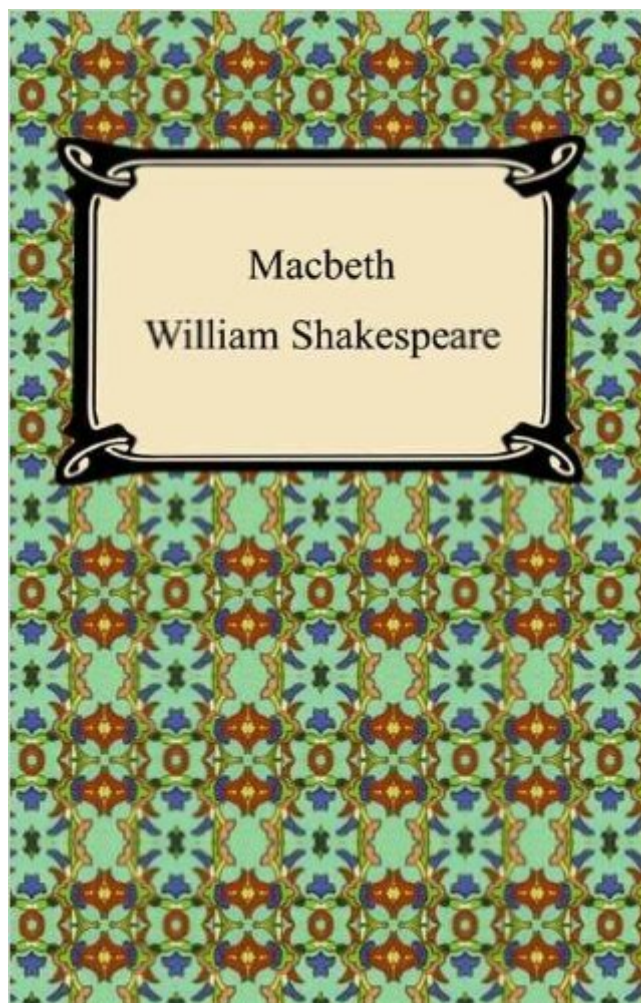


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# Macbeth [with Biographical Introduction]



## Synopsis

Among the tragedies of Shakespeare, "Macbeth" is noted for the exceptional simplicity of the plot and the directness of the action. Here is no underplot to complicate or enrich, hardly more than a glimpse of humor to relieve the dark picture of criminal ambition, only the steady march toward an inevitable catastrophe. This tragedy illustrates in its close the conventional poetic justice that demands the triumph of the righteous cause and the downfall of the wicked. But there is not lacking that more subtle justice, so impressive in "Lear" because unaccompanied by the temporal reward of the good, which reveals itself in the subduing of character to what it works in. Far more terrible than the defeat and death of Macbeth is the picture of the degradation of his nature, when he appears in the scene before the battle like a beast at bay.

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## Customer Reviews

I consider myself to be a reasonably literate individual but, I have always avoided Shakespeare since I cannot make sense of the text. But now, I have finally read Macbeth because, with "No Fear Shakespeare," each left hand page is written in the original whereas the right hand page is a

plain English translation. So now I know, that when a porter says "it makes him stand to and not stand to," he is not referring about someone standing up on his feet. Instead, it means that alcoholic drinks make a man have an erection but then, lose the erection. How true is that and how cool is it to be able to understand that? Seriously, Macbeth is a great tale of ambition, deception and conscience. Thanks to this innovative book, I was able to read the original, then, after reading each page, I referred to the translation so I could understand. It was fun to read lines in the original, try to work out what I thought it meant and then check whether I was right. I recommend this as a way finally read and appreciate Macbeth.

I won't even attempt to critique Shakespeare's work, as some have done here. I'm not reviewing MacBeth, but this particular version of it. As a homeschooling Mom with three highschool students, the only way we could get through Shakespeare's works is by having a copy of Shakespeare Made Easy on hand. As it is, we completed 5 plays this year - all done orally, with each of us taking several parts. While I think it's important that my kids read Shakespeare in it's original format (and they did), I had the Shakespeare Made Easy translation handy so that I could give simple, concise explanations whenever they just didn't "get it". I recommend these books for that purpose - not for the watered down versions of these classics, but to make them understandable to the average student who might otherwise find Shakespeare's works boring and a waste of time (as many students do).

I've been playing this in a regular senior English class. Many of the students are finally understanding the play. The actors in this cd do a wonderful job interpreting their lines. The Scottish accents are well done. Sound effects make it vivid. It's the best production I've found to date.

Virtually all editions of Macbeth will have at least some annotations. Rummaging through five different editions, I preferred this Yale University Press version, edited by Burton Raffel, as having the most comprehensive and comprehensible notes, as well as an excellent introduction to Shakespeare's play. Raffel not only explains the meanings of obscure words, but also gives brief notes pertaining to relevant history, geography, stage directions, etc, that are rarely addressed as fully by other editors. In addition, Raffel frequently gives the proper way to stress the syllables in a line when reading it aloud, which can be extremely helpful. (However, in most places these stresses need to be very subtle, so that you don't sound like "taDUM taDUM taDUM".) And Yale's page layout is among the clearest that I've seen. As a bonus, this edition includes at the back a long

essay on the play by Harold Bloom. This is not an uninteresting commentary, but Bloom desperately needs a good editor. His essay is not only at least three times longer than it should be, but is startlingly repetitious. Yale would have been wise to have asked Bloom for a rewrite.

This series is wonderful if you are a teacher. It really helps students to hear how Shakespeare's words are supposed to flow when spoken by classically trained actors. Students snicker a bit at first when they hear the Scottish accents, but they get used to them quickly and the quality of the recording is excellent. The cheesy music in between acts is irritating, but you learn to ignore it. A fun bit of trivia is that the porter scene is acted by David Tennant who most people know as the current Dr. Who! It's also a treat to be able to listen to Macbeth in my car. Shakespeare makes rush-hour almost tolerable.

Macbeth has always been one of Shakespeare's most popular plays. It is vivid, has blood & murder, magic, visions, treachery, and just deserts. I mean, what is not to love? The play moves along quickly and isn't one of the longer plays. For all these reasons and more, audiences love it. But there is a lot more to the play than the plot outline might suggest. Shakespeare brilliantly works out the subtleties of character through the action, interactions, and self-discussions in the play. It isn't a simple "action" play, it is also a masterwork of revealing the character of the characters even when they are themselves unaware of the trap they are leaping into. I am partial to the Arden editions because I trust the text, love the extensive notes, and the introductory and additional material that helps give the play context and talks about sources Shakespeare almost certainly used. In this case Holinshed's "Chronicles of Scotland". Throughout this edition there are also discussions of the textual problems of this play: where some things seem to be missing, what might be interpolations, and so forth. This is a very useful edition of a great play.

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