

MACBETH

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

IMPORTANT DATES

- 1536 Henry VIII has Anne Boleyn, his second wife (and mother of Elizabeth I) beheaded for “treason”
- 1553 Mary “Bloody Mary” takes the throne of England
- 1558 Elizabeth I ascends to the throne of England
- 1564 William Shakespeare is born
- 1588 England defeats the Spanish Armada
- 1594 Lord Chamberlain’s Men is formed as the players (actors) who performed Shakespeare’s plays
- 1600 East India Company formed
- 1603 Elizabeth dies; James I becomes king of England
- 1605 “Gunpowder Plot” on November 5th
- 1606 Macbeth is written (most likely/speculative date)
- 1616 Shakespeare dies



FAMILY TREE

- Henry VIII had SIX wives during his reign as king of England
- He wanted a son but alas for a long time only had daughters—so he broke from the Catholic Church and formed the Church of England so he could legally annul his first marriage and remarry

CATHERINE OF ARAGON



- First wife of Henry VIII and mother of Mary I (later queen of England)
- The breakup of their marriage caused a massive break with the Roman Catholic Church and broke ties with the Pope and the King

QUEEN MARY I



- Henry VIII was finally able to have a son with his third wife but the son died and Mary I became queen
- She wanted everyone in England to denounce Protestantism and become Catholic and her reign was marked by religious and political upheavals
- She became known as “Bloody Mary” for executing at least 280 Protestant dissenters

ANNE BOLEYN



- Second wife of Henry VIII and mother of Elizabeth
- Beheaded for “treason” but the charges were false—Henry VIII wanted a son and thought it was her fault for not giving him one

QUEEN ELIZABETH I (REIGN: 1558-1603)



- Elizabeth spent much of her childhood being labeled a “bastard” because of her mother’s marriage to Henry VIII
- She was imprisoned by her half-sister, Queen Mary, because she was a Protestant
- At age 25, Elizabeth took the throne for one of the longest and most successful reigns in English history

THE VIRGIN QUEEN



- Elizabeth never married or had children (she named herself “the Virgin Queen”)
- Her reign was marked by its comparative peace and stability
- Elizabeth encouraged the arts and allowed playwrights (like William Shakespeare) to flourish

KING JAMES I (REIGN: 1603-1625)



- After Elizabeth died without an heir, the son of one of her rivals, Mary Queen of Scots (not to be confused with Queen Mary I) became King James I
- The “Golden Age” of the Elizabethan Era continued with James I
- Another patron of the arts (the English translation of the King James Bible is named after him)
- Shakespeare wrote some of his best plays during the early 17th century when King James reigned (King Lear, Othello, Antony and Cleopatra, and Macbeth)

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1554-1616)

