

# [How does shakespeare manipulate the audience’s view of macbeth essay](https://assignbuster.com/how-does-shakespeare-manipulate-the-audiences-view-of-macbeth-essay/)

This depends on the audience, and their interpretation of a hero. Exactly what constitutes a hero has no doubt changed since 1600, although some of the core elements have remained the same. For example, in Shakespeare’s time, a hero had to be – without exception – male. This, although perhaps not strictly true today – due to sexism issues – is usually the case with fictional modern day heroes. Macbeth’s character can be interpreted in different ways, giving directors complete freedom when deciding how to portray the character.

Shakespeare attempts to manipulate the audience into seeing Macbeth as a Machiavellian hero, although Macbeth’s character sometimes echoes a Greek tragic hero – his ambition being his downfall. Shakespeare has used imagery to get across the true feelings or personality of the characters or setting that it relates to. In Act 1 Sc 2, the Captain makes many references to nature, such as “ Yes, as sparrows eagles; or the hare the lion. ” He is comparing the relationships between different animals to the present situation on the battlefield, to hammer the true meaning of the scene across to the audience.

Relationships between animals in nature was mostly common knowledge at the time, and so Shakespeare has used this to create very clear cut parties – good or evil. In Act 3 Sc 3, the porter compares Macbeth’s castle to hell itself, as he says, “ But this place is too cold for Hell. ” He is referring to the fact that the castle has seen no less than two cold-blooded murders recently, and that there seems to be no limits to the evil of the place.

This is another good example of Shakespeare using imagery to manipulate the audience’s view of a character or setting, as the setting for the characters can often show their true personalities as well as their speech. On stage, a director could choose to portray an evil character by dressing him/her in dark clothes and dimming the lighting when they are on stage – as black is often associated with evil. Macbeth is often set in a dark castle with thunder, lightning and rain, to build up the spooky atmosphere. Shakespeare has used iambic pentameter to highlight specific words in the speech of the characters.

This can help actors to ‘ stress’ certain key words, and get the true meaning of their lines across to the audience. This is only effective on stage, as the play is designed to be acted out, not just read. An example of this would be Macbeth’s soliloquy in Act 5 Sc 5, in which Shakespeare uses iambic pentameter so that keywords like ‘ death’ and ‘ fury’ are stressed. This gives the audience a clear idea of what Macbeth is thinking, and how his character has changed since the beginning of the play – from a good man to an evil dictator.

Shakespeare also uses this technique as a means of separating different characters into different classes. Those who speak in iambic pentameter are often high in society, such as the King and Queen – and this idea is strengthened by the fact that less socially-important characters, such as the porter and maid, speak in blank verse. The unearthly witches, however, speak with three beats in a line, to separate them from the human characters in the play, and create a supernatural air about them.

Even a simple technique such as iambic pentameter can aid Shakespeare in his attempt to manipulate his audience, by separating his characters into different groups, and perhaps even highlighting the differences between them in terms of good and evil. At the beginning of the play, Shakespeare wanted us to see Macbeth as a good, law-abiding man. We see his reluctant attitude towards murdering Duncan through his words and actions, and we see that Lady Macbeth pushes him into it. Shakespeare makes it clear that it is more Lady Macbeth’s ambition than Macbeth’s, that is driving him to murder.

Lady Macbeth is arguably more evil than her husband, and is almost certainly the main driving force behind the events of the play. Her true colours come across to the audience in Act 1 Sc 5, when she refers to Macbeth as a coward as she says, “ It is too full o’ th’ milk of humane kindness, to catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great, art not without ambition, but with the illness should attend it. ” Here, she is saying that Macbeth is too troubled by his conscience to take the opportunity available to him, so she decides she will have to ‘ encourage’ him.

Macbeth knows that murdering the King is morally wrong, and he shows this in scenes such as Act 1 Sc 7. He says, “ I dare do all that may become a man, who dares do more, is none” and “ We will proceed no further in this business” which clearly shows his reluctance towards the idea, or even discussing it. It is the inclusion of scenes such as these that help Shakespeare to manipulate the audience, as he wanted the blame to fall on Lady Macbeth’s shoulders, rather than Macbeth himself.

Lady Macbeth taunts him in Act 1 Sc 7 with “ Would’st thou have that which thou esteem’st the ornament of life, and live a coward in thine own esteem, letting ‘ I dare not’ wait upon ‘ I would'”. This again distracts the audience from the wrong that Macbeth is about to do, and puts Lady Macbeth in the frame as the evil character. Shakespeare deliberately creates a contrast between the nature of Lady Macbeth and Macbeth himself. At the beginning of the play, she is the strong-willed, ambitious person. It is Macbeth who is weak and uncertain.

