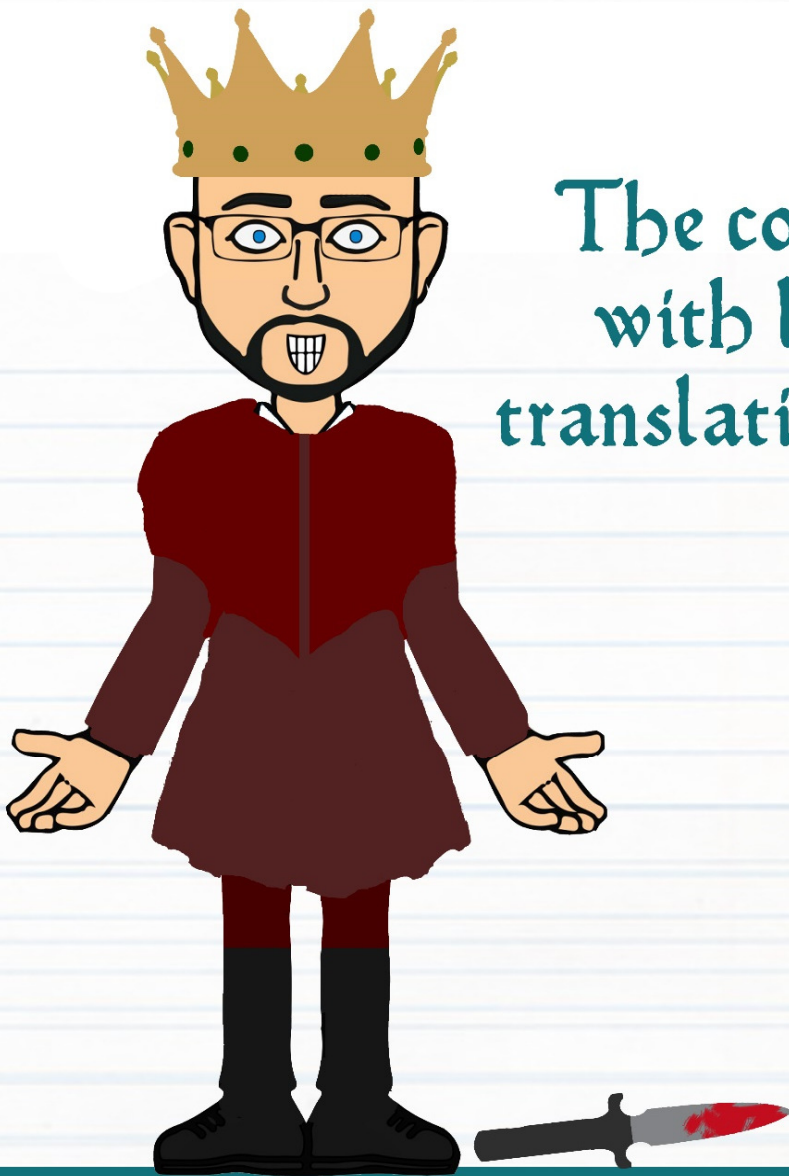


Mr Bruff

ONLINE REVISION

MR Bruff's
Guide To
William Shakespeare's
'MACBETH'



The complete play
with line by line
translation & analysis

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SAMPLE

ORIGINAL TEXT**ACT I****SCENE I. A desert place.**

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three
Witches*

First Witch

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch

When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

Third Witch

That will be ere the set of sun.

First Witch

Where the place?

Second Witch

Upon the heath.

Third Witch

There to meet with Macbeth.

MODERN TRANSLATION**ACT 1****SCENE 1. An open place**

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three
Witches*

First Witch

When will the three of us meet again?
Will it be during thunder, lightning or
when it's raining?

Second Witch

When this storm is finished,
When the battle is over.

Third Witch

That will be before the sun sets.

First Witch

At which place?

Second Witch

In an open field.

Third Witch

There we will meet Macbeth.

<p>First Witch</p> <p>I come, Graymalkin!</p> <p>Second Witch</p> <p>Paddock calls.</p> <p>Third Witch</p> <p>Anon.</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air.</p> <p><i>Exeunt</i></p>	<p>First Witch</p> <p>I'm coming grey cat!</p> <p>Second Witch</p> <p>The toad, Paddock, is calling.</p> <p>Third Witch</p> <p>At once! We are coming.</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>Everything that is bad is good and everything that is good is bad: Let's fly through the fog and dirty air.</p> <p><i>Exeunt</i></p>	
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Act 1 Scene 1 Analysis

This is one of the most famous scenes in *Macbeth*. It is the first time the audience gets to see the witches and we are invited into a mysterious world inhabited by creatures which, as of yet, we are unsure are for good or evil.

