

RENAISSANCE: 1485-1660

Tragedy of Macbeth, by William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare

- A brief bio

The...Reel Background



William Shakespeare

- April 23, 1564 (in Stratford-upon-Avon) – April 23, 1616
- Church records from Holy Trinity Church indicate that he was baptized there on April 26, 1564 → no actual record of birth
- Married Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582. William was 18 at the time, and Anne was 26—and pregnant.
 - first daughter, Susanna, was born on May 26, 1583.
 - twins, Hamnet and Judith, born February 2, 1585. Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11.
- For the seven years following the birth of his twins, William Shakespeare disappears from all records, finally turning up again in London some time in 1592

Renaissance History

- **Dates:** 1485 – 1660 (from end of the War of the Roses until restoration of the monarchy after Cromwell; **LANGUAGE:** Early modern English)
- **Renaissance:** “rebirth” - focus on Greek philosophy, art, and architecture; seen as the bridge between Middle Ages and modern society
- Renaissance Man – inspired by man of Classical Greece: man who cultivated his innate talents to the fullest (focus on the physical, mental, intellectual)
- **Rulers: Two Houses during Shakespeare: Tudor and Stuart**

1) House of Tudor

- Henry VII (War of the Roses declared Henry VII as rightful king of England)
- Henry VIII (infamous for 6 wives)
- Edward VI (sickly – brief reign; from age 9 - 16)
- Lady Jane Grey (The 9 Day Queen)
- Mary Tudor (“Bloody” Mary)
- Elizabeth I

2) House of Stuart

- James I
- Charles I
- Oliver Cromwell → The Commonwealth

Acting troupe: under Queen Elizabeth, Lord Chamberlain’s Men; under James I, the King’s Men

Transition: Tudor to Stuart

TUDOR: Elizabeth: the “Virgin Queen” – no heir

- As she was a Protestant, the Catholics feared repercussions; however, she served as a buffer b/w the Catholics and the Protestants (except for that one little Catholic coup)
- Catholics viewed Elizabeth as illegitimate (divorces not recognized by the church); plotted to place Mary, Queen of Scots, a distant relative to Henry VIII, on the throne. Mary was placed under house arrest. When the danger became too great, Elizabeth had her assassinated.
- On her deathbed, Elizabeth wanted to ease her way into Heaven, so she chose Mary’s son James to become the next King of England.
- The appointment of James I was a good political move, unifying England and Scotland under one King.

Shakespeare's English

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMkuUADWW2A>

Pre-Shakespearean Actors

Before Shakespeare's time, troupes of actors traveled the countryside, to perform ▼



in parks
halls
courts
courtyards

and in other
open spaces they
could find.

Theaters:

In 1576, the first playhouse, called The Theater, was built outside London's city walls. Soon other famous London theaters followed. i.e.



