



**AMERICAN PLAYERS THEATRE**  
**PRESENTS**

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S**  
**MACBETH**

**2019 STUDY GUIDE**

American Players Theatre / PO Box 819 / Spring Green, WI 53588  
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# Macbeth by William Shakespeare

## 2019 STUDY GUIDE

By Becky Kliebenstein

All photos by Liz Lauren

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## Who's Who in *Macbeth*



**Macbeth (Marcus Truschinski)**  
Thane of Cawdor, he is pressured by his wife to murder Duncan and become King of Scotland; tormented by witches' prophecies, he is eventually slain in battle by Macduff.



**Lady Macbeth (Melisa Pereyra)**  
Wife to Macbeth, she eggs him on and questions his manliness when he hesitates to murder Duncan; once Macbeth is crowned, she is haunted by her role in the murder and kills herself.



**Duncan (Triney Sandoval)**  
King of Scotland, he is murdered by Macbeth.



**Malcolm (Cristina Panfilio)**  
Duncan's daughter, she seizes the Scottish crown after initially fleeing to England.



**Banquo (Laura Rook)**  
Murdered by Macbeth, she reappears as a ghost.



**Macduff (Gavin Lawrence)**  
He flees Scotland but returns to slay Macbeth.



**Ross (Jeb Burris)**  
He joins Macbeth's adversaries.



**Lennox (Aila Peck)**  
Joins the rebels in overthrowing Macbeth.



**Angus (David Daniel)**  
He notes Macbeth's troops "move only in command/nothing in love."



**Seyton (Xavier Roe)**  
An officer and aide to Macbeth.

# Who's Who in *Macbeth*



**Doctor (Sarah Day)**  
Loyal to the Macbeths, but unable to cure them.



**Porter (Pictured Ted Deasy. Played by John Taylor Phillips)**  
He greets Macduff at Macbeth's castle with a discourse on drunkenness.



**Murderers (Yao Dogbe and Charles Pasternak)**  
They are hired by Macbeth to kill Banquo and Fleance.



**Lady Macduff (Alys Dickerson)**  
She cannot understand why her husband has left his family in danger.



**Macduff Daughter (Laëtitia Hollard)**  
Displays wisdom in a deeply moving exchange with her mother.



**Fleance (Kenneth La'Ron Hamilton II)**  
Banquo's son, he flees from hired murderers.



**Witches (Tracy Michelle Arnold, Samantha Newcomb and Carolyn Ann Hoerdemann)**  
They predict Macbeth's and Banquo's futures.

## *Macbeth* Design Team

Director: James DeVita  
Voice & Text Coach: Sara Becker  
Assistant Director: Erin Nicole Eggers  
Costume Design: Daniel Tyler Mathews  
Scenic Design: Takeshi Kata  
Lighting Design: Michael A. Peterson  
Sound Design & Original Music: Josh Schmidt  
Choreographer: Jessica Bess Lanus  
Fight Director: Brian Byrnes  
Assistant Costume Design: Brandi Mans  
Stage Manager: Evelyn Matten

## About the Play

Three witches anticipate a meeting with Macbeth. King Duncan hears a report of how his generals Macbeth and Banquo defeated the Norwegians and the Scottish rebels. The witches gather on a heath and meet the generals returning from the war. They predict Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor, and one day king, and that Banquo's children will be kings. Macbeth is then greatly impressed when he is greeted by Ross and Angus with the title of Cawdor.



Laura Rook (Banquo), Triney Sandoval (Duncan), Cristina Panfilio (Malcolm) and Marcus Truschinski (Macbeth).

Duncan greets Macbeth with great praise and proposes to visit him. Macbeth writes to his wife telling her of what has happened and the King's plans. Lady Macbeth, seeing the opportunity, plots with her husband how they might kill Duncan when he arrives. After initial enthusiasm, Macbeth changes his mind, but Lady Macbeth persuades him to carry out the deed. He murders Duncan, making it seem that the servants were to blame and describes the scene to his wife. She finds herself having to return the daggers he has used to Duncan's bedroom, and her hands become covered with blood too. They retire when they hear repeated knocking at the castle gates.

