



# Year 8 Knowledge Organiser: Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Macbeth

**WHO**  
 William Shakespeare was a famous actor and playwright based in London. He is the most performed British playwright ever. He was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. The exact date of his birth is not known but many believe it to be the 23<sup>rd</sup> April as he was baptised on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 1564 and most babies were baptised three days after birth. Shakespeare died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1616.








**WHAT**  
 Shakespeare wrote 38 plays and 154 sonnets. Shakespeare's plays generally fall into three categories: comedies, tragedies and histories. Shakespeare's plays had the royal seal of approval. Both Queen Elizabeth I and James VI of Scotland and I of England would often hire Shakespeare's company to come and perform at the Royal Court. In the Shakespearian era all roles were performed by men and young boys, women were not allowed to perform.

**WHERE**  
 Shakespeare was born in Stratford Upon-Avon but lived in London from around 1590 – 1613 with his wife Anne Hathaway and his three children Susanna, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet died in 1596, and Shakespeare appeared to name his most famous character 'Hamlet' after him. Shakespeare was part of a theatre company called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later known as The King's Men. They regularly performed at a place called 'The Theatre', but after a dispute with the landlord, they took the building apart and rebuilt it across the river naming it 'The Globe'. The large, open-air theatre, accommodated people from all walks of life. If you were poor, you could only afford tickets to the ground floor where there were no seats and you were exposed to the cold, wind and rain that came in through the open top. The people who watched from this area were known as 'stinkards'. If you were rich, you could afford to sit in the higher-level, covered galleries in a comfy seat – away from the smelly poor people.

**THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH**  
 Macbeth is believed to have been performed in 1606.

Upon meeting 3 witches on the heath, Macbeth is told he will become Thane of Cawdor and then King of Scotland. The power hungry nobleman along with his wife kill the King and later Macbeth's friend Banquo as the witches said Banquo's son would be king. Macbeth is told by the witches that he should fear Macduff but that "no man of woman born can harm Macbeth". Macbeth has Macduff's wife and children killed. Macduff along with Malcom (Duncan's son) invade Scotland with the aim to kill Macbeth and take power. Lady Macbeth is driven insane and dies. Malcolm's army attacks, and Macduff fights Macbeth. Macduff reveals that he "was from his mother's womb untimely ripped", and kills Macbeth. Malcolm is crowned king of Scotland.

**CHARACTERS**

	<b>Macbeth</b> – A warlike Scottish Lord who betrays and murders his king to get power		<b>Macduff</b> – A Scottish Lord who seeks revenge on Macbeth
	<b>Lady Macbeth</b> – Macbeth's ambitious and cold-blooded wife		<b>The witches</b> Strange figures who predict Macbeth will become king
	<b>Duncan</b> – A good and noble Scottish king who is murdered by Macbeth		<b>Malcolm</b> – Duncan's son and heir, who flees to England after the murder
	<b>Banquo</b> – Macbeth's friend, who also receives a prophecy from the witches		

**THEMES**

Power	Greed	Fate
Violence/death	Witchcraft	
	Good versus Evil	
	Madness	

**GLOSSARY**

**Thane** – In Scotland, a man, often the chief of a clan, like an English Lord.

**Heath** – a bare piece of land in the countryside.

**Fate** - The development of events outside a person's control, regarded as determined by a supernatural power.

**Prophecies** - A prediction of what will happen in the future.

**Proclaimed** - Announced officially or publicly.

**To yield** – To surrender

**From his mother's womb, untimely ripped**- Today we would call this a caesarean section, where the baby is delivered by operation through the stomach..

**SHAKESPERIAN TECHNIQUES**

**Sonnet**- A poem of fourteen lines using rhyme schemes. Typically having ten syllables per line.

**Asides**- When a character's dialogue is spoken but not heard by other characters.

**Soliloquy** – A speech performed by one actor that only the audience hear.

**Dramatic Irony**- The audience know something that the characters do not.

**Iambic Pentameter** – The way that Shakespeare wrote dialogue for his noble characters, each line consists of 5 'feet' or 10 syllables which are performed as unstressed/stressed (**Shaboom**)

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