



Macbeth

William Shakespeare

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Macbeth (full title The Tragedy of Macbeth) is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare, and is considered one of his darkest and most powerful works. Set in Scotland, the play illustrates the damaging physical and psychological effects of political ambition on those who seek power for its own sake. The play is believed to have been written between 1599 and 1606, and is most commonly dated 1606. The earliest account of a performance of what was probably Shakespeare's play is the Summer of 1606, when Simon Forman recorded seeing such a play at the Globe Theatre. It was first published in the Folio of 1623, possibly from a prompt book. It was most likely written during the reign of James I, who had been James VI of Scotland before he succeeded to the English throne in 1603. James was a patron of Shakespeare's acting company, and of all the plays Shakespeare wrote during James's reign, Macbeth most clearly reflects the playwright's relationship with the sovereign.

Macbeth Details

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From Reader Review Macbeth for online ebook

Bookdragon Sean says

**Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.**

Poor old Macbeth. You were doomed from the very first act. Your mistake was believing in hearsay, prophecy and half-truths. You were an excellent Thane, noble and strong. But you were never meant to be King. You should never have told your wife about the witches, that way the fires of your ambition would never have been fanned.

You only committed in halves to the witches advice. You needed to go the full way or not at all. For you are bloody. Your butcher's work in King Duncan's tent saw to that. Your soldier's work on the battlefield also saw to that. You weren't afraid to get your hands dirty and in this you were bold and daring, but none would ever call one such as you resolute. Your conscience got the better of you, it made you weak and vulnerable, and because of this you failed. Your rule failed. Your sword arm failed. You needed to go the full way or not at all.

Desperation, paranoia and butchery are what followed your indecisiveness. You killed those that could have been loyal; you killed those that could have remained friends. And it was your doom. You created your own haunting, your own end. You listened to the advice of the witches when you should have followed your own path, your own mind. Their words killed you. Your faith in them killed you. Macduff was defeated at your feet, but your fear conquered you. Their words unmanned you.

*Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff.
Beware the thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.*

Mohammed Arabey says

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Bill Kerwin says

Macbeth is Shakespeare's darkest play not only because of the restricted palette of its images--shades of black varied with bright red blood--but also because, in the play's world of warfare and witchcraft, its hero is half-damned from the start.

Inured to violence, prone to superstition, Macbeth struggles with the hags' predictions in the depth of his soul. But his wife, fiercely ambitious, never struggles. When he is haunted by his imagination, she is steadfast: preparing everything, looking after the details, urging him on. It is only afterward, when he is thoroughly damned, coldly vicious, that she finds she cannot wash Duncan's blood off from her hands.

Among other things, this play is the portrait of a good marriage. If, that is, a good marriage can be made in hell.

Jason says

There are two reasons to love this play.

The first reason is Lady Macbeth. Man, that girl has got it goin' *on*. Have you ever found yourself in the running for, say, a new position that's opened up at your company, a position for which you—along with one of your equally worthy colleagues, perhaps—might qualify? You may not have given much thought to your professional advancement before, but now that this promotion has been dangled before you, it has ignited a spark of ambitious desire. Imagine the possibilities! And it is just within your grasp...if only there were a way to edge out the competition. Maybe you could sabotage a project he's working on. Or you could discredit him by rumors of his incompetence. Better yet, you could off him in the parking garage. But each of these strategies requires a certain level of gumption to execute, a level not everyone possesses. This is where it pays to be married to Lady Macbeth. All she would need is a mere *mention* of this potential uptick in your career path and she's off and running, drafting the schematics, telling you where to stand (just outside the stairwell, across from his car, within easy reach of the tire iron lying in the corner that can be used while he's distractedly sifting through his keys). Why doesn't she do it herself, you ask? Well, why should she? It's not *her* job. Her job is to support you, to boost your confidence, to supply that additional

gumption. You're the one who has to do the dirty work.

Lady Macbeth is an amazing character. I've seen reviews on here that criticize her for being the morally reprehensible of the two protagonists, planting ideas in her husband's head that he would not have otherwise formed, encouraging him toward evil deeds that he would not have otherwise committed. I disagree. She may have made a mistake helping to plan Duncan's murder, but if anything Lady Macbeth is the one with her moral faculties still intact—she exhibits a profound sense of remorse at the end of the play that Macbeth recognizes as nothing short of an ailment for which to seek a cure. While Macbeth is off slaughtering anyone who might threaten his regal standing, his wife is at home rubbing the fuck out of her hands until the blisters explode and she suffocates in a pool of her own pus.

