

# Macbeth

William Shakespeare lived more than 400 years ago. Many people see him as the greatest writer in the English language. *Macbeth* is one of Shakespeare's best-known plays. In this scene, Macbeth and his friend Banquo are travelling to the town of Forres when they meet three witches.

Enter MACBETH and BANQUO.

**MACBETH:** So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

**BANQUO:** How far is't called to Forres? What are these,  
So withered and so wild in their attire\*,  
That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth, 5  
And yet are on't? Live you, or are you aught\*  
That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her choppy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips; you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret 10  
That you are so.

**MACBETH:** Speak if you can: what are you?

**FIRST WITCH:** All hail Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane\* of Glamis!

**SECOND WITCH:** All hail Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor!

**THIRD WITCH:** All hail Macbeth that shalt be king hereafter! 15

**BANQUO:** Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair? I'th' name of truth  
Are ye fantastical\*, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner  
You greet with present grace and great prediction 20  
Of noble having and of royal hope,  
That he seems rapt withal\*. To me you speak not.  
If you can look into the seeds of time  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear 25  
Your favours nor your hate.

**FIRST WITCH:** Hail!

**SECOND WITCH:** Hail!

**THIRD WITCH:** Hail!

An extract from Act I, Scene 3 of *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare.

## Glossary

attire — clothes

Thane — a person holding some of the King's land

rapt withal — amazed

aught — anything

fantastical — imaginary