**AIMAN College of Arts and Science for Women**

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**I M.A-English-II Semester**

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**UNIT-I**

**MACBETH**

**Macbeth**, tragedy in five acts by [William Shakespeare](https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-Shakespeare), written sometime in 1606–07 and published in the [First Folio](https://www.britannica.com/topic/First-Folio) of 1623 from a playbook or a transcript of one. Some portions of the original text are corrupted or missing from the published edition. The [play](https://www.britannica.com/art/dramatic-literature) is the shortest of Shakespeare’s tragedies, without diversions or subplots. It chronicles [Macbeth’s](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Macbeth-fictional-character) seizing of power and subsequent destruction, both his rise and his fall the result of blind ambition.

Macbeth and [Banquo](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Banquo), who are generals serving King [Duncan](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Duncan-fictional-character) of [Scotland](https://www.britannica.com/place/Scotland), meet the [Weird Sisters](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Weird-Sisters), three witches who prophesy that Macbeth will become thane of [Cawdor](https://www.britannica.com/place/Cawdor-Scotland), then king, and that Banquo will beget kings. Soon thereafter Macbeth discovers that he has indeed been made thane of Cawdor, which leads him to believe the rest of the prophecy. When King Duncan chooses this moment to honour Macbeth by visiting his castle of [Dunsinane](https://www.britannica.com/place/Dunsinane-mountain-Scotland) at [Inverness](https://www.britannica.com/place/Inverness-Scotland), both Macbeth and his ambitious wife realize that the moment has arrived for them to carry out a plan of regicide that they have long contemplated. Spurred by his wife, Macbeth kills Duncan, and the murder is discovered when [Macduff](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Macduff), the thane of [Fife](https://www.britannica.com/place/Fife-council-area-Scotland), arrives to call on the king. Duncan’s sons [Malcolm](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Malcolm-fictional-character) and Donalbain flee the country, fearing for their lives. Their speedy departure seems to implicate them in the crime, and Macbeth becomes king.

Worried by the witches’ prophecy that Banquo’s heirs instead of Macbeth’s own progeny will be kings, Macbeth arranges the death of Banquo, though Banquo’s son Fleance escapes. Banquo’s ghost haunts Macbeth, and [Lady Macbeth](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Lady-Macbeth) is driven to madness by her guilt. The witches assure Macbeth that he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane and that no one “of woman born” shall harm him. Learning that Macduff is joining Malcolm’s army, Macbeth orders the slaughter of Macduff’s wife and children. When the army, using branches from Birnam Wood as camouflage, advances on Dunsinane, Macbeth sees the prophecy being fulfilled: Birnam Wood has indeed come to Dunsinane. Lady Macbeth dies; Macbeth is killed in battle by Macduff, who was “from his mother’s womb untimely ripped” by [cesarean section](https://www.britannica.com/science/cesarean-section) and in that quibbling sense was not “of woman born.” Malcolm becomes the rightful king.

**Why does Macbeth think the Witches want to help him?**

When Malcom reveals that he was taken from his mother’s womb – or, in other words, delivered via Cesarean section – Macbeth finally understands that the Witches’ prophecies meant his downfall, not his elevation. Up to the end of the play, Macbeth has confused the fact that the Witches’ predictions always came true with the idea that their predictions were helpful to him. Everything the Witches predict does come true, but everything that happens ends up hurting Macbeth as well. He does become Thane of Cawdor, but that feeds his ambition so he kills Duncan. He becomes the king, but as a result kills many people, including his best friend. When Macbeth hears the Witches’ final prediction, he is tormented by the vision of Banquo’s children ruling instead of him, but he still doesn’t understand that the Witches are not on his side. He sees their predictions that he can’t be defeated until Birnam Wood moves and that he can’t be killed except by a man not born of a woman as proof that he is protected. He is very wrong.

**UNIT-II**

**AS YOU LIKE IT**

**The Delights of Love**

*As You Like It* spoofs many of the conventions of poetry and literature dealing with love, such as the idea that love is a disease that brings suffering and torment to the lover, or the assumption that the male lover is the slave or servant of his mistress. These ideas are central features of the courtly love tradition, which greatly influenced European literature for hundreds of years before Shakespeare’s time. In *As You Like It,* characters lament the suffering caused by their love, but these laments are all unconvincing and ridiculous. While Orlando’s metrically incompetent poems conform to the notion that he should “live and die [Rosalind’s] slave,” these sentiments are roundly ridiculed (III.ii.142). Even Silvius, the untutored shepherd, assumes the role of the tortured lover, asking his beloved Phoebe to notice “the wounds invisible / That love’s keen arrows make” (III.v.31–32). But Silvius’s request for Phoebe’s attention implies that the enslaved lover can loosen the chains of love and that all romantic wounds can be healed—otherwise, his request for notice would be pointless. In general, *As You Like It* breaks with the courtly love tradition by portraying love as a force for happiness and fulfillment and ridicules those who revel in their own suffering.

