Dunsinane

SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY
FIRST FOLIO
Teacher and Student Resource Guide
Consistent with the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s central mission to be the leading force in producing and preserving the highest quality classic theatre, the Education Department challenges learners of all ages to explore the ideas, emotions and principles contained in classic texts and to discover the connection between classic theatre and our modern perceptions. We hope that this First Folio: Teacher and Student Resource Guide will prove useful to you while preparing to attend Dunsinane from the National Theatre of Scotland & Royal Shakespeare Company.

First Folio provides information and activities to help students form a personal connection to the play before attending the production. First Folio contains material about the playwrights, their world and their works. Also included are approaches to explore the plays and productions in the classroom before and after the performance.

First Folio is designed as a resource both for teachers and students. All Folio activities meet the “Vocabulary Acquisition and Use” and “Knowledge of Language” requirements for the grades 8-12 Common Core English Language Arts Standards. We encourage you to photocopy these articles and activities and use them as supplemental material to the text.

Enjoy the show!

The First Folio Teacher and Student Resource Guide for the 2014-2015 Season was developed by the Shakespeare Theatre Company Education Department:

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Macbeth and his friend and fellow soldier Banquo make their way home after a victorious battle with Norway and encounter three witches. Taken aback by their unearthly appearance, Macbeth and Banquo listen amazed as the witches call Macbeth Thane of Glamis, then Thane of Cawdor and future King of Scotland. The witches go on to prophesy that Banquo, though never a king himself, will beget kings. Macbeth demands to know where the witches came by this information, but the witches disappear. Reeling from this supernatural occurrence, Macbeth and Banquo are further amazed when messengers from King Duncan, lords Ross and Angus, deliver the news that Macbeth has been granted the title Thane of Cawdor.

Macbeth contemplates the witches' predictions and wonders if he should assist fate by doing away with King Duncan himself. Suppressing these murderous thoughts, Macbeth accompanies Ross, Angus and Banquo to see the king. Duncan honors Macbeth and Banquo for their deeds in battle and then declares his son, Malcolm, Prince of Cumberland, the official heir to the throne. The entire party departs to Inverness, Macbeth's home; Macbeth hurries ahead to prepare for their coming.

Having sent word home to his wife about the predictions of the three witches, Macbeth arrives to find her already plotting the king's murder. Macbeth, at first horrified by his wife's plans, agrees to kill the king. That night, Lady Macbeth drugs the king's guards. On the way to murder Duncan, Macbeth sees a dagger floating in the air before him, leading him to the king's chamber. Macbeth kills Duncan with the guards' daggers and flees, consumed by guilt. Lady Macbeth lays the daggers near the sleeping guards, setting the scene for them to be blamed for the king's murder.

Early in the morning, Macduff and Lennox arrive to meet the king and discover his bloody body. Macbeth rushes into the chamber and kills the two sleeping guards. In the ensuing confusion, Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's sons, flee to England and Ireland, respectively. The princes' flight arouses suspicion of their guilt, and Macbeth is crowned King of Scotland.

Having achieved the throne, Macbeth begins to fear Banquo, who witnessed the witches' prophesy and who—according to them—will beget a long line of kings. Macbeth plans a great feast and invites Banquo, then arranges to have him and his son, Fleance, murdered. Banquo is killed, but Fleance escapes. At the feast, Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo sitting at the table and he rages in a fit of madness, alarming the guests. Tormented by guilt and fearing for his future as king, Macbeth decides to visit the witches again.

Some of the Scottish lords have begun to suspect Macbeth's involvement in the murders. Macduff travels to England to meet with Malcolm, who has been taken in by King Edward (Edward the Confessor, 1042-46). Macduff hopes that Edward will help put Malcolm back on the throne by sending an army headed by Siward, Earl of Northumberland. Learning of Macduff's journey, Macbeth sends murderers to Macduff's castle in his absence to kill his wife and children. Ross delivers this devastating news to Macduff in England. Macduff vows to avenge his family in battle with Macbeth and return the throne to Malcolm, the rightful heir.

Macbeth returns to the witches who summon a series of apparitions with three warnings: first, to beware Macduff; second, that "none of woman born" shall harm Macbeth; and third, that Macbeth will never be defeated until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane (the location of Macbeth's castle.) Feeling confident that the woods will never uproot and move themselves to his home, Macbeth returns to prepare for Malcolm's attack.