Macduff arrives, and has a brief exchange with the Porter. He discovers the dead king and rouses the castle. Malcolm, fearing blame for Duncan's death, flees abroad. Soon after,

Ross and Macduff reflect on what has happened, and Macduff reports that Macbeth has been made king.

Macbeth is concerned about his position, very aware of the prophecies about Banquo. He arranges with a group of murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance; they succeed with Banquo, but Fleance escapes. At a dinner that night, where Banquo would have been the chief guest, Macbeth is terrified by the appearance of his ghost. Macbeth decides to return to the witches to find out his fate. They tell him that he should fear Macduff, that no man born of woman can hurt Macbeth, and that he will never be vanquished until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane. They then show a line of eight kings deriving from Banquo.

Macbeth learns that Macduff is fled to England, so he arranges the death of Macduff's wife and children. Macduff meets Malcolm, who tests Macduff's allegiance to Scotland by first painting a bleak picture of her own personality as a future ruler, then revealing her true character. They agree to fight together, with English support. During the meeting, Ross brings news of the murder of Macduff's family. In Scotland, a doctor and gentlewoman observe Lady Macbeth sleepwalking, imagining she cannot clean her hands of Duncan's blood.



Tracy Michelle Arnold, Carolyn Ann Hoerdemann, Samantha Newcomb (The Witches) and Marcus Truschinski (Macbeth).

The Scottish nobles gather, and Malcolm orders his men to camouflage themselves with tree branches as they attack, thus giving the appearance of Birnam Wood approaching Dunsinane. Macbeth learns his wife has died. Fearing no man born of woman, Macbeth fights on, but on meeting Macduff he learns of Macduff's cesarean birth. Macbeth refuses to yield, is killed by Macduff, and Malcolm is proclaimed king.

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# Macbeth Photo Summary



1

“Fair is foul,  
and foul is fair”  
- Witches,  
ACT I, SC i

The witches arrive, bringing with them ill omens and foreboding words.



2

Macduff brings news of Macbeth and Banquo's outstanding bravery in battle



3

“If chance will  
have me king,  
why chance  
will crown me  
without my  
stir.”  
- Macbeth,  
ACT I, SC iii

The witches share their visions with Macbeth and Banquo. He will be king, she will be mother to a line of kings.



4

After talking with Banquo, Macbeth resolves to not take action and let fate decide.



5

“Come you  
spirits that  
tend on mortal  
thoughts,  
unsex me here,  
And fill me  
from the crown  
to the toe top-  
full Of direst  
cruelty.”  
- Lady  
Macbeth,  
ACT I, SC v

Receiving a letter from Macbeth telling her about the prophecies and his chance to be king, Lady Macbeth calls up all her strength to make it happen.



6

Surrounded by those loyal to the King, Macbeth struggles to follow through on their terrible plan.

“If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly.” - Macbeth, ACT I, SC vii

## Macbeth Photo Summary



7  
Before killing Duncan, Macbeth is tortured with visions.

“Methought I heard a voice cry, “Sleep no more!” Macbeth does murder sleep.”  
- Macbeth, ACT II, SC i



8  
After the murder, Macbeth is horrified at the potential consequences. Worried he will never be able to remove the evidence of his crime, Macbeth is reassured by Lady Macbeth.



9  
After Duncan’s heir, Malcolm, flees the country, Macbeth is crowned King of Scotland.



10  
Banquo realizes that Macbeth has murdered Duncan and worries for the future.



11  
Macbeth is obsessed with the vision that said Banquo’s children, not his, would be king. He decides to kill Banquo and Fleance, but does not tell Lady Macbeth of the plan.

“O treachery! Fly good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!”  
- Banquo, ACT III, SC iii



12  
Banquo dies protecting her son. She later appears to Macbeth as a ghost.

## Macbeth Photo Summary

13



Lennox, Ross and Angus discuss the fate of Scotland in Macbeth's hands

14



At his insistence, the witches show Macbeth the three apparitions. After hearing the apparitions, Macbeth resolves to kill Macduff's entire household.

