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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## Shakespeare Speaks

### What's done is done

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#### **Narrator**

It was a late summer's morning. William Shakespeare is at the market.

#### **Will**

A pound of plums, please, Mary.

#### **Stallholder**

Here you are Mr Will.

#### **Will**

Mary? You're not your usual happy self this fine morning.

#### **Stallholder**

I feel terrible, Mr Will. I did an awful thing to that Nell Butcher – she's had her eye on my George for ages. I've had enough. I put pepper all over her fruit pies. Oh Mr Will, poor Nellie's in so much trouble and it's my fault.

#### **Will**

Well Mary, there's nothing you can do about it now. What's done is done!

#### **Stallholder**

Lady Macbeth said that in your play, didn't she Mr Will?

#### **Will**

She did indeed Mary.

#### **Stallholder**

She was telling her husband that you can't change the past. You just have to forget about it and move on, even if it's really, really bad.

#### **Will**

And it was indeed very bad in my play, Mary. Macbeth murdered the King. And Lady Macbeth encouraged him.

**Stallholder**

No wonder he feels bad afterwards... I feel bad enough about the fruit pies...

**Will**

Macbeth feels very guilty. He has some terrible dreams. But Lady Macbeth doesn't feel the same. She tells Macbeth to forget his bad thoughts.

**Stallholder**

Say the lines, Mr Will.

**Will**

Very well Mary. Close your eyes and imagine: Macbeth is feeling bad about the people he killed. Lady Macbeth tells him that they are dead, so his guilty thoughts about them should die, too. He can't fix things, so he shouldn't think about them. These are her words:

**Lady Macbeth**

How now, my lord! Why do you keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,  
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
Should be without regard. What's done is done.

**Narrator**

We'll leave them there for now. In Shakespeare's Macbeth, Lady Macbeth is central to the play's examination of the psychology of guilt. Deeply ambitious and ruthless, she encourages Macbeth to murder his way to power, but by the end of the play she is overcome by guilt and descends into madness. These days, people still use Shakespeare's exact phrase: **what's done is done**, usually to say that there's no benefit in feeling bad for a long time about past mistakes. Take footballer Thierry Henry, explaining how his father taught him to always think of the next game.

**Clip 1**

My dad always taught me to never be satisfied, to want more and know that what is done is done... You've done it, now move on.

**Clip 2**

Just explain you meant to send the email to a different Sophie - and then forget about it. What's done is done.

**Stallholder**

So Mr Will, should I forget about the pepper and the pies...?

**Will**

Indeed you should, Mary. And forget about Nell Butcher too.

**Stallholder**

Hmmm.... to forget, or not to forget: that is the question.