

Act 1 Scene 1
A desolate place

FIRST WITCH When shall we three meet again?
 In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
 SECOND WITCH When the hurly-burly's done,
 When the battle's lost, and won.
 THIRD WITCH That will be ere the set of sun. 5
 FIRST WITCH Where the place?
 SECOND WITCH Upon the heath.
 THIRD WITCH There to meet with Macbeth.
 FIRST WITCH I come, Graymalkin.
 SECOND WITCH Paddock calls. 10
 THIRD WITCH Anon.
 ALL Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
 Hover through the fog and filthy air.

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 2

King Duncan's camp near Forres

DUNCAN What bloody man is that? He can report,
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
The newest state.

MALCOLM This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend;



The wounded Captain reports that although the rebel Macdonald had strong forces, Macbeth personally killed him. Facing an assault by fresh Norwegian troops, Macbeth and Banquo fought on undaunted.

Language in the play

The Captain's report (by yourself)

The Captain's words are carefully chosen to capture the battle and paint a picture for his onstage audience (Duncan and the noblemen), as well as for the audience in the theatre.

Read lines 16–23 aloud. Identify four visual images that help the audience picture key moments in the battle. For example, you might want to look for images that depict Macbeth in the fray ('his brandished steel, / Which smoked with bloody execution') or when he meets his enemy ('And fixed his head upon our battlements'). When you have selected your four visual images, draw them or write a short paragraph for each one describing the impact it has.

Write about it

First impressions (by yourself, then in pairs)

- a** Imagine you fought in the battle that the Captain describes. Using details from the script opposite, write a diary entry at the end of the day describing your impression of Macbeth. How would you turn some of the visual images into a straightforward eye-witness account?
- b** Swap your piece of writing with a classmate. Read each other's entries and then talk together about the difference Shakespeare's language makes in evoking the battle. How do the visual images created by the Captain's words have a different impact from the narrative details in your own account of the battle? (For example, look at descriptions such as 'two spent swimmers that do cling together' or 'cannons over-charged with double cracks'.)

1 The wounded Captain writes home

Imagine you are the wounded Captain. You have had your wounds dressed and now you write home to tell your family what has happened. Base your letter on lines 7–42.

broil battle

choke their art when two swimmers try to cling to each other; they stop each other from swimming and both drown

for to that to that end

kerns lightly armed soldiers who often used a sword or bow and arrows

galloglasses heavily armed soldiers often carrying a heavy battle axe

Fortune fickle luck

Valour's minion

bravery's favourite

carved out his passage

sliced his way

unseamed him ripped him open

nave to th'chaps navel to the jaws

'gins his reflection begins to fade

direful dreadful, terrible

Mark pay attention

skipping leaping in fright

trust their heels run away

surveying vantage

seeing an opportunity

furbished polished, cleaned

say sooth speak the truth

cracks cannon shots

doubly redoubled eightfold blows

reeking streaming with blood

memorise another Golgotha

re-enact a slaughter like Christ's crucifixion



	Say to the king the knowledge of the broil As thou didst leave it.	
CAPTAIN	Doubtful it stood, As two spent swimmers that do cling together And choke their art. The merciless Macdonald – Worthy to be a rebel, for to that The multiplying villainies of nature Do swarm upon him – from the Western Isles Of kerns and galloglasses is supplied, And Fortune on his damnèd quarrel smiling, Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak, For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name – Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel, Which smoked with bloody execution, Like Valour's minion carved out his passage Till he faced the slave, Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him, Till he unseamed him from the nave to th'chaps And fixed his head upon our battlements.	10 15 20
DUNCAN	O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman.	
CAPTAIN	As whence the sun 'gins his reflection, Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders, So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come, Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark, No sooner justice had, with valour armed, Compelled these skipping kerns to trust their heels, But the Norwegian lord, surveying vantage, With furbished arms and new supplies of men Began a fresh assault.	25 30
DUNCAN	Dismayed not this our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?	
CAPTAIN	Yes, as sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion. If I say sooth, I must report they were As cannons over-charged with double cracks; So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe. Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds Or memorise another Golgotha, I cannot tell. But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.	35 40



Ross tells that Macbeth has triumphed, capturing Cawdor and obtaining ransom and a favourable peace treaty from the King of Norway. Duncan sentences Cawdor to death and confers his title on Macbeth.