15



After Macduff leaves for England to join with Malcolm in opposition to Macbeth, Lady Macduff is angry at her husband for leaving her in Scotland with no knowledge of his whereabouts

“Wisdom? To leave his wife, to leave his babes.”  
- Lady Macduff,  
ACT IV, SC ii

16



Ross arrives to join Malcolm, bearing the news that Macduff's castle was attacked and his family slaughtered.

17



Lady Macbeth is undone by her guilt.  
“All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.”  
- Lady Macbeth, ACT V, SC i

“I have almost forgot the taste of fears.”  
- Macbeth,  
ACT V, SC iv

18



Because the witches prophesied that no man “of woman born/Shall harm Macbeth,” he believes he's infallible and goes to battle. Macduff, who was “from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd, slays Macbeth and Malcolm becomes queen.



# American Players Theatre's *Macbeth*

## Brave Macbeth, Vile Macbeth

Macbeth was a real, legitimate and successful King of Scotland in the 1000's. Unfortunately for his legacy, the man he defeated to take the throne was the ancestor of Shakespeare's patron, King James I of England (James VI of Scotland). Shakespeare's acting company was re-named King's Men in order to honor his new patron who had recently succeeded Elizabeth I to the throne. Shakespeare took significant license with his dramatic interpretation of history to please his very important new boss. As a result, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a usurper, laden with ambition and undone by hubris.



Marcus Truschinski as Macbeth.

The real Macbeth introduced laws in Scotland in the 1000's that allowed women the same inheritance rights as men, and so, it is fitting that our production ignores the rigid gender expectations of Shakespeare's time. Although not set in a specific era, much of the production dates from at least Pre-Christian times, and in many ways that time was more inclusive and less rigidly controlled by class than Shakespeare's time. In the ancient Scotland of the real Macbeth, as well as the fictional world of this production, time, hard work and success could earn you status as much as inherited power could. In a move both modernizing and historically accurate, as Scotland has numerous legendary historical women, director James DeVita incorporates female warriors in this production. Notably, Banquo and Malcolm are portrayed by Laura Rook and Cristina Panfilio, and both Lady Macbeth

and Lady Macduff are armed to defend their respective homes. Because the play allows for women to achieve and hold power, there are subtle shifts in the motivations of some of the characters. As Melisa Pereyra, Lady Macbeth, notes, "We built an ancient society where men and womxn alike can be queens and warriors. This gave me freedom as an artist. I didn't have to think things like, 'Well at the time, she would have been hungry for power because she is one of the only womxn in this world. That's the only way to be free.' I got to go beyond that, which made her complicated, human and flawed."

Additionally, in this world of gender parity, the family structures are tightened and much more familiar feeling to a contemporary audience. Young viewers will recognize patterns of interactions from their own family units in the scenes between Banquo and her son and the Macduff family.

## A Sense of Community

In this production, the director and ensemble have created their own society, complete with its own rituals and codes. Using the storied history of Scotland as a framework, but sticking to no particular time, rather someplace "on the edge of history" as DeVita explained, Pereyra describes the process of the entire ensemble making up rules for their community together and these acts of community play out in several ways. Gathering in a circle, the use of talismans, worn and carried, and physical connection to the earth we tread all mark essential moments for these characters. The ritual elements, both those of the weird sisters and the regular folk build into the tightness of community that gives this production so much of its intensity. Marcus Truschinski, who plays Macbeth, says that adding ritual to the story was a deliberate choice, not as a modernizing device, but as one that adds context and meaning.

