

BBC

# Macbeth



Programme Notes by Stuart Rathe

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## Introduction

This teaching sequence provides a scheme of work to accompany **Macbeth** - an animated adaptation in eight short (5 minute) episodes from [BBC School Radio](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio).

There are various opportunities to meet Key Stage 2 National Curriculum requirements, including study of a significant author; reading techniques such as prediction, drawing inferences, clarification and summary; and drama and writing opportunities - including poetry performance, descriptive writing, persuasive writing, letter writing, newspaper article writing, poetry and play scripts. Each lesson sequence summarises the National Curriculum objectives at the start of the sequence.

Some of the lesson sequences require several lessons. Others require just one or two. An indication of the likely time required to cover each episode's lesson sequence is provided in each case. The entire sequence is likely to encompass four weeks of English teaching.

The titles in these Notes that are coloured blue have been hyperlinked to enable easy access the online episodes of Macbeth if you are connected to the internet.



# 1. The Weird Sisters

Lesson sequence for Episode 1: The Weird Sisters

Suggested timeframe: 1 week for this sequence

## Lesson sequence focus from National Curriculum

1. **Drama** (Participating in presentations, performances and role play using intonation, volume and movement)
2. **Reading** (Discussing and evaluating figurative language, making predictions and drawing inferences, summarising and clarifying the meaning of words in context)
3. **Writing** (Composition - Planning / Drafting and Writing / Evaluating and Editing). Writing genre - Descriptive writing, with additional teaching input required on organisational devices and figurative language techniques (simile / metaphor / personification).

## Starter / warm up: Macbeth greetings game

- Have children move around the classroom or hall space. Tell the children that during this warm up you will give a signal (eg clapping your hands) and upon the signal they should greet the nearest person to them in the space with a handshake, high-five or similar - a friendly greeting.
- Once they have done this a few times, give them a signal to stop. Explain that the next time they meet someone in the space they will be exhausted medieval soldiers. They have fought a long battle on foot and horseback with broadswords and daggers. They spot their best friend, who has also survived the long battle and they greet as two fatigued soldiers, delighted that their friend is still alive. Take feedback on how they might greet. (An embrace? What might they say?) Repeat the 'greeting' exercise with this scenario, using the same signals to start and stop the activity and repeating a few times so that children get to greet a number of classmates. Select a few pairings to 'show back' to the rest of the class.
- Next - introduce a third scenario. This time, remain paired with the last 'soldier' that you greeted. As you move together across the space, you spot something strange and eerie. On the signal, react in your pairs to this creepy presence. Again, repeat a few times, using the same signals to start and stop. Select a few pairings to 'show back' to the rest of the class.

## Watch 'The Weird Sisters' - Episode 1 of Macbeth

This lesson sequence will build to a descriptive retelling of the first episode with opportunities for use of figurative language techniques and organisational techniques such as paragraphing.



## Activity 1: Creating a battlefield

- Ask the children to close their eyes and listen to Episode 1 from 1 minute to 1 minute 20 seconds. Mind-map with the class the battle sounds they heard. (You may wish to supplement this with additional battle sounds. A YouTube search of 'Medieval battle sounds' should provide a number of possibilities). Children are likely to suggest cheers, cries, wails, horses, clanging armour, men crying or pleading for their lives, striking swords, etc. Gather as many suggestions as you can as it will assist with the next part of the activity.
- Put children into pairs and spread around the space. Ask children to decide on a different battle sound each. (Eg a shout, a 'clang', a sob, a pleading or a horse's whinny). In their pairs, they then have a battle sounds 'conversation', where one child makes his sound and the other responds with hers. They repeat this conversation, adding extra battle sounds, up to a maximum of three battle sounds per person, if they feel able. If they do not feel able to add extra sounds they may simply bounce the same single battle sound backwards and forwards in conversation. Stop and listen to a couple of examples.
- Next ask children to add a freeze-framed action (or actions) to go with each sound: eg a sword aloft ready to strike, or a crouched soldier shielding his face from a blow. Add the actions to the sounds and replay the 'conversation' with a sound per freeze. Again, show back a couple of examples.
- Finally, have the whole class play back their battle freezes / conversations simultaneously to create a battle action soundscape.

