

RHYTHM AND RHYME THAT SET 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 how it conveys info, ideas and themes, and influences the listener's / viewer's response.	1-2 class Periods	Desks in groups, then open spaces for exploring the text	Attached handouts of activities

ACTIVITY

In the opening scene, Shakespeare doesn't employ his usual <u>iambic pentameter</u>, the rhythm of which is *de DUM de DUM de DUM de DUM de DUM –* as in Macbeth's opening line later on: "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." Instead, the witches use a <u>trochaic tetrameter</u>, in which 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, evoking a strong dramatic effect for the beginning of the play that sets the tone for what is to come.

In groups of three, experiment with various ways 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: The witches are also referred to as the "weird sisters," a name that comes from the Anglo-Saxon concept of *wyrd*, or fate, often associated with three goddesses. How might you portray these three characters, other than with 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 <u>hurlyburly's</u> done, When the battle's lost and won.

fighting, commotion

THIRD WITCH That will be <u>ere</u> the set of sun.

before

FIRST WITCH Where the place? SECOND WITCH

Upon the <u>heath</u>.

THIRD WITCH There to meet with Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH

<u>I come¹, Graymalkin²!</u>

SECOND WITCH

Paddock calls.

toad

1. The witch is answering the cry of her "familiar spirit," usually

believed to take the form of an animal. 2. a grey cat

THIRD WITCH

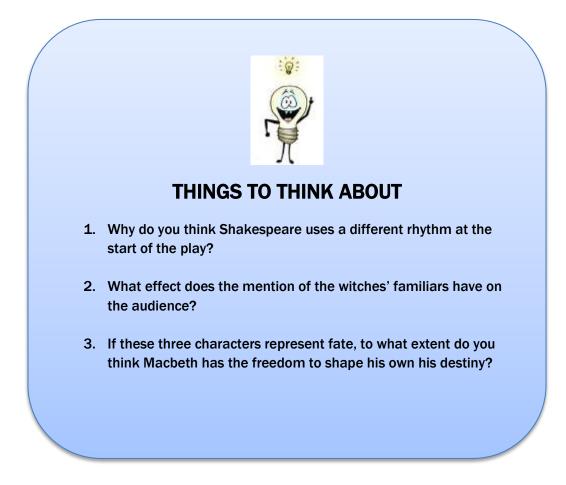
Anon.

I'm coming straight away

ALL

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

Exeunt



wilderness