

How fiend like is lady  
macbeth



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Lady Macbeth is called a “ fiend-like Queen”. How far do you consider this to be an accurate description? Shakespeare reflects the beliefs of his age.

People believed in a natural hierarchy in the 17th century often called the ‘ great chain of being’.

This says that God is at the top, angels beneath God, beneath angels there are humans, men above women. There was a similar hierarchy for society. This stated that the King would rule the country, men would rule women et cetera. It was seen to be sinful and unnatural for a woman to rule a man. In the play Lady Macbeth turns the order of the hierarchy as she seems to be the one ruling over Macbeth.

It is not just Lady Macbeth who doesn’t fit into the hierarchy, the witches also do not fit into it because they can neither be classified as men or women because they have female characteristics but also have beards. Lady Macbeth is seen as a ‘ fiend-like Queen’ because she plans the death of Duncan. In the 17th century it was ultimate evil to kill a king because people believed the king was chosen by God. When Lady Macbeth reads the letter by Macbeth she instantly decides that she will make Macbeth kill the king in order for the prophecy to come true. “ That I may pour my spirits in thine ear”, Lady Macbeth says that she will try to influence Macbeth with evil thoughts, example given, death of Duncan so that he can become king because she knows that Macbeth will not do it without being influenced because of his nature. Throughout the play Lady Macbeth is in control and tells Macbeth what to do.

She manipulates Macbeth and questions him about his manhood when he decides it isn't right to do something. Macbeth: If we should fail? Lady Macbeth: We fail? But screw your courage to the sticking-place, And we'll not fail. She manipulates Macbeth into going through and murdering Duncan even though he had second thoughts. She knows that Macbeth's manhood is central to his sense of his own identity so she questions it because she knows that in order to prove that he is a man he will do what she says. And live a coward in thine own esteem.

Also she manipulates Macbeth because she knows that he won't do anything due to his nature. When Lady Macbeth read the letter Macbeth sent her about the prophecies she knew that it was important for Duncan to be dead. Even though Lady Macbeth hasn't met the witches at all she responds to the witches' prophecy which was that Macbeth would be king. "Come, you spirits That tend on mortal thoughts! Unsex me here, Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood, Stop the access and passage to remorse" Lady Macbeth calls on the spirits of darkness and say to make her unwomanly.

She uses phrases which are associated with women, "my milk" and says to turn it into "gall" this makes her unwomanly and therefore she doesn't fit any category because she isn't a man yet she won't have any characteristics of a woman, she becomes almost like a witch because they also do not fit into any category and also witches are evil and she is calling upon evil to do this. She also says "Unsex me here" which means to take away all her feminine qualities again making her. She isn't a "fiend-like queen" because she can't hide what she feels when she sees Duncan's dead body. She faints as soon as the people start asking Macbeth questions this making it easier

for Macbeth and drawing attention away from himself because they can tell something is wrong. This is ironic in a way because the night when they were killing Duncan she wasn't concerned at all but now she pretends to. If Lady Macbeth was really fiend-like then she would show no regret and have no conscience.

At the beginning of the play after Duncan's death, Lady Macbeth seems to be coping but after a while she cannot pretend that everything is all right and starts to give up acting. Lady Macbeth can no longer pretend and has to admit her feminine nature which is to be emotional and be affected by what she made Macbeth do. She had said for there to be dark when the evil deed was done, now Lady Macbeth has got to keep a light by her side " She has a light by her continually, 'tis her command". This shows that now she is afraid of the dark as she had asked for there to be dark so that heaven couldn't see what she was doing. She becomes driven mad by guilt by the end of play. At the beginning she is calm and in control of everything she does.

She starts sleepwalking and all she thinks about is the death of Duncan. Yet here's a spot ... Out, damned spot! Out, I say! ... What, will these hands ne'er be clean? ... Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Lady Macbeth is no longer in control of what she does. She is paying the price. This eventually becomes too much for her to handle and commits suicide. If she was really fiend-like her conscience wouldn't come back and haunt her.

When Lady Macbeth dies Macbeth doesn't mourn for her. " She should have died hereafter; there would have been a time for such a word". He doesn't

care that she's dead he would've preferred if she dies later on. Lady Macbeth damned herself for Macbeth and now he doesn't care. After Duncan's death they became distant.

Macbeth wouldn't tell her about what he was planning to do. Also whatever Lady Macbeth asked to happen to her has happened to Macbeth. She asked for her to be fearless and now Macbeth has become fearless just like a warrior. On the battlefield he was always fearless.

Over the years, the fear of being discovered gradually strips Macbeth of the ability to have any human emotions. He becomes a full knight, not just brave: but ruthless; not just bold, but cruel; not just ambitious, but stripped of all meaning or motive to hang on power. In my opinion I don't think that Lady Macbeth is fiend-like because if you are fiend-like then you would have no emotions or guilt and Lady Macbeth does show this at the end of the play unlike her husband who doesn't really care anymore. Also whilst planning Duncan's death she says " Had he not resembled My father as he slept, I had done't. " She still couldn't bring herself to kill Duncan even though she had called on the evil spirits to help her do this because Duncan reminds her of her father when he sleeps.