

## Unit-V – SHAKESPEARE

### Drama (For Detailed Study)

### Macbeth

#### Origin of the Play

- William Shakespeare's talents were in the creative dramatization of a story full of imagery and imagination rather than in the origination of the story itself.
- For his inspiration, he often consulted **Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland***.
- According to the Chronicles, the "real" **Macbeth became King of Scotland in 1040 after having defeated a historical Duncan** who was a weak, youthful ruler with little experience.
- Shakespeare presents an older King Duncan who is due the respect of his thanes; consequently, his murder is more heinous in the dramatic interpretation.
- **In the Macbeth of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, the wife of Macbeth is hardly mentioned.**
- Shakespeare develops the impressive character of an ambitious lady Macbeth from a different story found in the Chronicles.
- The **historical Macbeth reigned for 17 years and survived the battles which returned Malcolm to the throne**: whereas, Shakespeare presents a series of events which speed to the conclusion of a Macbeth defeated and beheaded.

#### Characters

**Macbeth:** Scottish general ambitious enough to commit regicide to become king

**Lady Macbeth:** Macbeth's wife; ambitious; later remorseful

**Banquo:** General, murdered by hired killers

**Fleance:** Banquo's son

**Duncan:** King of Scotland

**Malcolm:** Eldest son of Duncan, Prince of **Cumberland** **Donalbain:** Youngest son of Duncan

**Macduff:** General, dedicated to the good of **Scotland** **Ross:** Cousin to Macduff

**Lennox:** Nobleman, loyal to Duncan

**Seyton:** Lieutenant to Macbeth

**Siward:** English Earl, supporter of Malcolm **Young Siward:** Bravely faces Macbeth though he is killed in battle

**Three Witches:** Predict Macbeth's ambitions will soon come true; later predict his downfall

#### Summary

- Set in medieval Scotland

- partly based on a true historical account
- *Macbeth* charts the bloody rise to power and tragic downfall of the warrior Macbeth.

## ACT I

- **Three witches** meet **Macbeth and Banquo** on the **heath** (moorland) as the men return from battle.
- They predict that **Macbeth will be named Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland** and that **Banquo will be the father of kings**.
- The witches vanish
- **Ross** enters to greet Macbeth with the title of Cawdor, the traitor whom King Duncan has determined must be executed and whose title and lands will be given to Macbeth.
- This immediate "earnest of success commencing in a truth" causes Macbeth to consider the extent of his ambition and Banquo to warn that predictions are often harmful as well as beneficial. (iii.)
- Announcing that his eldest son, Malcolm, is to be his heir, Duncan states his intention to visit Macbeth's castle, Glamis. (iv.)
- When Lady Macbeth reads the letter Macbeth has sent ahead, she determines her husband must take advantage of the opportunity **Duncan's forthcoming visit offers as a way of fulfilling the prophecy**. However, she fears that though Macbeth is "not without ambition," he is "**too full o' th' milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way.**" (v.)
- Macbeth is not as determined as his lady about the need for murder. **He considers reasons he should defend rather than threaten the life of his king.**
- Lady Macbeth remains adamant and pressures him with attacks on his manhood as well as reminders of their feelings for each other.
- She convinces Macbeth to proceed by presenting **her plan to drug Duncan's guards and leave evidence that will implicate them in the crime.** (vii.)

## ACT II

- Macbeth sees a "dagger of the mind" leading him towards Duncan's chamber. (1.)
- Lady Macbeth has drugged the guards, noting that **Duncan's resemblance to her father has stayed her from doing the deed herself**.
- After the murder, Macbeth carries the bloody daggers from the chamber causing Lady Macbeth to reprimand him for his great show of emotion.
- After she returns the daggers and smears the guards with blood, she tells Macbeth, "**a little water clears us of this deed.**" (ii.)
- **The porter** attends the knocking at the gate, creating **a comic relief scene of his imaginings**.
- **Macduff** discovers the body, and **Macbeth kills the guards**, explaining the act as his overwrought response to their unjust offense.

- Duncan's sons realize their danger and decide that **Malcolm will go to England and Donalbain will go to Ireland.** (iii.)
- Their flight makes them suspect, and **Macbeth is crowned King of Scotland.** (iv.)

