

Macbeth: plot synopsis

Following a successful battle, Macbeth and Banquo are confronted by three witches on a heath.

These witches make three statements:
Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor; Macbeth will become King;
Banquo will father kings but never be King

The first prophecy is fulfilled immediately. Macbeth becomes the Thane of Cawdor.

Macbeth is taunted by Lady Macbeth until he agrees to murder King Duncan. The second prophecy is fulfilled when Macbeth becomes King after the murder and Duncan's sons flee.

Worried by the third prophecy, Macbeth arranges the deaths of Banquo and his son, Fleance. Fleance escapes.

Banquo's ghost haunts Macbeth. His conscience troubles him.

Macbeth seeks out the witches and three further prophecies are made:
Macbeth is to be wary of Macduff; Macbeth will not be beaten until Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane; No-one born of woman can harm Macbeth.

Macbeth orders the deaths of Lady Macduff and her children after Macduff joins Duncan's heir, Malcolm, to prepare for battle.

Lady Macbeth, once strong, is conscience-stricken and can no longer sleep. She begins to lose her reason and suicides as Malcolm's army approaches.

Macbeth feels confident about the upcoming battle until he sees Birnam Wood "moving".

He finally realises he is defeated when, face to face with Macduff in battle, Macduff tells him he was "from his mother's womb, untimely ripped".

Macduff kills Macbeth, Malcolm becomes King of Scotland. Order is restored.