



Now, with the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603 came a change in English culture and a physical change to the theatre. While *Macbeth* was written for the Globe, it was first performed in 1606 for King James I in the Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace. There is a reference in the text, possibly, to King James in the text, which we will discuss.

With the Jacobean (“Jacobean” is the adjective for “James”) period came the rise of indoor theatres such as Blackfriars, which was lit by candlelight and seated only 700 people. This theatre, which served as Shakespeare’s winter theatre, sold tickets for up to five times the cost of the Globe.

While you will doubles in the writing in *Macbeth*, the Jacobean plays are increasingly written for an elite audience.

King James VI of Scotland, James I of England



A seventeenth-century rendering of an indoor theatre

Macbeth, in many ways, resembles the Jacobean drama that will follow Shakespeare. The darker, more violent taste echoes changes in the drama in general, going back to Elizabeth's reign, as the genre of tragedy develops. It's true, too, that the mood at King James' court is darker—the court is more alienated from the whole of society and the national mood is less optimistic. Remember that there will be civil war in England in 1642.

The History of *Macbeth*

The story of *Macbeth* comes from Raphael Holinshed's 1587 *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*.

Historical Macbeth was born into a world of feuding Scottish clans, such as we will read about next year in *Beowulf*, where thanes (war lords) fought to control territory and trade. Killing and revenge killing were common, and Vikings and Norsemen raids were frequent.

The historical Macbeth was born in 1005 into a noble family. He married Gruach, granddaughter of a High King of Scotland. They had no children. King Duncan was ineffectual and unpopular and may have been killed by Macbeth, who came to power in 1040 and ruled for seventeen years—he was a competent, reforming king. There's no evidence that Macbeth was interested in witchcraft.

Duncan's son Malcolm invaded in 1054, supported by the English king, Edward the Confessor.

You will see that Shakespeare takes many liberties with the story to make his tragedy.

Witchcraft was a particular interest of King James, and the inclusion of witches may have been to please him. I will post a separate screencast about the role of King James later in our reading.