

Bell Shakespeare Online Resources

***JUST MACBETH! (ABRIDGED)* – ONLINE LEARNING PACK**

CONTENTS

ABOUT BELL SHAKESPEARE	2
THE ARTISTIC TEAM	3
SYNOPSIS: <i>MACBETH</i>	4
BACKGROUND: SHAKESPEARE'S <i>MACBETH</i>	5
USEFUL WORDS	6
KEY CHARACTER PROFILES: <i>JUST MACBETH! (ABRIDGED)</i>	7
CHARACTERS/EVENTS FROM THE <i>JUST!</i> SERIES	9
<i>JUST MACBETH! (ABRIDGED)</i> - THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION	10
INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TERESA JAKOVICH	12
THE BANNER	13
ACTIVITIES	14
RESOURCES	23

ABOUT BELL SHAKESPEARE

2015 is a very exciting year for Bell Shakespeare—it's our 25th anniversary!

Founded in 1990 and beginning life in a circus tent, Bell Shakespeare has grown into Australia's national touring theatre company playing to over 80,000 school students every year in theatre complexes and school auditoria all over the country. Add to that another 75,000 online and you'll see that our outreach is unrivalled.

So how are we celebrating our 25th birthday? With a stunning line-up of popular Shakespeare plays.

The year begins with the lyrical romantic comedy *As You Like It* directed by Peter Evans and featuring John Bell in the role of Jaques. This will play in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra.

Hamlet is our big national tour of some thirty venues. It will be directed by Damien Ryan, whose *Henry V* in 2014 was such a resounding triumph. In the title role we have Josh McConville, one of the most dynamic performers of his generation.

The Tempest, one of Shakespeare's last plays, will perform in Sydney. John Bell will direct this magical, mystical fable with a superlative cast of actors, headed by Brian Lipson as Prospero.

Our dedicated youth production in 2015 will be *Romeo And Juliet*, performed by our 2015 Players under the direction of James Evans, whose *Macbeth* in 2014 was such a success with school audiences. As with *Macbeth*, this will be a 90-minute, no-interval adaptation and will perform at Sydney Opera House and Arts Centre Melbourne. It is sure to sell out fast, so we urge you to book early!

The Players will also take to the road with their Actors At Work productions, touring the country with the dark depths of *Macbeth: Undone* and the hilarious heights of *Midsummer Madness*. Both shows are tried and true favourites with students.

We're also excited to launch our new online resource with ABC Splash, *Shakespeare Unbound*. These 12 scenes from six of Shakespeare's most famous plays are paired with commentaries from the director and cast, and will prove invaluable for students and teachers alike, allowing unfettered access to Shakespeare's works performed by Australia's best-known theatre actors.

Alongside these productions we'll once again offer Student Masterclasses, Artist in Residence, the Regional Teacher Scholarship and teacher Professional Learning.

We wish you a happy and fulfilling year of Shakespeare in the year ahead.

John Bell AO and Peter Evans
Artistic Directors

Bell Shakespeare highly values its partnerships with all the organisations that support our Learning programmes including the Department of Education and Training; BHP Billiton; Foxtel; Australia Council for the Arts; Arts New South Wales; Arts South Australia; Bill & Patricia Ritchie Foundation, Collier Charitable Fund; Crown Resorts Foundation; E B Myer Charity Fund; Gandel Philanthropy; Ian Potter Foundation; James N Kirby Foundation; Limb Family Foundation; Packer Family Foundation; Playing Australia; Scully Fund; Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation; Weir Anderson Foundation; Wesfarmers Arts.

Bell Shakespeare thanks the Limb Family Foundation for their generous support towards the script development of *Just Macbeth! (abridged)*.

Bell Shakespeare Learning Initiatives 2012 to 2015 are supported by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training

THE ACTORS AT WORK COMPANY

JUST MACBETH! (ABRIDGED)

CAST

TEAM ARIEL

Alice

Anna

Cameron

Sam

TEAM CALIBAN

Amy

Jake

Lucy

Shiv

CREATIVES

SCRIPT (*Just Macbeth! Abridged*)

Andy Griffiths, adapted by
Joanna Erskine

PROJECT DIRECTOR

James Evans

DIRECTOR (*Just Macbeth! Abridged*)

Teresa Jakovich

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

Scott Witt

BANNER DESIGN

Nathanael van der Reyden,
based on the work of Terry Denton

CREW

COMPANY STAGE MANAGER

Kelly Ukena

STAGE MANAGER

Chantelle Foster

STAGE MANAGER

Mel Dyer

It is recommended that teachers take students through the synopsis of *Macbeth* and introduce students to the characters from the *Just!* books by Andy Griffiths before attending the show.

SYNOPSIS OF SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

Three witches meet on a heath, and plan an encounter with Macbeth, Thane of Glamis. Macbeth and Banquo arrive together, returning from a tough and bloody war in which their courageous fighting achieved victory for King Duncan. The witches predict Macbeth will be promoted to Thane of Cawdor, and one day will become King. They also predict that Banquo will be the father of kings. Moments after the witches disappear, the lords Ross and Angus arrive to inform Macbeth that he has been granted the title Thane of Cawdor. King Duncan greets Macbeth with praise and tells Macbeth that he plans to visit him. However, it is Duncan's son Malcolm who gets the highest honour, being named Prince of Cumberland – next in line to the throne. Macbeth writes a letter to his wife telling her what has happened and of the King's plans. Lady Macbeth reads the letter and seeing the opportunity, plots with her husband to kill King Duncan when he arrives. Macbeth is keen on the plan at first but once Duncan has arrived begins to have doubts. Lady Macbeth persuades him to carry out the murder. That night Macbeth kills Duncan and returns to his wife with the bloodied daggers. She replaces the daggers near Duncan's sleeping servants, framing them for the murder.

