



MACBETH DIRECTOR'S NOTES (FROM ASP PROGRAM)

You truly have to be mad to take on *Macbeth* and willingly spend weeks of your life in a consumingly dark place with evil spirits and villains. It is not normal, but it is hella fun.

The opportunities for self-reflection that arise while exploring the themes and actions of *Macbeth* are eye-opening. We all at one time or another question our own ambitions, our own desires for greatness. The question we are often confronted with is, "What are we willing to do to achieve our goals?" Do we leave our future up to chance, or do we grab the reins with bold and bloody resolution?

Our process of working on the play has been one of exploring the humanity and the love in the piece, and working to empathize with those who lie in the tyrant, Macbeth's, wake. It has also been one of looking at the truthful motivations in the heinous deeds of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, who are trying to fix their broken home partly due to the loss of a child. While they navigate their political and private lives, other characters in the play must assess their own actions in a fluctuating and dangerous climate. Macduff puts country and honor before the safety of his family. Banquo is genuinely good and able to quell his darker nature and control the ambitions he may have for himself and the future of his son. But the good intentions for each character become that character's undoing.

[We have been lucky to have Migdalia Cruz, the translator of *Macbeth*, in the room for much of the rehearsal process to help us uncover new truths in Shakespeare's text and grapple with the *Macbeth* of 2018.](#)

I hope this new rendition challenges you and entertains you. I invite you to look at the motivation behind the deeds, find the character you most identify with, and ask yourself, "What would I do?"

-Dawn M. Simmons



RESOURCES FOR THE PLAY ON! PROJECT

The Play on! Project

- [Oregon Shakespeare Festival](#)
 - *This article explains the beginnings of the Play on! Project, the project's guidelines, and how it has been received by the public. A few of the op-eds mentioned in this article are included below as well.*
- [New York Times - "Shakespeare in Modern English?"](#)
 - *James Shapiro is firmly against the Play on! Project, and shares his argument here.*
- [New Yorker - "Why We \(Mostly\) Stopped Messing with Shakespeare's Language"](#)
 - *In this slightly longer article, Daniel Pollack-Pelzner discusses the history of the changes that people have made to Shakespeare's words throughout the years, and what made Shakespeare's texts suddenly become "secular scripture."*
- [New York Times - "Translating Shakespeare? 36 Playwrights Taketh the Big Risk"](#)
 - *Jennifer Schuessler interviews various contributors to the Play on! Project. This article also includes a comparison between a section of Shakespeare's original text from Pericles, and the translation by Ellen McLaughlin, as well as a famous speech from Henry V for you to try to translate. How would you rewrite Shakespeare's words, following the rules set by the Play on! Project?*

Migdalia Cruz, translator of *Macbeth*

- [ASP Interview with Migdalia Cruz](#)
 - *Migdalia Cruz gave Actors' Shakespeare Project an in-depth look at how she approached this translation.*
- [50 Playwrights - Q & A with Migdalia Cruz](#)
 - *50 Playwrights interviews Migdalia Cruz on the defining moments of her playwriting career, and advice for young playwrights.*
- [Folger - Q & A with Migdalia Cruz](#)
 - *The conversation here includes the process of translating and how she chose to do Macbeth.*



LINKS TO OUTSIDE RESOURCES FOR *MACBETH*

1. **Macbeth Synopses**

[No Sweat Shakespeare](#)

[Thug Notes](#)

No Sweat Shakespeare provides a clear, concise listing of the play's key plot points. Thug Notes offers a 4.5 minute video summary with a healthy dose of humor and modern references. Please review the video before sharing with students, as it contains strong language throughout.

2. [Macbeth Script](#)

This is the full online script of Macbeth from MIT Shakespeare.

3. [OpenSource Shakespeare](#)

This resource has the full text broken down by scene. In addition, there is a complete list of characters and every line each character says throughout the play.

4. [Folger Shakespeare Library Teaching Modules](#)

This resource provides lesson plans for several of Shakespeare's plays. You will find four lessons specific to Macbeth on this website.

5. [Penguin Teacher's Guide](#)

This is a teacher's guide to the Signet Classic edition of Macbeth. It provides activities and prompts designed to explore the play's language, character, plot, themes, and central conflicts before, during, and after reading.

6. [American Shakespeare Center Study Guide](#)

This study guide is a start to finish outline of how to guide your students through the play using performance-based learning. The digital edition can be purchased at this link.