## American Players Theatre's *Macbeth*

By encircling the society of the play so tightly, the destructive acts of the Macbeths resonate more personally for the audience. The geopolitical concerns of the text take a backseat to a much more resonant conflict: betraying one person you love for the advantage of others you love more. As Macbeth considers killing the king, he is surrounded by those people he will betray in doing so. Facing them in celebration while he contemplates the unthinkable, it is easy to see why he wavers. How can he kill a king he loves just to benefit himself? Truschinski points out, “the tightness of the group is tied to honor and trust. If the King says it’s Malcolm, regardless of what we feel, we go with it. That’s why Macbeth’s decision to take fate into his own hands is so monumental. He defies the group and treason is the worst ‘sin’ he can commit.” In fact, at some point in the play, every character, from Macbeth to the Porter, has to decide where their loyalties lie and what they will sacrifice to preserve that bond.



*Macbeth* ensemble.

### Something Wicked This Way Comes



Laura Rook (Banquo), Samantha Newcomb (Witch) and Marcus Truschinski (Macbeth).

Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* at a time when witches were a subject of fascination and fear. James I, who was king at the time, was so interested in witches that he wrote a book about them called *Daemonologie*. Totally bound in superstition and fear, it was nevertheless a popular text that informed beliefs about witches and witchcraft of his time. King James was even convinced that witches tried to ruin his wedding. The weird sisters in this production retain their connection to the spirit world, serving as conduits for the visions that galvanize Macbeth, but that is where their power begins and ends. From their first entrance, we sense these women feel the burden of their gifts. These are not puppeteers controlling the actions of the humans around them. As DeVita points out “if the Macbeths are puppets, there’s no conflict, there’s no drama.” And indeed, these sisters simply deliver the message

and, rather than relish it, seem almost to fear the result of what they share.

Tracy Michelle Arnold’s limp, Carolyn Ann Hoerdemann’s grimace, and Samantha Newcomb’s fear when she feels her power, all speak to the depleting impact of their gifts. When they first meet Macbeth, they’ve been entranced, frozen to the spot as they deliver missives from the spirits to the incredulous Banquo and Macbeth. The three actors spent significant time breaking into the text, shaping their scenes to avoid clichéd depictions and instead created a community of women coming together to support their newest member and ride out the storm together. The cauldron scene, probably one of the most referenced of Shakespeare’s body of work, has been re-contextualized with Arnold, Hoerdemann and Newcomb each bringing new humanity to these characters. Each moment they are on stage reinforces the importance of kinship, choice and the very real potential for humans to use their power for evil, instead of good.

# American Players Theatre's *Macbeth*

## Evil People Never Think They're Evil: The essential humanness of *Macbeth*

It is always a little uncomfortable to find yourself agreeing with the bad guy, but Shakespeare's villains are often some of the most compelling, introspective and watchable characters on stage and the words they speak reflect our own thoughts. For this production of *Macbeth*, Mr. DeVita and the cast took on the task of making humans out of characters so well known they run the risk of losing their impact and becoming caricatures. In order to meet this goal, they centered their work on the core human values each character possesses, and their struggles to balance the good with the bad. The subtle shifts from expected portrayals of wicked witches and evil wives, something DeVita says evolved from "knowing what we didn't want to do," involve a passionately devoted, expectant couple, prophetic sisters who can see the future but not control it, and the use of the inevitable physical deterioration of humans with deeply guarded secrets and unwanted emotional burdens.

Marcus Truschinski's portrayal of Macbeth is both sympathetic and harrowing. To begin with, it may have been reasonable for him to expect to be king after hearing the predictions of the witches, as well as the tradition of the time. In the Scottish era in which this production is set, the tradition was for the king to name his successor rather than simply passing on the crown to his first-born son.

Having just won the war that preserved the current king's rule, Macbeth may very well have become heir to the throne. To hear Duncan tell Macbeth, "More is thy due than more than all can pay," it is no surprise that Macbeth, Malcolm and the rest gathered are a bit surprised to see the choice go to the king's daughter. Macbeth's disappointment at being overlooked for this honor certainly doesn't justify murder, But he seems ready to be pushed over that edge, and this slight is the perfect motivation to spur him on, especially with some support from his wife.

