

What is your
response to the way
macbeth is presented
in the play? what is
there ...

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



What is your response to the way Macbeth is presented in the play? What is there to admire and what are his weaknesses? Shakespeare's tragedy introduces Macbeth, the strongest character in the play, as a brave, powerful, and well known soldier. His strengths were ambition, courage and honour. It is in recognition of his bravery that he is bestowed the title of 'Thane of Cawdor'. However, as the play unfolds, these very strengths that defined him become his weaknesses. Macbeth is consumed by evil ambition to become king and as a result of his own self-doubt and superstitious nature, he is blatantly manipulated by his wife, Lady Macbeth. He is driven to murder and would seemingly stop at nothing to get his hands on the crown. This tragic hero eventually meets his untimely demise just as he was foretold by the witches. Shakespeare uses different language techniques to emphasize the main character's personality and presentation. At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is shown as a brave and courageous character who strives for power. These are the key credentials of a tragic protagonist. The title, 'Thane of Glamis', which later becomes 'Thane of Cawdor', is given to him in the first few scenes which gives the impression that he is a military man who serves the king. Therefore, the audience would view Macbeth as popular and would seek a false sense of security towards his character. This was because many of the heroes and idols of the performances at the time were seen to be brave knights and kings. As the show progresses, Shakespeare gives the audience the impression that Macbeth is ageing considerably more than the amount of time that passes. This may be the writer's explanation for the numerous changes in the character's persona throughout the tragedy. One of these changes occurs

when the plot twist and Macbeth sees his chance to claim the royal throne by killing Duncan because of the witches' predictions, and when they address him as, "Cawdor and king of the Scots". This is unusual because his character seemed, at first, to dislike the thought of murder, but now shows greed and ambition. These emotions are not however, brought on by Macbeth himself. Instead, Shakespeare uses other characters, such as Macbeth's Wife and the Witches to force his cold aspirations of murder. This possibly give the audience the impression that he might be a weak character. An example of this is when Lady Macbeth challenges Macbeth to commit to the plan to murder Duncan by saying, "But screw your courage to the sticking-place, And we'll not fail." After this, he is shown to give in to his previous beliefs, and proceeds with the murder of the king. This was very out of the ordinary for this time, as women were seen to be feeble and inferior to men. So it may confuse or astonish the audience when Shakespeare shows Macbeth's character being so effectively convinced by his wife and the three witches. As well as Macbeth's main tragic flaw, his is also corrupted by his curiosity which is caused by the witches. Shakespeare shows this in the play when the witches tell Macbeth that he will become kings, "Thane of Glamis! Thane of Cawdor! And King hereafter". In the original performance the witches were described as ignoble and vulgar instruments of hell who were there to overwhelm the audiences' senses with mental horror. However, when they were seen to address Macbeth, they spoke in a loftier tone and announced their prediction with an obscure brevity and majestic solemnities as if they were oracles. Shakespeare showed the character of Macbeth to have complete belief in their prophesies, and his personality and behaviour

changed in result of this. His character became curious and ambitious to fulfil the prospect they had relayed to him as he desired they would come true, due to his belief in the supernatural as this is where he placed all his faith. In his desire for these events to unveil and become real Macbeth, as a character grew more violent. The pivotal part of the play that displays this is when he sends for Banquo's murder " I am in blood, stepped in so far that I should wade no more, Returning were as tedious as go'oer", here he is saying that he has killed already what is one more death, this death however also having importance as it is Banquo who could unveil the truth about Duncan's death so in order for Macbeth's murderous secret to remain as such, Banquo too must die. This subsequently leads to the death of the character, Macbeth. After Shakespeare shows Macbeth being controlled by a woman, the audiences' perception of the character changes, he is now no longer the once noble and brave warrior who would stand up and fight any man. Now he is a much weaker man that gives into his wife's orders and follows her assassination schemes. This is stressed further when Lady Macbeth remarks, " Art thou afeard, To be the same in thine own act and valour, As thou art in desire? " In this scene Macbeth is being portrayed as a faint-hearted husband who is dominated by Lady Macbeth hinting perhaps that he is sexually weak, some have viewed this as Shakespeare subtly hinting at the character being impotent. Both being horrific ideas to imply on such an astute man and icon of the time, thus bringing the ways in which people viewed him to a lower level and ridding any idea of him being superior. Another key feature of the play is in Act II scene two where Macbeth exclaims, " Wake Duncan with thy knocking, I would thou couldst. "

