

Macbeth and man

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



To be a Man in Shakespeare's Macbeth In William Shakespeare's Macbeth the definition of what it is to be a man is seen differently by several characters. One of the views expressed in the play is that a man is a man when he is willing to do everything he can to get what he wants out of life and never feel any remorse about the actions he has taken. The view of what it means to be a man, that contradicts this view, is that a man must only go so far in trying to get what he wants, otherwise he is just a monster. In this view a man is allowed to be able to feel grief and empathy. The way in which the characters in Macbeth view what it means to be a man affects the way in which they live their lives and, in turn, governs their actions. Lady Macbeth and Malcolm are two of the characters in Macbeth that believe that a man must be able to do whatever it takes to get what they want and not feel remorse or grief for other people. When Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth that he no longer wants to murder Duncan she says, " When you durst do it, then you were a man;/ And to be more than what you were, you would/ Be so much more a man" (1. 7. 50-52). What she is saying is that he was a man only when he was telling her than he wanted to kill Duncan and the more that he acts likes he is going to go through with killing him the more it will make him a man. She thinks that Macbeth's hesitation to kill Duncan is a weakness and is unmanly. This passage shows that Lady Macbeth believes that a man is a man when he is willing to do what ever it takes to get what he wants. In this case, Lady Macbeth thinks that Macbeth should kill Duncan in order to be king and not doing so would be unmanly. After Macbeth kills Duncan he feels remorse. Lady Macbeth says, " A foolish thought, to say sorry sight" (2. 2. 25). Lady Macbeth thinks that it is foolish of Macbeth to be

remorseful at the sight of Duncan's blood on his hands. Lady Macbeth thinks that a man should not feel remorse or guilt for doing what he had to in order to become king. After Macduff finds out that his children and wife have been murdered by Macbeth, Malcolm says, " Be this the whetstone of your sword. Let grief/ Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it" (4. 3. 230-231). In this passage Malcolm shows that he feels a man should not take time to grieve the loss of his wife and children, but instead convert grief to anger and seek revenge immediately. Malcolm's view of man is a man may not feel remorse or grief. After Macduff decides to go and seek revenge on Macbeth, Malcolm says, " This tune goes manly./ Come, go we too the king" (4. 3. 237-238). Malcolm praises Macduff for taking action against Macduff, commending his decision as manly. Malcolm believes that a man must not take to time to grieve but take action in order to get what he wants; in this case the action is revenge. One of the views of what it is to be a man in Macbeth is that a man must do what ever is necessary to get what they want and never feel any remorse or grief. The other view of what it means to be a man in Shakespeare's Macbeth I that a man must only go so far in trying to get what he wants, otherwise he is just a monster. In this view a man is allowed to feel grief and empathy. In Macbeth both Macbeth and Macduff have this view of what it means to be a man. After thinking about whether or not he should kill Duncan he talks to his wife and says, " We will proceed no further in this business" (1. 7. 32). Lady Macbeth reprimands his decision to let Duncan live by saying that he is not a man. He replies with, " I dare do all that may become a man;/ Who dares do more is none" (1. 7. 47-48). Macbeth is saying that he is willing to do everything that needs to be done in

order to be king as long as it does not go too far and turn him into a monster. He believes that there is a boundary that distinguishes manliness from beastlike. He believes that a man should stop at nothing to get what he wants. Later, after he kills Duncan, Macbeths says, “ I am afraid to think of what I have done" (2. 2. 54). He is saying that he does not want to go back into the room and see Duncan’s body now that he has already killed him. This shows that Macbeth is feeling remorse for murdering Duncan. Macbeth beliefs that a man should be able to feel remorse and that a man should be able to grieve. When Macduff finds out that his wife and children were murdered by Macbeth Macduff says, “ I must also feel it like a man" (4. 3. 223). Macduff says that he will revenge his family’s death, but he will first grieve for his family. This shows that Macduff believes that a man must seek revenge for wrongs done to him, but also be able to feel grief. Macbeth and Macduff’s view of what makes a man is that a man must be able to do whatever it takes to get what they want only to a certain point. They feel that a man should be able to feel remorse and grief. The way in which the characters in Macbeth view what it means to be a man affects the way in which they live their lives and, in turn, governs their actions. This happens when Lady Macbeth persuades Macbeth to go along with killing Duncan. Macbeth shows that he has decided not to kill Duncan when he says, “ We will proceed no further in the business" (1. 7. 32). He makes this decision because it goes against his idea of what it means to be a man. Because Lady Macbeth’s view of what it means to be a man differs from that of her husbands she convinces him to kill Duncan. This is apparent when Macbeth says, “ I am settled, and bend up, / Each corporal agent to this terrible feat"

(1. 7. 80-81). Without his wife's influence Macbeth would never have decided to kill Duncan. This shows how the characters viewed what it means to be a man governs the actions that they make. Lady Macbeth's caused Duncan's murder to take place. Another example of when how a character views what it means to be a man governs their actions is when Malcolm wants Macduff to avenge his family immediately after he hears of their murder. When Macduff hears that his family has been murdered Malcolm says, " Be comforted. / Let's make us medicines of our great revenge/ To cure this deadly grief" (4. 3. 216-218). Malcolm think that he and Macduff should go avenge the death of Macduff's family immediately because Malcolm does not believe that a man should take time to grieve. Malcolm tells Macduff to, " Dispute it like a man" (4. 3. 221). What Malcolm is telling Macduff is to be a man and not give into his grief. This passage shows how these characters beliefs affect their actions. Malcolm believes that they should seek revenge on Macbeth, because he does not believe that a man should grieve. Macduff think that he should take the time to grieve, because he thinks that a man should grieve. The way in which the characters in Macbeth view what it means to be a man affects the way in which they live their lives and, in turn, governs their actions. In William Shakespeare's Macbeth one of the views of what it means to be a man that is expressed in the play is that a man is a man when he is willing to do everything he can to get what he wants out of life and never feel any remorse about what he has done. The other view of what it means to be a man is that a man must only go so far in trying to get what he wants and feel remorse and grief, otherwise he is just a monster. The way in which the characters in Macbeth

view what it means to be a man affects the way in which they live their lives and, in turn, governs their actions. WORKS CITED Shakespeare, William. Macbeth. New York: Bantam, 1988.