The Tragedy of Macbeth, Act I
by William Shakespeare
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The Tragedy of Macbeth, Act I

Introducing the Play

You cannot have power for good without having power for evil too.

—George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950)
The Tragedy of Macbeth, Act I
Introducing the Play

The Domino Effect

Have you ever wondered . . .

how just one action might affect the entire course of your life?

Can one selfish impulse lead to a chain of decisions you will later regret?
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Introducing the Play

The Domino Effect

In *Macbeth* a brave and accomplished nobleman

- deliberately murders someone to whom he should be loyal
- must then kill two other innocent men as a consequence
- finds he cannot turn away from his evil course

Where will this horrific chain of events lead? What will the consequences be for the main characters?
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Introducing the Play

Characters

Duncan, King of Scotland
Malcolm
Donalbain
Macbeth
Banquo
Macduff
Lennox
Ross
Menteith
Angus
Caithness

Fleance, son of Banquo
Siward, earl of Northumberland, general of the English forces
Young Siward, his son
Seyton, an officer attending Macbeth
Son to Macduff
An English Doctor
A Scottish Doctor
A Porter

Pronunciation Guide
The Tragedy of Macbeth, Act I

Introducing the Play

Characters, continued

An Old Man
Three Murderers
Lady Macbeth
Lady Macduff

A Gentlewoman attending
Lady Macbeth
Hecate
Witches
Apparitions
Lords, Officers, Soldiers,
Attendants, Messengers

Setting: Scotland; England

Pronunciation Guide
**The Tragedy of Macbeth, Act I**

*Introducing the Play*

**Pronunciation Guide**

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<tr>
<th>Character</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duncan</td>
<td>DUHN kuhn</td>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>RAWS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>MAHL kuhm</td>
<td>Menteith</td>
<td>mehn TEETH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donalbain</td>
<td>DAHN ul bayn</td>
<td>Angus</td>
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<td>Macbeth</td>
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<td>Banquo</td>
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Introducing the Play

Pronunciation Guide

Duncan   DUHN kuhn
Malcolm  MAHL kuhm
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Lennox   LEHN uhx
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Ross     RAWS
Menteith mehn TEETH
Angus    ANG uhs
Caithness CAYTH nehs
Fleance  FLEE ans
Siward   SEE wurd
Seyton   SAY tuhn
Amid thunder and lightning a trio of witches arranges to meet after a battle.

At a military camp, King Duncan learns that his generals, Macbeth and Banquo, have defeated the enemies.
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Introducing the Play

On the heath the witches offer a prophecy. They tell Macbeth and Banquo that Macbeth will be king of Scotland and that Banquo will beget rulers.

Will the prophecy of the witches come true? Will Macbeth’s destiny be fulfilled?

[End of Section]
The Tragedy of Macbeth, Act I

Literary Focus: Tragedy

Tragedy—a literary work depicting serious events, in which the main character, who is often a high-ranking, dignified person, comes to an unhappy end.
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Literary Focus: Tragedy

In a tragedy

- ill-judged human actions lead to inevitable catastrophe, usually including one or more deaths
- the characters’ bad deeds, crimes, and mistakes are never forgiven or rectified

By contrast, in a comedy

- the characters can do as they please as long as they amuse the audience
- the funny mess is easily cleaned up at the end

[End of Section]
Quickwrite
Macbeth’s lust for power is so great that he commits murder in order to fulfill his destiny of becoming king. Think of people in actual life who are so obsessed with power that they will take extreme measures to get what they want. What are some of the consequences of such shameless ambition? Write down your thoughts.
Meet the Writer
William Shakespeare (1564–1616) moved to London sometime around 1590. Enjoying the patronage of Lord Chamberlain and later of King James, he prospered as an actor, as a playwright, and as a shareholder in the Globe Theatre. This literary great authored more than thirty-six timeless plays.