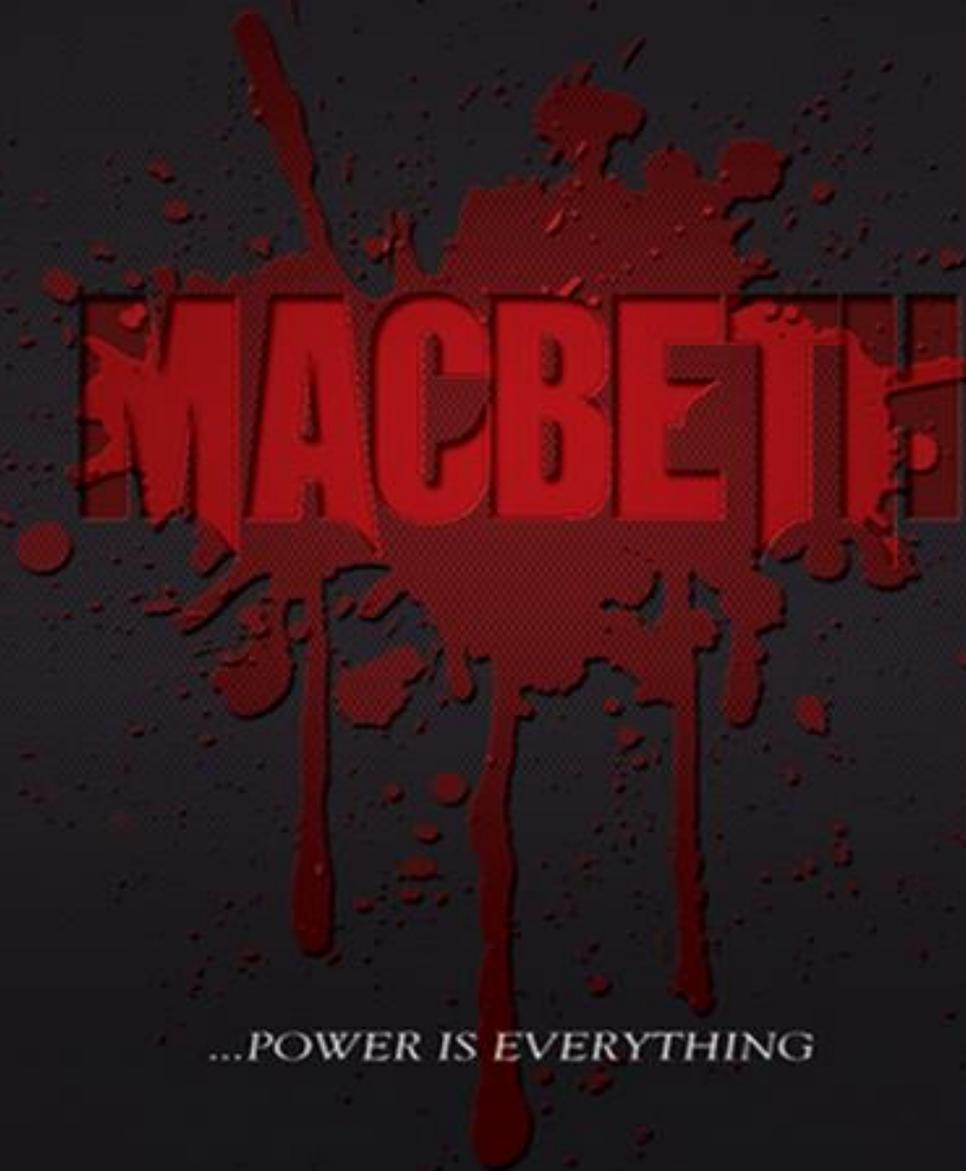


WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



**MACBETH**

*...POWER IS EVERYTHING*

# Historical Background

- There was no Tudor successor to the throne of England.
- Elizabeth I chose James VI of Scotland to succeed her.
- After her death in 1603, James VI of Scotland became James I of England.
- Elizabeth I had been instrumental in the death of her cousin, Mary Queen of Scots, who was beheaded.

# The English Renaissance

- The Renaissance (rebirth) began in Italy in the 1300's with a flourish of literature, art, and intellectual development.
- The English Renaissance began around 1485 when Henry VII took the throne and began the Tudor reign.



