

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

**An Adaptation via Thinking Processes Affording
Joy in Learning and Logical Analysis**

an *auto*SOCRATIC QUICK-START publication

Michael Lee Round



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Macbeth

The Context and the Book

SCOTLAND

The Scene of Macbeth



The Glamis Castle



The Cawdor Castle



The Context: WAR

Norway and Ireland
are marching to war
against Scotland.

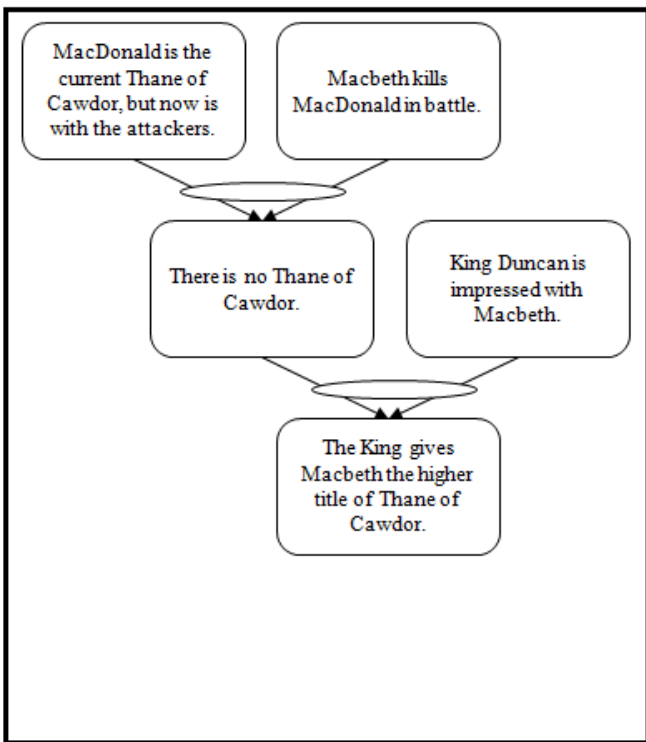
Macbeth and Banquo
are two of Scotland's
two great military
captains.

King Duncan of
Scotland sends the two
captains to put down
the assault.

A messenger reports
on Macbeth's valor in
combat.

King Duncan is
impressed with
Macbeth.

A New Title



The Witches Prophecy

Three witches of incredibly odd appearance gather to speak to Macbeth.

Banquo and Macbeth both approach, but Banquo speaks first to the witches.

The witches, instead, speak to Macbeth.

He will be Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and King of Scotland.

Macbeth, startled, cannot believe the prophecy.

More of the Prophecy

Macbeth, startled,
cannot believe the
prophecy.

A rider approaches,
announcing the King
has made Macbeth
Thane of Cawdor.

Macbeth starts to
believe the prophecy.

Banquo inquires again
whether there's
anymore to the
prophecy.

The witches tell
Banquo he will beget
kings.

Conflicting Prophecies

The witches have told Macbeth he would be King of Scotland.

The witches have told Banquo he would beget Kings of Scotland.

Both Macbeth and Banquo are confused what this can all mean.

Part of Macbeth's prophecy has already come true.

Macbeth starts to believe his prophecy will win out.

A Confused Macbeth

The prophecy predicts contradictory things.

"I am a reasonable person."

I should not believe the prophecy.

These strange people have already correctly predicted my fate.

I should believe the prophecy.

A Secret to His Wife

Macbeth starts to believe his prophecy will win out.

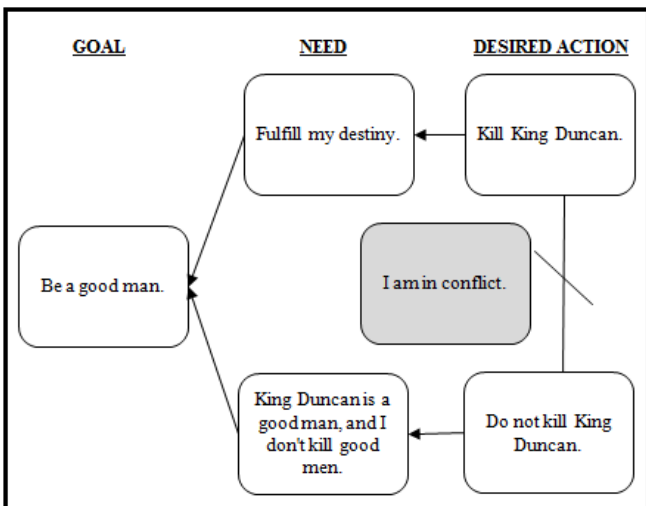
King Duncan is already King of Scotland.