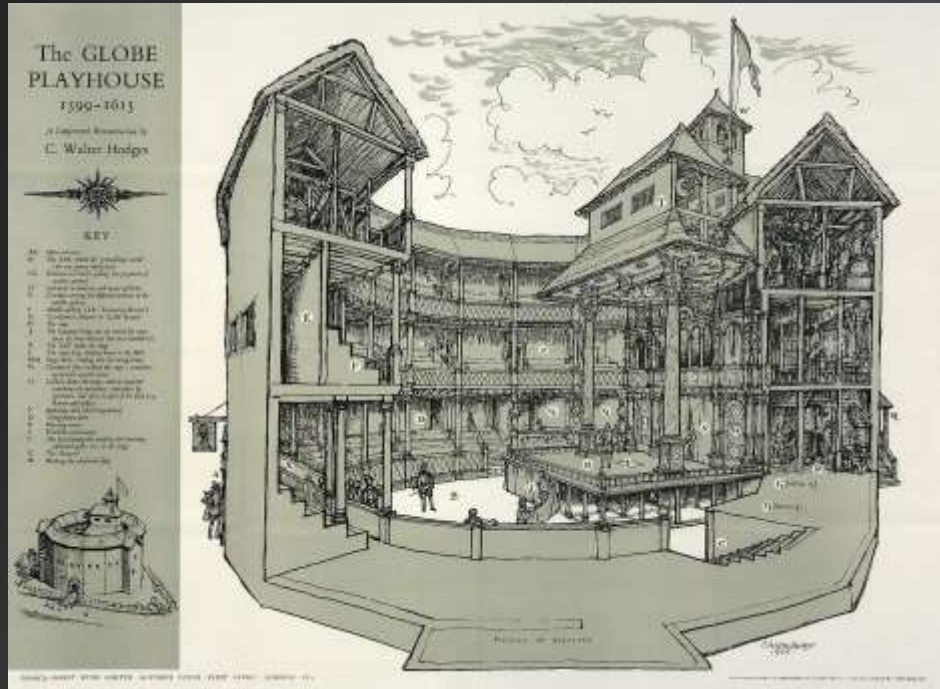


- Known as “the Bard” and universally recognized as one of the greatest English writers, with every major language having translated his plays
- Wrote plays at the beginning of “modern” plays (secular and for entertainment rather than religious and didactic)
- During his own time, he was one of many playwrights and his genius was not fully recognized until the 18th century
- Much about his private life is unknown

HOW MANY PLAYS DID “THE BARD” WRITE?

- The general consensus is that Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays.
- No one can know for certain because of the inexact documentation at the time the plays were first being organized and published. If we include *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and two lost plays attributed to Shakespeare, *Cardenio* and *Love's Labour's Won*, then we could say he wrote, either alone or in collaboration, forty plays. Moreover, in the last few years many critics have begun to reassess a play called *Edward III*, currently grouped with a collection of eleven other plays known as the Shakespeare Apocrypha. *Edward III* bears striking similarities to Shakespeare's early histories. Another play, *Sir Thomas More* has also been under debate. Handwriting analysis has led scholars to believe that Shakespeare revised parts of *Sir Thomas More*, but, like *Edward III*, it is not part of the standard collection of Shakespeare's plays.