At the core of the play is Macbeth's passionate love for his equally loving wife. Truschinski that "something so strong and beautiful is rarely seen in Shakespeare. There's been a lot written about the Macbeths having the strongest relationship in his plays," and the strength of their bond unites them in a horrible choice. Truschinski adds, "That's what's so heartbreaking to me. A beautiful young couple with everything ahead of them makes the worst decision imaginable."

Lady Macbeth loves her husband and wants the best for him. Her choices spring from Lady Macbeth's love for Lord Macbeth and her desire to see him—and as a result, her children—secure in a position that ensures their status indefinitely. Lady Macbeth is noticeably pregnant in this production. The impending birth of her potential heir adds a level of urgency to the Macbeths' actions. Pererya explains "She sees her husband's full potential and wants him to achieve it. She sees how the throne will end up providing for her children, so she is hungry to take it. The love for her unborn child only aids in her belief that only good can come out of killing Duncan." Lady Macbeth reminds her husband that she has borne and nursed children, so we know she has also lost those children. How precious is the child she carries and what would she do to see it safely to adulthood? Her actions remain abhorrent, but her motivation shifts to believably, fiercely maternal as Pereyra's interactions with her growing family evoke the same response a viewer would have to any mother hopefully and eagerly waiting for the birth of her child.



Triney Sandoval (Duncan), Cristina Panfilio (Malcolm) and Marcus Truschinski (Macbeth).

# American Players Theatre's *Macbeth*

## A Mind Diseased:

As the couple chooses selfishly to pursue the crown, the impact of their decisions quickly takes a toll on their hearts and minds. Truschinski explains that “the deed itself and the nightmares that come with it are too much to handle. They are no longer the same people they were, so the love that remained would be false,” and without each other as support, the Macbeths fall apart. After Lady Macbeth plans the murder of Duncan, and Macbeth carries it out, both are plagued with sleeplessness, and the emotional upset that comes from both the guilt and loss of sleep add to their unraveling. Macbeth attempts to shelter his wife from the added horrors of his consequent murders. “He’s in search of clarity and freedom from guilt. He wants to restore them to what they were, but more murders only make the guilt and the loss of faith grow exponentially, and they lose themselves,” Truschinski describes. This added strain on him leads to Lady Macbeth’s breakdown, which Pereyra explains is rooted in Act 3 during the banquet. “The mask can’t be kept on for much longer and it is in this scene when we see the couple split completely.” Truschinski’s physical delivery in many seminal moments adds to our understanding of this emotional struggle. This is a Macbeth who is nearly tearing out his hair, blood and dirt covered, physically possessed and drained by the visions that plague him.



Melisa Pereyra as Lady Macbeth.

Shakespeare’s audience would have had next to no understanding of mental health concerns, yet the Doctor, played by Core Company member Sarah Day, speaks to Lady Macbeth’s impending doom with such sympathy, noting “More needs she the divine than the physician.” Realizing that Lady Macbeth’s problems are not physical, but helpless to solve them, the Doctor offers the only advice she can. The entrance of Lady Macbeth, cradling her heavily pregnant body, unwieldy hair dragging like the rags she wears presages the inevitable outcome for her. How can a woman so devoted to the murder be so undone by it? Pereyra turned to the banquet scene, Lady M’s last scene before she reappears mad, to trace the source of the breakdown. “In the scene prior to the banquet you see her regretting her

circumstance in private when she says, ‘Nought’s had, all’s spent, /where our desire is got without content.’ She is feeling the scorpions in her mind too, but thinks she’s being strong by not sharing it.” As Macbeth visibly falls apart, Lady M is forced to face the uncomfortable truths about their actions. Pereyra adds, “I think she is ashamed; of herself, of them. But before she can feel all that shame, I needed to make her psychological journey as real as possible. And to me that meant having her experience her shame through rage.” This rage breaks open Lady Macbeth’s internal dam and she cannot survive the issuing flood.

Coming to the Doctor for help with a mind diseased, Macbeth notes he cannot “cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart?” Macbeth embraces a manic, frenzied devotion to winning at all costs. Spurred on by the news he receives from the witches, when he commits to his dark side, it is thrilling and we are reminded his motivations may not be so foreign.

