

**William Shakespeare
Literacy Lessons for Middle School Students/ Read 180**

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Overview

There have been many great poets, dramatists, and actors who speak to each of us. One important poet that we all know some information about is William Shakespeare. Many students in the middle schools have no idea who Shakespeare was and why he is so important to our world today. This unit will focus on 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in the Communications classroom. I will give the students more knowledge and understanding of Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, teach them who Shakespeare was as a person, and prepare them for the literature on William Shakespeare in high school.

In my curriculum, I will be focusing on the life of William Shakespeare and teaching the students who he was and what he accomplished in his life. As part of this curriculum we will focus on the play *Macbeth*. The students will learn about the genre tragedy and also be introduced to four major genres. Current critics have identified these genres as: tragedy, history, comedy, and romance. The students will read the middle school version of *Macbeth* which is in the *Scope Magazine* and the high school version found in the book *Shakespeare's Macbeth*. The students will be comparing and contrasting the two plays. The students will explore plot, setting, conflict, and character motivation. The students will learn more about the literary devices imagery, metaphor, personification, and symbolism. The students will find all of these skills using the *Elements of Literature Book* and the play *Macbeth*.

Rationale

There are many reasons for middle school students to understand and appreciate the literature of William Shakespeare. When I heard about this class I remember thinking that this would be a wonderful opportunity for middle school students to learn about a

great poet and to research someone new for them. I also feel that if students are introduced to Shakespeare in the middle schools then they will be more open-minded when Shakespeare is introduced to them again in high school. By doing this there will be less intimidation when reading and discussing him. Our middle school students need a rich background on William Shakespeare and teachers need to find techniques that are very appealing to middle school students. I feel that the *Scope Magazine*, written in middle school language, will give the students the opportunity to be less intimidated and more eager to learn about Shakespeare. Shakespeare's plays challenge many students with difficult language and offers knowledge of human behavior and insight into the world around us. When you discuss characters and the issues that a play raises, the students are rewarded in many ways. Studying Shakespeare in school exposes students to powerful themes, concepts, and effective literary devices.

Life of William Shakespeare

Who was William Shakespeare? Why was he so popular long ago and in the present? These are some of the questions that middle school students will ask when the name William Shakespeare is brought up. According to Sidney Lamb, author of the book *Shakespeare's Macbeth*, "William Shakespeare permeates almost all aspects of our society. He can be found in our classrooms, on our television, in our theatres, and in our cinemas. Actors still regularly perform his plays on the modern stage and screen"(17). William Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. There is no record of the exact date of which Shakespeare was born, but most infants were baptized a few days after they were born. Shakespeare would die 52 years later on that same date. William was the third son of Mary and John Shakespeare. According to scholars, Shakespeare most likely attended King's New School. At the age of 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway. They had three children during their marriage. The theory is that Shakespeare went to London to become an actor, gradually becoming a playwright, and gaining attention. In 1592, Shakespeare came back into the records. Shakespeare never participated in the publication of any of his plays. Seven years after Shakespeare's death his first folio was printed. Members of his acting company did this for him. During the first decade of the 1600's, Shakespeare's great tragedies were performed. In 1606, *Macbeth* was published and recognized.

Tragedy

What is tragedy? According to the Middle English Dictionary, "the definition is a drama or literary work in which the main character is brought to ruin or suffers extreme sorrow, especially as a consequence of a tragic flaw, moral weakness, or inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances" It is also a disastrous event especially one involving distressing loss or injury to life. William Shakespeare's plays are divided into four categories: history, comedy, tragedy, and romance. I will be focusing on the genre tragedy and how it is betrayed in the play *Macbeth*. As Lamb points out,

In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare leads his audience through the downfall of Macbeth. During the play the audience understands the hero's pain and

suffering, as well as his mistakes. In a good tragedy, like *Macbeth*, the readers and audience members get pulled into the play by identifying with the protagonist, who is painted as a great and admirable person in society. Shakespeare then leads the audience through the hero's pain and suffering as well as his mistakes. (17)

A tragedy usually depicts the fall of a man of high station or class, such as a king, a prince, or a general. Main characters in a tragedy can fall from power or fall from happiness, but they almost always die by the end of the play. Through the course of the play, the audience gains more knowledge of the situation than the hero does. This distance and enlarged view allows the audience to foresee the hero's demise. Though no longer identifying with the hero, the audience is still trapped in the tension of the play and released only by the protagonist's death. Because tragic heroes are almost always responsible for their demise, critics and scholars sometimes identify their mistakes as stemming from some sort of tragic flaw, be it indecision, ambition, pride, or jealousy. *Macbeth* is firmly rooted in the contexts of Early Modern England. This play remains timeless for its penetrating and extensive portrait of the evils that humans can commit. It depicts Macbeth's conscience decision to descend into evil and tyranny in the name of personal ambition, and it illustrates the disorders in politics, gender, nature, and religion that this decision causes. Unlike many of Shakespeare's other tragic heroes, Macbeth feels the agony of his decision in the beginning rather than the end of his fall. Emotionally deadened by his actions, Macbeth ends the play with a terrible determination to fight against fate and die in the process. This play reveals a lot about being human.

