

# Macbeth essay

Literature, William Shakespeare



Evil. Immoral. Devious. However way one says it, they all mean the same. People associate these words with dark, sinister feelings that most try to avoid. In William Shakespeare's play Macbeth, Lady Macbeth may be considered evil or immoral solely on the basis of her actions alone. The full presentation of Lady Macbeth in the play makes the audience react more sympathetically than they otherwise might. First, Lady Macbeth can be considered evil or immoral because she becomes ambitious for power, willing to kill, and assists in and sets up a murder. Once she learns of the opportunity for her husband to assume the throne as king of Scotland, she immediately becomes obsessed with achieving everything in her power to place Macbeth in the position. She begins to persuade him in murdering the current king, King, Duncan, so he can take the crown. When Macbeth becomes hesitant about this plan, Lady Macbeth questions his manhood and exclaims, "When you durst do it, then you were a man..." (Shakespeare). She insinuates that Macbeth is not a man and will not be a man until he completes the deed. Her persuasive actions and words are examples of how Lady Macbeth may be considered evil in the play. When Macbeth hesitantly agreed to come through with the murder, Lady Macbeth insists that she will come up with a plan and will find a way to take the blame away from Macbeth. By coming up with the original idea and plan of killing King Duncan, her thoughts alone could prove that Lady Macbeth is immoral. After Macbeth completes the act, Lady Macbeth takes the dagger used to stab King Duncan and places it near the sleeping guards to frame them of the murder. Blaming other people for her and her husband's actions, and conducting the idea and executing the plan prove the characteristic of evil and her immoral beliefs.

However guilty of being evil and immoral Lady Macbeth might be, her full presentation of character makes the audience react more sympathetically than they otherwise might. William Shakespeare portrays Lady Macbeth as a complete character with two sides to her personality. Unlike the story of Cinderella, in which the audience only sees one side or the evil side of the stepmother, Shakespeare portrays Lady Macbeth in such a way that the audience can see the developed feelings and personality that represent Lady Macbeth as a complete character. This may be why the viewers react more sympathetically towards her actions in the play. Pursuing this further, when Lady Macbeth begins to feel guilty for her actions, this could be how the audience feels and reacts more sympathetically. After succeeding in his first murder, Macbeth believes that he must kill everyone that poses a threat to him or to taking his newly gained position. However, Lady Macbeth does not want to continue with the murdering and wishes he would stop as well. Her changed perspective on gaining and maintaining power connotes that Lady Macbeth is a complete character and has more feelings than just evil, which enable the viewers to feel sympathy for her. Towards the end of the play, according to a doctor and a gentlewoman, Lady Macbeth, “ rises from her bed [and writes a letter] all the while in a most fast sleep, “(Shakespeare). She begins to sleep walk, perhaps out of guilt or anxiety for the murder she helped commit. The way Shakespeare illustrates her guilt and anxiety to the audience through the hallucinations of “ spots of blood” and “ smell of blood” could be the reason that they feel more sympathetic towards her character. In William Shakespeare’s play Macbeth, Lady Macbeth could be considered evil or immoral based solely on her devious actions alone. However, the way

Shakespeare portrays her full presentation of character enables the audience to react more sympathetically towards her and her actions than they otherwise might. There is no true definition of evil, as it is merely a matter of morals. What one may consider evil, another one may see as good. Evil is a matter of opinion, not fact.