

# Macbeth Background

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# Shakespeare- Renaissance Drama

- **Rebirth** of interest in Greek Tragedies
- Shakespeare wrote three types of plays:
  - Histories
  - Comedies- has a happy ending
  - Tragedies- tragic hero comes to **a miserable end**



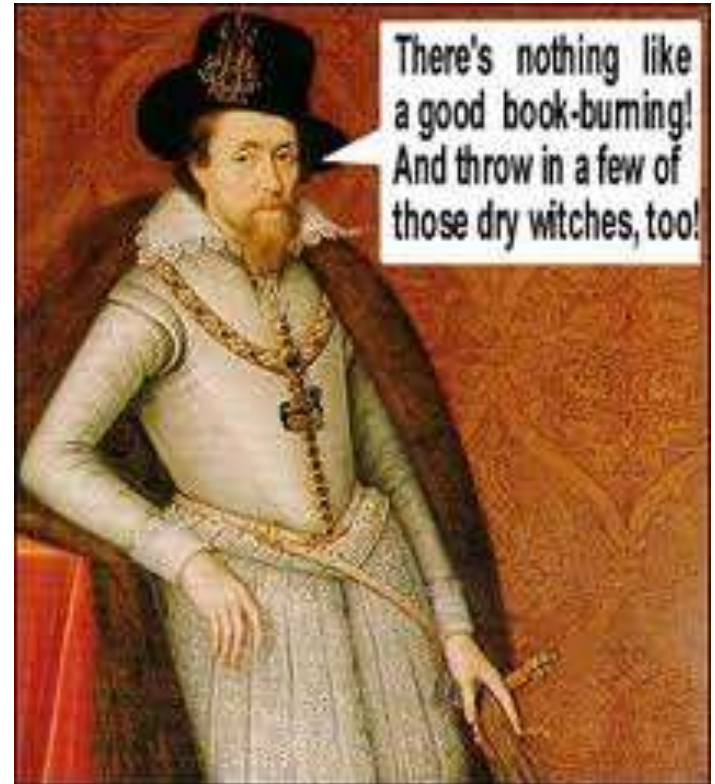
# Historical Background

- The Title Character based on a historical Macbeth, king of 11<sup>th</sup> century Scotland
- He seized the throne after killing King Duncan



# Shakespeare's Sponsor

- King James the First
- James interested in **witchcraft**- but didn't necessarily believe- used it for political purposes
- Belief about witches **widespread**-  
WHY: ?**illiterate people**, no scientific **explanation**



# Witches- Famous Three in Macbeth



# Witches- Famous Three in Macbeth



*"Add hair of Sarah, eyerolls of McCain, wool of Obama, and Biden's slip of the tongue,...and we get a pretty tasty election!"*

# Characteristics of Tragedy

- Tragic hero must begin the play as a **person of importance**
- Someone looked up to because of **position and/or ability**
- Cannot be an **average guy**
- Never a **woman** ☹️



# Characteristics of Tragedy

- Tragic hero exhibits **extraordinary** abilities
- Also has a **TRAGIC FLAW** that leads to his downfall
- Tragic flaw is usually associated with **HUBRIS**-excessive pride
- Macbeth's tragic flaw is driven by his **AMBITION**