7. [Royal Shakespeare Company Education Resources](#)

This website includes a number of resources, including a list of themes in the play, a synopsis, and some activities to try in the classroom.



Character Chart



Lennox
(Scottish Nobleman)



Duncan
(King of Scotland)



Ross
(Scottish Nobleman)



Malcolm
(Older son of Duncan)



Donalbain
(Younger son of Duncan)



Lady Macbeth
(Wife of Macbeth, becomes Queen of Scotland)



Macbeth
(Thane of Glamis, becomes Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland)



Banquo
(Commander of Duncan's Army)



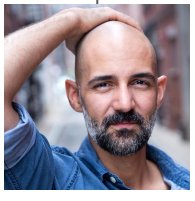
Macduff
(Thane of Fife)



Lady Macduff
(Wife of Macduff)



Fleance
(Banquo's Son, Future King of Scotland)



Macduff's Son



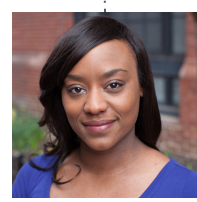
Doctor
(Attending Lady Macbeth)



Gentlewoman
(Attending Lady Macbeth)



Porter
(Doorman at Macbeth's castle)



The Weird Sisters
(Witches and Servants of Hecate. They share prophecies with Macbeth and Banquo)



Hecate
(Goddess of Witchcraft)



Murderers
(Hired by Macbeth to kill Banquo and Fleance)

Additional Characters:
Messengers, soldiers, servants, etc. also appear, played by the ensemble.

- Family/Marriage
- Serve or Work For
- Supernatural Connection





Macbeth Activity 1: Inner Thoughts

This lesson is designed for students with strong familiarity with the story of Macbeth.

Lesson Objectives:

- Develop understanding of motivation and intention in acting and how it enhances a portrayal of a character.
- Develop comfort with and understanding of Shakespeare's language.
- Explore the emotional state of Shakespeare's characters.

Time:

- 45-60 minutes
- The time will vary depending on how many scenes are done in class and how many "inner thoughts" are provided by the students.

Materials

- Copies of scenes from *Macbeth*. There should be enough copies for each actor in the scene, including any actors who do not have speaking lines in the performance.

Procedure:

1. Backstory Whoosh

- a. This is a quick, physical, and participatory telling of the story, which will help students remember the events leading up to the moments that they will be working on, as well as invite them to engage and play.
- b. Students and teacher sit in a circle, and the teacher narrates the story of the play. Students jump into the circle to create images for the story. This can include becoming a character (like Macbeth or Banquo), or a place (like the forest), or a thing (like the cauldron that the witches use).
 - i. The portions of *Macbeth* that are narrated should be selected based on the scenes that will be used in the following exercise.
- c. If the inside of the circle gets too crowded, the teacher says "whoosh" and students are sent back to their seats in the circle. There will now be new students playing each character.
- d. This activity can be interwoven with each scene in the following activity to provide context before the students' performances.

2. Inner Thoughts

- a. This activity can use the following suggested scenes (or others of the teacher's choosing), based on the number of students and available class time.
 - i. Act I Scene 4 (Duncan gives Macbeth the title of Thane of Cawdor)
 1. 4 Speaking Characters; Additional characters can be added (Ross, Lennox, etc.)
 - ii. Act II Scene 3 (Duncan has been murdered)



Macbeth Activity 1, Continued

1. Begin at Lennox's Line "Good morrow, noble sir."
2. 7 Speaking Characters
- iii. Act III Scene 4 (Banquet Scene)
 1. 4 Speaking Characters, plus the Ghost of Banquo. Additional characters can be added (other lords and ladies, servants, etc.)
- b. Divide students into two groups. Group A will be playing characters in the scenes and Group B will be the inner thoughts of the characters.
- c. Cast each scene with someone from Group A. Select students from Group B to stand behind each Group A member. Group B will follow Group A throughout the scene.
 - i. Anyone who was not cast in either group will be the audience for this scene.
- d. Have Group A read through the scene once, encouraging the actors to make big choices.
- e. Review the scene with all students. What is going on in the scene? Are there any lines that are confusing? Are there any lines that are delightful?
- f. Group B will now stand behind their Group A partners, and the scene will begin again. This time, Group B will provide inner thoughts for the dialogue as their partners' lines require it.

Example:

ROSS: Please't your highness

To grace us with your royal company.

