

## 11th Century play remains relevant for children today

**After watching a production of Macbeth, Children's Express reporters reflect that life hasn't changed much for some children around the globe.**

*What must it have been like for young people, sitting bored on a wet afternoon in the 11th century, not to have the option of surfing Internet chatrooms or being entertained by special effects-laden films?*

There are so many escape routes from boredom for young people today it's hard to imagine a life without computers, television, CD players and films to fall back on.

Michael Joseph Magee, 11, who plays Banquo's son, Fleance, in the play, expressed concerns that he would find it hard to adapt to the world his character is from: "I'd be scared if I was in the 11th Century. I wouldn't understand that world. I'm glad I'm just acting it, not living it."

Life was hard for most people, but especially if you were a child. Children were seen as inferior compared to their elders.

This was compounded if you were a girl, as all females at the time were viewed by men as 'second class' citizens.

Adults would have laughed at the modern day notion of children's rights - it would be quite some time before any legislation was passed that would protect children from exploitation.

Slavery was widespread in the UK and Ireland, with people being kept as servants for wealthy aristocrats.

For many children this meant if their parents were slaves then they automatically were too, and from very early ages small children were forced to work long hours.

If that wasn't enough, the 11th Century had more than its share of health epidemics like typhoid, cholera and the Black Death.

Young reporter Andrew Mullan, 13, has looked into conditions faced by these modern day slaves and was shocked by what he discovered. "Nowadays incidents of typhoid and cholera are found mainly in developing parts of the world and still claim thousands of lives," he said.

"A play like Macbeth still has resonance because many of the conditions faced by young people in the 11th century are being faced by young people in developing countries."

Small children in places like Palestine and Sierra Leone are forced to work in unsafe factories, making clothes for countless hours and little pay.

They don't have the freedom that young people do in parts of the world like America, Australia and the UK.

The children who must work in such conditions must do so for food and shelter, and if they refuse to do their work, they are cruelly punished.

The 11th century may appear different from today, but slavery and child labour are two examples of proof that, even after hundreds of years, our world still suffers from some of the same problems.

**About the team** This story was produced by Connor Scullion, 15, and Clare Hughes, 14. It was published by the [Irish News](#).

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