

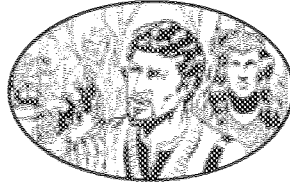
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

# Macbeth

*Macbeth* is the shortest of Shakespeare's great tragedies. It also differs from the others in that it has no subplot.

While there is no definitive date for the first publication or performance of *Macbeth*, scholars generally date this play to the year 1606. Shakespeare appears to have written this play to please and honor the Scottish King James, who ascended the throne after Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603. Within months of becoming king, Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, was formally declared the King's Men. Shakespeare showed his and the company's gratitude by writing *Macbeth*, in which Banquo, one of the king's ancestors, is a hero.

Shakespeare loosely based his play on a story found in Raphael Holinshed's



*The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*. One of the great liberties he took in rewriting this history included making Banquo a hero, instead of a conspirator in the murder of the king that Holinshed's *Chronicles* tells us he was.

**Activity:** Ask students to imagine the letter that *Macbeth* wrote to his wife after his encounter with the three witches. Then have them write a letter they think he might have sent.

**BARD CARD**

## Macbeth

**Plot Summary:** *Macbeth* is the story of a Scottish noble who murders his king to gain the throne, and the consequences of his actions. The story takes place in Scotland in the 11th century.

### Main Characters

- Macbeth:** a Scottish thane
- Lady Macbeth:** his wife
- Duncan:** King of Scotland
- Banquo:** a Scottish chieftain
- Malcolm:** King Duncan's son
- Macduff:** a Scottish thane
- Witches**

### Glossary

- bane:** destruction
- bed chamber:** bedroom
- bough:** a branch of a tree
- chamber:** bedroom
- harness:** armor
- heath:** an area of wasteland
- imperial:** relating to an empire or emperor
- kinsman:** relative
- prologues:** introductory events
- propheying:** making predictions
- Scone:** ancient royal city where Scottish kings were crowned
- thane:** a Scottish feudal lord
- usurper:** one who wrongfully seizes power
- vanquish'd:** overcome in battle
- wrack:** ruin, destruction