

SHAKESPEARE IN 30 MINUTES: MACBETH

Adapted By Mike Willis

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AUTHOR'S NOTES:

“Shakespeare in 30 Minutes” is available as an anthology of four award-winning adaptations by Mike Willis, or each adaptation separately. Mr. Willis is a high school drama director who spent twelve seasons with the Wisconsin Shakespeare Festival Acting Company. He used his Shakespearean experience to fashion four 30-minute adaptations were entered in the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association’s Fall Play Festival Competition. In order to be selected as an “all-state” play and given the opportunity to perform at the state festival, a production is required to participate at sub-district, district, and sectional levels and be awarded advance recommendations from two of three adjudicators. Each of the four adaptations in this collection received all-state recognition and were performed at the Wisconsin High School Forensic Association’s State Theatre Festival. Along with their all-state selection, these plays were also accorded several other awards, including: ten student outstanding acting awards, four state outstanding director’s awards, and “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” was chosen to receive the Critic’s Choice Award at the 1993 state festival. These adaptations are easily staged and unlike some adaptations of Shakespeare, they keep the poetry of the dialogue intact. Each adaptation is ideal for one act play competitions and school productions where resources do not allow for a full-length Shakespearean production.

MACBETH
ADAPTED BY MIKE WILLIS

CAST OF CHARACTERS

LADY MACBETH.....	(4 lines)
MACBETH.....	a general (37 lines)
PORTER.....	(2 lines)
MACDUFF.....	a noble (31 lines)
ROSS.....	a noble (9 lines)
LENNOX.....	a noble (6 lines)
MALCOLM.....	Duncan's son (14 lines)
1 ST WITCH.....	(13 lines)
2 ND WITCH.....	(9 lines)
3 RD WITCH.....	(7 lines)
HECATE.....	(3 lines)
ARMED HEAD.....	Apparition 1 (1 line)
BLOODY CHILD.....	Apparition 2 (2 lines)
CROWNED CHILD.....	Apparition 3 (1 line)
KING DUNCAN'S GHOST.....	(Non-Speaking)

INTRODUCTION

This one act adaptation of Shakespeare's "Macbeth" actually begins in Act Two, Scene II of the original Shakespeare text. Prior to this, in Act One, Macbeth and Banquo, two noble generals in the army of King Duncan of Scotland, have just quelled a rebellion led by Macdonwald and the thane of Cawdor. News of their glorious victory reaches King Duncan before Macbeth and Banquo arrive home. On their return journey, while crossing a Scottish heath, Banquo and Macbeth are met by three witches. The witches hail Macbeth as the "thane of Cawdor, and proclaim who shall be king hereafter." This prophecy that he will be king, plus the fact that King Duncan has advanced his son Malcolm to the title of the Prince of Cumberland, instill in Macbeth the urge to plot Duncan's death. Macbeth finds an accomplice with even more determination in the form of his wife, Lady Macbeth. Together, they plot King Duncan's murder. The opportunity presents itself when King Duncan and his sons come to visit Macbeth at his castle. The adaptation begins late at night at Macbeth's castle after Duncan and his sons have retired for the evening. Throughout the play, Macbeth is haunted by apparitions and ghosts who foretell his ultimate downfall at the hands of Macduff.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This particular adaptation relies on the prophecies of the Witches and the apparitions which foretell the events leading up to the defeat of Macbeth. The setting can be quite simple and can be done using only stage curtains. In the original production of this play, a seven foot high platform was placed up center stage. This platform had a curtained arch underneath through which the Macbeth castle entrances were made. The three witches also entered through the curtained arch for the witch scene. This entrance allowed them to hide the cauldron underneath the platform. A fog machine was also located underneath the platform and had a black hose running to the cauldron. While a fog machine is not required, it is quite effective. Hecate and the Apparitions then appeared above on the platform. The raised platform had offstage stairs to it, was separately lighted, and had an opening where fog was piped onto it. The original production of this script ended with the witches and Hecate mounting the platform while Malcolm, Macduff and others froze below. The final flourish ended and was followed by fog, mainstage blackout with only the platform lighted showing the three witches kneeling around Hecate. The final sound cue was then made up of the thunder and storm sound from the witch scene. The final trumpet flourish surrounding Malcolm's announcement however is quite effective and only necessitates a simple fade to black. The entrances and exits other than the witches and those at Macbeth's castle were all made either stage right or stage left.