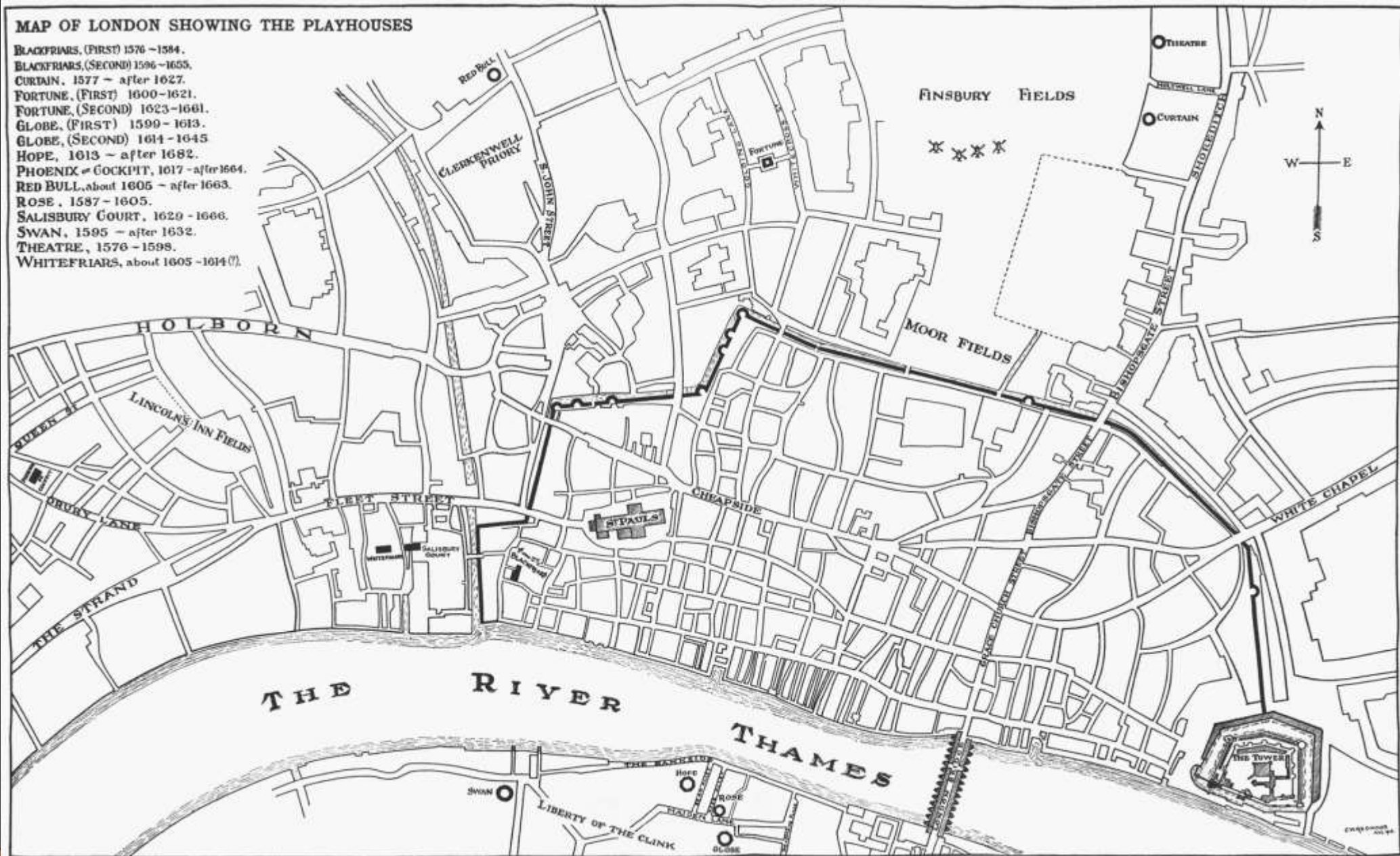
THE GLOBE THEATRE



- Shakespeare's plays were not meant to be read but performed (indeed, his plays were not published until after his death)
- The Globe was a playhouse in which many of his plays were seen during the day and all characters were played by male actors (young boys played the women)
- Not a "high-class" location (near peasants and lower-class neighborhoods) and nobles could "rub shoulders" with the poor while watching the plays
- The illiterate could enjoy the plays
- The Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men) were Shakespeare's company of actors

MAP OF LONDON SHOWING THE PLAYHOUSES

BLACKFRIARS, (FIRST) 1576-1584.
 BLACKFRIARS, (SECOND) 1596-1655.
 CURTAIN, 1577 - after 1627.
 FORTUNE, (FIRST) 1600-1621.
 FORTUNE, (SECOND) 1623-1661.
 GLOBE, (FIRST) 1599-1613.
 GLOBE, (SECOND) 1614-1645.
 HOPE, 1613 - after 1682.
 PHOENIX & COCKPIT, 1617 - after 1664.
 RED BULL, about 1605 - after 1663.
 ROSE, 1587-1605.
 SALISBURY COURT, 1629-1666.
 SWAN, 1595 - after 1632.
 THEATRE, 1576-1598.
 WHITEFRIARS, about 1605-1614 (?).



THE GLOBE STAGE

The stage had two primary parts: 1) The outer stage, which was a rectangular platform projecting into the courtyard, from the back wall. Above it was a thatched roof and hangings but no front or side curtains. 2) The inner stage was the recess between two projecting wings at the very back of the outer stage. This stage was used by actors who were in a scene but not directly involved in the immediate action of the play, and it was also used when a scene took place in an inner room.

Underneath the floors of the outer and inner stages was a large cellar called "hell", allowing for the dramatic appearance of ghosts. This cellar was probably as big as the two stages combined above it, and it was accessed by two or more trap-doors on the outer stage and one trap door (nicknamed "the grave trap") on the inner stage. Actors in "hell" would be encompassed by darkness, with the only light coming from tiny holes in the floor or from the tiring-house stairway at the very back of the cellar.

LOOKING AHEAD: 1642 TO 1660

- Playhouses were closed for two decades because of the conservative and controlling religious powers of the Puritans taking over the political landscape of England
- Milton's *Paradise Lost* (the epic poem our pal Frankenstein's monster liked to read) was largely an allusion to the civil war between Charles I (King James' son) and the Parliament
- Charles II being "restored" to the throne in 1660, brought theater back to England (and women were then allowed to act on stage)

ELIZABETHAN ERA FASHION



LANGUAGE FROM SHAKESPEARE'S ERA

Your use of old fashioned words should make you sound old fashioned, not ignorant. Notice these usages.

Wherefore means *Why*.

'Whyfor' is a made up word. Use wherefore when you mean "why", and where when you mean "where".
(Juliet did not say "Whyfor art thou Romeo?")

Mayhap is 'singular.'

Don't say 'mayhaps.'
(You're thinking of 'perhaps.') To avoid confusion, try 'belike'.

Stay means "to wait".

If you mean to say that someone is waiting for you, and you are late (or whatever),
Say: I am stayed for.

Ta'en is short for taken.

