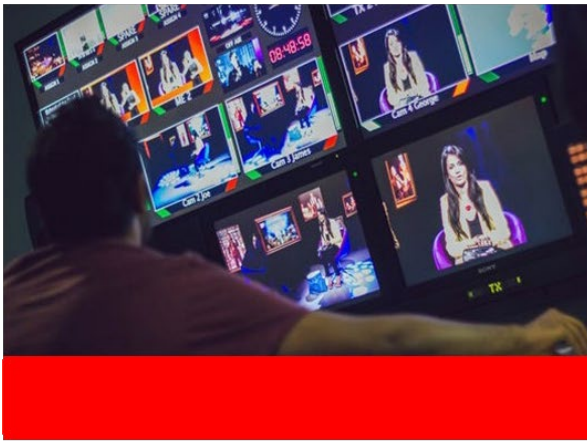


Play Titles: Macbeth

School/Course: Associate Schools CPD

Date: 1 November 2022

Please visit www.rsc.org.uk/learn for more information about our work



ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

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Our artistic practice

The work of RSC Learning is underpinned by a deep connection to the artistic practice of the Company. We make very strong connections between the **rehearsal rooms** in which our actors and directors work and the **classrooms** in which you work with your children and young people.

Rehearsal rooms are essentially places of **exploration and shared discovery**. A company of actors and their director work together to bring Shakespeare to life so that it is fresh and coherent for each audience that sees it.

To do this successfully they need to have a deep understanding of the text, to get the language ‘in the body’, to speak it as if it is ‘fresh-minted’, and to be open to a range of interpretive possibilities and choices. The ways in which they do this are both **active and playful**, connecting mind, voice and body. They are also approaches that young people take to readily, allowing them to explore complex language confidently and openly.

How we help young people approach Shakespeare

To do this we begin by deliberately building a spirit of one group with a shared purpose – this is about **us** rather than **me**. We often do this with games that warm up our brains, voices and bodies, and we continue to build this spirit through shared, collaborative tasks that depend on and value everyone's contributions. The ways in which we work encourage young people of all ages to discuss, speculate and question: there is rarely one right answer.

At the heart of the pedagogy you have experienced is the idea of young people encountering Shakespeare as fellow artists. Working with his language in the same ways that actors do, they can create outcomes that offer real insight into the text, in which they can take great pride, and which are often genuinely beautiful. For the actor in the rehearsal room there is little distinction between play and work; they make plays for a living. It can be very helpful to point this out to the young people we teach. **The playful approaches we asked them to commit to and take seriously are real work in the real world.**

Whatever the age of the young people you teach, playful **rehearsal-room approaches** can open up Shakespeare's language, amplifying the views and opinions of children and young people and igniting a love of language and literature in learners of all backgrounds and abilities. **They can make clear that Shakespeare has something to say to everyone, and that everyone has something to say back to Shakespeare.**

Building our Company

Pass the Clap:

Players are asked to pass a clap around the circle, keeping it going, finding the rhythm of the group. Extend to clapping together with the people either side: now each person claps twice, once to receive, once to pass, finding the rhythm of the group. This game helps to find the collaborative ethos of 'we' not 'I' which is at the root of rehearsal based learning.

Names and Action:

Players introduce themselves with their first name around the circle. Then, each person finds an action to go with their name which is repeated back by the rest of the group, until everyone has introduced themselves. Playfulness and the will to 'give it a go' are bedrocks of rehearsal based pedagogy.

Crossing the Circle:

One person looks across the circle, makes eye contact with another player, points at them and says their name before approaching them across the circle and taking their place. The nominated person must find someone else to approach before their place is taken. Extend with 'As ifs': as if approaching a good friend, royalty, an enemy. What difference do these 'as ifs' make to our body language, tone? The idea of stepping into a situation and exploring it as if we are the characters involved is another essential building block of rehearsal practice. The circumstances we are in affect language structure, register, jargon, pitch, tone, volume, pace. So, in a playtext which is designed to be spoken/heard and shared, rehearsal based pedagogy is fundamentally about standing in the shoes of the characters, speaking and listening to their words, imagining ourselves as if we are in the given circumstances of the action, to understand the play from the inside out.

