



MACBETH

by William Shakespeare

TEACHER RESOURCE PACK

Written and compiled by Stacie Novotny

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FOREWORD

This resource pack is designed to help promote further exploration into the script of *Macbeth*. It has been designed with the current national English and Drama curriculum in mind and the activities and information have been specifically chosen to fulfill many of the demands expected by the curriculum in terms of literacy, performance and additional life skills such as teamwork, co-operation and negotiation.

As well as providing a series of activities that will take you through the production scene by scene, the pack also contains some useful background information into the play's history, the power of Shakespeare's language and some other productions of *Macbeth* which may be interesting for further research.

In order to compliment the Lyric Theatre Film and Workshop, this resource pack contains lots of ideas to encourage the students to think about the play in terms of the theatre industry and the variety of different roles that are involved to make a whole production come together. Some of the activities, suggested to promote the exploration of the scene, actively encourage the students to take on some of these roles and will allow them to form a better understanding of what happens in the creation of a theatre production and that there is a wide variety of careers within the theatre industry.

To get the best use of this pack, it does not have to be read or worked through from start to finish but instead provides an additional resource, which can be dipped into and out of as inspiration is needed, to help bring Shakespeare's written word to life.

At the end of the pack I have included several additional resources which may be useful and interesting to look at during the students' research of the play.

Happy creating,

Stacie Novotny

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Lyric Theatre production, October 2012

CREATIVE TEAM

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| DIRECTOR | LYNNE PARKER |
| SET AND COSTUME DESIGN | DIANA ENNIS |
| MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGN | DENIS CLOHESSY |
| LIGHTING DESIGN | SINEAD MCKENNA |
| ASSISTANT DIRECTOR | HELEN DONNELLY |

CAST (in order of appearance)

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| THE WEIRD SISTERS | CAROL MOORE |
| | ELEANOR METHVEN |
| | CLAIRE RAFFERTY |
| DUNCAN/DOCTOR | NIALL CUSACK |
| MALCOLM | CHRISTOPHER DOYLE |
| CAPTAIN/FLEANCE | FANCIS MEZZA |
| ROSS | PAUL KENNEDY |
| MACBETH | STUART GRAHAM |
| BANQUO | MICHAEL CONDRON |
| LADY MACBETH | ANDREA IRVINE |
| PORTER/DONALBAIN | DARREN FRANKLIN |
| MACDUFF | PAUL MALLON |
| LADY MACDUFF | CLAIRE RAFFERTY |
| SERVANT/MURDERER | JASON MCLAUGHLIN |
| MACDUFF'S SON | LIAM ROWAN/JAMES WRIGHT |
| CHILDREN GROUP 1 CASSIDY | ADRIENNE BLACK, EMILY BLACK, AARON LYNCH, ODHRAN |
| CHILDREN GROUP 2 WILSON | ROMA BANNON, ANTHONY BRIERS, CILLIAN BURNS, KIAN |

AMBITION- THE HEART OF *MACBETH*

“...I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th' other-

Enter Lady Macbeth”

Act I Scene VII

It is impossible to explore the text or the performance of *Macbeth* without the notion of ambition being questioned and debated. It is clear that *Macbeth* was an ambitious character.

He clearly states it in the play's opening act that he is being spurred into his actions in plotting against the King Duncan by “vaulting ambition.” However what he fails to do is link this ambition to himself in this instance; instead we have his powerful soliloquy interrupted by the entrance of his wife.

This should draw our attention to the ambition which also lies within Lady *Macbeth*. This deliberate interruption that Shakespeare writes into the language at this moment also highlights the way in which Lady *Macbeth* picks up the ambition of her husband and runs with it until the deed has been committed and “the golden round” has been secured.

Interestingly however, the original source, Holinshed's *Chronicle*, where Shakespeare first found the plot of *Macbeth*, only once mentions the idea that Lady *Macbeth* was an ambitious wife who encourages her husband's crime in order that she would become queen.

The notion of ambition literally busts forth from the opening of the play “when the battles lost and won.” This not only draws attention to the traditionally masculine demonstration of ambition, war, but provides a forewarning for the story about to unfold; while some will be victorious and have their ambitions secured, there are also those whose battles will be lost.

HISTORY

MACBETH: HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1005 – Macbeth was born into a turbulent Scotland filled with feuding clans fighting over the territory and trade in the area. He was the son of the powerful family that ruled over the territories of Moray and Ross.

1032 (approximately) – Macbeth married Gruach who was the granddaughter of a High King of Scotland. There were no children recorded during their marriage.

1040 – Macbeth was elected the High King of Scotland just outside Perth. Suspected of killing the former King Duncan who was killed at the age of 38 after a rather unpopular and ineffectual rule.

1054 – Malcolm, Duncan's son, invaded Scotland. He was supported by the English King known as Edward the Confessor.

1057 – Macbeth was killed at Peel Ring, Lumphanan in Mar.

HISTORY INTO DRAMA

Like many playwrights Shakespeare understood that history was full of great stories, however he was not a historian. Shakespeare drew from a variety of historical sources when writing his earlier history plays one of his key sources, but by no means his exclusive source, was Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1587).

Shakespeare wrote his tragedy of *Macbeth* in 1606. The bold themes of murder, treason and the supernatural found in Shakespeare's work were of great interest to the King James IV of Scotland, who by 1606 had become King James I of England. As a result Shakespeare ensured he had the script of *Macbeth* finished in time to provide a special royal evening of entertainment for King James and his brother-in-law at Hampton Court Palace.

As the timeline on page 10 shows, there were some historical truths to be found in the bard's *Tragedy of Macbeth*, however, Shakespeare also freely sprinkled his play with his own imagination, creating Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking as her ambition drives her towards madness and ultimately death, another fictitious element of the plot.

Much of the action in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, takes place in the Macbeth family home, Cawdor Castle. This is a further invention by the bard. Cawdor Castle in Scotland was not built until late into the 14th century making it impossible for the historical characters of King Duncan or Macbeth to even have graced its grounds. This inspirational castle is only located about 15 miles outside Inverness and thanks to Shakespeare's play bestowing the Macbeth myth on the place, it has become a popular tourist attraction, with over 70,000 visitors each year.

MACBETH AT THE LYRIC THEATRE

The production of *Macbeth*, produced by the Lyric Theatre in 2012, was directed by Lynne Parker. As a director, Lynne has spoken of the fact that when tackling Shakespeare, no production can ever be a definitive production; instead the director must decide what aspects and elements they want to explore in their vision of the play. The Lyric Theatre production of *Macbeth* could be described as exploring two key areas; the ambition of politics and the notion of the supernatural and fate and how much influence do they hold in our lives. Given the history of Belfast and Northern Ireland, both elements seem topical and uncomfortably relevant for this production.

Lynne also made the decision to keep all the actors in the local Northern Irish dialect. It is a well-documented fact that Shakespeare's accent and the accents of his actors were a long way from the RP accents commonly heard upon the stage of the Globe today. Therefore, given that the play is in fact set in Scotland, and there are many links between the province of Ulster and Scotland, the meaty Belfast tone seemed like a suitable choice.

See below some reviews from the most recent Belfast production:

THE STAGE REVIEW:

<http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/review.php/37628/macbeth>

THE GOWN REVIEW:

<http://thegown.net/2012/10/29/theatre-review-macbeth-at-the-lyric-theatre/>

IRISH THEATRE MAGAZINE REVIEW:

[http://www.irishtheatremagazine.ie/Reviews/Current/Macbeth-\(4\)](http://www.irishtheatremagazine.ie/Reviews/Current/Macbeth-(4))

KEY PERFORMANCES AND ADAPTATIONS

Below are some examples of past productions and adaptations of *Macbeth* which are useful to research and compare. What was happening in society during these productions? Would this have influenced the Director's choices?

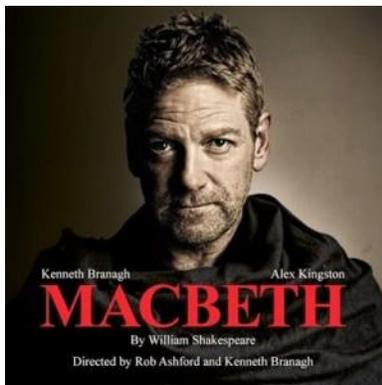
ABBEY THEATRE PRODUCTION, DUBLIN, MAY 2010