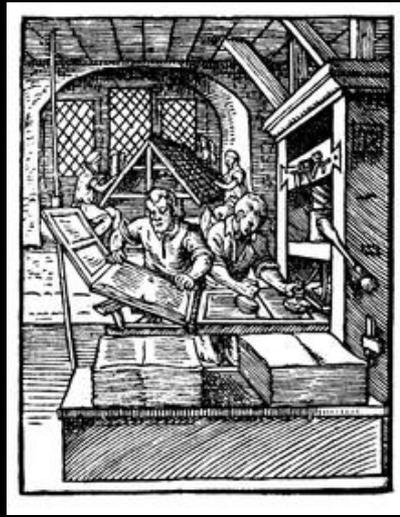
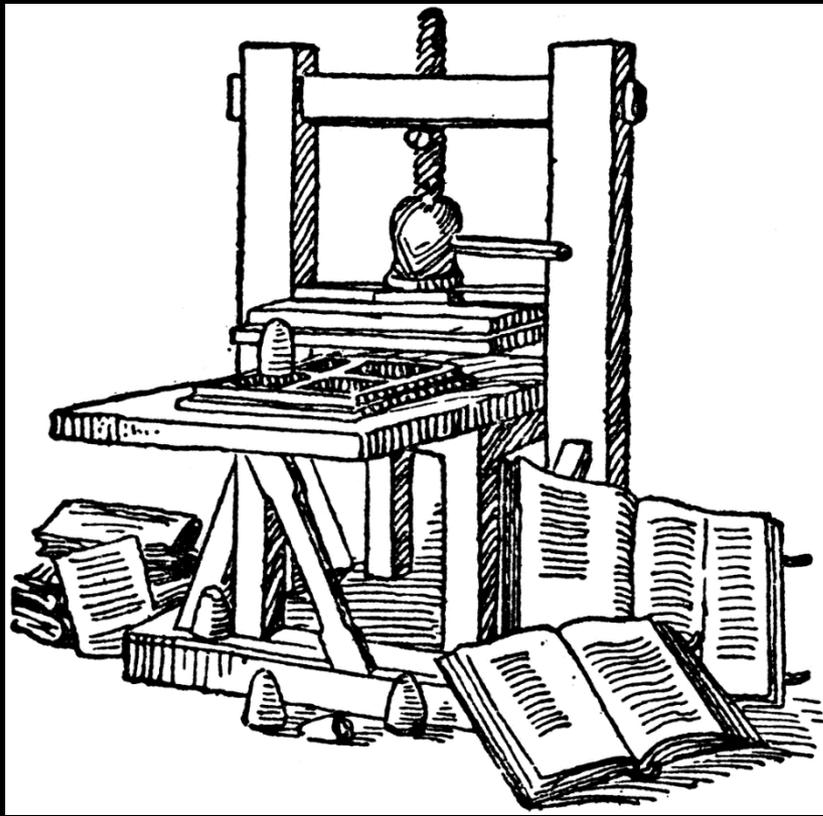
Henry VIII, 1535-1540. Cirle of Hans Holbein.  
© Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica, Rome.

# The English Renaissance

- After the Middle Ages had focused on the after life and hell, the Renaissance turned its focus to the “here and now.”
  - Focus on love
  - Human passions
  - Pleasure

# The English Renaissance

- Moveable type was invented – Gutenberg developed the printing press in the 1450's.
  - Publishing was easier
  - More books were published = more people are reading
  - Scholars and authors began writing in the “vernacular” (common speech) of the time period. More people can understand literature and they began reading.



# The English Renaissance

- **British Monarchy – A lesson in SCANDAL!!**
  - They say many authors write about what they know, and with Shakespeare this is probably true. Royalty in England were very prone to doing SCANDALOUS things! Here's one example of SCANDAL in Shakespeare's time:

# The English Renaissance

- Henry VIII, of the Tudor family, took the throne in 1509.
- Even though he was given the title “defender of faith” in 1534, Henry VIII found that his marriage to Catherine of Aragon would not produce a son. So, he wished to have the Pope annul his marriage so he could marry Anne Boleyn.
- The Pope refused. Imagine refusing a KING! Henry VIII was MAD and he remarried anyway.
- This was an outrage! “Divorce” – as it would have to be without the annulment – was a sin!
- So, to counter this, Henry VIII issued the Act of Supremacy, which split England from the Catholic Church and allowed him to take full control of the Churches of England.
- Henry VIII became the supreme head of the Church of England (or Anglican Church)



Catherine of Aragon

Anne Boleyn



- On her deathbed, Elizabeth wanted to ease her way into Heaven
- She chose Mary's son James to become the next King of England.
- The appointment of James I unified England and Scotland under one King.

# **“Macbeth”: a tribute to King James I**

- **Shakespeare wrote “Macbeth” in 1606, during King James’ reign.**
- **King James was a devout advocate of the “Divine Right of Kings.”**
- **The setting is Scotland, King James’ homeland.**
- **Banquo was an ancestor of James and is shown in the play to be a virtuous person.**
- **James believed himself to be an expert on witchcraft.**
- **James had an interest in faith**

# A Tribute to the People

- Shakespeare demonstrated the Elizabethan belief that the country is stable only if the King is good and virtuous.
- Elizabethans believed that evil occurs in darkness, which is a recurring theme in “Macbeth.”
- Shakespeare included a lot of blood and murder, which the Elizabethans expected to see in a play.
- The play was considered a thriller – a threat to an anointed King and the perceived evil behind the threat – and alluded to the Gunpowder plot of 1605.