Pairs 1-2-3:

Pairs share a count of 3, gradually replacing the spoken numbers with actions: a clap for 1, a stamp for 3, a click for 2. What difference do

these changes make to how we navigate the exchange? What do we notice about how we learn, visual and auditory clues, rhythm, our own comfort levels with the exercise. We all learn differently, and so we are going to need each other if we are going to fully understand and own the play we are about to explore.

Show Us A..... individuals: warrior, witch/ small groups (social distancing) A King and his court.

- **Social and historical context:** students are told they are going to investigate a play called 'Macbeth', and are offered social and historical context from the time the play was written: THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING. (see below) They are asked to re-make their image of a King and his court bearing in mind that context. Images are shared and interrogated through speculation, thought tracking, bringing the image to life as appropriate.

Reflection:

What are the differences in learning opportunity between introducing the 'world of the play' in this way or as a traditional chalk and talk lesson?

Pass the Chant:

The teacher introduces key lines from the play, using the rhythm of the words to create a chant: e.g. '**Double, double, toil and trouble, fire burn, and cauldron bubble.**' The chant is spoken together by the whole group, and then shared round the circle, with each player taking a phrase, swapping at the punctuation marks. Introduce who speaks those lines in the play, and pass the chant again, this time with an agreed objective for the speakers. Agree actions which could go with the words. Practice passing the chant sequentially with the actions, then extend to passing in any direction.

Introducing the witches:

Players are asked to consider what people believed about witches at the time Shakespeare wrote the play: that they were outsiders, beyond the great chain of being, that they could disrupt the natural order and create storms, that they could shape shift and predict the future. Players in

triads are offered a piece of fabric and asked to create a meeting of witches. They must shape shift to appear, and speak a line from the play together. (The lines can be taught orally or offered as text scraps):

**When shall we three meet again? In thunder, lightning or in rain.
When the hurly burly's done, when the battle's lost and won.
Where the place? Upon the heath. There to meet with Macbeth.**

Exploring Act 1 Scene 3: Actors' and directors' questions

- Work through the description of Macbeth in battle (below) and unpick the language by physically representing the characters described and enacting what is reported. How would we describe Macbeth? Macbeth has fought side by side with his friend, another brave captain called Banquo. The class sculpts two volunteers as Macbeth and Banquo: Are they tired? Celebrating? What might they look like? How do his Macbeth's peers describe him? Text scraps (below) are assigned.
- After the battle, Macbeth and Banquo meet the three witches.
- Read through Act 1 Scene 3 (see edit below) , asking those listening to pay attention to facts (what do we know) inferences (what do we think we know?) or questions (what do we want to know?) The players now work either in small groups of 5/6 (or under the teacher's direction) to explore the scene.
- Assign sections of the scene and ask players to surface facts, inferences or questions. The players are told that Macbeth is Thane of Glamis, but the Thane of Cawdor is alive and well. And, that King Duncan is alive and well and has two sons and heirs. They are assigned a part of the scene to work with and must bring that section to life, with a clear beginning and end. Fabric and percussion can be used to catalyse the imagination and support their ideas.
- The scene is shared back around the classroom. The teacher asks the players to notice the different interpretations of witches and to notice what happens to the relationship between Macbeth and Banquo during the scene.

- Now the players are told that a messenger comes in from the battlefield who announces that the Thane of Cawdor has died in the battle, and so the King has promoted Macbeth and given him the title. The players representing Macbeth and Banquo are asked to re-act to this news, and the characters are thought tracked.
- What difference does meeting the witches make to Macbeth and Banquo?

Reflection: *How do you feel about introducing the characters in this way? What are the differences between reading the opening scene of the play sitting at desks and this approach? What are the learning opportunities? What sort of interpretive choices have we made and why?*

Shakespeare introduces three ‘weird sisters’ into the play. The themes of superstition and witchcraft, which are central to the story of Macbeth, would have appealed to the contemporary audience, many of whom believed in witches, and also to King James who had written his own book on Daemonologie. The book describes necromancy – prophecy by the dead – which it describes as a ‘black and unlawful science’. Witches were thought to have a variety of powers, such as creating storms, shape-shifting (transforming themselves into animals) and having demon followers. It was also believed that witches and soothsayers could predict the future. In the stories and sermons of the day, witches were associated with evil, disorder in nature, and the disruption of the Divine Right of the King. Therefore, women who were suspected of witchcraft were shunned, and many were killed. In 1606, social outsiders were commonly described as witches.