## Activity 2: Describing and creating the witches

- Hand out this extract from the original Shakespeare text, when Banquo describes the witches for the first time:

*What are these  
So withered and so wild in their attire  
That look not like the inhabitants of the earth  
And yet are on it? Live you? Or are you aught  
That man may question? You seem to understand me  
By each at once her choppy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips. You should be women  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so*



- Using inference and deduction skills, what can we tell about the witches from this speech? Discuss in groups and feedback as a whole class. Children may comment (with scaffolding from you) on language such as 'wild' and 'withered'. They may notice that the witches don't look human (not like the 'inhabitants of the earth') and on physical characteristics such as fat fingers, thin lips and beards.
- Use an internet search to look at the depictions of witches from past Macbeth productions and paintings. (It might be helpful to search using terms such as 'Male witches in Macbeth', 'Movie witches in Macbeth', 'Young witches in Macbeth' and 'Modern dress witches in Macbeth' prior to the lesson and create a diverse slideshow to show in the lesson). Discuss the various approaches to the witches in past productions - age, dress, male or female, etc. Does this go against the children's expectations of what a 'witch' looks like?
- Ask children to draw a picture of the three witches. Try to make each witch different to the next. One might be old and withered, the next might be young, one might be a male witch, etc. Use inspiration from the slideshow shown earlier in the lesson.
- In groups of three children now use drama to create their own trio of witches. They choose favourite elements from their own drawings and the slideshow of images to create a physical embodiment of the witch group. The witch group should have a single phrase: 'All Hail, Macbeth and Banquo!' Write this on the whiteboard and ask the children to try speaking this either in canon or unison, trying out different types of voices within their group - low, high, croaky, squeaky, giggly, etc. How will each witch move? Will he or she be bent and old with outstretched fingers, shy and childlike or inhuman and zombie-like? Watch some of the witch group dramas.

### Activity 3: Creating a battle drama sequence

- It is now time to put all the elements we have worked on so far together in one drama sequence. Two children will be at one end of the space, playing Macbeth and Banquo, greeting each other after the battle (as per the warm up activity at the start of the lesson sequence). One group of three children will be at the other end of the space, playing the Witch group (Activity 2). All other children will be in the space between, playing out their 'battle drama soundscape' (Activity 1) in pairs. On a given signal, the battle should commence. On a second signal, the battle should end, with all children sinking to the floor other than the Macbeth / Banquo and Witch group. At this point Macbeth and Banquo greet each other, spot the witches and the witches 'hail' them in their chosen way.
- Repeat this a number of times with different Macbeth / Banquo and Witch groups.





## Activity 4: Writing activity

- Rewatch Episode 1. This, with the drama enrichment above, could lead to a descriptive write based on the first episode. This could be divided into three paragraphs: i) the heath and the battle; ii) Macbeth and Banquo first see the witches; iii) the witches speak to Macbeth and Banquo).
- Remind children to include all the descriptive elements that we have worked on in our drama. They should hear the battle sounds in their heads, remember the relieved and exhausted greeting of Macbeth and Banquo, spot the Witch group and describe each witch, etc.
- Additional teaching of paragraphing, figurative techniques such as personification, simile and metaphor and speech punctuation (direct and reported) may be necessary.
- For initial scene setting, use an internet picture search for 'Blasted heath' which will provide many photo stimuli which could be printed or added to a PowerPoint slideshow to assist the children's descriptions.
- Children should be encouraged to plan their writing and to edit and improve after their first drafts.

## 2. All hail, Macbeth! Thane of Cawdor!

Lesson sequence for Episode 2: All hail, Macbeth! Thane of Cawdor!

Suggested timeframe: 1 day for this sequence

### Lesson sequence focus from National Curriculum

1. **Reading** (Making predictions and summarising, participating in discussion about texts, building on their own ideas and challenging the views of others and providing reasoned justification)
2. **Writing** (Composition - planning a character study)

### Resources

- Plot cards (see below)
- [Resource Sheet 1](#) and [Resource Sheet 2](#)

**Watch 'All hail, Macbeth! Thane of Cawdor!' - Episode 2 of Macbeth**



## Starter: Sequencing events

- Cut out the cards below and mix them up. (They are currently in the correct order). Have the children sequence the story and then write their own prediction on the final card for what will happen next. Share the correct order and discuss each group's predictions.

