

Introduction

Shakespeare on the Double! Macbeth provides the full text of the Bard's play side by side with an easy-to-read modern English translation that you can understand. You no longer have to wonder what exactly "Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble" means! You can read the Shakespearean text on the left-hand pages and check the right-hand pages when Shakespeare's language stumps you. Or you can read only the translation, which enables you to understand the action and characters at a more even pace. You can also read both, referring easily between the original text and the modern translation. Any way you choose, you can now fully understand every line of the Bard's masterpiece!

We've also provided you with some additional resources:

- **Brief synopsis** of the plot and action provides a broad-strokes overview of the play.
- **Comprehensive character list** covers the actions, motivations, and characteristics of each major player.
- **Visual character map** displays who the major characters are and how they relate to each other.
- **Cycle of death** pinpoints the sequence of deaths in the play, including who dies, how they die, and why they die.
- **Reflective questions** help you delve even more into the themes and meanings of the play.

Reading Shakespeare can be slow and difficult. No more! With *Shakespeare on the Double! Macbeth*, you can read the play in language that you can grasp quickly and thoroughly.



Synopsis

ACT I

Scene 1

During a storm, a battle sweeps across the Scottish heath. Three hags gather to await a meeting with Macbeth, the Thane of Glamis.

Scene 2

On the battlefield, a captain reports to Duncan, Scotland's king, that the Thane of Cawdor led an insurrection. After Duncan's soldiers put down the rebellion, Duncan condemns the leader to immediate execution. In a battlefield promotion, Duncan plans to elevate Macbeth to Thane of Cawdor.

Scene 3

Macbeth, accompanied by Banquo, his military companion, crosses the plain. Still uninformed of his promotion, Macbeth meets three witches, who predict that he is already Thane of Cawdor and will one day be Scotland's king. The trio prophesy that Banquo will not be king, but he will establish a Scottish dynasty. Angus and Ross report to Macbeth that Duncan has made him Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth muses on the speed with which the first prophecy has come true.

Scene 4

At Duncan's camp, Macbeth invites the king and his court to Inverness castle, the home that Macbeth shares with his wife. Macbeth precedes the royal entourage to alert his staff to make the king feel welcome. Privately, Macbeth ponders an obstacle to ambition—the king's heir, Malcolm, Scotland's crown prince.

Scene 5

Lady Macbeth reads her husband's message concerning his promotion and the witches' prophecy. With letter in hand, she summarizes Macbeth's faults and assumes that he lacks the ambition to seize Scotland's throne. Before Duncan reaches Inverness, she advances from welcoming a royal

guest to plotting his murder. When Macbeth arrives, he hesitates to arrange for the king's assassination and leaves the details to Lady Macbeth.

Scene 6

When Duncan surveys Inverness, he praises the pleasant atmosphere. Lady Macbeth offers hospitality due to her king.

Scene 7

In private, Lady Macbeth pushes her husband toward committing regicide. He thinks it wrong to slay the man who has just awarded him a new title. She promises to stand by her husband. At her urging, he agrees to kill Duncan.



ACT II

Scene 1

Banquo and Macbeth have contrasting responses to the witches' predictions. Banquo is too honest to behave dishonorably. When Macbeth is alone, he visualizes a dagger floating in the air with its handle toward his hand. The blade drips blood.

Scene 2

After Lady Macbeth places a sedative in the wine cups of Duncan's bodyguard and strikes the signal bell, Macbeth slips by the sleepers and stabs the king. On the way down the hall, Macbeth hears a guest asking for God's blessing. Because Macbeth can't reply "amen," he is shocked at his culpability. Trembling, he goes back to his room. Lady Macbeth scolds him for removing the swords from the crime scene. She returns them to Duncan's grooms, then returns to her room to have Macbeth wash away the blood and go to bed.

Scene 3

The doorkeeper is still drunk from the night's celebration when someone knocks at the castle gate. He opens the door to Lenox and Macduff. Macbeth joins them. Macduff goes to Duncan's room and returns shaken by the sight of the king's slaughtered corpse. As report of the murder spreads, Macbeth summons Lady Macbeth and the king's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain. As though in anger, Macbeth kills the startled grooms.

Lady Macbeth pretends to faint. In the turmoil, the two princes realize that they must escape before the investigation charges them with Duncan's death or before the murderer makes them the next victims.

Scene 4

Outside Inverness castle, Ross and an elderly man consider how much uproar has resulted from Duncan's murder. Macduff announces that Donaldbain and Malcolm face accusations of killing the king. Macduff also reports that Macbeth succeeds Duncan on Scotland's throne. Ross leaves immediately for Macbeth's crowning at Scone, the traditional site of Scotland's coronations. Macduff remains behind at Fife.



ACT III

Scene 1

Banquo suspects that Macbeth has killed Duncan. On the evening of a state dinner, Macbeth learns that Banquo and his son Fleance are going out on horseback before returning to the banquet. Lest Banquo produce a dynasty as the witches prophesied, Macbeth sends two assassins to murder Banquo and Fleance. The king manipulates the killers by blaming Banquo for all Scotland's problems.

Scene 2

Macbeth joins Lady Macbeth in assessing their political situation. She fears that her husband reveals his criminality by looking guilty.

Scene 3

At nightfall, a third murderer joins the two assassins. After they ambush and murder Banquo in a ditch, Fleance rides off.

Scene 4

The chief assassin returns during the banquet to inform Macbeth that they successfully killed Banquo, but not Fleance. Macbeth returns to the formalities and envisions Banquo's ghost sitting in the king's chair. As guests mutter at their host's bizarre illusion, Lady Macbeth reports that the king has long been troubled by hallucinations. A second outburst ends the

state banquet. Lady Macbeth excuses all from the hall. Macbeth longs to hear more prophecy from the witches. She encourages him to sleep.

Scene 5

Hecate, the head witch, chides the three hags for toying with Macbeth without her advice. She instructs them in stirring up a spell for Macbeth.

Scene 6

Meanwhile, Lenox and another noble debate the cause of Duncan's and Banquo's murders and the reason why Malcolm fled to England. Because Macduff has joined Malcolm at the court of King Edward, Lenox surmises that the English will lead a revolt in Scotland to restore rule to Duncan's heir.



ACT IV

Scene 1

Hecate and the three hags continue boiling ingredients in their pot. Macbeth arrives to demand a more detailed view of the future. The three witches summon a series of illusions. First comes an armored head to alert Macbeth to danger from Macduff. A second illusion consists of a bloody child, who declares that Macbeth can never suffer harm from enemies born normally of woman. The last illusion, a child wearing a crown, signifies that Macbeth will be undefeated until Birnam wood marches on Dunsinane hill. The three illusions elate Macbeth. He deduces that his reign will be unchallenged.

Still hungry for glimpses of the future, Macbeth demands that the witches tell him about danger from Fleance. A fourth illusion is a procession of eight kings following Banquo's ghost. At the end of the vision, the magic cauldron sinks and the witches vanish. A messenger reports that Macduff has fled Scotland. Because of the first illusion, Macbeth begins plotting the slaying of Macduff's family.

Scene 2

Lady Macduff charges her husband with abandoning her and leaving her children vulnerable to attack. After a brief warning of danger, she encounters murderers, who slaughter Macduff's son along with Lady Macduff and her other children and servants.

Scene 3

Meanwhile, Malcolm confers with Macduff at the court of King Edward in England. Through trickery, Malcolm elicits proof of his patriotism. Ross reports that rebellion is growing in Scotland. Under duress, he adds details of Macbeth's raid on Fife and the slaying of Lady Macduff, her children, and the servants. Macduff transforms his rage into military might. He joins Malcolm and Siward the Elder in leading a rebellion against Scotland's tyrant king.



ACT V

Scene 1

At Dunsinane castle, a doctor and a lady-in-waiting discuss and observe Lady Macbeth's mental aberrations. Carrying a candle, she sleepwalks, writes notes, and tries to wash imaginary blood from her hand. From her babblings, the doctor and lady deduce that Lady Macbeth joined Macbeth in murdering the king and in spreading terror over Scotland. The observers wisely keep quiet about their conclusions.

Scene 2

Outside Dunsinane castle, Malcolm, Macduff, and Siward the Elder lead ten thousand English troops to Birnam wood.

Scene 3

Macbeth clings to the prophecies that imply that he is safe from harm. The physician reports that Lady Macbeth suffers mental illness. Macbeth declares that he has no faith in medicine.

Scene 4

Malcolm orders the troops to chop down branches and to camouflage their approach by walking behind the leaves. He intends to conceal from Macbeth the size of the rebel force.

Scene 5

After investigating a cry from the women's quarters, Seyton informs Macbeth that Lady Macbeth is dead. Macbeth is not surprised that her condition worsened to her demise. He believes that life is useless.

Scene 6

Malcolm commands the troops to drop the tree limbs and attack Dunsinane castle.

Scene 7

A trembling, white-faced servant reports that Birnam wood appears to move toward Dunsinane. Macbeth's courage crumbles after he realizes that the witches predicted the revolt. He slays Siward the Younger in a duel and hurries on to confront Macduff.

Scene 8

Rejecting suicide, Macbeth clings to the hope that no man born of woman will threaten him. Macduff, too enraged for words, shatters all false hopes by revealing that he was surgically removed from his mother's womb. Knowing that he is guilty of murdering Lady Macduff and her family, Macbeth stoically clashes with Macduff. Macduff returns to Malcolm with Macbeth's severed head and proclaims Malcolm Scotland's rightful king. In reward to his supporters, Malcolm proclaims them Scotland's first earls.



List of Characters

Macbeth The Thane (Lord) of Glamis and a leader in Duncan's army, later the Thane of Cawdor. When three witches predict that he will one day be King of Scotland, he allows his ambition and that of his wife to overcome his loyalty to King Duncan, who is Macbeth's kinsman. Macbeth's bloody reign culminates in a battle against Malcolm and the English forces.

Lady Macbeth The scheming wife of Macbeth, whose ambition helps to drive her husband toward murdering Scotland's king. Subsequently, her husband's cruelty and her own guilt drive her to sleepwalking and madness.

Banquo A fellow soldier and companion of Macbeth, who also receives a prophecy from the three witches that his children will one day succeed to the throne of Scotland. This information causes Macbeth to hire killers to ambush and assassinate Banquo. At a state dinner, Banquo's ghost terrifies Macbeth.

Duncan King of Scotland. His victories against rebellious kinsmen and the Norwegians bring him honor and the love of Scots. His decision to pass the kingdom to his son Malcolm provokes Duncan's untimely stabbing at the hands of Macbeth, Duncan's kinsman.

Fleance Banquo's son, who, by escaping Macbeth's plot on his life, is fated to father a line of kings.

Donalbain and Malcolm Duncan's two sons. Fearful of implication in their father's murder, they flee Scotland, Donalbain to Ireland and Malcolm who is heir to the throne to England. With the aid of King Edward of England, Malcolm raises a landing force to unseat the tyrant Macbeth.

Macduff A thane (lord) of Scotland who discovers the murdered King Duncan. Suspecting Macbeth and eventually turning against him, Macduff later flees to England to join Malcolm. After Macbeth masterminds the murder of Lady Macbeth and her children, Macduff faces Macbeth in a duel and avenges the loss of the Macduff household.

Lady Macduff and her son Innocent victims of Macbeth's assassins. Lady Macduff, in the absence of her husband, is unable to ward off the murderers who slay the entire household.

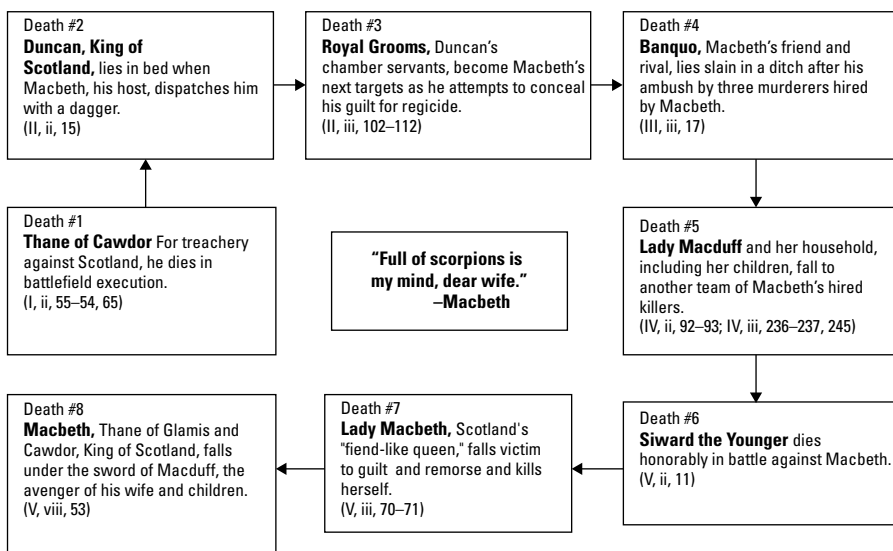
Lennox, Ross, Menteith, Angus, Caithness Scots nobles who turn against the tyrannical Macbeth.

The Porter, the Old Man, the Doctor Three commentators on events, all of whom have a certain degree of wisdom and foresight. The Porter hints at the hellish nature of Macbeth's castle; the Old Man associates the murder of King Duncan with the instability of the natural world; the Doctor recognizes mental unrest in Lady Macbeth, whose madness is incurable.

Hecate and the Witches Three agents of Fate who reveal the future to Macbeth and Banquo and who later appear to confirm the downfall and tragic destiny of the tyrannical Macbeth. Leading the unnamed three witches is Hecate.

Cycle of Death

“Vaulting ambition” is the motivation for multiple murders in Macbeth. Goaded by his wife, Macbeth hurries prophecies of greatness by murdering the King of Scotland. From this point on, the tragedy spirals downward with ambush, swordplay, suicide, and the execution of a mother and her children. The graphic below outlines the sequence of deaths.





**Shakespeare's
Macbeth**