MACBETH: WHO IS THIS BLOODIED MAN?
EDINBURGH FRINGE FESTIVAL 2012



NATIONAL THEATRE PRODUCTION, LONDON, JULY 2013



MACBETH THE MUSICAL, PAUL BOYD MUSIC, 1992

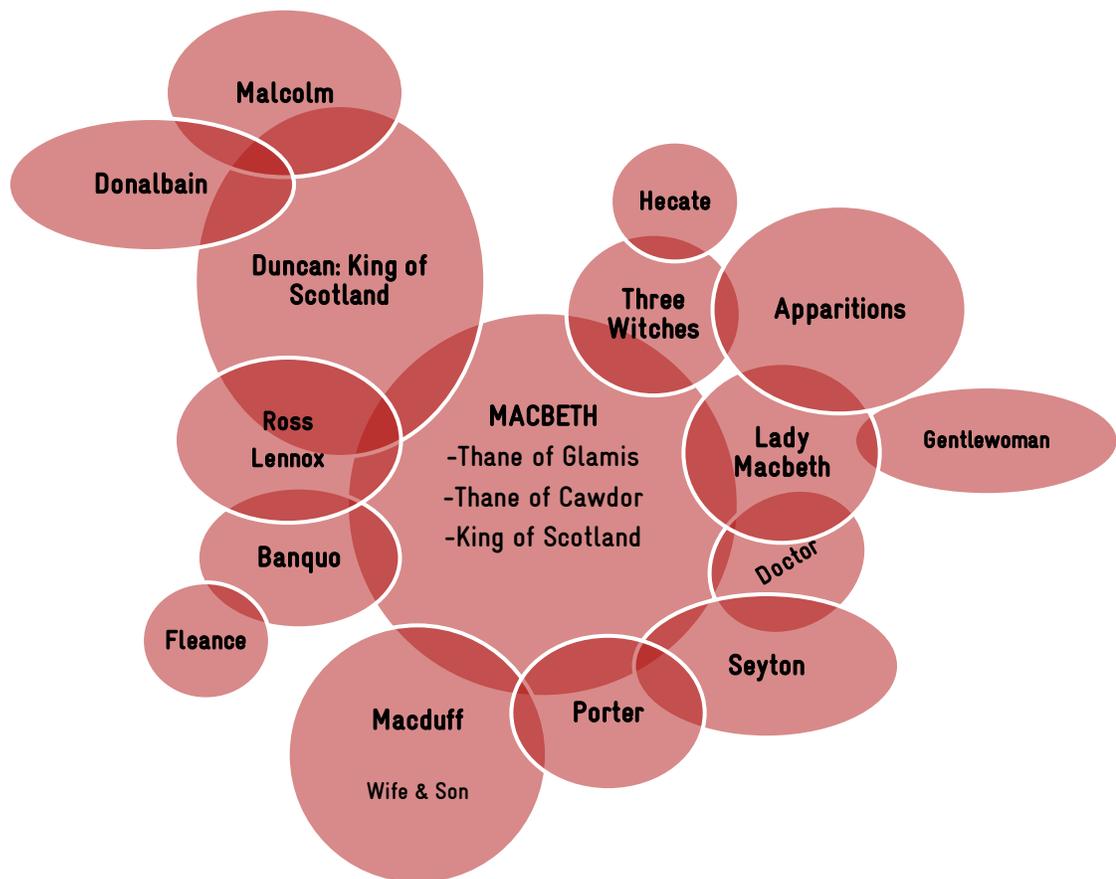


MACBETH, 1979 Film



CHARACTERS

WHO'S WHO - QUICK GUIDE



CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

MACBETH

Also called Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland during the course of the play. Macbeth is married to Lady Macbeth and a renowned soldier of Scotland. Fuelled by his own ambition and his wife's desire for greatness, Macbeth becomes the murderer of King Duncan and several other characters. However, unlike many of Shakespeare's villains, it seems more appropriate to view Macbeth as a tragic Hero, similar to Hamlet than an evil villain as he possesses a degree of self-reflection and doubt over his actions which a villain does not. These elements of the character result in a human quality being presented which audiences can identify with. Macbeth's character should not be explored in terms of evil but rather a tragically flawed human.

LADY MACBETH

Wife and partner in crime to Macbeth. This character is often explored in relation to the amount of influence she had in Macbeth's desire for ambition and how much responsibility she holds for Duncan's murder. Another area which is interesting to examine in relation to this character is the number of times that Lady Macbeth talks about committing the murder herself. This depicts a more sinister nature to the character who is already regarded as Shakespeare's most evil female characters.

DUNCAN

The beloved King of Scotland. With this character, Shakespeare has deviated once again from historical fact for the purpose of drama. Historical reports suggest that Duncan was a typical tyrant to his people and was not the friendly, respected Duncan presented in *Macbeth*. Shakespeare was aware however, that if the audience did not sympathise with Duncan, the play would have failed to exist after his murder, as Macbeth would have been praised as the hero who saved them from their ruler.

BANQUO

Friend and comrade to Macbeth, Banquo is set up to present the antithesis to the central character. From the first interaction with the weird sisters, it is evident that Banquo will be our moral compass throughout the action, favouring to put his trust in the hands of fate rather than taking matters into his own bloodied hands as Macbeth chooses to.

MACDUFF

Having faced the tragedy of the brutal murder of his King, followed by the murders of his wife and only son, Macduff lives to finally put an end to Macbeth's ambition. Macduff kills Macbeth, cuts off his head and presents it to the rightful King of Scotland, Malcolm, at the end of the play.

THE WEIRD SISTERS

Often referred to as the three witches, these characters are only once called witches in the entire play. Macbeth and Banquo seem to perceive them as supernatural and fantastical beings. To explore the characters under this instruction provides a more interesting task as it avoids the temptation to get caught in the stereotypical trap of witches with pointed hats and broomsticks. It has long been debated how much influence these weird sisters had over Macbeth or did they only awaken something that was already inside his character?

MALCOLM

Duncan's son. He is an intellectual and possesses many qualities for which Macbeth has little respect. Malcolm has one of the most powerful scenes in the play when he tests Macduff to see if he will make a good king. When he learns that Macduff's wife and children have been murdered, he joins forces with Macduff.

**SCENE-BY-SCENE
SYNOPSIS
AND ACTIVITIES**

ACT I SCENE I

SYNOPSIS

The three witches meet in a desolate place vowing to meet Macbeth after the battle. Each Witch has a familiar spirit that calls to them. Their chanting foretells of what is to come.

EXPLORATION

This is the first moment of the play so it is designed to capture the audience's attention and pull them into the intrigue of the supernatural which plays a dominant role throughout the production. During the exploration of the text it may be useful to get the group to think of the 'Witches' as the Weird Sisters instead- this is the term that they use to describe themselves and it can help prevent the stereotypical approach of picturing pointed hats and broomsticks.



Ask the group to design the costumes for the three Weird Sisters. They should be encouraged to think about the fact that this will be the first image the audience will see on stage. The weird sisters should make an impact, but this will be very different for a modern audience. In the Lyric Theatre's production the witches wore large hoods which concealed their faces and left much to the imaginations of the audience. This also enabled them to use the same actors in several different roles. They may wish to do more research into each of the sister's 'familiar spirits' which may provide some inspiration.

When the group has designed the costumes get them to present a convincing pitch in front of the others. They should provide an explanation for their creative choices and use persuasive language to convince the others that they should get the costume design contract for their production.

As a group discuss who you would choose and why.



Arrange the group into smaller groups of 6-8. Ask three to take on one of the roles of the weird sisters, one person should perform the role of director and the others should help create additional sound effects and atmosphere. Together they should work on the opening scene for performance on the radio. They should explore how they will create the atmospheric opening of the play without the aid of visuals. Try to discourage the stereotypical witches cackling but rather, get the group to think of other ways they could use their voices to create a supernatural and unnerving atmosphere. Explore the rhythm of Shakespeare's text- how does this help in performance?

When thinking about the presentation of the weird sisters, it is important to remember that although often associated with the female, in Shakespeare's productions these characters would have been presented by men. How would that effect a modern presentation of them?

If you have the facilities, record each group's performance and then listen back to them as a whole group and discuss what different techniques the groups have used. What worked well over the recording?

ACT I SCENE II

SYNOPSIS

The great battle between the Scottish and Norwegian army discussed by the witches in the opening scene has now ended. The Norwegian side had been supported by the Scottish Traitors, Macdonald and the Thane of Cawdor. King Duncan, who led the Scottish forces, receives news from a wounded captain about his general, Macbeth and Banquo. Ross and Angus then arrive to deliver the news of the Scottish victory.

EXPLORATION

This scene is filled with Shakespeare's impressive use of language. The retelling of the battle by the wounded soldier is packed full of rich images and interesting references which the group should be encouraged to find and research in more depth to create a clear understanding of what happened during the battle.



Ask the group to think about the modern battles they see presented in the news today. They could even find some examples of war correspondents online and cut out images presented in the press. How do these modern examples compare to the wounded captain's report in *Macbeth*? What techniques do reporters use when delivering war reports? Ask the group to choose one form of modern news reporting, Radio, TV, newspaper or online report. Get them to re-write the captain's description of Macbeth's battle in modern terms. They should be encouraged to think about the importance in the media of finding the balance between being sensitive to the subject of war while also ensuring they make the report interesting for their audience. If time permits ask some people perform their reports as if to a TV camera. How does this affect the way they stand and the tone of their voice? This scene is also the first description the audience receives of Macbeth.

Ask the group to make a list of everything we learn about this character. They should keep this list and add to it as they find out more about the central protagonist. Based on this initial description ask the group to get into pairs and recreate an interview with Macbeth, one person should be Macbeth and one should be the interviewer. This should be documented and could be added to their modern news report.



To help the group get a clear understanding of all the images used throughout this scene get them into small groups of 4-6. One member of the group should read through the Captain's speech slowly, pausing after each new image. The others should clearly mime out the action described.

Then in groups of three ask the group to explore the end of this scene. Angus and Ross enter, bringing news of the victory however the conversation is only between Duncan and Ross, with Angus remaining Silent. Get each group to perform the scene from line 48-67. Ask them to include the character of Angus. This may be during the scene or they may choose to give Angus a soliloquy after the other characters exit from the scene. As a large group watch each performance. What impact does this have on the scene? Why does Shakespeare choose to have Angus remain silent?

ACT I SCENE III

SYNOPSIS

The three Weird Sisters meet again on a deserted heath, chanting about what each has been doing since the last time they met. The drum beating signals the sound of soldiers approaching yet the sisters already know it is Macbeth and Banquo who are near and returning victorious from their battle. The Weird Sisters greet Macbeth with prophesies that he shall become Thane of Cawdor and eventually King of Scotland. Banquo then requests to know his own future. They reveal that while he shall not become King, he will be a father to future kings. The Weird Sisters disappear and Angus and Ross enter to deliver Macbeth his new title of Thane of Cawdor, the predictions seem to be coming true and Macbeth's thoughts take on a more sinister edge.

EXPLORATION

This scene gives audiences a much clearer description of the power that the witches or weird sisters possess. It is also the only point in the whole play where they are referred to as witches which indicates the need to explore the relevance of this term to a Shakespearean audience compared to a modern audience. This scene is also our first meeting with Macbeth. His opening line echoes the last line of the weird sisters in the first scene. What other reasons might he have for entering with a phrase such as “so foul and fair a day I have not seen”?



The predictions given to Macbeth and Banquo are similar to the modern day horoscope. Ask the group to write their own horoscopes for Macbeth and Banquo based on the predictions given by the witches. Encourage them to be cryptic in their descriptions and explore unusual ways of painting images.

