Macbeth
Ambition and Inner Conflict

Learning Objectives

- **Introduction** to lively action methods.
- **Themes**- ambition and conflict, guilt and redemption, ideas of masculine/feminine roles, madness/sanity, destiny/fate vs choice/freewill also how characters use language to resolve inner turmoil.
- **Character**- exploring the character of Macbeth through the use of language and relationship to characters in the play.
- **Language**- rhythm, imagery, use of verbs, personification and actions in the language.
- **Discussing** the text- engaging students in the language, enabling them to have further ownership of the work.
- **Questioning and reflection**- creating a safe space to discuss/analyze ideas and discoveries.
- **Dissemination**- taking the lively action approach back into the classroom and sharing the work with colleges.

Warm-ups

- Walking in the space with intention changing direction, balancing the room (special awareness)
- Relaxation and breathing exercises.
- Find a partner and mirror your partner’s movement (connecting)

Circle

- Say a line of text to someone in the circle ‘send’ it to them.
- Physicalize/ sculpt ambition, power, powerlessness, loss of sanity, conflict and violence.
- Status card game.
- Discuss how status/power is communicated physically and expireanced in the space through movement. What is Macbeth/ Lady Macbeth’s relationship to power/status?

Exercise
- Look at the most persuasive lines used by The three Witches, Lady M and Macbeth used in the play to fuel Macbeth’s ambition-discuss these lines.
- Divide the room in three 1) The three witches 2) Lady Macbeth 3) Macbeth. Individually decide who is most responsible for making Macbeth kill Duncan, sit where you think the most responsibility lies, then justify why you have made this decision. After you have heard everyone else’s ideas change positions if you have been swayed by their argument.

- In pairs try to convince your partner with the lines “We will proceed no further” and “Art thou afeared”, using as many different verbs/tactics to convince each other.
- What are the actions/verbs/tactics used in these lines?

**Act 1 Scene 7, Macbeth vs Lady Macbeth**

Read through the scene with your partner.

**Repetition-Play** the scene with your partner, listening carefully to them, choose a key word from the line that they have just spoken, repeat this word out loud before saying your line. Take turns playing both characters.

**Pointing-Then** as well as repeating the word, whenever you get to a noun or pronoun point to yourself, each other or an imagined object.

**Fighting to be heard** - choose the most powerful word and repeat it constantly while your partner speaks their lines.

Read through the scene bearing in mind the exercises that you have just done.

**Reflection**

Get into groups of 4 and discuss with your group what your thoughts are on Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s relationship.

Points to consider.

- What did repeating the word do, in terms of understanding the character and dynamic of their relationship?

- What kind of verbs and physiological tactics do the characters use to persuade each other?

- Do we learn anything about the role of women in the world that Shakespeare portrays?

- How did the repetition and pointing exercise affect the way you played the scene?

- What did speaking over your partners lines reveal about the way the characters use language?
**Dissemination**

Discuss how you might use the exercises in your classroom, and what you can share with other members of your department.

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**Exercise**

**Meisner Exercise**- stand in front of your partner and make an observation about them, they will repeat this observation until they notice something about you and you then repeat this observation.

**Meisner and Text**- before you say your lines of text make an observation about your partner, they will do the same.

Do the Meisner exercise both with the Macbeth and Othello scene.
- What does the external focus of the exercise reveal about the way the characters perceive each other?

Play the scene in two ways.

1) Lady Macbeth is desperately trying to force Macbeth into doing her will.
2) Lady Macbeth is caring for a vulnerable Macbeth in this scene.

Repeat the above exercise with Othello/Desdemona scene (Act 5 scene 2)

1) Desdemona desperately trying to convince Othello to do her will.
2) Desdemona caring for a vulnerable Othello.

**Reflection**

- Which of the two ways felt most authentic to the scene?
- Was there a verb/physiological tactic that the characters used repeatedly?
- What did you discover about the characters?
- How does this help us understand the play?

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**Dissemination**- Discuss how you might use/adapt this in your own teaching/practice and how you might share this with your department?

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**Exercise: Macbeth Hot seat**

Sit with your partner facing each other 1) Macbeth before he kills Duncan, one of you being Macbeth ask your partner as many questions about who they are, what they want, where they are and how they feel, and what their relationships to the characters in the play are.
2) Macbeth after he kills Duncan, with one of you being Macbeth ask them as many questions about how they feel, why they did what they did, what they want.
3) Watch how other groups do this exercise, and closely observe Macbeth in the hot seat. In this ‘hot-seating’ exercise the idea is to really get into the skin of the character by totally inhabiting and spontaneously responding to questions.

Reflection

As a group discuss what you discovered in how Macbeth changed as a character before and after killing Duncan. What impact did this have on him? Do we get any further insight as to why he did it? Did we feel any empathy for the character?

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Act 2 Scene 1 “is this a dagger which I see before me...”

Exploring the character of Macbeth through verse.

Walk around the room reading the speech changing direction at the end of a line/full stop

Imagery - one speaker reads the speech, the group lying on the floor with eyes closed echo the words that paint the picture in your minds eye.

The argument- In a circle each person reads a line from the speech, but the line has to be read and directed to another person in the circle as though the line was a vital piece of information in an argument.

Questions - A new speaker speaks the speech in the middle of the circle and every time there is a question the group shouts ‘WHAT?’. The speaker has to repeat the question until everyone in the room is satisfied that the question has been fully asked and fully received.

Personification - Read the speech to your partner and point at them each time personification is used.

Walking with the Speech - Walk in the room while reading the speech out loud, changing direction at the end of the line. Then try changing direction at the end of the punctuation.
-What did you notice about the rhythm of the verse? What does this reveal about Macbeth’s inner state?

