

Kingship in macbeth analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Until the Victorian era, the reigning monarch had complete control over the country. The monarch was capable of uniting the country or creating unrest and chaos. England was very unstable following Henry VIII rule until Elizabeth. Elizabeth had a very strong personality and managed to unite the country. However, she had no heir and named James I (James VII of Scotland) as her heir. The comparison between Macbeth and Duncan is made in Macbeth as a political point, as well as being a dramatic device.

Shakespeare is showing James I the need to be strong and virtuous, unlike Macbeth. The king-becoming graces are defined in IV: 3 as justice, verity, temperance, stableness, bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness, devotion, patience, courage and fortitude. Duncan is the epitome of a good King whilst it is said that Not in the legions Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd In evils to top Macbeth. (IV: 3 56-57) Duncan is very just. He rewards good service and is unafraid to punish traitors.

This is seen in I: 4 when the Thane of Cawdor is punished for treason and his titles are given to Macbeth. Macbeth, however, is never just once he is corrupted by the witches. The obvious example of this is that he kills anyone who he feels has crossed him, including women and children. Duncan is very honest, a quality which can also be seen in I: 4. Duncan says of the first Thane of Cawdor He was a gentleman on whom I built An absolute trust. (I: 4 13-14) A weak King, such as Macbeth, would not have admitted to being so trusting.

Macbeth distrusts people to such an extent that he has spies in their houses and constantly lies and equivocates, even to his best friend (and second

victim) Banquo. [Of the witches] I think not of them (II: 1 22) Duncan is a stable and controlled King. He is very dignified and regal, doing everything as it should be done and never lashing out or wanting revenge, even against the Thane of Cawdor who was a traitor. Macbeth too is dignified and radiates self-control whilst he is a Thane.

Once he becomes King, the evil leads him to lose his stableness. He is determined to be ruthless and dabbles with supernatural powers to achieve his aim. When he sees Banquos ghost during the Banquet in III: 4, he loses control of himself completely. Also, whilst Duncan rewards and encourages his subjects, such as when he calls Lady Macbeth Fair and noble hostess, (I: 6 24) There is no need for Duncan to say this but he does because his is kind and polite. Macbeth is never encouraging to his subjects, telling a boy that he is a Liar and slave! (V: 6 36) and that If thou speaks false, Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive. (V: 6 39-40)

Duncan is very merciful because he is Christian and also to provide an opposite to Macbeth. Whilst some may consider Duncan too merciful for his own good, he is far better than Macbeth who even kills a defenceless child. Macbeth is very ambitious and perseveres to achieve his goal although the way that he does this is terrible killing women, children and many other murders that are only hinted at.

Organic imagery is used throughout the play to emphasize how Scotland will develop and flourish under a good King but will be hewn down by a bad King. Where as Duncan is a natural King, the robes dwarf Macbeth. This is something that Banquo hints at unknowing of Macbeth's intentions in I: 3. ...

strange garments, cleave not to their mould. (I: 3 145) Duncan is remembered with love, honour and respect but Macbeth is remembered as a bloody butcher at the end of the play with a fiend-like Queen.