The second reason to love this play is the eloquence of the language. There are passages in this play that describe human emotion so briefly yet so profoundly it triggers goosebumps. These are some of my favorites:

On expressing one's grief:

*What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows;
Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.*

On not having enough gumption:

*Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldest be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it.*

On contemplating ambition's worth:

*Nought's had, all's spent,
Where our desire is got without content:
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.*

On being past the point of no return:

*All causes shall give way: I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.*

On the futility of life:

*Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.*

On the finality of death:

*There's nothing serious in mortality:
All is but toys: renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees*

Is left this vault to brag of.

I said in the comments section of my *Hamlet* review that I was preferring *Hamlet* to *Macbeth*. While I think I prefer the *character* of Hamlet to that of Macbeth, I no longer stand by that statement in terms of the play itself. *Macbeth* really is a masterpiece.

Madeline says

Years after first adding this to my "Shakespeare" shelf, I finally sat down and did it. So here, long overdue, is The Scottish Play, abridged:

WITCHES: Bibbity bobbity boo! Time to fuck with the mortals!

DUNCAN: Isn't Macbeth great? Now *there*'s a guy I can always trust to have my back. I should promote him.

MACBETH AND DUNCAN: WEEEEE ARE THE CHAMPIONS, MY FRIEEENDS. YES WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS, WEEEEE ARE THE CHAMPIONS, NO TIME FOR -

WITCHES: ThaneofGlamisandCawdorandFutureKingsayswhat?

MACBETH: What?

WITCHES: Oh, and Banquo, your kids are going to be kings someday. Good luck working that one out!
POOFvanish

BANQUO: ...*Dude*.

MACBETH: Great news, honey! I meet these witches and they told me I was gonna be the thane of Cawdor and then BAM the king promoted me, and they also said I was gonna be king someday, so I guess Duncan's going to make me his heir or something.

LADY MACBETH: Cool. I'll invite him over and then you can kill him.

MACBETH: I...wait, what?

LADY MACBETH: KILL THE KING, YOU PUSSY!

DUNCAN: Hey, Macbeth, how's my favorite -

MACBETH: I KEEL YOU!

DUNCAN'S SONS: *GTFO*

BANQUO: So anyway, son, apparently you're going to be king someday, but I don't really see how since now *Macbeth*'s the king, but anyway...

ASSASSIN: I KEEL YOU!

BANQUO'S SON: *GTFO*

MACBETH: Hey there, nice witches, I need some help. I just saw Duncan's ghost and I've been killing a lot of people and my wife's losing what few marbles she had to begin with –

LADY MACBETH: THE BLOOD IS THE LIFE! THE BLOOD IS THE LIFE! I KEEL MYSELF (offstage)!

MACBETH: - and I'm not so sure about this whole prophecy thing anymore.

WITCHES: Don't sweat it, you can't be killed by any man born of woman, and you won't really be in trouble until the forest starts moving.

MACBETH: Wait, didn't something kind of like that happen in *The Lord of the Rings*?

WITCHES: NO. Also, watch out for Macduff.

MACBETH: Cool, I'll go kill his whole family now.

WITCHES: This is just too much fun. We should have thought of this years ago.

MACDUFF: Macbeth, you are SO going down.

MACBETH: Joke's on you, sucker! I can't be killed by anyone born of woman, and since Caesarians haven't been invented you...oh *shit*.

MACDUFF: I KEEL YOU!

WITCHES: More popcorn, Hecate?

THE END.

David says

Don't you kind of hate how we've entered the decadent phase of Goodreads wherein perhaps fifty percent (or more) of the reviews written by non-teenagers and non-romancers are now naked and unabashed in their variously effective attempts at being arch, wry, meta, parodic, confessional, and/or snarky?

Don't you kind of pine (secretly, in the marrow of your gut's merry druthers) for the good ol' days of Goodreads (known then as GodFearingGoodlyReading.com) when all reviews were uniformly plainspoken, merely utilitarian, unpretentious, and -- above all else -- dull, dull, dull?

Don't you kind of hate when people say 'don't you think this way or feel that way' in an effort to goad you both psychologically and grammatically into agreeing with them?

In the words of ABBA: I do, I do, I do, I do, I do).

Well, because the interwebs is a world in which the past stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the present (and with fetish porn), we can revisit the past in its inviolable presentness any time we wish. Or at least until this website finally tanks.

Consider (won't you?) Matt Nieberle's review of *Macbeth* in its entirety. I have bound it with a heavy rope and dragged it here for your perusal. (Please understand that many a *sic* are implied in the following reviews.)

its really complicated and stupid!
why cant we be reading like Romeo and Juliet?!?!
at least that book is good!