Lady Macbeth and Macbeth retire to bed and are disturbed by knocking at the castle gates. Macduff arrives, and has a brief exchange with the porter, whose job it is to watch the door. Macduff discovers that the King is dead, and wakes everyone in the castle. The King's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, fear they will be blamed for their father's death and flee abroad. Soon after, Ross and Macduff reflect on what has happened, and Macduff reports that Macbeth has been named King.

Macbeth is concerned for his position and arranges the murder of his close friend Banquo and Banquo's son, Fleance. Banquo is killed but Fleance escapes. At dinner that night Macbeth is terrified by Banquo's ghost and decides to return to the Weird Sisters to learn more about his fate. They tell him he should fear Macduff, that no man of woman born can harm him, and that he will never be defeated until Birnam Wood comes to his castle at Dunsinane. They also show him a line of eight kings descended from Banquo's family.

Macbeth learns that Macduff has fled to England so he arranges the murder of Macduff's wife and children. Macduff meets Malcolm, and they agree to fight together, with English support. During the meeting, Ross brings news of the murder of Macduff's family. Back in Scotland, Lady Macbeth's attendant brings a doctor to observe her distracted sleepwalking. She has clearly become ill and deranged, imagining she cannot cleanse her hands of Duncan's blood and revealing information about the various murders.

The Scottish nobles gather. Malcolm orders his men to camouflage themselves with tree branches to disguise their numbers for the attack, giving the appearance of Birnam Wood marching on Dunsinane. Macbeth is told that his wife has died, but barely feels it. Despite the numbers turning against him, Macbeth continues to fight ferociously. He loses heart, however, when he discovers that Macduff 'was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped' (5.8), ie born by caesarean section. Macduff kills Macbeth and presents his severed head to Malcolm, who is proclaimed King.

BACKGROUND TO SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

Macbeth is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy. It was written early in the 17th century, not long after King James was crowned upon the death of Queen Elizabeth I. James soon gave Shakespeare's company the title of the 'King's Men' and commanded that they play regularly at court, where this play was almost certainly seen, around 1606. The earliest surviving definitive account of the play is from an audience member who attended a performance at the Globe theatre in 1611.

King James I had been King James VI of Scotland for 37 years before he succeeded to the English throne. He was a superstitious and paranoid king. He was convinced that a terrible storm that happened when he was on a ship sailing from Denmark back to Scotland was caused by witches trying to kill him. He was very insistent on the 'divine right of kings', that is, the belief that the King is appointed by God and that any act against him is not only treachery but the worst kind of mortal sin. *Macbeth* plays on the King's preoccupation with this world view.

When *Macbeth* was written, women all over Europe were still being executed as witches. The idea that someone might have the power that the Weird Sisters display was not considered, by much of the population, to be fantasy. Similarly, most people still believed in ghosts, so Banquo's appearance at the banquet table would have been assumed to be a genuine apparition, not just a sign of Macbeth's deteriorating mental state.

The Weird Sisters also form part of a series of references in the play to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, in which Catholic dissidents planned to assassinate King James, his son and the entire government in one explosion at the Houses of Parliament. The plot was discovered and the plotters brought to trial, during which the king carefully organised the public's outrage, including inventing Guy Fawkes Day (Gunpowder Treason Day as it was then known). The dissidents' act was linked to witchcraft and several plays were written around 1606–7, referring to the conspiracy.

One of the ways the Sisters trick Macbeth is by encouraging him to fear being supplanted by the heirs of Banquo. In fact, the Sisters' prophesy is a reference to King James' family claim to have descended from the (possibly mythical) Banquo, Thane of Lochaber, a line which did not come into play for several generations after Malcolm replaced Macbeth. Basically, Macbeth would have gained nothing even if he had succeeded in having Fleance killed, and this makes his efforts as ironic as his dismissal of the seemingly impossible prophesies that then came to pass.

Macbeth, Duncan and Malcolm are real figures from Scottish history. Shakespeare sourced and adapted their stories from the historian Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, specifically his 'Historie of Scotland'. At this time the law of tanistry governed the royal succession in Scotland: a king was succeeded not by his eldest son but by the most respected of his kinsmen.

The Superstition

For a long time *Macbeth* was considered an unlucky play (despite being hugely popular), and stories circulated about terrible things that happened to actors and crew members working on it. For this reason many actors still won't say the word 'Macbeth' and refer to it instead as 'The Scottish Play'. If you say the name of the play in the theatre there are various acts to counteract the curse. Some actors will insist that you have to go outside and run three times around the theatre, but others think you can get by with just turning three times around on the spot, and spitting.

USEFUL WORDS TO KNOW

Foul – disgusting and smelly

Thane – a noble lord

Plight – dangerous or unfortunate situation

Friends – usually means family, kindred, not just people you like and hang out with

Unseamed – split open

Trifles – small, valueless things

Recompense – reward

Wassail – drinking and revelling

Posset – a hot, milky alcoholic drink

Avaunt – begone, get away

Fell – deadly

Mirth – good humour

Unbecoming – unattractive, it looks bad

Blanched – gone white

Charnel houses – tombs where bones were stored

Lamentations – sad cries and wailing

Fantastical – imaginary

Wherefore – why, for what reason

Glamis is pronounced ‘Glarms’

Note: These can be the basis for a game of guess the definition. Students can make a ‘cold’ guess first, then look at the words in the play to see if they can tell from the context.

