

MACBETH

*"By the pricking of
my thumb, something
wicked this way
comes."*

Context

- Macbeth was written by William Shakespeare in 1605.
 - One of 37 plays and 154 sonnets he wrote before his death in 1616.
- Shakespeare wrote Macbeth at the beginning of King James I's reign.
 - Before James succeeded Elizabeth I, he was king of Scotland.
 - A play about James's homeland probably pleased him.
 - A play about Duncan & Malcolm – ancestors of James – probably pleased him more!
- It's about an actual nobleman, Macbeth (r. 1040-1057), who overthrew the rightful King of Scotland.

So, this is a comedy...right?

- Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies; it is also his shortest play.
- Shakespeare is a leader of the English Renaissance, but this play has many traditional elements...
 - There is a heavy emphasis on the supernatural (witches, prophecy, spells, and ghosts).
- Aside from the violent nature of the plot, Shakespeare uses several plot devices to enhance the feeling of evil.
 - He creates a serious and sinister mood by having most of the play take place at night.

A haunted play?

- Macbeth spawned many accidents in English theatres soon after it started.
- Many actors and stagehands were injured on stage or behind the scenes, and many people associated with the play became ill or even died.
- It soon gained a poor reputation!
- Today it's better to call it the "Scottish play" rather than mention it by name. 😊

Themes

- Fascination with evil
- Appearance v. Reality
- Consequences of guilt
- Effects of ambition
- Predestination

Motifs

- Blood
- Water
- Dark/Light
- Animals
- Clothing
- Weather
- Sleep
- Things in three