

# MACBETH STUDY GUIDE

by Jessa Cunningham, dramaturg

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## DRAMATURG'S NOTE: FIGHTING THE DARKNESS

**H**ave you ever made a decision that had a huge influence on your life? What drove you to make that choice? At the beginning of the play, Macbeth knows the path he is on for his life. He is content with where he is, and it isn't until outside forces work their way into his mind that he begins to question and change his direction. It only takes a little bit of darkness—in the form of the witches—to drastically alter Macbeth's path. And it's not pretty.



As you watch the show, try to notice the things that influence Macbeth and his choices. Is it the allure of power? Supernatural forces? People? Or, could it be a combination of a lot of things? The answer may not always be as simple and clear-cut as we think.

In this study guide, you will learn about the things that might have heavily influenced Macbeth, both the real person and the Shakespeare version. You will also have the chance to put yourself in Macbeth's place and make your own choices. How would you do against these forces that compel you? Would you make the same choice as Macbeth, consequences and all?

—Jessa Cunningham, dramaturg



Be sure to check out the lobby display! Write down a fear or other thing that could control your life and throw it in the cauldron to get rid of it!



## THE REAL STORY OF MACBETH

**M**acbeth was a real person a long time ago—in the 1000's to be exact. However, what you see in this show is not exactly how things happened in reality. Here's the real story of Macbeth:

- 1005 AD Mac Bethad mac Findláich (Macbeth) was born to Finlay, an earl of an ancient Celtic province in Scotland, and his wife, Donada.
- 1040 AD Macbeth killed the ruling king, Duncan I, in a battle. He was then crowned king of Scotland.
- 1045 AD Macbeth killed Duncan I's father, Crinan, in another battle, further solidifying his role as king.
- 1054 AD Macbeth was challenged by Siward, who wanted to reclaim the throne for Duncan's son, Malcolm Canmore.
- 1057 AD Macbeth was killed in battle by Malcolm, who then became known as Malcolm III.

Overall, Macbeth ruled for 17 years. He was a good king who emphasized law and order in his kingdom. He also supported the practice of Christianity.

As you will see, the Macbeth Shakespeare wrote and the real Macbeth are quite different. Why did Shakespeare change his character? For information on that, check out the 4th Wall!

If you were to write a play about a real person, who would you choose? What would you change about them?



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MACBETH AT 4TH WALL DRAMATURGY  
[4thwalldramaturgy.byu.edu/category/macbeth](http://4thwalldramaturgy.byu.edu/category/macbeth)



# MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION IN ANCIENT SCOTLAND

**S**uperstition and the supernatural played a big role in the lives of ancient Scots. Belief in magic and fairies and other sorts of pagan beliefs were widespread among the people. Druidism, the belief that some philosophers and wise men also acted as wizards and prophets, was a popular notion and even was incorporated into some Celtic kings' rules. King Conchobar mac Nessa, a Celtic king of great legend, was said to use druids in his royal court. Here are a few things that many Scots during this time might have believed:

- ✦ Fairies existed, and they would dispense supernatural charms and knowledge of the future. Some Scots even believed that fairies kidnapped people!
- ✦ Witchcraft was real, and people could harness the power of the earth in order to do magical things, both good or bad.
- ✦ Druids had the power of divination, meaning that they could tell people their futures.



Not all of the beliefs of the ancient Scots focused on witchcraft or divination; many times they turned to druids to ensure successful harvests. Calves and other offerings were put on altars in order to protect the food the people would farm. There were even some superstitions that influenced how people ate. For instance, in the Scottish Highlands, many believed that eels grew from horsehairs and that anyone who ate them would go wildly insane. We don't believe that now, but back then it was quite ordinary for someone to avoid eel for this very reason.

We all have our superstitions and beliefs, which means we're not so different from the characters in the play. What are some of the superstitions the characters have? Do you have any superstitions?



## WHAT IS A SUPERSTITION?

It is a custom or action based on a certain belief that doesn't seem very logical.



## DID YOU KNOW...

There is a superstition in the theatre concerning this very play. According to several stories, some scary things have happened in the past with this show. In fact, many actors and designers will not say the name of the show for fear of cursing the production—they call it “the Scottish play.” So whatever you do; don't say its name in the theatre!