Celia speaks to the curative powers of love in her introductory scene with Rosalind, in which she implores her cousin to allow “the full weight” of her love to push aside Rosalind’s unhappy thoughts (I.ii.6). As soon as Rosalind takes to Ardenne, she displays her own copious knowledge of the ways of love. Disguised as Ganymede, she tutors Orlando in how to be a more attentive and caring lover, counsels Silvius against prostrating himself for the sake of the all-too-human Phoebe, and scolds Phoebe for her arrogance in playing the shepherd’s disdainful love object. When Rosalind famously insists that “[m]en have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love,” she argues against the notion that love concerns the perfect, mythic, or unattainable (IV.i.91–92). Unlike Jaques and Touchstone, both of whom have keen eyes and biting tongues trained on the follies of romance, Rosalind does not mean to disparage love. On the contrary, she seeks to teach a version of love that not only can survive in the real world, but can bring delight as well. By the end of the play, having successfully orchestrated four marriages and ensured the happy and peaceful return of a more just government, Rosalind proves that love is a source of incomparable delight.

**The Malleability of the Human Experience**

In Act II, scene vii, Jaques philosophizes on the stages of human life: man passes from infancy into boyhood; becomes a lover, a soldier, and a wise civic leader; and then, year by year, becomes a bit more foolish until he is returned to his “second childishness and mere oblivion” (II.vii.164). Jaques’s speech remains an eloquent commentary on how quickly and thoroughly human beings can change, and, indeed, *do* change in *As You Like It.* Whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually, those who enter the Forest of Ardenne are often remarkably different when they leave. The most dramatic and unmistakable change, of course, occurs when Rosalind assumes the disguise of Ganymede. As a young man, Rosalind demonstrates how vulnerable to change men and women truly are. Orlando, of course, is putty in her hands; more impressive, however, is her ability to manipulate Phoebe’s affections, which move from Ganymede to the once despised Silvius with amazing speed.

In *As You Like It,* Shakespeare dispenses with the time--consuming and often hard-won processes involved in change. The characters do not struggle to become more pliant—their changes are instantaneous. Oliver, for instance, learns to love both his brother Orlando and a disguised Celia within moments of setting foot in the forest. Furthermore, the vengeful and ambitious Duke Frederick abandons all thoughts of fratricide after a single conversation with a religious old man. Certainly, these transformations have much to do with the restorative, almost magical effects of life in the forest, but the consequences of the changes also matter in the real world: the government that rules the French duchy, for example, will be more just under the rightful ruler Duke Senior, while the class structures inherent in court life promise to be somewhat less rigid after the courtiers sojourn in the forest. These social reforms are a clear improvement and result from the more private reforms of the play’s characters. *As You Like It* not only insists that people can and do change, but also celebrates their ability to change for the better.

**City Life Versus Country Life**

Pastoral literature thrives on the contrast between life in the city and life in the country. Often, it suggests that the oppressions of the city can be remedied by a trip into the country’s therapeutic woods and fields, and that a person’s sense of balance and rightness can be restored by conversations with uncorrupted shepherds and shepherdesses. This type of restoration, in turn, enables one to return to the city a better person, capable of making the most of urban life. Although Shakespeare tests the bounds of these conventions—his shepherdess Audrey, for instance, is neither articulate nor pure—he begins *As You Like It* by establishing the city/country dichotomy on which the pastoral mood depends. In Act I, scene i, Orlando rails against the injustices of life with Oliver and complains that he “know[s] no wise remedy how to avoid it” (I.i.20–21). Later in that scene, as Charles relates the whereabouts of Duke Senior and his followers, the remedy is clear: “in the forest of Ardenne . . . many young gentlemen . . . fleet the time carelessly, as they did in the golden world” (I.i.99–103). Indeed, many are healed in the forest—the lovesick are coupled with their lovers and the usurped duke returns to his throne—but Shakespeare reminds us that life in Ardenne is a temporary affair. As the characters prepare to return to life at court, the play does not laud country over city or vice versa, but instead suggests a delicate and necessary balance between the two. The simplicity of the forest provides shelter from the strains of the court, but it also creates the need for urban style and sophistication: one would not do, or even matter, without the other.

