



1st – Grade

English

School Lecturer

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1st Grade

CONTENTS

English

PART – II (Graduation Level)

A. Poetry		
6.	Browning: My Last Duchess	1
7.	Nissim Ezekiel – Night of the Scorpion	24
8.	Kamla Das: Dance of the Eunuch	38
B. Drama		
1.	William Shakespeare	53
	• Macbeth	57
	• As you like it	70
C. Prose		
1.	Bacon: Of Studies	97
2.	Lamb: In Praise of Chimney Sweepers	130
D. Fiction		
1.	Thomas Hardy: The Mayor of Caster bridge	137
2.	R.K. Narayan – The Vendor of Sweets	158
E. Literary Forms and Figure of Speech		
	• Sonnet	173
	• Plot	190

William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in the village of Stratford-on-Avon in the country of Warwickshire. His father John Shakespeare was a son of a farmer, John came to Stratford in about 1531, and began to prosper as a trader in corn. His mother Mary Arden was the daughter of prosperous farmer.

Of Shakespeare's education little is known. For a few years he probably attended the Grammar school at Stratford where he picked up 'small Latin and less Greek'. He often played truant, took part in the village games. His 'astonishing store of natural knowledge' has been praised by all his critics.

When Shakespeare had attained the age of 14, his father lost his little property and fell into debt. Therefore Shakespeare had to leave school to help and support the family of younger children. It is not exactly known what job he occupied for the next eight years but from evidences found in his plays, it is maintained that he was a country school master and lawyers clerk.

In 1582 Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway the daughter of a peasant. She was eight years older than Shakespeare. He fled to London to seek some fortune. There he joined Burbage's company of actors. According to a tradition, his reason for leaving Stratford was that he had been caught stealing a deer from Sir Thomas Lucy's park and he fled from Stratford to escape the consequences.

His life in London from 1587 to 1611, nothing definite is known. It was the period of his greatest literary activity. He entered into the stirring life of England's capital with the same perfect sympathy and understanding which he had shown among the simple folk of his native, Warwickshire. He came to be known among his followers as "the gentle Shakespeare".

Shakespeare's first work may well have been that of a general helper, an odd job man, about the theatre; but he soon became an actor. Within two years he was at work on plays and his course was exactly like that of other playwrights of his time. He soon broke away from his apprentice work and then appeared in quick succession.

Shakespeare's poems, rather than those early dramatic attempts, mark the beginning of his success. 'Venus and Adonis' became immensely popular in London. It was dedicated to the Earl of Southampton and brought from him a large amount of money as a gift. His success and popularity grew enormously. Within a decade of his arrival in London, he had become one of the most famous actors and literary men in England.

Shakespeare's sonnets were composed between 1593 and 1601, though not published until 1609. That edition 'The Sonnets of Shakespeare' consists of 154 sonnets, all written in the form of three quatrains and a couplet that is now recognized as Shakespearean. The sonnets fall into two groups: Sonnets 1-126, addressed to a beloved friend, a handsome and noble young man, and sonnets 127-152, to a malignant but fascinating "Dark Lady", who the poet loves in spite of himself. Nearly all of Shakespeare's sonnets examine the inevitable decay of time, and the immortalization of beauty and love in poetry.

Shakespeare wrote more than thirty plays. These are usually divided into four categories: histories, comedies, tragedies and romances. His earliest plays were primarily comedies and histories such as 'Henry VI' and 'The Comedy of Errors' but in 1596, Shakespeare wrote 'Romeo and Juliet', his second tragedy, and over the next dozen years he would return to the form, writing the plays for which he is known as best dramatist - 'Julius Caesar', 'Hamlet', 'Othello', 'King Lear', 'Macbeth' and 'Antony and Cleopatra'. In his final years Shakespeare turned to the romantic with 'Cymbeline', 'A Winter's Tale' and 'The Tempest'.

Only eighteen of Shakespeare's plays were published separately in quarto editions during his lifetime; a complete collection of his works did not appear until the publication of the First Folio in 1623, several years after his death. Sometime after 1612, Shakespeare retired from the stage and returned to his home in Stratford. He drew up his will in January of 1616, which includes his famous bequest to his wife of his "second best bed".

He died on April 23 1616, and was buried two days later at Stratford Church.

Macbeth

William Shakespeare's play *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, or *Macbeth*, is one of his shorter tragedies and was probably written between 1599-1606. Shakespeare penned the play during the reign of James VI, who was a patron of the playwright's acting company. The main source for Shakespeare's *Macbeth* play was Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Holinshed, in turn, took the account from a Scottish history, *Scotorum Historial*, written in 1527 by Hector Boece.

