

Decision Education Foundation English Curriculum

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

Unit Snapshot

<i>Designed For</i>	High School Students
<i>Essential Questions</i>	How do I choose an alternative when I am uncertain? How much information do I need to make a good decision, and where should I look for that information? Does Macbeth rely on his “head” or his “heart” or both? How do I usefully combine information from my “head” and “heart”? Is there a role for other people to play in my personal decision making?
<i>Content and Skill Focus</i>	<p>Decision Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information has a particular definition in a decision context.• Reasoning ties together frame, alternatives, values, and information• Probability is the clearest language for uncertainty.• Identifying decisions, uncertainties, and outcomes is a good place to begin solving a problem.• Decision trees help to define choices. <p>English Topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading for understanding involves paying attention to detail.• Supporting evidence makes arguments powerful.• Reading Shakespeare (or any verse) well requires attention to <i>sentences</i> as well as <i>lines</i>.
<i>Expected Outcomes</i>	Students will be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none">• construct a decision tree to analyze a character’s action;• use a tree diagram to organize a personal decision;• calculate the probability of a set of outcomes;• give an informed opinion about Macbeth’s decision;• read Shakespearean language well.
<i>Kinds of Assessment</i>	Performance Task: Help Macbeth Avoid Disaster Decision Journal Essay: A Decision Report Six Decision Skill Class Exercises
<i>Time Required</i>	Six class periods
<i>Comments</i>	The root cause of Macbeth’s downfall is his deciding to kill the King, and we watch him make this decision in Act 1. Even though Macbeth’s problem is a dramatically extreme situation, it provides a rich context for exploring the importance of values, alternatives, and information in thinking through important decisions.

(Version 7)



Overview

General Description: Through a close reading of passages in *Macbeth*, Act 1, students will examine how *reasoning* combines *values*, *information*, and *alternatives* in good decision making. This plan is designed to be a part of a larger *Macbeth* unit for level 9-10, and it can be used most effectively immediately after students have read the first act. If teachers prefer, the unit can serve instead as a review once the class has finished the play. While it is best if students have already had previous exposure to the decision six elements of a good decision, through the *Concept Review*, teachers can adjust this lesson to serve as an introduction to alternatives, values, information, and reasoning.

Duration: This unit is designed for six class periods. Depending on how much time teachers devote to the *Personal Decision Journal* and individual decision skill lessons, this plan can be adapted for a shorter or longer duration.

Decision Perspective and Context: Act 1 of *Macbeth* provides a detailed look at one man's thought process in making the most important decision of his life: whether or not to kill his king. At the start of the play, even before the main character first appears on stage, we learn from a captain's report that Macbeth is a brave soldier who values loyalty to the King above self-preservation. In response to the King's question about whether the "fresh assault" of Norwegian forces discouraged the already battle-worn Macbeth, the captain responds sarcastically, "Yes, as sparrows [dismay] eagles, or the hare [dismays] the lion" (1.2.39): because he believes in serving his king (see 1.4.25-30), Macbeth never hesitates to enter the fray, even when fortune is against him. The rest of the play—from 1.2 on—describes Macbeth's descent from this initial high standard of loyalty and service to the King.

The root cause of Macbeth's downfall is his deciding to kill the King, and we watch him make this decision in Act 1. In the beginning of the act, Macbeth states, "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me / Without my stir" (1.4.158-159). During the first act he changes his position from letting fortune unfold on its own to taking matters into his own hands. Macbeth closes the act with the following statement: "I am settled and bend up / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat" (1.7.92-93): he decides to kill his king. This choice influences all of Macbeth's later actions in the play and ultimately leads to his deadly sword fight with Macduff.

Even though Macbeth's problem is a dramatically extreme situation, it provides a rich context for exploring the importance of values, alternatives, and information in thinking through important decisions. While killing a king may be foreign to ninth-and tenth-graders, teenage life often puts students in situations where, like Macbeth, they could be risking disaster for themselves or others. Everyone has agreed to do this prank: is it really that risky? Is speeding really that dangerous? Do I drive a group of friends home after I have been drinking? Do I take the drug my friend offers me? Most of our students face questions like these, and they will benefit from taking a close look at how better decision skills might have helped Macbeth avert disaster.



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2. Learning Plan

First Class: Introduction

Materials

Performance Task—Help Macbeth Avoid Disaster
Decision Journal
Essay—A Decision Report
Handout 1—Concept Review
Handout 2—New Concept: Sound Reasoning
Handout 3—Values, Alternatives, and Information

Procedures

- Introduce the unit with a discussion of the following question:

Have you ever witnessed someone make a decision that you believed was a serious mistake? Was the outcome what you expected?

After hearing examples from the class, ask for a few volunteers to share *what they did about it before and after* the person made the decision. Ideas to emphasize during the discussion:

- The role friends play in decision making: two heads are better than one; sometimes a close friend or family member has a limited perspective.
- A personal decision can have public consequences.
- Decision skills can also help me help others.
- A good decision can have a bad outcome, and a bad decision can have a good outcome.

Explain to the class that they are about to explore one extremely bad decision that had disastrous consequences for the person who made it as well as for those he cared about. Now that they have finished Act 1, they will look closely at Macbeth's decision to kill the King, and they will have the opportunity to try to convince him that he should change his mind. Introduce the **Decision Journal**, and **Essay** and **Performance Task**.

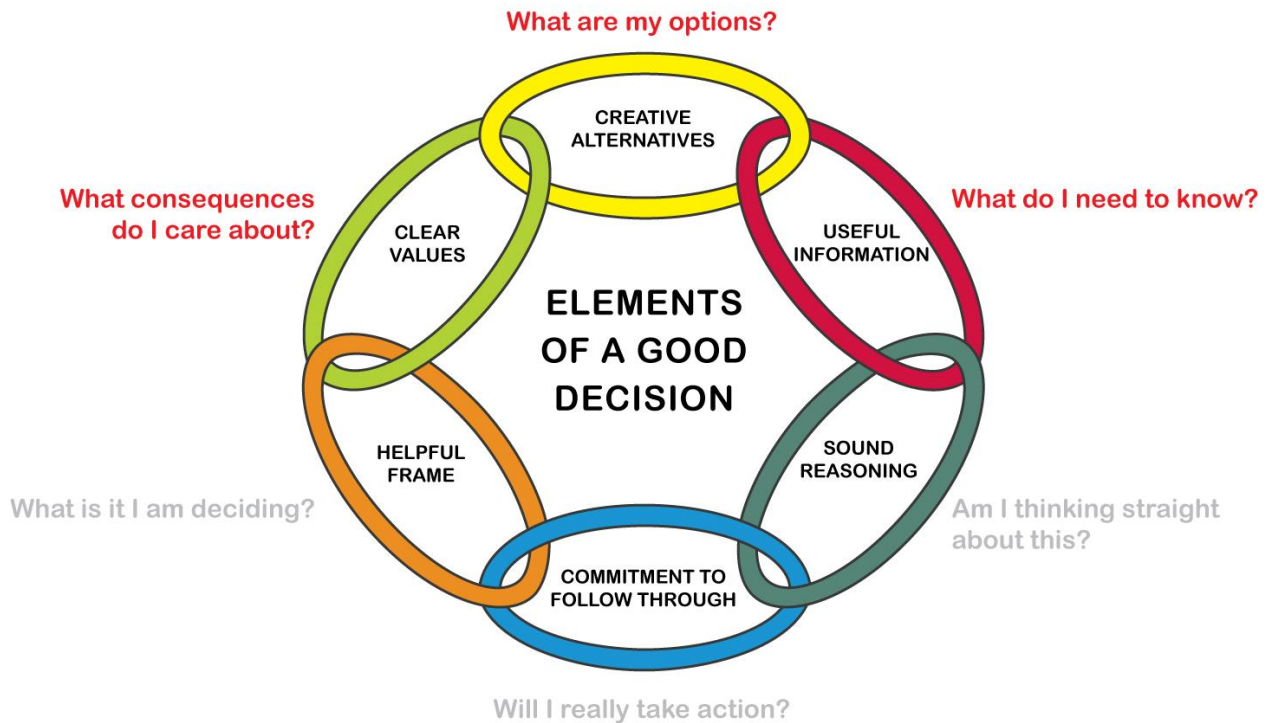
- Follow the introductory conversation with a review of the *clear values*, *useful information*, and *creative alternatives*. Use **Handout 1**, and emphasize the questions related to each element. Focus on the action of *asking questions* to decide. Ask for volunteers to describe how they considered values, alternatives and information in an important decision.
- Use **Handout 2** to introduce *sound reasoning*. Continue discussion by applying this idea to the volunteers' examples.

