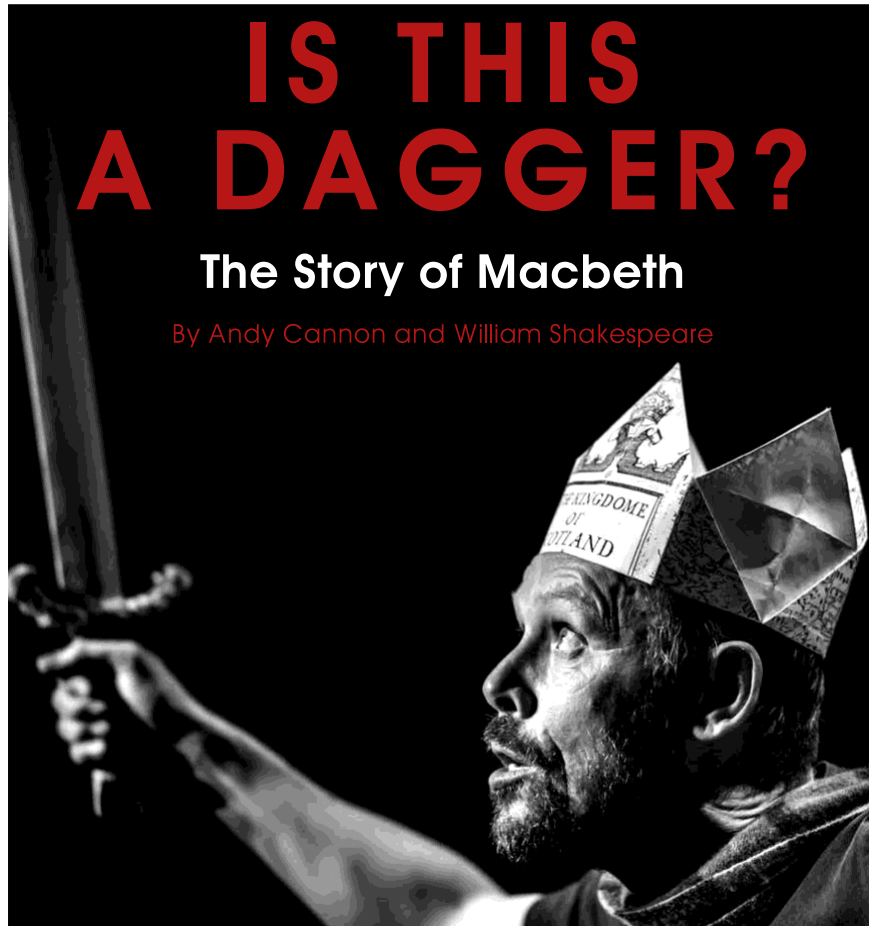


# Is this a Dagger? The Story of Macbeth

Information and activities for schools



Produced by:

 **RED BRIDGE**  
[www.redbridgearts.co.uk](http://www.redbridgearts.co.uk)

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## Information for Teachers

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Thank you for booking *Is this a Dagger?* for your school. This pack will tell you what to expect on the day and gives you some additional information about the production.

### Contents:

- About the production
- What to expect on the day
- Audience feedback and reviews
- Pre and post show activities
- Useful information and resources

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## About the Production

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Andy Cannon, formerly of Wee Stories Theatre is one of Scotland's finest storytellers for children. *Is this a Dagger?* Is Andy's story of Macbeth. Audiences join Andy on a thousand-year journey from fact to fiction and back again. Shakespeare's celebrated play Macbeth is a tale most foul, of witchcraft, deceit & murder. Andy's version distils the essence of this epic play into an entrancing one-man, one-hour version for audiences young and old.

The show was nominated for CATS Award for Best Show for Children and Young People and described as "Strikingly heartfelt and intelligent... immensely classy stuff" by The Scotsman.