Greek Theater

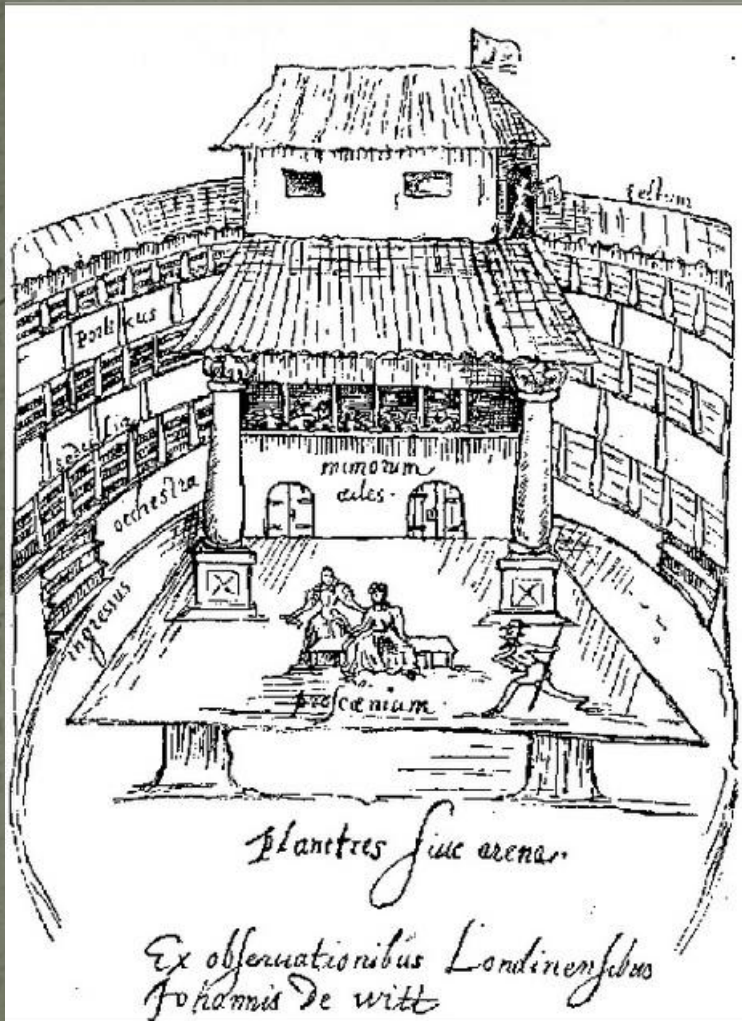


The Globe

- the Rose
- the Fortune
- the Red Bull
- the Swan

• **The Globe Theater:** where Shakespeare's acting troupe performed; circular design modeled after the outdoor Greek theaters, which were designed in a semicircle around the stage

The Globe Theater

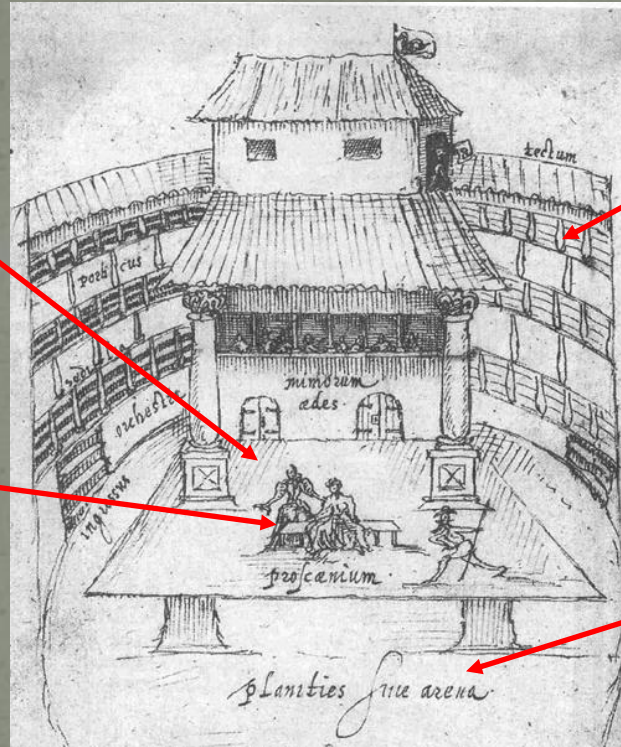


- Rebuilt 1598 on London's Bankside district
- Burned down in 1613, cannon shot during performance of Henry VIII

THE GLOBE

main stage

Actors:
All men



covered seats

cheap standing
room



By William Shakespeare



*Be careful
what you wish for...*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rFtCYESosDw>

The Tragedy of Macbeth: Introduction

What would you do if you encountered three strange women who predicted your future?

▼
Suppose the women predicted that you would become a powerful ruler someday.

Would you want to wait to see if this came true?

Or would you want to *make* it come true? ...