Next Steps—Homework: Students choose a decision for their **Decision Journals** and complete **Handout 3** to practice concepts.



Handout 1. Concept Review

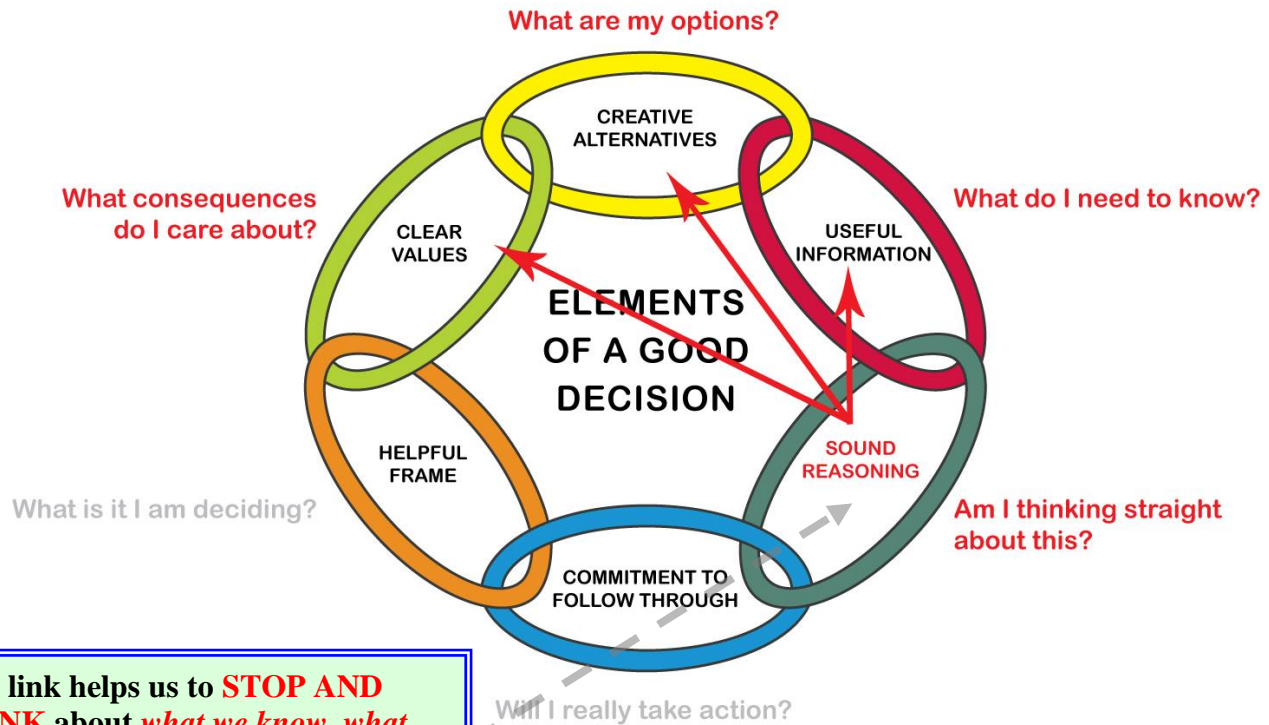
*Asking the right questions about **ALTERNATIVES**, **VALUES**, and **INFORMATION** is essential to making a good decision...*



1. To make a good decision we need to make sure we define **clear values** for the situation and find **creative alternatives** and **useful information**. These three links form the basis for a sound decision.
2. **Values** in the decision-making context are simply what and whom we care about or want in a given situation.
3. Without **alternatives** there is no decision. A decision can only be as good as the choices we define, so time spent exploring creative alternatives is time well spent.
4. By **information** we mean anything we know, would like to know, or should know that might influence our decision. Before making a decision, we need to find out the basic facts, possibilities, and probabilities (likely outcomes).

Handout 2. New Concepts

SOUND REASONING is how I combine my **alternatives**, **values**, and **information**. It is my answer to:
“Why am I making this choice?”



This link helps us to **STOP AND THINK** about *what we know*, *what we care about*, and *what we can do* in a given decision situation.

1. Just saying, “I’m choosing this alternative because it feels right” is not enough. Good reasoning requires an explanation, or rationale. For example, “I am choosing this alternative because it involves less risk and is better for the people I care about than the other alternatives available. Here are the specifics...(alternatives considered, information taken into account including risks, values and tradeoffs considered, method of combining these to arrive at a chosen alternative).”
2. Identifying decisions, uncertainties, and outcomes is a good first step.
3. Decision trees are diagrams that help map out choices.

Handout 3. Values, Alternatives, and Information

What do we learn about Macbeth's views in the conclusion to 1.2?

Immediately after he hears the good news that the King has made him the new Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth speaks to himself while on stage with other characters (definition of an *aside*). Because he speaks to himself, we are privy to his honest reactions.

Directions: After reading the passage carefully, underline places where you see Macbeth considering values, information, and alternatives. In the margins, note your findings.

Hint: Look at **complete sentences** first, then **lines**.

Macb. [Aside.] Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme. I thank you, gentlemen.
[Aside.] This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good; if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings;
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not.

Ban. Look, how our partner's rapt.

Macb. [Aside.] If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir.

Ban. New honours come upon him,
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould
But with the aid of use.

Macb. [Aside.] Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

Ban. Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

Macb. Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought
With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains
Are register'd where every day I turn
The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.
Think upon what hath chanc'd; and, at more time,
The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak
Our free hearts each to other.