Back at the castle, Lady Macbeth is walking and talking in her sleep. Her nurse summons a doctor and together they watch as Lady Macbeth, sleepwalking, relives the night of Duncan's murder. As Macbeth prepares for war, Lady Macbeth ends her life. Malcolm rallies the English forces and travels to Birnam Wood, where they are met by Scottish lords who have abandoned the tyrant Macbeth. To hide their number as they approach the castle, Malcolm instructs the army to cut branches from the forest and ride with them in front. Macbeth is horrified when a messenger tells him that Birnam Wood appears to be marching towards them. He dons his armor and prepares to fight, still convinced that "none of woman born" can hurt him. Macbeth meets Macduff on the battlefield and confesses this seeming infallibility, but Macduff tells him he was "from his mother's womb untimely ripped." Macduff defeats Macbeth, and Malcolm is restored to the throne.
Under the cover of night, an English army sweeps through Scotland arriving at the castle of Dunsinane. There is a fierce battle and they kill the tyrant king, Macbeth, and take the seat of power.

After the battle, Siward, the English commanding officer, discovers that Lady Macbeth (the Scottish queen known as Gruach) is not in fact dead as he has previously been led to believe. Siward attempts to install a new king in Scotland: Malcolm. However, many of the clans will not accept Malcolm as the king while Gruach still lives. One of Siward’s Scottish allies, Macduff, suggests killing the queen to put an end to the conflict, but Siward is a man of principle and refuses.

Attempting to restore peace and establish Malcolm as the rightful ruler, Siward is beset by a brutal guerrilla uprising and must also deal with discontent amongst his own inexperienced men. Isolated and alone, he is drawn to the charismatic Gruach and a romance develops between them.

King Malcolm calls a parliament and, in a surprise move, whilst addressing this parliament Siward proposes a marriage between Gruach and Malcolm to achieve lasting peace. Both Malcolm and Gruach agree to this and preparations are made for the wedding. However, the night of the wedding Gruach’s men storm the castle and free her, killing several of Siward’s men in the process.

Siward realizes that the Queen’s son and heir is still alive and puts all his efforts into finding him and the queen, against Malcolm’s advice and wishes. After much bloodshed, Siward’s men capture Lulach (the queen’s son) and he is killed. Siward believes that this will now put an end to the conflict, but Malcolm disagrees.

Siward travels the length and breadth of a snow-covered Scotland, compelled to return Lulach’s body to Gruach. When at last he finds her, the queen is holding a baby who she claims is Lulach’s child. She refuses Siward’s plea to make peace with England and instead tells him Lulach’s son will be the next true king of Scotland...

Scotland is a land of geographic variety, from the marshy lowlands of southern Scotland to the craggy highlands of the north. Despite Scotland’s lack of agricultural viability, battles have been waged over this territory since the first century AD. At that time, the clan-rulled Picts, descended from Scandinavian tribes to the northeast, inhabited the highlands. Their Celtic neighbors to the south, the Scots, were mostly descended from Irish settlers. The Romans invaded and conquered the area now known as England in the first century. As they made their way north, the Romans were met with more and more resistance, particularly from the barbaric Picts. They were eventually forced to abandon their advance northward. To keep the warlike tribes from invading Britannia (as the Romans named their newly conquered land), the emperor Hadrian had a massive wall erected from the east coast to the west, close to the border of present-day Scotland.

Over the next few centuries a growing rift developed between the Picts and the Scots. Their proximity to England enabled the Scots to begin to adopt English culture and language. Feudalism was developed and trade increased. In the ninth century, Scottish king Kenneth MacAlpine united the Picts and Scots under his reign, and he and his descendants began to battle England for land near their shared border. By the time Duncan ascended the Scottish throne, eight generations later, Scottish territory had grown tremendously and included major portions of northern England. Duncan is the reigning king at the start of Shakespeare’s Macbeth, though Shakespeare's dramatization strays from documented Scottish history in a number of ways.