The Tragedy of Macbeth: Weird Sisters

Weird Sisters: similar to Germanic *wyrd*, meaning predestination and the three fates of Greek mythology



Macbeth: a tribute to King James I

- Shakespeare wrote Macbeth in 1606, during King James' reign.
- King James was a devout advocate of the "Divine Right of Kings."
- The setting is Scotland, King James' homeland.
- Banquo was an ancestor of James and is shown in the play to be a virtuous person.
- James believed himself to be an expert on witchcraft.
- James had an interest in faith healing.
- The assassination plot would have fascinated James.

The Gunpowder Plot: Catholic plot to assassinate James I. They were excited to have a Catholic king and became enraged when he did not reinstate Catholicism as the state religion. The Gunpowder Plot failed. Guy Fawkes, who was to guard the gunpowder under the House of Lords, where James was expected to be, was caught and tortured until he broke. He committed suicide prior to his execution.

Guy Fawkes became synonymous with the Gunpower Plot => Guy Fawkes Day

Macbeth: an appeal to Elizabethan interests

- *Macbeth* demonstrates the Elizabethan belief that the country is stable only if the King is good and virtuous.
- Elizabethans believed that evil occurs in darkness, which is a recurring theme in Macbeth.
- Shakespeare included blood and murder, which the Elizabethans expected to see in a play (not much different from today)
- The play was considered a thriller – and they connected the threat to an anointed King and the perceived evil behind the threat –to the Gunpowder plot of 1605.

History & *Macbeth*

Primary Source:

Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, & Ireland*

Before the Curtain Opens

When the play begins, there are two wars in progress:

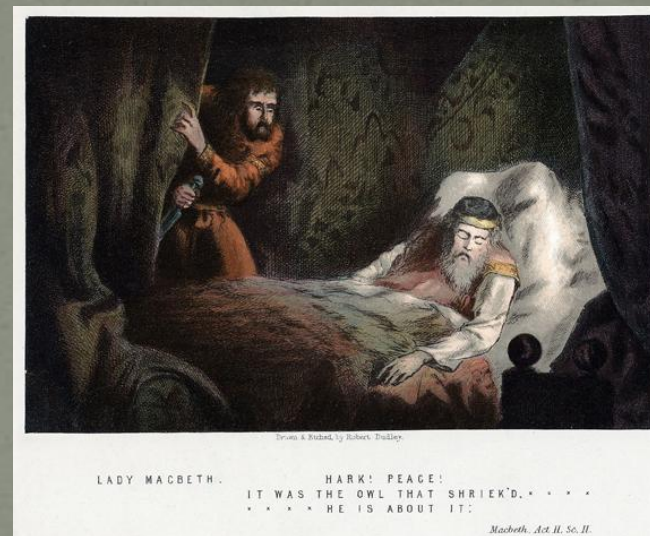
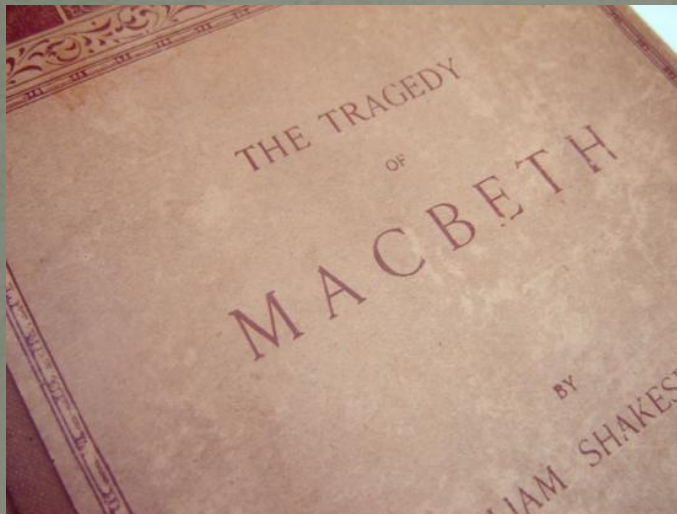
1. **Civil War** - King Duncan vs. Macdonwald's rebels
2. **National War** - Scotland, led by King Duncan, against invading Norway, led by King Sweno

Setting

- King Duncan is the King of Scotland.
- Edward the Confessor is the King of England.
- The time period is the eleventh century (1000-1099).
- Shakespeare used poetic license to bend some of the historical information.

