

What is tragedy what
elements define
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for a tragic figure
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[Literature](#), [William Shakespeare](#)



Introduction

The aim of the research paper is to discover and investigate the principle of tragedy so that we can get an insight relationship between human conditions and the tragedy in literature. The research paper aims to discover the various types of tragedy that befell Macbeth and other characters in Shakespeare's play. This dissertation will also identify how these tragedies are important in defining and modeling the society. Shakespeare uses the character Macbeth to communicate the theme of tragedy that can lead to destruction and failure of all ambitions of a human being. He discusses a series of tragedies that Macbeth encountered as a mass murderer (Golden, 15). The playwright asserts, Macbeth has, 'Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel, Which smoked with bloody execution', The playwright is quick to mention that the tragedy that faces Macbeth as a mass murderer is out of freewill rather than a natural or, induced tragedy. The research explores all the tragedies of Macbeth and their application to the success of the play alongside the themes.

Macbeth is a tragic character since everything he does is portrayed as wrong. His deeds are marred by evil and his plans are disgusting. The playwright reviles Macbeth by saying that he held the position of a ruler with no legal mandate such that he looked like a person on borrowed clothes.

Macbeth was continually concerned with how the next ruler will be chosen and he aspired that he would be the best choice only for his plans to fail. He resorted to killing Duncan so that he could take the reins of power. In addition, Macbeth is tragedy to moral order. This is because after he killed

Duncan, Scotland became unruly since Macbeth was ruling as a non legitimate leader.

The presence of the withes in the start of the play indicates there would be doom in the play. The playwright prepares the readers of an impending tragedy that would happen to Macbeth later in the play. Macbeth sheds a lot of blood to ascend to power.

Macbeth's role in the play is important in shaping the society since it enlightens on the dangers of conspiracy, deceit and thirst for power. It is immoral for a person to betray the community by bestowing on himself privileges that do not belong to him through shedding innocent blood.

Discussion of Aristotle's conception of tragedy

Aristotle was a great philosopher from ancient Greece and he had developed a habit of looking at things and explaining the nature of the reality in it. Aristotle claimed that plot was the first principle and the most significant feature of tragedy. He describes a plot as a logical flow and systematic arrangements of incidents. This meant that a story was determined by how the events followed each other and the way the structure of the play looked like. Aristotle tried to explain the reality of nature by saying that the tragedies that were focused on a tight series of actions were more superior as compared to the tragedies where the events depended on either the character or behavior of the main protagonist (Eldridge, Richard 19). The structure of an ideal plot according to Aristotle includes the following: the plot must be composed of three parts, the start (incentive moment), middle (climax) and the end (resolution); the plot has to be a

complete one, unified and with self-contained structures; the plot has an option to be either a complex or a simple one though a complex one will be better.

After the plot, character is the second in importance according to Aristotle. A perfect tragedy requires a character that will be in a position to support the plot in a story or play. He claims that a person must be motivated and his feelings connected to the cause-and-effect chain of the events that will produce a kind of pity and fear to the spectators (Schwartz & Joseph 227). Fear and pity comes out clearly when the protagonist changes his fortunes from a good state to a bad state. Hamartia is commonly used by Aristotle to mean a tragic flaw or mistakes that is considered an ideal of a tragedy. The characters involved in a tragedy should have quality morals, fit into character, realistic, consistent, necessary and idealized. In accordance to Aristotle, a tragedy has six components, this includes: plot, thought, diction, character, spectacle and song. Aristotle claims that tragedy will produce a healthy effect on the human character. Tragedy is also centered on evil elements that are destructive to the moral values of humans.

A tragedy is defined as a composition of serious actions that are imitated, have a great importance and complete, applies an appropriate and pleasurable language. It is given in form of a narrative and not a drama, it has incidences which has an arousing fear and pity and finally, it aims at accomplishing a catharsis of the specific emotions of the audience.

