



William Shakespeare's Macbeth

UKS2 Reading Comprehension Activity

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William Shakespeare's Macbeth

The Tragedy of Macbeth (commonly called *Macbeth*) is a play written by William Shakespeare. It is considered one of his darkest and most powerful tragedies. Set in Scotland, the play dramatizes the effects produced when the Scottish lord Macbeth, chooses evil as the way to fulfill his ambition for power.



He murders King Duncan, to become king himself and then goes on a reign of murderous terror to stay in power, eventually sending the country into civil war. In the end he loses everything that gives meaning and purpose to his life before losing his life itself.

The play is believed to have been written between 1603 and 1607, and is most commonly dated 1606. The earliest account of a performance is in April 1611, when Simon Forman recorded seeing such a play at the Globe Theatre. It was first published in 1622.

Macbeth is Shakespeare's shortest and bloodiest tragedy, and tells the story of a brave Scottish general named Macbeth who receives a prophecy from a trio of witches that one day he'll become King of Scotland. Consumed by ambition and spurred to action by his wife, Macbeth murders King Duncan and takes the throne for himself.

His reign is racked with guilt and paranoia, and he soon commits more and more murders to protect himself. The bloodbath swiftly takes Macbeth and Lady Macbeth into periods of arrogance, madness and eventually death, as he is defeated and killed on the battlefield by Macduff, allowing the new king, Malcolm, to take the throne.

William Shakespeare's Macbeth

Comprehension

1 - What is the full name of the play Macbeth? (1)

2 - What king does Macbeth murder and how does he stay in power afterwards? (2)

3 - What country is Macbeth set in and when was the play written? (1)

4 - How does the story end for Macbeth? (2)

5 - Who watched the play Macbeth in 1611 and in what theatre? (2)

6 - "It was first published in 1622", what might this mean? (1)

7 - Who tells Macbeth he is going to be king one day? (1)

8 – Who spurred Macbeth into murdering King Duncan? (1)

9 - Who defeats and kills Macbeth on the battlefield? (1)

10 – Who became king after Macbeth? (1)

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Grammar

11 – Can you spot two pronouns in the first paragraph? (2)

12 – Find some apostrophes in the text, and state whether they are used for possession or contraction. (2)

Extension

13 - Using evidence from the text write a description of Macbeth – the person. (3)

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Questions

Comprehension Questions

- 1 - What is the full name of the play Macbeth? (1)
- 2 - What king does Macbeth murder and how does he stay in power afterwards? (2)
- 3 - What country is Macbeth set in and when was the play written? (1)
- 4 - How does the story end for Macbeth? (2)
- 5 - Who watched the play Macbeth in 1611 and in what theatre? (2)
- 6 - "It was first published in 1622", what might this mean? (1)
- 7 - Who tells Macbeth he is going to be king one day? (1)
- 8 - Who spurred Macbeth into murdering King Duncan? (1)
- 9 - Who defeats and kills Macbeth on the battlefield? (1)
- 10 - Who became king after Macbeth? (1)

Grammar Questions

- 11 - Can you spot two pronouns in the first paragraph? (2)
- 12 - Find some apostrophes in the text, and state whether they are used for possession or contraction. (2)

Extension Activities

- 13 - Using evidence from the text write a short description of Macbeth – the person. (about 4-6 sentences) (3)

Answers

Comprehension Questions

- 1 – The Tragedy of Macbeth
- 2 – King Duncan / He goes on a reign of murderous terror (1 mark for each)
- 3 – Scotland / between 1603-1607 (accept 1606)
- 4 – He loses everything that gives meaning to his life before losing life itself (2 marks)
Death (1 mark)
- 5 – Simon Forman at the Globe Theatre (1 mark for each)
- 6 – It was made into a book / It was written
- 7 – A trio of witches (accept witches)
- 8 – His Wife / Lady Macbeth
- 9 – Macduff
- 10 – Malcolm

Grammar Questions

- 11 – It / his (1 mark for each)
- 12 – Shakespeare's (possession) He'll (contraction) (1 mark for each one)

Extension Activities

- 13 – Mixed answers ranging from 1 mark to 3 marks.

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