

The play "macbeth" by william shakespeare essay sample

[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



The Play “ Macbeth” by William Shakespeare Essay Sample

It is clear at the beginning of the play that Macbeth starts out as a good man. He is brave and well loved and trusted by the King, who calls him “ worthy gentleman, valiant cousin!” (2, 2, 24) He is also a good husband, the first thing he does when he gets the chance, is write to his wife and share the news of the witches prophesy.

Throughout the play, despite doing terrible things, he is not without remorse and guilt. He talks of how upset and frightened he was that he could not say Amen, just after he has killed Duncan, saying “ I had most need of blessing, and “ Amen” stuck in my throat.” (2, 2, 32) This shows that already he feels that he has done a terrible thing. When he talks about never being able to wash the blood from his hands, “ Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood/ Clean from my hand?”, (2, 2, 60-61) it is clear that he is feeling guilty and dirty because of what he has done. Here Shakespeare has given us a very powerful image which conveys very well the enormity of what Macbeth is feeling. Shakespeare is not just saying that Macbeth will have to wash his hands, but that all the oceans in the world would not be enough to wash the blood, and therefore the guilt, from his hands. We can almost feel the horror and revulsion that he feels himself. Having killed Duncan he imagines he has heard a voice saying “ Sleep no more! To all the house: / Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawder/ Shall sleep no more: Macbeth shall sleep no more!” (2, 2, 41-43) showing us that already he fears for his sanity after committing such a terrible deed. From that point on, we are watching a man gradually fall apart and lose everything.

Perhaps some of the reasons for committing this first murder can be seen as weakness and ambition, rather than the act of an evil man. He is talked into doing it by the witches and his wife. Right from his first meeting with the witches, they seem to have some sort of hold over him, telling him things he wants to hear and sparking his ambition. Here Shakespeare has created the character of Lady Macbeth, who can be seen as the epitome of Macbeth's crisis of conscience. As the real Lady Macbeth is hardly mentioned in history books, we can imagine that Shakespeare has created his Lady Macbeth for the sole purpose of giving Macbeth's "darker side" a voice. In the play Lady Macbeth never seems to be in any doubt as to the action they should take. How could Macbeth show reluctance and fear when his own wife is so determined? When she accuses him of being a coward, saying "And live a coward in thine own esteem," we can see how he lets himself be talked into it. At this point in the play, Macbeth's biggest weakness would seem to be that he is weak willed and easily led. Surely these alone are not enough for him to deserve everything that happens to him

However later in the play Macbeth makes decisions which make it very difficult for us to feel any sympathy for him, Feeling that being King is not enough unless he feels safe in that position, "To be thus is nothing/ But to be safely thus", (3, 1, 47-48) he makes the decision to murder Banquo. At this point we start to lose any feeling we may have had that he is merely a victim of fate or prophesy, as he makes this decision alone, with no coercion from his wife. By the time he orders the murder of Macduff's family, we really do not have any sympathy for him.

Over the next few scenes, we hear about some of the terrible things that Macbeth has been doing. Macduff talks of how "each new morn/ new widows howl, new orphans cry" (4, 3, 4-5) giving us a sad, depressing image of Macbeth's reign. We hear that Macduff's family were "savagely slaughtered". (4, 3, 205) Now, when the thanes discuss Macbeth they describe him as "the tyrant" (5, 2, 11) and comment on how "some say he is mad". (5, 2, 13) This contrasts sharply with the first description of him by his fellow soldiers as "brave Macbeth" (1, 2, 16)

However when we look at Macbeth's speech to Seton, we see a man who appears broken and alone. He talks about the things that he should have at this stage in his life, "that which should accompany old age/ As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends/ I must not look to have"(5, 3, 24-26) Perhaps this is why he is ready to go down fighting. He has nothing else to lose and finds some comfort in going back to what he knows best, being a soldier. This is what he should have been all along. He clearly was not cut out to be king. In the end he accepts this fate and would rather die honourably, than live in a cage.

So yes, Macbeth does terrible things, but he pays, not only with his life, but by losing his, friends, wife, reputation, honour and soul. And is destined to be remembered in history as "this dead butcher" with a "fiend-like queen", so perhaps he does not deserve everything he gets.