At the end of the scene we get a glimpse inside the mind of Macbeth. Fuelled by the prophesies of the three weird sisters his thoughts are filled with ambition and some darker plots to ensure that these predictions become reality.

Ask everyone in the group to write a letter as Macbeth to his wife, Lady Macbeth, informing her of what has just occurred and what has been promised to him. Will he be as honest as he is in his private thoughts that we hear as an audience or will he lie and conceal some of them as he does with Banquo?



This scene is another great example of Shakespeare's use of language and rhythm, especially for exploring the witches' use of their own unusual speech pattern. The best way to explore this is to speak it out loud. Get the group to read the witches lines around the room, changing person at each point of punctuation. Look at what patterns emerge or lack of patterns. Try this again but this time split the group into three. Each section takes responsibility for the lines of one of the witches. They could try speaking the lines collectively or using some to provide an echo for some of the key words or striking images.

One of the biggest problems with this scene is the disappearance of the witches after line 76. In smaller groups of at least 3, get them to discuss ways they would tackle this as a director then get them to try some of the ideas out. This work should be experimental and it may be useful to workshop it in front of the whole group in order that others can suggest changes as they are going through and the scene can be paused and restarted as many times as needed to explore different possibilities. It is important to remind the group that there is no correct solution to this exercise, it is to highlight some key challenges that a director and set designer can face when putting a production together.

Macbeth's aside to the audience, lines 126-141, is an excellent technique which Shakespeare uses to allow the audience inside the mind of the character. A modern day equivalent would be the diary room in a reality television show like Big Brother. Get the group into pairs and ask them to both play Macbeth as if he was in the Big Brother Diary room, one should use the original text and the other should try to find the equal sentiment but in today's use of the language. Using the familiar language of young people today it should help highlight the gravity of what Macbeth is really thinking during this scene. Discuss how this scene has altered their opinion of Macbeth's character.

ACT I SCENE IV

SYNOPSIS

Duncan warmly welcomes Macbeth and Banquo, congratulating them on their victory in battle and announces his son Malcolm will be his heir to the throne. A celebratory feast is due to be held at the Macbeths' residence. Macbeth realises the obstacle that has now been placed between him and the fulfilment of the prediction of the weird sisters.

EXPLORATION

This scene is a good example of the contradictions that occur between a character's words and actions. Macbeth speaks to Duncan with an air of grace as his humble servant, yet speaks to the audience of the dark plot against the King and the future heir, Malcolm. This provides another key point in which to ask the group to explore if their opinion of Macbeth has shifted again.



Duncan's line "There's no art/ To find the mind's construction in the face." suggests that as humans we often deceive others with appearing other than we are. Divide the group into two and get them to prepare a short presentation for or against this statement.

It may be useful to encourage them to look for modern examples from the world's press. Once you have a selection of newspaper pictures of different people, give one to each smaller group. Ask them to write the headline and news report corresponding to the image. After this has been done, you can reveal the actual headline for the picture. Did the picture reveal the truth or deceive?



Get the group into pairs. Give them the two small speeches of Macbeth from this scene, one to Duncan and the other his aside to the audience. Explore different ways to speak the two speeches. How do you ensure that a modern audience will understand the conflicting attitudes revealed by the Character of Macbeth in the two speeches?

For each section, try reading it aloud and for every word which has more than one syllable, spread your arms out wide. What effect does this have?

Now read the second speech again and punctuate each monosyllable with your first punching the air. What quality does this bring to the words? What do you notice about the use of syllables in the two speeches? How does Shakespeare use this for dramatic effect? How would you use today's language to create the same distinction?

ACT I SCENE V

SYNOPSIS

Lady Macbeth has received her husband's letter, proclaiming the good news of his new title and of prophecies from the three Weird Sisters. Lady Macbeth is told of Duncan's arrival at her home. She greets her husband Macbeth, with great enthusiasm.

EXPLORATION

This is the audience's first introduction to Lady Macbeth, the play's second key protagonist. The scene reveals Lady Macbeth's thoughts of her husband and her reaction to the content of his letter is an important area for exploration as this gives away many clues of her own character. As with Macbeth, It is important at this point to create a list of facts and impressions that you have about Lady Macbeth. Update this as your impression changes or more is revealed.



Ask the group to imagine they are a director about to produce a production of *Macbeth*. They have cast the play except for the character of Lady Macbeth. Ask them to write a briefing to go to agents describing the sort of person they are looking for. Important details to think about might be, age, height, physical stature, hair colour, voice. Compare the different impressions that the group have formed about the character. What are the dominant similarities?

This scene is also the first moment we see Macbeth and Lady Macbeth interact together. Imagine you are one of the attendants within the Macbeth Household. Write a diary entry describing this meeting and your impression of their relationship in general.



This is our first introduction to Lady Macbeth. As a whole group explore how this scene should open. The script states [*Enter Lady Macbeth alone, with a letter*]. How should this character enter? What impression do you want this entrance to have on the audience? Experiment with different ways that Lady Macbeth could enter the stage? Does she move

slowly or excitedly? Does she move with grace or in sharp movements? Try as many different ways you can think of and discuss which seems most appropriate.

Having received this news of what has been promised to Macbeth, Lady Macbeth's character communicates with the supernatural in her own way, calling upon spirits to remove any feminine remorse. In small groups explore the lines 36-52 that are spoken by Lady Macbeth. Try speaking them aloud as if you were casting a spell, share the lines among the group and try different techniques to create the most atmospheric performance. You could whisper them softly, hiss them angrily, or speak them as if already under a spell or perhaps try the lines as if a prayer. As each group presents their interpretation discuss what happens by changing the quality with which these lines are delivered?

ACT I SCENE VI

SYNOPSIS

Duncan arrives at the Macbeth residence and comments on how pleasant a place it is. He is greeted with an elaborately warm welcome by Lady Macbeth and she showers him with compliments for his past favours towards them.

EXPLORATION

This scene provides a sense of the calm before the storm. While relatively short, it provides an excellent lesson on dramatic irony when the audience begins to have a better understanding of the situation than some of the characters in the scene. This scene may also be explored for the contradictions and deceptions in word and thought that many of the characters process.



Much of the flattery given to Duncan by Lady Macbeth can be seen as false and insincere. Ask the group to re-write the lines of Lady Macbeth in this scene as if she were saying what she really thought about King Duncan. They could use the same Shakespearean language or modern slang or they could stage it as a soap opera or a chat show.



You could get the group to bring their re-write scripts to life and act them out in smaller groups to get a feel for how differently the scene would be played if Lady Macbeth was completely honest to her thoughts when speaking to the King.

Using Lady Macbeth's original lines get the group to explore ways of presenting her insincerity. Get one of the groups to speak aloud the Lady Macbeth line 15-29. Every time they say something which is insincere, get them to grit their teeth together in a menacing way then pause and smile sweetly.

Then get another member of the group to read the same section, pausing after every punctuation. During this pause the rest of the group should be encouraged to act out and shout words that reveal what the character is really thinking. For example, behind "All our service", Lady Macbeth may be thinking 'the only other service we have to do for you is preform your murder'.

ACT I SCENE VII

SYNOPSIS

Macbeth performs a soliloquy, revealing his doubts about killing Duncan. His thoughts are interrupted by the entrance of his wife who accuses him of cowardice when he reveals he does not want to carry out their plot against Duncan. Lady Macbeth regains control of the scene and uses her power of persuasion to convince Macbeth that her plan will work and provide them with all they have been promised. Macbeth applauds his wife for her evil brilliance and advises they conceal what's in their hearts by presenting a cheerful complexion when returning to the banquet in honour of Duncan.

EXPLORATION

An interesting scene for exploration, which takes on two parts: Macbeth's soliloquy, revealing his own personal thoughts and feelings on the task at hand, and then the development in the relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Their dialogue takes on the pattern of a power struggle- who has control? Does this change throughout the scene?



Looking at Macbeth's Soliloquy, lines 1-28, get the group to make a list of all the reasons Macbeth gives for not proceeding with the plan to kill Duncan. This is a good opportunity to introduce the gravity of what it meant to kill a king in Shakespeare's era. To kill the monarch was to kill God himself. This was a serious act of treason for a nation who were, at the time particularly God-fearing and held great loyalty for the current King of England, King James, for who, this play was presented.

Ask the group to imagine they were a theatre critic attending the performance of *Macbeth* that was presented to King James in 1606. Write a review of the performance, noting King James reaction to Macbeth's Soliloquy in this scene.

In small groups ask for Macbeth's soliloquy to be re-written but in today's language. Discuss any sections, which are difficult to translate into a modern day equivalent. Why is this the case? How has the loyalty that current generations have for their political leaders changed? What effect would this have on a modern day Macbeth facing the same dilemma?



Explore the power relationship between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth by placing one member of the group into the middle. Everyone else surrounding them represents Lady Macbeth. All the Lady Macbeths should walk about Macbeth and read her lines 28-82, stopping after each punctuation mark for the next speaker to begin. Throw the biting words and insults at the Macbeth in the centre using whatever action you feel is appropriate. Ask the group to be as imaginative as possible with their delivery of these lines. Try this a few times and then discuss which of Lady Macbeth's insults is the most cutting for Macbeth.

It is always good to remember what else is happening outside of the scene you are working on. At this point Lady Macbeth and Macbeth have both left the banquet they have arranged for all their guests. At any point one of the guests could appear, looking

for their hosts. In groups of three, two actors and a director, get them to think about how you would create, on stage, the real sense of urgency and danger at being over heard in their plot against the King. Then get them to improvise, in pairs, a parallel situation in which two people are discussing something private and could be over heard at any moment. How does this set of given circumstances affect the voice and body in performance?

