

'MACBETH' BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (Adapted from Schmoop.com)

Early Medieval Scotland :(Think Game of Thrones). We start with some creepy witches cackling about some guy named "Macbeth," and then cut to post-battle, where we learn that this Macbeth has been kicking serious tail in battle—so much that King Duncan has decided to give him the title Thane of Cawdor.

Now it's time to meet Macbeth. He's prancing home on a dark and stormy night after defending King Duncan in battle with some skilled enemy-disemboweling. Understandably, he's feeling pretty good about himself. Just then, he and his good pal Banquo run into three bearded witches (the "weird sisters"), who prophesy that Macbeth will be named (guess what?) Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland. Just as Banquo is pouting about being left out, the witches tell him that he'll be father to a long line of future kings of Scotland BUT that he will not be 'happy' or King himself.

The next thing we know, Ross shows up to say that, since the old Thane of Cawdor turned out to be a traitor and is about to have his head lopped off and displayed on a pike, Macbeth gets to take his place as Thane of Cawdor. That takes care of the first prophecy.

While Macbeth is waiting around for "chance" to come along and make him king, he starts getting restless. His ambitious wife, Lady Macbeth, prods him into acting like a "man" and killing King Duncan when the poor guy comes to Macbeth's castle for a friendly visit.

When Macduff finds the king's dead body, Macbeth kills the guards and conveniently accuses them of murdering the king. King Duncan's kids, Donalbain and Malcolm, find out what's happened, they high tail it out of Scotland so they can't be murdered too. Unfortunately this makes them look guilty, though Banquo suspects something.

Macbeth is named king. Prophecies fulfilled! Except, wait. Macbeth starts to worry about the witch's prophecy that Banquo's heirs will be kings. Macbeth's not about to let someone bump him off the throne so, he hires some hit-men to take care of Banquo and his son, Fleance. Banquo is murdered, but Fleance escapes.

Things go downhill for Macbeth, who is sleepless and starting to lose his mind. He pops in on the Weird Sisters for another prophesy, which comes in three parts: (1) watch out for Macduff; (2) No man born of woman is going to hurt him; and (3) Don't worry until Birnam Wood (a forest) moves to Dunsinane.

Macbeth breathes a sigh of relief with #2 and #3, since those are obviously impossible situations and mean that he's effectively safe. The one about Macduff has him a little worried, though, so he kills off Macduff's family. Macduff was born by Caesarean, which will bite Macbeth in the butt later.

By now, people are starting to get a little suspicious. Macduff and Malcolm pay a visit to the awesome English king, Edward the Confessor, and start plotting with the English soldiers how to save Scotland from Macbeth's tyranny. Oh, and Lady Macbeth? She's not doing so hot. In fact, she basically dies of guilt. But Macbeth is safe, right? Not so fast. Macduff and Malcolm show up with their army and order troops to cut the branches from the trees in Birnam Wood for camouflage. Macduff kills Macbeth.

Common Shakespearean Terms

anon—right now, OR “I come right away”..... “*Anon, good nurse! Speak!*”

art—are, OR skill..... “*Thou art dead; no physician’s art can save you..*”

dost or doth—does or do..... “*Dost thou know the time?*”

ere—before..... “*We must leave ere daybreak.*”

fain—gladly..... “*I fain would bake Mr. Love cookies if I could get an A.*”

fie—an exclamation of dismay or disgust..... “*You cheated? Fie upon it!*” OR “*Fie! Are you mad?*”

hark—listen..... “*Hark to the owl,*” OR “*Hark! The herald angels sing!*”

hence—away..... “*Get thee hence, beggar!*” OR “*We must hence before the army arrives.*”

hie—hurry..... “*Hie thee hence, or lose your life!*”

hither—here..... “*Come hither, young lad.*”

thither—there..... “*Look to the east—thither doth the sun arise.*”

hath—has..... “*He hath killed many a man.*” OR “*He hath a horse.*”

ho—hey (roughly equivalent). “*Lucius, ho!*” [Brutus calling his servant]

mark—pay attention to..... “*Mark my words.*”

marry—indeed..... “*He says I should respond quickly; marry, I want to.*”

pray/prithee—a polite way of asking something..... “*I prithee answer the question.*”

saucy—cheeky; sassy..... “*Hence, thou saucy boy!*”

sirrah—a term of address used for inferiors..... “*Sirrah, bring the letter over here.*”

thee—you..... “*When will I see thee next?*”

thou—you..... “*Thou art a villain.*”

thy—your..... “*Thy name is more hateful than thy face.*”

whence—from where..... “*Whence came that news?*” OR “*Return to whence you came.*”

wherefore—why..... “*Wherefore dost thou leave?*” OR “*Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?*” [As in, “why can’t you be someone else, whom my family doesn’t hate?”]