

Shakespeare's macbeth and dramatic irony essay

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Dramatic irony occurs when the audience has more information than the characters. Shakespeare uses dramatic irony to amuse the audience and to show the level of deception developed by the main character.

In Act, I, Scene III, the first instance of dramatic irony occurs when the three witches appear, and they greet Macbeth and Banquo. The witches address Macbeth as Thane of Cawdor, which Macbeth takes to be a prophecy (Shakespeare 7). However, the audience knows that King Duncan has given orders to Ross to have Cawdor placed under Macbeth's control, as a reward for winning the battle.

Another incidence of dramatic irony occurs when King Duncan gives a pleasant speech about his host, not knowing they plan to assassinate him (Shakespeare 14).

Dramatic irony occurs when Macbeth and the lords await the arrival of Banquo. Macbeth already has information about his murder. The audience is aware of Macbeth's actions, but the characters are deceived. Macbeth says, " I drink to the general joy o' the whole table, and to our friend Banquo, whom we miss, would he were here, I to all, and him, we thirst" (Shakespeare 39). He expresses how he anticipates the arrival of Banquo when he has been told by the first murderer about his death.

Another instance of dramatic irony is when Macbeth speaks to Banquo's ghost, and the guests consider him a disturbed man. They claim he needs to be left alone. The characters are not aware, as much as the audience, that Banquo's ghost is in their midst (Shakespeare 38).

The audience is aware of Macbeth's murders when the characters still consider him an honest man. There are other dramatic ironies in the play, such as the plot by the three witches and Hecate to deceive Macbeth. The dramatic ironies are used to emphasize the treacherous plots that the innocent-looking faces conceal. It also creates suspense that keeps the audience anticipating reaction when the truth is revealed.

In Act V, Scene V, Shakespeare brings out the theme of ambition through Macbeth's speech. He speaks about the brevity of life and anxiety during critical times. However, a major theme that fits the description is ambition. Tales of ambitious people are "full of sound and fury" (Shakespeare 65). Ross describes it as "Thriftless ambition, that wilt ravin up thine own life's mean!" (Shakespeare 28). Ambition comes with a lot of energy, but it is short-lived.

Shakespeare develops the theme by the people he uses to talk about the future. He uses the three witches to forecast what is going to happen. The three witches have been used to tell the story of the brief life of Macbeth. They have made him more ambitious than they found him.

Shakespeare uses the porter to give the impression of what is likely to happen. The porter fits the description of a tale "told by an idiot, full of sound and fury" (Shakespeare 65). The porter says, "Here's a farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty" (Shakespeare 22). The porter gives a clear picture of what is about to happen.

The tale of the ambitious that is told no more after their death includes that of the Thane of Cawdor. He had supported the king of Norway (Shakespeare 6). His story is told no more after his death. The death of Banquo is another example of an ambitious person with a brief life. In Act III, Scene I, Banquo had thoughts of assassinating Macbeth (Shakespeare 29). He becomes part of a tale told by an idiot. Lady Macbeth also forms part of the same tale, the tale of ambition.

Political legitimacy occurs when the king reigns because he deserves to reign. It includes overall acceptance by the people. Macbeth's political legitimacy is based on deception. He creates the assumption that Donalbain and Malcolm killed their father, which is supported by their escape (Shakespeare 28). He kills King Duncan's guards to prevent further investigation into the matter. He is named king based on the assumption that he is virtuous.

One of the characteristics associated with moral legitimacy is the ability to win the trust of friends. Malcolm's questioning of Macduff shows that to be trusted by friends may grant the moral legitimacy of absolute power (Shakespeare 53). In the play, the lords have a strong influence on the person in power. Macbeth does not want to kill Banquo in the open because the lords will be upset. They may desert him.

Macbeth's action, of killing anyone who differs with him, makes him a tyrant. How he carries the killings makes most of the people hate him. Duncan is seen as a good king. In the case of the Thane of Cawdor, he does not give commands to eliminate the entire family. Duncan rewards Macbeth for his

bravery on the battlefield. He shows the characteristics of a good king.

Duncan does not use deceit and can be trusted by the rich. On the other hand, Macbeth is a threat to anyone who has some influence on running the kingdom.

Macbeth describes Duncan as a king whose actions are transparent. He has nothing evil to hide. In Act, I, Scene VII, Macbeth says, “ Besides, this Duncan hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been so clear in his great office that his virtues will plead like angels” (Shakespeare 16). On the other hand, Macbeth has many deeds; he would not like people to know. They would not accept him as king if it were known.

In summary, deception and murder make Macbeth a tyrant. Macbeth follows no fundamental rules in his reign. On the other hand, Duncan conducts his actions in a transparent manner. He follows some fundamental rules in his reign.

Shakespeare has explored the issue of gender. In Act IV, Scene I, the second apparition tells Macbeth, “ Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn, the power of a man” (Shakespeare 46). The apparition indicates that a powerful man should care the least of what people are saying about him.

He should be resolute and carry out his actions firmly. Aggression is another value that may be taken from the words “ be bloody.” Macbeth takes the advice and executes anyone who appears suspicious. A powerful man has to be bold. Masculinity is expressed through boldness, aggression, and making firm decisions.