ACT II SCENE I

SYNOPSIS

Banquo and his son Fleance are keeping watch after the banquet. Macbeth enters the scene (on his way to perform his duty of killing Duncan). Banquo tells Macbeth of the Kings gratitude to him for his hospitality. Banquo also reveals he has dreamt about the weird sisters they met on the heath. Macbeth dismisses this and conceals his true thoughts on the witches' prophesies. Once alone, Macbeth hallucinates, believing he sees a blood-stained dagger before him. Evil imaginings fill his mind as he proceeds to kill the King.

EXPLORATION

This scene looks at one of the most iconic moments from Shakespeare's writing where Macbeth imagines the dagger used to kill Duncan in front of him but before he has committed the crime. This is the first moment that we see an element of madness in Macbeth and is a difficult one for a director and designer to stage. Discuss with the group whether, in their production, they would show a dagger before Macbeth or whether they would leave it as a hallucination? What difference would the decision have on the audiences' perception of Macbeth?



Banquo is presented by Shakespeare as Macbeth's opposite. While Macbeth forges ahead, determined not to be a passive player in his destiny, Banquo is much more content to allow fate to take its course, unaffected by his own actions. Ask the group to imagine they were the director of this scene. They should write down rehearsal notes for the actors playing Banquo and Macbeth, advising them how to perform this scene to ensure the audience is alerted to the contrast between the two friends.



Using the notes from the first exercise get the groups into pairs and then swap about the different rehearsal notes. Each pair should try the suggestions from the set of notes they have been given.

Then in their pairs, ask the group to prepare a short improvised scene between Macbeth and Banquo during their service in the army together. How will they portray the early seeds of Macbeth's ambition and Banquo's more passive attitude towards life?

Try a staging of Macbeth's lines 33-64, using the whole group. Invite some people to act as directors, some to create sound and atmosphere, you may choose to have several Macbeth's for his changing thoughts and then also have some members of the group to play the weird sisters. How can they be used to highlight the spiritual sensation of this moment? How much influence do they have in this moment? After trying different options, discuss how well it worked or did not work to have the witches featured in this scene. What did it add to the moment? What aspects of the supernatural did it remove?

ACT II SCENE II

SYNOPSIS

Lady Macbeth, who has been drinking, awaits the return of Macbeth from Duncan's room where she hopes he has gone through with his task of murdering the King. Despite having drugged his guards and sending Macbeth to fulfill the plan she worries he will not go through with it. Macbeth returns announcing he has killed the king but he has brought the daggers back with him. Lady Macbeth dismisses Macbeth's concerns and hallucinations and vows to return the daggers herself and explains that she will smear the offending blood upon Duncan's guards so that they will be accused of the crime. Lady Macbeth tells Macbeth to remain strong and she prepares their alibi.

EXPLORATION

During this scene the audience learn more about the characters of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. Take a moment to discuss what is revealed about the characters in this scene and how that alters our perception of them? Explore the fact that this scene displays the couple during a stressful and frantic situation. Do you think that they are showing their true colours or are they still able to conceal what they are really like as characters? Find evidence in the words they speak to support either decision.



Lady Macbeth reveals that she would have committed the murder of Duncan except that he resembled her father. Write a short story about Lady Macbeth's childhood.

Get the group to imagine they are either Macbeth or Lady Macbeth and they have to provide an alibi for where they were and what they were doing during the time that Duncan was murdered. Get them to write up their side of the story as to their whereabouts that night.



Shakespeare decided not to show the actual murder of Duncan taking place on the stage. This may have been influenced by his knowledge that the play was to be presented to his own ruling Monarch, King James. In small groups ask them to decide whether or not in their production they would show the murder on the stage and how they would present this to a modern audience. If they decide not to show the murder, get the group to stage the dialogue between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. They should try saying all the lines quickly with no breaks at first and then ask them to explore other techniques for suggesting nervousness on stage between the two characters.

ACT II SCENE III

SYNOPSIS

Macduff arrives at the Macbeth house to meet Duncan and is greeted by the drunken porter who believes he is the keeper of the gates of Hell. Macbeth shows Macduff the way towards Duncan's room while Lennox explains what an awful night they have had. Macduff returns to raise the alarm that King Duncan has been murdered. Lady Macbeth and Banquo enter, woken by the panicked Macduff. Duncan's sons are informed of their father's death and Macbeth reveals he has killed the guards in revenge for Duncan's murder. Lady Macbeth faints and has to be carried out. Malcolm and Donalbain, Duncan's sons, fear for their own safety and flee the country, one to England and the other to Ireland.

EXPLORATION

This is a scene filled with discoveries. It opens however with the only comic relief in the play. Shakespeare has included Macbeth's drunken porter to provide some light relief for the audience after they have just bore witness to Duncan's murder. This is a good moment to explore the use of comedy among tragedy. Can the group think of modern examples from films they may have seen? Why do they think this is a common tactic?



The Porter at Macbeth's gates talks about equivocation, when someone says something that could mean several different things, in other words they are using ambiguity to deceive. Ask the group to find examples of when other characters in the play have used the tactic of equivocation. What result has this had? Can the group think of modern example of equivocation being used, for example among present day politicians or celebrities in the middle of a scandal?

Imagine the group are reporters at the scene of the crime. Just after Malcolm and Donalbain have made their decision to flee, they get to catch them outside the castle. Ask the entire group to think of questions that they would ask Duncan's sons after the event of his death just as they are about to escape.

Then in pairs get the group to discuss whether fleeing the scene of the crime was the most sensible course of action for the two sons. They should make a list for all the reasons they can think of for and against the decision to flee.



In groups of eight, ask everyone to explore the question of "O, by whom?" has Duncan been murdered. It should be remembered that only two of the characters on the stage know the truth. Each group should produce a frozen tableau of each character's expression and reaction to this question from Malcolm. Which characters would look suspicious? Who would look and point the blame at whom? Once each group has prepared their tableau speak the line and ask each group in turn to freeze in the moment. Compare where the suspicion falls in each and whether you can easily identify through their facial and body expression, which character is which.

Get two volunteers to be Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Hot seat both characters regarding anything you find suspicious about the way the characters act during this scene. For example, you may ask Lady Macbeth, if she really fainted?

ACT II SCENE IV

SYNOPSIS

Ross and an Old Man discuss that the events of Duncan's death have been reflected in the natural world around them. There seems to be an unnaturalness to all that is happening. Macduff enters on his way home to Fife. He reveals that Duncan's sons have fled, causing suspicion to fall on them. He also tells that Macbeth is to be crowned the new King of Scotland at Scone, however he will not be attending the ceremony.

EXPLORATION

This scene is sometimes left out of a production. However it allows important consolidation of the key facts so far in the play. The character of the Old Man is often viewed as fulfilling a function similar to a Greek Chorus. This is something the group could research and then discuss if they agree. Does the Old Man comment on the action, present universality and provide the viewpoint of the ordinary people?



Ask the group to write a letter from Macduff to his wife and son who he is travelling home to see. He should explain what has happened and why he will not be attending Macbeth's coronation ceremony.



The conversation between Ross and the Old Man contains tales of many bizarre and unusual occurrences. In pairs the group should improvise an extension to this conversation and invent other unnatural events that could reflect the consequences of the King's murder. Get the group to think about how serious an event this was during Shakespeare's era. What would be the consequences today should one of the political leaders be murdered? What unnatural events may take place?

ACT III SCENE I

SYNOPSIS

Banquo thinks upon the predictions of the weird sisters yet fears that Macbeth has become King of Scotland through less honorable means. Macbeth enters with Lady Macbeth and the newly crowned couple request Banquo's attendance at a banquet that evening and claim that Duncan's sons have been spreading rumours before dismissing his company until dinner. While Macbeth reflects upon prophecies that promise the crown to Banquo's sons, two murderers enter. Macbeth taunts them into agreeing to murder Banquo and Fleance, at a moment when no suspicion should point towards him.

EXPLORATION

This is the first scene in which the audience see Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as King and Queen. As actors, get the group to think how this would change the way they enter the stage. How would you suggest the increased status that the couple now possess?



Although secondary characters, the two murders are interesting to explore further and should not be dismissed. It is interesting to note how bitter and disheartened the two murderers are towards the world at large. Get the group to think about what has made them like this; what “vile blows” have they had to endure? Ask everyone to imagine they are writing a newspaper report to be published in a tabloid paper. The story should feature the life stories of the two murderers; make up their names and what trials they have had to face.

Some hold the view that people who have had troublesome lives often end up falling into criminal activity. Divide the group in two and debate this notion. Can the group think of any modern example to support their argument?



As Macbeth waits for the approach of the murderers, he reflects upon his position and how, despite having secured the crown, Banquo’s descendants could still remove that from him, if the prophesies are to be believed. In pairs ask the one person to read aloud Macbeth’s soliloquy, lines 49-73, while their partner echoes any word to do with Banquo. Then repeat by asking them to echo any word relating to Macbeth himself. What does this reveal about Macbeth’s thoughts at this point in the play?

There are many ways to perform Macbeth’s encounter with the murderers. Explore in groups of four different ways to stage this moment. Is Macbeth nervous when dealing with his new power? Does he greet them seated or pace around the stage? When each group has tried several different options ask them to choose one to present. Discuss the creative choices each group has made and what impact that has on the impression an audience forms of Macbeth.

ACT III SCENE II

SYNOPSIS

Lady Macbeth enters to find her husband alone and brooding on what has been committed to achieve his position. Macbeth demonstrates doubts and fear and envies the peace that Duncan now has through death. While Macbeth hints at his plans to murder Banquo he never fully reveals his new plans to his wife and partner in crime.

EXPLORATION

This scene presents Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, alone together for the first time from the night of Duncan’s murder. Ensure that the group has a chance to update their character sheets on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as this scene presents yet another shift in their personalities. How has the couple’s power struggle altered? Who now holds the greater control?



Ask the group to become agony aunts for Macbeth. They should work in small groups to discuss and list all the concerns and fears the character seems to be experiencing. Then they should craft a letter of advice with how Macbeth should proceed when dealing with these problems.