Macbeth-the story

Greed, ambition, guilt...the students will be drawn to the plot of Shakespeare's classic, *Macbeth*. It is based on the historical King Macbeth I of Scotland, in which the king is unflatteringly depicted. Macbeth, Thane of Glamis and a general of the army of Duncan, King of Scotland, quickly rises through the ranks after a great victory over the rebel Macdonwald. Fueled by his thirst for power, and inspired by the three witches' prediction that he would become king, Macbeth and his wife murder the king. Macbeth becomes king after the heir, Malcolm, flees to England, where he is joined by Macduff, the loyal Thane of Fife. Macbeth's friend Banquo, whom the witches have predicted will be the ancestor of future kings, begins to suspect him, and Macbeth, becoming more evil everyday, orders Banquo's murder to stop the prediction from coming true. Banquo's son escapes the assassins and Macbeth is haunted by the ghost of his dear friend Banquo. In the meantime, Lady Macbeth is remorseful and suffering very deeply. The witches come together and tell Macbeth that no man of woman born shall harm him. Fearing Macduff, Macbeth orders the murder of Macduff's wife and children. In seeking revenge, Macduff leads an army in battle with Macbeth where it's revealed that Macduff was ripped from his mother's body and is therefore not "of woman born." Macduff defeats Macbeth and Malcolm takes the throne.

Macbeth is one character that never gives up even at the end. However, at the last Macbeth seems to us as an honorable man, who will fight to the last, and Shakespeare makes us feel sadness for his fate. In this play all of the characters explore evil and play

a part in it. As Thomas Middleton points out, “Macbeth can be enjoyed at many levels. It is an exciting story of witchcraft, murder, and retribution that can also be seen as a study in the philosophy and psychology of evil” (975). This play remains timeless for its penetrating and extensive portrait of the evils that humans can commit. Sidney Lamb points out the “Macbeth ends the play with a terrible determination to fight against fate and die in the process” (25). Moments before he dies offstage, he tells his foe, “Lay on, Mac duff, /And damn’d be him that first cries, ‘Hold enough!’” (5.8.33-34)

Macbeth is a very successful character at the beginning of the play. He begins his downfall by listening to the three witches’ and feeling that he deserves more than what he has. Macbeth is very liked throughout the play and all the way through the end. Once Macbeth murders King Duncan the downfall of Macbeth has officially begun. Macbeth feels that he must keep his strength and that the only way for him to fall is by death. He won’t give up even at the end of his life. Macbeth’s love for power and the love for his wife got him to this place. A horrible fate is brought upon a man whom we actually admire and can identify with.

Themes

In the play *Macbeth*, Shakespeare explores many themes. My unit will focus on four major themes that are focused and seen in the play *Macbeth*. These themes relate to human nature, ambition, gender, and the family. The four themes are the concept of evil, reason versus passion, gender roles, and nature out of order.

Complexity of Evil in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

Macbeth explores the nature of evil through the gradual change in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as the play progresses. *Macbeth* explores the difference between innate evil and evil influenced by others. In the beginning of the play Macbeth is far from evil when he says: “Chance may crown me, without my stir” (1.3.144), which is saying that he may let fate lead his future. Later, he takes the actions to remove those in his way, like Banquo, and “the very firstlings of my heart shall be the firstlings of my hand”, and not caring who he harms and how he harms them. The corrupting influence of the three sisters on Macbeth increases his feeling of evil. However, upon hearing the prophecy of the weird sisters, he begins to contemplate the murder of Duncan. His thoughts turn to “horrible imaginings” (1.3.139). In the play, Macbeth has a gradual beginning to his evil side. At the beginning Macbeth is struggling with his conscience. But at some point the slide into evil accelerates. Macbeth begins his evilness by willful harm to others and becoming greedy. After killing Duncan, Macbeth initially is haunted by the horror of his actions and regards himself with repugnance. But he soon becomes more callous as his murder of innocents continues with Macduff’s family.

Macbeth is the hardest character to judge in this play because he is so complex. Shakespeare wants us to feel this way and how we feel continues to change throughout the play. Macbeth seems to us as an honorable man, who will fight to the last, and Shakespeare wants us to feel sadness for this character. Macbeth explores evil in many ways and all of the characters play a part.

Lady Macbeth presents a slightly different case study of evil. Like her husband, she clearly is not a virtuous character. But while Macbeth becomes increasingly evil and less sympathetic as the play progresses, Lady Macbeth moves in the opposite direction. Lady Macbeth plans the murder of Duncan but doesn't take any action during the act. Lady Macbeth talks, bullies, and seduces Macbeth and gets him to do what she wants him to do. She is very evil in her thoughts and deeds but is she guilty for the actions that her husband took. Lady Macbeth wants her husband to be successful and she feels by getting him what he wants that she is doing her duty as his wife. Lady Macbeth's mental struggle escalates. She eventually commits suicide, suggesting that her conscience provides her with a sort of redemption that Macbeth could never find.