Ascendancy to the Scottish throne in the 11th century was less formal than the strictly regulated rules of succession of its neighbor England, where the idea of Divine Right of Kings stated that the current ruler was appointed by God, and anyone who removed the king from power was defying God’s will. In Scotland, which had a history of family-based clan rule, succession was loosely based on bloodlines; any man descended from a former king through his father or mother could conceivably claim the throne. In one of Shakespeare’s sources for Macbeth, Raphael Holinshed's The Historie of Scotland, King Duncan is described as “soft and gentle of nature.” Most historians agree that this was Holinshed's diplomatic way of describing a weak king, and in Medieval Scotland a weak king was not tolerated for very long. We hear this idea echoed by Gruach in Greig’s Dunsinane. Macbeth had a decent claim to the Scottish throne: his mother was the daughter of King Kenneth I, and his wife, Gruach, was descended from Kenneth I. It was only natural that a great warrior with a royal heritage like Macbeth should usurp the throne from the weak Duncan.

In Macbeth, as in most of his plays derived from historical sources, Shakespeare takes creative liberties with historical truth to dramatize the story. In many ways, Shakespeare does a disservice to the real Macbeth, who was a distinguished warrior and a competent ruler. Unlike their dramatic counterparts, Macbeth and King Duncan were pretty close in age, and Macbeth ruled for 17 fairly peaceful years, until Duncan’s son Malcolm returned from exile in England and defeated Macbeth. Malcolm was aided by his uncle, Siward Earl of Northumberland.
## WHO’S WHO in *Dunsinane*

### The English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Siward</strong></td>
<td>An English General attempting to “stabilize” Scotland and install a ruler friendly to England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Egham</strong></td>
<td>English lieutenant to Siward. Would prefer to go home to England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Osborn</strong></td>
<td>Siward’s son, a soldier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Boy Soldier</strong></td>
<td>A young soldier who assists Egham and Siward.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The Scottish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Malcolm</th>
<th>Supporting Gruach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Malcolm</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gruach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of the murdered King Duncan, put on the throne after the English overthrow Macbeth. He is not a stable ruler because many clans do not support his kingship.</td>
<td>Former Queen and Macbeth’s widow. Many of the clans support her and her son as the rightful rulers of Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macduff</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lulach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A fierce warrior, lieutenant to Siward, attempting to help the English and secure Malcolm’s place on the throne.</td>
<td>Gruach’s son, supported by some as the rightful king of Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Chief of) Moray</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief of one of the more powerful Scottish clans, Moray. Gruach is a princess of the Moray clan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Soldiers & Villagers

Besides the lead characters, many other people populate the stage in Greig’s *Dunsinane*: British soldiers and Scottish soldiers, farm girls and blacksmiths of the occupied towns, families of the clans and their leaders and attendants. Every one of these people seems to have a different set of loyalties, yet they all must confront the daily horrors of being at war.
After the Dictator Falls: Tracing the Steps of Gruach

By Jackie McGlone, 2013, National Theatre of Scotland

In his essay, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the great parliamentarian and philosopher Edmund Burke argued that we like to go to violent plays for the same reason that people went to hangings; not because violence improves us but because it interests us, as long as it’s happening to someone else.

There is no bloodier play in the Shakespearean canon—with the exception of *Titus Andronicus*—than *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. “And yet Macbeth is a play that I would happily sit through on a weekly basis,” says David Greig, author of *Dunsinane*, a magnificent “sequel” to Shakespeare’s version of the life and death of the Celtic warrior-king and his “fiendlike” queen.

Greig was inspired to write *Dunsinane* after seeing a production of *Macbeth* at Dundee Rep. “I really like the play,” he confesses. “I like the narrative of it and I love seeing different actors playing it. I also admire the space it gives actors to explore these two archetypal figures, particularly Lady Macbeth.” He remembers seeing five or six productions in the UK in rapid succession, always wanting the play to carry on, longing to see part two. “I kept wondering, ‘What happens after the dictator falls?’”

*Dunsinane* is Greig’s “response” to that question. “If *Macbeth* is about the toppling of a dictator, then we see in it a mirror of the Romanian dictator Ceausescu or Gaddafi, say, and the really interesting question is what happens next,” Greig explains, adding that he began writing as Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq crumbled. A great deal of violence was actually happening to other people, not only in Iraq but in Afghanistan. Tragically, the continuing unrest and bloodshed in the Middle East makes the timeless *Dunsinane* even more timely today. As Greig notes: “Civil wars are always with us.”

If Macbeth is “the Scottish play,” then *Dunsinane* reverses that—it’s a play about English people. It tells of an English garrison trying to survive in a hostile land, just as our “peacekeeping” forces have struggled in distant lands of late. When Greig’s play begins, Macbeth is dead. The queen has not taken her own life. She is very much alive and she certainly has not “unsexed” herself. We encounter an icily regal woman, who is cleverly playing the occupying army, led by the aristocratic Siward [Earl of Northumbria], at various complex games while carving up clan allegiances.