Explore with the group the similarities between Macbeth's line 40-53 and Lady Macbeth's calling upon the evil spirits in Act 1 Scene 5. It is useful to list the similar imagery used by both characters and then to research what reactions the images would have provoked in Shakespeare's audiences. Compare that to how a modern audience may perceive them.



Get the group into pairs. Ask them to work through the scene together to explore the power struggle between the new King and Queen. While they read through the lines, it might be useful to hold a wooden stick or ruler between the pair. This should be used to demonstrate the tension and the power that each character holds at different moments, for example, when Lady Macbeth is in Control she should be pushing the stick towards Macbeth and vice versa. Are there moments when both characters are pushing at the same time? Who holds the power by the end of the scene?

ACT III SCENE III

SYNOPSIS

The three murderers hired by Macbeth meet and await their victims. They kill Banquo but his son, Fleance, manages to escape.

EXPLORATION

Although this is a very short scene in the play, it is full of action for the audience to enjoy. This scene also emphasises one of the key themes of the play, murder. As we witness the murder of Banquo the audience are provoked to think back on the other murders Macbeth has committed. One of the most chilling aspects of this scene is that the audience witness Macbeth's orders to have a child murdered. Although Fleance escapes the intention was still present and presents yet another facet to Macbeth's character. How does the group feel about Macbeth after this scene? Another interesting point for exploration in this scene is the presence of the third murderer when initially Macbeth only speaks with two. Ask the group to think about why Macbeth may have brought a third murderer in to help out? If they were to stage this scene who would they cast as the third murderer? It is interesting to note that some past productions have had Macbeth himself play the third murderer. How would that change the scene?



During the death of many of his characters, Shakespeare writes long and poetic dying speeches, for example, in *Romeo and Juliet*. However, the deaths of characters in *Macbeth*, are not granted the same luxury to lament their passing and

meditate upon their lives. Ask the group to discuss briefly possible reasons why Shakespeare did not give characters such as Duncan, Macbeth and Banquo long passionate speeches when killed?

Then ask the group to try to write a dying speech for Banquo in this scene. They should be encouraged to write in the Shakespearean style and include all the things Banquo would have wanted to say if he had been given the chance. Would he have voiced his suspicions about Macbeth? What advice would he have given his son?



Split the group into smaller groups of five or six and ask them to imagine they are movement coordinators for a production of Macbeth. They have to choreograph the action in this scene. It is important to remember that all the actors must be kept safe during fast paced scenes like this and to remind them that the scene is meant to take place in the dark. How would they ensure that the audience can see what is happening or if they choose to only let the audience see elements of the scene what parts would they choose?

If you have time try getting the groups to perform this short scene as a radio play. Ask those without lines to perform sound effects to create the scene for an audience listening to the play. Ask those reading the lines to speak them quickly and leave no spaces between speakers, they should almost overlap each other. What effect does this have? Now try it much slower; how does this change the nature of the scene?

ACT III SCENE IV

SYNOPSIS

The Banquet Scene. Macbeth welcomes in his guests and he receives the first murderer's report of Banquo's death and Fleance's escape. The escape disturbs him and renews his fear. Lady Macbeth takes control of the situation asking Macbeth to mingle with his guests. During the banquet the ghost of Banquo appears, unsettling Macbeth once more. While Lady Macbeth attempts to restore calm, the ghost leaves. As Macbeth is gradually regaining composure, the ghostly vision returns and Macbeth spirals into an outburst, demanding the ghost leaves at once. Lady Macbeth, sensing suspicion, asks the guests to retire to their rooms as the King is not well. Once alone, Macbeth vows to return to the witches to be sure of his future fate.

EXPLORATION

The banquet scene is one of the most iconic of Shakespeare's work. It is also a very difficult scene for directors to stage with lots of decisions to be made to ensure an audience can see all the action and that the right atmosphere is created. Get the group to think about how they would stage this scene as directors?

Would they show Banquo's ghost or allow the audience to use their imaginations? There have been occasions during performances when the ghost of Banquo has been so bloody that it has provoked laughter from the audience rather than fear and anticipation. How would the group avoid creating the wrong type of reaction from their audience? Encourage them to think about all the different elements required to make a scene such as this come to life. In small groups get them to discuss collectively their ideas and then nominate someone to plan the lights, costume, sound, staging and the directions of the actors. This is important to demonstrate the level of negotiation and compromise required when working on a collective production in the arts.



This is the last time the audience gets to witness Macbeth and Lady Macbeth together. Create a time line for each character charting their experiences and the power struggle in their relationship.

This scene highlights the notion of what it is to be a good man. Discuss as a group what this means today? What qualities are associated with the idea of a good and noble man? How does Macbeth measure up? Can the group think of modern day examples that Macbeth should be aspiring towards?

During the course of the scene the guests at the banquet see Macbeth in many strange moods, which Lady Macbeth explains as momentary and passing. Get the group to imagine they are one of the guests at the banquet. They should write a diary entry for the character after they have been asked to leave by Lady Macbeth. What reasons would they provide for Macbeth's strange outbursts?



Get the group in pairs and ask them to explore the dialogue between Macbeth and the first murderer. This is a good exploration of Macbeth as a man. The pairs should consider where this conversation should take place on the stage, remembering that all other characters are also on stage at this time. They should then experiment with different ways to speak the lines 12-32. Would Macbeth be angry, nervous or would he be good at pretending to hold a normal conversation? Try different ways and show some examples to the whole group. Then discuss what effect each had on the audience. It is these small decisions that a director makes which can change a whole scene and the perspective of the audience, therefore it is always important to have a clear vision as a director. What do you want your production to say? What story are you trying to tell?

You can continue to explore this idea of the importance of a director's decision through the staging of the guests' reactions to Macbeth during this scene. As a large group, cast a Macbeth and a Lady Macbeth and get the rest of the group to be the guests attending the banquet. They will also become the directors of the scene. Explore lines 84-121, thinking of as many different reactions for the guests as possible to what Macbeth is saying. Encourage the group to really think about facial expression and body language, as the guests must react in silence. How many different reactions would Macbeth provoke: fear, nervousness, amusement, concern, anger? The possibilities are extensive so ask the group to play with the staging of these lines. It is important to remember that while the guests should react clearly and truthfully, they should also not be distracting from the central characters. Try a staging where the guests do dominate the scene, discuss what difference this would make for an audience.

ACT III SCENE V

SYNOPSIS

Hecate, the queen of witchcraft meets with the three weird sisters and reprimands them for daring to speak with Macbeth without consulting her. Hecate asks them to meet her with Macbeth in order that they can tell him his destiny. Hecate plans to use her magic to bring the over- confident Macbeth to ruin.

EXPLORATION

This is another scene which has much to explore and yet is often cut from productions. Ask the group to make a list of all the different options that Hecate gives about Macbeth's character. Do they make any of the options they had previously written down on their character sheet for Macbeth?



Ask the group to design a costume for Hecate. Encourage them to think about what this character represents and what sort of personality they have; could this be reflected in the costume. Remind the group that as with the weird sisters, this role does not have to be gender specific.

During Hecate's speech, the actor playing this part is given clues, as Shakespeare frequently does, to show them how to read the lines. Begin by counting the number of syllables in each line. How does this influence your performance of these lines?



There is some debate surrounding the authorship of this scene, with many believing that Shakespeare did not write it himself. Get the group to try reading Hecate's lines out loud, first line by line, then stopping after each punctuation mark and finally read it in sections, asking the group to stop and pause after each thought. Discuss what they notice about the different readings. Discuss whether or not they think Shakespeare was the author of this scene. What are the reasons for your decision? Does the group think it makes a difference whether Shakespeare wrote it or not? How would they feel if they found out that J.K. Rowling was not the real author of the Harry Potter books? Would they still want to read them?

ACT III SCENE VI

SYNOPSIS

Lennox and an unnamed Lord discuss recent events. Lennox hints that Macbeth is responsible for the murders that have already taken place and expresses his concern that Malcolm, Donalbain and Fleance could be his next victims. The anonymous Lord tells Lennox of Malcolm's escape to England and Macduff's plans to revolt against Macbeth's tyranny with the help of English forces.

EXPLORATION

This scene gives a sense of optimism to the audience that Macbeth's tyrannous rule will finally be overthrown. However, it's important to explore the fact that Lennox is taking a risk, speaking his mind as openly as he does. A good extension exercise is to research other tyrannous leaders: Stalin or Hitler for example, who also ruled through fear. Set the group a research project to find out more about a modern day tyrant and then explore similarities that can be found in the character of Macbeth.



Ask the group to imagine who the unnamed Lord really is? Who or what does he represent? Get the group to think like a reporter and write a list of questions that you would like to ask this mystery Lord. Then get them to swap questions with another member of the group. They should answer the questions remembering that they need to be careful with what information they reveal. Share some of the answers with the whole group. Discuss what factors influenced your questions and answers.



Split the group into smaller groups to work on lines 34-36. These lines describe everything that is missing in Scotland now that it is under the rule of Macbeth. Get each group to identify the different elements and ask them to create five tableaux showing the journey of present Scotland under Macbeth's tyranny and then the hope of what future Scotland will be once he has been overthrown.

ACT IV SCENE I

SYNOPSIS

The Weird Sisters prepare to meet Macbeth again by casting a spell over their cauldron. Their efforts are congratulated by Hecate. When Macbeth arrives he demands to know what the future holds now that his is King. The Weird Sisters show Macbeth three apparitions, when pressed to reveal more, the Weird Sisters present Banquo's descendants as kings before quickly vanishing. Macbeth is angry with the witches' prophesies and is enraged when he hears news that Macduff has fled to England and refuses to return. Macbeth resolves to kill every member of the Macduff family.

EXPLORATION

This scene summarises several of the play's central themes.

- The supernatural
- Children and babies
- Royalty & Succession to the crown
- Equivocation
- Bloodshed

Now is a good point to get the group to work in smaller groups and source quotes relating to these key themes. If each group focuses on one theme then the research can be shared among the wider group. Once they have discussed their given theme and

collected several quotes from different points in the play relating to that theme, ask them as a group to present their findings and understanding of the theme to the rest of the group. The way in which they choose to present their gathered data should be encouraged to be creative in some element. They may choose to present it in performance, through poetry or they could use IT skills to work on a PowerPoint presentation.