# American Players Theatre's *Macbeth*

## Signifying Nothing:

As the Macbeths destroy their communal ties, the thanes and other characters form new alliances. Jeb Burris, David Daniel, Aila Peck and Gavin Lawrence as Ross, Angus, Lennox and Macduff form a parallel team to thwart Macbeth's destruction of Scotland in the name of his own ambitions. The thanes, having realized, as Lennox states, that "a swift blessing may soon return to this our suffering country under a hand accursed!" rally around Malcolm and ready for war. But the less powerful are left to shift for themselves and the death toll mounts.

Macbeth's deliberate embracing of his dark ambitions as he abandons Lady M for his pursuit of his legacy sets him adrift from any community left to him. Truschinski marks this decision as the beginning of the end for the Macbeths, pointing out that "Together they think they are destined for greatness. It's only when they are taken from each other they start to unravel." Having lost his wife to her guilt, along with their unborn child, Macbeth is left alone. The stage, full of servants and kinsmen for much of the first half, empties of all but him for much of this portion of the play. As Malcolm's army marches in opposition to a foe who was once one of their own, we see the hurt, distrust and loss they feel as their circle closes one last time.



Marcus Truschinski as Macbeth.

Ultimately, no single person's fate can drive the entirety of a society. While the Macbeths are committed to their future, the cost for those who surround them is too high and the community rises up to eliminate the blight. As noted, this production is not about bad witches and worse would-be kings. Pereyra points out that the Macbeths "have agency to act or not," and in their choice to kill the king, they doom themselves and almost doom their country.

## This Might Be Your Favorite Macbeth

Melisa Pereyra and Marcus Truschinski have brought their wealth of talent to the roles of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, respectively. Having played opposite each other several times and, as they both note, having grown up as actors on the APT stage, both are perfectly cast for the world and energy of DeVita's production. Pointing to the relatively generous amount of time they have to produce the show and the care they used in creating their world as well as the responsibility they feel to their audience, Pereyra notes that the kind of depth she was able to bring to this performance is unique. Educators familiar with the text will find the predominant themes come to life in ways uniquely accessible to a young audience.

Those who have read the play will also notice some characters have been combined, others cut. Like Shakespeare in his time wrote for his seventeenth century audience, this production is geared toward today's. Director James DeVita, who also serves as Literary Manager for APT, maintains an airtight focus on the center of the play. In order to avoid losing an audience that might drift, including many patrons who are encountering the play for the first time, DeVita's choices move the play along while diminishing none of its meaning.

# ***Macbeth* Classroom Activity 1**

## **O, never shall sun that morrow see!: Light and Dark in Macbeth**

Once on his path to the throne, Macbeth layers darkness upon darkness, act after act. For this activity, students will trace the characters who are overcome with darkness, either at the hands of the Macbeths or through their own choices in Acts 2-5.

Assessment outcomes:

Students will demonstrate and support their understanding of the creeping darkness in the play through specific lines in the text. Students will analyze the balance of light and dark and justify their reading of the meaning of the work as a whole.

This activity is written as a summative assessment but could be easily converted to a formative if the job of tracking the darkness was assigned at the start of the reading. All other steps could be followed sequentially to retain the writing prompt as a stand-alone summative assessment.

Pacing: Two 50-minute class periods or one 90-minute block.

Materials: If you want something to decorate your walls, black construction paper circles in graduated sizes, yellow construction paper and white typing paper. A simple chart is sufficient.

### **Step 1:**

Have students read the following:

ROSS: Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,

Threatens his bloody stage. By th' clock 'tis day,  
And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp.  
Is 't night's predominance or the day's shame  
That darkness does the face of earth entomb  
When living light should kiss it?

5-10 minute large group discussion on the use of light and dark as a motif in literature and Macbeth specifically.