Ban. Very gladly.

Macb. Till then, enough. Come, friends.



Second Class: Information and Perspective

Materials

Teacher Resource 1—Sample Responses to Handout 3: Values, Alternatives, and Information
Handout 4—Useful Information
Handout 5—Different Perspectives
Handout 6—Macbeth’s Soliloquy, Act 1, Scene 7

Procedures

- Begin each class with **Decision Journal** exercise (see **Assessment** for instructions).
- Review homework assignment (**Handout 3**). Allow students to share their responses and use **Teacher Resource 1** for reference.
- Give students copies of the blank table in **Handout 4**. They can complete this exercise individually or in groups. Once they have filled in the table, discuss responses.
- Follow discussion with the perspective wheel activity (**Handout 5**). Use masking tape to create the perspective wheel on the floor. As different students volunteer to walk through the sections and speak as if they were the character designated, have someone list the information gathered for each character. If useful, this information can become a part of the *Performance Task*.
Note: Explain to students that the exercises in **Handouts 4** and **5** provide two methods of expanding our thinking about alternatives, methods they can use in with their own decisions.
- At the end of each class, give students time to write in their **Decision Journals**. See **Assessment** for specific instructions.

Next Steps

Homework: Give each student a copy of Macbeth’s soliloquy in 1.7 (*Learning Resource g*), and ask them to do the following:

1. Read the passage closely. Mark each point where Macbeth shifts to a main idea. List the main ideas and write a 1-2 sentence version of each in your own words.
2. Search the passage for more evidence of the *values*, *information*, and *alternatives* Macbeth is considering in his decision process (same directions as *Learning Resource c*).
3. This passage is a *soliloquy*. How is it different from the *aside* you studied?



Teacher Resource 1. Sample Responses to Handout 3: *Values, Alternatives, and Information*

What do we learn about Macbeth's views in the conclusion to 1.2?

VALUES:
Macbeth
views
becoming
king as
“success.”

Mach. [Aside.] Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme. I thank you, gentlemen.
[Aside.] This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good; if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
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Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not.

Ban. Look, how our partner's rapt.

Mach. [Aside.] If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,
Without my stir.

Ban. New honours come upon him,
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould
But with the aid of use.

Mach. [Aside.] Come what come may,
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

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Mach. Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought
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The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.
Think upon what hath chanc'd; and, at more time,
The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak
Our free hearts each to other.

Ban. Very gladly.

Mach. Till then, enough. Come, friends.

VALUES: The phrases “happy prologue,” “swelling act,” and “imperial theme” show that becoming king is on Macbeth's mind and that he likes the idea.

INFORMATION: Here Macbeth begins to weigh the reliability of the information (he calls it *supernatural soliciting*) from the witches as well as his own reactions to their news about his becoming king. It is interesting to note that *soliciting* means *seduction* or *temptation*, suggesting that initially Macbeth has some concern—or is at least aware—that the witches' motive could be to harm him. That said, he is never as critical of the witches as Banquo (see 1.3.135-8), and Macbeth might have made a different decision had he paid more attention to his friend's reaction to the prophecy.

INFORMATION: The new piece of information Macbeth considers here is his own response to the prophecy: the *suggestion* or idea that scares him enough to make his heart *knock* and hair stand on end comes from within himself—not from the witches. While Macbeth does not say so outright, it is clear that his thoughts—right from the start—are of killing the king. At this point murder is only *fantastical* (imaginary), but Macbeth and Lady Macbeth give the idea life by naming it in their conversation.

ALTERNATIVES: Banquo notices how completely absorbed (*rapt*) Macbeth is in his own thoughts, and it is ironic that Banquo mentions his friend's *new honours* when Macbeth's thoughts are far from honorable: he is contemplating regicide. But here Macbeth says he will let chance take its course, thereby defining the two alternatives he considers for the rest of the act. Though Macbeth realizes in the first part of this aside that he might become king the same way he became Thane of Cawdor (*Without [his] stir*), his observation that time runs through the *roughest day* suggests an expectation of violent action.

INFORMATION: Back in his public persona, Macbeth ends the conversation with a healthy plan: he asks his friend to think about the prophecy, suggests that they take the time to weigh the information, and then meet for honest discussion.

However, the duplicity has begun, for Macbeth's extreme desire for the crown leads him to treacherous thoughts which he must hide from public view. He can no longer share a “free heart” with Banquo, and by the end of the play, Macbeth is a man whose heart is completely imprisoned by guilt and desire for power.



Handout 4. Useful Information

How do the following characters respond to the witches' prophecy?

	Banquo	Lady Macbeth	Macbeth
Issues considered	--seeks information from them about himself (1.3.60-64) --real experience or hallucination? (1.3.40-49; 1.3.86-8) --questionable source of information: heaven or hell? (1.3.132-139)	--immediately assumes the validity of the information and source (1.5.15-16) --how to make the forecast come true (1.5.15-33)	--more interested in content than source (1.3.73-92) --in weighing the information, he uncovers his own "horrible imaginings" (1.3.143-159) and "black and deep desires" (1.4.58)
Issues ignored	--the fact that there is no immediate benefit predicted for Banquo (only his children)	--information is not about HOW to become king --morality of killing Duncan --reliability of the witches	--reliability of the witches --his uncontrolled ambition stirred up by the information

Blank table for class use

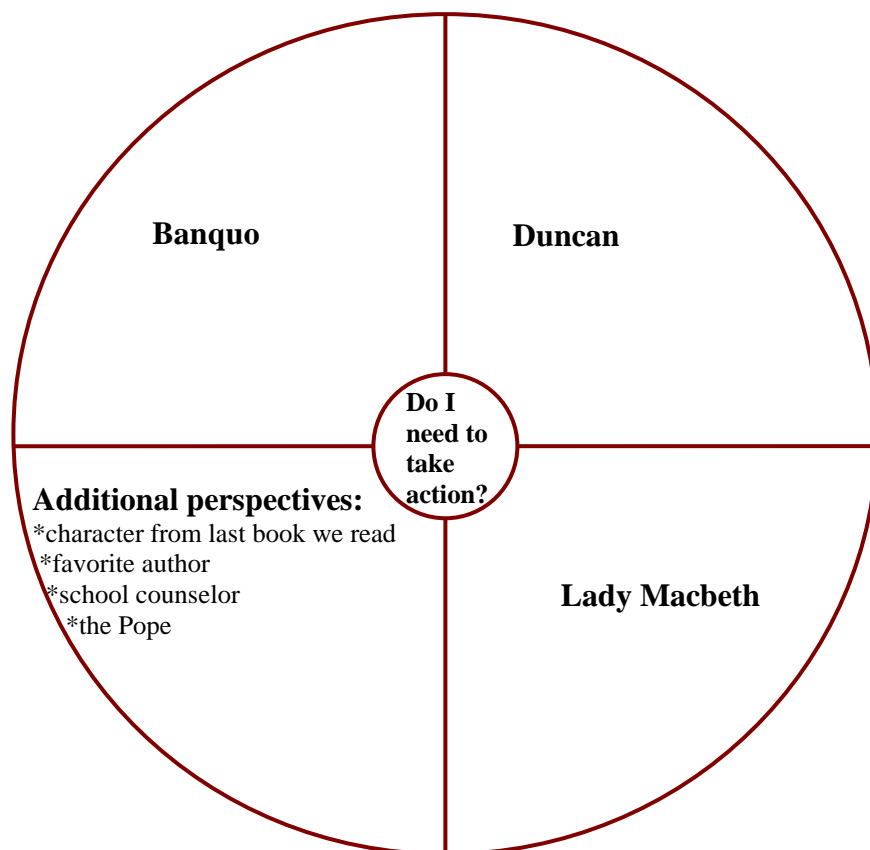
	Banquo	Lady Macbeth	Macbeth
Issues considered			
Issues excluded			

