Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1606)

Shakespeare’s shortest tragedy

Tragedy: a literary work depicting serious event in which human “flaws” have negative consequences. The main character is often high-ranking and has a tragic flaw such as ambition. Bad deeds, errors, and crimes build upon each other toward a catastrophic end.

Background: *Macbeth* is partially based on a true story. A Macbeth ruled Scotland from 1040-1057. Shakespeare changed parts of the true story. The play was written to please King James I who was interested in witchcraft and his own ancestry. King James I was a Scot and a descendent of Banquo (a character in the play).

FYI: the term “Thane” is equivalent to “Lord” in England, a title of rank and privilege.

Things to consider:

1. How ambition drives people
2. The role of fate and prophesies
3. Appearances can be deceiving. “Fair is foul and foul is fair.”
4. Imagery:
5. blood (mentioned over 100 times in the play)
6. clothing
7. light and dark
8. sickness and health
9. unnatural events
10. birds