choose from: unsex me here / fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direct cruelty / make thick my blood / stop up the access and passage to remorse / take my milk for gall / come, thick night, and pall thee (my knife) in the dunnest smoke of hell.
- In literature, a quibble is a common plot device, used to fulfill the exact verbal conditions of an agreement in order to avoid the intended meaning. Its most common uses are in legal bargains and, in fantasy, magically enforced ones. In one of the best known examples, Shakespeare also used a quibble in *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia saves Antonio in a court of law by pointing out that the agreement called for a pound of flesh, but no blood, and therefore Shylock can collect only if he sheds no blood.
There are countless examples throughout literature, especially science fiction, and fantasy literature (such as 'Lord Of The Rings'). Maybe you know of a few more for your students.
- "Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more"
 - "Look how our partner's rapt"
 - "There's no art to find the mind's construction in the face"
 - "They met me in the day of success"
 - "Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten her nine farrow"
 - "It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands"
 - "Turn, hell-hound"

9. Lady Macbeth is 'providing for' King Duncan by laying on a feast and hospitality - but it is also an ironic way of saying he must be 'dealt with' - and killed.
10. (a) True
(b) True
(c) False. It appears to be a beautiful, healthy and natural place - birds build their nests there, and all seems peaceful and pleasant. Lady Macbeth appears to be the perfect, welcoming hostess.
(d) True
(e) False. It is the sweat of a hanged man.

POST-PERFORMANCE WORKSHEET

Find a partner. In pairs, discuss, and make detailed notes, on the following questions. Share your responses with the whole class later on.

1. Were the characters in the performance as you had envisaged them? What was especially good about the portrayals? Would you have played any of the characters differently? Why?
2. What aspects of the performance were most memorable, and why? Have they enhanced or altered your views or understanding of the play in any way? Explain in as much detail as you can with specific reference to the text and performance.
3. Which themes in the play were highlighted in the performance, and the after-show discussion? Which ideas were stressed in particular? (eg. love/hate, fate, ambition, power, role of women).
4. Did this production help to bring to life Shakespeare's use of language? In which ways did it add to our understanding and enjoyment of the play?
5. In which ways do you think that this production differed from the original performance in Elizabethan England? (Staging/costumes/actors/audience).
6. Do you think that Macbeth is still relevant to people today? Why?
7. Character and Motivation. Think about the key characters you have seen in the performance. Why do they behave as they do in the play? (Macbeth/Lady Macbeth/Banquo/Macduff/Duncan).
8. The Director's Choices. Every production of 'Macbeth' will be different. What choices were made for this performance, and how effective were they? (Delivery of Shakespeare's text/use of the hall, room or space - positioning of the audience/body language and movement/props and costumes). What choices would you make?

WHO SAID THAT...?

Here are some random quotes from the play - but who speaks them?

1. "There's daggers in men's smiles"
2. "Never shake thy gory locks at me"
3. "They say blood will have blood"
4. "Like elves and fairies in a ring"
5. "Now God help thee, poor monkey"
6. "What, all my pretty chickens and their dam at one fell swoop"
7. "Out, damned spot! Out I say!"
8. "Cool it with a baboon's blood"
9. "More needs she the divine than the physician"
10. "Why should I play the Roman fool and die on mine own sword?"
11. "If you can look into the seeds of time, and say which grain will grow, and which will not, Speak."
12. "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage"
13. "When our actions do not, Our fears do make us traitors."
14. "To show an unfelt sorrow is an office which the false man does easy."
15. "Screw your courage to the sticking-place."
16. "Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it."
17. "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it"
18. "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me."
19. "I have almost forgot the taste of fears"
20. "By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes."

At the end of this quiz, find all these lines from the playtext, and explain what is happening when they are spoken, and what they mean.

WHO SAID THAT...? ANSWERS

Here's the answers to the quotes question on the previous page

1. Donalbain - Act II, Scene 2
2. Macbeth - Act III, Scene 4
3. Macbeth - Act III, Scene 4
4. Hecate - Act IV, Scene 1
5. Lady Macduff - Act IV, Scene 2
6. Macduff - Act IV, Scene 3
7. Lady Macbeth - Act V, Scene 1
8. Second Witch - Act IV, Scene 1
9. Doctor - Act V, Scene 1
10. Macbeth - Act V, Scene 8
11. Banquo - Act 1, Scene 3
12. Macbeth - Act V, Scene 5
13. Lady Macduff - Act IV, Scene 4
14. Malcolm - Act II, Scene 2
15. Lady Macbeth - Act I, Scene 7
16. Lady Macbeth - Act I, Scene 5
17. Malcolm - Act I, Scene 4
18. Macbeth - Act I, Scene 3
19. Macbeth - Act V, Scene 5
20. Second Witch - Act IV, Scene 1

MANACTCO is the trading name for MANCHESTER ACTORS COMPANY.
We have over **42 years** experience of bringing professional theatre to the north west and neighbouring counties..... Providing an exciting, relevant, non-condescending and unpretentious theatre service in a full range of mostly non-theatre venues.