Soldiers are portrayed through their masculine roles. Macbeth refers to his servant as a soldier's patch because he lacks bravery (Shakespeare 62).

Ross applauds Young Siward for his death as a warrior. He claims that it is deserved. Ross describes that " he only lived till he was a man; The which no sooner had his prowess confirmed..." (Shakespeare 69). Young Siward confirmed his masculinity through his skills on the battlefield.

Shakespeare's exploration of gender is seen in the conversation between the three witches. In Act, I, Scene III, the first witch asks, " Where hast thou been, sister?" (Shakespeare 6). The Second Witch answers, " Killing swine." (Shakespeare 6). Shakespeare subverts the perception of gender by capturing the description of a woman who has been hunting. Hunting is associated with masculinity.

Another instance of subversion of gender occurs between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth in Act II, Scene II. Macbeth says, " I'll go no more: I am afraid to think what I have done" (Shakespeare 21). Lady Macbeth takes the blades and lays them next to the king's guards. Macbeth is afraid of going back into the room. Lady Macbeth appears bolder than Macbeth. Bravery is a major value that keeps reoccurring with masculinity.

Motifs are ideas that keep on reoccurring. In this analysis, " nature" as a motif is investigated. Shakespeare uses " nature" as a motif to distinguish between that which is good and that which is evil. Something may be bad, but also unnatural. He uses " nature" to give degrees to the evil deeds that people may choose. If it is unnatural, then it is also unusual.

In Act I, Scene II, when the sergeant speaks to Duncan, the first application of the word "nature" occurs. He refers to MacDonald as a person whose nature is to be rebellious. Shakespeare may have used the sergeant's speech to create the mood for the expectation of rebellion. The sergeant claims, "The multiplying villainies of nature, do swarm upon him" (Shakespeare 5). It creates the mood of rebellion by referring to multiplying rebellion as natural. Rebellion is made to appear common for some people.

Nature has been used concerning sleep in Act II, Scene II. Macbeth refers to sleep as "balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course, chief nourisher in life's feast" (Shakespeare 21). Using nature as a value in sleep makes it be considered with utmost importance. The value of sleep is intensified.

Shakespeare creates a mood that supports the theme of anxiety. Both Macbeth and his wife will be sleepless and restless when the play approaches a climax. Sleep's grand importance is elaborated when Lady Macbeth sleepwalks.

Lady Macbeth refers to Macbeth's condition like lack of natural sleep when he speaks to a ghost. Lady Macbeth says, "You lack the season of all natures, sleep" (Shakespeare 40).

Nature has been used by Macbeth in Act III, Scene IV. Macbeth refers to the ghost's cheeks as having kept "the natural ruby" (Shakespeare 40).

Shakespeare builds the mood of fear. Banquo's nature is to be rebellious, even in his death.

In many instances, Shakespeare allows Macbeth to speak about nature. Macbeth is defiant against the three witches. He demands that they answer his questions about whether they can control nature. Macbeth orders, "Though the treasure of nature's germen may tumble all together, even till destruction sicken; answer me to what I ask you" Shakespeare 45).

Shakespeare tries to show that Macbeth is the least delusional of all people, yet he perceives ghosts. The apparitions and the witches appear more tangible if they are perceived by Macbeth. Macbeth is the only character who meets with the unnatural creatures frequently.

Good literature is one which creates human behavior, things, and events in a manner that amuses the reader. Good literature is weighed by the stylistic devices that it applies and how they are arranged in the plot. An over-use of devices may not always be good because it may create ambiguity for the reader.

In drama, the stylistic devices add a lot of value. Shakespeare's plays usually use humor and personification. In Macbeth, humor has not been applied to a great extent. Personification has been used as Shakespeare's main stylistic device. An example of personification is Macduff's speech, "Bleed, bleed, poor country! Great tyranny! Lay thou thy basis sure" (Shakespeare, 52). Giving life to values emphasizes the kind of action they generate in the people that possess them.

He uses foreshadowing by the three witches and flashback by Macbeth to capture the interest of the audience. Macbeth can be considered good

literature because it creates a plot cast in far-fetched deception. Very few can expect that Macbeth will turn against the king as the play starts.

In poetry, imagery is the most important aspect that makes a poem a good piece of art. A good poem will be measured by how differently the poet describes the same picture from other poets. For example, “ I Hear America Singing” by Walt Whitman allows the reader to create the images of the sound of the people at work. In line 2-3, “ Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong” (Whitman par. 1).

Another example is John Keats’ “ This Living Hand.” In the first two lines, he writes, “ This living hand, now warm and capable, of earnest grasping, would if it were cold...” (Hirsch par. 2). Hirsch (par. 1) explains that he was able to feel the hand as he was reading the lines. Poetry is about the ability to make the reader form those images you describe. The reader should be amused at the similarities and the linkages that the poet creates from different things.

Hirsch, Edward. On John Keats’s “ This Living Hand”. Web.

Shakespeare, William. Macbeth. Web.

Whitman, Walt. I Hear America Singing. Web.