The Tragedy of Macbeth: Background

In the tragedy *Macbeth*, Shakespeare explores the damaging nature of overwhelming ambition and greed. ▼



Major Themes ...



*That which is
wrought by negative
means becomes our
destroyer.*

The Nature of Power

Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.


LORD ACTON

AZ QUOTES



A guilty conscience impedes happiness.



A painting depicting a man in armor sitting at a wooden table. On the table is a lit candle in a silver holder and a small bowl of food. The man is looking down at something on the table. The background is a simple, textured wall. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

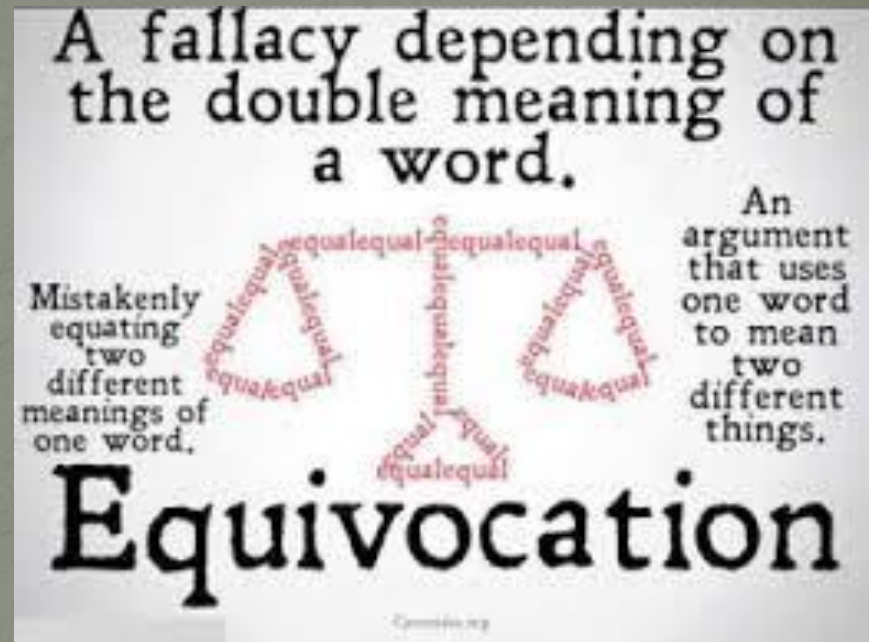
"It will have
blood, they say:
blood will have
blood."

Fate v. Free Will



What has a greater impact on our lives: fate or free will?

Appearance v. Reality



What is real and what is merely the appearance of reality?

Motifs in Macbeth

- Clothing
- Blood
- Masculinity
- Light/Dark
- Natural World
- Fair & Foul

MACBETH MOTIFS

CLOTHING

"Those he commands
move only in command,
Nothing in love. Now does
he feel his title
Hang loose about him,
As a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief."

Angus accuses Macbeth of stealing the king's power, and parading around with the king's title, which does not quite "fit" him at all. "The robe is a metaphor for the King's supremacy."



BLOOD

Blood symbolizes the horrible guilt Macbeth feels for the murder of Duncan. He feels so guilty that he believes



"With all great Neptune's
ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No;
this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas

Masculinity

"What beast was 't, then,
That made you break this
enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you
were a man;
And to be more than what you
were, you would
Be so much more the man."
(I.7.48-51)



Scotland is immersed in darkness as soon as Duncan is murdered, revealing the turmoil that has engulfed the land. Darkness symbolizes evil and is associated with death.

"There's husbandry in
heaven; Their candles
are all out."
(II.2.4-5)

Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband into killing Duncan by questioning his manhood and his love for her. Macbeth's crafty wife forces him to murder the King.



Macbeth