Themes/Imagery - In groups of 4 create freeze frames for any images/themes that are in the speech.

The Inner Conflict - imagining the speech is a scene between two characters, persuade your partner each line that you communicate (alternatively) then instead of the line take it to the punctuation, when there is a resolution in the speech say the line in unison.
Whisper - Bearing this in mind read the speech to your partner like you are telling them an urgent secret.

- What does the language reveal about the inner state of the character?
- How is inner conflict handled in the text?
- What techniques does Shakespeare use to express the inner state of the characters?
- What did you discover about the structure of the line/speech? Did it in any way reflect the emotional state of the character?

Try the above exercise with the following speeches:

OTHELLO “It is the cause…” Act 5 scene 2
HAMLET “To be or not to be…” Act 3 scene 1

Discussion/ Dissemination - discuss how you might use/adapt this in your own teaching/share this practice with members of your department.

Exercise

Playing the scene - Act 1 scene 7

- Run and find a different space in the room before saying your lines to your partner, making sure your voice travels across the space with energy and intention and reaches your partner. Your partner does the same each time before they speak.
- Hit the paper every time you come across any kind of punctuation in your lines.
- Decide when to move forward, when to move aside and when to retreat whilst playing the scene.
- Physicalize key words in the language.
- Decide when you have to get eye contact and when you avoid it.

The Globe Stage

- Imagine the rehearsal room is the Globe stage and we have audiences all around us. Use chairs to mark the pillars of the Globe stage. And thinking about engaging with the audience (made up of everyone in the group around the room) find a way of playing this scene. In other words direct yourself and your partner in playing the scene, thinking about the physicality of the language and the characters as well as the movement.

- Choose some groups to preform/share their work with the rest of the group as audience.

Discuss/Reflect
- What was the relationship of each character to the audience?
- What was the most dynamic way of using the stage in telling the story?
- In what way did movement affect the way you related to the text?
-What clues does the scene/text give us about the movement/physicality of the characters and of how we should play the scene?

**Dissemination** - Discuss how you might use/adapt this in your own teaching, how might you share this practice with your department.

**Cool Down** - Going around in a circle each person say what they will take away from the workshop.

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**Texts for the workshop**

**ACT 1 Scene VII**

**Macbeth**

How now! What news?

**Lady M.**

He has almost supp’d: why have you left the chamber?

**Macbeth**

Hath he asked for me?

**Lady M**

Knowest thou he has?

**Macbeth**

We will proceed no further in this business:

**Lady M.**

Was the hope drunk wherein you dress’d yourself? Hath it slept since?

**Macbeth**

He hath honour’d me of late; and I have bought Golden opinions from all sorts of people, Which would be worn in their newest gloss, Not cast aside so soon.

**Lady M.**

Would thou have that Which thou esteem’s the ornament of life, And live a coward in thine own esteem

**Macbeth**

Prithee, peace: I dare do all that may become a man; Who dares do more is none.

**Lady M.**

What beast was’t, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me? When you durst do it, then you were a man;

Macbeth    If we should fail?
Lady M.     We fail! 
            But screw your courage to the sticking-place, 
            And we'll not fail.

Macbeth    I am settled. 
            False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

*Othello Act 5 Scene 2*

DESDEMONA    Who's there? Othello?

OTHELLO     Ay. Desdemona.

DESDEMONA    Will you come to bed, my lord?

OTHELLO     Have you pray'd to-night, Desdemona?

DESDEMONA    Ay, my lord.

OTHELLO     If you bethink yourself of any crime 
            Unreconciled as yet to heaven and grace, 
            Solicit for it straight.

DESDEMONA    Alas, my lord, what do you mean by that?

OTHELLO     Well, do it, and be brief; I will walk by: 
            I would not kill thy unprepared spirit; 
            No; heaven forfend! I would not kill thy soul.

DESDEMONA    Talk you of killing?

OTHELLO     Ay, I do.
DESDEMONA
Then heaven
Have mercy on me!

OTHELLO
Amen, with all my heart!

DESDEMONA
If you say so, I hope you will not kill me.

OTHELLO
Hum!

DESDEMONA
And yet I fear you; for you are fatal then
When your eyes roll so: why I should fear I know not,
Since guiltiness I know not; but yet I feel I fear.

OTHELLO
Think on thy sins.

DESDEMONA
They are loves I bear to you.

OTHELLO
Ay, and for that thou diest.

DESDEMONA
That death's unnatural that kills for loving.
Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip?
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:
These are portents; but yet I hope, I hope,
They do not point on me.

OTHELLO
Peace, and be still!

DESDEMONA
I will so. What's the matter?

OTHELLO
That handkerchief which I so loved and gave thee
Thou gavest to Cassio.

DESDEMONA
No, by my life and soul!
Send for the man, and ask him.
OTHELLO
Sweet soul, take heed,
Take heed of perjury; thou art on thy deathbed.

MACBETH
Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one halfworld
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace.
With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,
And take the present horror from the time,
Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.
A bell rings

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.
OTHELLO
It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,--
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!--
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then put out the light:
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me: but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose,
I cannot give it vital growth again.
It must needs wither: I'll smell it on the tree.
[Kissing her]
Ah balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after. One more, and this the last:
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly;
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

HAMLET: To be, or not to be--that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep--
No more--and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep--
To sleep--perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprise of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action. -- Soft you now,
The fair Ophelia! -- Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

Further resource for teaching Macbeth, The Merchant of Venice, Romeo and Juliet, and A Midsummer Night's Dream can be found at http://www.playingshakespeare.org/