**Three weird witches plot and spin their spells. They plan to meet a man called Macbeth upon the heath.**

**Macbeth and Banquo fight Norwegian invaders and find themselves alone on a heath after the battle.**

**As Macbeth and Banquo head to King Duncan's camp they spot the three weird sisters.**

**The witches greet Macbeth and Banquo. They tell Macbeth that he is Thane of Cawdor and that he will be king one day.**

**The witches tell Banquo that he will never be king but his children will.**

**The witches disappear into the mist.**

**Macbeth and Banquo reach Duncan's camp and are told that Macbeth is now Thane of Cawdor, just like the witches promised.**

**Duncan says that his son Malcolm will be the next king. This worries Macbeth. Duncan then tells Macbeth he intends to visit him and Lady Macbeth in their castle at Dunsinane.**

**We meet Lady Macbeth - who is cruel and determined. She will do whatever it takes to make her husband King of Scotland.**

**And our prediction for what happens next is...**



## Main activity: Role on the wall

- We have already learned quite a lot about Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Discuss and mind-map what we know. Encourage use of adventurous vocabulary.
- Create a role on the wall for each character - an outline (life-size if possible) with the characteristics, hopes, fears and personal desires of each character written on the inside of the figure. On the outside of the figure, children provide details of how the character appears to others. This is best done in small groups. Post it notes can be used to add the information to the role on the wall.
- For example, Macbeth. *Inside the figure*: anxious about the witches' predictions / worried that Banquo's sons will be king / worried about Malcolm being the heir to the throne / devoted to his wife. *Outside the figure*: appears brave and courageous / honoured by the King as Thane of Cawdor.
- If children find the exercise difficult, then a whole class discussion prior to the exercise may assist.
- If there is time the children could create their own mini role on the wall in their books using the Role on the wall resource sheets for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. See [Resource Sheet 1](#) and [Resource Sheet 2](#) at the end of these notes.

## 3. Daggers for King Duncan

Lesson sequence for Episode 3: Daggers for King Duncan

Suggested timeframe: 3 days for this sequence

### Lesson sequence focus from National Curriculum

1. **Drama** (Participating in performances and role play using intonation, volume and movement)
2. **Reading** (Discussing and evaluating figurative language and clarifying the meaning of words in context)
3. **Writing** (Composition - Planning / Drafting and Writing / Evaluating and Editing) Writing genre - Narrative recount with direct or reported speech AND / OR Play Script writing, with additional teaching input required on direct and indirect speech and the organisational devices of play scripts





## Resources

- Shakespearean insults sheet (see hyperlink below)
- Mystery Words / Phrases (below)
- [Resource Sheet 3](#) (original script of *Lady Macbeth plots*) and [Resource Sheet 4](#) (comic-strip with speech bubbles for *Lady Macbeth plots*)

## Starter activity: Shakespearean insults

- Explain that in the episode we are about to watch, Lady Macbeth insults Macbeth and suggests that he is a coward. In Shakespeare's original script she calls him a cowardly cat for not wanting to kill Duncan.

## Watch 'Daggers for King Duncan' - Episode 3 of Macbeth

- Explain that Shakespeare used lots of amazing insults in his plays. Pick-and-mix Shakespearean insults are huge fun. A printable template can be found at either the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's Shakespeare Week site (which is free to join) or at the website PlayingWithPlays:

<http://shakespeareweek.org.uk/topics/drama-and-talking-shakespeare/#>

<http://playingwithplays.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/shakespeare-insult-generator.pdf>

- Print off one of the templates.
- Children should walk around the space with their insult generator sheets. When the teacher calls out, 'The bell tolls. It is time to kill Duncan!' children should find a partner and take it in turns to pretend that they are Lady Macbeth, by saying to their partner, 'Why haven't you killed him yet, you... [insert insult].' Move around the space again and do the same thing several times on the same signal, using a different insult each time.

## Main teaching - play scripts and speech punctuation

- There are two resource sheets for this lesson ([Resource Sheet 3](#) and [Resource Sheet 4](#)). The first is an adapted and shortened version of the original Shakespeare script for the scene where Lady Macbeth plots. Read through the scene as a whole class.



## Activity 1: Mystery Words / Phrases

- Write the following on the whiteboard or cut out and distribute as cards. Ask children to use clarification skills to ascertain what these words mean. They could use dictionaries, but it would be better if they could try to clarify meaning from the context of the scene and with the help of Episode 3, which they have just watched.

