



## Just Macbeth!

Andy Griffiths

Teachers' Notes

### Introduction

Andy Griffiths is an Australian children's book author and comedy writer. His books have sold over 4 million copies worldwide, have featured on the New York Times bestseller lists and have won over 40 Australian children's choice awards.

His latest book, *Just Macbeth!*, is a play based on the 1606 play, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* by William Shakespeare. Three school children who are rehearsing a scene for this play are propelled onto a battlefield on a cold Scottish heath!





## Curriculum Links

English: Reading, Writing, Presenting, Researching, Talking, Listening  
Creative and Performing Arts: Drawing/sketching, Modelling, Drama  
PDHPE: Interpersonal relationships, Decision Making  
Science and Technology: Using Technology, Design and Make,  
The Human Body

## Learning Outcomes

Students will have the opportunity to:

- read texts independently and in groups
- respond to themes and issues in a text
- draw on a range of skills and strategies to read and comprehend a text
- analyse techniques used by authors to create certain effects and use language creatively
- write in different genres or text types
- examine different functions within the English language such as the differences between Shakespearean language and modern-day English
- design and make a board game
- devise, act and rehearse drama for performance to an audience
- learn about parts of the human body.

## Before you read

Look at the author's name. Talk about other book titles by Andy Griffiths you may have read previously, especially the *Just!* books. Make the list as long as you can and share a bit about your favourite book. Discuss what makes Andy Griffiths' novels so enjoyable. Discuss any other plays you have read.

Look at the front cover picture and the title of *Just Macbeth!* Write a short paragraph outlining what you think the play may be about. Share your ideas with the class.



## Read the book

Read *Just Macbeth!* as directed by your teacher in one of the following ways:

- as a whole class
- in small reading groups
- individually.

Stop every now and then to re-evaluate where you think the play may be heading. Discuss your ideas with a friend as well as parts of the play you like and why.

## After You Read

Use the following questions to promote discussion of the book. Discuss these questions as a class or write the answers down.

1. Why does Andy really, really, really love Shakespeare at the beginning of the book?
2. What is a soliloquy?
3. Why did boys play the roles of women in Shakespearean plays in the 1600s?
4. What happens when Andy, Danny and Lisa drink the potion from their cauldron?
5. What are four good things about being a king? See the illustration on page 62.
6. What are some of the 'brave' feats that Andy did in the other *Just!* books, described in Chapter 3?
7. Why does Macbeth kill Duncan and Banquo?
8. Why do you think some chapters are all cartoon with no words?
9. What are some of the ingredients in the witches' cauldron?
10. What makes Lady Macbeth so sick?
11. How does 'Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane'?
12. How do the author and illustrator make *Just Macbeth!* so funny?



## Activities

### Drastic Drama

Work in small groups and choose one of your favourite parts of the play. Rehearse and act out one or two of the scenes. Bring in any props and costumes you may need. No spleens or dog's tongues!

### Research – Shakespeare

Find out as much as you can about the playwright Shakespeare. Make sure you include:

- When and where Shakespeare was born
- When and where Shakespeare died
- Family history – marriage and children
- Number of plays he wrote. List at least five
- Anything else Shakespeare wrote
- Five famous Shakespeare quotes
- A picture of Shakespeare.

### Interesting Insults

When Andy and Danny arrive in Scotland they hear the warriors insulting each other. For example, 'Puking jolt-head', 'Beef-witted slubgullion', 'Misbegotten toad-spotted barnacle' ...

Make up some funny insults similar to those. Keep them clean!

### Lavish Language

Shakespearean language is very different to modern-day English. Write down a short conversation you would have with a friend in the playground. Next to this, change the conversation into Shakespearean language. Perform your conversation for the class with a friend.

### Shakespearean Board Game

Work in small groups and design and make a simple board game that relates to the story of Macbeth in *Just Macbeth!* Keep the rules simple. Make the design interesting. Use recyclable materials to create your game and give it a catchy name. Rotate as a class, playing each group's game.

## Coronation Invitations

Design and make a coronation invitation for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's coronation. Use a computer program or design it by hand. Include the date, the time and the place for the coronation. To extend the activity, design and make a menu for the coronation celebration banquet.

## Royal Crowns

Use the internet or books to look at different sorts of crowns worn by kings and queens throughout history. Design and make your own crown using recyclable materials.

## The Splendid Spleen

Use books and the internet to find the location and function of the human spleen. Label the spleen in the human body and write about its function.

## Circle Meeting

Sit in a circle and discuss the topic 'Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practise to deceive'. This quote is from Sir Walter Scott, a Scottish author who was born in 1771. Discuss the meaning of the quote and talk about how it relates to the character of Macbeth in the story.

Next think of your own life and go round the circle saying whether you agree or disagree with the topic. Go round the circle again giving reasons for your answers and adding new ideas. Keep going round the circle, adding interesting ideas and comments about the topic. You may say Pass at any time.

## Hungry? Haggis Procedure

Use cookbooks or the internet to find a recipe for haggis. Write your recipe for haggis as a procedure including ingredients and how to make it. Try to follow the recipe at home with the help of an adult. Cook, eat and enjoy!?

## Knock-knock Jokes

On page 75 Danny thinks Andy is telling a knock-knock joke. Write down a few knock-knock jokes of your own to tell the class.





## Tricky Translation

Read the passage on pages 81–3. Choose six lines from this passage to translate into modern English. Translate it into everyday language. Compare your translation with another student in your class.

## Clever Cartoon Captions

Work with a friend to write a catchy short phrase to go with each cartoon picture on pages 84–88.

## Traditional Costumes

Scottish people traditionally wear kilts. Use books or the internet to find some other traditional clothes or national costumes from other countries. List them or draw them.

## Mashing and Pulverising Machine

Macbeth becomes so caught up in trying to kill everyone he designs a mashing and pulverising machine. Use the sketch on pages 148–9 as inspiration to design and label your own mashing and pulverising machine.

## Garden Gnomes

Macduff was a kind of gnome in the play *Just Macbeth!* Create your own gnome. Give it a special name. List its personality traits and design its appearance. Draw it or make it from modelling clay.

## Mysterious Castles

Look at photos of old Scottish castles. Look at the rooms, halls, dungeons and other features. Draw, paint or make a model of your version of Macbeth's castle. Display around the classroom.

## Book Review

Write a short book review for *Just Macbeth!* Include the following:

- Title
- Author
- Illustrator

- Favourite characters
- Brief plot summary
- Favourite parts of the play and why you like these parts
- Recommendation (who you would recommend the book to and why)
- An illustration.

