



**GLOBE
EDUCATION**

STAGING IT

MACBETH: ACT 2, SCENE 1 ['IS THIS A DAGGER...']



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

How Staging It Works:

Actors are filmed performing a duologue or monologue on the Globe stage or in Globe rehearsal spaces. Each section of their speech is shot numerous times, each time performed with a different emotional state e.g. happy, angry etc. The virtual 'director' then views each of the ways the actor has performed the line, choosing their favourite reading. They then add their choice to a dynamic storyboard, slowly building the scene with their personally selected clips.

At the end of directing a scene, the user is asked for their name which is seamlessly added to the end credits. Now the scene is complete, the virtual director can watch it back, or download it.

About Staging It:

Staging It is a digital platform that allows anyone to 'direct a scene' at Shakespeare's Globe. It combines specially created footage filmed on location at the world famous Globe stage, with groundbreaking custom-made software. It allows a user to compile a scene by choosing from a selection of clips provided.



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SCRIPT

Context: Macbeth is planning to kill King Duncan while he sleeps. Having just spoken of magical prophecies that will see him crowned the new king, Macbeth sees a vision of a dagger floating in the air before him. Its tip points the way to Duncan's chambers. Macbeth wonders whether the knife is real or in his imagination.

MACBETH

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-oppresed brain?



STORYBOARD



Is this a dagger...

Style: _____
Comments: _____



Come, let me clutch thee...

Style: _____
Comments: _____



I have thee not...

Style: _____
Comments: _____



Or art thou but...

Style: _____
Comments: _____



EXPLANATORY REHEARSALS

Notes on Explanatory Rehearsals:

It is often thought that a rehearsal is simply a chance to 'practise' a play or scene. The running of lines and movement over and over to make sure they go smoothly in the performance. However, there are four basic kinds of rehearsal; Blocking, Exploration, Movement and Performance. Staging It looks at the Exploratory stage of rehearsals; where the actors and director look at interpretation, motivation and emotion. In this stage actors and directors will try playing the characters in many ways to explore the relationships, dynamics and power play within the scene. This is a chance to try alternative approaches and see how that impacts or transforms the dynamic of the text.

General Tasks for Explanatory Rehearsals:

1) Before approaching the text, pupils can explore intonation, body language, facial expression, posture in a more general way, for example:

- 'How do we show another person we're bored or interested in what they're saying?'
- 'How does the face show fear, disgust or anger?'
- 'What might make a person turn away or not meet another person's eyes?'

2) Pupils could look up the character or characters who speak in this extract and search the 'Adopt An Actor' archive to find insights in the form of blog posts and interviews from actors who have played these parts at the Globe.

3) Pupils could find out more about the other aspects of the rehearsal process and turn this into a flow chart. They should try to find out what they can about how long the entire rehearsal process takes.

4) Place the scene in context within the play as a whole. Use techniques such as tableaux to ensure pupils are clear about what happens before and after each Staging It extract. Discuss characters' emotions and motivations going into this particular scene and this particular extract.

5) Use any of a wide variety of rehearsal room techniques to get used to the lines and explore reading them in different ways, e.g.

- read the lines in different voices, i.e. as different kinds of person/character types;
- read the lines over and over again varying pace, volume, tone, etc.
- experiment with body language
- if the scene features more than one character, try some different techniques for reading your duologue, e.g. interrupting each other, leaving long pauses, pointing, repeating important words, etc.

6) Share books about actors' preparations for Shakespearean roles such as those by Antony Sher, Harriet Walter and Simon Callow.



TASKS: KEY STAGE 3

Task 1: Emotions

Select emotions from the options and add them to the dynamic storyboard at the bottom of the screen. Pupils should try to start with one emotion and end with another in the most natural way possible. They should then see Macbeth changing his mind, either moving from Confident to Scared or from Scared to Angry.

For example: Scared - Mastering Courage – Excited - Angry

Using the dynamic storyboard, explain what changes Macbeth's mind and emotion in each section. For example, does Macbeth's inability to grab the dagger frighten him or make him angry etc.? This encourages pupils to think about the character's motivation, the mental state of Macbeth and the imagery of the dagger.

For more tasks on Macbeth's characterisation, download the KS3 Character Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks3-macbeth-characters.

Task 2: Thought-tracking

Pupils should create their Staging It film, reviewing it until they are happy with the results. Then, using the storyboard sheet write what Macbeth is thinking for each segment of the speech. This may be in tune with the emotion they chose or work against it. Working in this way will help them to explore the subtext. For example, is Macbeth still scared but trying to calm his nerves by acting unafraid?

For more tasks on character motivations, download the KS3 Character Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks3-macbeth-characters.

Task 3: Actions and speech

Having made their films of the speech, pupils could move on to explaining how Macbeth's motivation and emotions are portrayed through the actor's actions and speech. The note-taking table on the next page can be used to record comments on the effects on the audience of the language and performance of the speech. Pupils should discuss with their classmates how the points they have recorded in different columns of the table are connected, e.g. connections between what the actor does and the effects on the audience, and connections between language and actions/behaviour/movement, as well as connections between the different parts of the speech.

For more tasks on Macbeth's language, download the KS3 Language Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks3-macbeth-language.

	How Macbeth's emotions and motivations are conveyed through his actions	How Macbeth's emotions and motivations are conveyed through his speech	Effects of language on audience	Effects of performance on audience
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?				