Aristotle derived five quantitative elements of tragedy: prologue, exode, episode, stasimon and parade. After he defined tragedy, Aristotle highlights

the following features of tragedy; plot, song, diction, thought, spectacle and diction (Eldridge & Richard19). The elements of tragedy are further divided into the external and internal aspects. The features are either concerned with the objects of imitation or the medium of imitation.

A tragic figure is one who is popular and more prosperous in accordance with the events that take place. A tragic figure is one that is neither good nor just but is the one whose misfortune will be determined by some kind of error or frailty but not depravity. A character that has human virtues, and is accompanied misfortunes and errors in judgment will always remain in a glorious position and he is considered a tragic figure (Curran & Angela29).

Summary Macbeth

The play begins with the two generals of King Duncan, Banquo and Macbeth, returning home from war. On their way home they encountered with three witches in the midst of the woods. The witches inform Macbeth that he is to be crowned as the king of Scotland after acquiring the title of Thane of Cawdor. The witch also tells Banquo how he will be closer to the throne of King, but he will never be crowned as a king (Shakespeare 6). However, the two generals become sufficiently skeptical about the witches and proceed with their journey home.

However, the prophecy of the three witches appeared to be true when the two generals approach the encampment. They met with the messenger who presented King Duncan's message declaring Macbeth to be the Thane of Cawdor. This situation, justifies the prophecy, making Macbeth to project that he will become a king. He later invites King Duncan for a dinner at his

stronghold that very evening and later narrates the story of the day to his wife.

Upon hearing the occurrence of the event, Lady Macbeth becomes more optimistic of the future of her husband. She develops a plan that they have to murder King Duncan in order to ensure his ascension. After getting back to his castle, Lady Macbeth succeeds on convincing Macbeth to take the life of Duncan at that night.

The two partners develops a plan to get the chamberlains of Duncan drunk enough so that they will not remember the events and the will be the one to be blamed of the Duncan's death. After the discovery of the Duncan's body later in the morning, Macbeth proceeds to murder the "culprits" and takes over the kingship. Apparently, the Duncan's sons escape in another country to save their own lives. However, after taking over the thrown, his trust on the prophecy forces him to kill his colleague and his son Fleance fearing that he would fulfill the prophecy of seizing the thrown. He successfully murders Bonquo but fails to murder Fleance (Shakespeare 22).

On the night of the Banguo's death his ghost appears on Macbeth and as a result, he engages in hysteria, annoying his wife and scaring his guests.

Being the king of Scotland, he irritates the other aristocrats and later incites Macbeth's paranoia and misgivings.

In order to relieve his fear, Macbeth revisits the three withes and they provide him with more prophecies. They prophesied that he must be careful of Macuff who is a chief oppose of Macbeth taking the throne. The witches also prophesied that he will not be harmed by any other man until Birnam Wood emerges into Duninane Castle (Shakespeare, and Barnett 33). As he

returned home, he found that Macduff had fled to another country where Malcolm was. Macbeth extends his murderous actions by ordering the death of Macduff's family. As a result, Macduff and Malcolm form an army to overthrow Macbeth to his murderous and tyranny actions.

As Macbeth awaits the arrival of his opponents, his wife started developing insanity while she was unable to wipe the blood out of her hands. Macbeth becomes more desperate as he gets the news of his wife suicide and the invasion of English army. Macbeth awaits the prophecy to declare his invulnerability but Macduff's forces invades backed up by spurs cut from Birnam wood and took over the kingship. Finally, Macbeth is beheaded and kingship is passed on to Malcolm who was supposed to be the heir of the throne.

Investigation of Macbeth as a tragic figure

A tragic figure is reflected by a character that lives normally but achieves some heroism. In respect to Aristotle's argument a tragic hero estimates a character that is between a scoundrel and a holy individual. Macbeths proves to be one of them as he lives with the expected life qualities showing some flaws in addition to his heroism. In the start of the play Macbeth is displayed as a noble man and events come up and degenerate his character making him make mistakes that are expected to clarify his heroism.