Investigating a speech: Lady Macbeth Act 1 Scene 5

The teacher explains that Macbeth writes a letter home to his wife, Lady Macbeth, at their castle in Inverness. When she receives it, she says she fears that Macbeth will be ‘too full of the milk of human kindness’ to take power. Then, a messenger comes from King Duncan, telling her that the King and his entourage will come to stay at their castle, to honour Macbeth and celebrate victory. So, Lady Macbeth formulates a

plan to murder King Duncan when he is their guest, and calls on the spirits to help her.

- Students are asked to imagine that they are spirits who can create chaos. The students close their eyes and the teacher reads the speech. Students echo, whisper back out loud, any word that they believe would interest such a spirit.
- Students stand in a circle. Individual students read from one punctuation mark to the next.
- Students as a whole group find gestures and images for each word in the first couple of lines of the speech.
- Students in pairs/triads are allocated a short section of the speech, and find gestures to express the key words in their section.
- The teacher leads the group in experimenting with ways of saying the words that will awaken and draw in the spirits. What vowels could be lengthened, which consonants made sharp?
- The pairs show their work around the circle. The rest of the students are asked to notice and feedback on which words and images stood out to them. Students take notes on their script.
- Students are asked what is it Lady Macbeth wants from the spirits? What exactly is she asking the spirits to do? How does she view them? What adjectives does she use to describe them?
- Students discuss the impact of the words that Lady Macbeth uses on the audience. Why does she speak in this way? What can we tell about her character? What specific literary devices has Shakespeare used to help the audience understand this character?

Reflection

- *What are the differences between this approach and analysing the language using a glossary?*
- *How does speaking and listening to the words affect our understanding of them?*
- *Fundamentally, actors are trying to work out who they are speaking to, what they are speaking, what the given circumstances are, why they are speaking and what they are trying to achieve by speaking. This is the transferrable idea.*

Desk based scene study: Act 1 Scene 7

The teacher explains that at that moment, Macbeth arrives home and tells his wife that King Duncan and the victorious thanes of Scotland are coming to feast with them for one night. Lady Macbeth says they should kill the King, tells her husband to 'look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it' and to leave all the arrangements, both for the feast and the murder, with her.

- Students in pairs are asked to read through the scene back to back. (see edit below).
- Many of us work in desk based classrooms where free movement is challenging. However, most of these exercises can be done at and around our desks.
- **Whisper** the scene as if the character's do not want to be overheard (as if they are still in the same room as the feast, and have to host.)
- **Shout** the scene as if they do not care who hears them (as if they have left the feast and are in a room with stone walls) .
- **Tactics:** The scene is played with Macbeth sitting and Lady Macbeth able to move wherever she likes, using persuasive tactics. What tactics were successful and why?
- **Exploring backstory** Pairs discuss why they think Lady Macbeth mentions the baby, and what has happened to the child. Each pair makes three still images, which tell the story of what they think has happened. What is at stake for the characters?
- **One word dialogues** Pairs are asked to choose ten words, which are the distilled scene: the essential moments. They choose strong gestures to go with their chosen words. Several are shared and the differences in interpretive choices are highlighted.
- Pairs now rehearse their own version of the scene, or annotate their scripts according to what they have discovered.

Reflection:

- *Does an experience of making interpretive choices enable us to analyse the scene? What are the differences between this approach and working as an individual reader of the text?*

- *What reading objectives have we tackled in doing this work?*
- *What sorts of written outcomes might follow an active investigation of this scene?*

Investigating a soliloquy: Act 2 Scene 1

The teacher explains that although Macbeth has agreed to his wife's plan, he still has doubts. King Duncan retires into the guest room (where do we think that would be?) where he sleeps, guarded by his personal bodyguards.