**UNIT-III**

**RICHARD-II**

*Richard II,* written around 1595, is the first play in Shakespeare's second "history tetralogy," a series of four plays that chronicles the rise of the house of Lancaster to the British throne. (Its sequel plays are *Henry IV, Parts 1 & 2,* and *Henry V.*) *Richard II,* set around the year 1398, traces the fall from power of the last king of the house of Plantagenet, Richard II, and his replacement by the first Lancaster king, Henry IV (Henry Bolingbroke). Richard II, who ascended to the throne as a young man, is a regal and stately figure, but he is wasteful in his spending habits, unwise in his choice of counselors, and detached from his country and its common people. He spends too much of his time pursuing the latest Italian fashions, spending money on his close friends, and raising taxes to fund his pet wars in Ireland and elsewhere. When he begins to "rent out" parcels of English land to certain wealthy noblemen in order to raise funds for one of his wars, and seizes the lands and money of a recently deceased and much respected uncle to help fill his coffers, both the commoners and the king's noblemen decide that Richard has gone too far.

Richard has a cousin, named Henry Bolingbroke, who is a great favorite among the English commoners. Early in the play, Richard exiles him from England for six years due to an unresolved dispute over an earlier political murder. The dead uncle whose lands Richard seizes was the father of Bolingbroke; when Bolingbroke learns that Richard has stolen what should have been his inheritance, it is the straw that breaks the camel's back. When Richard unwisely departs to pursue a war in Ireland, Bolingbroke assembles an army and invades the north coast of England in his absence. The commoners, fond of Bolingbroke and angry at Richard's mismanagement of the country, welcome his invasion and join his forces. One by one, Richard's allies in the nobility desert him and defect to Bolingbroke's side as Bolingbroke marches through England. By the time Richard returns from Ireland, he has already lost his grasp on his country.

There is never an actual battle; instead, Bolingbroke peacefully takes Richard prisoner in Wales and brings him back to London, where Bolingbroke is crowned King Henry IV. Richard is imprisoned in the remote castle of Pomfret in the north of England, where he is left to ruminate upon his downfall. There, an assassin, who both is and is not acting upon King Henry's ambivalent wishes for Richard's expedient death, murders the former king. King Henry hypocritically repudiates the murderer and vows to journey to Jerusalem to cleanse himself of his part in Richard's death. As the play concludes, we see that the reign of the new King H**enry IV has started off inauspiciously.**

**Further Study** Study Questions

Some readers and critics feel that Henry Bolingbroke and Richard are presented as opposites. How are the parallels between Richard and Bolingbroke presented?

Most of the characters in the play agree that Richard is a bad leader, and we can see why: he mismanages his country's budget, is out of touch with the common people, creates friction among his relatives, and leaves the country at exactly the wrong moment. On the other hand, Bolingbroke succeeds in returning from exile, building good foreign relations, obtaining the loyalty of Richard's noblemen, and winning the love of the common folk. He is also a plain-spoken man of action, in comparison to Richard's poetic virtuosity and ineffectiveness in practical matters. We see them explicitly contrasted in several scenes: for example, when York recounts the ride into the city of London, during which the people cheered Bolingbroke but dumped dust and rubbish on Richard's head (V.ii.4-40). It is, of course, ironic that the two are first cousins.

Discuss the importance of the curses and prophecies that appear throughout *Richard II.*

Beginning with John of Gaunt's thunderous curse upon Richard in Act II, scene i, and reaching its peak with the Bishop of Carlisle's prophecy of civil war if Bolingbroke seizes the crown (IV.i), foretellings of evil are a running theme in the play. Since kingship was associated with divine power in medieval and Renaissance Europe, its abuse or theft, it was thought, could bring dire retribution from the heavens. Richard is followed by threats of cosmic vengeance during the play's first half both because he has mismanaged his country by renting out land and because of the guilty skeleton in his closet: his involvement in the murder of his uncle Gloucester. In the second half of the play, Bolingbroke becomes the target of these prophecies because he is now guilty (in some characters' eyes) of stealing the crown from the rightful king--an act tantamount to blasphemy.