To be King of Scotland, King Duncan would have to be killed.

Macbeth tells his wife, Lady Macbeth, of the prophecy.

His wife knows he's already thinking of murder, and is also troubled by it.

Macbeth's Dilemma



Macbeth is caught in a terrific conflict. He wants to be a good man, and in order to be a good man, he must fulfill his destiny. Isn't that what destiny is? And in order to fulfill his destiny, he must kill King Duncan. On the other hand, in order to be a good man, he must not kill other good men - and King Duncan is himself a good man! Therefore, he should not kill King Duncan.

"Kill King Duncan" versus "Do not kill King Duncan". What should he do?

A Decision

Macbeth makes a decision: do not kill King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth, angered, says Macbeth must not love her.

Macbeth decides to kill King Duncan.

To become King, Macbeth must not be implicated in the murder.

Lady Macbeth hatches a plan to blame the murder on the King's two guards.

A Murderous Plan

Lady Macbeth will get the King's guards drunk.

Macbeth will kill the King, and then smear blood on the drunk guards.

When the King is found, the guards will appear guilty.

The guards might talk, or convince others of their innocence.

Macbeth will be near, and instantly kill the guards, claiming "JUSTICE"!

A New King

The King is killed, the guards blamed, and the guards killed by Macbeth.

King Duncan has two sons (Malcolm & Donalbain) who don't believe the story.

The two sons fear for their lives, and leave Scotland for England.

The sons' departure sheds guilt on them.

Macbeth ascends to the crown, the Thane of Cawdor next in line.

Fulfilling the Prophecy

Much of the prophecy has become true: Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland.

The remainder of the prophecy is Banquo's son, Fleance, who becomes king.

To ensure Macbeth remains king, Banquo and his son Fleance must be killed.

Macbeth hires assassins to kill the two, but Fleance escapes.

Macbeth is haunted - by Banquo's ghost, and the fact Fleance has escaped.

Out of Control?

Macduff, one of the noblemen who found the dead king, thought Macbeth guilty.

Macduff went to England to forge an alliance with King Duncan's sons.

When Macbeth calls to consult with Macduff, he learns Macduff is gone.

Macbeth again consults with the witches, and is told to beware of Macduff.

Macbeth learns of Macduff's departure, and has his entire family killed.

Prophecy of Death

Macduff convinces the King's sons to march on King Macbeth.

Forces approach King Macbeth's castle, and Macbeth senses defeat.

Defeated, Macbeth reflects on the recent witch's prophecy.

The prophecy said he would never be harmed by anyone born of woman.

Macbeth feels an uneasy sense of confidence he cannot be killed.

A New Scotland

The prophecy said
Macbeth would never
be harmed by anyone
born of woman.

Macduff reveals he
was born via
Caesarian Section.

Macduff kills Macbeth.

King Duncan's oldest
son (Malcolm)
ascends to King of
Scotland.

Peace comes again to
Scotland.

Macbeth

An Alternative Ending

A Thought on the Prophecy

The prophecy says I will become King.

The King has two sons, Malcolm and Donelbain.

Not only must he kill the King, but also the King's two sons, to become King.

The witches told Banquo he would beget Kings of Scotland.

To ensure Macbeth is King, he must also kill Banquo and his son, Fleance.

A Thought on the Prophecy

The prophecy says I will become King.