Setting:

The stage is dressed in dark, somber colors. There is a raised platform up center stage. This platform has a curtained arch underneath, through which a number of entrances and exits are made. There is a backstage stairway which leads to the platform surface. The stage is dimly lit. The elevated surface on the platform is separately lighted. There are curtains guarding the wings to allow exits stage right and stage left.

**SCENE I
MACBETH'S CASTLE**

There is a light fog covering the surface of the stage. Lady Macbeth and Macbeth enter through the curtained arch up center. Macbeth's hands are bloody and he carries a bloody dagger. A knock is heard.

LADY MACBETH: Retire we to our chamber. A little water clears us of this deed. *(Knock.)* Hark! More knocking.

MACBETH: To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself. *(Knock.)* Wake King with thy knocking! I would thou couldst! *(Lady Macbeth and Macbeth exit offstage into the wings.) (Knocking continues. Porter enters through curtained arch.)*

PORTER: Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell gate, he should have old turning the key. *(Knock.)* Knock, knock, knock! Who's there I' the name of Belzebub? Here's a farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty. Come in time! Have napkins enow about you; here you'll sweat for't. *(Knock.)* Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, Here's an equivocator, that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. O, Come in, Equivocator! *(Knock.)* Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, Here's an English tailor come hither for stealing out of a French hose. Come in, tailor. Here you may roast your goose. *(Knock.)* Knock, knock! Never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further. I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire. *(Knock.)* Anon, anon! *(Porter exits to open gate.)* I pray you.

Enter Porter with Macduff and Ross.

MACDUFF: Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed, that you do lie so late?

PORTER: Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second cock.

MACDUFF: Is thy master stirring?

(Enter Macbeth.)

SHAKESPEARE IN 30 MINUTES: MACBETH

Our knocking has awaked him; here he comes.

ROSS: Good morrow, noble sir.

MACBETH: Good morrow.

MACDUFF: Is the King stirring, worthy Thane?

MACBETH: Not yet.

MACDUFF: He did command me to call timely on him;

I have almost slipped the hour.

MACBETH: I'll bring you to him.

MACDUFF: I know this is a joyful trouble to you; But yet 'tis one.

MACBETH: The labor we delight in physics pain. This is the door.

(Macbeth indicates the curtained arch.)

MACDUFF: I'll make so bold to call, For 'tis my limited service.

(Macduff exits through curtain. Pause as Macbeth and Ross greet each other.)

Oh horror, horror, horror!

(Macduff reenters.)

Tongue nor heart cannot conceive or name thee!

MACBETH: What's the matter?

MACDUFF: Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!

Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope

The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence

The lif' o' the building!

MACBETH: What is't you say? The life?

MACDUFF: Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight

With a new Gorgon. Do not bid me speak.

See, and then speak yourselves. *(Macbeth and Ross exit arch.)* Awake, awake!

Ring the alarum bell. Murder and treason! Malcolm

Awake! Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,

And look on death itself! Up, up, and see.

The great doom's image! Malcolm!

As from your grave rise up and walk like sprites

To countenance this horror! Ring the bell! *(Bell rings.)*

Enter Lady Macbeth.

LADY MACBETH: What's the business'

That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley

The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak!

MACDUFF: O gentle lady,

'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak!

The repetition in a woman's ear

Would murder as it fell.

Enter Macbeth and Ross.

MACBETH: Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant
There's nothing serious in mortality;
All is but toys; renown and grace is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and mere less
Is left this vault to brag of.