Macbeth reviews his loyalty to the public and the king by actively participating in the Duncan war and through his courage they win. His courage and survival through the war proves him as a real warrior who is always ready to support his country. Loyalty to the king is revealed after

they meet with witches on their way home. Macbeth did not believe on the prophesy that he would become the king although he found them interesting. However in a little time the first prophesy comes to out to be true an occurrence that triggers the mind of Macbeth making him think of taking throne, contrary to the fact that he was nowhere near the hierarchy. The ambition that is created by these event of taking the thane could only be fulfilled by a wrongful action since Duncan's sons were still alive could customary inherit the power.

The strength of a woman is used to deteriorate the power of manhood on maintaining his virtues. After Lady Macbeths is informed on the prophesies of the three witches, her desire to be the queen makes her feel that it should happen at whatever condition. She pushes her husbands to take the necessary steps an eliminate Duncan. Although Macbeth values the Duncan as valuable friend as well as a friend, the pressure from her wife, weakens his morals and kills him on the same night.

With the death of their father, Duncan's son move out of Scotland to secure their life. This event makes Macbeth the king strengthening his heroism that he had won the battle. However he is afraid of the last prophesy that was made by the witches that Banguo's sons would be kings. The events that follow show that the human nature and morals no longer existed in Macbeth's mind and he is ready to give anything to remain in power. He organizes murderers to kill Banguo and his son but unfortunately Fleance escapes.

As expected from a tragic hero Macbeths moral values have faded away making his actions is led by his desires. He believes that he has won and this

makes him disbelieve the prophesy made latter by the witches that there would come a Macduff who is not born of a woman and overthrow him.

Although he is scared that Macduff would defeat him then he pretends a hero just to avoid being termed as a coward.

Another character that shows heroism is Fleance and may be termed as a hero. His planned death does not occur at the time of his father's death. This fulfills prophesy that he might be the king and thus be able to fight and win.

With the character of Macbeth, the lesson learned is that one should maintain his good morals as well as act accordingly to accommodate nature.

Being a hero should not make one forget that the society depends on him and thus should always act positively.

Conclusion

Tragedy is important in displaying the deceptive environment of the plot of the play. The tragedies are essential in outlining the evils and the struggle between good and evil in the setting of the play. Shakespeare depicts the motives of Macbeth through his tragedies and also creates an image of what to expect as the play unfolds. An example is when Macbeth met the witches at the beginning of the play. The reader is made aware that there is a probability of a tragedy to strike. In this manner the playwright is able to create a logical flow of events.

Deceit is major theme in the play since everything enrolls out from it. Deceit is manifested in Macbeth's wife towards her husband and the king.

Moreover, tragedy shows how many evils Macbeth has done in shedding blood. This is depicted in Macbeth's monologue, ' What hands are here? Ha!

They pluck out mine eyes! Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather The multitudinous seas
incarnadine, Making the green one red'. (2. 2. 59-63)

Logs

Log 1

Harrison, R. J., University of Newcastle upon Tyne and University of
Newcastle upon Tyne. (1999). Recapturing Greek tragedy: Aristotelian
principles in eighteenth-century opera and oratorio. Newcastle upon Tyne:
University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

McEachern, C. (2003). The Cambridge companion to Shakespearean tragedy.
Cambridge, U. K: Cambridge University Press.

Database

ARIA, all databases April 23 2013

Search terms

Key words: Shakespeare's tragedy, Aristotelian tragedy.

Location

Cambridge University library

Importance

The theme of tragedy has been profound in many literary works from time
immemorial. The theme of tragedy was explored using various sources as
indicated. McEachern's book, The Cambridge companion to Shakespearean
tragedy (2003) was used in expounding this theme. The book analyzes the
concept and the cause of tragedy in the book Macbeth. From these studies,

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Harrison(1999) it was discovered that tragedy can earn a person recognition as shown in Macbeth. This is at per with Aristotle's description of the importance of tragedy.

Quotes

Macbeth: " By Sinal's death I know that I am thane of Glamis, but how of Cawdor?"