- Players discuss the reasons for and against Macbeth killing the King.
- A crown and dagger are placed at one end of the space to represent the sleeping Duncan. Conscience 3s. Players work in groups of 3: A, B, C. A is Macbeth, B speaks all the reasons to go through with the murder, and C speaks all the reasons against. B and C simultaneously persuade A, who takes a step forwards or backwards according to the strength of the arguments.
- How do we think he is feeling? Macbeth walks a corridor of the castle. His feelings are so strong, that he hallucinates a dagger.
- Any of the approaches which we used to investigate Lady Macbeth's speech could be used with this one. One of the devices which Shakespeare often uses in his plays is the soliloquy. What is that? There is always an audience for the words in a play, and a soliloquy is a character sharing their thoughts, feelings, plans with the audience.
- Players look at the speech for 30 seconds, then choose a phrase which stand out. They share that phrase with a partner. Players in pairs then find strong actions for their chosen phrases. The phrases are shared. This is a more time economic way of exploring the key imagery in a speech.
- Players read the speech in response to interpolated questions, as if Macbeth speaking to a sympathetic friend.
- Players stand mid-way in the space and read the speech aloud, taking steps forwards and backwards according to whether Macbeth is getting closer to or away from the act of killing the king. What do we notice about the structure of the speech?

Rhythm and meaning: Act 2 Scene 2

Macbeth In pairs, as Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, they read through the scene, back-to-back.

- **Five point Chase.** The scene is played: characters have simple choices about how they move:
 - move towards
 - move away
 - turn towards
 - turn away
 - stay still
- **Iambic Introduction.** Students are introduced to the iambic rhythm. They clap the rhythm, finding the 'heartbeat' driving through the words. They consider iambic pentameter as the rhythm of everyday speech. They could make up modern English iambic lines as compliments and insults. They gallop the rhythm, exploring masculine and feminine endings through famous lines from Shakespeare, and consider why these might be used, by speaking the lines.
- This work is now applied to the scene. Students are asked to play the scene with pauses imagining listening out for sounds of the castle stirring. Then, to share the rhythm lines between the characters and 'finish off each other's heartbeat'. Where are the genuine pauses in the rhythm? Where are the shared lines? Students beat through the iambic patterns, discovering where the masculine and feminine ended lines are, considering what interruptions to the rhythm might add to our understanding of the character speaking, considering why characters might share a rhythm line. Students are asked to express their findings in terms of the characters' relationships, feelings and speech patterns.
- What do students think will happen to the Macbeths now? How does this exchange compared with the pre-murder scene ('Was the hope drunk . . . ?'). How does the structure of the scene provide the necessary information about what has happened off-stage?

Reflection:

- *At the RSC, rhythmic clues are clues about the relationship between characters and the state of mind of the speakers.*
- *Can these rehearsal-based strategies enable us to explore Shakespeare's language?*

RESOURCES

Texts

Circle of chairs

Name Labels

Fabric/ percussion including drum and bell

Crown/dagger

THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING

- In 1606, when Macbeth was first performed, people believed in the 'great chain of being'
- The chain was a visual metaphor, popular in Western culture for over 1000 years, which put all living things in order of importance.
- At the top of the chain was God.
- At the bottom of the chain was hell, where evil was.
- Under God was human kind, ranked from King to slaves.
- The King was 'God on earth', who had a 'divine right' to be king: he was born to be king
- Women were ranked slightly below men.
- People were born into their rank. If you were born a kitchen servant, you stayed a kitchen servant.
- If anyone disturbed the 'great chain of being' they were disobeying the natural order of the universe. Men and women who disobeyed the natural order could fall from their rank in their chain, to become slaves, or into hell, depending on how much they had disturbed the chain.

MACBETH IN BATTLE:

- For brave Macbeth: well he deserves that name!
- Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
- Which smoked with bloody execution,
- Like valour's minion carved out his passage
- Till he faced the slave;
- Till he unseamed him from the nave to the chaps,
- And fixed his head upon our battlements.

