

Oregon Shakespeare Festival
A Lesson in Plot or The 100-Second *Macbeth*

- ◆ **The lesson supports the following Common Core Standards: Reading Standards for Literature 1- 6, 10; Speaking and Listening Standards 1, 3, 4**
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This exercise is based on a lesson created for the Folger Shakespeare Library by Janet Field-Pickering.

Explain to the students that their task is to tell the story of *Macbeth* as clearly and as quickly as possible. Their goal is to break the 100-second record for enacting this entire play. Count the students off in teams of 15. Depending on the numbers in the class, the groups can be larger if students play Fleance and Lady Macduff or, smaller, if students play more than one part. Hand out a copy of the abbreviated version of *Macbeth* (see worksheet for The 100-Second *Macbeth*.) Ask the teams to assemble and read through the text out loud several times.

Divide each group into 3-4 subgroups. Assign each subgroup a portion of the script. Tell the subgroups that their task is to analyze their part of the text: What events in the play are represented in the language? What does each line in their section mean? What actions are needed to accompany particular lines in order to tell the story of the play? Give the subgroups five minutes to discuss their text.

Reassemble the groups. Ask each subgroup, in turn, to share their text discoveries with the rest of the group.

Next, tell the groups to get on their feet and begin to walk through the story. Assign each student a character or ask each group to decide who will represent which character. Tell them to incorporate any action indicated in the text. For example, if the script indicates that a character dies, the student representing that character must fall to the ground and do so. They should run through their version of the play several times, clarifying where each character exits and enters. Remind them that the goal is to tell the story of the play as quickly and concisely as possible, making sure that the lines of the text are clearly spoken. Encourage them to be big and bold in the way they tell the story and, most of all, to have fun. Give the groups approximately 15 minutes to work. Check in with each group and coach if necessary.

Once the groups are ready, ask one group at a time to share their version of the play. Time each group with a stopwatch to see who can tie or break the record.

Then lead a discussion with the students. Ask them what they learned about the play. What are the play's essential plot points? How did each group make those plot points clear? What were the unique choices made by each group? What was discovered about the play by watching the various groups tell the story?