Task 4: 'Is this a dagger...?'

What gives us the impression in this speech that Macbeth is unsure about whether he should really believe what he is seeing? Pupils should pick out words and phrases that show us this. Where else in the play does Macbeth question what he has seen and heard? They should then compare the language he uses to voice his uncertainty in this speech and elsewhere. Pupils could also discuss whether in their staging of this scene, a dagger or an image of a dagger should be used or not, and explain this choice. They should then relate their ideas about this to their reading of Macbeth's motivation and mental state at this point in the play.

For more on the theme of apparitions in Macbeth, download the KS3 Themes Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks3-macbeth-themes.

Task 5: Pronouns

Although this is a soliloquy, Macbeth does have an addressee in this extract - the dagger itself. Ask pupils to identify the pronouns in this short extract from the soliloquy and mark them in the text. Which ones apply to Macbeth and which to the dagger? They could be highlighted in two different colours.

Next, pupils should watch their version of the speech they have directed again and notice in particular how these words are spoken and whether they are accompanied by a particular emphasis or gesture. You could also watch some of the other versions of the speech and compare them. Ask pupils what insights into Macbeth's thoughts and feelings this activity has given them.

For more tasks on soliloquies, download the KS3 Language Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks3-macbeth-language.



TASKS: KEY STAGE 4/5

Task 1: Language features

Before carrying out the Staging It task, pupils could annotate Macbeth's speech picking out key language features. Encourage pupils to look in particular for the following:

- alliteration
- caesura
- personification
- paradox
- compound word

Now pupils could take just one of these features and focus on a place in the extract where that particular feature is used. Ask pupils to make notes about Macbeth's thoughts, feelings and general state of mind at that point in the text and to think about how Shakespeare's language choices convey that. Next, ask pupils what guidance they might give to the actor playing Macbeth about performing those particular words and phrases within the context of the soliloquy as a whole. Finally pupils could carry out the Staging It activity, noticing any key differences between the actor's various performances of the words or phrases they have been focusing on and their own interpretations.

For more tasks related to features of language, download the KS4/5 Language Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks45-macbeth-language

Task 2: Soliloquy and stagecraft

This extract is part of a longer soliloquy. To what extent would pupils advise the actor playing Macbeth to address any part of this speech to the audience? How would they advise the actor playing Macbeth to use the space on stage? Once they are clear about how they would like the actor to perform the lines using Staging It, they could begin to build up a detailed picture of exactly how this scene should 'look' and 'sound' on stage. Consider the actor's movements, props, clothing, and perhaps even music and/or special effects. Pupils could use a diagram of the Globe stage to record their ideas and keep track visually of how the entire soliloquy might be performed.

For more tasks on Macbeth's soliloquies, download the KS4/5 Language Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks45-macbeth-language

Task 3: Iambic pentameter

Like much of the play and much of Shakespeare's output as a playwright overall, these lines are written in blank verse (non-rhyming iambic pentameter). Where Shakespeare varies from the standard number of ten syllables (with five stressed syllables) or places the stresses in an unexpected way, interesting effects can be generated and the actor playing Macbeth can explore what these variations may tell us about Macbeth's thoughts, feelings and motivation at this point.

Write or print out these lines so that they are double-spaced. Count the number of syllables per line and write this total in brackets at the end of each line. In the spaces above each line, work out which are the stressed syllables. The first line would look like this:

— — — — —

Is this a dagger which I see before me, (11)

With pupils, notice which are the stressed and which are the unstressed words and sounds. Where in this section of Macbeth's speech does the syllable count change? What effects are created?

For more information on iambic pentameter, download the KS4/5 Language Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks45-macbeth-language

Task 4: Themes and symbols

What could the dagger in this speech symbolise? Macbeth's ambition? His fear? A decision? Indecision? As they use Staging It to direct different versions of this speech, pupils could think about what the dagger represents each time Macbeth speaks about it. Encourage pupils to collect their ideas in a mindmap with a picture of a dagger at its centre and to try to link their ideas to as many of the play's themes as seems appropriate.

For more information on symbolism in the play, download the KS4/5 Themes Lesson Plans on teach.shakespearesglobe.com/ks45-macbeth-themes

Task 5: 'Being soldierly'

Pupils could read this extract from a blog post by Jasper Britton who played Macbeth at the Globe in 2001.

“As to my character, I'm trying to play him in a way that it typically wouldn't be played. I'm battling against preconceived notions of the character. It was really effective during the Witches' scene. When I first met them, instead of being frightened, I laughed. Tim [Carroll, Master of Play] was pleased with this moment. He said it really worked as an insight into Macbeth's character, a character who is slightly unstable in his intention. I really don't want to get trapped into playing Macbeth as just being soldierly. I think the character has more depth than that.”

Pupils could discuss with a partner what they understand by Britton's remark that he didn't want to 'get trapped into playing Macbeth as just being soldierly'. Ask pupils to think about some different interpretations of Macbeth's character and behaviour in the play, interpretations that focus less on his 'brave' and 'soldierly' qualities and suggest some new approaches. How might this affect the way you pupils approach Staging It?

To listen to interviews with actors from Globe productions, visit shakespearesglobe.com/discovery-space/adopt-an-actor.