

Teachers' Notes
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MACBETH, YOU IDIOT!

by Don Henderson

Summary

Andy Macbeth has just begun his first year at Scotts College. All the boys from his mother's family, the Aikin-Buttquakes, have attended this school since its inception. Although a little nervous about starting high school, Andy is confident in his own ability to impress others with his various talents. He is especially confident about his abilities on the soccer field where he is the star player. Macbeth's three weird aunts are also confident in his abilities and they prophesize that he will become captain and then coach of the team. When Macbeth is appointed captain after the first game he starts to think that the second of their prophecies that he will be coach, may also be possible.

After one hundred and fifty years, Scotts College has opened its doors to female students for the first time. Naturally this has caused quite a stir amongst the boys and Macbeth quickly succumbs to the charms of the devastatingly beautiful, yet ghastly vain and manipulative, Fifi L'Amour. It is with Fifi's help that Macbeth hatches and executes a seemingly perfect plan to remove the highly respected Duncan King from his throne as coach of the first years' soccer team. They expose his secret love of ballet by posting photos of Duncan wearing a tutu and then blame the crime on Duncan's brothers. Incredibly embarrassed and publically humiliated, Duncan quits as soccer coach, therefore leaving the title of coach free for Macbeth to claim and achieve the second of his aunts' prophecies.

Andy Macbeth then embarks on his quest to create the best soccer team in Scotts College history. However, in doing so he is so blinded by his own arrogance that he alienates his friends and teammates. He sacks his best friend, Banger Bangoot, as goal keeper and ridicules his lack of ability; resulting in Banger withdrawing from the action of the novel in a ghost-like trance. Adding further insult to his team, Macbeth recruits four thugs from the enemy team of Beltic High, to boost their numbers.

Meanwhile Macbeth is enjoying his blossoming romance with the ravishing Fifi and is busy writing tragic love songs in her honour. He goes to great lengths to prove his love, even publically humiliating himself by performing at the Scotts College Talent Showcase. Unfortunately for Macbeth, Fifi quickly loses interest in his charms and this ironically coincides with his decline in popularity. Wallowing in self pity and guilt, at having helped defame Duncan King, Fifi falls into a state of depression.

As the soccer season progresses the team establishes itself as a force to be reckoned with. Unfortunately Macbeth's success only serves to inflate his ego to epic proportions and he adopts the role of hideous tyrant. His teammates eventually revolt and they all quit, leaving Macbeth to form a new team. The boys seek revenge for Macbeth's idiotic behavior and chase him up Dunsinane Tower to teach him a lesson; however, he is able to curtail their punishment by dacking himself and apologizing for all the things that he had done. The final prophecy that 'if anyone beats Scotts it will be Scotts itself' comes true when the two Scotts teams compete. Banger returns to play soccer once more, Duncan King is reinstated as coach and Macbeth never captains the team again; instead a rotating captaincy is introduced which allows all teammates to experience the leadership.

Before Reading the Novel

Consider the cover of the book.

- Are you able to get a feeling about the story based on the cover and blurb?
- What does it give away that could help you piece together what might happen in the book?
- Record your ideas so that you can revisit them during your reading of the novel.
- What is implied about Andy Macbeth by the illustration on the cover and in the blurb?

As you read the text, look back at your notes.

- Do you read Macbeth's character with an expectation that he is an idiot because of the way that the novel introduces him to you?
- Is this a good or bad thing, and how does it affect your enjoyment of the book?

Character Analysis

Andy Macbeth

Andy Macbeth is a highly impressionable young man. As a first year student at Scotts College, a school where his family holds much authority, Macbeth feels pressure to prove he is capable of great things. Whilst independently ambitious,

he is easily influenced by those around him, and without the encouragement of others he may not have had the courage to pursue his ambition. Blinded by his desire to rule, Macbeth stops at nothing to achieve success – alienating even his closest friends. Even the song, 'Black Knight', (p.128) playing at his aunts house when he visits reflects his sinister agenda. Confronted by his justice seeking peers, Macbeth is ultimately remorseful and is forgiven for his idiocy.

