

Macbeth – cruel  
tyrant or tragic hero  
essay sample



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In this essay I am going to examine about Macbeth characteristics. Is he a cruel tyrant or a tragic hero? He has the elements of Shakespeare's tragic heroic qualities. He is born of noble birth because he is a relation to the king. He is responsible for his own fate because he chooses to kill the king Duncan. He also has the attributes of true tragic hero because he has fallen from great heights.

His heroic qualities can also be seen in Act 1 Scene 1&2, when Macbeth is described by King Duncan as 'valiant cousin and worthy gentleman'. At the beginning of the play he was respected by the people due to his braveness. He was called, 'brave Macbeth' and the captain says that he deserves that name. The captain was describing how bravely Macbeth killed their enemies in the battle. Even when the enemy had the advantage Macbeth did not give up and he is described by the captain as 'the doubly redoubling his strokes upon the foe'.

The darker side to Macbeth's character is that he is not scared of violence and blood. As he is a warrior who is engaged in a violent battle, this makes him not to fear for anything. His sword was described as 'smoking with bloody execution' and he seems to show no mercy as he kills without giving his enemy anytime to plead for his life.

However Lady Macbeth reveals her view of Macbeth as being too full of the 'milk of human kindness' to want to murder. Her views are expressed in Act 1 Scene 7. She said Macbeth is not ambitious enough and he should be more ruthless. These characteristics description about him may suggest that he may fit into the definition of tragic hero. Macbeth's wife is more control of

events because she says that ‘ I may pour my spirits in thine ear’. She tries to persuade him to kill King Duncan.

Macbeth wishes that just killing King Duncan would lead him achieve his ambition but he also thinks that, if he does something wrong’ it will always jump back on him. He uses metaphors to shows what he thinks. They are from Act1 Scene 7. He thinks generally that if he tries to do some immoral behaviour it’s like poisoning his own lips. He reveals that if he murders the king, it will end him up being in problem. He also thinks about the judgement. He is worried about people judging about him after he had murdered the king.

Macbeth also persuades himself that it would not be a good idea to kill the king. He comes across with four reasons to argue that he should not kill the king. Those reasons have been expressed from line13 of Act 1 Scene 7. The first reason is he realises that he is a kinsman, the relative of the king. He says, “ I am his kinsman and his subject”. He knows that he is supposed to protect the king, not to destroy him. He is his subject, which means he is vital to the king. The second reason is that he thinks that he is the person who should shut the doors for the murderer. The evidence is “ Who should against his murderer shut the door”. He is his host and he should be against the murderer, and not murder the king himself.

The third reason is Macbeth thinks about his king’s virtues. He realises that he should not kill the king where everybody is pleased about him. He says that his “ King virtues will plead like angels”. The last reason is that he thinks about how he is honoured and rewarded in the kingdom. He thinks about his

popularity and he doesn't want them to destroy. He also has taken in mind that he has golden opinions for all sorts of people.

In contrast to this he only came up with one reason of why to kill the king. His ambition is his reason. He knows that he should lose all his popularity to achieve his ambition.

Lady Macbeth tries to change his mind. She uses persuasive language to persuade him to kill the king. She asks him questions like are you weak and changeable and is that what your feelings for me are like? In line 35 she persuades him by asking, " was the hope drunk where you dressed yourself...such I account thy love...green and pale". The colour green and pale indicates that she asks questions if his love for her has been shading. She also asks him if she is a coward. This can be seen in the line 43 as " And live a coward in thine own esteem". He replies telling her to be quiet and that whatever he decides to do it must only be an action appropriate for any decent man and no more. This is shown in line 46 as " I dare do all that may become a man".

She then says in line 48 " what beast wasn't then that made you break this enterprise to me". She continues and she says he was cruel and unkind to falsely get her hopes up and make a false promise. She flatters him and says he will impress her if he does the deed. She says this in line 48 " and to be more than..... so much more than a man".

She says that as a woman she is possibly a stronger person than he is as nothing on earth would make her break a promise. She says this in line 58 that she would " dashed the brains out, had I so sworn". She says that she <https://assignbuster.com/macbeth-cruel-tyrant-or-tragic-hero-essay-sample/>

will even kill her baby if she has made that promise. From lines 58 she reassures him that they will not fail to kill King Duncan.

In Act 2 scene1 it seems that it is the last chance for Macbeth to decide whether to kill the king or not. He says that he sees the dagger before him. The dagger is the negative word, which is used to describe a knife. It also seems that the nature shows some signs of bad things, which is going to happen. From line 32 to 65 he uses a lot of negative words like “ fatal vision, dagger, false creation, dudgeon guts of blood, Witchcraft celebrates and finally the horror. These words suggest that it is the death warning vision and his decision could deceive him. From these lines you can also see the rhyming couplets like lives, gives and knell, hell. Ending a paragraph like ‘ hell’ emphasises that Macbeth has taken a bad decision. This helps emphasises the point that he is not going back on his decision.

In Act3 Scene4, this is when the murderer kills Banquo. He comes to Macbeth where they all having the dinner. The first murderer said to Macbeth that “ my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides, with twenty trenched gashes on his head”. Now Macbeth knows that the Banquo is dead but in front of other people he questions people like where is Banquo and he also says that it would be nicer if he were there. He is hypocritical and this shows some of his tyrant qualities.