Macbeth: " Is this a dagger that I see before me, the handle toward my hand? Art thou fatal vision a true dagger or a dagger of the mind a procreation from the heat oppressed brain?"

Log 2

Research paper topic:

1. Source/citation

Curran, Angela. Brecht's Criticisms of Aristotle's. Aesthetics of Tragedy Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism; Feb 2001, Vol. 59 Issue 2, p167, 18p

2. Database used/ date

On date 21st, I used my school library subject and the research guides from the literature section with the help of the catalogue.

The key terms that I used included: tragedy, aesthetics, Aristotle

3. Importance

I went on with my research even when I was not at the school library because it was very easy to access the journal from the school library database using my username and password.

When I had problems on how to cite the reference paper, I was guided and

<https://assignbuster.com/what-is-tragedy-what-elements-define-tragedy-what-makes-for-a-tragic-figure-research-paper-examples/>

assisted by the school librarian. This has been helpful as it always guides in when doing citation for my papers.

The journal has a perfect and interesting literature review on tragedy in Macbeth works.

Log 3

Research paper topic: Macbeth by William Shakespeare

1. Sources:

Shakespeare, William, and Sylvan Barnet. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. New York: New American Library, 1963. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Buenos Aires: Ambrosía, 2003. Internet resource

2. Data based used:

On 18th April, 2013, I used my school Library Subject and Research Guide on the English and literature catalog. The keyword terms used on the research were the Macbeth, William Shakespeare.

3. Importance:

I found an excellent review that helped me to come up with the key ideas and quotes of Macbeth hence summary.

Being able to search through the English and literature was very helpful since I found other sources that were important in developing summary of Macbeth.

On Saturday 20th April, 2013, I realized that I can use the internet source to provide me with the background information on the summary

Importance:

The internet source provided me with the recent summaries on the topic that used to compare with my summary.

I used page numbers, such as Shakespeare 6, to locate quotes and notes on the Macbeth.

Log 4

Source/Citation

Hochberg, Shifra. Genre and Self-Reflexive Enterprise in Macbeth: Writing the Text of Tragedy. Literature Interpretation Theory; Academic Search Premier Sep1998, Vol. 9 Issue 1, p1, 13p

Nuttall, A D. Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure? Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Internet resource.

Database used/date

Library. These two sources are obtained from the library database

April 20th 2013

Search terms used

Keywords: tragic heroism and the characteristics of a tragic hero. Macbeth's tragic heroism

Location

World catalogue (DLC) 950550430 internet resource, computer file

The importance of the source

The two sources used provided complete information on tragic heroism

They have exclusive review of the literature on the t required topic, that a

<https://assignbuster.com/what-is-tragedy-what-elements-define-tragedy-what-makes-for-a-tragic-figure-research-paper-examples/>

clear indication of tragic figures that can be used to link the character of Macbeth with tragedy.

The sources provided other resources in their reference section that can be used as additional citation

Appealing and recent that can be relied on to produce the most modernized version

Log 5

The paper provides an insight on the Shakespeare's Macbeth and the element of tragedy. This is achieved by analyzing, examining and summarizing the element of the tragedy in the Macbeth. In order to understand the element of tragedy, the Aristotle's conception of tragedy is analyzed and discussed in this paper. Tragedy is defined as a composition of serious actions that are imitated, have a great importance and complete, applies an appropriate and pleasurable language. The paper also provides the summary of Macbeth. The paper concludes by providing the importance of tragedy in the construction of the plot in a play.

The thesis statement in this paper is to analyze the element of tragedy in the Shakespeare's Macbeth. Analysis of element of tragedy sheds light to the understanding of the Shakespeare's Macbeth.

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Hochberg, Shifra. Genre and Self-Reflexive Enterprise in *Macbeth*: Writing the Text of Tragedy. *Literature Interpretation Theory*; Academic Search Premier Sep1998, Vol. 9 Issue 1, p1, 13p

Nuttall, A D. *Why Does Tragedy Give Pleasure?* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Internet resource.