Handout 5. Different Perspectives

When making important decisions it often helps to look at the problem from different perspectives. The information we gather from this exercise can lead us to consider a wider variety of alternatives. Create the circle below on the floor with masking tape. Have students step into different sections and speak about the issue as if they were the character named in that section of the perspective wheel.

Does Macbeth need to take action as a result of hearing the witches' prophecy?

How would Banquo and Duncan answer the question above, and what is Lady Macbeth's response? Put yourself in their places and list the points and details that each character would emphasize to Macbeth if he were to help him answer the question. Then consider some additional perspectives.



Note: To different extents, Macbeth chooses to confide in Banquo and Lady Macbeth about the witches' prophecy that he will become king. Notice that he disregards Banquo's cautions and agrees with Lady Macbeth's perspective.

Handout 6. Macbeth's Soliloquy, Act 1, Scene 7

Macb. If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly; if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague the inventor; this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels trumpet-tongu'd against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'er-leaps itself
And falls on the other.—

Enter LADY MACBETH.

How now! what news?

Lady M. He has almost supp'd: why have you left the chamber?

Macb. Hath he ask'd for me?

Lady M. Know you not he has?

Macb. We will proceed no further in this business:
He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.



Third Class: Tree Work

Materials

Teacher Resource 2—Sample Responses to Handout 6: Annotated Soliloquy

Handout 7—Summary Look at the Way Macbeth Considers *Alternatives, Values, and Information*.

Handout 8—Tree Diagram that Represents Macbeth’s Decision and Uncertainties

Handout 9—Tree with Uncertainties Added

Procedures

- Review homework assignment (**Handout 6**). Allow students to share their responses and use **Teacher Resource 2** for reference.
- Use **Handout 7** to connect Macbeth’s choice to the decision chain. Emphasize questions for each element. Discuss question at bottom of the page.
- Tree Work—Using **Handout 8**, demonstrate to students how we can use a tree to represent the alternatives and uncertainties of a decision. Explain that the branches of a decision tree represent alternative paths in the same way that real trees branch out in many directions. Have students draw their own trees in small groups, and complete the *uncertainties and outcomes* exercise.
- Create the tree in **Handout 9** with the class to show students one version of the tree. Give copies at end of class. Explain that there are other possible versions of the tree but that the class use the example in **Handout 9** for class discussion of Macbeth’s decision.

Next Steps

Homework: Have students add all possible outcomes to their trees.



Teacher Resource 2. Annotated Soliloquy: The color of the text changes when Macbeth moves from one main idea to another.

INFORMATION: In the first part of the soliloquy, Macbeth considers *consequences*, or outcomes—specifically the fact that regicide could lead to damnation in the afterlife. *Jump the life to come* means to risk one's soul. His concern about damnation surfaces again later in the passage.

Macbeth. If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well

It were done quickly; if the assassination

Could trammel up the consequence, and catch

With his surcease success; that but this blow

Might be the be-all and the end-all here,

But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,

We'd jump the life to come. **But in these cases**

We still have judgment here; that we but teach

Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return

To plague the inventor; this even-handed justice

Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice

To our own lips. He's here in double trust:

First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,

Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,

Who should against his murderer shut the door,

Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan

Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been

So clear in his great office, that his virtues

Will plead like angels trumpet-tongu'd against

The deep damnation of his taking-off;

And pity, like a naked new-born babe,

Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd

Upon the sightless couriers of the air,

Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,

That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur

To prick the sides of my intent, but only

Vaulting ambition, which o'er-leaps itself

And falls on the other —

VALUES: Macbeth suggests here that one of his values is to avoid damnation in the afterlife.

INFORMATION: Macbeth acknowledges the moral consequences of murder: his actions could end in his own execution or in the mental *plague* of guilt. In the next section he describes the expected, honorable standards that he would be breaking.

INFORMATION: Duncan's popularity is important information for Macbeth: there might be justification for killing a tyrant, but Duncan has proved himself to be a virtuous and well-liked king. Therefore, Macbeth concludes that he has no convincing reason to commit the murder: only his *vaulting ambition*.

VALUES: Even though Macbeth does not finally make the honorable choice, **honor** is a significant value for him at this stage in this thinking: 1) he recognizes his responsibility—as a kinsman and subject—to protect Duncan; 2) he acknowledges Duncan's virtue; 3) as he weighs his options here, Macbeth decides not to go through with the plot and, instead, to enjoy the honors Duncan has given him with the new title, Thane of Cawdor. *What causes Macbeth to change his mind by the end of this short scene? What trade-offs does he make?*

Enter LADY MACBETH.

How now! what news?

Lady M. He has almost supp'd: why have you left the chamber?

Macbeth. Hath he ask'd for me?

Lady M. Know you not he has?

Macbeth. We will proceed no further in this business:

He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought

Golden opinions from all sorts of people,

Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,

Not cast aside so soon.



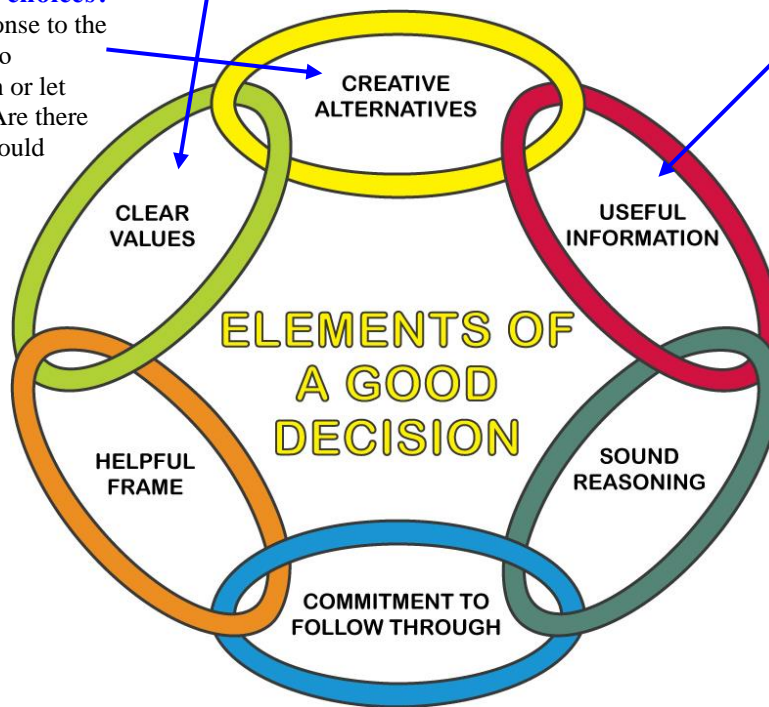
Handout 7. Summary Look at the Way Macbeth Considers *Alternatives*, *Values*, and *Information*.

