

Comparing and contrasting macbeth and lady macbeth essay sample

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



In the play 'Macbeth' by Shakespeare, the characters Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are both depicted very differently with only a few attributes in common (e. g. the desire to obtain kinship). These differences start off relatively small and seemingly unimportant. However, as they are spiralled downwards into the problems caused by their joint disruption of the divine order it is interesting to note how the great differences in their reactions to the problems reflects their differences in character. The way in which they react to each other is also a valid indicator of their characters especially when considering how the circumstances effect who controls whom and how they do this.

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are greedy and over-ambitious however they express these attributes in different forms. Macbeth has the desire to become king but doesn't have the mental capacity to formulate an adequate plan. After two thirds of the prophecies have come true he takes the line of thought that because his position as king is already predetermined, he doesn't need to make any actions in pursuit of the title: "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me without my stir." His wife, on the other hand, is perfectly able to create a suitable plan (which she does) and troubles only a little with emotions getting in the way. Macbeth plays the role of hesitant murderer whilst Lady Macbeth is too quick to jump in as a calculated butcher and suffers the consequences after the deed is done.

In this early part of the play the reader is directed to sympathize with Macbeth much more so than Lady Macbeth. This is because Lady Macbeth is the one that actually converts killing Duncan and rising to kinship from being

just a fantastical idea to reality. The way she does this is also a wrongdoing to Macbeth because she breaks his separation between the battlefield and his life outside of it by manipulating him to kill Duncan and his best friend, Banquo causing him to lose his rationality and senses of guilt and shame. To do this she uses conniving, mockery and seduction (e. g. “ when you durst do it, then you were a man”) which makes Macbeth, in this respect the manipulated victim whilst Lady Macbeth is portrayed as far more evil and in control of the terrible deeds that are done.

After the first two murders are over the true emotions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth begin to come out. Whilst Macbeth struggles with unleashing his battle-fighting nature at the beginning, Lady Macbeth struggles with suppressing her conscience. However, only Macbeth overcomes his dilemma for good and shows his killer instinct from that point onwards. His wife, on the other hand, starts to go crazy as the guilt from the crimes overcomes her and it becomes clear that her demeanour in planning the earlier murders was just a façade that she forced upon herself. Unlike Macbeth, she denies her very nature and ends up going crazy because her conscience cannot deal with the guilt she has built up. It seems ironic that the “ direst cruelty” and “ thick blood” that Lady Macbeth begged to be attributed to her were hidden in Macbeth all along.

Even though from this unveiling of character seems to suggest that Lady Macbeth is a good woman at heart who has forced herself to be evil to meet her ambitious side and Macbeth is actually a flippant murderer who only realised his taste for the crime when he had killed outside of the battlefield,

there are also other issues one must look at to assess their evilness. One such issue is that Macbeth is not portrayed to be a great or clever man and therefore has trouble dealing with tricky situations in a rational way. When he uncovers the ease of getting his way through bloodshed and tyranny he carries on with it because it is the easy way out and he doesn't know any better. Lady Macbeth, however, is more intelligent and knows very well the significance of her acts of murder and disruption of the divine order but to be fair even Macbeth must have realised the evil of putting ambitions before conscience. Also, Lady Macbeth shows many telltale signs of madness such as ranting and sleep-walking yet she at least recognizes the madness in the crimes she has committed whilst Macbeth goes berserk and starts up a thoughtless killing spree that unlike his wife is not stopped by himself but by being killed by an enemy showing a lack of self-awareness – an attribute common to many mentally ill people.