

The story of Macbeth begins with the Kingdom of Scotland in chaos. There is a rebellion in the west and invasion in the east. In the west a great warrior called Macbeth, the Thane of Glamis, leads the Scottish army and his bravery and skill destroys the enemy. He then rides across the country to the other battle and with his mighty sword he drives the enemy off. It's as if one man has won both World War I and World War II single-handed and on the same day.

After the battles Macbeth and his best friend, Banquo [also a great warrior] are riding back to see King Duncan. Macbeth is feeling strange.

Macbeth

**So foul and fair a day I
have not seen.**

Act 1 Sc iii

Three weird sisters
appear in front of
them and greet
Macbeth. They say
that he will be
promoted to Thane of
Cawdor and also greet
him with the words:

Witches

**All hail Macbeth! That shall
be King hereafter.**

Act 1 Sc iii

They also tell Banquo his children shall be king, though he himself will never be.

The pair are soon greeted by messengers from the king who tell Macbeth that he has been promoted to Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth and Banquo are surprised. They soon reach the king and he thanks them both for their service in saving the kingdom. He then names his successor:

King Duncan

**Our eldest, Malcolm; whom we name
hereafter**

The Prince of Cumberland.

Act 1 Sc iv

Macbeth is
begins to be
consumed with
the desire to
be king, but he
tries to conceal
it.

Macbeth

Stars, hide your fires!

**Let not light see my black and
deep desires**

Act 1 Sc v

King Duncan honours Macbeth by announcing that he will visit Macbeth's castle. Macbeth sends a letter to his wife telling her all that has happened. Lady Macbeth decides to help her husband become king, but she isn't sure that either of them are strong enough to murder the king and take the crown by force. So she summons up evil spirits to make her able to do what is required:

Lady Macbeth

**Fill me from the
crown to the toe, top-
full of direst cruelty!**

Act 1 Sc vii

Macbeth arrives home and having thought through the consequences of killing King Duncan he decides they had better not, but Lady Macbeth will not hear of this and she criticises Macbeth for being a coward.

Macbeth

**We will proceed no further in
this business.**

Lady Macbeth

Art thou afeared?

Act 1 Sc vii

Agreeing to carry out the murder his wife has set up for him to do, Macbeth sees a dagger pointing towards King Duncan's room - guiding him to the murder.

Macbeth

**Is this a dagger, which
I see before me?**

Act 2 Sc i

After
committing the
terrible crime
Macbeth is
instantly sorry
and full of
regret.

Macbeth

**To know my deed,
'twere best not know
myself.**

Act 2 Sc ii

However his wife refuses to let him wallow in guilt and demands he try to cover up his crime.

When Macduff, The Thane of Fife, tries to wake up the king in the morning he discovers the scene of the crime and with his shocked cries he wakes up the whole castle.

Macduff

Awake! Awake!

Ring the alarum bell.

Murder and treason!

Act 2 Sc iii

King Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, fear that they will be murdered by whoever murdered their father so they flee. This makes people suspect they might have murdered their own father.

Everyone is upset at King Duncan's violent death, and, since the war was so recent, they decide to make Macbeth king. The witches prophecy has come true.

But, even though he is King, Macbeth isn't satisfied. He feels guilty about having killed King Duncan and worried that someone will take the crown from him.

Macbeth

**To be thus is nothing,
But to be safely thus.**

Act 3 Sc i

Lady Macbeth sees that he is suffering and tries to help him forget the past but Macbeth can't help it.

Lady Macbeth

**Why do you keep
alone?...What's done
is done.**

Macbeth

**Full of scorpions is my
mind, dear wife!**

Act 3 Sc ii

Macbeth remembers that the witches predicted Banquo's children would become kings. He sends three murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance.

Banquo

**O treachery! Fly good
Fleance, fly, fly, fly!**

Act 3 Sc iii

Fleance escapes the ambush and Macbeth is still worried. Soon after Banquo's death Macbeth is having a big dinner with all the important people of Scotland. Banquo's blood covered ghost appears and Macbeth is very frightened.

Macbeth

**Never shake
thy gory locks
at me.**

Act 3 Sc iv

No one else can see the ghost and they think that Macbeth is unstable and suspicious. He seeks out the witches for more advice. The witches give him three prophecies.

Witches

Beware the Thane of Fife...

None of woman born shall harm

Macbeth...

Macbeth shall never vanquished be,

until Great Birnum Wood

to high Dunsinane hill shall come

against him

Macbeth

That will never be

Act 4 Sc i

Macbeth feels safe now that he knows no man born of woman can harm him and that he is safe until Birnum Wood comes to Dunsinane castle. But since the witches warned him about Macduff he decides to kill him and his family anyway.

He sends his murderers to Macduff's house, but Macduff is away in England so while they cannot kill Macduff, they do murder his whole family.

Macduff's Son

**He hath kill'd
me mother.**

Act 4 Sc ii

Macduff has gone to England to find King Duncan's son, Malcolm. They agree to rise up against the murderous Macbeth and return Malcolm, the true king, to the throne of Scotland. Just then a messenger arrives to tell Macduff of Macbeth's latest crime.

Macduff

**He has no
children.**

**All my pretty
ones? Did you
say all?**

Act 4 Sc iii

Back in Scotland Lady Macbeth has gone mad with guilt over the murders of the King, Banquo and Macduff's wife and family. She imagines she has blood staining her hands.

Lady Macbeth

**Out, damned
spot!**

Act 5 Sc i

Malcolm and Macduff's army marches towards Macbeth and, as they pass through Birnum Wood, Malcolm commands them to cut down a branch each to make it harder for the enemy to count how many soldiers they have.

Malcolm

**Let every soldier
hew him down a
bough.**

Act 5 Sc iv

As the army closes in on Macbeth, and his Thanes desert him to side with Malcolm, Lady Macbeth dies. Macbeth feels very sad and regrets that life has become so dark.

Macbeth

**She should have
died hereafter.**

Act 5 Sc v

Still trusting in the witches prophecies Macbeth feels that he cannot be defeated, but then Malcolm's army comes over the hill carrying the branches of Birnum Wood and Macbeth starts to suspect the witches may have tricked him with their words.

Macduff corners Macbeth in his castle and Macbeth says he is protected from any man born of woman. Macduff replies that he wasn't born of woman.

Macduff

**Macduff was
from his mother's
womb untimely
ripped.**

Act 5 Sc viii

Alone, tricked
by the witches
and trapped
Macbeth
decides to try
and fight his
way out.

Macbeth

**Lay on Macduff and
damned be him
that first cries,
"Hold enough!"**

Act 5 Sc viii

Macduff beats
Macbeth in
single combat
and everyone
calls for
Malcolm to be
the new king.

All

**Hail, King of
Scotland!**

Act 5 Sc ix