What consequences does Macbeth care about, and does he really know what he wants?

Macbeth makes it clear in Act 1 that he has a serious ambition to become king of Scotland. He also shows some concern for loyalty, service to Duncan, the opinion of others, honor, and the eternal state of his soul. By the end of the act, however, he places extremely high value on the opinion of his wife and her limited definition of what it means to be a *man*. One could argue that Macbeth finds himself in a treacherous position at the end of Act 1 because he does not devote enough time and energy to clarifying his values. Why, exactly, does he want to become king? Why is it so important for him to achieve that goal so speedily?

What are Macbeth's choices?

Macbeth limits his response to the witches' prophecy to two alternatives: kill Duncan or let chance take its course. Are there additional choices he should consider?



What does Macbeth know?

Facts:

- Half of witches' forecast came true: the king makes Macbeth the new Thane of Cawdor
- Duncan is a good king, and his death will devastate his people
- Macbeth's responsibility includes "double trust"—as a host and kinsman his job is to protect the king at all costs

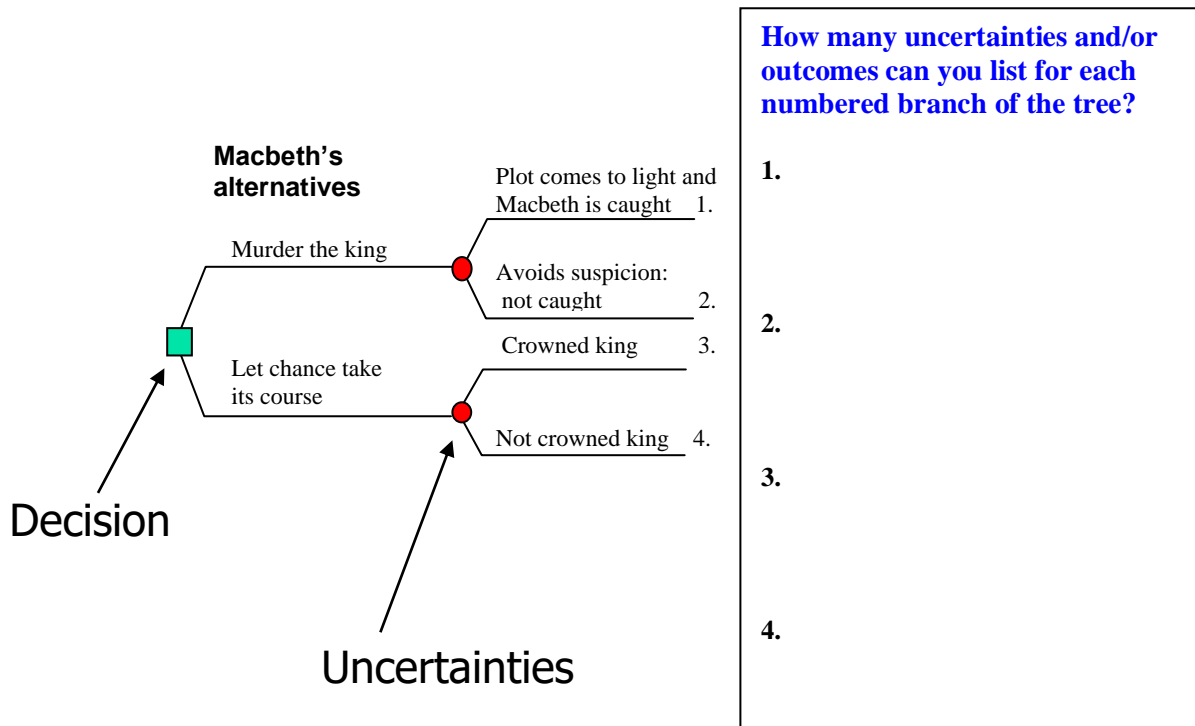
Possibilities if Macbeth chooses murder:

- Not caught, crowned king, *mental plague* (or debilitating guilt)
- Not caught, crowned king, eternal damnation
- Not caught, crowned king, guilt, eternal damnation
- Not caught and NOT crowned king with the three variations above
- Not caught, crowned
- Not caught, not crowned
- Caught and executed



Note that all of possibilities above include dishonor.

What are two possibilities for Macbeth if he decides not to murder the king?

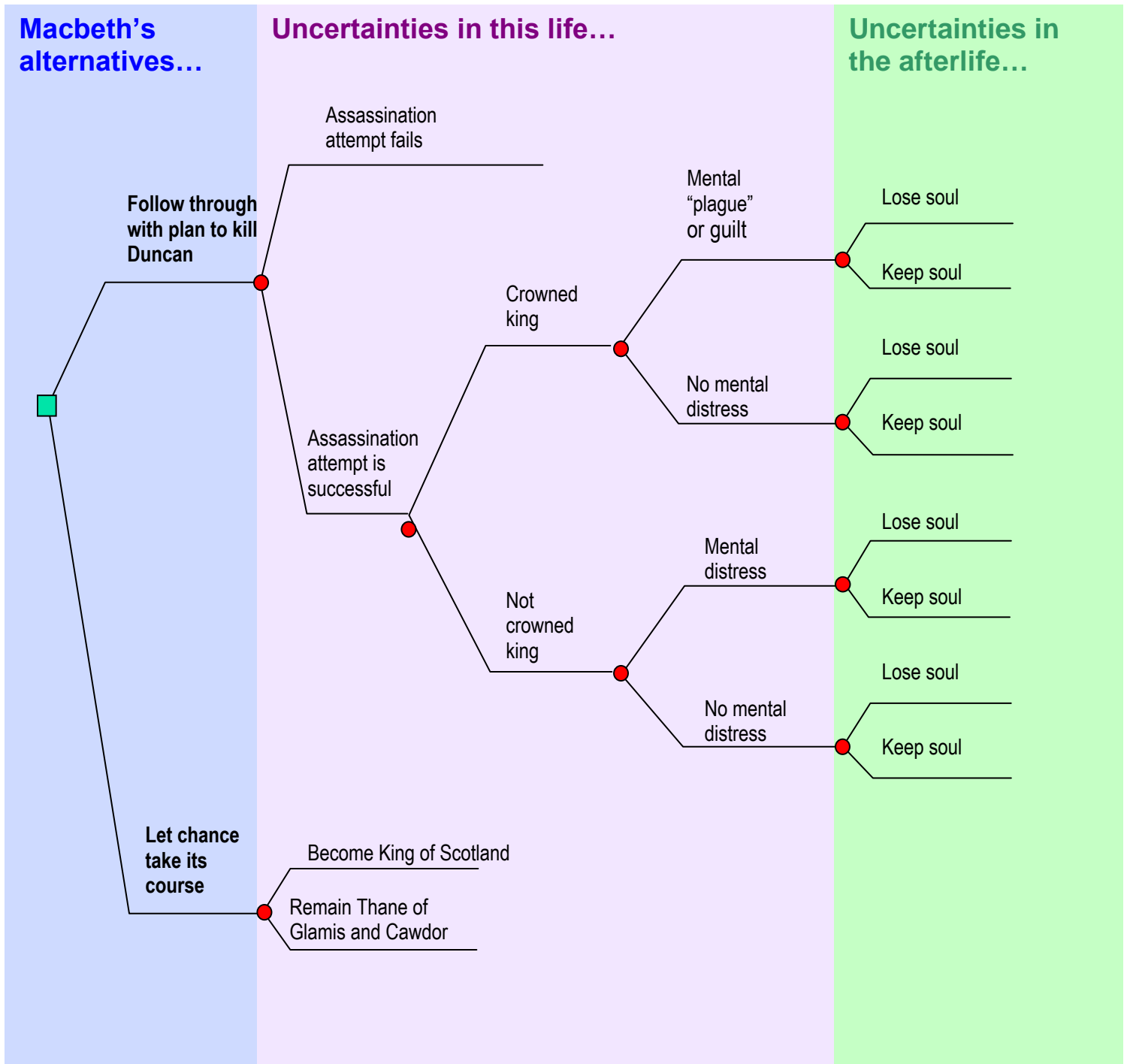
Handout 8. Tree Diagram that Represents Macbeth's Decision and Uncertainties