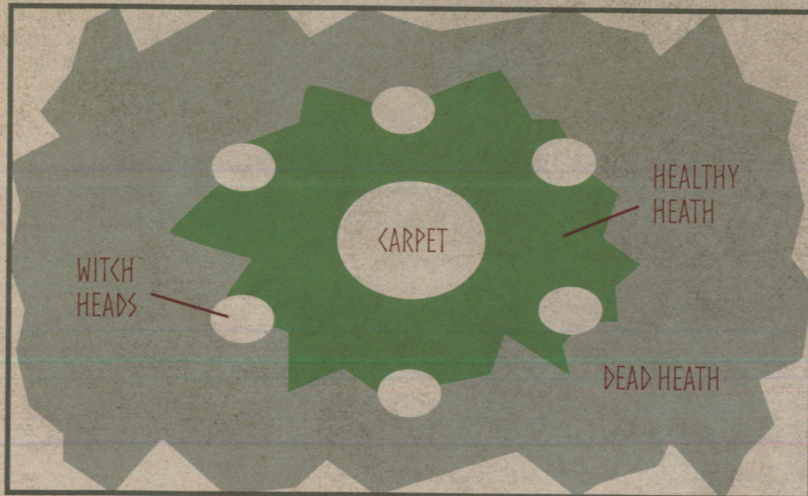
## DESIGNER HIGHLIGHT

Set designer Kayla Doyle combined the geography of Scotland and its superstitions together to create a spooky world for the characters (and audience).

First she put a heath, which is a patch of grass, in the middle of the stage, where most of the action happens. Then she surrounded the heath with rocks—which she calls witches' heads. The resulting circle creates a sort of fairy ring.

Fairy rings have had a role in folklore in many different cultures. Some believed that fairy rings marked the sign of a witch, while others believed them to be the result of elves and fairies dancing. Either way, it is common for cultures to have the belief that fairy rings are a sign of supernatural forces. Many people think that fairy rings are dangerous and should be avoided, so be careful not to step on the stage!

What else do you notice about the set? How does the atmosphere it creates make you feel? If you were a part of the show, how would you act in the fairy ring?



## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

By the close of the show, you will know how Macbeth's story ends. Now, it is your turn to make the choice. If you were in Macbeth's shoes, how would you respond to the witches that appear in the beginning of the play? Draw your answer in the box below.





## AUTOGRAPHS



fter the show, go and get the lovely actors to autograph this page for you! They aren't scary like some of their characters, so don't be shy. They'd love to meet you and talk to you!

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT MACBETH AT 4TH WALL DRAMATURGY  
[4thwalldramaturgy.byu.edu/category/macbeth](http://4thwalldramaturgy.byu.edu/category/macbeth)





## PRODUCTION STAFF

### Teresa Dayley Love Director

An adjunct faculty member with BYU's Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Teresa Love also works with the Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program through BYU's A.R.T.S. Partnership, helping educators engage students in learning through drama. Teresa is pleased to serve on the Noorda Children's Theatre Advisory Board, Utah Valley University. Author of over fifty produced plays, Teresa most recently directed *Water Sings Blue* (based on Kate Coomb's award winning poetry) for the Young Company. For this production, Teresa is especially grateful to the Macbeth Advisory Group, a delightfully helpful group of boys, ages 9–13.

### Kayla Doyle Scenic Designer

From Colorado Springs, Colorado, Kayla Doyle is a senior studying scenic design and costume construction.

### Jessa Cunningham Dramaturg

From Charleston, South Carolina, Jessa Cunningham is a senior studying theatre arts studies with a minor in history. Recent credits include dramaturg for *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Charlotte's Web*, both at BYU.

### Susan Kupferer Lighting Designer

From Irvine, California, Susan Kupferer is a junior studying stage management and light design. Recent credits include assistant stage manager of *Mother Courage and Her Children* and production stage manager of *The Importance of Being Earnest* here at BYU. She is excited to be involved in this production of *Macbeth* as the lighting designer.

### Shelby Ré Renshaw Makeup Designer

From Sandy, Utah, Shelby Renshaw is a graduating senior studying theatre studies with an emphasis in makeup design and a minor in ballroom dance. Recent credits include assistant makeup designer in *The Importance of Being Earnest* at BYU, an intern makeup artist for BYU T.V.'s Studio C, and a guest makeup designer for Mountain West Ballet's *Sleeping Beauty*. She has also worked as a hair and makeup supervisor/artist on BYU's productions of *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Charlotte's Web*.

### Minkyong Park Production Stage Manager

From South Korea, Minkyong Park (a.k.a MK) is a senior studying theatre arts, with an emphasis in stage management. Most recently, she assistant stage managed for *Beauty and the Beast* at BYU. She spent last summer in England studying Shakespearean works. She's excited to be part of this production.

### Matthew Schlitters Properties Designer

From Rochester Hills, Michigan, Matthew Schlitters is a freshman studying physics—astronomy with a minor in economics. This is Matthew's first show at a college level. Matthew was super excited to be a part of this show and learned a lot from all the wonderful people he worked with. He is looking forward to all the other shows he can be a part of. Hope you enjoy the show!

### Nels Andersen Drum Consultant

Nels has been facilitating drumming events since 2009 and engages over 1,500 people per month in group-drumming at DrumBus.

### Macbeth Advisory Group

Cole Andrew  
Carson Andrew  
Ashton Hansen  
Trey Hansen  
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\*BYU Arts Production

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Education and related artistic programs are made possible through the generosity of the National Committee for the Performing Arts and the President's Advisory Committee on the Arts.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants, and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers, and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction, and performance.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

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