

***Imaginative Ways to Approach the Text***

**MACBETH - Rhythm and Rhyme that Sets the Tone: The Witches Entrance  
(Act I, Scene 1)**

# Overview

Students will explore the opening scene of the play which uses a trochaic tetrameter rhythm to create a strong dramatic effect.

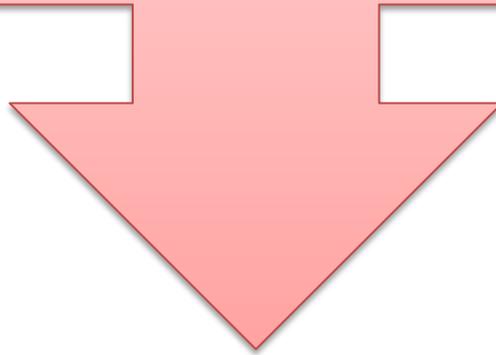
Grade Level	Subject Area	Curriculum Expectations and Learning Outcome	Time Needed	Space	Materials		
7-12	English, Drama	Analyse the text, focusing on the ways in which it communicates info, ideas, and themes and influences the listener's / viewer's response;	Analyse the text and explain how they help communicate meaning and enhance effectiveness;	Use a variety of conventions to develop character and shape the action in ensemble drama presentations	1-2 class Periods	Desks in groups, then open spaces for exploring the text	Attached handouts of Activities

### Activity:

Shakespeare doesn't employ the usual iambic pentameter in the opening scene where the rhythm would be *de DUM de DUM de DUM de DUM de DUM* such as in Macbeth's opening line later on, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." Instead, the witches use a trochaic tetrameter where the rhythm is *DUM de DUM de DUM de DUM* as in, "When shall we three meet again?" This short, rhythmic line is chant-like and evokes a strong dramatic effect for the beginning of the play that sets the tone for what is to come.

In groups of 3 experiment using a variety of ways in which to stage this. You may want to walk slowly around the room at first to feel the rhythm of the beat. Feel free to incorporate sound effects to enhance the mood.

**Note:** These witches are also referred to as the 'weird sisters' coming from the Anglo-Saxon mythological goddess 'Wyrd' or Fate. How might you portray these three characters, other than the stereotypical images of witches?



## Act I, scene 1 – A desolate place

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches*

### First Witch

When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

### Second Witch

When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.

*fighting, commotion*

### Third Witch

That will be ere the set of sun.

*before*

### First Witch

Where the place?

**Second Witch**  
Upon the heath.

*wilderness*

**Third Witch**  
There to meet with Macbeth.

**First Witch**

I come<sup>1</sup>, Graymalkin<sup>2</sup>! *1. the witch is answering the cry of her 'familiar' spirit which usually took on the form of an animal 2. a grey cat*

**Second Witch**  
Paddock calls.

*toad*

**Third Witch**  
Anon.

*I'm coming straight away.*

**ALL**  
Fair is foul, and foul is fair:  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

*Exeunt*

### Things to Think About

1. Why do you think Shakespeare uses a different rhythm at the start of the play?
2. What effect does the mention of the witches' familiars have on the audience?
3. If these three characters represent fate to what extent do you think Macbeth will be able to have free control over his fate?