

INTERESTING FACTS

- Macbeth was probably written in 1606, three years after the coronation of King James I, Elizabeth's chosen successor. James was quick to assume the patronage of Shakespeare's company, and they became known as the King's Men.
- Macbeth is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy, with only about 2100 lines. The first known publication of the play was in the First Folio in 1623, some years after Shakespeare's death. Some suspect the brevity of that published version suggests that some scenes had been cut for performance (or lost) in the meantime, and not restored for publication.
- Shakespeare's chief source for Macbeth was Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland. He combined the story of the real life Macbeth with an account of a separate Scottish regicide, which provided the details of the murder. The real life Macbeth was apparently a reasonably competent and responsible king.
- Although Holinshed's real life Banquo was a coconspirator of Macbeth, Shakespeare idealized him for a good reason; James I was a descendant of Banquo. In a bid to flatter the king, Shakespeare has Macbeth witness a line of kings, all descended from Banquo, that will "stretch out to the crack of doom": James' descendants will rule for all time.
- Given James' Scottish ancestry, the writing of a play based in Scottish history was a natural fit. James also had a strong belief in the occult and considered himself an expert on the topic of witches. In 1597, he wrote *The Daemonologie*, a book about magic, sorcery, witchcraft and ghosts. (James was also one of the first antismoking activists; one of his other publications was titled *A Counterblaste to Tobacco*.)
- It is believed that Macbeth was first performed for the king and his guest, King Christian IV of Denmark, at Hampton Court on August 7, 1606. It may be that the play was initially written with the darker, claustrophobic atmosphere of an indoor performance in mind, and with an eye on the budget for special effects that a court performance could provide.
- Theatrical tradition dictates that Macbeth be referred to as "the Scottish Play" or "Mackers" within the confines of a theatre; superstition suggests that to speak the actual title is to invoke a curse. Presumed origins of the curse (and the stories of disasters and dire consequences that have befallen the careless) are many and varied.

Ask the CTP cast for a tale about the curse!