

Status and Tableaux in Shakespeare

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The previous exercises on Status and Tableaux can be applied to Shakespeare's plays directly. Here are some examples for working on status in *Macbeth*:

Quick discussion: *What is status? What is the definition of status? What are some other words that describe status? Work together as a group to generate a list:*

For example: Power, authority, position, privilege, access, wealth, etc.

Discussion: Status in Shakespeare's plays

Looking at one of Shakespeare's plays, who has the most status at the beginning of the play? How does that change over the course of the story? Does anyone go from lower to higher status?

Exercise: Status and Macbeth (or any Shakespeare play)

High status at beginning: King Duncan

How does his status change? He's killed, so he loses status. He gives status to Macbeth, which undermines his own power

Who's status changes over the course of the play? Macbeth goes all the way from the middle to top, but then loses power. How?

Other questions: How would you rate the Witches' status? Does it change? How much of status is perception?

Applying Status to Staging: Macbeth and the Great Game of Power

- Clearly define the performance space in the room. Put a few simple pieces of furniture there - chairs, maybe a table. If the furniture is sturdy enough to stand on, all the better.
- Ask for a few volunteers and assign them roles from *Macbeth* and agree on whether you are staging the status at the beginning, middle or end of the play.
- Have the first actor (perhaps **Duncan**) enter the space, and put their body in the place - and the physical position - that gives them the most possible 'power' in the space. Ask them to consider the "audience" as well as the room itself.



- Ask a second actor (perhaps **Lady M**) to enter the space, and put their body in the place - and the physical position - that gives *them* the most possible power, and takes it from the first volunteer.
- Ask a third actor (perhaps a **Witch**) to enter the space, and put their body in the place - and the physical position - that gives *them* the most possible power, and takes it from the first and second actor
- Debrief: Discuss the tactics people used, and what tools are available in a theatrical setting to give a particular character/performer/body more or less power/focus/status onstage

Exercises: Status & Tableaux in Macbeth

Definition: Tableau

A tableau is a frozen picture, a staged photograph of a moment in time. Tableaux allow us to stage a moment that can show us relationship, power, status, environment, and even conflict! Once you have explored status, you can apply that to the tableaux, or pictures, you make to tell a story.

As you explored in the GGP, you can show status in a variety of ways, from position relative to the audience or actors, literal height or levels, body languages and facial expressions.

Exercise: Three Tableaux and Macbeth

Have the class talk through the beginning, middle and end of either a scene from Macbeth or the whole play. Then break the students up into small groups of 3-4 people. Have each group stage three tableaux: the beginning, middle, and end of that story. Ask them to consider the following questions:

Who are the characters? What is their status relationship to each other? Does it change over the three pictures?

Where are they? What is their location? Does it change?

What is the event or action of each frozen moment? What is happening in each picture?

Have each group perform their three tableaux in order and then discuss as a class what story they communicated and what choices really made the story pop!