The play is set primarily in Scotland, and follows the character of Macbeth, a bold Scottish general, the Thane of Glamis and later Thane of Cawdor, murders the king, Duncan and is elected as king in his place. Lady Macbeth, his wife, is his co-conspirator in the murder. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, themselves in danger, flee. Banquo, Macbeth's friend, is also murdered by Macbeth. Macduff, the Thane of Fife, suspects Macbeth and his whole family are massacred. Macduff is the man who finally kills Macbeth. There are three witches, who plant the idea of murdering Duncan in Macbeth's mind, and they lead him on to his destruction. Their queen is Hecate. Other characters are the

Scottish nobleman, Lennox and Ross, and the English general, Siward and his son Young Siward.

The main themes in 'Macbeth' are ambition and guilt. Macbeth's overweening ambition leads him to kill Duncan and from then on until the end of the play he suffers unendurable guilt. Another theme is that of appearance and reality. Of all Shakespeare's characters, Macbeth has the most difficulty in distinguishing between what is real and what is not. Other themes of Macbeth are Nature, Manhood and light versus Dark.

Character List -

Macbeth -

Macbeth is a Scottish general, and the Thane of Glamis who is led to wicked thoughts by the prophecies of the three witches, especially after their prophecy that he will be made Thane of Cawdor comes true. Macbeth is a brave soldier and a powerful man, but he is not a virtuous one. He is easily tempted into murder to fulfill his ambitions to the throne, and once he commits his first crime and is crowned King of Scotland, he embarks on further atrocities with increasing ease.

Ultimately, Macbeth proves himself better suited to the battlefield than to political intrigue, because he lacks the skills necessary to rule without being a tyrant.

His response to every problem is violence and murder. Unlike Shakespeare's great villains, such as Iago in 'Othello' and

Richard III in Richard III, Macbeth is never comfortable in his role as a criminal. He is unable to bear the psychological consequences of his atrocities.

Lady Macbeth -

Macbeth's wife, a deeply ambitious woman who lusts for power and position. Early in the play, she seems to be the stronger and more ruthless of the two, as she urges her husband to kill Duncan and seize the crown. After the bloodshed begins, however, Lady Macbeth falls victim to guilt and madness to an even greater degree than her husband. Her conscience affects her to such an extent that she eventually commits suicide. Interestingly, she and Macbeth are presented as being deeply in love and many of Lady Macbeth's speeches imply that her influence over her husband is primarily sexual. Their joint alienation from the world, occasioned by their partnership in crime, seems to strengthen the attachment that they feel to each other.

The Three Witches -

Three "black and midnight hags" who plot mischief against Macbeth using charms, spells and prophecies. Their predictions prompt him to murder Duncan, to order the deaths of Banquo and his son, and to blindly believe in his own immortality. The play leaves the witches' true identity unclear - aside from the fact that they are servants of Hecate. In some ways, they resemble the mythological Fates who impersonally weave the thread of human destiny. They clearly take a perverse delight in using their knowledge of the future to toy with and destroy human beings.

Banquo -

The brave, noble general whose children, according to the witches' prophecy, will inherit the Scottish throne. Like Macbeth Banquo thinks ambitious thoughts, but he doesn't translate those thoughts into action. In a sense, Banquo's character stands as a rebuke to Macbeth, since he represents the path Macbeth chose not to take: a path in which ambition need not lead to betrayal and murder. Appropriately, then it is Banquo's ghost and not Duncan's - that haunts Macbeth.

In addition to embodying Macbeth's guilt for killing Banquo, the ghost also reminds Macbeth that he did not emulate Banquo's reaction to the witches' prophecy.

King Duncan

The good king of Scotland whom Macbeth is his ambition for the crown, murders. Duncan is the model of a virtuous, benevolent, and farsighted ruler. His death symbolizes the destruction of an order in Scotland that can be restored only when Duncan's line, in the person of Malcolm, once more occupies the throne.

Macduff

A Scottish nobleman hostile to Macbeth's kingship from the start. He eventually becomes a leader of the crusade to unseat Macbeth. The crusade's mission is to place the rightful king, Malcolm, on the throne, but Macduff also desires vengeance for Macbeth's murder of Macduff's wife and young son.

Malcolm -

The son of Duncan, whose restoration to the throne signals Scotland's return to order following Macbeth's reign of terror. Malcolm becomes a serious challenge to Macbeth with Macduff's aid. Prior to this, he appears weak and uncertain of his own power, as when he and Donalbain flee Scotland after their father's murder.

Hecate -

The goddess of witchcraft, who helps the three witches work their mischief on Macbeth.

Fleance

Banquo's son, who survives Macbeth's attempt to murder him. At the end of the play, Fleance's whereabouts are unknown. Presumably, he may come to rule Scotland fulfilling the witches' prophecy that Banquo's sons will sit on the Scottish throne.