Reason versus Passion

Why do we do things that we know we shouldn't do? When does our desire overwhelm our judgment? These are the questions that I would discuss with the students before we begin the theme of reason versus passion. During their debates over which course of action to take, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth use different persuasive strategies. Macbeth is very rational, contemplating the consequences and implications of his actions. He recognizes the political, ethical, and religious reasons why he should not commit murder. Macbeth knows that it's wrong to even think about murder but to go ahead and actually do it is really hard for him to do at first. Macbeth does some reasoning with himself and with his wife. Macbeth defends himself by claiming that not killing the king actually makes him more of a man. His reason tells him that killing a king, especially one who trusts him as much as Duncan does, diminishes his manhood. After he murders King Duncan, Macbeth feels that he must continue his actions in order to be king. In addition to jeopardizing his afterlife, Macbeth notes that murder is a violation of Duncan's "double trust" that stems from Macbeth's bonds as a kinsman and as a subject (1.7.12).

Lady Macbeth, on the other hand, has a more passionate way of examining the pros and cons of killing Duncan. She is motivated by her feelings and uses emotional arguments to persuade her husband to commit the evil act. She uses her zeal to convince her husband to kill Duncan. Lady Macbeth also makes Macbeth feel like less of a man if he doesn't commit the murder. Lady Macbeth detaches herself from the view of the crime. She wants to make sure that she isn't accused of the murder and neither is her husband. Macbeth on the other hand becomes emotionally gripped with horror and repugnance. Lady Macbeth even returns the daggers to the king's bedchamber and smears blood on his servants to implicate them in the crime. From her perspective, "what's done is done" and need not be regretted (3.2.12). Lady Macbeth wants to make sure that neither she nor her husband is charged with Duncan's death. She will do anything, even kill, to make sure that her husband is successful. Lady Macbeth has a lot of passion for her husband and what is good for his future. She is only thinking about him and what is best.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth go through major transformations during the play. She goes from cool and calculating to mad and delusional. Despite this detachment of guilt, Lady Macbeth is unequipped to deal with the consequences of their actions. Lady Macbeth can sleep, but not peacefully. She is haunted by dreams of the evil deeds she and Macbeth have committed. In Act 5, Scene 1 the doctor indicates that this is the third

night he has kept watch. A major change has occurred in Lady Macbeth when the gentlewoman informs the doctor that Lady Macbeth requires light at all times. A change has occurred in Lady Macbeth's conscience. She can't find divine aid for her troubled mind. Her only way out is death. Macbeth reacts emotionally with repugnance and remorse but later reasons that "blood will have blood" (3.4.122). Macbeth feels that he must act villainously in order to maintain his crown. He realizes that he is unable to clean himself of the crime of regicide, saying that his hands could turn the green seas red (2.3.61-63). The deadening of his emotions culminates in Act 5 when Macbeth greets news of his wife's death with no outward grief, saying that "[s]he should have died hereafter" (5.5.17). He feels that he must keep fighting and he won't go down unless it's in death.

Gender Roles

In the play *Macbeth*, there are many characters that all demonstrate a confusion of gender. The witches, Macbeth, and Lady Macbeth all demonstrate a lot of confusion when it comes to gender roles in the play. Lady Macbeth is a big focus of the gender roles in this play. As Lady Macbeth pushes her husband toward committing Duncan's murder, she indicates that she must take on masculine characteristics. In Act I, Scene 5, after reading Macbeth's letter in which he details the witch's prophecy and informs her of Duncan's impending visit to their castle, Lady Macbeth indicates her desire to lose her feminine qualities and gain masculine ones. She cries, "Come, you spirits/ That tend on mortal thoughts! Unsex me here, /And fill me from the crown to the top full/ Of direst cruelty" (1.5.38-41). This request is part of what David Bevington, in his introduction to *Macbeth* in the fourth edition of the *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, sees as "sexual inversion" in the play. Clearly, gender is out of its traditional order. This disruption of gender roles is also presented through Lady Macbeth's usurpation of the dominant role in the Macbeth's marriage; on many occasions, she rules her husband and dictates his actions. Lady Macbeth continues to mock him and his manhood. The disruption of gender roles is also represented in the weird sisters. Their very status as witches is a violation of how women were expected to behave in Early Modern England. Upon encountering them, Banquo says, "You should be women,/ And yet your beards forbid me to interpret/ That you are so" (1.2.45-47). Their facial hair symbolizes their influence in the affairs of the male-dominated warrior society of Scotland. William C. Carroll, in his Bedford Cultural edition of *Macbeth*, sees the witches and the question of their gender as a device Shakespeare uses to criticize the male-dominated culture, where titles are acquired through what Carroll describes as "murderous violence" (24). Men never wanted to be seen with their guards down especially in public. The woman's job was to please the husband and help him in all ways. This play is showing what a dominate time it really was. If women were seen as strong then the men would lose their dominance.