Enter Malcolm.

MALCOLM: What is amiss?

MACBETH: You are and do not know't.
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood
Is stopped, the very source of it is stopped.

MACDUFF: You're royal father's murdered.

MALCOLM: O, by whom?

MACDUFF: Those of his chamber, as it seemed, had done't.
Their hands and faces were all badged with blood.

ROSS: So were their daggers, which unwiped we found
Upon their pillows.
They stared and were distracted. No man's life
Was to be trusted with them.

MACBETH: O, yet I do repent me of my fury
That I did kill them.

MACDUFF: Wherefore did you so?

MACBETH: Who can be wise, amazed, temp'rate and furious,
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man.
The expedition of my violent love
Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin laced with his golden blood,
And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature
For ruin's wasteful entrance; there, the murderers,
Stepped in the colors of their trade, their daggers
Unmannerly breached with gore. Who could refrain
That had a heart to love and in that heart
Courage to make's love known?

LADY MACBETH: Help me hence, ho! (*Lady Macbeth pretends to faint.*)

MACDUFF: Look to the lady.

MALCOLM: (*Aside to Macduff.*) Why do we hold our tongues,
That most may claim this argument of ours?
Let's away.
Our tears are not yet brewed.

Malcolm and Macduff exit up center. Lady Macbeth takes Macbeth aside.

LADY MACBETH: These deeds must not be thought
After these ways, So, it will make us mad. (*Lady
Macbeth and Macbeth exit.*)

SCENE II (ON THE HEATH)

Thunder with fog and storm effects. Enter the three witches with cauldron which is placed center stage below the platform, the witches move slow and catlike as the storm continues.

WITCH 1: Where hast thou been, sister?

WITCH 2: Killing swine.

WITCH 3: Sister, where thou?

WITCH 1: A sailor's wife had chesnuts in her lap
And mounched and mounched and mounched. Give
Me, quoth I.
"Aroint thee, witch!" the rump-fed ronyon cries.
Her husband to Aleppo gone, master o' the "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.

WITCH 2: I'll give thee a wind.

WITCH 1: Th'art kind.

WITCH 3: And I another.

WITCH 1: I myself have all the other,
And the very ports they blow,
All the quarters that they know
I' the 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 sev'nights, nine times nine,
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.
Though his bark cannot be lost,
Yet it shall be tempest-tost.
Look what I have.

WITCH 2: Show me! show me!

WITCH 1: Here I have a pilot's thumb,
Wracked as homeward he did come.

WITCH 3: A drum, a drum!
Macbeth doth come.

ALL: The Weird Sisters, hand in hand, (*Circling cauldron.*)

Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about,
Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,
And thrice again, to make up nine.
Peace. The charm's wound up.

WITCH 1: Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed.

WITCH 2: Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whined.

WITCH 3: Harpier cries; 'tis time, 'tis time.

WITCH 1: Round about the cauldron go; (*Circling cauldron.*)

In the poisoned entrails throw.
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Swelt' red venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first I' the charmed pot.

ALL: Double, double, toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

WITCH 2: Fillet of fenny snake,

In the cauldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt, and toe of frog,
Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork, and blindworm's sting,
Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing;
For a charm of pow'ful trouble
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL: Double, double, toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

WITCH 3: Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,

Witch's mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravined salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock, digged I' the dark;
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gail of goat, and slips of yew
Slivered in the moon's eclipse;
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips;
Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-delivered by a drab:
Make the gruel thick and slab.
And thereto a tiger's chaudron
For the ingredients of our cauldron.

ALL: Double, double, toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

WITCH 2: Cool it with a baboon's blood,

Then the charm is firm and good.

Hecate enters on raised platform.

HECATE: Well done! I commend your pains,
And every one shall share I the gains.
And now about the cauldron sing
Like elves and fairies in a ring,
Enchanting all that you put in.

WITCH 2: By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.
Open locks,
Whoever knocks!

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