Another option to approach this task is to get the groups to think about using their chosen theme as the central pivot of the play. They should then present their ideas for staging a production based on this theme. Their presentations should be supported with quotes from the text. Once each group has presented, invite a group discussion about which was the most convincing and why?



The scene opens with the weird sisters casting a dark spell by creating their recipe of many grotesque ingredients. Ask the group to write their own spell. They could experiment with either using modern ingredients that would be unappealing to today's audience or they could try creating a heavenly recipe with pleasant ingredients. How does this change the scene?



Once the group has prepared their own recipes for the scene they could try performing them. They should think about different ways to cast a spell, trying to avoid clichés and stereotypes.

There are many challenges in the staging of this scene. The entrance of the apparitions is one of those. In small groups of 4 get the group to rehearse a presentation of lines 60-93 where the three apparitions appear to Macbeth. During Shakespearean productions these entrances would have been made through a trap door, however for a modern audience, which is used to the highly advanced graphics in films and video games, the group will have to be much more creative and really exercise their imaginations. An important element to this task, like with Banquo's ghost is to ensure laughter is not provoked from the audience. The group should be encouraged to think about what each of the apparitions represents for Macbeth's future. This can help develop ideas for staging these strange sightings.

ACT IV SCENE II

SYNOPSIS

Lady Macduff is comforted by Ross as she laments her husband's flight to England, believe that it is a sign of madness, fear or a complete lack of love for his family. Macduff's son teases his mother through playful words which provide a moment of light relief before the impending danger. A messenger arrives to warn mother and son to flee, however before they can, the murderers hired by Macbeth enter, looking for Macduff. They proceed to kill his son and pursue Lady Macduff to murder her off stage.

EXPLORATION

Yet again this scene presents Macbeth's murderous hand at work through the hands of others who have been employed to do his dirty work for him. As a group, explore the reasons why someone would take up the service of a tyrant such as Macbeth. What kind of society produces people who are willing to kill innocent victims for the right price?



In this scene we see Macduff's son murdered on stage, however Lady Macduff's death happens off stage when the scene has ended. It is then reported back to the audience. In Greek tragedy it was customary that all killings took place off stage, where the violence could be left to the audiences' imagination. Discuss as a group which tactic you think is most effective for a modern audience. Then ask them to imagine that this scene was re-written in the style of Greek tragedy and both murders occurred off stage. Get the group to individually write the end of the scene but as reported by another character in the play. They should consider how the character who reports the crime may influence the re-telling of the events. Will they show sympathy? Will they protect Macbeth and fabricate the report?



During this scene Lady Macduff suggests that the reasons for her husband's flight are due to fear or a lack of love for his family. The audience is aware that this is not the case however it must have been difficult for Lady Macduff to know that her husband did not wish to return to Scotland. In pairs ask the group to improvise a conversation between Macduff and his wife, when he tells her he is going to England and leaving her and their son in the dangerous situation in Scotland. They should look at lines 2-14 to support Lady Macduff's anger and belief that her husband is a traitor to their family. Present some of these to the rest of the group. How does this relationship compare to the interactions between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth that have been previously explored?

ACT IV SCENE III

SYNOPSIS

Set in the palace of King Edward, England. Macduff has arrived in England and tries to encourage Malcolm to return and defend Scotland against Macbeth's tyranny. Malcolm reveals his suspicions that Macduff may betray him to Macbeth. Malcolm is testing Macduff's sincerity. He reveals that he has English troops at his disposal, however, he warns that his own vices are much worse than Macbeth's. Macduff finds ways to excuse the lust and greed Malcolm claims to be possessed by. Malcolm then goes further to claim that he has no good qualities at all and only desires to bring chaos to the country. At this, Macduff condemns Malcolm and claims he would be an unfit ruler. On hearing this, Malcolm reveals he was only testing Macduff's integrity to Scotland and proceeds to deny all vices he talked about, declaring he is ready to invade Scotland and overthrow Macbeth. Ross arrives to bring news of Scotland's suffering and the rumored rebellion against Macbeth. Although initially telling Macduff his family are all well, Ross goes on to reveal the news about their murder. Macduff cannot be comforted and openly demonstrates his grief. He vows vengeance on Macbeth. Malcolm announces that now is the time to see Macbeth topple from his tyrant's tower.

EXPLORATION

This is the first scene to be set in England. Ask the group to think of simple but effective ways to show their audience that this scene takes place in England, at the palace of King Edward. Think about this from the perspective of the set designer and the director.

This is the longest scene in the play. Therefore a good start point for exploring it further is to ask the group to summarise it into 5 sections. This will ensure they have a clear understanding of what is happening before exploring the key themes and important points.

Once the group has a clear summary of the events, ensuring nothing has been left out, it is interesting to explore ways in which they could present the scene in the briefest way, ensuring that no essential details were left out. They could use tableaux, narration, projections or many other imaginative ideas to speed up this moment in the play.

Due to the length of this scene, many productions do not present it on stage at all. Split the group into two and create a debate on the issue of 'to cut or not to cut Act IV Scene III.'

Each side should be given the chance to prepare and present their argument. As a whole group get them to think about who had the strongest argument? What decision would you make for the group's production of Macbeth?



When the character of Malcolm is testing Macduff's loyalty, he describes himself as having a limitless sexual desire. Macduff excuses this vice in the future Scottish King claiming that it is an unimportant quality in a leader. Put the group into smaller groups of four and ask them to discuss this decision by Macduff. Do they think that this is an important element of a leader? Can they think of contemporary politicians who have been caught up in public scandals of this nature?

When Malcolm reveals he has been testing Macduff, he then proceeds in lines 125-31, to describe the real attributes of his character. Get the group to make a list of these and compare them to the qualities of kingship described in lines 92-4. What elements does Malcolm lack? Get the group to create a character sheet for Malcolm and write down how they feel about his character throughout this scene. Does it change?

To help the group understand the minds of some of the less dominant characters in the play, a letter written from their perspective can open up a much fuller character for them. Ask them to choose to be either Ross writing a diary as he is traveling to England, bringing the bad news to Macduff about his family's murder or Malcolm writing a letter to his brother Donalbain who fled to Ireland, explaining his plans to return to Scotland and overthrow Macbeth.



In lines 57-60, Malcolm lists eight of the evil qualities of Macbeth's nature. Get the group to work in groups of six or eight to create a series of tableaux or short mimes which present Macbeth's nature. Each should show a different element to his character and can include a narrative commentary if needed.

Then in the same groups ask them to explore lines 92-4, where Malcolm lists the qualities of a good king. Present these in a similar way as the evil qualities of Macbeth. Then ask the groups to think about how they could tell the story of Macbeth and his evil nature being overthrown and replaced by a good king, using the mimes and tableaux that they have already created. Could this be used as a vision of the Weird Sisters? Try adding them in as additional characters, for example as the narrators. What effect does this have?

The end of this scene sees Macduff discover that his whole family has been murdered under the order of Macbeth. The character cannot contain his grief. This moment when performed well has the potential to be extremely moving for an audience as Macduff's reaction is very human and easy for an audience to relate to. In order to help an actor find the truth in moments that are this delicate they often use a technique of improvising a scene as themselves. In pairs, ask the group to improvise a scene

where they have to break some very bad news to a good friend. What tactics do you naturally use when breaking bad news to someone?

Now try bringing the characters of Ross and Macduff to life using Shakespeare's words, but remembering the natural tactics used during the improvisation.

It is important to stress that the bad news given in these improvisations should not be based on fact for the purpose of this activity.

ACT V SCENE I

SYNOPSIS

Commonly referred to as the sleepwalking scene, the audience is told how Lady Macbeth has become accustomed to sleepwalking in the night. During her sleep walking she is reported to sleep talk and rub her hands. Lady Macbeth's gentlewoman and the doctor wait to see if Lady Macbeth will perform her routine. As Lady Macbeth enters the scene, asleep but holding a candle, the doctor and the gentlewoman witness her trying to wash blood off her hands and hear her talk about the past murders of Duncan, Lady Macduff and Banquo.

EXPLORATION

This scene has been portrayed in many different ways. Research some images and video clips of a few different actresses performing this scene and show them to the group. Discuss how they differ and what choices have been made by the actress and the director. Do we learn different things from the different portrayals? At this point ask the group to add any new impressions or character traits to their sheet for Lady Macbeth.



During this scene, the gentlewoman refers to Lady Macbeth ritually writing on a piece of paper before carefully sealing it. As an audience we do not find out exactly what she is writing. Ask the group to think about what Lady Macbeth may have been writing in her sleep. Was it a letter to Macbeth? Her confession to the murderers she helped to coordinate? A will? Ask everyone in the group to write their own version of what was on Lady Macbeth's notepaper.



As this is one of the most iconic scenes from Shakespeare, ask the group to work in smaller groups of six to try staging this scene. Encourage one person to take on the role of the director so that they have the chance to negotiate in groups the differing opinions of the actor and director, which is a common scene within rehearsal rooms. Encourage the group to think about non-conventional staging with perhaps echoes of earlier lines "A little water clears us of this deed" used throughout it.

ACT V SCENE II

SYNOPSIS

The English army advance on Dunsinane, led by Malcolm, Macduff and Siward. Macbeth awaits war and struggles with internal conflicts. His soldiers are only obeying him out of fear and four thanes discuss how they will rebel against Macbeth.

EXPLORATION

This scene marks an increase in pace throughout the rest of the play. This is very typical of the Greek Tragedy structure. Explore this additional context with the group and ask them to research other features of Greek Tragic structure. How does this help an audience when watching the play? What effect does the quick pace of scenes in the final act have?