“And this is where, I think, events in Syria are relevant,” says Greig. “What interests me is this impulse to do good, which can often end up causing as much or, indeed, more bloodshed. In *Dunsinane*, Siward doesn’t begin by wishing to cause harm—he believes himself to be doing the right thing. I’m actually fond of Siward, a man of action who finds himself in a confusing situation. He ends up mired in trouble and even more violence. The sad thing is, in war, one man’s downfall is the downfall of many.

“Bizarrely, when I began writing the play, which tells a story but is also a speculation, I didn’t know that this desire to do the right thing would become increasingly relevant. ‘We must do something,’ we say when we see what is happening in Syria, Iraq and many other countries. This desire to ‘do’ is both attractive and dangerous.”

Attractive and dangerous is, of course, a perfect description of Lady Macbeth, wicked power behind the throne...Who was the woman who married a king who murdered his way to the throne, but brought regime change and peace to Scotland in brutal times?

The academic, historian and broadcaster, Fiona Watson believes that we can’t lay all the blame on Shakespeare for the demonizing of the Macbeths. The king’s posthumous reputation had been bloodied, besmirched and blackened by Scotland’s mythmakers—early practitioners of the black art of spin—long before an Englishman dramatized his tragic rise and fall.
In her scholarly, “factional” biography, *Macbeth: A True Story*, Watson points out that Shakespeare’s Macbeth bears no resemblance to the king who ruled between 1040 and 1057/8. “It is difficult to exaggerate how great an injustice history has inflicted on him and his queen, although Shakespeare was merely repeating, with some of his own embellishment, what was already being said by the Scots themselves,” she says.

Macbeth’s queen was Gruoch—Gruach in *Dunsinane*—great-great-great-granddaughter of Malcolm I. Macbeth had married her after slaughtering her first husband, Gillacomgain of Moray, Macbeth’s cousin and father of her son, Lulach. Is her image as a virago a farrago of lies? Why is it that she seems more of a monster than Macbeth? And why is it that, most troublingly, of all Shakespeare’s characters the Macbeths seem the most “modern?”

“One of the things I love about Gruach is the fact that she doesn’t talk much,” says Siobhan Redmond, who is playing the seductive, flame-haired queen for the third time, finding ever more contemporary resonances in the character. “She’s a woman with secrets, a marvel. It’s admirable that she never wastes words. However, that does not mean that she’s not telling the truth. I think she is always telling the truth but she’s not always telling the whole truth. She’s cool enough to think before she speaks, an enviable quality.”

“Ah, the silence of medieval women!” exclaims Watson, to whose impressive and illuminating researches, Greig insists he’ll be forever indebted, while echoing Watson’s view that the real queen has perhaps been wronged by history even more unjustly than Macbeth himself. Gruoch is conspicuous by her absence from the chronicles and sources scoured by Watson in her intellectually rigorous determination to fill in the “gaping crevasses” in our knowledge about Macbeth’s 17-year reign.

Do not, however, be tempted to interpret Gruoch’s absence as indicative of a weak and submissive personality, warns Watson, pointing to the uniqueness of Gruoch’s only recorded foray into public life. She was named with her husband in documents relating to the gift of land to the Culdee monastic community of St Serf’s, an island in Loch Leven, Fife. “An undeniable hint that this doubly royal woman played an active role both in her marriage and in public life more generally,” Watson writes, stressing that Gruoch made a political match with Macbeth. Her first husband had been murdered by him. She and her fatherless son needed a strong protector; Macbeth fitted the bill perfectly.

Was Macbeth’s queen mad, bad and dangerous to know?

“I think today that when women get to a certain age we’re often described as ‘mad,’ but I do think she’d have made an excellent warrior herself,” Redmond believes. “One thing Gruach does not do is ask for anybody’s approval, despite her awful circumstances—she is, after all, a prisoner of war but she’s a politician, too.”

Greig says: “Once you take another point of view of Macbeth himself from Shakespeare’s, then you have to think again about this woman, who has been painted as monstrous. You have to recognize that she may have been behaving not only rationally but with honor. I’m not saying that Gruach is a good woman. She’s in a complex situation—and she’s a queen. The real woman came from a very important clan—and this is where Fiona was so helpful—while Macbeth emerged from nowhere. It’s that discovery that made me actually rethink the play, that and the fact that when rehearsals began, we were embroiled in Afghanistan. So, I see Gruach as a woman of authority, but I also wanted her to have her own story.