Nature out of Order

The disorder of nature as well as gender is a major theme in this play. The unnatural and disruptive death of the monarch is paralleled by equally violent disruptions in the nature itself. On the night of Duncan's death, the nobleman Lennox claims there

were “Lamentings heard i’ the air; strange screams of death/ And prophecying with accents terrible/ if dire combustion and confus’d events/ New hatch’d to the woeful time” (2.3.61-64). Many critics see this parallel between Duncan’s death and disorder in nature as an affirmation of the divine right theory of kingship. Macbeth’s murder of Duncan and his continued tyranny extends the disorder to the entire country.

Literary Devices

Some devices involved in the play are imagery, metaphor, personification, and symbolism. During the play each of these tropes will be brought to life for the students.

Imagery is language that creates pictures. It can also reach our senses like smelling, tasting, hearing, and feeling. An example of imagery in the play is Act 2, Scene 1. In this scene Macbeth gives his speech on seeing the floating dagger. Macbeth says, “Is this a dagger which I see before me, The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee: I have thee not, and yet I see thee still (2.1.33-35). Macbeth is seeing the image of daggers but when he tries to grab them he can’t. He can’t understand why he sees them but he can’t grab them. Macbeth is the victim of the disparity between illusion and reality; he cannot distinguish between the two. Notice that the evil and disorder in which he is participating horrifies Macbeth but does not dissuade him from his course of action.

A metaphor is comparing two different things directly without using like, as, or than. In Act 5, Scene 8, Malcolm is the rightful owner to the throne. Macduff is fighting Macbeth for Malcolm to have the throne. Macduff speaks to Macbeth and says, “I have no words; my voice is in my sword (5.8.7-8). Also in Act 1, Scene 5, “Your face, my thane, is a book where men may read strange matters” (1.5.60).

Personification is something non-human that is spoken as if it were human. This is when something that is not living is spoken as if it were alive. In Act 1, Scene 4 Macbeth says “For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires; The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be which the eye fears, when it is done, to see (1.4.50-53).

Symbolism is a person, place, or thing that stands for itself and something beyond it. This is found in Scene 4 when Macbeth and Lady Macbeth plan to kill Duncan. This is the night that King Duncan will die. Macbeth says, “Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand?” Macbeth tries to grab the dagger, but his hand passes through it. This symbol is telling Macbeth that this is what needs to be used in order for him to be the next king. He must follow through with the plan in order to achieve success. The location of Act 1, Scene 1 takes place on a deserted heath representing disorder. This establishes a theme of disorder through the bleak landscape, the presence of the witches and the stormy weather. This opening scene introduces the audience to the supernatural element that will be carried throughout the play

These devices will be taught before the reading so that while we are reading the play the students will recognize these devices and be able to pull out phrases from the play to discuss as a class. We will be reading the middle school version of *Macbeth* along with the adult version by Sidney Lamb. The adult version includes a lot of footnotes and help on understanding Shakespeare’s language but lets the students enter a

world of literature that they have never experienced. In addition to exposing students to a multitude of literacy techniques, Shakespeare's plays offer knowledge of human behavior and insight into the world around us. Shakespeare's plays are open to many interpretations and encourage the students to use his or her imagination. Discussing characters, impressions, and the issues that a play raises challenges the students, and is often one of the most rewarding and pleasurable aspects of the study of Shakespeare in school exposes students to powerful themes, concepts, and effective literary devices.

Story Structure

In the play *Macbeth* we are going to focus on the plot which is the story's structure. When discussing the plot you are focusing on the story's basic situation. It will answer the questions: Who is the main character and what is the character's basic problem or conflict. This is also the time when the writer links the tragedy of Macbeth and what leads to his downfall.

Plot/ Conflict

In every good story or play a conflict/ plot is involved. In order for students to understand the plot of a story or play they must be able to place events in order from which they happen. This is very important for students in the middle grades to catch onto and understand. This will help all readers with comprehension and help the students understand what they have just read. The plot is a series of events in a story. What has happened in the play and what did we learn? This is the time when students will place events in chronological order. A conflict is when two or more characters are in disagreement. The major conflict in Macbeth is the battle. Then it's the witches presenting the prophesy and finally Macbeth's struggle to believe or disbelieve it. There are many other conflicts between the characters and themselves. The other conflicts that are important to bring up for discussion are Macbeth and the Witches, Macbeth and Banquo, Banquo and Macbeth, and Lady Macbeth and her conscience. These are all very important conflicts that affect the outcome of the play.