KEY CHARACTER PROFILES: *JUST MACBETH!*

Andy is a boy who has a best friend called Danny. Andy really likes Lisa. In *Just Macbeth!* whilst doing his class presentation on Shakespeare's Macbeth, Andy becomes the character Macbeth.

Macbeth is a kinsman of King Duncan and his bravest captain. The course of the play shows the changes that can happen in a person when they are offered something they want very much, but can only get it through underhand means. Macbeth's ambition leads him to do some terrible things. Does he do it because of the witches? Or is it his own weakness that causes him to act? When he realises how he has been deceived, Macbeth rallies his strength and fights to the death.

Lisa is a schoolgirl, and the girl Andy really likes. She likes to be clever in class, and do well at school. In the class project Lisa becomes Lady Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's best known and most frightening female characters. How far she influences Macbeth, or simply tells him what he wants to hear, every production of the play needs to work out. Lady Macbeth has none of her husband's doubts about the need to murder their king, but eventually the weight of what they have done crushes her. Sleepwalking through the castle wiping the blood from her hands ('Out damned spot!') she loses her mind, and later dies.

Jen is Andy's older sister who always makes fun of him. Jen and her school friends play the three Weird Sisters in Macbeth.

The Weird Sisters

Three strange women open Macbeth and set the dark sinister tone. They refer to each other as 'Sister' and collectively call themselves the 'Weird Sisters'. They are never actually called witches by other characters in the play. They more closely resemble the Fates, who were female characters in both Norse and Greek mythology. The Fates manipulate human lives and ultimately end them. Shakespeare maintains their non-human quality and dark power throughout the play. They are symbols of the supernatural and have been presented in many ways in different productions.

The Sisters are enormously powerful in their manipulation of Macbeth with their predictions, yet they do not actually force him to do anything. They merely plant the idea in Macbeth's mind that he could gain the throne. Their other predictions could be considered ironically accurate readings of the future: Birnam wood coming to Dunsinane, and Macbeth being killed by a man who is not technically 'of woman born'. In this they are like the Ancient Greek oracles that so often carry a hidden meaning that tricks the listener.

The Sisters often speak in rhyming couplets. This separates them from the other characters in the play, who speak blank verse or prose. They recognise and consequently play off Macbeth's weaknesses rather than casting spells over him. The Sisters can be comic, especially in *Just Macbeth!* and they can also be extremely evil.

Danny is Andy's best friend and in the school project he becomes Banquo.

Banquo is Macbeth's best friend, and a general in the Scottish army. He also hears the Weird Sisters' prophesies. Macbeth acts on the Sisters' prophecy, whereas Banquo does not, although he is probably just as ambitious as Macbeth. According to the Sisters' prophecy, Banquo's children will inherit a throne. But which throne? Banquo represents the path that Macbeth did not take. Later in the play, Macbeth has Banquo killed, and Banquo's ghost returns to haunt him.

King Duncan is the classic example of a noble and virtuous leader. He is somewhat comic in Danny and Andy's school project in *Just Macbeth!* He is the king murdered by Macbeth. His death reflects the destruction of order in Scotland. Order will only be restored when Malcolm, a descendant of King Duncan's line, occupies the throne.

Macduff is another nobleman in the play. He is angry about Macbeth's rise to the throne from the beginning. Macbeth orders the murder of Macduff's wife and son. Macduff leads the assault to unseat Macbeth and to place Malcolm on the throne. He also seeks revenge for the murder of his wife and children. Macduff is played in an unusual way in *Just Macbeth!*

KEY CHARACTER PROFILES: *JUST MACBETH!* CONTINUED

Malcolm is the son of King Duncan. He flees Scotland with his brother Donalbain after Duncan is murdered. At this point Malcolm is weak and fearful, unsure of his role and power. In league with Macduff, Malcolm becomes a serious threat to Macbeth's reign. His appointment to the throne signals the end of Macbeth's reign and represents restoration of order for Scotland.

Fleance is Banquo's son. Fleance escapes the murderers, sent by Macbeth, who kill his father. It is not clear where he is at the end of the play, but the prophecy suggests he will survive to have a family of his own.

After seeing the production students could write the names of Andy Griffiths *Just!* characters next to the characters they played in *Macbeth* on this Character Chart.

THERE ARE A LOT MORE CHARACTERS IN *MACBETH* THAN IN *JUST MACBETH!*

THE ROYAL HOUSE OF SCOTLAND

DUNCAN, King of Scotland

MALCOLM, his elder son

DONALBAIN, his younger son

THE SCOTTISH NOBILITY

MACBETH, Thane of Glamis later Thane of Cawdor, later King of Scotland

LADY MACBETH, his wife

BANQUO FLEANCE, Banquo's son

MACDUFF, Thane of Fife

LADY MACDUFF, his wife

MACDUFF'S SON

ROSS

LENNOX

MENTETH

ANGUS

CATHNESS

THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD

THREE WITCHES, the weird sisters

HECATE, Queen of Witchcraft

THREE APPARITIONS

SERVANTS

A PORTER

MURDERERS

AN OLD MAN

LADY MACBETH'S GENTLEWOMAN

A DOCTOR

CHARACTERS AND EVENTS FROM *JUST!* STORIES REFERRED TO IN *JUST MACBETH!* (ABRIDGED)