“Of course it’s cheeky to write a sequel to a great Shakespeare play, but I wanted to reclaim a bit of our history, and that’s how I feel about Gruach. I’m reclaiming her, too, although there’s a cheekiness in saying, ‘Well, maybe Lady Macbeth was a bit more like this.’ I don’t think that she’s a silent woman—indeed, that’s evident in the final confrontation between Gruach and Siward, when she releases invective upon him, which feels like a curse. The war is embedded and it will not go away so I was interested in her ability to call that up—her very real power to lay a curse.”

*Jackie McGlone is a freelance feature writer.*
By Clare Wallace, excerpted from the full-length article in STC’s Guide to the Season Plays

Since the 1990s, Scottish playwright David Greig has built for himself a reputation as not only one of the most prolific but more importantly as one of the most talented, intellectually stimulating writers of his generation. Greig’s work is extremely varied, ranging from collaborations with Suspect Culture, the experimental theatre company he co-founded in the 1990s, to plays for young people, adaptations, expansive national histories and miniature plays touching massive political issues. Yet despite its obvious diversity, questions of proximity and distance, belonging and difference are among the dramatic concerns in all his work, even his recent light-hearted pieces such as Midsummer (2008) or The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart (2011).

Dunsinane is indeed a play that mines the potential of disorientation in order to pose open-ended questions. Using its Shakespearean precursor as springboard, Greig launches a nuanced exploration of the disparities and pitfalls of transnational communication and the amorphousness of national imagined communities. The play begins with the closing conflict of Shakespeare’s Macbeth as the English army camouflage themselves in preparation for the final attack on Macbeth’s stronghold. It goes on to envisage what happens after Macbeth is deposed and the new king, Malcolm, is installed. Action is centered on the principled English general Siward, his youthful soldiers, and their fateful interaction with the Scots, as they find themselves in the midst of alien territory on an impossible peacekeeping mission. In consequence, Dunsinane has a disconcertingly bifocal quality, merging Greig’s intertextual engagement with Shakespeare’s Macbeth with an allegorical dimension that intimates the resonances between the tale of Scotland in the Middle Ages and more contemporary territorial conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Rewriting or reorienting a Shakespeare play in modern theatre is a fairly frequent practice; Tom Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1966), Edward Bond’s Lear (1971) and Paula Vogel’s Desdemona: A Play About a Handkerchief (1979) are just a few strikingly contrasting examples of works with overtly Shakespearean points of reference. What remains exciting about such experiments is the way such overt intertextuality can produce an interaction between texts that is destabilizing, playful and productive of unexpectedly new perspectives, rather than a matter of mere priority or homage. In an interview for the BBC, Greig describes Dunsinane as an act of speculation. As a sequel to Macbeth, the play only partially overlaps with its predecessor. Its title explicitly hails Macbeth and the location of its concluding action, but directs us away from Shakespeare’s tyrant to the site of his demise, suggesting the precedence of place over personage.

The tradition of superstitiously referring to Macbeth as “the Scottish play” may seem a trivial occlusion, but it creates a certain eddy of cultural irritation even for Greig, who habitually distances himself from simplistic national allegiances. As he mentions in interview with Nigel Wrench: “to some degree for Scottish writers, it’s always felt a little bit cheeky that unquestionably the greatest Scottish play was written by the great English playwright.” This sense of Scottish difference and marginalization is a feature of the cultural terrain of Anglo-Scottish relations with a long and troubled history. It is one that since Dunsinane’s premiere in 2010 has entered a new phase with the referendum on Scottish independence in 2014. Taking such a context into account, we can see that Dunsinane gestures toward several issues simultaneously. Which of these audiences and reviewers recognize as most significant depends on where the play is produced. For instance, as noted in The Theatre of David Greig, when performed first in London in 2010, it was understood in terms of international politics; when transferred to theatres in Scotland it was seen as “a major statement of Scottish identity at a time of flux.” Greig’s Macbeth sequel is thus an act of speculation with subversive intent; it is, he explains to Nigel Wrench, an “answering back […]. Playing with some of those concepts and characters, and claiming just a little bit of history from another point of view.” The intertextual underpinning of Dunsinane clearly works as a cultural intervention on a number of levels.
One of Greig’s premises is to question the “truth” of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, a figure very dissimilar to the historical King Macbeth. Hence the play begins where Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* concludes. The apparent success of the military operation is soon mitigated by the discovery that Gruach—Lady Macbeth—is alive, and that her son and heir to the throne has escaped. Macduff and Malcolm, it transpires, have fed the English with misinformation so as to win the throne. This presents Siward with the undesirable task of administering justice and peace brokering in an internally divided Scotland.