At this point in the play, Macbeth is beginning to realise his tragic flaw and that his power is slipping away from him. This is said shortly after he had murdered Duncan which was peculiar because none of the other characters had suspicions of Macbeth being the murderer. Shakespeare has shown the character to talk over his feeling and his action to reassure himself. This is done to make the character's feelings clear to the audience and also so they can see more of Macbeth's thought process, and possibly explain some of his actions. At this point in the performance, the character is showing further change in personality and displays feelings of guilt and near madness. His regret continues further into the play when, what is said to be one of the presentations most powerful lines, Macbeth states, " Had I but died an hour before this chance, I had lived a blessed time. " This quotation is spoken after Duncan's dead body is discovered and carries a double meaning. Firstly, it seems that Macbeth is showing lament in seeing the dead body of Duncan. Shakespeare uses this technique to try and connect with the audience because they are aware of the murder, so therefore the audience share a secret with Macbeth, and understand the hidden meaning to the extract. The relationship with Macbeth and the audience deepens as the play goes on unlike that of the other characters. This may be because Shakespeare pays a large amount of attention in developing the personality and feelings of his character and only give vague description of the rest of the cast. Shakespeare does this so that the viewers can see him as a human being and understand some, if not all of his emotions and judgments. Thus giving the audience a sense of empathy for the character, and as the play continues they are known to triumph and suffer alongside Macbeth. As this

happens, the spectators feel more positive towards the end, as they gain a greater conception of how far humanity can be pushed, this is known as catharsis. Shakespeare enforces this technique by using many soliloquies, thus expressing a character's thoughts without addressing any other cast member or the audience directly. An example of this is when Macbeth utters, "If it were done when 'Tis Done". This is the character discussing with himself what actions he should take following the murder he has just committed. Shakespeare's infamous Macbeth is held in such high esteem, undoubtedly renovations that take the story into other genres and eras will occur. Along with Roman Polanski and Orson Welles' film there is a Japanese film named 'Throne Of Blood' and a Mafia Macbeth. However the most successful films based on Shakespeare's Elizabethan plot were directed by Sean Bean and Patrick Stewart who changed key aspects to appeal to a more modern society. One key idea that was twisted is the accent of the play. Macbeth famously being known as 'The Scottish Play' by the superstitious audience. Bean's medieval version was played out through Yorkshire accents. Interestingly Bean and Stewart both picked on the idea of the witches. Bean portraying them as erotic figures and carried this theme to Lady Macbeth. Whereas Stewart took the opposite approach scripted the witches as nurses whom are deemed caring and wholesome. Intriguingly as Patrick Stewart played Macbeth in Sean Bean's Hollywood populist, it could be that Stewart sees nurses as erotic figures. In these versions Stewart and Bean are showing that Macbeth follows the prophecies due to his awe of abstract eroticism. This contrasts with Shakespeare's original ideas of Macbeth believing the predictions to supernatural beliefs which were rife at

his time of writing the play, however they are more subdued in society now so less believable. Bibliography [www. absoluteshakespeare. com](http://www.absoluteshakespeare.com) [www. shakespear. mit. edu](http://www.shakespear.mit.edu) [www. sparknotes. com](http://www.sparknotes.com) [www. macbeth. com](http://www.macbeth.com) [www. library. thinkquest. org](http://www.library.thinkquest.org) [www. online-literature. com](http://www.online-literature.com) [www. enotes. com](http://www.enotes.com)
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