The malevolent garden gnome – ‘Wish you weren’t here’ from *JUST ANNOYING!*

The inspirational teacher Miss Livingstone – ‘Expel me’ from *JUST STUPID!* And ‘Mudmen’ from *JUST CRAZY!*

Andy’s bed-wetting – He can’t find a toilet in a shopping centre and then helps extinguish a fire by urinating on it, only to find that he is in bed, dreaming – ‘Busting’ in *JUST STUPID!*

Andy speeds downhill in a pram – ‘Runaway Pram’ in *JUST STUPID!*

Food fight Andy starts a food fight in a fancy restaurant – ‘Food Fight’ in *JUST STUPID!*

Band-aids Andy is too indecisive to remove a bandaid – ‘Bandaid’ in *JUST CRAZY!*

Helium Balloons Andy flies around town attached to helium balloons – ‘A Crazy, Bad, Dumb, Bad, Bad, Dumb, Crazy, Bad Idea’ in *JUST CRAZY!*

Kittens The mashing and pulverising of kittens, puppies and ponies in a machine designed for that purpose – ‘Kittens, Puppies and Ponies’ in *JUST CRAZY!*

Shut Up! Andy and his annoying older sister, Jen’s habit of saying shut up to each other – ‘Shut up!’ in *JUST DISGUSTING!*

Brussel Sprouts Andy’s dislike of brussel sprouts – ‘Brussel Sprouts’ in *JUST DISGUSTING!*

Giant Slugs Danny makes a giant slug that almost devours the world – ‘The Story of the Very Stupid Boy and the Very Big Slug’ in *JUST DISGUSTING!*

Brown Blobs in the Bath Andy’s adventure in the bath with two mysterious brown blobs – ‘Two Brown Blobs’ in *JUST DISGUSTING!*

STORIES THAT FEATURE ANDY TRYING TO IMPRESS LISA

‘The Story of the Very Stupid Boy and the Very Big Slug’ in *JUST DISGUSTING!*

‘Chubby Bubbies’ in *JUST STUPID!*

‘Copycat from Ballarat’ in *JUST ANNOYING!*

‘Rubbish’ in *JUST CRAZY!*

‘Kittens, Puppies and Ponies’ in *JUST CRAZY!*

‘Why I love Choco-pops in Fifty Words or Less’ in *JUST SHOCKING!*

JUST MACBETH! – THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION

By Andy Griffiths

When first invited by Bell Shakespeare to create a piece with the purpose of introducing Shakespeare to a younger audience, I wasn't sure where to begin. *Macbum? Toilet and Cressida? A Mid-bummer night's dream* (featuring, of course, the infamous *Bottom*)? But after some thought I decided that a more productive – and much less smelly – approach might be to transplant my character Andy from the *Just!* series into the world of my favourite Shakespearean play, *Macbeth*.

Macbeth is my favourite play because it manages to make us feel empathy with – and even sympathy for – a ruthless killer. It's also my favourite because it's the shortest of all Shakespeare's tragedies and features one of the most linear plots: both important considerations given that I also had to build in devices to help the younger audience negotiate the language and conventions of Elizabethan theatre.

Although the circumstances of Andy and Macbeth's lives are vastly different (Andy is a contemporary suburban boy – Macbeth is an 11th century Scottish nobleman) the leap from the world of the *Just!* stories to the world of *Macbeth* is not as great as it might at first seem.

Like Macbeth, Andy is highly prone to the suggestions of others and his ambitions and schemes often override his ability to consider the true cost and consequences of his actions. Andy often overreacts to the accusation of being cowardly. Danny has only to accuse him of being a 'chicken' to get Andy to attempt a dangerous or reckless stunt.

Also like Macbeth, Andy has a vivid imagination, exhibited very clearly in the story 'Wish you weren't here' where he imagines that an indestructible garden gnome with supernatural powers is trying to kill him. (I was amazed, when, during a week of script workshopping, the director of *Just Macbeth*, Wayne Harrison, picked up on this story and decided to have Macbeth's nemesis, Macduff, played – appropriately enough – by a concrete garden gnome.)

As Lady Macbeth is to Macbeth, so is Lisa, 'the most beautiful girl in the school', to Andy. He will stop at nothing in his endless, desperate and ultimately doomed attempts to impress her.

As Banquo is to Macbeth, so is Andy's best friend, Danny to Andy. On numerous occasions Danny proves a liability to Andy's schemes and is a constant source of irritation to him. Andy also exhibits a ruthless streak every bit as well-developed as Macbeth's, perhaps most vividly demonstrated in the story 'Unfunniest Home Videos' when Andy sets up Danny to have a painful accident so that he can record it and win first prize on The Funniest Home Video show.

Paradoxically, while both Andy and Macbeth can be ruthless, they also have a well-developed conscience and the ability to feel guilt for their actions that can surface at the most inopportune times. In 'Beat the Bomb', Andy is unable to consummate a practical joke because of a sudden overwhelming concern for the welfare of his victim. And he interrupts his mad urgent headlong dash for a toilet in 'Busting!' to buy pencils from a pencil seller because he feels sorry for him.