<b>GOLDEN OPINIONS</b>	<b>AFEARED</b>	<b>PEACE!</b>
<b>SCREW YOUR COURAGE TO THE STICKING PLACE</b>	<b>THIS TERRIBLE FEAT</b>	<b>FALSE FACE MUST HIDE WHAT THE FALSE HEART MUST KNOW</b>

Answers for teachers:

- Golden opinions* = high opinions (for his bravery in battle)
- Afeared* = frightened
- Peace!* = be quiet! Silence!
- Screw your courage to the sticking place* = tighten your courage until it is as firm as a screw hanging a picture on the wall (this is a tricky one but should generate some good discussion)
- This terrible feat* = this awful deed or thing I must do
- False face must hide what the false heart must know* = I must pretend to be friendly, knowing that I am going to kill Duncan later tonight

## Activity 2: Role playing the script

- In pairs, children use [Resource Sheet 3](#) to re-tell the story of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth planning the murder by creating their own drama duologue. Explain that they can use the original Shakespearean dialogue or a simplified version (it may help to re-watch Episode 3 again to give the children an idea of the simplified text) or they could use a combination of the two. They can even include a Shakespearean insult from their insult generator. Watch some of the dramas back.



### Activity 3: Creating a comic-strip using [Resource Sheet 4: Lady Macbeth plots](#)

- Now familiar with the story, the children fill in the comic strip bubbles. The resource has been designed so that the pattern of the speech follows the same sequence as the script resource, with Macbeth speaking first, followed by Lady Macbeth, etc.
- Tell children they should base the comic strip on their drama duologue - they should not feel inhibited by either the Animation script or the Original script, but they may use as many elements from each as they want to create their own discussion between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth about the killing of Duncan.

### Activity 4: Extended writing

- With the comic strip prepared, this could lead into an extended written piece, retelling the encounter between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, using a combination of direct speech / inverted commas and reported speech. Children should be encouraged to use the 'said' clause at either the start or the end of the speaker's speech or (for an extension) to use interrupted speech, with the said clause in the middle of the speech. Other teaching input could include better words for said and use of adverbs of manner.

### Alternative Activity 4: Play script writing

- Alternatively, this could lead to further work on play script writing. In Shakespeare's time, play scripts did not include conventions such as detailed stage directions or detailed scene setting. This is often thought to be because Shakespeare's own blank verse contained hidden direction for actors - the rhythm of the speech telling the actors how to speak the lines (especially important in Shakespeare's time because there was so little time for group rehearsal before performance).
- With further teaching input, children could work on re-writing the encounter between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as a modern play script with the usual play script conventions, including a scene-setting description at the start of the script, a list of characters (with ages, descriptions, etc) and stage directions (in terms of characters' movements, emotions and vocal intonations).



## 4. All hail, Macbeth! King of Scotland!

Lesson sequence for Episode 4: All hail, Macbeth! King of Scotland!

Suggested timeframe: 1 or 2 days for this sequence

### Lesson sequence focus from National Curriculum

1. **Drama** (Participating in presentations, performances and role play using intonation, volume and movement)
2. **Spoken language** (Articulating and justifying answers, arguments and opinions)
3. **Reading** (Making predictions and drawing inferences)
4. **Writing** (Composition - Planning / Drafting and Writing / Evaluating and Editing); Writing genre - Persuasive writing, with additional teaching input required on persuasive techniques (see below)

### Watch 'All hail, Macbeth! King of Scotland!' - Episode 4 of Macbeth

Pause the episode at 3 minutes 47 seconds:

- What do children think that Macbeth's plan will be? Ask children to discuss and report back. Did they anticipate that Macbeth would want to get rid of both Banquo and his son Fleance to ensure that the witches' prediction for Banquo cannot come true?
- Watch the rest of the episode, which deals with the introduction of the murderers.

### Activity 1: Conscience alley

Use the 'conscience alley' drama technique to become Macbeth's conscience. One half of the class should be the 'devil' on Macbeth's shoulder and the other half should be the 'angel' on his shoulder. Allocate a 'devil' or 'angel' role to each child and have them write down on a post-it note their reason, in role, for Macbeth to either kill Banquo or to let him live. Then have them line up to create an alley for Macbeth to walk down. The teacher should then walk down the alley in role as Macbeth, pausing for each child to give his or her reason. Ensure that this is a structured exercise and that you pause for each 'angel' / 'devil' so that all children can hear every justification.