**Age range:** the show is suitable for ages 8 and over or from P5+.

### Performance style and themes:

- Simple staging with 3 key set items: a stool, a bucket and a biscuit tin plus simple props
- Storytelling and being inventive with simple props
- Direct address with audience
- Tells Shakespeare's Macbeth in an accessible and fun way!

**Curriculum of excellence:** Andy's award winning storytelling helps deepen pupil's engagement and involvement in Shakespeare and raises questions to be explored in English, Social Studies and Expressive Arts.

<b>Writer</b>	Andy Cannon and William Shakespeare
<b>Performer</b>	Andy Cannon
<b>Sound and composition</b>	David Trouton and Wendy Weatherby
<b>Lighting</b>	Simon Hayes

Originally produced in 2007 by Wee Stories Theatre for Children

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## Audience Feedback and reviews

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*Andy Cannon brings his storyteller's arts to Shakespeare's Macbeth in a one-man show that is aimed perfectly at audiences aged seven or over. It is a bloody tale, and Cannon's telling is fluid enough for him to emphasise or fudge the more gruesome elements depending on his audience. Dread murder...*

★★★★★ The Stage. [Read the full review](#)

*Andy Cannon is a man with storytelling in his blood; a performer who can take the trickiest, most complicated of narratives and deliver it to a young audience as if it were a simple nursery rhyme....*

★★★★★ The Scotsman [Read the full review](#)

*A new and accessible Scottish Play for younger audiences by storyteller Andy Cannon...*

★★★★★ The List [Read the full review](#)

*Cannon's humour, just Monty Python and measured enough, is a lodestar that guides us through the darkness of bloody, murderous battlefields and the ghoulish heath to the grisly finale.*

★★★★★ Deadline News [Read full review here](#)

*What a great show and what an accomplishment to perform this as a one man show! I learned lots about the story of Macbeth and was entertained throughout. My 8 year old son loved it too!*

**Nicky – Audience member**

*Brilliant! Witty, clever, oh so very clever.. it is a whirlwind hour. My daughter (9) and I both loved it. Thank you*

**Caroline - Audience member**

*Do yourself a favour and go and see this brilliant version of Macbeth. I went with two children 10 and 12 and an 83 year old grandpa and we were utterly transfixed by the wit, charm and clever telling of this great play. What a joy to watch storytelling like this - thank you.*

**Laura - Audience member**

*Utterly utterly brilliant. Andy Cannon is engaging throughout, is insanely knowledgeable about Macbeth (both Shakespeare's version and the factual version), and managed to enthral both a 9 year old girl and a 14 year old boy.. If only every English Lit teacher taught Shakespeare like this I think a lot more of our young people would be interested in our nation's literary history. Five stars! This man should be in Hollywood. Looks quite tidy in a kilt too!*

**Sara - Audience member**

*This. Is. Brilliant.*

*This tells the Macbeth story in an absorbing, fascinating and accessible manner. We took our 6 and 9 year olds to see it and both were transfixed throughout, as were we. I only wish I'd had a chance to see this version when I was their age.*

*Highly recommended.*

**John - Audience member**

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## Pre and post-show activities

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Curriculum for Excellence links include:

- Literacy
- Expressive Arts
- Health and Wellbeing
- Social Subjects
- Technologies

### PREPARING CHILDREN BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE

Evidence shows that the more audiences are prepared for seeing a performance the greater the impact it will have. The work you do in preparing your class for the performance in their school will greatly enhance their overall experience, build excitement and enthusiasm for the performance and generate more meaningful discussion and follow up work.

#### Start with a synopsis of the story

Prepare your class for the performance by reading them the synopsis of the story and talking to them about what they are going to see. Understanding their expectations will help you to explore their reactions after the performance.

#### A very brief summary of the story of Macbeth by William Shakespeare

Macbeth is Shakespeare's only thriller. At times it is a bloodbath. A story of power, ambition and ultimately loss. Macbeth is a story about a man's ambition to be king and what happens as a result.