Andy has always approached the everyday trials and tribulations of his life with the gravity of a Shakespearean hero. For instance, in a story called 'Bandaid', in which Andy agonises over whether to peel a bandaid off quickly or slowly he even borrows from Hamlet's famous 'To be or not to be' soliloquy: 'I have to stop. It's the worst pain ever. It's the worst pain in the history of worst pains ... Maybe fast is not the answer. But neither is slow. I can't leave it on. But I can't peel it off. To peel or not to peel? That is the question.' (It is, of course, no accident that when Andy/Macbeth asks Danny/Banquo's ghost what it wants, the gory vision replies 'I want a bandaid ... lots of bandaids!')

As such, the *Just!* series seemed to be a perfect stepping off point into the world of *Macbeth*, but it still wasn't clear to me how to actually 'step off'. My initial idea of having Andy and Danny stage a wonky and chaotic version of the play – with Danny playing Lady Macbeth – was fun, but didn't feel quite right. Another possible approach was to borrow the plot of *Macbeth* and transport it to a completely modern setting, but as one of my aims was to retain as much of the original language and feel of the play as possible, this didn't seem to be the way to go either.

Thankfully my friend, and director, Jenny Lovell – an early adaptor of some of the Just! stories for the stage – pointed out the gross and disgusting list of ingredients that the witches put into their cauldron (e.g. ‘eye of newt, toe of frog, wool of bat, tongue of dog’) was not dissimilar to the types of items found in Andy’s list of ‘101 disgusting things’ which are painstakingly chronicled in all their stomach-churning glory in *Just Disgusting!* Jenny suggested that a compelling opening image to the play would be Andy, Danny and Lisa mixing up the contents of the witch’s cauldron in a food processor.

That was the way in. From there I figured that the reason they’d be doing that would be because they have to present the witch’s scene to their English class the following day, and true to form, Andy and Danny would be far more concerned with making the prop than attending to the actual text. Unable to resist the temptation to taste the potion, they are amazed to find themselves magically transported into the world of Macbeth. And not only that, but they’re even more amazed to find that they’re playing the starring roles. Andy IS Macbeth. Danny IS Banquo. Lisa IS Lady Macbeth.

Although a little bewildered at first, Andy, Danny and Lisa play along as best they can. Their clumsy attempts to speak and act appropriately provide the perfect device to introduce the audience to the world of Shakespeare, as well as supplying plenty of opportunities for humour and lots of Just! style silliness. They learn the ropes pretty fast, however, and as they begin to identify with their characters the drama of Macbeth unfolds.

Writing the play – my first – has been a great experience and I have particularly enjoyed the collaborative nature of the whole enterprise. My wife, Jill, is an editor and we work together on all my books, but she took on more of a collaborative writing role in this project and has enjoyed it as much as I have. We spent a week late in 2007 work-shopping the script with six actors and the director, Wayne Harrison, which turned out to be a highlight of our working lives. It was fascinating and inspiring watching these creative people at work and every evening we would rewrite entire sections of the script, incorporating their contributions. Along with the invaluable guidance, support and feedback from Marion Potts and Gill Perkins over the three years of its development from page to stage, *Just Macbeth!* has been both a joy – and a privilege – to work on.

Note: this year’s production is an abridged version of the original play, designed especially for touring to schools and only made possible thanks to the generous support of the Limb Family Foundation.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TERESA JAKOVICH

Teresa shares some thoughts on the process of working with Shakespeare's source material blended with Andy Griffiths', to create new perspectives on *Macbeth*.

THE WORLD

The worlds are constantly changing. In this context I find that if the world stays still for too long it loses its power. It's very prop heavy. Props are a really tricky thing, especially when some have to come to life, so the actors have to build a relationship with that. It's great to use the banners in a way to create a world that's constantly moving. When we're in the castle there's a shape that represents Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's space. I start in the same position that they end in (the classroom), so we go on the full journey, but we open the world up when Macbeth is on his own.

THE CHARACTERS

I'm trying to find the balance between really quick stereotypes and signifiers, but then it's breaking those down within it so the characters surprise them. So the witch can be quite Disney when she arrives, but then 'maybe the witch is overworked?', so those fixed stereotypes break down. The witch is a very short character who just arrives and disappears. But Andy still keeps bringing up the witch and how she got in his head. She's particularly lacking in power, which makes him more the fool, because he listens to her despite the fact that she doesn't create anything that amazing. One of the lines in the play is 'That witch just tricked me.' But he still makes the choice himself.

The framework is Andy Griffiths' characters, Lisa, Andy and Danny who you meet in all of his books, and we see them in a classroom scenario. Then the kids never quite work out whether they really do go to that other world or whether they create it on their own.