Likely 'devil' justifications:

- You are just fulfilling the witches' wishes...it's got nothing to do with you!
- Your wife wanted you to kill Duncan and this is the next obvious step!
- If Banquo's children will be kings, you need to do this to protect yourself and your own children!
- Are you a man or a mouse? Just do it!



Likely 'angel' justifications:

- Banquo is your great friend.
- You have done enough bad stuff already - don't dig yourself in any deeper.
- You were once a brave and noble warrior. To kill your friend and his child is cowardly.
- Why do you want to trust those three wicked witches? They could be tempting you to hell!
- How do you even know if the witches are telling the truth?
- Even Lady Macbeth is likely to think that this is a bad idea. Don't do it!

If the children's own justifications do not include all of the above, the justifications above could be shared with the whole class.

## Activity 2: Short written task

- In role as either the 'devil' or the 'angel' write a persuasive argument or create a persuasive poster / leaflet for Macbeth telling him that he should - or should not - go through with the plan to kill Banquo.
- Additional teaching input: persuasive argument features may need teaching, including rhetorical questions, daring the reader to disagree with specified viewpoint, emotive language, etc.

## 5. A trap for Banquo

Lesson sequence for Episode 5: A trap for Banquo

Suggested timeframe: 1 day for this sequence

### Lesson sequence focus from National Curriculum

1. **Drama** (Participating in presentations, performances and role play using intonation, volume and movement)

### Resources

- Dialogue cards below (*Never shake your gory locks at me!* and *Sit, worthy friends. He will again be well!*) and [Resource Sheet 5: Banquo's ghost](#)

### Watch 'A trap for Banquo' - Episode 5 of Macbeth





## Drama focus – A terrifying banquet

- This lesson is best done in a large hall space or a classroom with all tables cleared.

### Drama warm up

- Ask the children to walk around the space as if they lived in the court of King Duncan - a happy place. How might you greet people as you move around the space? After a minute or so, give the children a line of dialogue to say as they walk. They can either say '**God save the King!**' or '**Great Happiness**' to each other as they meet (both lines from the start of the play during Duncan's reign). They should try to say these lines in a way that matches the overall tone of the court.
- After a while, ask the children to stop and tell them that they must now move around the space as if they were in the court of King Macbeth. They feel nervous. It is not a nice place to live. People are being murdered and there are nasty rumours going around that the King and his wife are involved! Perhaps they whisper secretly to each other and skulk in the shadows. After a minute or so, give the children a new line of dialogue to mutter as they walk. They can either say, '**A devil damned in evil!**' or '**A coward and a monster!**' (both are lines from later in the play about Macbeth and his reign). Again - they should try to match their intonation to the tone of the court, so this time they are likely to sob, whisper or speak angrily.

### Main activity

- After the warm up, tell the children that we will be creating the Banquet scene during which Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo.
- First, ask children to find a space. In their own space, think of three freeze-framed actions that represent a banquet or dinner party. For example: i) holding up a goblet for a toast; ii) biting a chunk from a chicken leg; iii) laughing with the person next to you. When children have come up with their three frozen poses, ask them to put the three together: when the teacher gives a repeated signal (eg the banging of a drum or clapping of hands) change the pose from one to the next in a never-ending sequence.
- Next give the children a line of dialogue to practise in role as Macbeth, when he sees Banquo's ghost: '**Never shake your gory locks at me!**' (NB: this is printed below should you wish to hand it to the children). Discuss how Macbeth might say this line: he will probably be terrified and confused. Have children move around the space muttering the line to themselves. Then ask them to move around the space saying the line as they imagine Macbeth says it. On a given signal (a drum or hand clap) each child should then meet another child in the space. By negotiation between them, one will play Macbeth and the other Banquo. The child playing Banquo should shake their head. Macbeth should respond in his terrified and confused voice with '**Never shake your gory locks at me!**' Repeat this several times so that children get a chance to meet up in several pairings and to play both Macbeth and Banquo.