Ask the group to research some political cartoon from newspapers. What features do they have in common? Look at how they use key political figures and play with an aspect of their character or political position. Get the group to imagine they are working for a Scottish Newspaper and have been asked to draw a political cartoon of the Scottish King. Use the discussion of the thanes in this scene for inspiration. Once they have created their cartoons, ask them to think of an appropriate caption to accompany the cartoon.



In this scene there is an underlying sense of hope as the four thanes discuss, Macbeth's difficulties and the approaching help from Malcolm and the English Forces. Divide the group into smaller groups of four and get them to explore different readings of these lines. First ask them to try whispering the lines, only reading up to a punctuation mark and then changing reader. Then ask them to read it again but taking on each of the characters and reading through the scene. Perform a few in front of the whole group and explore what changes can be noted. Which version gives a greater sense of their mounting hope?

ACT V SCENE III & SCENE IV

SYNOPSIS

SCENE III- Macbeth has been receiving reports of desertions from his armed forces, making him recall the witches' predictions. He flies into a violent rage towards a servant who brings news that Malcolm approaches Dunsinane. Macbeth reflects upon the bleak future ahead of him but is determined to fight to the death. Rejecting the help of the doctor to help his wife, Macbeth exits calling for his armour. The doctor has decided to desert the King too.

SCENE IV- Malcolm orders his army to use the branches of the trees as their camouflage when approaching Dunsinane. He confirms that many have deserted from Macbeth's army, however Siward advises against too much optimism.

EXPLORATION

Throughout scene III an audience witnesses Macbeth's mood change very quickly. Ask the group to explore lines 1-66 and make a note of all the points when they can detect a mood change in Macbeth's character. Ask them to then describe what mood he changes to in modern adjectives. Then looking at Scene IV, ask the group to explore if Malcolm's mood changes. What differences can be drawn between the two leaders preparing for battle?



At the opening of this scene Macbeth reveals he has been receiving lots of different reports about the approach of Malcolm's army and that many of his own soldiers have deserted him. Get the group to write one report they think may have been sent to Macbeth in advance of this scene.



Put the group into pairs and as a warm up exercise ask the pairs to use the insults that Macbeth hurls at his servant to shout at each other. This is a quick way to get a group more comfortable with speaking Shakespeare's text out loud. After warming up, ask them to improvise a scene between two of Macbeth's soldiers as they try to decide whether or not they should desert the King and rebel against him or if they should stay and fight. They should explore and think about the risks involved in deserting as they would become traitors to the crown but also they should consider the fate that will await them working under Macbeth's tyranny. Try to encourage them to keep the Shakespearean style in their dialogue to each other.

ACT V SCENE V

SYNOPSIS

Macbeth is prepared for battle. It is only the desertions stop him openly facing Malcolm and the English forces, as he has almost become completely fearless. Seyton bring news of Lady Macbeth's death. As Macbeth contemplates the delicate nature of life a messenger arrives to announce that Birnam Wood is approaching Macbeth's Castle in Dunsinane. Macbeth is reminded of the early prophesies and is determined to die fighting.

EXPLORATION

This scene brings about the conclusion to Lady Macbeth as her death is announced. It is helpful to get the group to consider their feelings towards this character when Seyton announces "The queen, my lord, is dead." They could then try to write an epitaph for Lady Macbeth or the announcement that would appear in the local paper. Highlight the importance of these lines being much shorter than those previous, forcing an actor delivering it to pause. What effect does this have on the scene?



Although at the close of the play, Malcolm suggests that Lady Macbeth has taken her own life, can we really rely on his word? Ask the group to discuss in groups of four how they think Lady Macbeth met her death. They could then create a scene, which shows Lady Macbeth's death and features her own dying speech.



Upon hearing of his wife's death, Macbeth considers how fragile life is. Lines 18-27, present another soliloquy of Macbeth's character, which needs some consideration. In small groups ask them to explore the different ways they may present these lines to a modern audience. They should be encouraged to be as dramatic as possible and incorporate different ways of speaking, tableau, choral work and many other techniques they have discovered during the course of the play. Have each group present these one by one and talk about what effect each group created and what dramatic techniques they used to achieve that.

ACT V SCENE VI & VII

SYNOPSIS

SCENE VI- Malcolm instructs the army to discard their camouflage of branches and issues orders to proceed with battle.

SCENE VII- Macbeth is challenged by Young Siward which results in Macbeth killing him and vowing that no man of woman born can ever harm him. Macduff seeks only to fight with Macbeth and Siward invites Malcolm to finally enter Macbeth's surrendered castle.

EXPLORATION

These scenes explore nature of battle and civil war. Discuss with the group the different relationships that are involved in the warfare of these two scenes, friendships, fathers and sons etc.



Sometimes during civil wars, families are divided against each other, unlike Siward and young Siward. In small groups ask them to create a new Scots family whose loyalties are divided by Macbeth's rule over Scotland. Father against son or may be a brother against a bother. Create a new scene that is happening during the battle where the two family members come face to face on the battlefield. How does the scene play out?



During this scene Macduff makes his war cry for Macbeth to come out and fight against him. It is suggested that Macduff speaks the lines 15-24 on an empty stage, however most directors try to create a sense of the battle raging around him, due to time constraints and the hope to keep the audience engaged. In small groups ask that they take small sections of the lines and devise actions or sounds that would fit best. They may want to think about bringing other characters on to the stage at some points to provide a visible link to Macduff's words. Show each newly created scene in front of the whole group. Look at what worked well and what dramatic techniques they used to achieve this.

ACT V SCENE VIII

SYNOPSIS

Here Macbeth and Macduff finally meet in battle. Macduff reveals that he is not of woman born but was in fact born through Cesarean section. Macbeth is killed by Macduff's sword and Siward discovers his son has been killed also.

EXPLORATION

During this scene Macbeth makes the decision that he would rather die fighting than in captivity under Malcolm's rule. Ask the group to think about what their final impressions of Macbeth are at this point? How does his decision make you feel about his character? Does choosing death make him appear more noble or stupid? Then get the group to consider what makes death seem preferable to captivity?



Get the group to individually look at the final battle in this scene. Ask them to imagine they are a reporter and write up a report of the battle for the local press. Consider what sort of language is most suitable for a war report, often dealing with death and human life.

Alternatively get the group to imagine that the three Weird Sisters are present during this scene. Write a new version of the scene, which includes their reaction to the events as they unfold.



For large battle scene's professional productions will always bring in a trained fight choreographer to ensure no injuries are caused while also making the fighting believable. Fight choreographers always begin by going through the fight in sections and in slow motion. In groups of four get them to explore the staging of this scene but in slow motion. It might be helpful to begin with tableau then mime and finally slow motion with the text. This is a good opportunity to explore the work of stage fighting and some of the tricks and tactics they use.

ACT V SCENE IX

SYNOPSIS

Siward receives news of his son's death and hopes that he died with honor. Macduff arrives and presents Macbeth's severed head. He hails Malcolm as the new king of Scotland. Malcolm thanks the nobles for their services and makes them all Earls.

EXPLORATION

The final scene of the play and order seems to have been restored. Discuss as a group how you feel at this moment. As an audience would you be pleased that Macbeth is dead and Malcolm has taken the throne? Think if there are any questions that have not been answered or concluded? If you were to re-write the final scene, what would you include or not include?



One of the challenging elements of this final scene is the reveal of Macbeth's severed head. It has been reported that in several productions, audiences have laughed at this moment rather than being appalled or disgusted. Ask the group to imagine they are the props designer for a new production. Decide how you will produce Macbeth's head and draw up your proposed plans for the director.

An extension to this exercise would be to then ask the group to individually present their proposals to a panel of directors, similar to dragon's den to encourage presenting skills and for them to consider the practicality of their prop design.



In groups of five improvise an additional scene (ACT V SCENE X), which shows Malcolm heading to Scone for his coronation. On the way he meets the three Weird Sisters. What happens next?

LANGUAGE

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

The language of Shakespeare is one of the major features of his work. However, it can also be the main barriers to people accessing fully his work: his strange blend of words that are both familiar and completely incomprehensible at the same time. This is tricky; as so many of the words used by Shakespeare are easily recognisable and often the same as we use today, we automatically expect to understand, however once we delve into the text and the language we stumble and can get frustrated as our comprehension is clouded.

When starting to explore the language of Shakespeare, it is helpful to have some understanding of his main techniques and some tools to help decode some of Shakespeare's meaning.

Firstly it's important to remember that Shakespeare wrote his plays to be performed rather than read and so when possible try to speak the language out loud. This is also important in order to fully understand Shakespeare's preferred speech pattern of Iambic Pentameter. Iambic is two syllables with the stress placed on the second one which mean it reads 'de-DUM' or sometimes it can be referred to as short-long. Five 'de-DUMs' or feet, make up a pentameter (penta means 5 in Greek). Many Elizabethan playwrights adopted this form of verse for their characters as it is the closest to the normal speech rhythms of English speakers. Despite Shakespeare's fondness of this blank verse ('blank' because it doesn't have a rhyme) in his plays, he was not its creator. It was Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey who seems to be the originator of both Blank Verse and the English sonnet during the 1540's.

Although Shakespeare was fond of using Blank verse in his plays' he also enjoyed unsettling the predicted rhythm it generated. It's important to note that when Shakespeare upsets the usual Iambic Pentameter it is always for a reason, to create an effect or draw attention to the words or action it is describing. This is a signal that Shakespeare gives us to pay attention or delve a little further to find even more meaning from his language.

Along with the Iambic Pentameter, Shakespeare also wrote in prose, over a quarter of his text has been written in prose. This contrasted with the Blank Verse and was yet another way for Shakespeare to express an additional meaning or highlight his language through the rhythm in which he expresses it. It is sometimes reported that Shakespeare reserved the prose style for his lower status characters, and often gave those of higher social status the lines in Blank verse. While this was sometimes the case, be cautious about using this as a definitive rule in Shakespeare's language. Shakespeare's language is playful and although he uses patterns, he will often break them to surprise his audience or draw their attention to something important in his text.

