

Ambition in macbeth

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



Ambition in Macbeth Julius Caesar once said “ When the gods wish to take vengeance on a man for his crimes they usually grant him considerable success and a period of impunity, so that when his fortune is reversed he will feel it all the more bitterly”. This quote directly reflects the problem with over ambition in effective all cases. Being over ambitious can bring someone to great heights but usually also leads to their downfall. In William Shakespeare’s Macbeth, the situation is no different. Macbeth, the protagonist in the play, is cursed with over ambition. This affliction brings him to great heights in his career however ultimately leads him to his downfall. Three main examples of Macbeth's blind ambition go as follows. Near the beginning of the play Macbeth is awarded the title of the Thane of Cawdor by the late King Duncan after he managed to capture the previous thane on crimes of treason. Macbeth is temporarily content with his title but that was not to last. Upon his wife, named Lady Macbeth, receiving word of a prophesy regarding Macbeth becoming king she begins to hatch a plot to have Macbeth seize power from Duncan. Macbeth, hesitantly accepts the plot after much prodding from his wife by saying" I am settled, and bend up each corporal agent to this terrible feat. Away, and mock the time with fairest show: false face must hide what the false heart doth know. "(1. 7. 89-93) This simply means that he must hide his true intentions from Duncan before he kills him. Shortly after his coronation, Macbeth begins to feel unsafe with his position. He feels the guilt bearing down on him at almost every moment in the day and he has trouble sleeping. He ponders the witches prophesy and realizes the next step that he must take. The witches stated that Banquo “ Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none: So all hail,

Macbeth and Banquo! "(1. 3. 70-71) Given this knowledge, Macbeth is worried that Banquo may overthrow Macbeth. He hires three murderers to go out and kill Banquo and his son Fleance. He says " Well then, now Have you consider'd of my speeches? Know That it was he in the times past which held you So under fortune, which you thought had been Our innocent self: this I made good to you In our last conference, pass'd in probation with you, How you were borne in hand, how cross'd, the instruments, Who wrought with them, and all things else that might To half a soul and to a notion crazed Say 'Thus did Banquo.' " (3. 1. 80-90) By saying this, he basically pins all of their troubles on Banquo and thus giving them reason to kill him. The third and ultimately final example of Macbeth's reckless ambition occurs when Macbeth has the family of MacDuff, one of his Thanes, killed to simply send a message to the people of Scotland that he was not to be trifled with. Coincidentally, the reason that spurred him on to do this and the reason MacDuff manages to convince Prince Malcolm are quite closely connected. MacDuff escapes to England to raise an army against Macbeth, upon arriving he is questioned by Malcolm who had escaped previously as to the reason for his arrival. The only thing that allowed MacDuff to convince Malcolm to do this for him was the furor he had mustered upon receiving word of his dead family. He exclaims: " O, I could play the woman with mine eyes And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens, Cut short all intermission; front to front Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself; Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape, Heaven forgive him too! " (4. 3. 269-273) In conclusion, these three events had temporarily positive effects and long lasting extremely negative effects on Macbeth and ultimately leading to his

death. He did not remain content with the title bestowed upon him by Duncan and instead strive after the title for king for himself. He sought to stop the prophesy bestowed upon him by the witches by having Banquo killed but revealing his guilt afterward. Finally he had the family of a potentially opposing thane murdered to send a message to him. Unchecked ambition has been the bane of powerful men and women throughout history and nothing has changed in William Shakespeare's Macbeth.