THE STORY

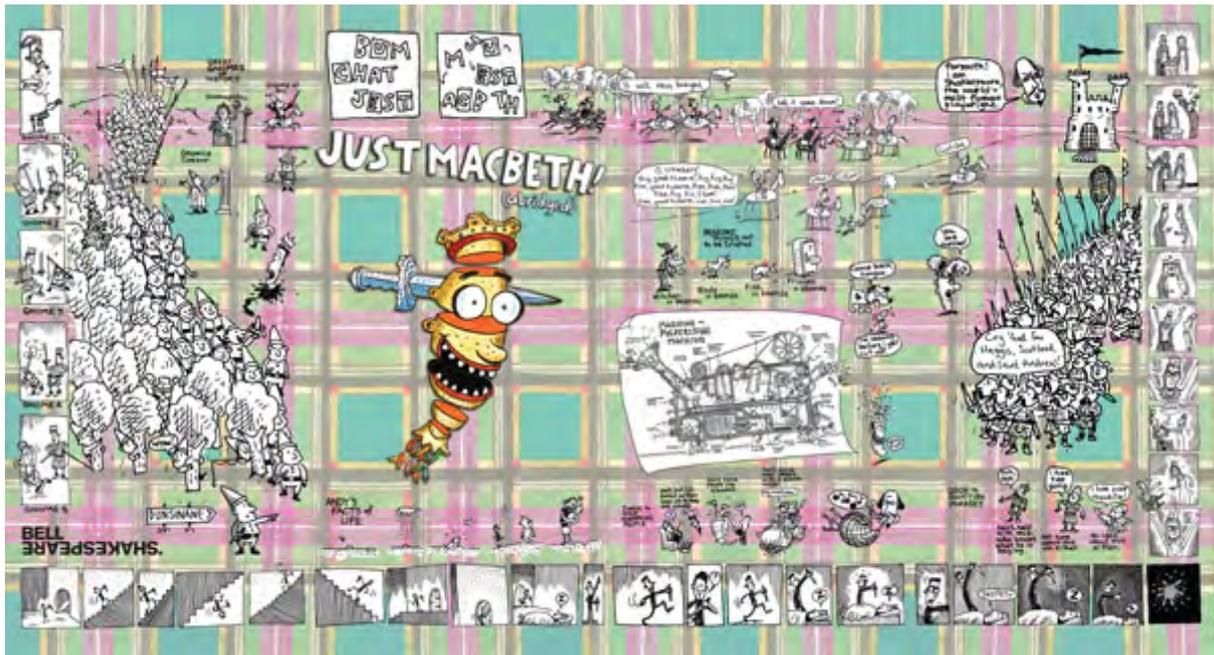
First and foremost I want the audience to know the story. We do go on the full journey. We go from Macbeth arriving in Scotland and the witches predictions right through to his beheading at the end, but because the framing characters are twelve they get to go through the journey on their level, and so they get to be afraid in that world, and they get to want things the same way, the ambition. They want the same things as Andy and Lisa, only Andy wants all the Wizz Fizz and the red lemonade. They go on the same journey of making choices. Originally Lisa has the same desires as Lady Macbeth, she wants to be top of the class she wants to win with the assignment. She gets the opportunity of being Queen and she loses the plot, and she finds herself sleepwalking, she goes on the same journey.

THE SHAKESPEARE, THE THEATRE

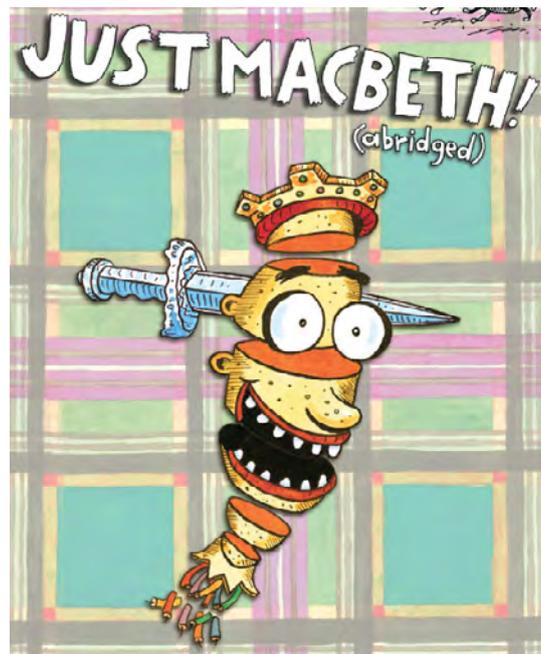
The Shakespeare is spliced in, in such a way that they start with one line and the kids shock themselves. And then Lady Macbeth finds that hers just come out more naturally than the others. As it goes through we hit some chunky bits. But then the sleepwalking, maybe the kids have to go there a little bit. And then the tomorrow speech is there. But there's never a moment that is not comic. There's all this fun and props and play, and the floor is covered, and then when he does his tomorrow speech there's nothing. It's just him on a box.

It's very important that the kids are enjoying something that is created before them, not on screen. So it's important that we have puppet shows, and that we create things out of nothing, a simple scarf and a hat and a bit of material – we haven't used anything that they don't have at home – and yet we go to whole new worlds.

BANNER DESIGN BY NATHANAEL VAN DER REYDEN



The design for the backdrop used in *Just Macbeth! (Abridged)* doesn't try to look like either the real world, Andy's classroom or a castle in Scotland. Instead you get some fun pictures by Terry Denton showing all sorts of things that go on in the story. This means the characters can be anywhere, but they also have places to go in and out, and somewhere to hide!



PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

'BLACK AND MIDNIGHT HAGS'

The witches in *Macbeth* are not called witches, but 'Weird Sisters'. However, Macbeth calls them 'you secret, black, and midnight hags' and Banquo refers to their beards! An audience member watching the play in 1611 described them as 'fairies or nymphs', and their leader, Hecate, is drawn from Ancient Greek mythology. Clearly there is no single, definitive way to think of these characters.

How do you see them? In black pointy hats? In rags? In battle armour? What would you have to do if you were costuming a modern dress production?

Should they look like this?



Or this?





Or more like one of these?

Draw a picture of how you see the witches. You can attach scraps of fabric or pictures from magazines to show what you would use if you were costuming a production.

PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

‘WHAT BLOODY MAN IS THAT?’

Macbeth is full of gruesome and bloody murders. You should practice to get in the right mood for them.