Setting

Some stories and plays could take place almost anywhere, but in most stories, setting plays a more important role. Writers often use setting to create atmosphere: scary, peaceful, gloomy. In most stories, setting controls the action; it is so crucial to the plot that the story could not take place anywhere else. The setting is where the story takes place. The setting for this play is at the heaths and the Macbeth's home. The heath is where Macbeth meets the witches and the home of the Macbeth's is where the downfall of Macbeth begins. The major tragedy of King Duncan took place at the Macbeth's home. In this play, if the characters can survive the threat posed by the setting, the story is resolved happily. If the setting is more powerful than the human characters, then the story's resolution is very sad indeed. The opening scene of Macbeth not only introduces the audience to the supernatural element that will be carried throughout the play, but it also establishes a theme of disorder through the presence of the witches, the stormy

weather, and the bleak landscape. The settings are the beginnings of the downfall of Macbeth. In the heaths, Macbeth is spoken to by the three witches and at his own house his wife is convincing him to kill Duncan. These two places affect the outcome of the story.

Character Motivation/ Analysis

What motivates people to act in a certain way? Why do we do things that later on we ask the question why? In this play a lot of this is going on and while we are reading we are asking in our mind why they did that. Character motivation is what triggers people to act in a certain way and why they act the way that they do. Lady Macbeth has an agenda when King Duncan comes to stay at their house. She wants to help her husband become king someday. Her motivation is to achieve that goal, but murder is the only way to get what she wants. At the beginning of the play it seems to me that Macbeth wants to be king but Lady Macbeth wants it more. She will do whatever it takes to get her husband in the throne. Their similarities are: clearly Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are not virtuous characters. They are both loyal to King Duncan and are slowly convinced by the weird sisters that this is something that needs to happen. They both believe that this should happen and will do everything they can to see it through. Also they are murderous, greedy, and haunted by guilt.

On the other hand, there are many differences between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth throughout this play. After killing Duncan, Macbeth initially is haunted by the horror of his actions and regards himself with repugnance. But he soon becomes more callous as his murder of innocents continues with Macduff's family. By the end of the play, his tyranny has reached its peak as he continues to destroy anyone who opposes him. Lady Macbeth on the other hand presents a slightly different case study of evil. Like her husband, she clearly is not a virtuous character. But while Macbeth becomes increasingly evil and less sympathetic as the play progresses, Lady Macbeth moves in the opposite direction. Lady Macbeth can sleep, but not peacefully. She is haunted by dreams of the evil deeds she and Macbeth have committed. Lady Macbeth dreams that there is a spot of blood on her hands that she is unable to clean. She seems to have reversed roles with her husband. Lady Macbeth realizes that "all the perfumes of Arabia" could not cover the scent of blood on her hands (2.2.44)

In the early stages of the play, when Macbeth hedges about whether to kill Duncan, Lady Macbeth, convinces her indecisive husband to follow through with his plans. Greenblatt notes in this introduction to *Macbeth* in the *Norton Shakespeare* (pg. 2557-8) she accomplishes this in two primary ways. First, she questions his masculinity by connecting his ability to murder Duncan with his manhood. She taunts her husband by asking him if he would prefer to "live a coward in thine own esteem" (1.7.43). Second, Lady Macbeth is rhetorically much more vicious than her husband in her beliefs and her determination. In a statement that is often cited to demonstrate the evil nature of Lady Macbeth, she claims that she would willingly murder her own child if she had sworn to do so. Despite their atrocity, these are only words. Despite being the primary force behind Macbeth's actions, Lady Macbeth ultimately seems to be more haunted by their deeds than Macbeth is. Unlike Macbeth, she cannot descend fully into evil.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth both wanted power and wanted it in two different ways. Macbeth wouldn't have thought about killing Duncan until Lady Macbeth brought it up. After the act was done, Lady Macbeth couldn't handle it emotionally or physically. Their tragic fall was one another. They loved each other and wanted to make the other one happy. Their flaw was not listening to each other and thinking about too much power and happiness for the other one. The Macbeth's had good intentions but didn't pursue them in the right way. They felt that killing was their only way to succeed. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth learned individually how this horrible act affected each of them in a different way.

Character analysis is very important when reading a play or book. We must be able to learn about our characters and figure out why they act the way they do. I also feel that it's important to put yourself inside the characters' heads. Every student will feel different about each character and that is important to discuss why they like that character and why they don't. Knowing who your characters are will help you understand the play better and why characters are who they are. Readers of Shakespeare's work are provided with the opportunity to step into the lives of his characters, to feel their emotions, and understand their motivations. This a very rewarding experience for all students.

All of the information provided in this rationale is research and understanding of how to teach Shakespeare and the play *Macbeth*. This information will provide the teacher and students with valuable information and understanding of what is needed for the students to be successful with this unit.

The students and teachers need to be familiar with the play *Macbeth* for preparation of this unit. There are also some picture books that will be very useful when introducing Shakespeare and his plays. *The Bard of Avon; The Story of William Shakespeare* and *William Shakespeare and the Globe* by Aliko will give the students a less intimidating way to learn about who Shakespeare was.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- * learn and understand who Shakespeare was.
- * identify character traits.
- * identify the genre tragedy.
- * identify the setting of the play.
- * identify plot.
- * identify character analysis.
- * identify themes in the play.
- * identify character motivation.
- * identify literacy devices.
- * read the middle school version of *Macbeth*.
- * read the high school version called *Shakespeare's Macbeth* and be able to use this book as a reference for understanding the play *Macbeth*
- * read the picture books called *Bard of Avon, The story of William Shakespeare* and *William Shakespeare and the Globe*.
- * write a compare/contrast essay involving Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

- * write an essay on who William Shakespeare was.
- * write a newspaper article on who is responsible for the death of Duncan. And you must be able to defend that person in a courtroom.
- * write a Response to Narrative Text.
- * gain understanding of character motivation while reading a classic tragedy.