THINGS PEOPLE SAY ABOUT MACBETH AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PLAY:

valiant cousin

worthy gentleman

brave Macbeth

worthy thane

peerless kinsman

great Glamis

Section Three

FIRST WITCH **All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!**

SECOND WITCH **All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!**

THIRD WITCH **All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!**

Section Four

BANQUO **Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth, Speak then to me who neither beg nor fear Your favours nor your hate.**

FIRST WITCH **Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.**

SECOND WITCH **Not so happy, yet much happier.**

THIRD WITCH **Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.**

ALL **Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!**

Section Five

MACBETH **Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:
I know I am thane of Glamis;
But how of Cawdor? The thane of Cawdor lives.
Speak, I charge you.**

(The Sisters vanish)

BANQUO **Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?**

MACBETH **Your children shall be kings.**

BANQUO **You shall be king.**

FACTS FROM THE TEXT

- The Thane of Cawdor is alive and well
- King Duncan has two sons called Malcolm and Donalbain who are the heirs to the throne
- Banquo has a son called Fleance who is about ten years old
- Macbeth and his wife Lady Macbeth at this time have no children

KEY QUESTIONS: *MACBETH*, Act 1 Scene 3

Section One:

- How do the witches appear in the space?
- What kind of relationship do they have with one another?
- Why are they speaking the spell? What do they want to achieve in meeting Macbeth? Are they deliberately manipulating him or simply delivering a message?

Section Two:

- What kind of relationship do Macbeth and Banquo have?
- What exactly are they doing when they enter?
- What do the witches do to get their attention?
- How do Macbeth and Banquo re-act?

Section Three:

- Are the witches mocking Macbeth, honouring him, tempting him or . . . ?
- How do they speak to Macbeth? Do they kneel or whisper in his ear or run up and give him something and run off again or . . . ?
- How does Macbeth respond to receiving each of the titles?
- How does Banquo respond?

Section Four:

- What does Banquo hope for in asking the witches what his future holds?
- How do the witches present their news to Banquo?
- How does Banquo respond? What does he do?
- How does Macbeth respond? Does he do anything?

Section Five:

- How do the witches vanish?
- What is Macbeth thinking when he says to Banquo, 'Your children shall be kings.'
- What is Banquo thinking when he says to Macbeth, 'You shall be king.'

Macbeth Act 1 Scene 5

LADY MACBETH

The raven himself is hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature*
Shake my fell* purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
And pall* thee in the dunnest* smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry 'Hold, hold!' –

**compunctious visitings of nature/ urgent feelings of guilt*

**fell/ dreadful*

**pall/ covering for the body at a funeral*

**dunnest/ darkest, most dense*

MACBETH ACT 1 SCENE 7 (Edited)

LADY M: He has almost supped. Why have you left the chamber?

MACBETH: Hath he asked for me?

LADY M: Know you not he has?

MACBETH: We will proceed no further in this business:

He hath honoured me of late, and I have bought

Golden opinions from all sorts of people,

Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,

Not cast aside so soon.

LADY M: Was the hope drunk

Wherein you dressed yourself?

From this time such I account thy love. Art thou afeared

To be the same in thine own act and valour

As thou art in desire?

MACBETH: Prithee, peace.

I dare do all that may become a man:

Who dares do more is none.

LADY M: What beast was't, then

MACBETH Act 2 Scene 1 (*edited*)

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.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw. I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes- Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts
And take the present horror from the time
Which now suits with it. – Whiles I threat, he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

Act 2 Scene 2 (Edited)

MAC: I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

**LADY M: I heard the owl-scream and the cricket's cry.
Did you not speak?**

MAC: When?

LADY M: Now.

MAC: As I descended?

LADY M: Ay.

MAC: Hark!

Who lies in the second chamber?

LADY M: Donalbain

MAC: This is a sorry sight.

LADY M: A foolish thought to say a sorry sight.

**MAC: There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried 'Murder!'
As they has seen me with these hangman's hands.**

LADY M: Consider it not so deeply.

**MAC: I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
Stuck in my throat.**

**LADY M: These deeds must not be thought
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.**

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We place the text at the core of everything we do. Whatever the age of the young people you teach, rehearsal-room, playful approaches can make Shakespeare's language vivid, accessible and enjoyable. His words have the power to excite and delight all of us. Building a classroom culture that values and celebrates this pedagogy takes time.

For many young people, it may make demands on them that are unfamiliar, even uncomfortable to begin with. But persist and the rewards can be great as young people grow in confidence, embracing and unlocking this extraordinary literary inheritance.