Lennox

A Scottish nobleman

Ross

A Scottish nobleman

The Murderers

A group of ruffians conscripted by Macbeth to murder Banquo, Fleance, and Macduff's wife and children

Porter

The drunken doorman of Macbeth's castle

Lady Macduff

Macduff's wife. The scene in her castle provides our only glimpse of a domestic realm other than that of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. She and her home serve as contrasts to Lady Macbeth and the hellish world of Inverness.

Donalbain

Duncan's son and Malcolm's younger brother

Summary

The play begins with the brief appearance of a trio of witches and their march to a military camp, where the Scottish king Duncan hears the news that his generals, Macbeth and Banquo, have defeated two separate invading armies - one from Ireland, led by the rebel Macdonwald, and one from Norway. Following their pitched battle with these enemy forces, Macbeth and Banquo encounter the witches as they cross a moor. The witches prophesy that Macbeth will be made thane of Cawdor and eventually King of Scotland. They also prophesy that Macbeth's companion, Banquo, will beget a line of Scottish kings, although Banquo will never be king himself.

The witches vanish, and Macbeth and Banquo treat their prophecies skeptically until some of King Duncan's men come to thank the two generals for their victories in battle and to tell Macbeth that he has indeed been named Thane of Cawdor. The previous thane betrayed Scotland by fighting for the Norwegians and Duncan has condemned him to death. Macbeth is intrigued by the possibility that the remainder of the witches' prophecy - that he will be

crowned king - might be true, but he is uncertain what to expect. He visits with King Duncan, and they plan to dine together at Inverness, Macbeth's castle, that night. Macbeth writes ahead to his wife Lady Macbeth, telling her all that has happened.

Lady Macbeth suggests none of her husband's uncertainty. She desires the kingship for him and wants him to murder Duncan in order to obtain it. When Macbeth arrives at Inverness, she overrides all of her husband's objections and persuades him to kill the king that very night. He and Lady Macbeth plan to get Duncan's two chamberlains drunk so they will black out; the next morning they will blame the murder on the chamberlains, who will be defenseless, as they will remember nothing. While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth stabs him, despite his doubts and a number of supernatural portents, including a vision of a bloody dagger. When Duncan's death is discovered the next morning, Macbeth kills the chamberlains - ostensibly out of rage at their crime - and easily assumes the kingship. Duncan's sons Malcolm and Donalbain flee to England and Ireland respectively, fearing that whoever killed Duncan desires their demise as well.

Fearful of the witch's prophecy that Banquo heirs will seize the throne, Macbeth hires a group of murderers to ambush Banquo on his way to a royal feast, but they fail to kill Fleance, who escapes into the night. Macbeth becomes furious: as long as Fleance is alive, he fears that his power remains insecure. At the feast that night, Banquo's ghost visits Macbeth. When he sees the ghost, Macbeth reacts fearfully, startling his guests, who include most of the great Scottish nobility. Lady Macbeth tries to neutralize the damage, but Macbeth's kingship incites increasing resistance from his nobles and subjects.

Frightened, Macbeth goes to visit the witches in their cavern. There, they show him a sequence of demons and spirits who present him with further prophecies: he must beware of Macduff, a Scottish nobleman who opposed Macbeth's accession to the throne; he is incapable of being harmed by any man born of woman; and he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth is relieved and feels secure, because he knows that all men are born of women and that forests can't move. When he learns that

Macduff has fled to England to join Malcolm, Macbeth orders that Macduff's castle be sieged and, most cruelly that Lady Macduff and her children be murdered.

When news of his family's execution reaches Macduff in England, he is stricken with grief and vows revenge. Prince Malcolm, Duncan's son has succeeded in raising an army in England and Macduff joins him as he rides to Scotland to challenge Macbeth's forces. The invasion has the support of the Scottish nobles, who are appalled and frightened by Macbeth's tyrannical and murderous behaviour. Lady Macbeth, meanwhile, becomes plagued with fits of sleepwalking in which she bemoans what she believes to be bloodstains on her hands. Before Macbeth's opponents arrive, Macbeth receives news that she has killed herself, causing him to sink into a deep and pessimistic despair. Nevertheless he awaits the English and fortifies Dunsinane, to which he seems to have withdrawn in order to defend himself, certain that the witches' prophecies guarantee his invincibility. He is struck dumb with fear, however, when he learns that the English army is advancing on

Dunsinane shielded with boughs cut from Birnam Wood. Birnam Wood is indeed coming to Dunsinane, fulfilling half of the witches' prophecy.

In the battle, Macbeth hews violently, but the English forces gradually overwhelm his army and castle. On the battlefield, Macbeth encounters the vengeful Macduff, who declares that he was not "of woman born" but was instead "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb (what we call now caesarean birth). Though he realizes that he is doomed, Macbeth continues to fight until Macduff kills and beheads him. Malcolm, now the king of Scotland, declares his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at Scone.