Strategies

Before the introduction of William Shakespeare, I would like to begin by asking the students what they know about Shakespeare. I would like them to share with me and the other students what they think they know. Along with this activity, we will do a K-W-L chart with the students. This chart is divided into three columns and each letter stands for something. The K stands for what the students know. The W stands for what the students want to know. And last the L stands for what the students have learned through this process. This chart is universal and can be used with many different topics. I would like to hear what the students know before I begin the introduction of William Shakespeare. The students will have the opportunity to use the internet in the computer lab to research and record what they know and don't know about Shakespeare. The students will begin to fill out the third column of the K-W-L chart out loud, sharing with the class. Then I will pass out two books that are in comic form for the students to look and take information from. The two books are *William Shakespeare and the Globe* by Aliko and *Bard of Avon, The Story of William Shakespeare* by Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema. These two books introduce Shakespeare in comic form. They are fun books that talk about Shakespeare's life, how he grew up, and how he became who he was. The books also share some of Shakespeare's plays in comic form. The students will be able to get some information about Shakespeare and know some information about him.

The students will also compose a short essay on who William Shakespeare is and present it to the class. The students will use all of the sources that they have found on him.

I will begin pre-reading activities with a discussion of literary genres and relating the genres to our 25 book goal for each year. I will discuss with the students that Shakespeare's plays are divided into four categories. The categories are history, comedy, tragedy, and romance. I will introduce the book *Bravo, Mr. William Shakespeare, Seven Plays* to introduce what Shakespeare meant as a tragic play. We will be focusing on tragedy and reading *King Lear* in comic form with the students. I chose *King Lear* because it is a tragedy and there wasn't *Macbeth* in comic form to introduce to the students. After the students have a better idea on what tragedy is then we will proceed with our main focus of the play *Macbeth*. This play follows the Pittsburgh Public Schools high school English curriculum. We will be discussing characters, setting, plot, character analysis, themes, and character motivation. I will explain to the students what a tragedy is and explain to them that this is when the main character in a story or play falls from power or falls from happiness and they almost always die by the end of the play. By using the *Elements of Literature book Collection 1*, the students can look for the exact meaning of all of the character terms. As we prepare for the Shakespeare unit the students will be very familiar with all of these terms due to the fact that we will have

already read stories that involve these devices. This book will be an excellent reference for the middle school students. Not all of the devices are found in the middle school version but when we begin the adult version the students will be able to see all of the devices that we have discussed in class.

The students will be introduced to the middle school version of *Macbeth*. This version is taken from the *Scholastic Scope-Reading, Writing, and Reality for Teens*. This *Macbeth* play is taken from the January 23, 2006 edition. After we read the middle school version we will begin to discuss the literary devices. The devices are imagery, metaphor, personification, and symbolism. The students will go back into the play and find the parts of the play that use these devices correctly and then we will discuss them as a whole class.

After this is complete the students will be introduced to the high school version of *Macbeth*. The students will compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the two plays. The students will use a graphic organizer to place their ideas. Some examples of this would be the similarity in the settings and how King Duncan was murdered. The difference would be the length of the two plays and the ghost scene with Banquo. This chart will include all of the meaningful similarities and differences. An appropriate method of organization for this paper will be discussed and used. The high school level that I will be using is *Macbeth* by Sidney Lamb. This version has been wonderful for me due to the helpfulness of side notes and explanations of what is going on in the play.

I will first begin discussing what a tragedy is before we read the play *King Lear*. I won't be focusing a lot on this play but I will focus on tragedy in this play. I want all students to be familiar with it before we begin our main focus on *Macbeth*. When all three plays are read and understood by all students we will move on and discuss the characters in the play. The students and teacher will discuss the similarities between the two main characters in the play. The characters that will be used are Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The students will use a chart that is split in half and they are to place all of the similarities and differences between the two characters using both plays. When this is done then the students will focus on the next assignment which will be writing the essay.

The assignment will be to write an essay of the similarities and differences in the play *Macbeth* involving the two main characters Macbeth and Lady Macbeth: The 1st paragraph- introduction of the play will include the title, author, and setting, and the two main characters Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, 2nd paragraph- similarities of the two characters, 3rd paragraph- contrasts of the two characters, and the 4th paragraph- conclusion: students will summarize the similarities and differences of the two characters.