1. Get into pairs.
2. Person one should mime stabbing person two with a sword. Remember, it's your (imaginary) blade that kills them, not your hand, so you won't actually be touching your partner at all.
3. Person two calls out one of the following lines, and then dies horribly.

Murder and treason!

Darkness does the face of earth entomb!

O treachery!

Turn, hell-hound, turn!

O my heart, thy hope ends here!

Lay on, Macduff!

The class can vote on the most spectacular death.

PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

DIY MACBETH

This activity can work before or after watching *Just Macbeth!*, as it relates to the story of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

The best way to learn a story is to tell it. For this you will need a long desk and a large bag of old socks (clean!).

Go through the story synopsis provided here with the students and write down the key moments as bullet points on a board that everyone can see. Divide the class into 5 groups and divide the bullet points into 5 Acts. Give each group one Act to perform.

Give everyone a sock each, and send the groups off to prepare their acts by using the socks as hand puppets. They will need to figure out among themselves who is being which character, and then make up lines to tell the story. You can use a narrator if it makes it easier.

Tip your largest table on its side to make a stage. The students crouch behind it and hold up their hands to make the puppets. Have the groups perform the Acts in order. By the time you have watched all the groups everyone will know the whole story. It's also pretty funny to watch.

Key moments to perform:

- The witches meet Macbeth and Banquo
- The King promotes Macbeth and makes Malcolm Prince of Cumberland
- Lady Macbeth gets a letter
- Macbeth arrives and they make plans
- Macbeth hallucinates a dagger, then murders Duncan
- Macbeth hires murderers to kill Banquo
- Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost at the banquet, and panics
- Macbeth returns to see the witches again
- Lady Macduff is murdered
- Macduff and Malcolm hear what has happened
- Lady Macbeth sleepwalks
- Malcolm's forces disguise themselves as trees
- Macbeth and Macduff fight
- Malcolm is crowned king (how can you show Macbeth's severed head?)

With older children try attaching a quote from the play to each scene. You can put them up on a smart board behind, as the performance goes on. This works best when the project is undertaken over two lessons, with a little more preparation time. Choose short quotes, so they act as a series of titles.

PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE - *JUST MACBETH!*

Find the following hidden words:

MACBETH,	BANQUO,
LADYMACBETH,	DONALBAIN,
MALCOLM,	LENNOX,
MACDUFF,	ANDY,
DANNY,	JENNY,
LISA,	MISSLIVINGSTONE

L P E P S O P A C E A I T L K Z
A H A O F H T E B C A M S R I E
D O N A L B A I N F L E E M J M
Y N N A D Z I R A O E X Q B S D
M A C D U F F H C M O E N Q M M
A J F F H S I L R E P E N A O A
C E Q V E G A C X P H X S O E K
B N D M A M S O P F G I F G O S
E N O T S G N I V I L S S I M T
T Y N O G N O G X V F D N E L E
H A O P E Q E U E P J D U A P A
N T O L V G C G Q X R X N H O I
D F E L Y I L Y D N A W N J J A
E N B O T E T E J T A N P O I S
H Y D S P N Q K T Y Q B I R T S
K I V B D N H Y M C F S O G K R

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

‘THAT WITCH TRICKED ME’

When everything starts to go horribly wrong, who is to blame? Andy says the witch tricked him, but could she have done it if she wasn't encouraging him to do things he wanted to do anyway? Andy wants to impress Lisa, and Lisa is willing to be led astray, too, so is it Lisa's fault?

Divide into 'Team Andy', 'Team Lisa' and 'Team Witch' and have a debate where you make a case for why the mess is NOT your person's fault.

Then think about it some more: do you believe your argument?

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

‘IN THE POISONED ENTRAILS THROW’

In *Just Macbeth!* Andy, Danny and Lisa make up the witches' potion as part of their school project.

1. Read through the script for *Macbeth* Act 4, Scene 1 on the next page and underline/colour-in the ingredients as follows: Animals – red Humans – brown Plants and nature – green
2. Count the number of each type of ingredient.
3. Rename the ingredients with what you might call them in Australia today. Perhaps *Scale of dragon*, tooth of wolf, might become *Blue tongue lizard's scale and the tooth of a dingo*.
4. Now create your own recipe for a potion.
5. Create the rhythm in your potion as in the witches' potion. The witches rhythm is Dum de Dum de Dum (Strong weak Strong weak Strong weak Strong. This is called a 'trochaic' rhythm.)

For example:

***In the cauldron pitch and throw
Blue tongue scale and stonefish roe, and
Sharpened tooth of fierce dingo!***

MACBETH

ACT 4 SCENE 1 (edited)

A cavern. In the middle, a boiling cauldron.

Thunder. Enter the three Witches

First Witch

Thrice the brindled cat hath mew'd.

Second Witch

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

Third Witch

Harpier cries, 'Tis time, 'tis time.'

First Witch

Round about the cauldron go; In the poison'd entrails throw. Toad, that under cold stone Days and nights has thirty-one Swelter'd venom sleeping got, Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Second Witch

Fillet of a fenny snake, In the cauldron boil and bake; Eye of newt and toe of frog, Wool of bat and tongue of dog, Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting, Lizard's leg and owlet's wing, For a charm of powerful trouble, Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

Third Witch

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf, Witches' mummy, maw and gulf Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark, Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark, Add thereto a tiger's chaudron, For the ingredients of our cauldron.

ALL

Double, double toil and trouble; Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

Second Witch

Cool it with a baboon's blood, Then the charm is firm and good.