We are well known for our energetic, vigorous, physical theatre performances where close attention is paid to the language, bringing the plays alive as a dynamic, well-spoken display of physical theatre, performed by some of the UK.'s hottest young stage talent.

Almost 100,000 watch our productions annually in school.....

FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES we have presented a series of theatre projects aimed at keystage 3 and keystage 4 students annually for almost twenty years, which in recent years have included: *MACBETH; ROMEO AND JULIET; THE TEMPEST; MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING; OF MICE AND MEN; AN INSPECTOR CALLS; A CHRISTMAS CAROL; THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE;* and *'FIGHTING FOR WORDS'* - our Poetry-In-Performance play, bringing to life the poetry contained in the AQA 'Power & Conflict' poetry cluster. All of our schools projects are always very well received by both students and staff as we bring the stories vividly to life with exciting, incisive scripts, tight direction and fantastic performances. Our performances are followed by a thirty-minute interactive discussion where, guided by actors in the company, the audience can expand and examine the texts in greater detail.

FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS we have presented a series of both well-established favourites and new writing projects - aimed directly as a springboard for keystage 1 and keystage 2 classwork - all of which are always very well received by schools and their young audiences. All of our primary school projects are hugely successful and each a total sell-out.

Why not check out our website?

www.manactco.org.uk

It tells you about the history of MANCHESTER ACTORS COMPANY and is packed full of photos of our productions, and includes details about all forthcoming productions for 2020.

And why not Email us and tell us what you thought
of our presentation of 'MACBETH'?

Email all contributions and reviews to:

feedback@manactco.org.uk

COMPANY BIOGRAPHIES

DANIEL AMBROSE-JONES (*Macbeth and ensemble*)

Daniel has been acting professionally since graduating with a degree in drama from Northampton University. He has done a variety of things since: ranging from odd days work for a 'Paypal' advert, or a mental health app.; to six months touring comedy shows throughout Italy for Action Theatre; appearing at the Edinburgh Festival as Guy Montag in FARENHEIT 451 for Exodus Theatre; or scaring visitors at the London Dungeon. Daniel also won the Derby Arts Festival Laurie Cup for most promising actor, and has recently been training in Jeet Kune Do for a martial arts movie trailer. His previous appearances for Manchester Actors Company were in 'POWER & CONFLICT' and 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL' in Autumn 2021.

ROSE GRAY (*Lady Macbeth and ensemble*)

Rose trained in Manchester at The Arden School of Theatre and graduated with a first class degree in Professional Stage Practice in 2012. Since then her work spans from international street theatre (her first role was playing a rat on the streets of Stockholm in a production of The Pied Piper) to local pop-up performances (Girl Gang Manchester).

She is an Associate Artist for Sheffield based theatre company The Bare Project and has toured their shows at Camden People's Theatre, HOME Manchester and Sheffield Crucible among others. She is co-founder of Creative Collective, a multi-platform company creating immersive productions and working with the local community (The Talk in association with 42nd Street) and has won places on boot camps at The RSC, with Slunglow's Lucy Hind and RashDash theatre.

Rose is passionate about theatre and is thrilled to be working on her third tour with Manchester Actors Company, having just toured with us through November & December 2021 with 'A Christmas Carol' and 'Power and Conflict'.

SIMON PENNICOTT (*Macduff and ensemble*)

Simon trained at The Bridge Theatre Training Company in London, where he appeared at numerous fringe theatre venues. Since then he has worked all over the UK, for theatre companies such as Kinetic, Pendle Productions and K22. He played Feste in TWELFTH NIGHT and the Duke of Venice in OTHELLO amongst many appearances for Rainbow Theatre, plus many productions for Talegate Theatre, including Crabstick in THE LITTLE MERMAID, and the Tin Man in THE WIZARD OF OZ. Other appearances include Dicken in THE SECRET GARDEN at Salford Arts Theatre, Jacques in JACQUES BREL: A LIFE A THOUSAND TIMES on tour throughout the UK, and also previously for Manchester Actors Company in THE LEGEND OF KING ARTHUR, and as Ebenezer Scrooge in our Autumn 2020 presentation of 'A CHRISTMAS CAROL'.

STEPHEN BOYES (*Director*)

Stephen is an Associate Member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and trained as an actor at The Drama Studio London. He is the winner of a Manchester Evening News Theatre Award. He has appeared in over sixty regional repertory productions, in theatres such as Sheffield Crucible, Manchester Royal Exchange, Nottingham Playhouse, Coventry Belgrade, Derby Playhouse, Bolton Octagon, Liverpool Everyman, Oldham Coliseum, Manchester Library Theatre, and Edinburgh International Festival. His TV credits include the BBC1 sitcom SORRY! with Ronnie Corbett, THE COPS, CORONATION STREET, HOME JAMES, HILLSBOROUGH, THE KRYPTON FACTOR, CONTINENTAL DRIFT, NO ANGELS and IN SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES. He played Frisk in the film THE FOOL with Derek Jacobi and Miranda Richardson. His most recent appearances have been playing Mr. Libby in the film MRS. PEPPERCORN'S MAGICAL READING ROOM, as well as various alternative comedy credits for BBC Radio 4.