MACBETH

Intro-in Sh’s wks
Macbeth’s in last 25% of output.
What is tragedy?
What do we expect from trag?
“a play that ends badly”...
“everybody dies”

Context: 1606
Shakesp
Sh not thinking of posterity; publicatn
later (busy as playwright, dir, actor)

Macbeth
1606, for court [His Majesty’s
Servants/King’s Men]

King James I
1603-frmr James VI of Scotland, after Liz I
parents murdered politically (Mary,
Q of Scots)
1st in Eng: Divine Right of Kings (King
James Works, 1609-handout)

Hysteria re: witches 1500-1660
-50-60K killed (80% women;
-old/widowed/dementia, prob’ly)
-J. wrote big bk on demonology
-Holinshed Chronicles has story of
Mcb, Banquo, witches (handout)

MACBETH
“Man of action”-how?

Yes-former Thane of Cawdor tried to kill
king...Mcb as ToF did kill king

But man of action—not a thinker

w/witches—1st 2 titles already achvd:
classic temptatn in predictn-3rd title (king)

Lady M manipulated: redefined terms-M
says to durst do more not a man; she says
doing more (killing D) is courage
What if Mcb did nothing? [by chance, I cld
do nothing & still become king...] Wld
predictn still come true?

Not likely in successn-but “kinsman”, so
maybe?

Duncan some sort of kin, yes. Also, M
sees self as subject, host: no justificatn to
kill...it took Lady M to get it to happen
Duncan a good king, virtuous

Murder in Mcb—close subject for
James

King is like a god; God’s anointed
Royalist propaganda
Push-back vs. idea of rebellion

Witches as important part of Mcb—
Our perceptions of witches—Salem
Halloween
Powers of darkness, demons
Temptation

Military, loyal(!!), physical (vs. thinker),
helped Duncan beat down rebellion-
named Thane of Cawdor

Weak; let himself get pushed around by
wife

Duncan a good king, virtuous