Shakespeare uses the witches as a way of pulling in the audience. We arrive at the end of whatever it is they have been doing. The first line we hear is "*When shall we three meet again*".

In Elizabethan times, the witches would have been a big draw for audiences because there was a huge amount of interest (and belief) in witchcraft and the supernatural.

Their meeting is complete and whatever they were up to, we can only guess. Shakespeare is clever in his construction here, prompting our curiosity about what role the witches will take in the text. It also helps to set the scene for the rest of the play. This is a dark world where there's confusion and not everything is what it seems. The scene opens with thunder and lightning, it continues with the witches taking about "*hurly-burly*" and when a battle is both "*lost and won*".

This sense of things being not what they seem, of appearance versus reality, is very important for the rest of the play as we see that many of the most important moments are based on this contrast.

The scene closes and we, as the audience, are none the wiser about what is happening. The last lines "*Fair is foul and foul is fair/hover through the fog and the filthy air*" seem to reinforce the idea that this is a frightening, mysterious world where the supernatural holds some power. The fact that Shakespeare structures the play so as to show this to the audience first is quite significant.

A note about **form** and **structure**:

You will notice that when the witches speak in scene 1, they speak in rhyme. This rhyme scheme is known as rhyming couplets. Shakespeare used the language in his plays to signify the importance or rank of the person speaking.

For example, all of the nobles in *Macbeth* speak in **Iambic Pentameter**. This is where you have **five stressed and five unstressed syllables**.

For example:

"And fixed his head upon our battlements"

This line contains **five iambs (a pair of syllables with one stressed and the other unstressed)**.

So:

"And fixed his head upon our battlements"

This gives an even and almost 'sing-song' quality to the lines. If you replace the actual words from the above example it simply sounds like:

"Da-dum da-dum, da-dum. da-dum, da-dum"

This is known as **Blank Verse**. A lot of Shakespeare's writing is done this way - it simply means the words don't have to rhyme but it must be written in iambic pentameter.

This is important because certain characters, such as the witches, don't use iambic pentameter and it's a good point to be able to make, to distinguish between the form used for different characters and different types of character.

The witches use of rhyming couplets give a sinister air to the play. It's like a nursery rhyme but much darker and evil. It's difficult to appreciate the effect of these witches now in the 21st century. To us the rhyming and spells can often come across as silly and humorous but this would not have been the case for Shakespeare's audiences.

The form used by the witches is **Trochaic Tetrameter**. Again, this is quite easy to understand once you break it down. A **Trochee** is the opposite of an **Iamb**. Whereas the iamb contains two syllables with the first one unstressed and the second stressed ("*and fixed*") a trochee is the other way around, a stressed followed by unstressed.

For example:

"Fair is foul and foul is fair"

In this line from the witches you stress the words as follows:

"Fair is foul and foul is fair"

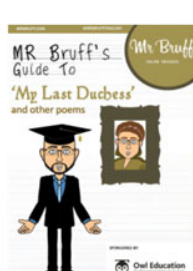
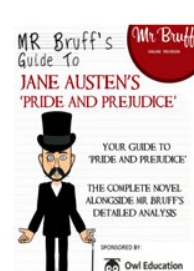
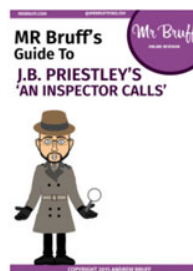
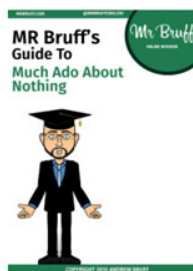
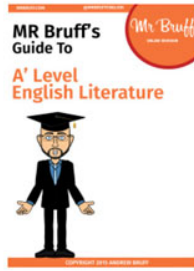
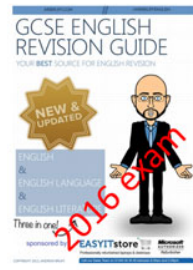
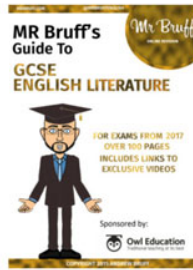
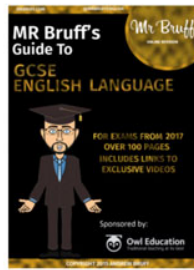
The word tetrameter just means there are four pairs of these trochees. The trochaic tetrameter added to the rhyming couplets makes for an entertaining scene and a clear break, on Shakespeare's part, between the witches and the other characters in the play.

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