There you have it. Refreshingly, not a review written in one of the witch's voices or alluding to Hillary and Bill Clinton or discussing the reviewer's first period. Just a primal yell unleashed into the dark wilderness of the cosmos. Yes, Mr. Nieberle is (probably) a teenager, but I admire his ability to strongarm the temptation to be clever or ironic. (Don't you?) He speaks the native language of the idk generation with an economy and a clarity that renders his convictions all the more emphatic.

Here's MICHAEL's review of the same play. You may 'know' MICHAEL; he is the 'Problems Architect' here at Goodreads. (A problematic title itself in that it implies that he designs problems... which might be the case, for all I know.)

This book shouldn't be required reading... reading plays that you don't want to read is awful.

Reading a play kinda sucks to begin with, if it was meant to be read, then it would be a novel, not a play. On top of that the teach had us students read the play aloud (on person for each character for a couple pages). None of us had read the play before. None of us wanted to read it (I made the mistake of taking the 'easy' english class for 6 years). The teacher picked students that looked like they weren't paying attention. All of this compounded to make me pretty much hate reading classics for something like 10 years (granted macbeth alone wasn't the problem).

I also hate iambic pentameter.

Pure activism there. STOP the mandatory reading of plays. It's *wrong*, morally and academically. Plus it can really fuck up your GPA. There's no wasteful extravagance in this editorial... no fanfare, no fireworks, no linked photos of half-naked, oiled-up, big-bosomed starlets, no invented dialogues between the author and the review-writer. It's simple and memorable. Being required to read plays is wrong, and if you require anyone, under duress, to read a play then you have sinned and are going to hell, if you believe in hell. If not, you're going to the DMV.

I am also tired of all you smug spelling snobs. You damnable fascists with your new-fangled dictionaries and your fancy-schmancy spell check. Sometimes the passionate immediacy of a message overcomes its spelling

limitations. Also, in this age when we are taught to respect each other's differences, it seems offensively egocentric and mean-spirited to expect others to kowtow to your petty linguistic rules. Artistic expression will free itself no matter how you try to shackle it.

That's your cue, Aubrey.

In my personal opinion, the play Macbeth was the worst peice ever written by Shakespeare, and this is saying quite a bit considering i also read his Romeo and Juliet. Ontop of it's already unbelievable plot, unrealistic characters and absolutly discusting set of morals, Shakespeare openly portrays Lady Macbeth as the true vilian in the play. Considering she is mearly the voice in the back round and Macbeth himself is truely committing the hideous crimes, including murder and fraud, I do not see why it is so easy to assume that Macbeth would be willing to do good instead of evil if only his wife were more positive. I believe that this play is eterally unrealistic.

But the following is by far the *ne plus ultra* of classic book reviewing. While succinct and without any distracting inclination to coyness or cuteness, Jo's review alludes to a bitterness so profound that it is inexpressible. One imagines a few Signet Classic Editions hacked to bits with pruning shears in Jo's vicinity.

I hate this play. So much so that I can't even give you any analogies or similes as to how much I despise it.

An incrementally snarkier type might have said something like... 'I hate this play like a simile I can't come up with.' Not Jo. She speaks a raw, undecorated truth unfit for figurative language.

And there's certainly nothing wrong with that. Once in a great while, when you get neck-deep in dandified pomo hijinks, it's a nice wallow in the hog pen you're itchin' for. Thank you, Jo. I love you and your futile grasping at similes that can't approach the bilious hatred in your heart. You are mine, and I am yours. Figuratively speaking, of course.

And now here's *my* review:

Macbeth by William Shakespeare is the greatest literary work in the English language, and anyone who disagrees is an asshole and a dumbhead.

Annie says

Ladies and gentlemen, may I present A Thing You Probably Didn't Want But Are Going To Get Anyway:

***Macbeth*, in GIFs:**

Witches:

King Duncan to Macbeth:

Macbeth to King (secretly):

Lady Macbeth:

Macbeth:

Lady Macbeth to Macbeth:

Macbeth to Duncan:

Everyone:

Malcom and Donalbain:

Macbeth:

Macbeth to Banquo:

Macbeth:

Fleance:

Malcolm to Macduff:

Macduff and Malcom:

Macbeth:

Lady Macbeth:

Lady Macbeth:

Macbeth:

Army:

Macbeth:

Macbeth:

Witches:

Everyone:

Nayra.Hassan says

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Brina says

Over the past year, I have branched out in my reading, attempting authors and genres that I had not discovered before. Recently, I read *Serena* by Ron Rash in which the title character is compared to Lady Macbeth. While *Serena* may be ruthless, I had never read the play so I could not contrast the two heroines. Another of my reading goals this year is increasing my reading of classics. Up until now, I had predominantly read modern classics, and found a worthy reason to read an older masterpiece. So it is without further adieu that I present my take on the Bard's *Macbeth*.