### ACT III

- Macbeth plans to overturn the witches' prophecy that Banquo's sons will become kings by **sending two murders to kill both Banquo and his son, Fleance.** (i.)
- Macbeth no longer needs Lady Macbeth's involvement and **bids her be "innocent of the knowledge" of his decisions.** (ii.)
- A third murderer, obviously not known by the other two, joins them, and although **Banquo is slain, Fleance escapes.** (iii.)
- **At the banquet, Macbeth is terrified by the bloody ghost of Banquo.**
- Since no one else sees the apparition, Lady Macbeth attempts to excuse his behavior and eventually has to end the banquet.
- Macbeth determines to visit the witches again. (iv.)
- Suspicion of Macbeth is mounting, and **Macduff joins Malcolm in England.** (vi.)

### ACT IV

- **The witches show Macbeth three apparitions**
- They warn him to beware Macduff; they promise him that "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth," and assure him that he will remain safe **until Birnam Wood moves.**
- He feels comforted by these prophecies without seeing their double meaning but is shaken by a vision of Banquo and his eight descendants. (I.)
- **Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty to Scotland,** and they plan strategy with English forces to oust Macbeth. (iii.)
- Meanwhile, **Macbeth has Lady Macduff and all her children slain.** (ii.)

### ACT V

- **Lady Macbeth, while sleepwalking (somnambulism), reveals her knowledge of the deaths of Duncan, Lady Macduff, and Banquo.**
- Her **continual washing of her hands** cannot ease her dread or make her feel cleansed. The doctor and attendant realize they cannot help her. (i.)
- **Macbeth is too involved with battle preparations against Malcolm and English and Scottish troops** to spend much time considering his wife's dreams. (iii.)
- When he hears of Lady Macbeth's death, he contemplates that **life is "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."**
- He reassures himself with the predictions only to see the woods advance when **Malcolm's soldiers camouflage (disguise) themselves with boughs from Birnam Wood.** (v.)

- Macbeth sees the ambiguity of the predictions but goes bravely into battle.
- He kills young Siward who dies fearlessly (vii.) and then faces **Macduff** who **tells him that he was not "of woman born" but was "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb.**
- Finally realizing the true implications of the predictions, Macbeth refuses to yield to Macduff and face capture and ridicule.
- He confronts Macduff and bravely fights to the death.
- Macduff displays the "usurper's cursed head" and acclaims **Malcolm the new King of Scotland.** (viii.)

## The Tempest

### Background Information

- The Tempest is generally regarded as **Shakespeare's last play**
- first performed in 1611 for King James I and again for the marriage festivities of Elizabeth, the King's daughter, to Frederick, the Elector Palatine.
- Scholars **attribute the immediate source of the play to the 1609 shipwreck of an English ship in Bermuda and travelers' reports about the island and the ordeal of the mariners.**
- The period in which it was written, the **seventeenth century age of exploration**, the circumstances of its performance at court, and the context of the playwright's writing career suggest immediately some of its rich themes and ambiguities.
- The play can be read as Shakespeare's commentary on European exploration of new lands.
- Prospero lands on an island with **a native inhabitant, Caliban**, a being he considers savage and uncivilized. He teaches this "native" his language and customs, but this nurturing does not affect the creature's nature, at least from Prospero's point of view. But Prospero does not drive Caliban away, rather he enslaves him, forcing him to do work he considers beneath himself and his noble daughter.
- As modern readers, sensitive to the legacy of colonialism, we need to ask if Shakespeare sees this as the right order; what are his **views of imperialism and colonialism**? What are our twentieth century reactions to the depiction of the relationship between the master and slave, shown in this play?
- **The theme of Utopianism** is linked to the explorations of new lands. Europeans were intrigued with the possibilities presented for new beginnings in these "new" lands.

### Characters

**Prospero:** the true Duke of Milan but now living on a deserted island  
**Miranda,** his daughter  
**Antonio,** brother of Prospero and usurper of the role of Duke of Milan  
**Ariel,** "an airy spirit" who does Prospero's bidding  
**Caliban,** a savage creature controlled by Prospero  
**Alonso,** King of Naples

**Sebastian**, his brother  
**Ferdinand**, son of the King of Naples

**Gonzalo**, former advisor to Prospero, now principally serves Alonso

### Summary

#### ACT I, SCENE I

- **The play begins on the deck of a ship at sea** in the middle of a violent tempest.
- Amid loud sounds of thunder and flashes of lightning, the sailors fight to bring down the sails in order to control the ship. T
- The passengers, **Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, and Ferdinand**, come on deck to see what is happening, but the sailors complain that they interfere with their work and make more noise than the storm.
- Soon all appears lost as the ship breaks apart.
- The passengers and crew believe they are about to drown.