- Now, repeat the above exercise, but this time give children a line of dialogue as Lady Macbeth (again this line is printed below): **'Sit, worthy friends. He will again be well!'** She says this when she notices Macbeth acting strangely and probably says it in a panic, while trying to sound in control. Have the children move around the space muttering the line to themselves. Then ask them to move around the space saying the line as they imagine Lady Macbeth says it. On a given signal (a drum or hand clap) each child should then meet another child in the space. By negotiation between them, one will play Lady Macbeth and the other a banqueting lord. The child playing Lady Macbeth should reassure the banqueting lord with **'Sit worthy friends. He will again be well!'** Repeat this several times so that children get a chance to meet up in several pairings and to play both Lady Macbeth and the lord.
- It is now time to put this together. Put children into groups of between six and ten. By negotiation, one child will play Macbeth, one Lady Macbeth, one Banquo's ghost and the rest will be the banqueting lords. Using the dialogue and actions they have practised so far, ask each group to develop the scene through improvisation. Give each group [Resource Sheet 5](#) as a template to help them develop their drama. Watch each drama back at the end of the lesson.

**Never shake your gory  
locks at me!**

**Sit worthy friends. He  
will again be well!**



## 6. Something wicked this way comes

Lesson sequence for Episode 6: Something wicked this way comes

Suggested timeframe: 3 days for this sequence (or longer if you choose to examine Shakespeare's rhythms in greater detail)

### Lesson sequence focus from National Curriculum

1. **Reading** (Preparing poems and plays to read aloud and to perform, showing understanding through intonation, tone and volume, so that the meaning is clear to an audience)
2. **Writing** (Composition – Planning / Drafting and Writing / Evaluating and Editing) Writing genre - Poetry, with additional teaching input required on use of a specified number of syllables per line (see teaching sequence)

### Resources (optional)

- [‘Once more unto the breach’](#) extract from *Henry V* (below); *Where's Will, Find Shakespeare hidden in his plays* by Tilly and Anna Claybourne

## Watch ‘Something wicked this way comes’ - Episode 6 of Macbeth

### Activity 1: Performing a witch's spell

- Macbeth features arguably the most famous spell in English literature. This is perfect for learning and reciting (in line with the KS2 curriculum requirements). In Shakespeare's original text, the witches cast this spell when Macbeth visits them for a second time.

***Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.  
Fillet of a 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 blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.***



- Children can work in groups of three or more to learn and recite this as a performance piece.

## Activity 2: Writing a witch's spell

- For this lesson, children will create their own magic spells using the same opening and closing couplets (in bold and italicised) as the original Shakespeare text, but with their own disgusting ingredients in between! Children could mind-map some of the ingredients they wish to include, making them as repulsive as possible!
- It is worth noting that there are seven syllables for each of the 'ingredients' lines which children could recite and clap as a whole class. Can they make their own 'ingredients' lines **seven beats long**?

## Activity 3: Blank verse - exploring Shakespearean rhythm and rap

- Shakespeare often wrote in 'blank verse' which is sometimes called iambic pentameter. The concept is actually very simple. It means that each line should have ten beats. Technically, it becomes important which beats are stressed and which are unstressed - but for KS2 children it will be fun to simply explore ten-beat lines. It's very easy to write ten-beat lines because it mirrors the way that we talk to each other on a day to day basis. For example:

*I'd like to have another cup of tea*

*I wonder if my friends will play football*

*What time is it? I hope it's dinner time!*

- All of the above examples have ten syllables per line. See if children can make up their own ten-beat lines. It helps to teach children that the rhythm is like a heartbeat:

*De-DUM, De-DUM, De-DUM, De-DUM, De-DUM*

- It is also possible to canter around the room to the rhythm as it is rather like the clip-clop of a horse's footfall.

This would be a good extension opportunity to look at a famous Shakespeare speech written in blank verse with ten beats.

This is an edited version of Henry V's battle cry at Harfleur. Cut it out and distribute among the class.



*Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;  
Or close the wall up with our English dead!  
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man,  
As modest stillness and humility;  
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,  
Then imitate the action of the tiger:  
Stiffen the sinews, conjure up the blood,  
Disguise fair nature with hard-favoured rage:  
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;  
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide;  
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,  
Straining upon the start. The game's afoot:  
Follow your spirit; and upon this charge,  
Cry 'God for Harry! England! and Saint George!'*