Two Important guidelines for creating accurate trees...

1.  Squares represent decision points.  Circles represent uncertainties.
2. We draw trees from *left to right* in *chronological* order: move from first decision and its uncertainties to following choices and uncertainties in order of what happens first, next, and last. What uncertainties would appear in the next set of branches?

Handout 9. Tree with Uncertainties Added



Fourth Class: Tree Work Continued

Materials

Handout 10—Tree with All Outcomes Added

Handout 11—How Likely are the Uncertainties and Outcomes?

Handout 12—Probability

Handout 13—Tree with Sample Percentages of Probability

Procedures

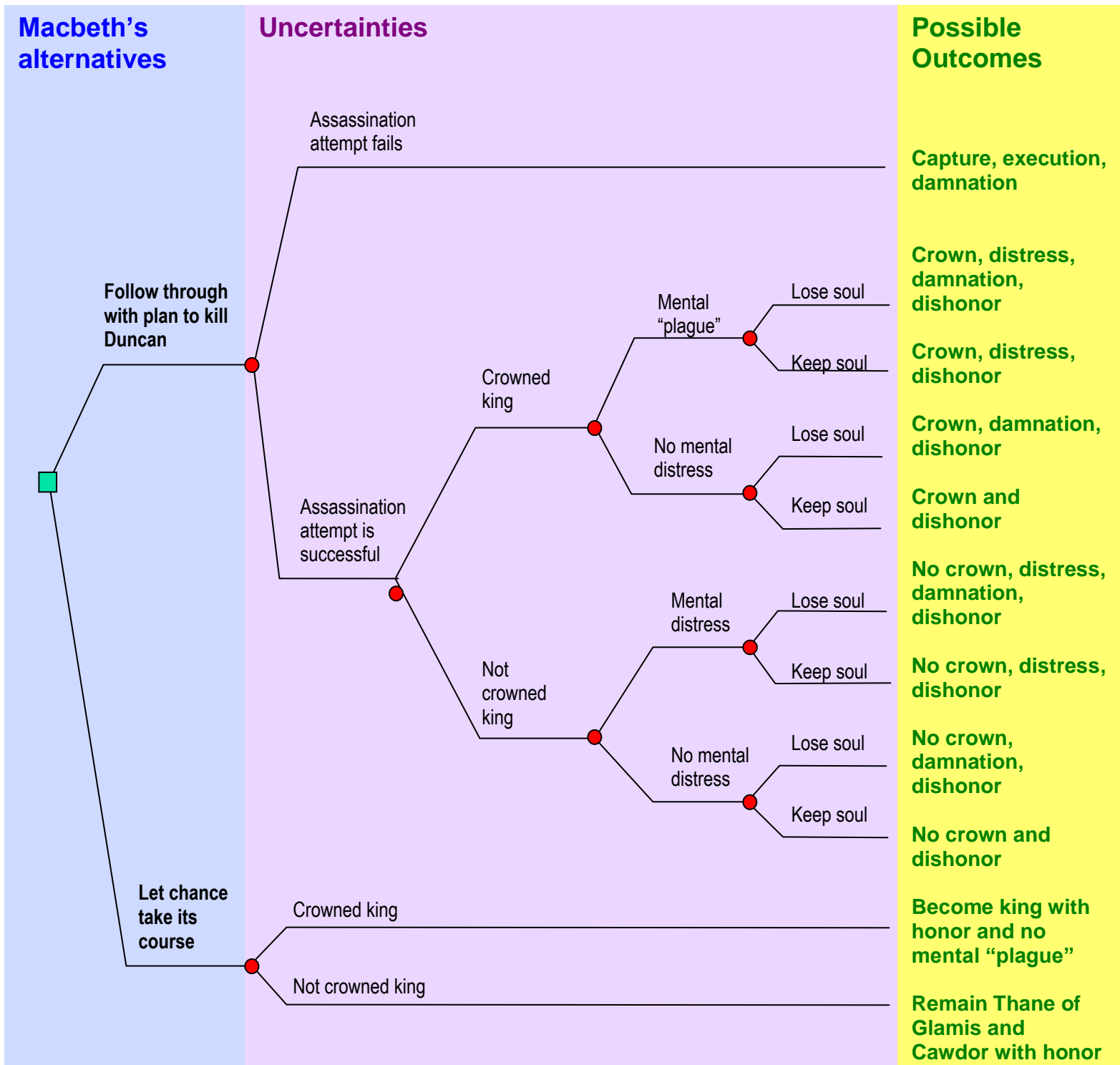
- After students share homework responses, create **Handout 10** with the class. Use it to discuss the connection between alternatives, uncertainties, and outcomes. **Note:** It is important to create each of the new versions of the tree with students **before** giving them the handouts (10, 11, 13).
- To introduce the basics of probability in Macbeth's situation, have students complete **Handout 11** in small groups. Points to emphasize during discussion:
 1. We use the language of probability to define the uncertainty of future events.
 2. While we use the best information we can find, probability estimates are *subjective*. Discuss the definitions in **Handout 11**.
 3. We can combine probability measurements to the branches in the tree to help us determine which alternative we want to choose.
- Students use **Handout 12** to add probability numbers to the tree.
- Use **Handout 13** to discuss the probability of possible outcomes for Macbeth and the reasoning behind the chosen numbers. Remind students that the purpose of this exercise is to provide Macbeth with convincing evidence for why he should not kill Duncan (see **Performance Task**).