Use ta'en for to mean "mistaken for". As in:
I fear thou hast ta'en me for someone else.
My brother is oft ta'en for me and I for him.

LANGUAGE IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

Instead Of...

Okay

Wow!

Excuse me

Please

Thank you

Gesundheit!

Air head

Bottom line

Bathroom

Certainly!

Nay not

Say...

Very well, 'Tis done, As you will, Marry shall I

Marry! 'Zounds (God's wounds, pron: ZOONDS) I'faith! Hey-ho! God's Death! What ho!

Forgive me, Pray pardon, I crave your forgiveness, By your leave

Prithee (I pray thee), If you please, An thou likest, An it please you, By your leave, An thou wilt, An you will

Gramercy, I thank thee, My thanks, God reward thee

God Save You!

Lightminded, Airling

In the end, At bottom, In the main, Finally, In the final analysis

Privy, Jakes, Ajax, Little room of office

Certes! (sir-tees) *Usage Note:* Certes means certainly, not certain. Do not say "I am certes that I paid that account." And never use it to replace "sure" as in "They will be married for certes."

Nay, I shall not. Nay, it is not so. (Just say *nay*.)

FIGURES OF SPEECH

- 1. **Simile** (Lat. *similis*, like) is a comparison between two things.

"This is the sergeant
Who *like a good and hardy soldier* fought
'Gainst my captivity." I. ii. 3-5.

"Doubtful it stood;
As two spent swimmers, that do cling together
And choke their art." I. ii. 7-9.

"*As thick as hail* came post with post." I. iii. 97.

FIGURES OF SPEECH

- **Metaphor** (Gr. *meta*, change; *phero*, I carry) is a figure of substitution; one thing is put for, or said to be, another. Metaphor is a simile with the words *like* or *as* omitted.

"Kind gentlemen, your pains,
Are register'd, *where every day I turn*
The leaf to read them." I. iii. 150, 151.

[Here Macbeth speaks of his memory as a book.]

MACBETH

- Known as “the Scottish play” (people call Macbeth this during performances due to a superstition that saying “Macbeth” is bad luck)
- Shakespeare’s shortest play (nearly half the size of *Hamlet*)
- King James I was Shakespeare’s patron (keep in mind, he used to be King of Scotland and Macbeth is set in Scotland)
- King James I had written on witchcraft and was quite paranoid over kings getting murdered (both his parents were killed after all)
- The story of Macbeth had contemporary relevance...
- The year before Macbeth was first performed, the “Gunpowder Plot” occurred—a failed attempt to assassinate the King (“Remember the fifth of November”)

THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

- There was still unrest over the Protestant religion in England
- Catholic dissenters plotted to blow up the House of Lords and kill King James I
- The plot was discovered and Guy Fawkes was found with 36 barrels of gunpowder, ready to destroy the House of Lords with it
- The rebels were hanged for acts of treason but today England now celebrates “Guy Fawkes Day” on November 5th and you might be familiar with his mask in “V for Vendetta” in popular film and comics



GUY FAWKES MASK





MACBETH AND
BANQUO AND THE
THREE WITCHES

THE “WEIRD SISTERS” (WITCHES)

- In the Folio edition (earlier edition of the play) the spelling is *weyward*. Our modern-day meaning of weird, i.e., odd or strange, is not really accurate. *Weird* here comes from the Anglo-Saxon *wyrd*, and means fate or destiny. Thus the Weird Sisters are foretellers of Macbeth's fate.

MACBETH ACT I

- Tightly compact play with symmetry (plays begins and ends with battles) and some interesting and clear motifs and tropes (blood)
- Political play (focus on assassination of a king) but also domestic (Lady Macbeth and her husband are a major aspect of the play)
- Macbeth's complexity as a character derives largely from moments of paradox and uncertainty ("fair is foul and foul is fair" reads like double-speak)

SOURCES FOR MACBETH

- Shakespeare's chief source for *Macbeth* was Holinshed's *Chronicles (Macbeth)*, who based his account of Scotland's history, and Macbeth's in particular, on the *Scotorum Historiae*, written in 1527 by Hector Boece. Other minor sources contributed to Shakespeare's dramatic version of history, including Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*, and *Daemonologie*, written in 1599 by *King James I*. Macbeth's words on dogs and men in Act 3, scene 1, (91-100), likely came from *Colloquia*, the memoirs of Erasmus (edition circa 1500). The plays of Seneca seem to have had great influence on Shakespeare, and, although no direct similarities to the work of *Seneca* can be seen in *Macbeth*, the overall atmosphere of the play and the depiction of *Lady Macbeth* can be attributed to the Latin author.