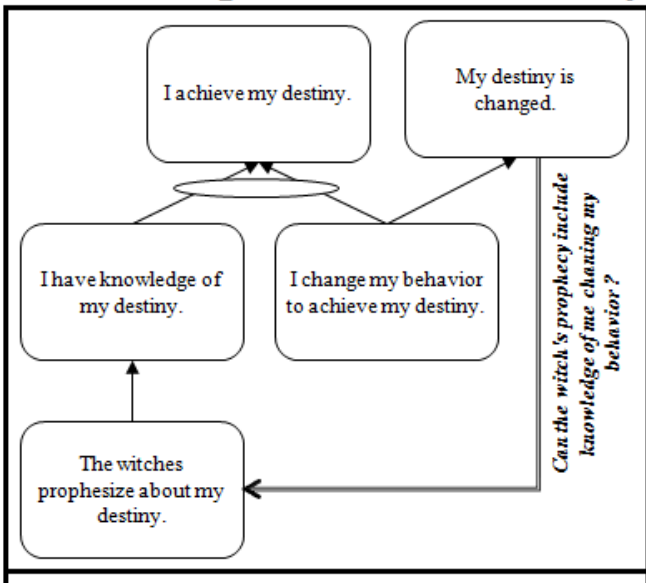
There are the King, his two sons, Banquo, and his son, all in line for the King.

To become King, I will have to kill at least five people.

I'm not the murderous kind of person.

I should question the prophecy, "fate", and predetermination.

Knowledge of One's Destiny



Let's suppose I'm told my destiny. Having knowledge of my destiny, won't I probably change my behavior to achieve that destiny? But in changing my behavior, *don't I change my destiny?* Or is it the case the witches prophecy included the knowledge I *would* change my behavior?

Macbeth

Narrative Summaries

Brief Outline and a Detailed Outline

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

A Brief Outline

Scotland. War. A heroic warrior, Macbeth, is told his future. Knowing your future, should you change your behavior to achieve your future, or does this changing of behavior change one's fate? What does Macbeth do? Does he succeed?

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

A Detailed Outline

The Context: WAR

Norway and Ireland are marching to war against Scotland. Because Macbeth and Banquo are two of Scotland's great military captains, King Duncan of Scotland sends the two captains to put down the assault. A messenger reports back to the King on the heroic efforts of Macbeth in battle. Because of this report, King Duncan is particularly impressed with Macbeth.

A New Title

MacDonald is the current Thane of Cawdor, a title similar to "Baron" However, he is now fighting against the King of Scotland, and in the course of battle, is killed by Macbeth. Therefore, there is no Thane of Cawdor. Recall, King Duncan has been impressed by the reports coming in on the valor displayed by Macbeth. Therefore, King Duncan gives Macbeth (the current Thane of Glamis) the higher title of Thane of Cawdor.

The Witches Prophecy

Banquo and Macbeth are returning home, but come upon three witches who have gathered to speak to Macbeth. They're of such unusual appearance neither of the two can tell what they are. Banquo asks about them, but the witches instead address Macbeth. They prophesize he will be Thane of Glamis (he already is), Thane of Cawdor, and King of Scotland. Macbeth, of course, is startled, and cannot believe the prophecy he is hearing.

More of the Prophecy

Macbeth cannot believe the prophecy. *Who would?* King of Scotland? But in this moment, a rider approaches, and announces the King has indeed made Macbeth Thane of Cawdor! *2/3 of the prophecy is already true!* Macbeth starts to believe the prophecy. Banquo, who had spoke first, again makes an inquiry to the witches about the remainder of the prophecy, and is told *he* will beget kings!

Conflicting Prophecies

The witches have told Macbeth he would become King of Scotland. The witches have also told Banquo he would beget Kings of Scotland! Can you imagine being

either Banquo or Macbeth? What would you think? Both Macbeth and Banquo are confused what this can all mean. However, despite the confusion, Macbeth knows part of his prophecy has already come true! Therefore, Macbeth starts to believe his prophecy will win out.

A Confused Macbeth

“I’m confused, because the prophecy is predicting contradictory things: It’s prophesized I will become King, and Banquo’s sons will become King! This can’t be! And I know I’m a reasonable person. Therefore, I should not believe the prophecy. However, these incredibly strange people have already correctly predicted my fate regarding the Thane of Cawdor. Maybe I should believe the prophecy after all!