1 What is Macbeth like? (in small groups)

In your groups, talk about and then draw up a list of the qualities you think Macbeth possesses. Include some quotations from the play so far. Present a tableau (a 'human sculpture', like a still photograph) that shows Macbeth as he has been described up to this point in the play. Your tableau might represent a moment in the battle or it could be a more symbolic depiction of Macbeth's qualities.

Language in the play

What is Duncan like? (in pairs)

Duncan's language is formal and his vocabulary ('honour', 'worthy', 'noble') associates him with qualities that are both admirable and kingly. With a partner, discuss how you would advise an actor playing Duncan to speak his lines in this scene. How would they contrast with the speeches made by the other characters? After the discussion, read those lines out loud in the style you have decided on.

▼ Macbeth's world is brutal and violent. How do scenes like the one pictured here create a specific ideal of masculinity?



smack taste, savour

Thane head of a clan in Scotland
looks is visible

flout mock, jeer

Bellona Roman goddess of war
bridegroom Macbeth, who has become married to the cause of war

lapped in proof clad in armour
self-comparisons similar actions

Point against point
sword to sword

Curbing restraining, constraining

lavish unrestrained or impetuous

composition a peace treaty

deign permit

Saint Colm's Inch Isle of Inchcolm
(see map, p. 60)

dollars English word for the German thaler; a large silver coin

bosom interest
heartfelt concerns

present immediate

former title Thane of Cawdor



The Witches await Macbeth. They plot to torment a sea captain whose wife has insulted them.
A drum signals the approach of Macbeth.

1 Historical witches (in pairs)

- The First Witch is angry with a sailor's wife who would not give her some chestnuts. The wife's response gives us some insights into the way witches were viewed in Shakespeare's day. With a partner, discuss what this passage tells us about the Witches and their supposed powers over both people and nature.
- Look at the images below of witches as they have been represented historically, and identify the witch-like qualities depicted there. Then read the script opposite and add to your list.
- How do the qualities on your list differ from depictions of witches and other supernatural characters in popular movies and books today? Describe these differences in a letter to a younger student interested in contemporary representations of the supernatural.



Language in the play

Metaphor for life (in pairs)

The image of a ship tossed by the winds and the waves, struggling to make it to a safe harbour, has often been used as a **metaphor** for life. Life is seen as a voyage during which we face difficulties, experience adventures and make discoveries. Discuss the impact the Witches have on the 'voyage' of the sailor in the script opposite. What does this metaphor reveal about the Witches' plans to meet with Macbeth?

quoth said

Aroint thee clear off

rump-fed well-fed, selfish, indulgent

runnion general term of abuse, especially for a woman

Aleppo trading city in northern Syria, which was part of the Turkish Empire

Tiger in 1606 an English ship called the *Tiger* finally arrived home after a disastrous voyage lasting 567 days (81 weeks)

sieve sailing in sieves was thought to be a common practice among witches

wind witches were imagined to control the wind

very ports they blow

winds prevent ships from entering every port

quarters geographical directions

card compass

penthouse lid eyelid

forbid cursed

sennights weeks (one sennight is seven days)

nine times nine 9 weeks x 9 weeks = 81 weeks

peak, and pine waste away

bark small ship

pilot guide who steers ships to harbour

Act 1 Scene 3
A heath

Thunder. Enter the three WITCHES

FIRST WITCH Where hast thou been, sister?

SECOND WITCH Killing swine.

THIRD WITCH Sister, where thou?

FIRST WITCH A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap
And munched, and munched, and munched. 'Give me', quoth I.
'Aroint thee, witch', the rump-fed runnion cries.
Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'th'Tiger:
But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
And like a rat without a tail,
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

SECOND WITCH I'll give thee a wind. 10

FIRST WITCH Thou'rt kind.

THIRD WITCH And I another.