An examination of *Macbeth* and Shakespeare's sources leads us to formulate several conclusions concerning the motives behind the dramatists alterations. It can be argued that the changes serve three main purposes: the dramatic purpose of producing a more exciting story than is found in the sources; the thematic purpose of creating a more complex characterization of Macbeth; and the political purpose of catering to the beliefs of the reigning monarch, King James the First. And, in the grander scheme, Shakespeare's alterations function to convey the sentiment echoed in many of his works – that there is a divine right of kings, and that to usurp the throne is a nefarious crime against all of humanity.

TRAGEDY

- Aristotle wrote on the “rules” on tragedy and Shakespeare was influenced by Aristotle's' works
- Aristotlean Tragedy Rules
- (1) A Tragedy must not be the spectacle of a perfectly good man brought from prosperity to adversity. For this merely shocks us. (2) Nor, of course, must it be that of a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity: for that is not tragedy at all, but the perversion of tragedy, and revolts the moral sense.
- (3) Nor, again, should it exhibit the downfall of an utter villain: since pity is aroused by undeserved misfortunes, terror by misfortunes befalling a man like ourselves.
- (4) There remains, then, as the only proper subject for Tragedy, the spectacle of a man not absolutely or eminently good or wise who is brought to disaster not by sheer depravity but by some error or frailty.
- (5) Lastly, this man must be highly renowned and prosperous — an Oedipus, a Thyestes, or some other illustrious person.

SOLILOQUY

- A device often used in drama when a character speaks to himself or herself, relating thoughts and feelings, thereby also sharing them with the audience, giving off the illusion of being a series of unspoken reflections.^[1] If other characters are present, they keep silent^[2] and/or are disregarded by the speaker.^[3]
- The term soliloquy is distinct from a monologue or an aside: a monologue is a speech where one character addresses other characters; an aside is a (usually short) comment by one character towards the audience, though during the play it may seem like the character is addressing him or herself.
- Shakespeare often employs soliloquys in his plays
- His most famous is the “to be or not to be” soliloquy in Hamlet—
- In Macbeth, the first one arrives at the end of Act I...

“IF IT WERE DONE WHEN 'TIS DONE, THEN 'TWERE
WELL
IT WERE DONE QUICKLY”

- If I could guarantee no further complications arise from the murder, and the whole matter would be neatly concluded, then it would be best to kill Duncan and kill him quickly: "If it were *done* [finished] when 'tis done." Note the foreshadowing in these lines. Wrestling with the consequences of Duncan's murder will be Macbeth's downfall.

ANALYSIS OF FIRST SOLILOQUY

- Macbeth's first soliloquy reaffirms that the Witches, by informing him that he will be "king hereafter" (1.3.50), have merely kindled his own innermost desire to obtain the throne. Their prediction may encourage Macbeth to act upon his secret thoughts, as does the prodding of Lady Macbeth, but it does not dictate Macbeth's course of action.

Macbeth makes a conscious choice to forsake morality and pursue his "Vaulting ambition" (28). This soliloquy exposes Macbeth's conflicting feelings about the murder. His first thoughts revolve around the consequences of committing the crime. In lines 1-12 his primary concern and reason for hesitation is the possibility that someone will exact that "even-handed Justice" (10) upon him. Once Macbeth usurps the throne there will be others who will plot to steal it from him.

REFERENCES TO THE BIBLE

- **Banquo:** If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me (1.3.60)

Commentary: Banquo, unconvinced that the Witches can foresee the future, makes reference to Ecclesiastes 11.6: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

Banquo: And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths, (1.3.123-4)

Commentary: Satan using Holy Scripture to lead us into sin is a common theme throughout the Bible. In Corinthians 11.13-14 we are told, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light". In Matthew 4.6, Satan attempts to use Scripture to tempt the Lord: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Jesus replies, "It is written again/Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Macbeth: Come what come may
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day. (1.3.156-7)

Commentary: A reference to two passages from the Bible: John 9.4: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man works"; and Job 7.1,2: "Is there not an appointed time to man upon the earth? and are not his days as the days of an hireling. As a servant longeth for the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the end of his work."