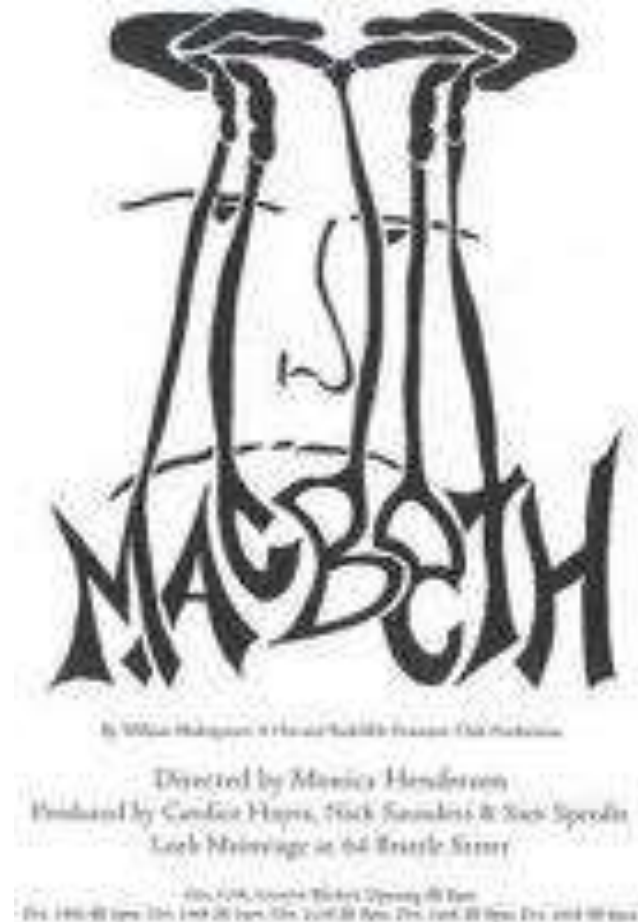
# Characteristics of Tragedy

- Antagonist-  
**outside forces**  
with whom the  
hero battles
- **Pushes** him  
toward the tragic  
ending



# Characteristics of Tragedy

- A series of **casually related** events lead the hero to the catastrophe
- **Catastrophe**- the hero dies, others may die



# Characteristics of Tragedy

- Right before his death tragic hero must **recognize his flaw** – his **OOPS** moment
- Gains the **pity** of the audience- they then feel **fear**- for if this can happen to a man so great, **what does it mean for the common man.**



# Characteristics of Tragedy

- Tragic hero comes to an **unhappy and miserable end**



# Characteristics of Tragedy

- Tragic hero meets death with **dignity and courage**
- Macbeth somewhat **problematic** in the end for some readers
- Question whether or not his OOPS moment is **big enough**



# Comic Relief in Tragedy

- The following of a **serious** scene with a **lighter humorous** scene
- Gives audience **relief**
- Juxtaposition **heightens** the prior tragedy



# Soliloquy

- Speech by a character  
**ALONE** on stage
- Shares **innermost** thoughts
- Only the **audience** hears.

*Savage Chickens*

by Doug Savage



[www.savagechickens.com](http://www.savagechickens.com)

# Aside

- Remark from a character to the **audience**
- Can also be a remark from one character to another **character** that other characters on the stage **DO NOT** hear
- Will indicate in the text
  - *aside to- character name*
  - *Aside- to audience only*



# Verse Drama

- Dialog consists mostly of poetry with a **fixed** rhyme or meter
- **Blank verse**- unrhymed iambic pentameter
- Shakespeare pulls characters out of verse to indicate **something about his or her character**

# Motif:

- a recurring object, concept, or structure in a work of literature
- Blood
- Sleep
- Manhood
- Water
- Clothing
- Weather
- Birds
- Light and Dark

# Shakespeare's Language

- NOT OLD ENGLISH
- Archaic word usage
- Grammatical Forms: thou, thee, thy, thine, and thyself instead of you.
- Outdated Verb forms:
  - Art for are
  - Cometh for comes
- Fewer helping verbs:
  - Not: Don't you know he has?
- Unfamiliar vocab:
  - Seeling=blinding
  - Choppy=chapped
  - Use the marginal notes in textbook to help with meaning.
- He coined words- like assassination

# Dramatic Irony

- What appears to be **true** characters in the play is seen to be **false** by the audience
- The audience has a more **complete picture** of the action-watches **EVERYTHING** unfold



# Themes

- Theme:
  - A central idea or unifying generalization implied or stated by the literary work
  - Not a subject
  - Must be in statement form
  - Should NOT be an absolute
  - Can be applied to humans and life beyond the text
- Macbeth Themes:
  - Things are not always what they seem
  - Ambition is often blinding
  - Power can corrupt those who have it.
  - Superstition often affects human behavior

# Key Characters

- Duncan
- Malcolm
- Donalbain
- Macbeth
- Lady Macbeth
- Banquo
- Fleance
- Macduff
- Lady Macduff and her son
- Witches
- Porter
- Old Man
- Three murderers
- Gentlewoman
- Seyton
- Siward and Young Siward
- Ross and Lennox

# Setting and Places

- 11<sup>th</sup> century
- Medieval Scotland
- Brief section in England with King Edward the Confessor
- Macbeth's Castle: Inverness on Dunsinane Hill
- Macduff's Castle: Fife
- Birnam Woods- a forest
- Scone-where kings are crowned
  - Instead: "know you not he has?"
- Unusual word order;
  - Verbs before subjects
  - Objects before verbs
  - Says: "O, never shall that sun that morrow see!" instead of "O, the sun shall never see that morrow!"

# Thank You

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