Another key feature of Shakespeare's language was his words. It has been estimated that he had a vocabulary of approximately 30,000 words (most people use a vocabulary of 6,000). Shakespeare is also credited with inventing many of the words we still use today. One way in which he did this was by using a hyphen, for example, new-born, bare-faced, cut-throat, earth-bound, lily-livered. Words are important in Shakespeare's plays as the Elizabethan audiences would have depended on them to visualise and understand the dramatic worlds being created for them on stage.

In Macbeth there are several words that are repeated throughout the play text, creating meaning and atmosphere for the audience. Some of the key words are BLOOD, FEAR, SLEEP, TIME, NIGHT, DONE, MAN. This is often a helpful way to highlight Shakespeare's key concerns and themes in a play.

When exploring the language of Shakespeare it is helpful to think as a detective. Shakespeare has left lots of clues in his language and it's our turn to decipher them. This process can be greatly helped by reading the language aloud and working together as a group to piece together the many layers of meaning waiting to be discovered.

THE WITCHES' PROPHEESIES

The characters of the witches are the perfect example of Shakespeare breaking away from his usual language structure for dramatic effect. The Weird sisters are suggested to be otherworldly and not of the earth and therefore it follows that they should not speak as those of the earth (all the other characters) do.

The witches speak in SHORT LINES with FOUR STRONG BEATS. This type of verse is called TROCHAIC TETRAMETER.

WHEN shall WE three MEET aGAIN

DUM-de DUM- de DUM-de-DUM

In THUNder LIGHTning OR in RAIN

de-DUM-de-DUM-de-DUM-de-DUM

This is the same rhythm that Shakespeare uses for the fairies in *A Midsummer night's Dream* who are also not of this world. These opening lines with their repeated four-beats convey a hypnotic sound that drums in our ears. This effect is especially noticeable later in the play when the witches concoct their spells.



THEMES

KEY THEMES IN *MACBETH*

Order vs. Chaos

Explores the struggle to maintain or destroy both social and natural bonds.

Macbeth reveals the destruction of morality and mutual trust among family and friends.

Appearance vs. Reality

The line is blurred throughout the play. Hypocrisy and deceit of several characters mean they cannot be trusted.

A friendly exterior does not account for the evil internal thoughts.

Ambition

Ruthlessly seeking power, Macbeth is also urged on by his wife.

Macbeth's own tragic flaws are also the cause of his downfall.

It is not just the Macbeth's that demonstrate ambition. Banquo is equally ambitious however does not act on it in the same way.

Violence and Tyranny

The play is filled with many battles on and off the battlefield.

Warfare, destruction, murder and oppression recur throughout the play.

Guilt and Conscience

Macbeth is fully aware that what he is doing is wrong. However he still proceeds with it and suffers both the physical and mental consequences as a result.

Masculinity

The play explores the violent, cut-throat nature of a society dominated by a hierarchical masculine society which breeds bloody stereotypes of what it means to be a man.

The play demonstrates that Macbeth will only be a man if he fulfills his promise to murder Duncan, yet it also explores a different side of masculinity, when Macduff weeps at the news of his family's murder.

Witchcraft and the Supernatural

The three weird sisters possessed the same powers which would have been expected from witches. They have the ability to predict the future, affect the weather, cast spells, and raise evil spirits.

The witches know what is going to unfold and let it all happen. This would have been very uncomfortable for Elizabethan audiences who would only have heard of witches yet never have seen any pictures of them as this was banned.

PERFORMING IN *MACBETH*

INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL CONDRON - BANQUO IN THE LYRIC THEATRE PRODUCTION OF *MACBETH*.

During your training did you work a lot with Shakespeare?

No I didn't. I always hated the thought of it as it can be quite intimidating. At school we didn't look at Shakespeare properly. Being taught Shakespeare when you're not interested in it is very difficult. When you're an actor it opens up the whole process. At school I shied away from it, I went to university to do Theatre Studies in Coleraine and in that we had to do parts of Shakespeare but I feel some people need spoon feed with Shakespeare and that is not always possible so I generally only had bad experiences with it. It kind of spirals out of control as you just don't want to go anywhere near it, I didn't want to even audition for it. This isn't everybody's experience, this is only my personal finding of it.

So what was your first professional experience of working on a Shakespeare production?

I got a phone call from the Lyric Theatre, Belfast and they asked if I would come in and audition for *Much Ado About Nothing*. It was an all-male cast. That was a real turning point for me. I auditioned for it, but still felt those same fears, but obviously as an actor you audition for whatever is coming up. I read in the audition with the director and in that one audition the director told me this is how I want you to read it, pause here, read through to the end of the line here etc.

This director had worked with Peter Brook and took inspiration from him. After this audition I felt for the first time I'd really enjoyed working with the language and that I could really get a handle on it. I ended up being cast in the production as Benedict and Hero and the director's process during rehearsal really opened it up for me and I started to feel this is just the best thing. That's how I got into Shakespeare and got the confidence to do it because it's definitely not easy but once the fear is gone then you just want to do it as much as possible.

How did you find playing a female character in Shakespeare?

I loved playing Hero. Playing a woman in an all-male cast again opens the whole thing up a million times more. I just loved playing Hero, it's one of my favourite things I've ever done. I'm not sure it's written for women but I found playing a female character just opened up everything in a more three dimensional way for me.

Most recently you were Banquo in the Lyric Theatre's production of *Macbeth*. How did you approach that character?

I suppose, the first thing I did was get an Arden copy of the script which just opens the script up. I think it's important to remember it's ok to use these resources, you're an actor and you have to do your research. Buy student guides and do whatever

you need to do to make the process as easy for you as possible by ensuring you have a full understanding of your character but also of everyone else and what's happening. You have to do your research otherwise it will spiral out of control and you don't know what's happening, so the first thing I did was went out and bought an Arden.

I had about 4 months to prepare for this part but I had decided quite early who I think Banquo is. Through my own interpretation of my research and thinking about his relationship with all the other characters I had decided how I wanted to play Banquo and I see him as quite a dark character and I think he is as ambitious as Macbeth, absolutely as ambitious. The only difference between the two of them is that Banquo does not act upon it. For whatever reasons Macbeth acts upon this ambition, this prophecy.

Why do you feel Banquo didn't act upon it?

Banquo's given the prophecy from the witches and he's happy to see what happens. I don't think that it's because he's cowardly about it, but he's happy to just let things tick along and see how they unfold. He has a monologue in which he discusses that all of what the witches foretold is coming true and therefore why should he doubt that what they promised him and his sons will not come true also?

Where were there any difficulties during the rehearsal process of *Macbeth*?

They aren't really difficulties because they are part of the process. All rehearsal processes have challenges but that's how a production develops. One challenge I found was when an actor and director have different views on a role or character.

I brought all my own ideas and thoughts about my character of Banquo to the table in the rehearsal room and a few days later I had a meeting with the director who asked why I saw him as an ambitious and such a dark character. I explained that we're all ambitious, we all have goals and desires and I see that in Banquo but I also see that he doesn't act upon anything. He has suspicions about Macbeth and yet he doesn't act upon that and I find that quite dark. For the director, Banquo's character was the crutch for all other characters in the play and for the audience. With everything that was happening between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, the audience needed a crutch, a character who they can identify with and support and that's the character of Banquo. That's not exactly what I had brought to the table after all my groundwork but ultimately during the process we had a difference of opinion. As an actor you have to be malleable and have these discussions in order to fully explore the character. I think that in the end all these differences coloured the performance and gave it a texture and another layer to the character which I probably wouldn't have brought otherwise.

I think many people embarking on a performance career will have a slight illusion that an actor and director are always working from the same vision. What advice would you give on this?

I think it's important to have disagreements and discussions because we will all have our own opinions on things and on the way a character should be played but it's important to hear other perspectives too which challenge you and help to mix things up. As an actor you have to remember that ultimately the production will be based on the director's vision and that if you're going to be that precious over your ideas then you should move into directing instead. Remembering this helps me to be less precious over

my ideas and instead helps me to enjoy the rehearsal process which is all about trying different things and putting collective ideas into practice. That's why we have rehearsals, to try everything, throw away all the rubbish and keep the good stuff.

Macbeth is still one of Shakespeare's most popular tragedies to perform. Why do you think it's still relevant to today's audiences?

It's a play about ambition. Everybody is ambitious. The play shows how ambition works and how things can spiral out of control and friendships can be destroyed and you can see that all those things are universal and still happen today. I recently saw a production in New York called Bull. It's the story of ambition in the workplace where there are four people but only three jobs available. It highlights that even today what people will do to get ahead of other people. It happens between friends, in the workplace, in families, in politics and even in the arts world. Ultimately it's about what people have to lose as well as what they could have. Macbeth is also just a really brilliant story, it's the equivalent of a modern day soap opera.

Did you always know you wanted to be an actor?

Yes, though I love flying too, so it was either an actor or a pilot, but I couldn't afford to be a pilot. I did drama in school and then I just stayed with it. I didn't go to drama school but did a theatre studies degree in Coleraine. I didn't love the course but it helped me to get my first steps towards where I wanted to be. After graduating I worked in a shoe shop for three years and didn't really audition much. At that point it's very easy to just slip out of (*the arts*) and get into a whole different world, and then it all can just crumble away. Luckily I just had a couple of friends from university who years after came back and asked if I wanted to audition for something. I auditioned for one thing, didn't get it, but got down to the final two. The director then phoned me about four years later and asked me to come down and audition for something new. I went down and I got my first paid acting job.

Do you have any advice for aspiring actors?

My advice is once you can get that first show where you can invite people to come down and see you in it, a momentum is created, the ball starts rolling. One of my big regrets is I lost three years in a shoe job and it's so easy to get side-tracked into other things. You need to keep your foot in the door and stay interested and go to watch shows regularly. If you can work within the industry, even if it's not on stage, that's what will keep your passion. You need to be proactive. You have to believe in your own chances to get the job but also have to put the groundwork in. Don't ever go unprepared for audition. Read the play, practise and be the best you can in that room because that's your job as an actor.