Shakespeare penned *Macbeth* around the year 1606 when he was already established as a reputed playwright. For this play, he chose a contemporary Scottish soldier and references the Scottish crown within the text. Yet, as in most of Shakespeare's works, the Bard was not as much concerned with the history surrounding the play, as he was with the characters themselves, their desires and motivations. Thus, *Macbeth* is regarded as Shakespeare's darkest tragedy.

The tale begins when Macbeth visits three witches, later of "double, double, toil, trouble" fame. They prophesy that he will become the Thane of Crowder, Thane of Glowdis, and King of Scotland. Yet, the men who hold these titles are all currently alive. Lady Macbeth plots and decides to murder all the key players who stand in the way of her husband becoming king, framing other upstanding individuals for her actions. She even goes as far as killing those who relayed news to her that King Duncan had been killed, even though she herself committed the crime. As the tale continues, the Lady now Queen continues to plot and has servants and soldiers at her disposal to do her bidding.

Meanwhile, Macbeth also grows weary of rivals to the crown and plots to eliminate anyone who goes against him. While Lady Macbeth is at ease being an evil mastermind, Macbeth reaches the point where he can not live with himself for murdering Duncan. He returns to the witches in an attempt to change the prophesy, but it is not to be. At this point, Lady Macbeth grows emotionally unstable, while Macbeth himself is no longer afraid to die in battle as penance for previous crimes committed. It is clear that Shakespeare intended for the Lady to be the more hungry individual in this drama.

As in all Shakespearean works, the text is not long but a little tedious if one is unused to old English. Because I had just read *Serena*, I read along quickly looking for comparisons to the two women, allowing me to be more engrossed in the prose than I might have been otherwise. Shakespeare's words remain timeless over 400 years later, deeming *Macbeth*, as well as his other works, worthy reads. This play was fun because the characters were so dark, encouraging me to read more Shakespearean tales in the future.

Lyn says

"By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes."

Shakespeare's shortest tragedy is also one of his most powerful. Macbeth's lust for power is compulsory, when confronted with the witches' prophesy he is drawn into the tragedy as if he were a runaway train on tracks. He must fulfill his ambition.

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death."

Macbeth is a tragic hero but, like Richard III, is also villain, and like Milton, Shakespeare immerses his audience in a character study of dark shadows. By casting the lot and allowing his tragedy to live out to its necessarily bloody conclusion, Shakespeare was drawing on primal heartstrings that people of his time, and people for all time, can relate. At the black heart of this play is a fear of death, and yet a perverse and paradoxical fascination with it as well.

"Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires."

Though written and produced in the late 1500s and early 1600s (originally) the subject involves witchcraft and sorcery and harkens to a pagan past, not too long lost on the folks sitting at the Globe. No doubt ancient family legends and folk tales still resounded in dank cellars and back rooms, and the imagery and symbolism Shakespeare used to such potent effect served as a chilling contrast with the Christian spectators. The inchoate curse of guilt for naked ambition is a theme readily apparent.

"Out, out, brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Lady Macbeth is one of the great female characters in literature. Her role as a temptress and wily beneficiary of the ruthless plan, and her eventual abysmal fall is one that resounds with readers and audiences to this day.

"Things without all remedy should be without regard: what's done is done."

Amalia Gavea says

"There's husbandry in heaven; Their candles are all out."

This is a text that has been brewing inside my mind for quite some times. I started reading Jo Nesbø's retelling of *Macbeth* two days ago (quite interesting so far, by the way...) and it gave me the chance to reflect on a masterpiece that isn't just a play but a psychological study of power, ambition and the darkest recesses of the human soul. I don't presume I am able to write a "review" on Shakespeare's works. Goodness, no! This is just my take on the reasons why *Macbeth* shaped Literature's dark themes and imagery, having a plethora of the Bard's most beautiful and darkest quotes, being the most realistic depiction of the human tendency to destroy and violate all that is sacred and honest.

"Can the devil speak true?"

