

**Shakespeare and violence**  
Transcript**Shakespeare and violence: listening transcript**

- Beth: Hi, Alexander. What've you been up to lately?
- Alexander: I've been really busy with work, actually. I'm involved in a production of *Macbeth*!
- Beth: Oh yeah. Didn't you get the main part?
- Alexander: Yeah, I'm Macbeth!
- Beth: Congratulations!
- Alexander: Thanks. It's a part to get your teeth into, that's for sure!
- Beth: To be honest, I've never been into Shakespeare. I don't even know what *Macbeth's* about!
- Alexander: Really? Didn't you study any Shakespeare at school?
- Beth: I only remember *Romeo and Juliet*, but it was never my thing!
- Alexander: That's a shame. You surprise me – I thought you were well educated!
- Beth: Come on, that's not fair! Knowing about Shakespeare doesn't mean you're educated!
- Alexander: Keep your hair on Beth; I'm only pulling your leg.
- Beth: Oh. OK, I'll let you off. So, what's *Macbeth* about then?
- Alexander: Well, in a nutshell, *Macbeth's* about how he and Lady Macbeth use violence to satisfy their ambition.
- Beth: Go on, continue.
- Alexander: You see, Macbeth is a general in the Scottish army and, after a successful battle, three witches prophecy some things about him and foretell that eventually he'll become King of Scotland. Macbeth is sceptical at first but, after one of their prophecies comes true, he wonders whether the witches were right and he will actually become king. So, he writes to his wife, Lady Macbeth, to tell her everything that's happened. She really wants him to be king and thinks Macbeth shouldn't hesitate to murder King Duncan. Macbeth's persuaded to kill Duncan and this starts off a chain of events, with plenty of blood and violence to follow.
- Beth: The story sounds interesting, but I'm not sure I like the idea of all that blood and gore.
- Alexander: You should come and see it – you might be surprised! You might learn something too!
- Beth: Since when have you become so cheeky? Well, maybe I will go and see it, Alexander, maybe I will. Would you say that *Macbeth* is one of Shakespeare's most violent plays?

- Alexander: Actually, violence seems to come up a lot in Shakespeare. I wouldn't say *Macbeth* is the most violent. *Richard III*, *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus* are all pretty violent in their own way. I mean, even *Romeo and Juliet* ends violently.
- Beth: Do you mean when Juliet stabs herself with Romeo's dagger?
- Alexander: Exactly!
- Beth: I suppose I'd never thought of it that way before.
- Alexander: Some of his other plays are quite shocking and brutal though. There's murder, suicide, executions and bloody combat and sometimes a lot of detail too. In *Richard III*, he is killed on the battlefield near the end of the play. I suppose there is a connection between violence and tragedy in Shakespeare.
- Beth: Yeah, that's because violence is tragic isn't it? What would you say is Shakespeare's most violent play if it's not *Macbeth*?
- Alexander: *Titus Andronicus* is probably Shakespeare's bloodiest and most violent work. It was really popular in Shakespeare's day, but it's quite distasteful in parts. Very gory too!
- Beth: Why? What happens?
- Alexander: There are so many examples, Beth, but near the end Titus himself is killed by Saturninus (the Emperor) after he reveals that Titus has baked Tamora's two sons in a meat pie that she has been eating at a feast at his house.
- Beth: Oh dear, that is bad taste indeed, and not just for the audience! That makes me feel sick!
- Alexander: I know! It makes *Macbeth* sound quite light! I think Shakespeare's plays are so interesting though, Beth, because he focuses more on the psychological issues than the violence itself.
- Beth: Let me be the judge of that! Anyway, since you're *Macbeth*, do you think you can get me a free ticket?
- Alexander: I thought you might say that! I think that can be arranged!