Macbeth and Banquo are both generals in King Duncan's army. They fought a huge battle and cross a wasteland together. From nowhere three witches appear. They tell the men their separate fates: Macbeth will become the Thane of Cawdor and then king. Banquo's sons will be kings. After their unlikely prophecies the witches vanish.

Consumed by ambition and spurred to action by his wife, Macbeth murders King Duncan and takes the Scottish throne for himself. He is then wracked with guilt and paranoia. Forced to commit more and more murders to protect himself, he soon becomes a tyrannical ruler. Lady Macbeth cannot stop thinking about King Duncan's death, she becomes deranged and dies. A large army marches on Macbeth's castle and Macbeth is killed by Macduff.

#### The Real Macbeth

Macbeth (known as Mac Bethad mac Findláich in Gaelic) ruled for 17 years after he killed the ruling king, Duncan I in 1040 in battle and succeeded Duncan as king. He married Kenneth III's granddaughter Gruoch and in 1045 defeated and killed Duncan I's father, Crinan at Dunkeld. Known as a brave leader who was successful in battle who promoted Christianity, Macbeth was killed by Malcolm Canmore, Duncan's son, at the Battle of Lumphanan in August 1057.

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#### Discussion pre-show: Would you like to rule your country... Think, pair, share

Ask the pupils to imagine they could be the king/queen of their country. Would you like to be? Why?/Why not? Discuss their thoughts in pairs and then share their ideas with the rest of the class.

## ACTIVITIES AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

There are a number of possible approaches to follow up work. Whatever activities you choose a useful starting point lies in taking time to reflect, remember and discuss the performance. Making time to reflect on the experience after attending a performance can help extend children's overall experience, develop their critical thinking skills and answer questions they may have.

### Discussion: Questions to assist post show classroom discussions:

1. What was the most memorable moment in the story for you?
  2. How did the performance make you feel?
  3. What did you notice about how the story was told?
  4. What do you think happened next for some of the characters?
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### Memory map

A useful way to begin your discussion is to simply ask your class to share as many memories as they can about the performance. It is very important that this is not made to feel like a test, but just a chance to share. If it helps think about the performance as separate elements:

#### The characters

Who did we meet? What were they like? What did they wear? What did they do? What do you think happened next for some of the characters?

#### The story

What was it about? What happened? Where did it take place? How did it make us feel? What was the most memorable moment in the story for you?

#### The performance

What did the show look like? What did we see? How many performers were there and how did they show different characters? Was there music? How did it add to the story?

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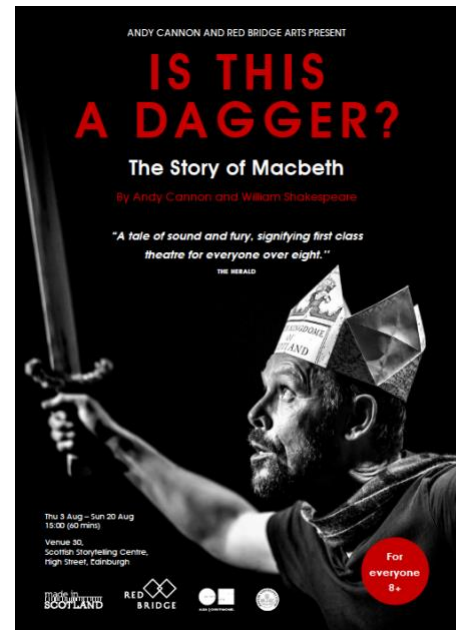
### Themes for post-show discussion and activities

There are many themes in *Is this a Dagger?* to be explored: they can be developed in discussion groups, writing projects or by gathering pictures. Some of the themes are highlighted below. You may also wish to compare how the themes affect the story, or the differences and/or similarities between themes in the play and the history.