# THE CURSE OF MACBETH

IF IT'S BAD LUCK TO SAY  
'MACBETH' IN A THEATRE



HOW DO THEY MANAGE  
TO PERFORM IT?



# The Curse

- It is believed to be bad luck to even whisper the word 'Macbeth' in a theatre
- Legend has it you will lose all your friends involved in the production--horribly

# themes of “Macbeth”

- **Theme #1** – Appearances are deceiving; do not trust only what you see.
- **Theme #2** – Greed is very different than ambition, and it has a destructive power.
- **Theme #3** – Power can corrupt.
- **Theme #4** – Going against one’s “nature” can result in the destruction of oneself and those around him/her.

# Background for Macbeth (This play, specifically)

- **Setting**

- “Macbeth” is set in Scotland in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries (900’s and 1000’s). Some specific settings are:
  - Inverness (Macbeth’s castle) on a desolate heath
  - Forres, King Duncan’s royal palace
- You will see that because there was almost NO scenery used in the theater during this time period, many of the characters describe their surroundings in great detail.
- Shakespeare uses the bloody history of Scotland as a setting to explore the fearsome and destructive powers of greed and the dark side of humanity.

# More Background Info

- **The Human Side of the Macbeth Monster**
- Even though the actions of Macbeth are horrible, he is actually a very human character. Watch and see how he struggles with his decisions.
- Can you relate to struggling with temptation? Have you ever given in?

# More Background info

- **Writing Style**

- Macbeth is written in “blank verse.” This means that it is unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter.

- What’s an iamb, you say?

- iambic pentameter is the rhythm that most mirrors natural speech.

# More background info

- \*\*\*When the witches speak they speak in **rhyming tetrameter** – very unnatural and charmed or “spell” sounding.
- *EXAMPLE:           Double, double, toil and trouble,  
                              Fire burn and cauldron bubble.*
- Inference time! Why might Shakespeare make the witches speak this way?



# Modern Associations with Witches?



# A “Macbeth” for King James?



- King James' interest in witchcraft was well known
- King James visited Oxford in 1605 and was greeted by three witches who hailed him as the descendent of Banquo . . . interesting.

# Witches & Witchcraft

- Witch-mania in the Elizabethan era.
- Most people believed in witches!
- Circulating pamphlets containing tales of witches and witchcraft were the equivalent of today's popular newspapers.



# Witches and Witchcraft

- **Witches were said to have “diabolical” powers. They could:**
  - predict the future
  - bring on night in the daytime
  - cause fogs and tempests
  - kill animals
  - curse enemies with fatal, wasting diseases
  - cause nightmares and sterility
  - take demonic possession of any individual
  - raise evil spirits by concocting a brew
- **It was believed that witches allowed the devil to suck their blood. Accused witches were examined for the “Devil’s Mark” - a red mark on their body from which the devil had sucked blood.**

## Witches and Witchcraft - Misogyny?



- Between 1560 and 1603, hundreds of people, nearly all of them women, were convicted as witches and executed
- In 1604 an official Act of Parliament decreed that anyone found guilty of practicing witchcraft should be executed

# The Tragic Hero



## What is a tragic hero?

- *“Man of high standard who falls from that high because of a flaw that has affected many” - Aristotle*
- Macbeth is one of the most famous examples of the tragic hero.



What is another example of a famous Shakespearean tragic hero that you know?

# *So What Really Happens?*

- Good guy goes bad
- Guy wants power
- Married to a pushy control freak
- She wants power
- Kills people- *LOTS of people*
- Gets power
- Gets paranoid (a.k.a. goes crazy)
- Ticks off a lot of people
- Want more power! Kill! Kill!
- Gets what's coming to him in the end

# What Do You Think?

1. People who are striving to get ahead often step on others.
2. Power=Happiness
3. One mistake always leads to another.
4. Everyone is capable of murder under the right circumstances.
5. Criminals can still feel love, concern, and fear for other people.

# beginning “Macbeth”...

- **Trance**
  - *“look how our partner’s rapt”*
- **Changed Appearance**
  - *“why do you make such faces”*
- **Inability to Pray**
  - *““Amen” stuck in my throat”*
- **Visions**
  - *“Is this a dagger I see before me?”*
- **Disturbed Behavior**
  - *“I have a strange infirmity”*
- **Lack of Fear**
  - *“I have almost forgot the taste of fears”*
- **Indifference to Life**
  - *“She should have died hereafter”*
- **Invitations to evil spirits**
  - *“Come, you spirits”*