- Count the ten syllable lines. Can children find the one line that is NOT ten syllables? It's 'Then imitate the action of the tiger' - which has an extra syllable - probably indicating a break in the rhythm because of the key change from talk of stillness and humility to the hard featured soldier in war.
- Again - this is another piece that is good for learning and performing in line with the KS2 curriculum. There are lots of great versions of this speech to listen to and watch on YouTube for inspiration.
- If children want to examine this further, then they could write their own iambic pentameter poetry. An excellent stimulus book for this is *Where's Will, Find Shakespeare hidden in his plays* by Tilly and Anna Claybourne. This is a 'Where's Wally' style book focussing on a number of Shakespeare plays. The double-page illustrations are full of incredible detail and a Macbeth illustration is included. The detail produces a stimulus for some lovely writing and is well suited to creating collaborative, group iambic pentameter poems. For example, using the detail from the Macbeth illustration, children might come up with blank verse, ten-beat lines such as:

*A lighting flash, three witches cast dark spells*

*A smoking campfire, horses rear and neigh*

*A castle drawbridge, soldiers bearing arms.*

which could then be combined with other children's lines to create a group poem.

## 7. Preparing for battle

Lesson sequence for Episode 7: Preparing for battle

Suggested timeframe: 2 days for this sequence

### Lesson sequence focus from National Curriculum

1. **Drama** (Participating in role play - hotseating)
2. **Writing** (Composition - Planning / Drafting and Writing / Evaluating and Editing) Writing genre - Informal letter writing, with additional teaching required on the conventions of writing a letter to someone you already know

### Resources

- Lady Macbeth timeline (below)



## Macbeth - Programme Notes

Before watching the episode, write the following words on the board:

WOMAN  
WOODS  
MACDUFF

Can the children remember what the witches have prophesied for Macbeth in the last episode based on these clues? Allow children to discuss and feed back.

## Watch 'Preparing for battle' - Episode 7 of Macbeth

### Main activity: A letter from Lady Macbeth

- Ask the class to imagine how Lady Macbeth is feeling. Why does she seem to be losing her mind? Anticipate that children will understand that she feels guilty for what she has done.
- Tell the children that we are going to write a letter in role as Lady Macbeth to her husband, telling him how sorry she is and how much she regrets everything she has done and begging him to stop his reign of terror and confess all!
- Prior to writing the letter, create a timeline for Lady Macbeth on the whiteboard or cut out this timeline and distribute it to the class.

1. She learns that her husband has spoken to the witches.

3. She smears blood on the guards to make it look like they did the crime!

5. She worries about Macbeth when he sees the ghost of Banquo. She can't see anything...is he going mad?

2. She encourages Macbeth to kill King Duncan.

4. She begins to have regrets that Macbeth became king in this way. Why won't he tell her what he is plotting now?!

6. She feels so guilty! She begins to sleep walk, washing her hands and crying that she can't get the blood off!



- The timeline features are some of the elements that Lady Macbeth could develop in her letter.
- Children could also come up with questions for Lady Macbeth which the teacher could answer in role during a hot-seating activity to further prepare children to write. Additional teaching may be needed in the conventions of writing an informal letter (as this will be a letter from wife to husband).

## 8. Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane

Lesson sequence for Episode 8: Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane

Suggested timeframe: 2 to 3 days for this sequence

### Lesson sequence focus from National Curriculum

1. **Drama** (Participating in presentations, performances and roleplay using intonation, volume and movement)
2. **Writing** (Composition - Planning / Drafting and Writing / Evaluating and Editing) Writing genre - Newspaper report, with additional teaching input required on features of a newspaper report (headline, byline, orientation paragraph, main body, quotes / direct speech and reported speech / reorientation paragraph)

### Resources

- [Resource Sheet 6 - Freeze frame story summary](#)
- Spoof newspaper report from BBC archives - 60 Second Shakespeare (hyperlink): [http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes\\_macbeth.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes_macbeth.shtml)
- Presentation on newspaper report features (hyperlink): <https://prezi.com/saicq4scvzix/newspaper-articles-features/>

**Watch 'Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane' - the final episode of Macbeth**



## Starter activity

- Now that the children know the whole story of Macbeth, create a whole-class freeze-frame adaptation using [Resource Sheet 6](#) (an eleven point plot summary of the story). Cut Resource Sheet 6 into eleven strips. Split children into groups of, say four, and distribute the strips evenly between groups. Each group then creates a freeze-frame for their part or parts of the story. The freeze-frames are shown back to the whole class in order, with one child (or all children in unison) reading out their strip before showing their freeze-frame.

