

# How is evil portrayed in macbeth

[Religion](#), [God](#)



In this essay I shall be looking at the way evil is portrayed in Shakespeares play, Macbeth. I will be concentrating on the characters in the play that contribute to the evil themes of the play. It is clear from the start of the play that the witches are the main source of evil. The witches have an enormous effect on the play, not only are they evil, but this is emphasised by the strong feelings against witches and witchcraft in Elizabethan times.

Convicted witches were regularly tortured and even executed. Most people believed in witches and there was little opposition against this persecution.

This was not helped by the fact that the king, James 1 was also interested in this superstition, often, he interrogated the accused himself. It is clear from the start of the play that the witches play a key role. The first scene is the witches planning to meet Macbeth. The setting of this scene is very important; they meet on a moor in thunder and lightning. These surroundings portray an evil image; the moor is a very lonely, barren and bleak place, while thunder and lightning associate with evil. So even at the beginning of the play one of the themes is known.

The witches language includes rhyming couplets that contradict each other and are very powerful. Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air This quote tells us about the witches hatred for all things good, and their love for things that are evil. Shakespeare adds rhyme and rhythm to the witches language to emphasise their evilness. The second part of this quote adds to their image of being witches and would have created tension among Elizabethan audiences. The image of old women with cats and the ability to fly would have shocked an audience.

The first meeting between Macbeth and the witches is significant as they make two predictions to Macbeth, Hail to thee hane of Cawdor and perhaps more significantly, That shalt be king hereafter. These proclamations astound Macbeth due to their sudden nature. The witches lure Macbeth into a false sense of security. The witches manipulate Macbeth and when he tells Lady Macbeth of the predictions, an evil plan is conceived. Ive done the deed. This deed is the worst possible crime, kingship; Macbeth has murdered king Duncan in cold blood.

Macbeth, the brave warrior at the beginning of the play has been driven by his ambition to be king. However, the source of this evil deed may not have come from Macbeth himself. Look like the innocent flower, But be the serpent undert. Lady Macbeth plants the seed of murdering king Duncan in Macbeths mind. The language Shakespeare uses here is significant, the flower is associated with beauty and goodness while the snake is associated with evil. The association with a snake would have been especially strong because in the bible the serpent is seen as an evil being.

These comparisons to bible characters would also have shocked Elizabethan audiences, as they believed in heaven and hell. Perhaps the most famous scene in Macbeth concerns the witches and especially their language. Liver of blaspheming Jew, Finger of birth-strangled babe. These disgusting images are the ingredients of the witches spell. The language used shows the exploitation of innocence and vulnerability by the witches and this links in with the theme of the desire to bring all good things to evil. The imagery conjured up in the casts is one of pure evil.

In the same scene the witches manipulate Macbeth by using three apparitions. The second of these apparitions lulls Macbeth into a false sense of security. Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee. The apparition, which is a bloody child, tells Macbeth of his fortune, For none of woman born shall harm Macbeth. Shakespeare uses Dramatic Irony as these words confuse Macbeth. It is apparent from these words that Macbeth would feel invincible and that no man could harm him. However, Macbeth fails to see the contradiction between this and the first apparition.

This is because Macbeth is unaware of Macduff's birth; he was born after his mother had died. It is only at the end of the play that Macbeth finally discovers his fate. After being told that Macduff had been, Untimely ripped from his mother's womb, describes the witches as Juggling Fiends. Macbeth is accusing the witches of deliberately juggling their words so that he could not understand them. This is a brilliant quote as Macbeth has just realised his life is in ruins, but the audience knew this earlier.

The witches have changed Macbeth from a brave warrior to an evil, murderous, traitor. By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes. This quote is significant as it illustrates the change in Macbeth throughout the play, now even the witches consider Macbeth to be evil. However, when looking at the path of destruction that Macbeth has left behind him it isn't very surprising. Just one man driven by his ambition to be king has led to a chain reaction of murders Stars, hide your fires! Let not light see my black and desires!

From this quote we can see Macbeth's true feelings towards King Duncan. It tells us that no one will see the murder due to the darkness and lack of light. His dark intentions have imagery due to the blackness of the night and evil desires and intentions of Macbeth. The murder of his once best friend, Banquo leads to Lady Macbeth going mad. The brains behind the relationship who conceived the plan of murdering King Duncan which started the chaos of the whole play eventually committed suicide as she couldn't handle the guilt.

Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. This is a significant quote as although Lady Macbeth did not kill King Duncan it was her idea, and it could be argued that Macbeth wouldn't have murdered King Duncan without the influence of Lady Macbeth. The fear of the Scottish people is shown in a conversation between Donalbain and Malcolm. There's daggers in men's smiles. This metaphor describes how Donalbain feels he can trust nobody and that everyone is putting on disguises; underneath the smiling faces is hatred and evil.

The imagery conjures up pictures of the innocent and pleasant man on the outside but on the inside he is a traitor and a murderer. The quote portrays the scenes of anarchy and chaos in Scotland. In conclusion I think it is clear the witches mostly portray evil in Macbeth. Not only are the witches evil themselves but their evilness spreads to other characters throughout the play. I think there is little doubt that without the influence of the witches, Macbeth wouldn't have murdered King Duncan.