

Adapting the Bard



L3

**All the world's
a stage, and all
the men and
women merely
players.**

William Shakespeare

The enduring legacy of Shakespeare is the accessibility of the stories that he told. The feelings, needs and conflicts that his characters experience mirror concerns and issues experienced by humans in modern times.

Adapting plays from Shakespeare connects students to the past and develops understanding of the human condition.

Full and free texts of all of Shakespeare's plays are available here.



<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/>

Method

① Introduce the play

Explore this potted synopsis.



<https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/shakespeares-plays/macbeth/>

② Watch the play

This is a good grounding for kids. A little dated but gives an idea.

Avoid Polanski's version unless you feel like fielding endless frantic phone calls from parents regarding the content... and, you know... Polanski is a troublesome artist for various reasons.

③ No Fear Shakespeare

Introduce the students to No Fear Shakespeare. Sparknotes is a subscription site but if you are planning to do a bit of this sort of thing, it may be worth an investment.



<https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/>

④ Adaptation

Once the students can recount the plot confidently, ask them to think about whether they would like to set their adaptation in the 11th century context of the king upon which Shakespeare's Macbeth is loosely based. Or alternatively, would they prefer to set the play in a more contemporary context?

Setting the play in a modern contemporary idiom connects the ideas of the play to the students but a historical context allows them to dig deeper into the ideas of the past.

Once this decision is made, the students can start thinking about the practical ways in which they can stage the play.

- Costume.
- Props (weapons particularly)
- Lighting.
- Set.

⑤ Begin the writing process

This should be approached collaboratively as this will mean that there is contextual and stylistic consistency in the finished product. You can either decide to adapt the whole play (Well it's possible. Huge but possible — depends how much time and energy you have) or craft selected scenes that show the trajectory of Macbeth's descent.

⑥ Rehearsal of script

⑦ Costuming

⑧ Set and prop design

⑨ Performance

The performance of the completed play/scenes can serve several purposes.

Summative assessment opportunity for Drama.

Performance as part of a wider school arts festival.

Exposing students to well-regarded literature in an unthreatening way.

FUN!

**An example of an adaptation
could look like this**

Macbeth

**From Act One
— Scene Three**

From Act One — Scene Three

BANQUO

What are these
So wither'd and so wild in their attire,
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,
And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to
understand me,
By each at once her chappy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.

MACBETH

Speak, if you can: what are you?

First Witch

All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

Second Witch

All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

Third Witch

All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!

BANQUO

Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear
Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of
truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner
You greet with present grace and great
prediction
Of noble having and of royal hope,
That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak
not.
If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow and which will
not,
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear
Your favours nor your hate.

To

BANQUO

Who are these wrinkly, crazily dressed people?
You look like you shouldn't exist and yet here
you are.

Are you alive? Can we understand you?
You seem to understand me because you're
touching your lips with your crusty fingers.
You look like women but the beards are an
unusual touch.

MACBETH

Speak, if you can: what are you?

First Witch

Yo, Macbeth! Hi there, Duke of Glamis!

Second Witch

Yo, Macbeth, Hi there, Duke of Cawdor!

Third Witch

Yo, Macbeth, the one who will be King shortly!

BANQUO

Dude! What's up? You seem worried about this
cool news.

To witches

Are you spirits or real women? Tell me? You've
told my mate here so many cool things that
he's freaking out a bit to be
honest but you haven't told me anything.
If you can tell the future, what do I have to look
forward to...
not that I care or anything.

ALSO — later in the same scene

Ross

The king hath happily received, Macbeth,
The news of thy success; and when he reads
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,
His wonders and his praises do contend
Which should be thine or his: silenced with
that,
In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,
He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,
Nothing afraid of what thyself didst make,
Strange images of death. As thick as hail
Came post with post; and every one did bear
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,
And pour'd them down before him.

TO

Ross

Dude! The King has heard how you owned
the rebels in the battle yesterday!
He can't work out whether he's the cool
guy or whether you are.
He is stoked that you were right in the middle
of the battle, smashing the Norwegians. You
turned into a dark picture of death as you
fought and everyone is telling him how
amazing you are!

Curriculum links

Drama

Understanding drama in context

Investigate the functions and purposes of drama in cultural and historical contexts.

Developing ideas

Initiate and develop ideas with others to create drama.

Communicating and interpreting

Listening, Reading and Viewing

Present and respond to drama, identifying ways in which elements, techniques, conventions, and technologies combine to create meaning in their own and others' work.

English

Listening, Reading and Viewing

Recognises and understands the connections between oral, written, and visual language

Identifies particular points of view and begins to recognise that texts can position a reader

Speaking, Writing and Presenting

Uses oral, written, and visual language features to create meaning and effect and engage interest

Organises and sequences ideas and information with increasing confidence

Social Sciences

Although this resource concentrates on English and Drama, there is a potential connection to the Social sciences curriculum

Understand how cultural practices vary but reflect similar purposes.

Understand how people remember and record the past in different ways.