

MACBETH

STORY

Duncan is the King of Scotland - a very good king. When the play opens, Scotland is at war with the Norwegians but the Scots are about to win thanks to **Macbeth** and **Banquo**, two of Duncan's thanes (lords) who are very brave fighters.

On their way back from the battle, Macbeth the Thane of Glamis and Banquo meet 3 witches in the rain on a heath. The witches tell Macbeth that he will become Thane of Cawdor and eventually King of Scotland. Macbeth is puzzled because Duncan's son **Malcolm** is next in line for the throne and the Thane of Cawdor is still alive. The witches then tell Banquo that he will be happier than Macbeth and that his children will become kings in the future.

Macbeth and Banquo meet up with Duncan who praises them for their bravery and says that the Thane of Cawdor has been executed as a traitor. He gives the title to Macbeth as a reward. They all decide to spend the night at Macbeth's castle as it is nearby. Macbeth sends a letter to his wife telling her they are coming and also telling her about the witches.

Lady Macbeth reads the letter alone and fancies the idea of being queen. She describes her husband as being too nice to do the obvious thing and kill Duncan to get him out of the way but she is determined to try and persuade him - especially as Duncan is coming to stay. An ideal opportunity!

Getting Macbeth alone, she tries all sorts of tricks to persuade him to kill Duncan and eventually succeeds. That night Macbeth stabs Duncan while he is asleep. Malcolm, on hearing of his father's death, runs away to England because he fears he may be the next victim. Of course this looks suspicious - as though he had something to do with the murder so Macbeth is crowned king.

Banquo begins to suspect Macbeth. Macbeth remembers what the witches said and arranges for Banquo to be murdered along with his son **Fleance**. Banquo is killed but Fleance escapes. That night Macbeth holds a banquet and Banquo's ghost appears. Only Macbeth can see this horrible thing with blood all over his head and starts shrieking. Lady Macbeth tries to calm him down but the guests think he has gone mad and leave.

Many other lords now start to go to England to raise an army against Macbeth. Macbeth decides to visit the witches again to see what the future holds. He is told 3 things. 1) Beware **Macduff** (another lord who may be very dangerous.) 2) Nobody born of a woman will ever kill him. 3) He will be safe until Great Birnam Wood starts to move towards his castle.

He is pleased with this but decides to have Macduff killed just in case. Murderers go to Macduff's castle in Fife but Macduff has already left for England so they kill his wife and children out of spite.

In England, Malcolm and Macduff have raised an army to attack Macbeth. When he hears the news of his family, Macduff is determined to finish off Macbeth himself. The army gathers in Great Birnam Wood not far from Macbeth's castle. The men cut down branches from the trees to creep towards the castle so that Macbeth will not know how many there are.

A servant tells Macbeth that the wood is moving but he is not too worried because he knows that no man born of a woman can kill him. He goes out to fight after hearing that Lady Macbeth has committed suicide. In the final moments of the battle, Macduff faces Macbeth and announces that he was not 'born' but delivered by caesarean. He kills Macbeth and Malcolm is crowned king.