### **Step 2:**

Have them discuss in pairs or small groups the following and take notes (10-15 minutes):

1. How do the Macbeths' actions snuff out hope and light throughout the events of the play?
2. When are there moments of light/hope?
3. Is the death of Macbeth the result of his character succumbing to darkness or lightness overthrowing him? Which is the suicide of Lady Macbeth?

# ***Macbeth* Classroom Activity 1**

## **Step 3:**

Depending on the ability level of your students, choose the following:

- Assign each student one character whose life is negatively impacted/affected by Macbeth/Lady Macbeth. Have the student skim their lines for the key moment when they are overcome by the darkness. Ex: Macduff “All my pretty ones?/Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?/What, all my pretty chickens and their dam At one fell swoop?” (4.3.255-259) Have them compile in small groups their moments of impact to be put on the visual.
- Assign an act per student in groups of 4. Have the students pull out the moments when characters are killed, lives are destroyed, or hope is nearly lost. They will decide as a group which character faces their darkness in which act.
- Assign the entire play to each student. Have them make their own choices and be able to defend them as individuals.

Likely characters to use: Duncan, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Banquo, Malcolm, Macduff, Seyton (production-based), Young Siward and Donalbain (text based), etc.

## **Step 4 (optional-will probably require extra time):**

From a piece of black paper, cut out 4 circles/rings. From the yellow, cut one circle the same size as the largest black circle. With glitter pens, white paper cut to fit, or other crafty techniques, affix each moment to the circle corresponding with the appropriate act (2 in the center, encircled by 3, then 4, then 5). Glue all the rings to the back of the yellow circle.

## **Step 5 (day two):**

Revisit the answers to discussion questions 2 and 3 in step 2. Assign either groups, pairs or individuals the following:

Analyze the balance of light and dark in the play. A lot of people, innocent and otherwise, are dead or deeply harmed through the course of the play, but the bad guys don't actually win. In a well-constructed response, answer the following:

Is Macbeth a play about darkness nearly destroying the world, or lightness overcoming evil? Be sure to utilize your textual evidence compiled in the first set of activities to support this conclusion.

## **Step 6 (optional):**

Have students affix their final response to the sunny side of their display. Hang your eclipses around your room and encourage students to discuss each others' responses.

Students can also use this as a basis of a formal writing assignment and their sun/darkness can function as an outline.

## ***Macbeth Classroom Activity 2***

### **Classroom Exercise: Macbeth and Social Codes**

Every community is governed by codes, rituals, expectations, and rules that keep the members safe and the community intact. In killing Duncan, Macbeth ultimately dooms himself, yet his community is able to survive. In this exercise, students will examine the text pieces that lead to that choice then tie their understanding of that to fictional, real-world scenarios and contemplate the many ways in which our various communities communicate their rules and punish their transgressors.

**Materials:** The text, pen/pencil, paper.

**Pacing:** 1-2 class periods/1 block

#### **Step One:**

Have students re-read the following lines from the play. First, have them read for comprehension. Then, have them generate a code of conduct and expectations of how one should treat his/her sovereign or be willing to do to defend him, based on these lines. For students who have seen the 2019 production, they should add to this list any and all other details they gleaned from watching regarding how one displays loyalty in this community.

From 1.2:

**Sergeant.** Doubtful it stood;  
As two spent swimmers, that do cling together  
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—  
Worthy to be a rebel, for to that  
The multiplying villanies of nature  
Do swarm upon him—from the western isles  
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;  
And fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,  
Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak:  
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—  
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,  
Which smoked with bloody execution,  
Like valour's minion carved out his passage  
Till he faced the slave;  
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,  
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,  
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

**Duncan.** O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!



## ***Macbeth Classroom Activity 2***

From 1.4:

**Macbeth.** The service and the loyalty I owe,  
In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part  
Is to receive our duties; and our duties  
Are to your throne and state children and servants,  
Which do but what they should, by doing every thing  
Safe toward your love and honour.

**Duncan.** Welcome hither:  
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour  
To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,  
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known  
No less to have done so, let me enfold thee  
And hold thee to my heart.