#### ACT I, SCENE II

- **The scene changes to the island** where Miranda and Prospero have viewed the plight of the storm-tossed ship through Prospero's magic powers.
- Removing his magical robe, Prospero tells Miranda the history of her birth and her true place and value.
- He describes how he and **Miranda, then not quite three years old, were forced to board a rotting ship and put to sea to suffer certain death.**
- **The conspiracy to take over Prospero's power and station was the work of his brother who plotted with the King of Naples**, Prospero's enemy.
- Now "by accident most strange," all these men have been brought close to the island where **Prospero and Miranda have been shipwrecked for the last twelve years.**
- **Through magic and the spirit Ariel who is required to do his bidding, Prospero created the storm and chaos among the sailors and passengers so that they would be separated and believe the others drowned.**
- However, Prospero has protected them all from harm and hidden the ship under a charm.
- When Ariel appears reluctant to continue to serve Prospero, **he reminds the spirit of its imprisonment by the witch Sycorax and Caliban, her child, until Prospero worked his magic. (Ariel's gender is unspecified.)**
- Besides, **Prospero promises complete freedom in just two days time if Ariel carries out his designs.**
- Prospero awakens Miranda and they visit **Caliban, "the slave,"** who carries wood, makes fire, and serves their basic needs.

- **Caliban curses Prospero, his master, for usurping his rightful rule of the island,** and Prospero vows to punish Caliban for these insults and his continued insolent behavior.
- Prospero recalls how when he attempted to befriend Caliban and teach him language and manners, Caliban tried to “violate the honor” of Miranda.
- **Meanwhile Ariel’s song and music has lured Ferdinand near to Prospero and Miranda.**
- Miranda is immediately impressed by Ferdinand’s good looks, and **he is equally smitten by her beauty, calling her a “goddess.”**
- Prospero lets the audience know through the vehicle of asides that this attraction is exactly what he had planned and hoped for, and he only acts disapproving in order to make their bond even stronger.
- **Miranda pleads with her father to spare Ferdinand while Prospero demands his subservience.**

## ACT II, SCENE I

- Meanwhile **Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, and Gonzalo** have washed up on another part of the island.
- Gonzalo counsels Alonso to see the optimistic side of their predicament.
- Even though Ferdinand is missing, they should rejoice that they are alive. This is, of course, the last thing that Alonso wants to hear.
- Meanwhile **Sebastian and Antonio ridicule Gonzalo, making fun of his speeches.**
- Cruelly, **Sebastian even accuses Alonso of being responsible for Ferdinand’s death.**
- They wouldn’t have been on this journey **if Alonso had allowed his daughter to marry a European prince rather than the King of Tunis.**
- **Gonzalo** counsels moderation; no one is to blame.
- He also calls on the company to observe the beauty of the island.
- Then he **begins to describe the type of government he would institute on this island.**
- **It would be a utopia of equality with no marks of wealth or social status. All would have leisure and their needs would be met “without sweat or endeavor.”**
- Ariel, who is invisible, passes among the men playing music, and all of the company, except **Antonio and Sebastian, suddenly fall into a deep sleep.**
- **Antonio uses this moment to describe to Sebastian the opportunity he now has to seize the crown from his brother.**
- With Alonso’s son and daughter out of the way, **Sebastian can easily claim the crown; all he has to do is kill Alonso.**
- **Antonio points to his own behavior as a model.** He overthrew his brother and now enjoys success.
- **He vows to kill Gonzalo to prevent his interference with their plot while Sebastian kills his brother.**
- **Sebastian decides to follow Antonio’s “precedent,” promising Antonio as his reward that he will no longer have to pay tribute to Naples**

- Just as they draw their swords, **Ariel awakens Gonzalo, singing in his ear that treachery is at hand.**
- Sebastian and Antonio are able to avoid suspicion by saying that they too had heard a loud noise and were protecting the king.
- The company now decides to continue their search for Ferdinand.