Next Steps

Homework: Complete final **Decision Journal** entry and begin the **Essay** assignment.



Handout 10. Tree with Outcomes Added



Handout 11. How Likely are the Possible Outcomes?

To communicate clearly about uncertainty, we use the language of probability.

- A probability is a number between 0 and 1 (0% and 100%) that expresses our degree of belief that an event will occur.
 - A probability of 0 (or 0%) means it will definitely not occur.
 - A probability of 1 (100%) means it will certainly happen.
- A probability expresses our uncertainty about an event and is based on all the relevant information and experience we possess.
- There is no such thing as a “correct” probability. Different people have different probabilities for the same event because they have different states of information and experience.

Interpreting Probabilities

- A probability DOES NOT say what will happen.
- A probability DOES say how likely it is that something will happen.
- Example: If you flip a coin, your probability may be that it is equally likely to land heads or tails. BUT your probability does not tell you whether there will be a head or tail on a particular toss.

To determine the probability of the various outcomes for Macbeth, answer the following questions:

1. What % likelihood is there that Macbeth will fail in his assassination attempt?_____

Evidence for your reasoning? (i.e. extent to which you think witches are reliable, your views of Macbeth’s courage, commitment, ability to deceive, etc.)

Given your choice of the percentage number for failure, what will be the % chance that the plot will be successful?_____

2. What % likelihood Macbeth crowned king?_____

Reasoning?

% likelihood Macbeth NOT crowned king?_____

3. What % likelihood that Macbeth will feel guilt and mental distress?_____

Reasoning?

% likelihood he will be free of a bad conscience?_____

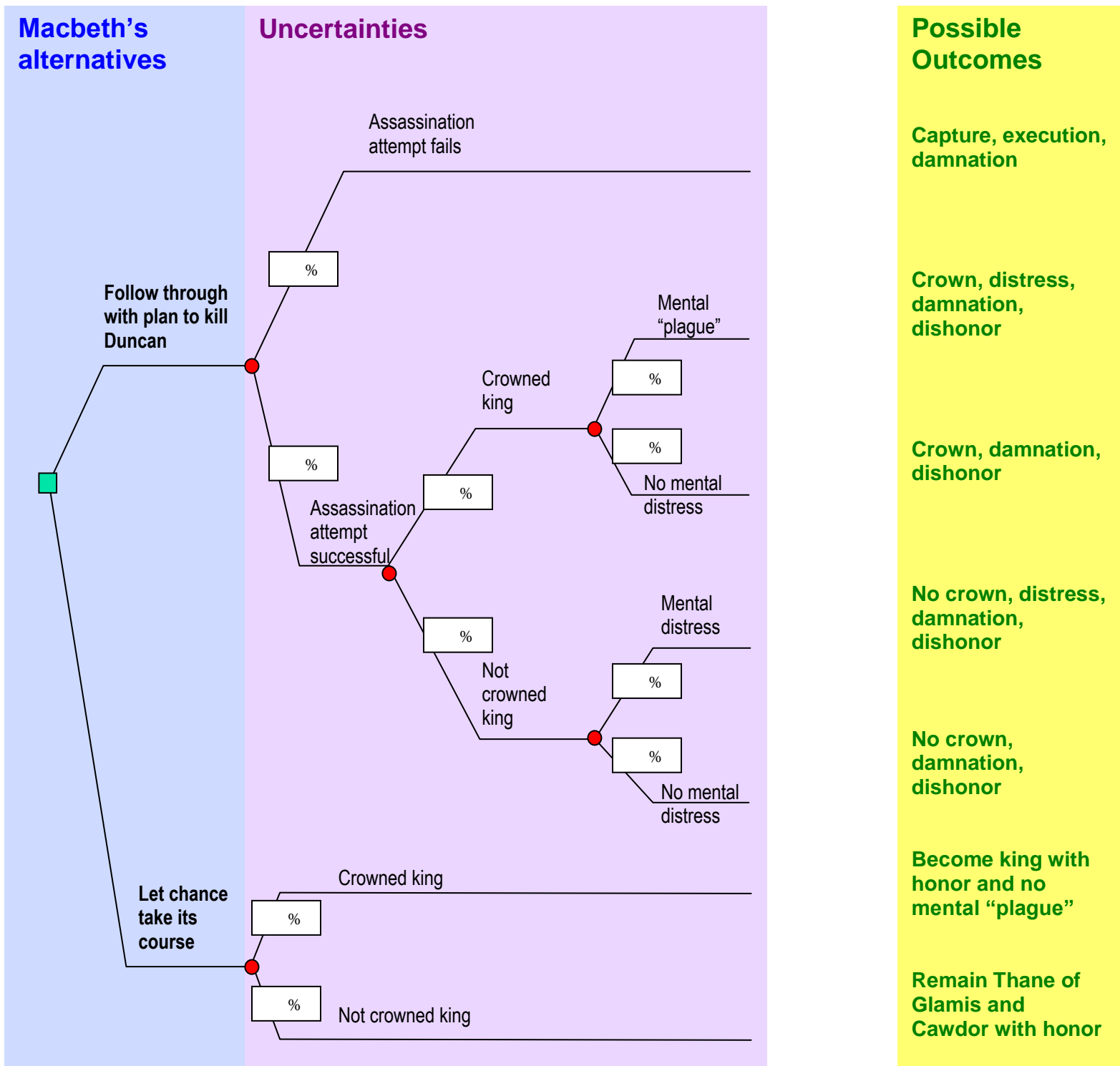
Once your group agrees on a number for each uncertainty above, “hang” the numbers on the tree in the spaces provided.

Note: To construct this class’s tree diagram we will assume (as everyone in both Macbeth and Shakespeare’s time would have) that life is sacred and that unrepented murder (especially regicide) leads to damnation in the afterlife.