A Secret to His Wife

Because part of his prophecy has already come true, Macbeth starts to believe his prophecy will win out. But King Duncan is *already* King of Scotland! Therefore, to become King of Scotland, King Duncan will have to be killed. Macbeth tells his wife, Lady Macbeth, of the

prophecy. Knowing her husband, she knows he's already thinking of murder, and she also knows he's troubled by it.

A Thought on the Prophecy

Another thought on the prophecy comes to mind: The prophecy says I will become King, but there are already two people in line behind the King to become King – his two sons: Malcolm and Donalbain. Therefore, to become King, not only must I kill the King, but also his two sons. And having killed those three, I must ensure the rest of the prophecy does not come true – Banquo's son(s). Banquo and his son (Fleance) must also be killed.

Knowledge of One's Destiny

Let's suppose I'm told my destiny. Having knowledge of my destiny, won't I probably change my behavior to achieve that destiny? But in changing my behavior, don't I change my destiny? Or is it the case the witches prophecy included the knowledge I would change my behavior?

Macbeth's Dilemma

Macbeth is caught in a terrific conflict. He wants to be a good man, and in order to be a good man, he must fulfill his destiny. Isn't that what destiny is? And in order to fulfill his destiny, he must kill King Duncan. On the other hand, in order to be a good man, he must not kill other good men – and King Duncan is himself a good man! Therefore, he should not kill King Duncan.

“Kill King Duncan” versus “Do not kill King Duncan”. What should he do?

A Decision

Macbeth makes a decision: he decides *not* to kill King Duncan. Lady Macbeth, with ambitions of her own, is not happy with his decision, and says he must not love her. To prove his love for his wife, he changes his mind and says he will kill King Duncan. But if he merely kills the King, he himself will not become king. He must not be implicated in the murder. Therefore, Lady Macbeth hatches a plan to blame the murder of the King's two guards.

A Murderous Plan

The Plan: Lady Macbeth will get the King's guards drunk. While they're drunk, Macbeth will kill the King, and then smear blood on the drunk guards. Therefore, when the King is found, the guards will appear guilty. *But is this enough?* After all, the guards might talk, or convince others of their innocence. There's the chance people will listen. We can't have this. Therefore, Macbeth must be near when the King is found, and instantly kill the guards, claiming "JUSTICE"!

A New King

The plan works perfectly: though it's Lady Macbeth that actually kills the King, the King is dead, the guards are blamed, and are instantly killed by Macbeth before they can talk. But remember, King Duncan had two sons (Malcolm and Donalbain), and they don't believe the story. Fearing for their own lives, they leave for England. Their immediate departure, unintentionally, sheds guilt on them! Macbeth, as Thane of Cawdor, ascends to the crown!

Fulfilling the Prophecy

Much of the prophecy has become true: Macbeth has become Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland. However, the remainder of the prophecy was Banquo's son, Fleance, becomes king. Therefore, to ensure Macbeth remains king, Banquo and his son, Fleance, must be killed. Macbeth hires assassins to kill the two, but Fleance escapes. Macbeth is haunted – first by Banquo's ghost, and second by the fact Fleance has escaped.

Out of Control?

In the meantime, Macduff, one of the noblemen who found the dead king, has thought Macbeth guilty. He has gone to England to forge an alliance with King Duncan's two sons. Therefore, when Macbeth calls to consult with Macduff, Macbeth learns Macduff is gone. *What is going on?* Macbeth again consults with the witches, and they tell him to beware of Macduff. Macbeth learns of Macduff's departure, and in a fit of rage, has Macduff's entire family killed.

Prophecy of Death

In England, Macduff convinces the King's sons to march on King Macbeth. The forces approach the castle, and Macbeth senses defeat. Knowing the end is near, Macbeth reflects on the recent witch's prophecy. Part of the prophecy (in addition to warning him regarding Macduff) said Macbeth would never be harmed by anyone born of woman. Therefore, Macbeth feels an uneasy sense of confidence he cannot be killed.

A New Scotland

Macbeth is faced against Macduff, and Macbeth tells Macduff of the prophecy Macbeth would never be harmed by anyone born of woman. Macduff reveals he was born via Caesarian section, and kills Macbeth. King Duncan's oldest son (Malcolm) becomes King of Scotland, and peace comes again to Scotland.

