

Security in "macbeth" by william shakespeare essay sample

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William Shakespeare’s Macbeth revolves around the downfall of several key characters during the course of this tragic play. Security or overconfidence is a feeling of freedom from danger, care, or fear. When one feels invincible, they may lose all rational thought in their heads as well as in their hearts. By the end of the play, overconfidence can be linked to the downfall of three important characters in the play: Duncan, Banquo and Macbeth.

Duncan was killed mainly because of his poor judgment of a person, namely Macbeth. We see from the first act that Duncan has trusted two people, Thane of Cawdor and Macdonwald, who would betray him and Scotland. This shows he has a record for establishing trust with the wrong people. Duncan believes, “ There’s no art to find the mind’s construction in the face: he was a man whom I built an absolute trust”(I, iv, 14-17) This quote shows yet again that he does not know the right people to trust. Due to the lack of judgment and the ambition of Macbeth to take the throne, Duncan was transformed from a king to a pawn in Macbeth’s chess game.

The murder of Banquo occurred because he had confidence that he would be safe from Macbeth’s overarching ambitions because the two have been great friends for years. In Act Two, Banquo reveals that he would stay loyal to Macbeth as long as it did not interfere with his loyalty to Duncan. This is revealed in the quote, “ So I lose none in seeking to augment it, but still keeping my bosom franchis’d and allegiance clear, I shall be councill’d”(II, i, 26-29) Banquo was counting on Macbeth’s protection based on their long

standing friendship. But, Macbeth would stop at nothing to ensure his own security, disposing all who stood in his way, therefore Banquo had to go.

Macbeth's downfall came from gross overconfidence, thinking that he was completely invincible. He was first given a confidence booster in the first act when he was greeted by the witches as, "All hail Macbeth! hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor" and, "All hail, Macbeth! thall shalt be king hereafter." (I, iii, 48-52) These rather unusual greetings trigger Macbeth's ambition. After becoming the king and failing to kill Fleance, Macbeth seeks out the counsel of the witches. Little does he know, Hecate is planning on making Macbeth overconfident by showing him three false apparitions and prophesies. The first of which was to beware of Macduff, so he had Macduff's family slaughtered. The second apparition tells him that no man born of a woman may harm him, bolstering his security. The third and final apparition informs him that he is safe until Birnam Wood climbs Dunsinane Hill. Ironically, Birnam Wood does "climb" up the hill and he is killed by Macduff, who was born by Caesarean section. Macbeth's overconfidence blinded him from the bold truth, that we are all mortal and was killed for it.

In this particular story, Shakespeare used a few distinct types of overconfidence. Duncan has his confidence in other people. Banquo has his in strong friendships. On the contrary, Macbeth had his all invested in himself. Despite what kind they each had, they all had a downfall caused by their individual confidence. Hecate's statement that security is mortal's chiefest enemy speaks volumes about these three characters, and can be

related to the downfall of many more historical persons such as Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler.