

Aquila Theatre - Macbeth Teacher Guide

In an English class:

Engage in RAFT writing and challenge your students to get inside characters' heads. RAFT writing asks students to summarize events, explore character motivation, and be creative in their word choice and use of voice.

You can use the RAFT strategy (R=role, A=audience, F=format, T=topic) and assign students one of the following prompts:

Role = Lady Macbeth

Audience = her sister who lives far away

Format = letter

Topic = You have reached the point where you know you cannot continue living and be happy.

Write a letter to your sister where you confess what you and your husband have done and tell about the unexpected consequences. Write about what you are feeling now? What advice would you give your sister to keep her out of situations like this?

Role = Fleance (Banquo's son)

Audience = his journal

Format = journal entry

Topic = Reflect on the events that led up to your father being killed, and make your own plans.

What will you do now? Do you feel that seeking revenge on Lord Macbeth is justified? What would be a good punishment for him? Do you blame the witches for their prophecy?

You can easily put a new twist to this assignment by changing the RAFT elements. For instance, students might pretend to be Macduff writing in his journal as he plans his revenge on Macbeth or Malcolm planning a speech to give to his new subjects.

Great Video Connections:

These films are all less than 10 minutes long, historically accurate, and could work as interest grabbers or models for student projects. If you have the ability to play videos from YouTube and TeacherTube, check them out!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5nlx2XzP-4> (Only 96 seconds long, yet it summarizes the story and mentions the connections to King James)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4cMHnWIR9k> (Longer, but done by Flocabulary. If you like their usual style, you will love this.)

http://www1.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=68698 (Popular with students, yet only suitable for more mature audiences.)

***Macbeth* Summary**

Character	Personality	Related to	Problems/Enemies	Outcome
King Duncan	Strong, interested in a being a powerful leader	Sons are Malcolm and Donalbain	Macbeth is willing to stop at nothing to become king of Scotland	Murdered
Macbeth	Needy and obsessive about power/Sometimes depressed	Wife is Lady Macbeth	His need for power is his downfall	Killed
Lady Macbeth	Controlling, needs power, bad temper	Husband is Macbeth	Her need for power is her downfall	Commits suicide
Weird Sisters	In a word, weird	Each other	None known	Their prophesies all come true
Banquo	More passive than Macbeth	Son is Fleance	Macbeth sees Banquo and his heirs as a threat	Murdered
Prince Malcolm	Brave when he needs to be, good leader	Father is King Duncan and brother is Donalbain	Macbeth sees him as a threat/He must reclaim his family's place on the throne	Becomes king of Scotland
Macduff	A thinker and skeptic, seeks revenge	Wife is Lady Macduff, has a son	He dares to challenge Macbeth/His wife and son are murdered	Is promoted to the rank of Earl

Pre-writing - Performance Review of *Macbeth*

Use the guide provided to record your thoughts and observations of *Macbeth*. Do not worry about writing things in perfect or complete sentences. Instead, focus on reacting and getting your thoughts down on paper. Things like spelling and punctuation do not count here. Later, you will be asked to write an essay-length performance review. What you record on this sheet will serve as a guide for what you write in detailed sentences and paragraphs later on.

Paragraph One:

What sort of performances have you seen onstage before? (List them.)	
What sort of movies, television, and, theater do you like?	
What did you expect before seeing <i>Macbeth</i> ?	
List things you did to prepare for seeing this performance.	List other Shakespeare plays you have read or seen performed before.

Paragraph Two:

Rate each of the following as amazing, good, average, below average, or awful.

Acting/Actors chosen	Story/plot	Sets	Costumes	Wording/Language

Paragraph Three:

- Rate the audience's reaction to *Macbeth* as one of the following:
 Very Engaged/ Delighted
 Amused
 Somewhat interested
 Somewhat Bored
- What do you think contributed to this reaction? What specific reactions do you remember that lead to your conclusion?

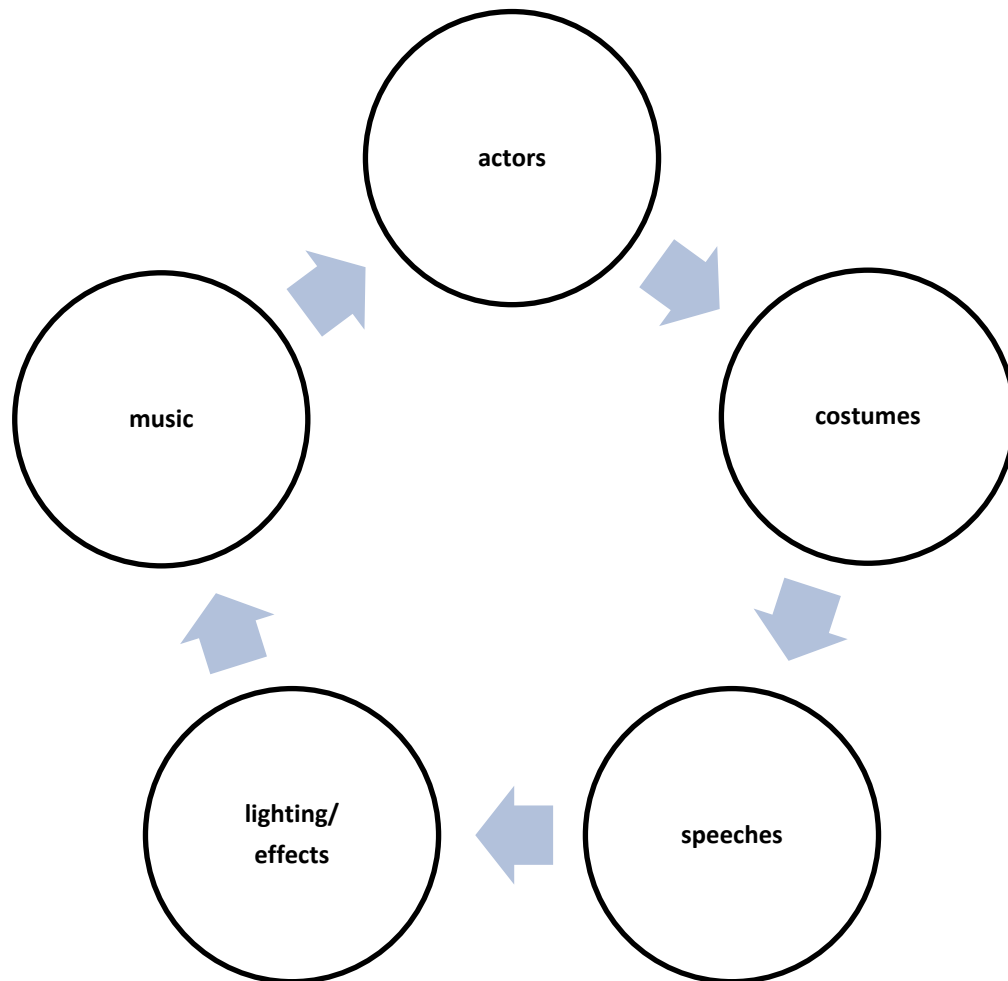
Paragraph Four:

What do you think the message or lesson of <i>Macbeth</i> is?	List other things (books, movies, etc.) that have this same message.
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Paragraph Five:

Imagine that you are involved in designing a re-working of *Macbeth*.

- Would you make your production traditional Shakespearian, only somewhat Shakespearian, or very modern?
- Write the answer to question number one in the space at the center of this diagram. Then, write ideas about who or what you would choose for each category in the bubbles provided.



The Prophecy Link and Other Common Themes in *Macbeth* and *Harry Potter*

JK Rowling names *Macbeth* as her favorite Shakespeare play, so the numerous correlations between the Scottish Play and the Harry Potter series should come as no surprise: witches, curses, prophecies, power struggles, and more. Remember, for instance, the scene from the movie *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* where a chorus sings a song called “Double Trouble” that includes many lines from *Macbeth*, including the one that famously graced the movie’s poster – “Something wicked this way comes.” Alas, this something wicked is hardly the only connection between Shakespeare’s world and the wizarding world. These themes from *Macbeth* further underscore the connection between the Bard and the Boy Who Lived.

- The corrupting power of ambition: *Macbeth* is sometimes hailed as a morality tale and held up as cautionary. Indeed, the whole story of *Macbeth* is driven by the main character’s ruthless greed and need to be king at any cost. Macbeth goes wrong because he cannot wait for the throne of Scotland to come to him naturally, and ambition becomes his downfall rather than his strength. The same could be said of Lord Voldemort, whose need to dominate the wizarding world and become the most powerful wizard ever is poison to him and those who stand in his way.
- Good king vs. tyrant: Macbeth does succeed in becoming King of Scotland, but his rule is a short and uncomfortable one. He is branded a tyrant and loses the loyalty of his people, who turn on him and support Malcolm in the end. Again, he parallels Lord Voldemort, who is seldom secure in his subject’s loyalty and rules by fear. Albus Dumbledore, who leads by inspiring, is a quiet, benevolent leader and more along the lines of Prince Malcolm, who also strives to see justice upheld.
- Strong female characters: Many of Shakespeare’s plays are focused primarily on male characters and their dilemmas, so much attention is drawn to female characters when they appear in prominent roles. JK Rowling frequently writes about fearless, intelligent, and no-nonsense females (most notably Hermione Granger and Professor McGonagall) and once created the evil, yet powerful Dolores Umbridge. Perhaps Lady Macbeth, who gets her power from her fearless insulting of her husband and his manhood, is more along the Umbridge line.
- Hallucinations/Magical dreams: Characters in *Macbeth* are guided by dreams, visions, and the images conjured by the three witches. Characters in Harry Potter are influenced by the content of dreams, visions, the recollections of ghosts, images in crystal balls, and the occasional correct prophecy of Professor Trelawney.
- Violence: *Macbeth* begins and ends in the violence of battle, and many other gory events, notably the murder of Lady Macduff and her children, appear throughout the play. The brutal murder of Lily Potter while trying to defend her young son from the Dark Lord is referenced in each of the Harry Potter books, and in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Harry relives the whole event from Voldemort’s point of view.
- The Weird Sisters: This is both the name for the wizarding world rock band, who famously played at the Yule Ball in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, and the name for the trio of prophetic sisters who can predict Macbeth’s destiny.
- The Quest for Immortality: Macbeth’s lack of a son to inherit the throne haunts him. What good is being King of Scotland if the throne is destined to pass immediately from your family line? Macbeth, who believes he cannot be killed by any mortal man, meets his own mortality in the form of Macduff in the end. Lord Voldemort, who has no family and

becomes obsessed with the notion of being Master of Death, mutilates his soul and sacrifices many others on his quest to live forever. He believes himself immortal too, but falls victim in the end.

- Prophecy: Macbeth hears the witches' prophecy, decides to make sure it comes true, and meets with disaster. Lord Voldemort hears Sybil Trelawney's prophecy, decides to make sure it can never come true, and meets with disaster. Need we say more?