

REEL TO REAL TEACHERS' RESOURCE

Throne of Blood

Understand more about the world of the film
Key Stage 3–5: English, Drama and History

INTO FILM

V&A

Reel to Real: Throne of Blood

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Introduction

This resource is intended for teachers to use with their students on site at the V&A. It was created as part of a partnership with education charity Into Film.

The resource explores the film *Throne of Blood*, an adaptation of *Macbeth*. It guides students to objects in the Museum that provide historical context for the film, and suggests activities and topics for discussion. The resource aims to immerse students in the world of the film.

We suggest that groups divide into pairs to follow the activities.

Film summary

In this adaptation, director Akira Kurosawa relocates Shakespeare's drama of murderous ambition to Japan. Toshiro Mifune gives a commanding performance as Washizu, the Samurai urged to slaughter his way to the throne by his ruthless wife, discovering that such ambition comes at a high price. Kurosawa reimagines Shakespeare's text and his setting enhances the story, but the film shows just how universal the themes of *Macbeth* are.

At the Museum

Visit the following galleries to provide a context for *Throne of Blood*. Use this resource in conjunction with the V&A Map.

Japan, Level 0, Room 45

Find the suits of armour similar to those worn in the film. Which parts of the body are emphasised? What role does Lord Tsuzuki's helmet play in the film? How was it used as a prop?

Find the print *Takiyasha the Witch and the Skeleton Spectre* which hangs on the gallery's central wall. It shows a giant skeleton summoned by a witch. What role do themes of witchcraft, prophesy, omens and ghosts play in the film? Discuss whether Washizu's visions are meant to be understood as real or a product of his guilty conscience.

The music, sets, costume and dance in the film are influenced by traditional Japanese Noh theatre. On the opposite side of the room to the armour, you can find small *netsuke* of Noh performers and masks. Can you describe how the music and costume create the atmosphere of the film? Think about what other theatrical techniques the director used to create the atmosphere.

Theatre & Performance, Level 2, Rooms 103–106

Many different adaptations have been made of Shakespeare's plays, including *Macbeth*. Directors have chosen to set the plays in different times and places, for many different reasons. The V&A's Theatre & Performance galleries include costumes, set designs and other materials relating to adaptations of Shakespeare. Keep an eye out for these when visiting the galleries. Download self-guided resources to direct your group around the galleries: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/teachers-resource-theatre-andperformance/>

Follow-up activities/find out more

The V&A's collections are rich in material linked to Japanese culture, as well as to Shakespeare and his time.

To find out more about the Japan gallery, visit: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/j/japan/>

For images of performers and designs from past productions of *Macbeth*, search the V&A collections by typing 'Macbeth' here: <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/>

Download the Shakespeare Trail, a tour around objects in the V&A related to the playwright and his work: http://www.vam.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/241047/Shakespeare_trail.pdf

A live recording of *Macbeth*, as well as recordings of other Shakespeare productions, can be viewed by groups free of charge at the V&A from the National Video Archive of Performance (NVAP). Contact bookings.office@vam.ac.uk to make an appointment. A list of NVAP recordings is available here: www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/nvap/

Continue learning through film by setting up a free Into Film Club at your school. www.filmclub.org/register. Access a catalogue of over 4000 film titles including those in the Reel to Real programme, as well as curriculum-linked resources created in partnership with the V&A. <http://www.intofilm.org/>