## ACT II, SCENE II

- On another part of the island, a parallel scene occurs between **Trinculo, a jester, Stephano, a butler, and Caliban.**
- At first **Caliban hides from Trinculo**, fearing he will torment him. **For his part Trinculo cannot tell if Caliban is fish or man**, but decides to take shelter in Caliban's garments because he fears a storm is coming.
- Stephano, who has found the ship's liquor, doesn't know what to make of the "beast" he discovers with four legs, two voices, and a severe case of the shakes.
- Finally, Trinculo and Stephano discover each other, and **Caliban is so impressed with Stephano's "celestial liquor"** that he declares he will be his subject.
- Caliban promises to show Stephano all the fine points of the island and to give him food and drink; **he vows he will no longer serve Prospero.**

## ACT III, SCENE I

- **Ferdinand carries and stacks wood for Prospero**, but declares that it is not odious work since he serves a sweet mistress.
- Miranda laments Ferdinand's heavy burden and offers to take his place.
- Prospero, observing this scene from a hiding spot, is happy because it confirms that the two young people are deeply in love.
- **Miranda and Ferdinand declare their affections and decide to marry.**

## ACT III, SCENE II

- **Caliban**, who is quite drunk, continues to **pledge his allegiance to Stephano.**
- The invisible Ariel creates mischief among Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo by making it appear that they are contradicting and interrupting each other.
- **Stephano beats Trinculo for defying Caliban**, finally forcing him to stand at a **distance while he plots with Caliban to overthrow Prospero, marry Miranda, and rule the island.**
- Their conspiracy is interrupted by Ariel's sweet music when Stephano and Trinculo follow the music in hopes of catching up with the musician.

### ACT III, SCENE III

- Alonso and his company, exhausted from their search for Ferdinand, decide they must accept the fact that he is drowned.
- **Sebastian quietly vows to Antonio to take advantage of the next opportunity and carry out their coup.**
- Suddenly music is heard and spirits enter with a banquet table **and invite all to eat.**
- The men are amazed and wonder if anyone will believe their stories of these strange events when they return home.
- **Just as they prepare to eat, Ariel arrives in thunder and lightning, looking like a bird of prey, and makes the table disappear.**
- The spirit announces “**you are three men of sin**” who overthrew Prospero; the shipwreck is fair punishment.
- The three men are deeply affected with guilt and anger and run off in different directions.
- Gonzalo thinks they may harm themselves in their desperation and calls on the rest of the group to follow them and restrain them if necessary.

### ACT IV, SCENE I

- **Prospero agrees to the betrothal of Miranda and Ferdinand.**
- He explains that the tasks he set were merely trials of Ferdinand’s love, and he has proven to be true.
- However, **Prospero cautions Ferdinand not to give way to his passions before the marriage ceremony.**
- **Ariel is sent to gather the whole company while Prospero entertains the young couple with a magic show.**
- **Ceres and Juno are called to the earth by Iris to witness a contract of true love.**
- They sing of the blessings to be bestowed on their marriage.
- **Just as nymphs and reapers begin to perform a graceful dance, Prospero rises up in alarm and interrupts the show.**
- He has just remembered the conspiracy of Caliban and his confederates.
- Meanwhile Ariel’s music has led the trio through a maze of briars and mud.
- **Stephano and Trinculo are disgusted and angry with Caliban who still urges them to kill Prospero.**
- But when they get to Prospero’s home, the men are distracted when they see luxurious clothing hanging on a line.
- **They start to fight over the garments and force Caliban to carry what they steal.**
- Suddenly spirits in the shape of dogs attack them.



## ACT V, SCENE I

- Prospero realizes that his project is almost completed.
- All his enemies are gathered together in one place.
- **Ariel describes the sorrow and emotions of the company, adding that anything human would certainly feel compassion for them.**
- Taking this cue, Prospero decides to show mercy.
- His reason and not his passion takes control.
- He realizes that “the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance,” and since they are sorry for their crimes, he has accomplished his purpose. Ariel is sent to release them.
- **Prospero uses his magic one last time to create music to sooth the senses and spirits of the conspirators.**
- Ariel fetches Prospero clothes showing his true status as Duke of Milan.
- When the company revives, Prospero greets them and accuses them of their crimes.
- **Alonso begs forgiveness and asks about Prospero’s life on the island.**
- Everything would now be in order except that Alonso regrets deeply the death of his son.
- Prospero says he too has suffered a similar loss; he has lost a daughter.
- Then he bids the company to look into his home.
- There they see **Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess**, and all are happily united.
- Ariel leads in the sailors who announce that the ship is safe and sound.
- **Caliban and his conspirators are led forward, entangled in their stolen clothes and still reeling from drink.**
- **Caliban has a change of heart, realizing that Prospero is a true master, not the drunken Stephano.**
- He vows to serve Prospero henceforth.
- The company retires to hear the story of Prospero’s life after which he promises them safe journey home.