Duncan King

As the coach of the first years' soccer team, Duncan King is a highly respected member of Scotts College. At a school which prides itself on boy's education, masculinity is highly valued; therefore Duncan's secret passion for ballet could pose a threat to his status. He is disgraced when a photo of him dressed in a tutu is posted on the pin up board during the team sleepover and he quits as coach. This allows Macbeth to take over. A credit to Duncan's personal valour, he courageously performs at the Talent Showcase and is applauded for his "absolutely breathtaking performance". (p.123) He is ultimately too respected by his peers to be shunned for his unusual pastime and is reinstated as coach of a second Scott's team.

Fifi L'Amour

For the first time in one hundred and fifty years, Scotts College has opened its doors to female students. However, they were quite unprepared for the likes of Fifi and her outrageous mother, Cha Cha. Fifi is "deadset hot" (p.27) and is eager to establish herself at her new school. With "Macbeth's hormones chafing at the bit like a field of quality gallopers in the Melbourne Cup" (p.28) she sees him as an easy target to help her achieve notoriety. Together they become the glamour couple of the school and Macbeth is so enraptured by her charms that he will do anything for love. Thus she provides him with the plan and ammunition to bring about Duncan's downfall. Unfortunately for Fifi, it seems as though she does have a conscience and she is so wracked with guilt that she breaks up with Macbeth and is drawn into a "sort of mini depression ... [getting] up all through the night and then wants to sleep all through the day". (p.159)

Macbeth's three aunts

Agatha, Bernice and Candy are often described as being "witches". The "three broomsticks" (p.21) spotted by Banger at the Macbeth barbeque further reinforce this persona. Whilst they "adore Macbeth" (p.14), his friends find them weird. Their ability to predict the future with their prophecies encourages Macbeth's ambition and he often goes to them for advice. The symbolism surrounding these three characters fortify the mystery around them; their garden is "wild ... in unclipped chaos" (p.128) and Macbeth is greeted with a "bloodcurdling scream" (p.128) when he arrives to visit. "Incinerated chickens ... along with charred lamb ribs and the burnt remains of various parts hacked from the bodies of cows"

(p.129) are thrown out the kitchen window after failed attempts at cooking; creating a ghastly cemetery in their backyard. The characterization of the three aunts provides a comical take on Shakespeare's original witches.

Banger Bangoot

Banger Bangoot is Macbeth's best friend and whilst he holds his friend in high esteem he shares none of his soccer ability. Banger is "the worst goalie in the world" (p.4) and whilst he tries hard not to let his team down, he invariably does. In his quest for greatness, Macbeth is intolerant of such sporting failures. Banger is so humiliated by Macbeth that he is left no option but to quit the team and sever their friendship. Banger is reduced to a shell of his former self, adopting a "lost and ghost-like look" (p.170) that sends "a chill down Macbeth's spine". (p.117) Whilst responsible for "the change in his old mate" (p.117) Macbeth fails to reach out and reconcile their friendship.

Themes

Supernatural Forces

- Supernatural forces are introduced early in the text when "dark clouds had invaded the sky and an ominous wind was roaring across the park" (p.3) during the first soccer game.
- Macbeth describes how the ball and his boot seemed to "come from the same cow, which, with the aid of supernatural forces, was now determined to rebuild itself". (p.6)
- The Aikin-Buttquake sisters offer a series of prophecies that compel Macbeth to follow his ambitions. Their ability to predict the future, and the fact that they are scary, suggest black magic at work. Numerous times throughout the text they are referred to as witches as they intimidate those around them.
- Banger's feelings of uneasiness foreshadow Macbeth's turmoil; he suspected "that rough times lay ahead for his best friend and that there was little he could do about it. Forces more powerful than himself were at play". (p.34)
- At key moments of the text ominous weather and storms coincide with Macbeth's betrayal of those close to him. It might be interesting for students to analyse the key events of the novel and note how the weather is used to create a sense of mood and atmosphere.

