

The story of "macbeth" shakespeare's play essay sample

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The story of Macbeth, like most of Shakespeare’s plays, tells a tale that has a moral lesson attached to it. Many a great man has fallen prey to greed, ambition, and power. Macbeth is no exception. His ambition to control the power of the throne confuses his judgement. When a prophecy was revealed to him, that he would indeed gain that power, he was faced with the choice of reason or temptation.

He is a character of powerful contradictions, a man who, for the simple sake of his own ambition, is willing to murder his king and best friend. At the same time, Macbeth has a conscience so strong that the mere thought of his crimes, torments him to no end. As with any of Shakespeare’s work, what we learn from it is up to us as is the way we view the story.

So, is Macbeth a hero or a villain?

Importantly, the opinions of other characters in the play show that he was a great leader right from the start. “ For brave Macbeth - well he deserves that name - disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel, which he smoked with bloody execution...” Here the captain is saying that Macbeth had fought well and deserves his new title; they all believed in him and thought he was a courageous warrior. In contrast to this, a normal soldier of low rank, Ross, says that Macbeth was “ Bellona’s bridegroom”, meaning he was comparing Macbeth to the Roman god of war. This made Macbeth look even more powerful and brave.

Because Macbeth was positioned in such a high place, that everyone trusted him deeply, comments such as " O worthiest cousin" by Duncan; " My noble partner" by Banquo; and " O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman" by Duncan, just reinforced this notion by showing just how trust-worthy and respected he was. He even says himself that " I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people," which means that a whole variety of people from different backgrounds have praised him for what he has done.

His wife, Lady Macbeth, who has been well informed of what the witches said, knows him better than any other character does. She knows that he will not proceed with the killing of Duncan because he is too kind and too full of honour. " Yet do I fear thy nature, it is too full o' th' milk of human kindness." She knows that she must influence him if he is to follow the witches' prophecies, which means Macbeth can't be a villain if he is too weak hearted. Surely a great man of war, a leader, can choose for himself between right and wrong.

However he was an intelligent man. He thought rationally before he made decisions. " This supernatural soliciting cannot be ill, cannot be good" Here Macbeth was referring to the advice from the witches, which he thought was neither good, nor bad. It shows that he looked at both sides of the argument to decide which was the best path to follow. So, even though he committed terrible crimes in the end, he had to be cunning in the first place, which he wasn't. Therefore he had greater outside influences.

I think the start of his downfall was when the witches helped to bring to the surface, his secret desires or ambitions in life. Followed by his crazy wife who began to corrupt and manipulate his once gentle conscience.

You must consider what Macbeth began doing once he had got into the rhythm of killing. King Duncan was not only his cousin, but he was his dear friend who had recently awarded him the title Thane of Cawdor. By going against the king, it was like going against God. It was sacrilegious! However, this did not stop him from doing so. The killing of Duncan was a "bloody business", a "sorry sight". Macbeth felt ashamed afterwards - "will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" He knew he had done wrong and wanted to repent. Instead, his wife persuades him to carry on.

By this point, Macbeth was becoming paranoid at the fact that others might be out to get him now. So he goes on to murder his best friend, Banquo, who was with him when the witches revealed their prophecies. "Our fears in Banquo stick deep, and in his royalty of nature reigns that which would be feared." Only Banquo's son, Fleance, survives and escapes. This is where Macbeth had really lost his mind. He planned the whole murder without confiding in Lady Macbeth, which is very sly and cunning. Not only that, but he also persuaded Banquo's killers that Banquo was the sole cause of all their miseries in life.

Three more events follow, which then prove that Macbeth had turned from a once sincere man, to a savage beast. First, the killing of Macduff's family - "

savagely slaughtered". Macbeth sent a dozen murderers to Fife Castle to wipe out every servant, every guard, every man and woman, Macduff's wife and all her little children. This shows us that Macbeth had gone on a killing spree and no longer knew any limits.

The second: Lady Macbeth's suicide. After a long time spent murdering people and playing a big part in other killings, her life became weltered in blood and was fast going mad. " Out damned spot; out I say. One, two, - why then 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky." The murder weapons that had bloodied her hands in the King's bedroom that night, had stained her to the very soul; she was crushed by guilt and committed suicide. Now, instead of feeling sad and heartbroken, Macbeth showed a lack of concern and remorse - " she should have died hereafter". This showed that his mind was beyond repair and was no longer sympathetic towards others.

When finally came the murder of young Siward, it proved that Macbeth had turned psychopathic and was only full of confidence in taking many more innocent lives. All he could say to this was " thou hast born of woman" - no remorse again.

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We see that Macbeth essentially loses his integrity and honour as a result of his own actions. He is no longer content with who he is or what he has done, despite the fact that he gets all that he set out to gain. This is a very common lesson indeed. Macbeth failed to realise that he needed to be more

proud of himself than of the material things he could gain. As a result, Macbeth tragically lost everything, including his life.

The lesson at the end of the day is that temptation is a great evil, which can take over and destroy our lives. I believe that Macbeth was, without a doubt, a villain. Once he had been tempted he was ruined. He had forgotten what it was like to be the faithful warrior he used to be. He had lost all that was dear to him, so all that was left in the end was for the evil to die.