**Banquo.** There if I grow,  
The harvest is your own.

**Duncan.** From hence to Inverness,  
And bind us further to you.

**Macbeth.** The rest is labour, which is not used for you:  
I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful  
The hearing of my wife with your approach;  
So humbly take my leave.

From 1.6

**Lady Macbeth.** All our service  
In every point twice done and then done double  
Were poor and single business to contend  
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith  
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,  
And the late dignities heap'd up to them,  
We rest your hermits.

**Duncan.** Where's the thane of Cawdor?  
We coursed him at the heels, and had a purpose  
To be his purveyor: but he rides well;  
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him  
To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,  
We are your guest to-night.

**Lady Macbeth.** Your servants ever  
Have theirs, themselves and what is theirs, in compt,  
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,  
Still to return your own.

## ***Macbeth Classroom Activity 2***

### **Step Two:**

Now have students re-read Act 1, Scene 7 wherein the Macbeths decide to betray their community. For students who have seen the play, have them enrich their discussion by noting how the staging/directorial choices enhance the tension between the couple and the agony Macbeth feels in making this choice.

### **Step Three:**

In small groups or large group discussion, work through the following, asking for textual evidence for all, even though some are wide-open to interpretation.

1. What rules is Macbeth following in the opening scenes?
2. What are the general expectations for loyal subjects?
3. What concerns does Macbeth enumerate in his soliloquy in 1.7? At the end of this speech, do you think he intends to kill the king?
4. What rules does Lady Macbeth encourage him to follow?
5. Why does he initially reject her?
6. What about Lady Macbeth's words help Macbeth follow through on the plans he started to hatch when first hearing the prophecy that he would be king?
7. Why does Macbeth ultimately decide to act on behalf of his family and their future rather than Duncan?

### **Step Four:**

To extend this activity beyond the text, have students list their communities. Your classroom, their family, their close friend group (for some this will be one person, for others their entire class. What is relevant is the individual's perception of the importance of the group, not the size of the group) and the school should all be on the list. You can consider adding social media accounts, extracurricular teams/groups, workplace, or any community a majority of your group might belong to.

### **Step Five:**

Give them 2 minutes to rank them from most important (1) to least (5 or higher, depending on how many communities they listed). Remind them that no one will hold them to these answers, that they might rank things differently tomorrow, and that this is just for the sake of thinking and analysis.

### **Step Six:**

They can work with partners or small groups for this step. List 3-4 non-negotiables (actions that lead to consequences) for each community. Each list should contain at least 1 action that would lead to being ostracized from the group, except the list for family.

## ***Macbeth Classroom Activity 2***

### **Step Seven:**

Group the students randomly in 3-4's. Present the following scenarios. Allow students to discuss each answer as it comes.

Scenario 1: A person in your level 4 community has beef with someone from your level 2 community. You see this on social media and hear it in the halls. What do the members of your level 2 community do?

Scenario 2: In order to ensure a goal for your level 1 community, you need to lie to the members of your level 3 about something important to their goals. How do you go about ensuring your success? What will happen to you if you get caught by the level 3 community?

Scenario 3: You want to leave your level 1 community. Which community will also be impacted by this? Will there be consequences from your level 1? Others?

### **Step Eight:**

Bring it back to the Macbeths.

For students who have seen the play, discuss those moments when it is clear their partnership is the most important community they inhabit. How does the 2019 production make it clear that Macbeth is going to choose to elevate his family at the expense of the loyalty he owes Duncan?

For students who have read but not seen the 2019 production, discuss how and why a husband might choose to keep a promise to his wife at the risk of losing the admiration of his peers.

### **Step Nine:**

Assessment options:

- Have students write a 1-page reflection on the nature of community, loyalty and choice.
- Ask students to find a line or group of lines from the text not used in this activity that either supports or contradicts one of the core values of Macbeth's community. Have them justify their choice in writing.
- Have students in small groups imagine themselves as a character in the play and go through steps 4-7 again. Have them record their answers. Consider having them draft and perform mini-scripts around these discussions.