

Inspiration® illuminates Shakespeare's plays for students

Visually organizing characters and scenes deepens understanding and appreciation

High school students use the power of visual learning to brush up their understanding of Shakespeare's Macbeth. Senior Honors English teacher Vicki Broadhead uses Inspiration to help students understand the play's characters, its metaphors, and its major themes. Students create character webs, map out the play's scenes, and make graphic organizers representing the metaphors they discover in the densely written lines.

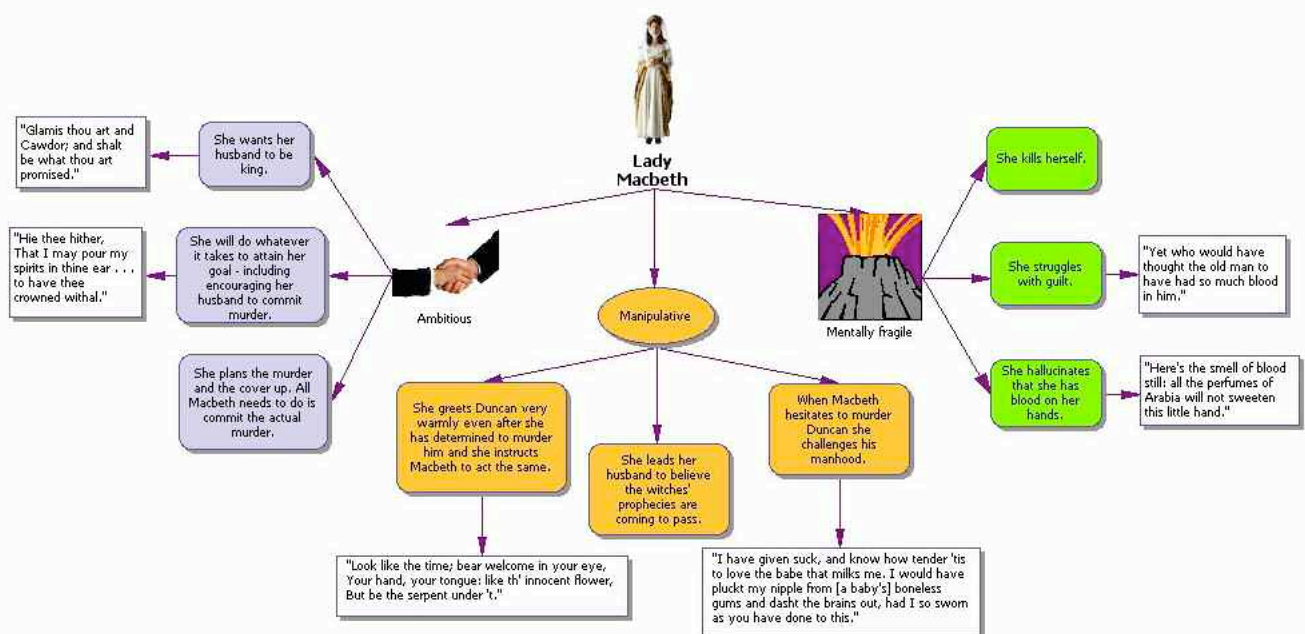
"I've developed a plan of what I want to happen," said Broadhead. "But even my best students need more time to understand Shakespeare than they do for other pieces of literature."

The process of making character web diagrams helped students comprehend Lady Macbeth, Banquo, and the other characters more fully by linking their actions, motives, and interactions with one another. And the

webs helped students justify their impressions of these literary characters because they cited specific text as part of the diagramming process.

Using an Inspiration template made it easy for students to start a character web. For Lady Macbeth, Broadhead's students selected Template under the File menu, then clicked on Language Arts – Character Web. This template gave them a starter document for mapping out Lady Macbeth's key characteristics. After entering her name in the "primary character" main idea symbol, students then entered her characteristics into subsymbols, linking each to examples and details in the play's text. For example, under "ambitious," they cited the lines in which Lady Macbeth encouraged her husband to commit murder in order to become king.

As they made their way through the play, the students continued to edit their character webs as they discovered more. At the same time, they used graphic organizers to



Graphic organizers created in Inspiration help Vicki Broadhead's students study more effectively and get better grades on their Honors English tests.

investigate the play's other components, such as scene development and major themes. Inspiration gave students a visual tool to name, organize, and express the play's many dimensions. Each student had the opportunity to understand the whole of Macbeth, from character development to moral lessons.

Inspiration also gave Broadhead the ability to create templates herself, such as the one used by students to map out scenes. Inspiration templates made it easy to get started on a specific lesson while still keeping students focused on the play. To create the template, Broadhead selected the type of graphic organizer she wanted students to use. With Macbeth as the main idea, and each scene as a subtopic, students then used the template to quickly capture and organize the events of each scene. Broadhead noted that she enjoyed the flexibility to customize a template for Macbeth and then to leave that same template open-ended for use with other plays. It takes more than Lady Macbeth's flickering candle to shed light on Shakespeare for eager Honors English students. It takes the visual learning power of Inspiration to ignite students' interest in classical literature.



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