

ACTIVITIES

ROUND ABOUT THE CAULDRON GO! (LIV.01D, LIV.02D, LIV.03D)

The witches' incantation is one of the most famous scenes in Macbeth. Their chant, "Double, double, toil and trouble/Fire burn and cauldron bubble" is instantly recognizable, and has been referenced and parodied in cartoon, sitcom, film and song. The text of the incantation is relatively simple, yet uses a distinct rhythm and a rhyme scheme to create a sense of the otherworldly.

First, distribute the handout containing an excerpt of the witches' incantation. Explain if necessary that the witches are following a recipe, or casting a spell. Read through the text a couple of times all as a group, taking care to listen to one another, speaking exactly in time, as though with one voice. Then take a moment to clarify the meaning of any unfamiliar words. **(LI1.03D)**

Next, read the text around the group, with each person reading just until the next punctuation point. Some readers may get a single word, some may get a full line. This will draw attention to the rhythm of the text, and clarify the individual thoughts and ingredients. Repeat, if necessary, so that everyone has a chance to speak. Introduce the idea that in Shakespeare's theatre, the atmosphere was created largely through the use of language, rather than through sets or props. It is the responsibility of the speaker to discover the unique effects within the text, to bring it to life and create excitement for the audience. **(LI1.07D, LI1.08D, LI2.02D)**

Now focus on the individual lines of the text: the sounds of the words, the rhythm, and the rhyme. Encourage the group to try saying words and lines of interest out loud, and to mark, underline, or circle interesting features in their text.

- What kind of mood or atmosphere is created by the text?
- How does Shakespeare create that mood?
- What *kind* of a spell are the witches casting? What, exactly, is being doubled? How do the ingredients contribute to this "hellbroth"?
- Count the number of syllables in each line – is there a pattern? How does it compare to Shakespeare's typical 10-count iambic pentameter line? Why do you think it differs?
The short, 7 and 8 count lines give a different rhythm to the speech of these supernatural beings, marking them as other than human, creating a distinct and special rhythm for the moment of magic.
- Notice the centre section of the spell, which is all in single syllable words, bracketed by sections that contain longer, multisyllable words. How does it lend clarity to the list of ingredients, or help build the tempo of the spell?
Perhaps the single syllable words slow the lines they're in, for a precise count of the ingredients, while the multisyllable words speed up the lines that they're in, lending urgency as the witches build to the repeated refrain.

• Bring attention to the repeated sounds and rhymes within the lines. (Fillet of a **F**enny snake/ In the cauldron **B**oil and **B**ake.) Have a volunteer read those lines, exaggerating the repeated sounds and rhymes. What does this contribute to the meaning? *Perhaps the repeated sounds highlight important words or exciting ingredients. The regular rhyme highlights the rhythm, the singsong nature of the incantation.*

• Which words are most regularly repeated? (*Trouble, Bubble.*) How does the sound of those repeated words add to the atmosphere?

After investigating these ideas, repeat a choral reading of the text as review – again, taking care to speak as though with one voice, and exaggerating the effects you've explored. **(LI1.07D, LI1.08D, LI2.02D, LI3.01D, LI3.02D, LI1.03D)**

Now, using the witches' version as a guide, create your own recipe or spell. Will it be a love potion, an energy drink, a new hairspray? Write quickly, but precisely, using a list of ingredients that are appropriate for the task. Use what we've learned about Shakespeare's rhythm and rhyme, and the effects he uses within the text to highlight what's important in *your* recipe. When you've finished, take a moment to speak your new version out loud, deciding how loud or soft it should be spoken, what tone of voice you should use for your particular recipe, etc. Encourage play. **(WRV.01D, WR1.04D, WR2.01D, WR2.02D, WR2.03D, WR2.04D, WR5.02D)**

TO FINISH, share what you've prepared with the group. If time is short, you could have each person share with a partner so everyone has a chance to speak, and then look at just two or three versions individually. Which are most successful?

How did you use what you learned from Shakespeare's example to create an effective original piece? **(LGV.02D, LG1.03D, LG2.03D, LG2.04D)**



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