Macbeth -more than any other play, in my opinion- has the power to form images of distinct horror and brutality in our minds. Let us not forget that it is loaded with superstitions and weird phenomena have been recorded during theatre runs throughout centuries of performances. I would take it one step further and say that Macbeth initiated the Gothic elements in Literature, although they wouldn't have been named thus at the time. This is obvious in the presence of the Three Witches, the characters I've always been most fascinated with than any other in the play. Imagine the audience during the reign of James I, the first Stuart king, watching spells and curses unfolding on stage, right before their eyes? How did they perceive their presence in the play? How do we perceive it? Are they merely the harbingers of things to come or do they have an influential role in the fate of Macbeth and the characters? In every production of *Macbeth* I've watched, the Three Witches can make or break the whole performance for me. One of the reasons I adore Polanski's vision of the play is his choice to end his outstanding 1971 film version with Donalbain coming across the Witches' lair, bitten by the harsh Scottish rain, as the vicious circle goes on and on...

“Now o'er the one half of the world nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse the curtained sleep; witchcraft celebrates pale Hecate’s offerings; and withered Murder, alarmed by his sentinel, the wolf, whose howl’s his watch...”

Darkness is everywhere. This is a country that is slowly finding herself in a deep sleep of deceit and death. Ravens croak, owls shriek, bats signify the end and Hecate walks the Earth with her ominous escort. Rain is the introductory dark omen of what is to come and the wind is filled with lamentations. The *strange screams of death* and the knockings out of nowhere are signs of the utter violation between two human beings, between kinsmen and friends.

“...and nothing is but what is not.”

Macbeth and his wife put on their most sincere smiles and act like the perfect hosts. He calls Banquo his dearest friend, invites him to his royal feast. Macbeth is brave, unyielding even when his world crumbles, firmly determined until the very end. And yet, his soul hides extreme antitheses. Throughout the action, he knows that his deeds will lead to nowhere. *“Blood will have blood”*, he says in sadness. And he is right. What he succeeds in is the murder of trust and every sacred value our world holds dear. The endless course of murder that desires more and more...Regicide, the killing of relatives, dear friends and compatriots and comrades. The slaughter of women, children and servants. He knows that once he starts, he cannot stop.

“I have supped full with horrors.”

Each and every time Macbeth decides to pluck away one more thorn of threat to his reign, he tries to find the arguments for and against the coming deed. The sense of duty doesn't seem to abandon him altogether but is always in a brutal fight with his burning ambition. Guilt plagues him even before he starts the bloody chain of events, he “murders sleep” and, in my opinion, the moment he raises his hand to slaughter Duncan, he first murders himself and his principles. Do I see his wife as the utter solicitor to his bloody future? Definitely yes. Lady Macbeth is by far my favourite Shakespearean heroine but as hard as I try, I cannot find any redeeming qualities in her character. Her remorse is madness, and is it even remorse or the unbearable burden of guilt? These two aren't one and the same. While Macbeth's end is as brave as it can be, her end is lonely, honoured only by Macbeth's quiet sorrow expressed in an achingly beautiful soliloquy. Macbeth isn't Iago. He's not a lunatic villain who kills just because. I've always considered him an anti-hero. A man who can't survive the fight between his weak will to do what is right and the darkness of his desires.

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare created one of the most controversial characters in Literature. While the historical Macbeth was the exact opposite of his theatrical counterpart, the Scottish play became one of the most

recognizable works of Art, even to the few uninitiated to the greatness that is the Bard. It became a synonym for conspiracy, treason, murder echoing, among other themes, the Gunpowder Plot that threatened the very essence of the British reign at the time. It became a metaphor of the limits a human can bend in order to achieve the absolute control. A token of lacking faith in everyone and everything. When a man who was considered valiant and loyal becomes devoid of any humanity, what kind of good can be sustained in a world governed by petty leaders and corrupted sovereigns? Do not tell me this doesn't apply to our current times. I will not try to convince anyone to love this play. Its strength in overcoming prejudices and the fact that it remains one of the most beloved and performed works of Shakespeare speaks for itself. For me, this work of dark beauty and nightmarish brilliance is the best example of how Shakespeare managed to know the human nature more than any other writer...

I leave you with what I consider to be the finest lines about the futility of chasing unattainable ambitions and the most beautiful soliloquy ever written...

*“Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his way upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.”*

My reviews can also be found on <https://theopinionatedreaderblog.wordpress.com>

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Tragedy of Macbeth, William Shakespeare

Mohammed-Makram says

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Huda Yahya says

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing

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To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow?,?
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day??,?
To the last syllable of recorded time?;?
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle?!?
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player?,?
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage?,?
And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury?,?
Signifying nothing?

...

Loretta says

I absolutely loved this play! ?