Like Brian Friel’s *Translations* (1980), *Dunsinane* plays with language barriers and linguistic competencies. The performance is, of course, in English but as is indicated in the prefacing stage directions the Scottish characters speak Gaelic, while the educated, privileged Scots are bilingual. The monolingualism of the English places them at a disadvantage in their chosen role as mediators and arbiters of justice. In a very real sense the limits of Siward’s language competence are the limits of his understanding of the world.

Gruach is especially disparaging about the shortcomings of English (and by implication, the English). By contrast, Gaelic is apparently detached from a simple denotative function, “We long gave up believing in descriptions. Our language is the forest” (76) says Gruach. The texture of the imagery here echoes the play’s opening scene, where the soldiers disguise themselves as Birnham Wood. Just as that military force is allegedly “impenetrable,” (12) so too it seems is the Gaelic tongue. And, as soon becomes evident, in the linguistic forest it is easy to lose one’s way. What *Dunsinane* vividly shows are the ways in which language is much more than a vessel of meaning, it is a system of knowing and of identity that delineates the contact zone between the cultures in the play.

**Clare Wallace** is an associate professor at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at Charles University in Prague. She is author of *The Theatre of David Greig* (2013) and *Suspect Cultures: Narrative, Identity and Citation in 1990s New Drama* (2006) and is editor of *Monologues: Theatre, Performance, Subjectivity and Stewart Parker Television Plays* (2008). Co-edited books include, *Cosmotopia: Transnational Identities in David Greig’s Theatre* (2011) with Anja Müller, *Stewart Parker Dramatis Personae and Other Writings* (2008) with Gerald Dawe and Maria Johnston, *Global Ireland: Irish Literatures for the New Millennium* with Ondřej Plíš (2006) and *Giacomo Joyce: Envoys of the Other* with Louis Armand (2002). She is a member of the editorial board of the *Journal of Contemporary Drama in English*. 
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Loyalty
- Who is loyal in the play? What are they loyal to? Which characters never betray or change sides?
- Who is disloyal in the play? Are they justified? What do you think is motivating them?
- Where should a person’s loyalty lie? Should we always be true to ourselves? Should we put our family or ourselves first? Should we put our “clan” or country before ourselves? Why? In what situations should one kind of loyalty trump another?

War
- What do you think the life of a soldier is like? How is it depicted in this play? Use examples from the text.
- Which side do you think is in the right? Should Malcolm be king? Or, should Gruach and her son rule?
- What do you think about Siward (and England’s) involvement in this conflict? Is their presence a help or a hindrance to establishing a peaceful Scotland? Should England have assisted Malcolm in overthrowing Macbeth? Should they continue to support his claim to the throne?
- What modern conflicts do the events and themes of this play remind you of? Why?
- What do you think this play is trying to say about war? What are you left thinking and feeling in the end?
- Discuss the phrase, “The end justifies the means.” Is it ok to do bad things for a good reason? At what point do the "means" become too horrible to justify the “end”? Does Siward cross this line? When?

Leadership
- Do you think Malcolm is joking or telling the truth in his speech to the assembled clans? Why?

“If you make me your king I promise you one thing only—total honesty...I will govern entirely in the interests of me. In so far as I give consideration to you it will be to calibrate exactly how much I can take from you before you decide to attempt violence against me. I will periodically and arbitrarily commit acts of violence against some or other of you—in order that I can maintain a more general order in the country. I will not dispose my mind to the improvement of the country or to the conditions of its ordinary people...”

- Now compare the quote to Malcolm’s conversation with Siward. Does it change your mind?

“They bring me wine—the chiefs—they bring me women—they think—I’m corrupt—I’m weak—I wallow in venality—they think—this King is easy—he won’t cause trouble for us...let him be King—better him than someone other—better him than someone strong—someone with more—definition.”