Ambition

- The text is primarily focused on ambition and the consequences of it; "where would the human race be without ambition?" (p.78)
- Macbeth aspires to great levels of sporting prowess and celebrity status. "He saw himself kicking the winning goal; he saw football boot

- endorsements, sponsorship deals, European cars and adoring women.” (p.7)
- Macbeth’s three weird aunts fuel his personal drive and offer the prophecies; “I would say captain” and “he will coach the team before the end of the season”. (p.19) They give him the confidence to pursue his dreams and encourage his feelings of entitlement. However, they also warn him that “if anyone beats Scotts it will be Scotts itself” (p.133) and that he “shall never vanquished be until the burny wood marches up Dunisane Tower”. (p.134) Dismissing the final two prophecies as ludicrous, Macbeth’s own ego proves to be the cause of his downfall.
 - The attention of Fifi L’Amour feeds Macbeth’s ego and raises his status at school, she encourages him to be ambitious as she also enjoys the limelight of success. She prompts him to “take what’s ours”. (p.31)

Loyalty & Betrayal

- Macbeth self righteously condemns “the stinking traitor” (p.3), Jimmy Cawdor for changing schools yet he too betrays those close to him. “Whatever happened to loyalty? ... The fact that Jimmy had deserted Scotts for another school was beyond belief for Macbeth.” (p.6)
- Blinded by his ambition, Macbeth ignores past loyalties to his friends as he chases personal glory.
- In an attempt to secure Fifi’s affection, he is unquestionably loyal to her and is eager to please by following her plan to strip Duncan of his position as coach of the soccer team. Whilst she provides him with the ammunition to bring about Duncan’s downfall, she also takes an active role in the betrayal, declaring that “if you want something done right, you’ve got to do it yourself”. (p.93)
- Macbeth alienates even his closest friend, Banger, in his quest to rule. Banger quits the soccer team after being humiliated during training, yet he is not even permitted to retain his dignity: “He can’t stop a ball to save his life anyway!” (p.108)
- After his peers dismiss Macbeth as “acting like a deadset psycho” (p.107), Duncan King regains his status as the soccer team remains loyal to him; “Long live THE KING”. (p.123)
- The bus driver’s tirade about the problems facing Manchester United soccer team, sound dangerously like the problems facing Macbeth’s own team. “It’s loyalty, mate. That’s the problem these days. Everyone is out for themselves. No one cares about their team anymore! United is left bleeding to death while all those overpaid prima donnas cash their fat cheques.” (p.127)
- Fifi betrays Macbeth by dumping him after the Scotts Talent Showcase. She feels guilty for being disloyal to Duncan. She blames Macbeth for being a bad influence – an accusation which Macbeth finds ludicrous.
- The betrayal of Macbeth’s uncle, Riley, by his team foreshadows the mutiny of Macbeth’s own team.

- In the process of pursuing his ambitions, Macbeth betrays his own personal integrity. He feels as though there is “something else that he couldn’t quite put his finger on, that he’d lost along the way”. (p.168)

Text, Style, Mood and Structure

- This is a novel of five acts. In deconstructing the action of the text, you could divide the class into five groups and assign an act to each group. Each cluster of students could then dramatise the act and present it to the rest of the class.
- The titles of the chapters represent quotes from Shakespeare’s original play of Macbeth. Students could reorganise a jumbled list of chapters and then reflect upon the meaning of each title.
- The author utilises a number of metaphors to create a sense of both mood and character. After investigating the purpose of a metaphor, search the text for a range of examples and evaluate the success of each.
- The text provides a terrific opportunity to introduce students to the work of Shakespeare. After studying this text, students could then be extended by experiencing Macbeth. The depth to which you investigate the original text may depend on the ability of an individual class. At the very least, students should be able to complete a comparative activity whereby they make links between the two texts. Students could complete two comic strips that represent the key moments of each text.
- Rewrite a section of the text from another character’s perspective, for example Banger’s take of Macbeth’s behavior.
- Both Henderson and Shakespeare employ the use of imagery and symbolism in their texts. Provide students with a range of images that represent key moments and characters in the text. They should then explain the significance of each image. For example a picture of a broomstick might represent Macbeth’s aunts, whilst an image of a ghost could denote Banger after he has quit the soccer team.