The students will create a newspaper article on who is responsible for the death of King Duncan. The students will form groups of three and choose who the responsible character for this terrible crime is. If Lady Macbeth and Macbeth were arrested for the crime of killing King Duncan who would you commit to serving jail time for it. Which character deserves to be punished for the crime? The students will argue this in class and against each other. The students must use information from the play.

After reading the play *Macbeth*, the students will write a Response to and Analysis of Narrative Text. This response will identify the theme of the play. The students should be able to support their answers with sufficient evidence from the play.

They will interpret the play with appropriate information found in the tragedy *Macbeth*. The students should explain inferences and support them with good text-based examples. The conclusion should draw adequate conclusions and identify with Shakespeare's point of view. I want the students to think about why Shakespeare wrote a play like this and what he wanted his audience to know.

Activities

Activity 1

The students will begin this lesson in a circle so that everyone can see each other. I will introduce the K-W-L chart to the students. I will begin by asking the students what they know about William Shakespeare. The students will place their answers under the K on the chart. The students will then share their answers with the person next to them. On large sheets of paper I will ask the students to tell me everything that they know. After this is complete I will ask the students what they would like to know about Shakespeare.

Activity 2

The students will use the internet to research the biography of William Shakespeare. They will share their findings with the class as a whole.

Activity 3

With the information found on William Shakespeare, the students will begin their research report on Shakespeare. The students will provide an introduction, body, and conclusion for their research report. An outline will be provided for the students to help keep them organized and on task. After this is complete the students will give a short speech on William Shakespeare and what information was most important to them.

Activity 4

The students will go through two books that won't be intimidating for them. The books are called *Bard of Avon, The Story of William Shakespeare* and *William Shakespeare and the Globe*. I will also be using the book *Bravo, Mr. William Shakespeare* to introduce a comic form of Shakespeare's play. I will be introducing the play *King Lear* so that the students will be familiar with the genre tragedy.

Activity 5

The students will have a lesson on the Elements of Literature-Plot and Setting using the *Elements of Literature textbook*. This section of text teaches the students to identify the main character. What is the character's basic problem, or conflict? What complications arise for the main characters? What is the setting of the play? What is character motivation? How is the conflict in the story resolved?

Activity 6

What is a tragedy? The students will use the student dictionary and give the definition of tragedy. This will be discussed after we read the play *King Lear* in comic form. I would like the students to associate the play with what a tragedy is. I will also be asking the students what a tragedy means to them. I would like to hear their responses and how they have dealt with tragedy in their own lives.

Activity 7

The students will define the term conscience with their student dictionary. I will then provide my definition of what conscience means as a comparison. Does everyone have a conscience? The students will write about a time when they ignored their conscience. Did the guilt haunt them, or were they able to move on easily? I will let the students know that they are about to read a play in which conscience plays a key role in the destiny of a king and his kingdom.

Activity 8

Each student will receive a copy of the play *Macbeth* written for their age group. The play we will use is from the *Scholastic Scope; Reading, Writing, and Reality for Teens*. We will begin by looking at the characters along the character list. I will ask for volunteers to take a part from the play *Macbeth*. Due to all of the characters, each student will be able to participate in the play. We will begin reading the play *Macbeth* as a whole group.

Activity 9

The students will read through the play twice and then take a short quiz on what they read. I want to know that the students understood the play and will be ready to find literacy devices in the play.

Activity 10

The students will be able to understand character motivation better. We will take a close look at one of the main characters in *Macbeth* and see if the students can figure out what motivates him or her. The students will create a chart with these headings: Name of character; character's choices or actions; possible motivations. The students will identify two choices or actions for their character. Are the actions or choices justifiable? The students will share and then compare their varied reactions to the characters in the play. The students will also compare and contrast the two main characters: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The assignment will include 4 paragraphs. The paragraphs will include: introduction of the play, similarities, differences, and conclusion. The students will use a graphic organizer which is two interconnected circles, and the students will write the similarities of the two characters in the overlapping section of the two circles and the differences in the outer circles.

Activity 11

I will begin a lesson on what literary devices are. The devices are imagery, metaphor, personification, and symbolism. I will have the students go into the *Elements of Literature* book and look on pages 538-539. These devices are explained very well

and examples are used in context so that the students will understand them more clearly. I will also have the students do short practice exercises that will help them understand the devices and make the students more aware of what they needed to find in the play. The practice exercises are on page 539. The students will begin their search in the play to find how literary devices fit into the play *Macbeth*.

Activity 12

The students will be introduced to the high school version of *Macbeth*. This is taken from the the book *Shakespeare's Macbeth*. The students will each receive a copy of the play and of the side notes and vocabulary. This will give the students an opportunity to look at the old English and still be able to understand what is being said throughout the play. The students will read this version as a whole group and also at home.

Activity13

After completing the high school version of *Macbeth*_we will use questions and topics to enhance our reading group discussion. The discussions will help get the students thinking and hopefully talking about Shakespeare in a whole new way. The questions can be found in *Shakespeare's Macbeth* on pages 190-191.