- Do you think Malcolm’s strategies or Siward’s strategies are more effective in leading? In winning the war?
- Do you think Malcolm will be a good ruler? What about Gruach? Why?
- Is Siward’s quest really about bringing peace to Scotland? What do you think it’s about? Can violence ever really bring about peace?
Classroom Activities

History of My Morning

Shakespeare’s plays can be read as a window into history and culture; however, they should not be taken as strict historical fact. Shakespeare shaped history into fiction, fabricating scenes and altering character details to fashion a more dramatic account of history. In his article “The Historical Background of the History Plays”, Peter Saccio writes:

“Above all, Shakespeare personalizes. Whether or not history is really governed by the characters and the choices of individual men and women, the dramatist can only write as if it were. Social conditions, cultural habits, economic forces, justice and the lack of it, all that we mean by ‘the times,’ must be translated into persons and passions if they are to hold the stage.”

Macbeth and Dunsinane are certainly two plays that are “based on a true story” but not 100% historically accurate. Shakespeare and Greig took liberties with their plays in order to make the story more engaging for an audience. However, they did keep the major historical points and outcomes, like who wins the war and who holds the crown. In “The History of My Morning” students will get a chance to see how embellishing on actual events can make them more dynamic to watch, but less accurate.

- Put students into four or five groups and ask each group to share stories about what happened to them this morning before they arrived at school. Once everyone has shared, the groups will choose one story to perform in front of the class. Each performance should end with the students arriving at school.
- Give students a few minutes to rehearse. Encourage students to create a performance that is as close to what actually happened as possible; it’s OK if the story isn’t very interesting. Once everyone has rehearsed ask each group to perform their scene in front of the class.
- Once all the groups have had a chance to perform ask everyone to rework the scenes. This time they should embellish their stories. The main character in the story (the student whose story it is), and the ending of the story (the student arriving at school) should remain the same; everything else can be heightened or manipulated. Encourage students to try to keep the essence of the story intact and only add fictional elements that will enhance the story for the audience.
- Once students have had a chance to devise and rehearse, ask the groups to share their new versions of the scene with the class.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
- What were some of the more engaging changes groups made to their scenes?
- Did the changes make the stories more entertaining to watch? Easier to follow?
- Which version of the story was more fun to rehearse and perform?
- What was it like to see your own story told with false elements added?
- Did any of the changes alter your view of the story’s ending? Of the characters?

Ewan Donald as Malcolm in the National Theatre of Scotland and the Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of Dunsinane. Photo by Jason Ma.
Classroom Activities

The Value of Public Opinion

This activity is designed to get students thinking about the themes in the play.

- Identify three lines in the room. (They can be imaginary or marked with tape.) One line is the AGREE line, one is the DISAGREE line, the center line is UNDECIDED.
- Read a statement about the play out loud.
- Participants stand on one of the lines to express how strongly they agree or disagree with the statements.
- Volunteers from each side then get to try to persuade the students in the center to join their line. Whichever line has the most in the end wins!

Statements about Dunsinane:

War can be justified if it’s for a good cause.

I am willing to fight and risk death for my country.

If I could be a King/Queen, I would fight and even murder to win the power of the crown.

Once I was King/Queen, I would murder a child to keep my power on the throne.

If my power and crown were taken from me, I would join forces with another country and attack mine to win it back.

I would let the person I love marry someone else in order bring peace to my country.

Border Lands

Conflicts along the borders of neighboring nations have been common throughout history. As we see in Dunsinane, the border between England and Scotland was plagued by constant warring, violent disputes and strategic invasions by various rulers for political gain.

Divide the class into groups and assign each group a modern border conflict (i.e. Israel/Palestine, Russia/Ukraine, India/Pakistan) to research. Have each group write a scene-by-scene outline of an updated version of Macbeth set against the backdrop of one of these border conflicts. What is daily life like along the border? Why does Malcolm solicit help from that country? How does a country gain from helping Malcolm regain the crown?
Classroom Activities

Still Equivocating

Equivocation: the use of ambiguous language to conceal the truth or to avoid committing oneself.

In Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, equivocation leads to doom for many characters. In *Dunsinane*, Siward finds that the ambiguity and confusion that brought down Macbeth still remains in Scotland. Have your students find examples of equivocation in Shakespeare’s play. Who is equivocating? Why? What is the hidden truth behind each example? (Hint: Look in Act IV.)

