

Macbeth essay

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



A Character in Her Own Right Behind all the great men of Shakespeare, there is a woman close behind, who is often overlooked. These women are just as crucial of a character as the men they follow. In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Macbeth is a mere tool, there to carry out orders for his wife, both of whom desire nothing more than to rule. Together they will do anything, including murder, to achieve their goal. Lady Macbeth proves to be a tragic figure and possess every capability that a man is able to. Although female, Lady Macbeth has proven herself as a central influence to the plot of the story, her strong, individualistic ways and ruthless plans prove to be the rise and downfall of her husband's reign as king and death, as well as her own. When the reader is first introduced to Lady Macbeth in acts one and two, they receive some insight into who she is and what she stands for. Lady Macbeth is reading a letter from her husband and learns of his desire to be king and to what lengths he claims he will go to achieve it. In her response, the presence of a realistic mind set is obvious. She frankly tells her husband that he can not be a good man while taking what is not his. She gets straight to the point and uses other tactics of persuasion to make sure her point is clear. "Hie thee hither. / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear/ And chastise with the valor of my tongue/ All that impedes thee from the golden round" (I. iiiii. 24-27). Here she is using her sexual hold over Macbeth to further her power over him and get her own way. Lady Macbeth also proves to be truly ruthless as she wishes herself a man filled with cruelty and thick blood so she will not feel any remorse. She also speaks of bashing babies against the wall and wishing for night so that her knife can not see what it does and heaven can not tell her to stop. Lady Macbeth will not let her

husband back out of the plot and clearly has thought of everything so the murder goes just the way she wants. She does everything except the actual deed. Lady Macbeth states to her husband, " My hands are of your color, but I shame/ To wear a heart so white" (II. ii. 61-62). She makes sure to keep herself innocent; she believes she will never feel guilt or remorse for the death of King Duncan. She is the one who must keep the masquerade up and pick up the slack her husband lacks. She continues to direct him after the murder is committed, and not let him go insane. She cleans the daggers and directs the framing of the guards. The next morning she acts as if it is all a big surprise that the King is dead, sealing her innocence with the other characters, but showing to the reader her true self. It is in act three that the reader starts to see another side of Lady Macbeth. She starts to reflect on her action and take into consideration what feelings her husband may be having. " Naught's had, all's spent,/ Where our desire is got without content./ 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy/ Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy"(III. ii. 6-9). Lady Macbeth is realizing that together Macbeth and she can never have a contented rule. No matter who they kill next, there is always someone who will challenge their crown. The struggle she is feeling within herself is claiming that it may be better to be the victim than the murder, because the dead do not have to live with the anxiety. Although these feelings have made their way into Lady Macbeth, she still manages to keep a cool front. She successfully takes control of what could have been a horrid situation. When Macbeth started seeing the ghost of Banquo at their dinner party and ranting at him to leave and go back to his grave, almost losing his mind completely, Lady Macbeth calmly instructed her guests that her

husband was ill, and they should leave. Her assertive manner comes into action as she tells her husband he is being a coward again and he must stop his foolishness. Without Lady Macbeth taking charge of the scene, the truth of the murders could have come out and ruined the Macbeths'. Her continuous ambition saved her husband and herself from what could have been an untimely downfall. Act five brings out an immensely different, and sudden, side to Lady Macbeth. It appears that coping with the guilt of murder is more than what she initially thought it would be. The guilt is so strong that it drives Lady Macbeth insane. She walks around aimlessly in her room, unaware of the things she says. Her ludicrous ramblings give away much more than she would like. " Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfume of/ Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, Oh, Oh!" (IIII. i. 42-43). This is basically a confession, claiming that her hand will always be red with guilt and will always smell as a reminder to her, and will never be right again. The doctor claims it is her disease talking and she is in need of a priest. Her caretaker is told to do away with anything she might harm herself with, but does not. Later, in scene five, word comes that Lady Macbeth has killed herself. The guilt made her a weak person, causing not only her death, but her husbands as well. For soon after Macbeth loses his will to live and dies. Lady Macbeth proves that even as a woman, she can still portray an active role in the plot and be a central influence to other characters, all of which lead to her downfall as well as her husbands. The reader sees her complete change in feelings and actions too. Both of which prove that a Shakespearean woman can feel and have dilemmas just as the men do.