Activity 14

The students will look at the two plays of *Macbeth*. The students will use a graphic organizer to compare and contrast the similarities and differences in these plays. We will discuss the results and begin putting them into paragraphs using the same format as the character analysis of the main characters. I would also like to ask the students which play the students enjoyed better and why. We will also use large graph paper to use for a large group discussion on the similarities and differences.

Activity 15

The students will create a newspaper article on who is responsible for the death of King Duncan. The students will form groups of three and choose who the responsible character for this terrible crime is. The students will argue this in class and against each other. The students must use information from the play information found about this tragedy. The students must draw a picture of what they think their character would look like to include in the discussion.

Activity 16

The students will review the following website to uncover who the real Macbeth was. The site to us is www.bbc.co.uk/history/historical_figures/macbeth.shtml and the students will find other related sites that provide biographies of the real Macbeth.

Activity 17

The students will use a Venn diagram or a graphic organizer to compare and contrast the real-life Macbeth with Shakespeare's character.

Activity 18

The students will write a Response to and Analysis of Narrative text. The students will answer these questions:

What is the theme of this play?

Who are the main characters in the play?

What were the main objectives for the main characters?

What was the author trying to convey to us?

What did you learn from the play?

Did the main character(s) succeed in what they wanted to accomplish?

Would the play have changed if the main characters were arrested for the crime that they did?

Do you think they would have turned on each other and would they have protected each other during this time?

Why did Shakespeare write a play like this and what did he want his audience to think about after the play?

Activity 19

The students will pick one scene from *Macbeth* and decide how you, as a director, would stage it. Where would the characters stand on stage? How and when would they move? How would they deliver their lines? What types of costumes would the actors wear? What type of scenery would appear on the stage? The students will form their groups and make sure they have enough parts for everyone.

Activity 20

The students will use the computer lab and research three internet sites. The students tell the other students in the class what was found in the sites and exchange information and ideas. The sites are www.clan-duncan.co.uk/duncanl.html, www.shakespeare.org.uk/content/view/12/12, and www.clicknotes.com.

Activity 21

The students will watch the play *Macbeth* as a whole group. This classic film is a must see for all students of *Macbeth*

Reading List:

Boece, Hector *Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, based on Hector Boece's 1527 *Scotorum Historiae*

This book gives the story of *Macbeth* and gives the concept of evil that *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth* gradually change into. This is a source for many of Shakespeare's plays.

Carroll, William C., ed. *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts*. *Bedford Shakespeare series*. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martins, 1999.

In addition to containing the full text of Macbeth and an extensive critical introduction, this edition reprints a wide array of contemporary Elizabethan and Jacobean documents.

Lamb, Sidney. *Shakespeare's Macbeth*. Hungry Minds, Inc. New York, 2000.

The complete resource center the shows the best of the best: this gives great links to information in print, on film, and online.

Stanley, Diane and Vennema, Peter. *Bard of Aron. The Story of William Shakespeare*. Morrow Junior Books. New York, 1992.

An award-winning book created with a feast of words and pictures to celebrate the life of a remarkable person from the pages of history: William Shakespeare, "a man for all time."

Williams, Marcia. *Bravo, Mr. William Shakespeare, Seven Plays*. Candle Wick Press. Massachusetts 2000.

A collection of seven plays written by William Shakespeare. These plays are detailed illustrations that will help young readers discover the riches in the continual relevance of Shakespeare's work, and lead them to further enjoyment of the original plays.

Wells and Taylor. *William Shakespeare. The Complete Works*. Oxford, New York 1988.

The complete collection of William Shakespeare's plays.

Scholastic Scope- Reading, Writing, and Reality for Teens. Scholastic Inc. January 23, 2006.

A school magazine that includes plays, readings, and writings for the middle school student.

Elements of Literature. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 2005.

Communications textbook that is used for the teaching of reading, writing, and English skills for middle school students.

William Shakespeare. 6 Mar. 2006<<http://www.williamshakespeare.com>

A website that gives a biography on William Shakespeare.

www.shakespeare.org.uk/content/view/12/12

A short biography on William Shakespeare

www.clicknotes.com

A website that describes Shakespeare's plays, themes, and motifs included in his plays.

Greenblatt, Stephen, Walter Cohen, Jean Howard and Katherine Eisaman Maus, eds. *The Norton Shakespeare*. New York: WW Norton and Co., 1997.

The editors are well-known scholars of Shakespeare and the early modern period. Excellent glosses and footnotes as well as helpful introductions to the play. This also contains background information and selections from texts of the period.

Danson, Lawrence. *Shakespeare's Dramatic Genres*. Oxford: University Press.

This gives a closer look into Shakespeare's genres, women during these times, masculinity, and the theatre during his time.

Standards

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify their purpose, structure, and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform, or describe.
9. All students converse, at a minimum level of "Intermediate Low," as defined in the oral proficiency guidelines developed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, in at least on language other than English,

including the native language if other than English, under Sec. 5.215(c) (relating to languages).

10. All students communicate appropriately in business, work, and other applied situations.