ROSS Inner Thought: I have to play it safe, butter up the new king ...

MACBETH: The table's full.

MACBETH Inner Thought: BANQUO is at my seat???? But he's dead!

LENNOX: Here is a place reserved, sir.

LENNOX Inner Thought: Your vision must be going. There's obviously an empty seat here.

- i. If a student from Group B wants to give an inner thought, they will place one hand on their partner's shoulder and raise their other hand so everyone can see. All Group A actors will remain "in the scene."
- g. After the performance, ask the students:
 - i. Group A: Did you learn anything different about your character when hearing the inner thoughts? Did you learn anything different about the other characters?
 - ii. Group B: What was it like to come up with the inner thoughts? Why did you choose to place them where you did?
 - iii. Audience: What changed in the way the characters interacted with each other? Are there places that you would have supplied a different inner thought?
- h. After this discussion, do another scene if time is available, or have the groups switch places, so Group A is the inner thoughts. (You'd be surprised at how many different types of responses there can be!)
- i. This can lead into a discussion and exploration of the soliloquies and asides in Shakespeare's works (in which the characters share their inner thoughts directly with the audience).



Macbeth Activity 2: Macbeth's Resolve

This is adapted from structures for primary and secondary schools by Jonothan Neelands and the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as from a workshop for the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company by Robert Colby.

Lesson Objectives:

- Develop familiarity with Shakespeare's language, especially in the context of a soliloquy.
- Gain confidence when making bold choices when delivering a soliloquy.
- Develop further understanding of Macbeth's emotional state.

Time:

- 30-45 minutes

Materials:

- Copies of the soliloquy.

Procedure:

1. The group stands in a circle and looks at Macbeth's soliloquy for 30 seconds. Students then cover up the soliloquy and tell the teacher what words or phrases they remember.
2. Come up with a movement for one of the words or phrases. Go around the circle, performing each movement, along with the words. Students will copy each other's movement and words.
3. The group reads the soliloquy from punctuation mark to punctuation mark.

Example:

And mine eternal jewel given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings,
The seed of Banquo kings!
Rather than so,
Come fate into the list.

4. Everyone is given a line or phrase from the speech, going around in a circle. Depending on the number of students, some lines may be doubled.
 - a. Students will need to memorize their line, as well as remember the person who has the line before them and their order in the circle.
5. Students walk around the room saying the full speech in a variety of ways. They will be overlapping one another and speaking simultaneously. Encourage students to repeat lines or words. Samples of variations include:
 - a. Whispered
 - b. As spies
 - c. As if telling a child a story
 - d. As a couple having an argument
 - e. As football fans cheering for their favorite team
6. Come back to the circle in the order of the speech. The whole group will now read the soliloquy in order, line by line.



Macbeth Activity 2, Continued

- a. Encourage students to pass the energy of the soliloquy to each other and really share the story and emotions with one another.
7. After the soliloquy is performed, ask the students:
 - a. What did you learn about Macbeth from this activity?
 - b. What was it like to hear the words spoken throughout the room?
 - c. Did your sympathy for Macbeth increase or decrease?
8. Students come up with either a question for Macbeth or something that they would like to say to him. (Example - "Aren't you afraid someone's going to find out what you've done?" or "It sure doesn't seem like you're enjoying being king.")
9. A "throne" is set up in the center of the room. Each student goes up to the throne one at a time to speak their thoughts to Macbeth.

Macbeth's Soliloquy - Act III Scene 1 (Teachers can substitute any soliloquy of their choosing.)

To be thus is nothing;
 But to be safely thus.--Our fears in Banquo
 Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
 Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;
 And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
 He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
 To act in safety. There is none but he
 Whose being I do fear: and, under him,
 My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,
 Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters
 When first they put the name of king upon me,
 And bade them speak to him: then prophet-like
 They hail'd him father to a line of kings:
 Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
 Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
 No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,
 For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
 Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
 Given to the common enemy of man,
 To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
 Rather than so, come fate into the list.
 And champion me to the utterance!



Reviews of ASP's *Macbeth*

[The Boston Globe](#)

[Broadway World](#)

[Dig Boston](#)

[Theater Mirror](#)

[Arts Fuse](#)

[Wicked Local](#)

And for the creative team's viewpoint on the translation, check out this [WBUR Interview](#) with playwright Migdalia Cruz and actor Paige Clark (Lady Macbeth).