FIRST WITCH I myself have all the other,
 And the very ports they blow,
 All the quarters that they know
 I'th'shipman's card.
 I'll drain him dry as hay:
 Sleep shall neither night nor day
 Hang upon his penthouse lid;
 He shall live a man forbid.
 Weary sennights nine times nine,
 Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.
 Though his bark cannot be lost,
 Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.
 Look what I have.

SECOND WITCH Show me, show me. 25

FIRST WITCH Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wrecked as homeward he did come.

Drum within

THIRD WITCH A drum, a drum;
Macbeth doth come.



The Witches chant a spell to prepare for their meeting with Macbeth. They amaze him with predictions that he will be Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland. Banquo demands to know his own future.

Stagecraft

A charmed space (in small groups)

The Witches wind up a charm immediately before Macbeth and Banquo enter the scene. Read lines 30–5 with your group.

- a** The rhythmic, chant-like language of the Witches gives clues about their movements on stage, such as what they are doing when creating the charm, when they speed up and when they stop. In your groups, talk about how you would stage this part of the scene so that you can show Macbeth and Banquo walking into this 'charmed' space.
- b** Prepare a dramatised reading of the whole passage opposite. Look at Banquo's speech in lines 37–45 for more clues about what is happening on stage.

▼ 'Speak if you can', Macbeth demands. Speak the Witches' predictions in lines 46–8 as you think they would deliver them.

weird sisters in Anglo-Saxon mythology, 'Wyrd' (Fate) was a goddess who controlled destiny

Posters speedy travellers

Thrice to thine ... to mine three times in your direction and in mine (the Witches perform a dance or use gestures that bind each individual to the group)

nine an action is repeated three times for each Witch

charm spell

wound up placed in readiness

foul and fair the weather is bad, but the outcome of the battle is good

Forres see map, p. 60

aught anything

choppy chapped and cracked by the weather

Glamis (pronounced 'Glahms')

start flinch or make a nervous gesture

fantastical imaginary

present grace immediate favour

noble having new titles of nobility

rapt spellbound, entranced

seeds of time future





The Witches prophesy that Banquo's descendants will be kings, but he himself will not. Refusing to answer Macbeth's questions, the Witches vanish. Ross brings news of Duncan's delight at Macbeth's victory.

Stagecraft

How do the Witches vanish?

Every director of the play has to solve the practical problem of the stage direction '*Witches vanish*'. At the beginning of Roman Polanski's movie version, the Witches vanished by walking away from the camera along a dismal beach, fading into specks that dissolved into the opening credits. On Shakespeare's stage there were obvious limitations to the way the Witches could vanish. They may have left on foot or via a trapdoor, or have somehow 'flown' off stage.

Write out your own suggestions for making the Witches vanish convincingly in a letter to a director working on a production in a modern theatre, which will later be turned into a film.

Characters

To be 'rapt withal' (in pairs)

Macbeth and Banquo are 'rapt withal' by the Witches' prophecies. Read the scene again, from their entrance after line 35, then write out five questions for these two characters. Step into role as either Macbeth or Banquo and answer your partner's questions.

1 Actors' experiments (in pairs)

Imagine you are an actor in rehearsal, taking advice from a director who wants to experiment with different ways of representing the scene opposite. Read the director's instructions below:

- In lines 68–76, Macbeth just can't believe what he has heard. He wants answers urgently. So speak the lines quickly and angrily *or* in a way that shows he is confused and frustrated.
- In lines 77–86, the two men are deeply puzzled and amazed by what they have seen and heard. So speak the lines slowly and wonderingly *or* fearfully and suspiciously.
- In lines 87–98, Ross wants to give Macbeth and Banquo important news from the king. So speak the lines pompously and grandly *or* with friendliness and excitement.

Choose how you want to interpret these lines, then take turns to perform your version of this scene to the rest of the class.

get be father of

Finel Macbeth's father

Stands not ... belief
is unbelievable

intelligence news, information

charge command, order

corporal physical

on of
the insane root hemlock,
henbane or deadly nightshade
(when eaten, it produces madness)

selfsame tune identical meaning

reads understands

stout brave, valiant
Nothing afeard not afraid

post with post many messages