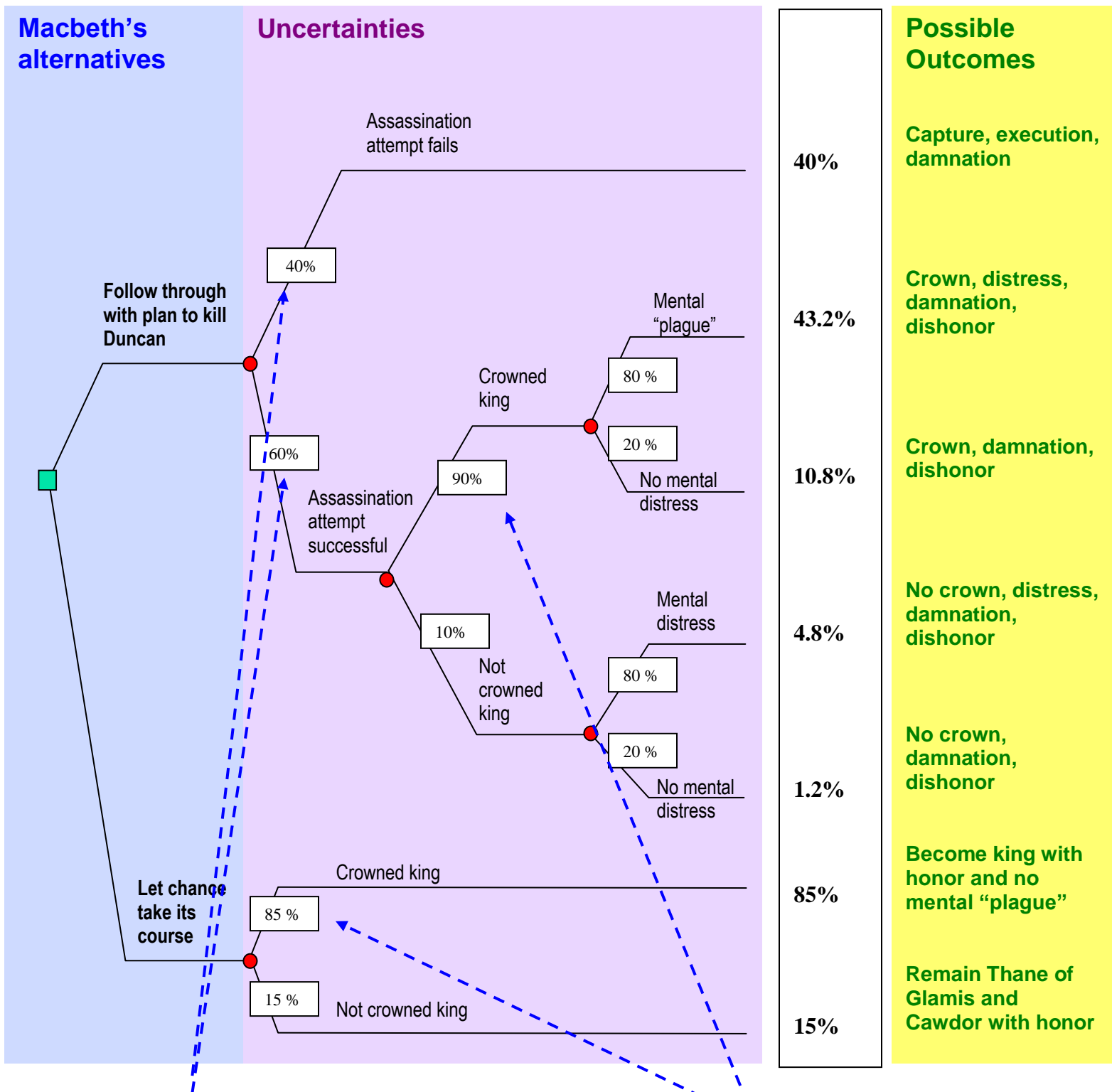


Handout 12. Probability

Fill in numbers that measure the uncertainties, and multiply numbers along the branches of the tree to determine the likelihood of each outcome...



Handout 13. Tree with Sample Percentages of Probability



The percentages are based on the **INFORMATION** we gather for the likelihood of an event happening. For example, in choosing numbers for the likelihood of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth being caught, we might consider the husband and wife's ability to deceive and their resolve to follow through with the plan, as well as the amount of protection around Duncan.

In this example, the likelihood of Macbeth being crowned receives a high percentage because the witches have already told one truth (Thane of Cawdor). However, if given the chance, Banquo, who is skeptical about the witches' purpose and truthfulness, might give lower percentages here.



Fifth Class: Writing Workshop

Materials

Decision Journals
Essay Assignment
Performance Task

Procedures

- Give students time to work on their essays, discuss ideas with classmates, and review drafts with you. Remind the class that they should hand in their journal with the final copies of their essays.
- Review the directions for the Performance Task. Schedule due dates for both this task and the essay.

Next Steps

Provide time for students to share either their completed essay or performance task with the rest of the class.



3. Assessment Evidence

Performance Task: Help Macbeth Avoid Disaster

Goal: Convince Macbeth not to kill Duncan

Role: You are Macbeth's long-time best friend in whom he has been confiding all of the details we know from Act 1.

Audience: Macbeth (played by your teacher)

Situation: While Banquo is Macbeth's good buddy and comrade in arms, you are Macbeth's closest friend, the Thane of (enter name of school, hometown, sports team, food...). While all the events of Act 1 take place, you have been banished to the Isle of Skye by order of the King, and, through occasional visits and frequent letters, Macbeth has kept you apprised of all that is going on, including details about his own feelings and thought process. There is time for one last letter from you to Macbeth before your friend proceeds with his assassination plan. The purpose of your letter is to convince him that he is making a bad decision.

Product: A four paragraph letter that examines Macbeth's decision to assassinate Duncan. Focus on two of the following elements that you think need the most attention in Macbeth's case: values, alternatives, information, and reasoning. The letter should include a decision tree that helps your friend, Macbeth, see the situation clearly.

Standards for a Successful Letter:

- 1) Imaginative introduction and frame for the letter (i.e. engaging details about your friendship, situation, etc.)
- 2) Effective use of detail from Act 1 that demonstrates your understanding of Macbeth's view of this decision problem
- 3) Analysis of Macbeth's values, information, alternatives, and reasoning—at least one paragraph for each.
- 4) Decision tree that clarifies the problem



Decision Journal:

1. Ask students to choose an important personal decision—either a current problem or a decision that they imagine having in the future. The decision should be one that is appropriate for class discussion and one that they will not mind sharing with you and other students.
2. Explain to students that they will write daily entries while the class explores Macbeth's important decision in Act 1.
3. At the end of each class discussion on a particular decision element, give students time to write in their journals with the following goals in mind:
 - a. Write as clear a summary as possible of the decision topic presented in the most recent class discussion.
 - b. Apply what you have learned to your personal decision.
4. Tell students that they should feel free to use diagrams and drawings to support their writing.
5. At the beginning of the next class, ask a few students to read their summaries for class discussion and review. Ask as many students as time and attention will allow, and pick different people each time until all have had the opportunity to read.
6. Collect journals periodically or at the end of the unit to assess understanding.

Essay: A Decision Report

This exercise provides students with the opportunity to review what they have written in their decision journals and to put the different entries together into one final, coherent report.

1. Introduction: The first paragraph should include a clear description of the decision and some discussion of the challenges this situation presents.
2. Three body paragraphs, one devoted to each of the following links: information gathered, values explored, and alternatives considered.
3. Include a decision tree that clearly represents alternatives, uncertainties, and outcomes for the decision.
4. Concluding paragraph: Which alternative do you think you will choose and why?



3. Web Resources

- **Electronic version of *Macbeth***
 - Bartleby.com: <http://www.bartleby.com/70/4111.html>
- **More Information and Links:**
 - **Wikipedia Resources for *Macbeth*** (includes useful links and background resources): <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macbeth>
 - **Macbeth Navigator (annotated text and resources) :**
<http://www.clicknotes.com/macbeth/>

