

Macbeth practice essay

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



Practice Essay Question Question: How does Macbeth follow what is expected in a Shakespearean tragedy? In your answer, you should refer to characterisation, themes and support your argument with evidence from the text. The theatrical play 'Macbeth' written by Shakespeare during the Elizabethan period in 1606 utilizes different themes and dramatic devices to depict what is anticipated from a Shakespearean tragedy. Throughout the play, three centralised themes include 'Ambition', 'Equivocation' and 'Order and Disorder'. During the sixteenth century people believed in the doctrine of 'The Great Chain of Being', which is portrayed in Shakespearean tragedies. The protagonist, Macbeth resembles a conventional tragic hero through the illustration of his nobility and high status at first, but is quickly overthrown by his fatal flaw of ambition. This had been achieved in the play by the means of using themes to characterize characters. The theme 'Ambition' delineates Macbeth's qualities as a hero and his fatal flaw. The opening sequence of the play characterizes Macbeth along with his friend Banquo as brave, honourable heroes from war. But immediately Macbeth finds himself trapped under his overwhelming "Black and deep desires" (Act1 Sc3) to become the king, his fatal flaw. Tension is built through prediction by witches' prophecies, "You shall be king" (Act1 Sc4) the witches told Macbeth. The prophecies are a reoccurring motif in the play which leads Macbeth into his downfall. To become king Macbeth would have to defy 'The Great Chain of Being' by killing the uppermost human, Duncan who was the king at the time. By doing so he would have set the world into chaos and imbalance. A soliloquy had been utilized to explain some of the thoughts going through Macbeth's head at the time to decide whether or not to kill

Duncan. It mentions “ Bloody instructions” (Act1 Sc7), “ Deep damnation” (Act1 Sc7) and “ I’ll have no spur to prick the sides off my intent only vaulting ambition” (Act1 Sc7), these are imagery descriptions used to illustrate his mood and set the atmosphere at the time. Macbeth had kept his conscience in control until his wife, Lady Macbeth urged and testifies his masculinity where he finally gives in to his domineering ambitions, “ Why do you durst do it, then you were a man” (Act1 Sc7). He has fallen into the in to his ambitions and ultimately his fatal flaw. The theme “ Equivocation” in ‘ Macbeth’ conveys that only half the truth is being told and everything has its opposite contained within it. Characters in the play are shown to have been misled by ambiguous expressions from the witches. The encounters with the witches have a dark and ominous atmosphere amidst unnatural phenomena’s, “ Fair is foul, and foul is fair, hover through the fog and filthy air” (Act1 Sc1). The use of oxymoron “ Fair is foul”, again addresses that fairness is not a necessity, thus suggesting that characters may be going through a misguided journey. The way in which Banquo interpreted the prophecy from the witches reflects once again the fatal flaw of Macbeth. Banquo was told that, “ Your children shall be kings” but doubted the witches and exclaimed they will, “ Win us to harm” (Act1 Sc3). This can be juxtaposed with Macbeth who gets condemned to abiding enigmatic riddles. The truth is only being half told here as the two men are not told what to do for them to become king, which foreshadows that Macbeth is deceived. Before the protagonist makes the second encounter with the witches the audience are foretold that the witch queen Hecate machination, “ Draw him on to his confusion” (Act3 Sc5). Dramatic irony achieved in knowing Hecate’s

plans in deliberating Macbeth into a trap while he himself is oblivious. There Macbeth is shown three apparitions, an armed head telling Macbeth to “Beware of McDuff”, a bloody child claiming, “None of women born shall harm Macbeth” and a crowned child holding a tree saying, “Macbeth shall never vanquish’d be until Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him” (Act4 Sc1). This is also dramatic irony as the audience will have pre-knowledge before watching the play that this is a tragedy and that the apparitions will not go according to plan. The double meaning is achieved with the trees being moved as a camouflage for the army and McDuff being “untimely ripp’d” (Act5 Sc7) from his mother’s womb. This reoccurring motif of prophecies depicts equivocation that gives Macbeth the false sense of security which eventually costs his life. Due to the fact that Macbeth was written in the 16th century, it revolves around the central idea of “The Great Chain of Being”. It characterizes people in the play into certain groups with the king being the highest and anyone who tries to disturb the balance will be punished. In the theme ‘Order and Disorder’ it involves Macbeth breaking the chain, thus causing the world to become out of balance. After the murder of Duncan, characters are shown to have been thrown off equilibrium. No longer can Macbeth sleep at night, “Sleep no more, Macbeth does murder sleep” (Act2 Sc2), as he has condemned himself into living a lie by killing the rightful king. As Ross a Scottish thane talks to an old man they metaphorically describe the death of the king, “Unnatural... A falcon, towering in her pride of place, was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed” (Act3 Sc2). The king being the falcon and Macbeth being the owl, it is perceived as unnatural and out of place. Moreover Macbeth results in

committing a series of murder and crime as he is living in a sense of paranoia and inner turmoil, with the end result being him giving up his own life. This outlines his downfall as a tragic hero from a worthy nobleman. The play 'Macbeth' portrays a typical Shakespearean tragedy through the utilisation of themes and dramatic devices. The protagonist's fatal flaw would be his ambition and aspiration to become king, which would defy 'The Great Chain of Being'. Characters such as Macbeth and Banquo are depicted to have heroic and brave characteristics, but when faced against temptation, Macbeth is shown to have been easily persuaded. At the cost of Macbeth's life the audience learn that crime does not pay out in the end and that to forcefully achieve something may not have the same result as you have wanted.