- Ambition
  - Guilt
  - Revenge
  - Loyalty
  - History
  - Anger
  - Fear
  - Love
  - Monarchy
  - Superstition
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## Expressive Arts: Design a theatre poster

- As a class, brainstorm some of the themes from the story and performance
- Share with pupils the poster or images for this show and others. Discuss what features the posters have – e.g a key image, the name of the company and writers, dates and times that the show is on, images that represent the themes from the story etc. List the features on the board.
- Pupils work individually or in groups to plan and produce a poster for the show. Using their imagination to highlight the key features
- Posters could be drawn, created online or created as a collage using found images from magazines, other posters etc.
- Display the posters and discuss the different style and what they communicate



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## Expressive Arts: Telling a story with simple props

In *Is this a Dagger?* Andy uses a handful of props to assist him in telling the tale. This activity will support pupils to tell a well-known story or fairy tale using a small number of props to help bring it to life.

### Warm up – Pass the Prop

- Sit the class in a circle and pass an everyday object round. Each person must show a short mime where they make the object into something completely different. The class guess what each one is.
- This can also be talked through with a mime *'This is not a 'spoon', it's a .....*'
- Encourage the children to be more and more creative with their ideas!

### Telling a story using objects

- Start with a familiar and simple story such as 'Red Riding Hood'.
- Discuss and write up on the board the key characters in the story
- Now brainstorm as a class the main events of the story you have chosen. If there are lots of ideas, write them all on the board and then decide as a class the six key events
- Create a simple story board that shows the key events in the story
- Brainstorm a list of possible props that could be used for each character and more that would help illustrate each event in the story
- Split the class into groups of 3 or 4 pupils. Each group will work together and choose 3 or 4 objects that they can use to tell their story. The objects should represent key characters or help tell a key event in the story
- Groups gather their objects (this can be a homework exercise)
- Groups practice telling the story using the objects – ensure that each member of the group has a role to play in telling the story – one can be the director if they don't like performing
- Each group performs the play for the class.

## **Literacy - writing**

### **Write a different ending for Macbeth**

- Talk about the ending of Macbeth. How did it make people feel? What were the main events that led to this ending?
- Discuss what the pupils might have done instead if they were involved in the story?
- Brainstorm ideas of things that one or more of the characters could have done differently that would have led to a different ending.
- Choose one or some of the ideas and write a new ending for the play
- If it's helpful pupils can write the story as though it was happening now rather than in the past
- Pupils can share their new endings with others and discuss which endings they think are the best / most realistic or the most unlikely

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## **Performances in Schools - What to expect on the Day:**

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*Is this a Dagger?* is a one-actor show with a minimal set.

The show has a running time of 60 minutes with a post show conversation lasting a further 10 minutes. There is no interval or break.

The show can perform in theatres and school halls for up to 120 pupils.

**Get in:**

Ideally the performer and technician will have time in the hall, without pupils before the performance, for around 1 hour.

**Get out:**

The technician will clear the set at the end of the performance. The performer can be available to talk with pupils after the show.

**Max number of pupils:**

120

**Duration:**

60 minutes performance and post show discussion of 10 minutes

**Preparing pupils for the performance and following up after the performance:**

Please see below for more information on suggested pre and post show activities and questions to assist post show classroom discussions and writing exercises.



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## Useful information and resources:

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If you'd like any additional information, or have any feedback on the show, please contact Red Bridge Arts team – [hello@redbridgearts.co.uk](mailto:hello@redbridgearts.co.uk)

Trailer for the show <https://vimeo.com/192014993>

Royal Shakespeare company synopsis of Macbeth  
<https://cdn2.rsc.org.uk/sitefinity/education-pdfs/school-synopses/edu-macbeth-schoolsynopsis.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

Imagine's teaching resources  
<https://www.imagine.org.uk/schools/learning-resources/>

If you'd like any additional information, or have any feedback on the show, please contact Red Bridge Arts team – [hello@redbridgearts.co.uk](mailto:hello@redbridgearts.co.uk)

Red Bridge Arts is a charity based in Scotland. [www.redbridgearts.co.uk](http://www.redbridgearts.co.uk)

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