Second Witch

By the pricking of my thumbs, Something wicked this way comes. Open, locks, Whoever knocks!

Enter MACBETH

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

‘I WOULD NOT HAVE SUCH A HEART’

Lady Macbeth’s Gentlewoman tells the Doctor:

‘I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon’t, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep.’ (Act 5, Scene 1)

What do you think Lady Macbeth is writing? A letter to Macbeth? A confession? A warning to Lady Macduff (too late)? The words of an old song, from when she was a young, innocent girl? A will?

Write Lady Macbeth’s letter. Look closely at her lines in Act 5, Scene 1 to see what things are tormenting her.

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

‘THIS CASTLE HATH A PLEASANT SEAT.’

Perhaps Andy and Lisa are transported to Scotland, or perhaps they are just in their classroom in Australia. How important is it that this play is set in ancient Scotland? It seems pretty fundamental to the story, but over the years there have been productions of *Macbeth* set in

- Japan
- 1950s gangster America
- modern Glasgow
- Space

First: What can you find out about medieval Scotland? How would people have dressed? What did they eat? What armour did they use, and how did they fight? What was the landscape like? And the castles? Research anything you can think of that will help you get a feeling for what feudal Scotland would have been like.

Next: Can you think of somewhere completely different where you could set the play? What would that world look like? How would its people behave? Would anything in the story have to be changed? Think about what you are gaining and what you might lose.

Now: Decide whether to go with Scotland or your other idea. Make a poster advertising your production of *Macbeth* that shows where it will be set.

Then: Present your poster to you class, and make a case for why this is a great setting for the play. You could divide into those who decided it needed to be kept in Scotland, and those who want to experiment with putting it elsewhere, and have a debate about the strengths and weaknesses of each.

POST-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITY

‘SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES’

Andy and Lisa sometimes surprise themselves by speaking Shakespeare’s words to express what is happening to them. Now you’ve heard them do it, you can give it a try yourself. Macbeth is full of great scary, creepy and bloody moments to play with.

- Choose a line that looks fun to say. There are some suggestions below.
- Figure out what sort of person is talking.
- What do you think is happening to them? How are they feeling?
- Use a dictionary to look up any words you don’t understand.
- Read the words out loud to you class, remembering who you are supposed to be.
- This is you explaining what you are experiencing to someone who doesn’t know. Make them understand how you feel!

*Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.*
Act 1, Scene 1

*The night has been unruly: where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i’ the air; strange screams of death,
Some say the earth was feverous and did shake.*
Act 2, Scene 3

*Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air:
But now I am cabin’d, cribb’d, confined, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears.*
Act 3, Scene 4

*The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!
Where got’st thou that goose look?
Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,
Thou lily-liver’d boy.*
Act 5, Scene 3

*Why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature?*
Act 1, Scene 3

*O well done! I commend your pains,
And every one shall share in the gains;
And now about the cauldron sing,
Live elves and fairies in a ring,
Enchanting all that you put in.*
Act 4, Scene 1

O, full of scorpions is my mind.
Act 3, Scene 2

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The best version of *Macbeth* for school students to use is the Cambridge School edition:

Gibson, Rex. (Ed.), Cambridge School Shakespeare *Macbeth* (1993, Cambridge University Press)

BOOKS TO SHOW YOUNGER CHILDREN ABOUT SHAKESPEARE'S WORLD:

Aliki, *William Shakespeare and the Globe* (2000, Trophy Picture Books)

Griffiths, Andy, *Just Macbeth!* (2009, Pan Macmillan)

Rogers, Gregory, *The Boy, the Bear, the Baron, the Bard and Midsummer Knight*, (2004 & 2006, Allen & Unwin)

BOOKS WITH GOOD EXERCISES FOR TEACHERS TO USE TO INTRODUCE SHAKESPEARE:

Bayley, P., *An A-B-C Of Shakespeare* (1985, Longman Group)

Gibson, Rex, *Stepping Into Shakespeare* (2000, Cambridge University Press)

Gibson, Rex, *Discovering Shakespeare's Language* (1998, Cambridge University Press)

Winston, Joe and Miles Tandy, *Beginning Shakespeare 4-11* (2012, Routledge)

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Chubbuck, I, *The Power Of The Actor* (2005, Currency Press)

Crystal, David & Ben Crystal, *Shakespeare's Words: A Glossary & Language Companion*, (2002, Penguin Books)

Dunton-Downer, Leslie & Alan Riding, *Essential Shakespeare Handbook* (2013, Dorling Kindersley)

Fantasia, Louis, *Instant Shakespeare* (2002, Ivan R. Dee)

Wells, Stanley, *Is It True What They Say About Shakespeare?* (2007, Long Barn Books)

SOME WEBSITES (BESIDES OURS!) WITH GREAT RESOURCES:

The full text of the play (convenient for being searchable and copy/pasteable):

<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html>

On Duncan and Macbeth in British history:

<http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofScotland/Duncan-MacBeth/>

Shakespeare's Globe in London, which has a very comprehensive Education section:

<http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/education/teachers/teaching-resources>

The Royal Shakespeare Company, which has plot summaries and records of previous productions:

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/education/>

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust has some fun blogs and other bits and pieces:

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/students-and-enthusiasts.html>

Shakespeare Online is a commercial site, but the information is reliable:

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com>

The Touchstone database is very UK-focused, but has some amazing images from a huge number of productions of all Shakespeare's plays:

<http://traffic.bham.ac.uk>