



CLASS X
ENGLISH LITERATURE READER
CHAPTER 2 - MACBETH
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

NOTES

TIME-LINE

A timeline for the main scenes within *Macbeth* includes the following:

- ✚ A fierce battle rages between Duncan's army headed by Macbeth and Banquo and that of Macdonwald's.
- ✚ The witches prophesize that Macbeth will become king.
- ✚ Macbeth murders King Duncan.
- ✚ Macbeth murders Banquo but his son Fleance escapes.
- ✚ Macbeth seeks the witches' prophecies for the second time.
- ✚ Macbeth murders Macduff's family.
- ✚ Malcolm and Macduff join forces to overthrow Macbeth.
- ✚ Lady Macbeth loses her sanity and commits suicide.
- ✚ Macduff kills Macbeth.

SUMMARY

Macbeth is one of the most well-known tragedies written by William Shakespeare who is regarded as the greatest dramatist of all time in the world. This tragic play which has five acts and a total of 28 scenes dramatize the damaging effects of political ambition on those who seek power for its own effect. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare shows how over-ambition leads to Macbeth's ruin. The present piece is one retold in story form by George Bagshawe Harrison.

The story is about a brave Scottish general named Macbeth who receives a prophecy from three Weird Sisters that one day he will become king of Scotland. Consumed with ambition and spurred to action by his wife, Macbeth murders King Duncan and takes the Scottish throne for himself. He is then plagued with guilt and paranoia. Forced to commit more and more murders to protect himself from enmity and suspicion he becomes a tyrannical ruler.

The bloodbath and consequent rebellion by his own subjects drives Macbeth and his wife into the realms of madness and death.