## Main activity

- Write a newspaper article about the Battle of Dunsinane. Firstly, mind-map with the children what they will need to include in the story:
  - details of Macbeth's reign of terror and crimes
  - details of the witches' predictions that Macbeth would not be killed by anyone born of woman or until the woods rose up against him
  - details of the fate of Lady Macbeth (ie that she went mad and died)
  - details of Macduff's victory and how he sliced Macbeth's head off!
  - details of Malcolm as the new King of Scotland
- You may need to remind children of the key features of a newspaper article. The following hyperlinked prezi presentation contains a summary of the main features:  
<https://prezi.com/saicq4scvzix/newspaper-articles-features/>
- You may need to remind children of how to include interviews with key witnesses - Macduff? Malcolm? The Witches? - through the use of reported and direct speech.
- The archived BBC site '60 Second Shakespeare' includes a Macbeth article which would be useful to analyse before children write their own. This can be located here and includes a print-friendly version:  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes\\_macbeth.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/60secondshakespeare/themes_macbeth.shtml)





**RESOURCE SHEET 1: *MACBETH* ROLE ON THE WALL  
CHARACTER SHEET**







**RESOURCE SHEET 2: *LADY MACBETH* ROLE ON THE WALL CHARACTER SHEET**



## RESOURCE SHEET 3: *LADY MACBETH PLOTS* *ORIGINAL SCRIPT*

Macbeth: We will proceed no further in this business  
Duncan has honoured me and I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people.

Lady Macbeth: Are you afeared?

Macbeth: Peace!  
I dare do all that may become a man!

Lady Macbeth: When you dare do it, THEN you were a man.

Macbeth: If we should fail!?

Lady Macbeth: We fail!?  
But screw your courage to the sticking place  
And we'll not fail.  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
The unguarded Duncan?

Macbeth: I am settled on this terrible feat.  
Away and mock the time with fairest show  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

**RESOURCE SHEET 4**  
**LADY MACBETH**  
**PLOTS**



## RESOURCE SHEET 5: *BANQUO'S GHOST*

- The guests arrive for dinner and are met by Lady Macbeth and Macbeth.
- They sit and eat (using your 3 action banquet drama).
- The ghost of Banquo enters (think about how he will move) and approaches Macbeth. No one else can see him.
- Banquo shakes his head at Macbeth.
- Macbeth is terrified. He delivers his line: *Never shake your gory locks at me!*
- The banqueting lords stop eating. They are confused and rise from their places!
- Lady Macbeth tries to calm everyone down with her line: *Sit, worthy friends. He will again be well!*
- Banquo creeps away and Macbeth cries: *Do you not see him?!*
- All the lords leave in a panic, leaving Macbeth and Lady Macbeth alone.



## RESOURCE SHEET 6: *FREEZE FRAME* *STORY SUMMARY*

1. Scottish lords and best friends Macbeth and Banquo defeat the Norwegian army in a mighty battle.
2. After the battle Macbeth and Banquo meet three witches who predict that Macbeth will be Thane of Cawdor and eventually king and that Banquo's sons will be king.
3. King Duncan congratulates Macbeth on winning the battle and makes him Thane of Cawdor, just as the witches predicted. Duncan makes his son Malcolm his heir to the throne.
4. Duncan visits Macbeth and his wife Lady Macbeth in their castle. Lady Macbeth is keen to be queen and she persuades Macbeth to kill Duncan in the night. She smears blood on the guards to make it look like they have done it.
5. Macbeth is crowned king and Lady Macbeth is crowned his queen.
6. Macbeth begins to worry about Banquo's sons being kings. He hires two killers to slay Banquo and his son Fleance. Banquo is murdered but Fleance escapes. He does not tell Lady Macbeth his plan.





7. At a dinner for his friends, Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost and becomes hysterical. Lady Macbeth tries to calm down the guests and reassure them that nothing is wrong.
8. Macbeth goes to see the three witches again. They tell him that he should be afraid of Macduff, but that no one born of woman can kill him and he will never be defeated until the woods rise up and walk towards his castle.
9. Macduff discovers that Macbeth has killed his wife and children and he raises an army to march on Macbeth's castle. Meanwhile, Lady Macbeth - full of guilt - begins sleepwalking and acting strangely.
10. Macduff's army take branches from the woods to camouflage themselves as they march on Macbeth's castle. Lady Macbeth kills herself and Macbeth is devastated.
11. Macbeth and Macduff fight. Macduff explains that he was cut from his mother after she died, so he was not 'born of woman'. He kills Macbeth. Malcolm is made King of Scotland.