Then, compare Shakespeare’s themes of equivocation with the following passages from *Dunsinane*:

MALCOLM
...so usually the way we manage this sort of thing in Scotland is by being careful not only not to tell lies—but also to be very very careful about the way we hear and understand words. So for example—if a person in Scotland says “It seems a person has died” we tend to hear that word “seems”—“seems”—and of course that word makes a difference. (28)

MCALPIN
...We have come here to say—install Malcolm as king and we will accept him but there can be no peace in Scotland as long as the Queen remains in Dunsinane.

MACDUFF
We thank you, McAlpin, for speaking on behalf of your people. You’ve spoken clearly and you’ve been heard. Now I call on Moray to speak on behalf of his people.

SIWARD
He doesn’t leave much room for compromise.

MACDUFF
There’s plenty room.

SIWARD
“There can be no peace as long as the Queen remains in Dunsinane.” It’s unequivocal.

MACDUFF
It all depends on the definitions of the words.

SIWARD
Which words?

MACDUFF
“Peace,” “Queen,” “remain,” and “Dunsinane.” (82)

MALCOLM
Siward, please.
You must stop.
Stop this.
This incessant Definition.

There are patterns of loyalty between us—there are alliances—there are friends who say they’re friends but work against us and others who say they’re enemies but quietly help us—there are networks of obligation between us—there are marriages and births between us—there are narrowly balanced feuds between us—feuds that only need the smallest breath of the wrong word spoken to tip them into war—

There are patterns between us. And into that very delicate filigree you are putting your fist.

SIWARD
I’m a soldier. I like clarity.

MALCOLM
Clarity is dangerously close to crudity.

SIWARD
And subtlety is dangerously close to corruption. (108)
Resource List

Shakespeare Dictionaries

Books on Shakespeare

Books on Teaching Shakespeare

Websites
- Shakespeare Theatre Company—http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/education
ON SHAKESPEARE: Articles and information about Shakespeare’s life and world
- In Search of Shakespeare: Shakespeare in the Classroom—http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/
The companion website to Michael Wood’s four-part PBS series *In Search of Shakespeare*, this site includes extensive research about Shakespeare’s life and works, as well as interactive features.
- Royal Shakespeare Company—http://www.rsc.org.uk/education/online-resources/
The most prominent Shakespeare company in England offers a resource bank of educational materials.
- National Theatre of Scotland—http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/
Information on the company that created *Dunsinane*, including their other exciting projects.

Standards of Learning

The activities and question sequences found in the Folio supports grade 8-12 Common Core standards in English Language Arts. Primary content areas addressed include but are not limited to:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>READING LITERATURE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Key Ideas and Details</td>
<td>(CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12.2)</td>
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<td>Craft and Structure</td>
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<td>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</td>
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<td>Range of Reading and Complexity</td>
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Theatre Etiquette

The phrase “theatre etiquette” refers to the special rules of behavior that are called for when attending a theatre performance.

Above all, it is important to remember that the actors on stage can see and hear you at the same time you can see and hear them. Be respectful of the actors and your fellow audience members by being attentive and observing the general guidelines below:

Before you go:

- *Dunsinane* takes place before cell phones and other fun technology existed. Please help us create the environment by turning off your cell phone and other electronic devices (music, games, etc.). Not only will it be historically inaccurate, but it can be very distracting, not to mention embarrassing, when a cell phone goes off during a performance. The lights from cell phones and other electronic devices are also a big distraction, so please no text messaging.

- We’re sure that you would never stick your gum underneath your chair or spill food and drinks, but we ask that you spit out your gum before entering the theatre and leave all food and drinks in the lobby or the coat check.

- We don’t want you to miss out on any of the action of the play, so please visit the restroom before the performance begins.

During the performance:

- Please feel free to have honest reactions to what is happening on stage. You can laugh, applaud and enjoy the performance. However, please don’t talk during the performance; it is extremely distracting to other audience members and the actors. Save discussions for intermission and after the performance.

Thoughts about the importance of being an audience member from Shakespeare Theatre Company Artistic Director Michael Kahn

“When you go to the theatre, you are engaging with other living, breathing human beings, having an immediate human response. In the theatre you sense that all of this may never happen again in this particular way.

As a member of the audience, you are actually part of how that’s developing—you have a hand in it … You are part of a community where you are asked to be compassionate, perhaps to laugh with or grieve as well as to understand people, lives and cultures different from your own.”