Shakespeare shows us throughout the play how her character is affected by the murders of Duncan and Banquo so that she goes mad and commits suicide. This helps to humanise her slightly, as up to now she has shown little emotion, as well as distracting the audience from the fact that she is even more evil than Macbeth. Another way in which Shakespeare highlights the fact that Macbeth was driven to evil through his ambitions, is by the use of other characters in the play, such as Banquo. Banquo is much like Macbeth at the start of the play – a brave and loyal soldier, and he too is given a prophecy by the witches.

Unlike Macbeth, he recognises that the witches are evil, and manages to resist these temptations. Shakespeare is showing us, through the use of Banquo, how Macbeth should have reacted, in order for the audience to compare the two characters, Banquo and Macbeth. This way, the audience can draw their own conclusions about Macbeth, and recognise the moment when Macbeth began to change. In Act 5 Sc 5, Shakespeare demonstrates the effective use of soliloquies, during Macbeth’s speech on how meaningless his life is, with the words, “ The way to dusty death.

Out, out, brief candle, life’s but a walking shadow” which shows us Macbeth’s deep regret for what he has done and how his life is over. Soliloquies are effective in the sense that they show the audience what the character is thinking, without the other characters on stage being aware of it. This helps to manipulate the audience’s view of a particular character. A director could achieve this by freezing all other characters stage, dimming the lights, and focusing a spotlight on the character whilst they spill out their thoughts and feelings.

Shakespeare uses dramatic irony to hammer an important message across to the audience. Dramatic irony can help influence the audience by providing them with information that the characters on stage are unaware of. An example of dramatic irony is Act 2 Sc 3, in which the drunken porter describes the castle gates as the gates to Hell, which is not too far from the truth as it happens. The way that Shakespeare structures some of the scenes is another important factor in how he can manipulate his audience’s view of the characters, particularly Macbeth.

Shakespeare tends to end scenes that feature Macbeth with a display of his fear or regret, which shows us how his character is developing deep down, by showing us what his human conscience is saying to him. An example of this could be Act 2 Sc 1, in which Macbeth’s closing lines are “ False face must hide what the false heart doth know”, which shows Macbeth’s conscience surfacing, even though he has agreed to murder the King. Another example would be Act 2 Sc 3, where he ends with “‘ Twere best not know myself. Wake Duncan with thy knocking: I would thou could’st” which means that if he could turn the clock back – he would.

This is another sign of regret, and strengthens the fact that Macbeth becomes more evil throughout the play, when we compare it to his contrasting speech near the very end, which is very cold and merciless. In the development of the characters throughout the play, Shakespeare twists the audience’s metaphorical arm into seeing each of them as he intended. Certain aspects of Macbeth’s character can be compared to the idea of a Aristotelian hero – the fact that a good man can become evil due to a flaw, and then redeem himself at the end.

This can be applied to Macbeth, as he fights bravely until the very end, although he regrets all he has done. This could be looked upon as him redeeming himself, as he briefly returns to the same good, sane state of mind that we saw early on in the play. At the beginning of the play, the witches played a major part in revealing the evil side of Macbeth, and their purpose in the plot is to highlight and take advantage of Macbeth’s weakness – his burning ambition for the throne.

Shakespeare may have used many clever tricks to manipulate his audience, but directors can also use techniques of their own to achieve the same goal. They can take into account, for instance, the character’s clothes and facial expressions. Shakespeare did not go into any detail on such aspects in his writing, and so the director has almost complete freedom in how to go about it. Having studied many different video versions of Macbeth, it is obvious that purely physical aspects, such as setting, clothes, or even accent, do not change or damage the original story or it’s intended atmosphere.

As the characters and plot can be applied to almost any era/setting, Shakespeare has ensured that his play will never go stale, but will always remain fresh and new with each different version produced, based on different directors interpretations and views of the original script. An audience’s response would not be entirely different today than it was in 1600. What constitutes good and evil has not changed, although we may now have a different idea of where good ends and evil begins.

A hero today is someone who rescues a child from a burning building, not a merciless soldier who slices people from the groin upwards. Society was generally more brutal in 1600 than today, so what we might consider to be evil nowadays was most likely overlooked back then. Shakespeare simply looked at how society then pictured a hero, and gave them a hero, in the form of Macbeth. Society may have changed, as well as our personal views, but our basic human morals will always remain the same and that is what Shakespeare has taken into account when writing Macbeth.

He knows that we know ‘ it is wrong to kill the King’, and has twisted this idea to such an extent, that even the most moral-driven audience can sympathise with Macbeth. The aim of Macbeth is to portray the idea that a good man can be driven to evil by his ambitions, and, due to Shakespeare’s clever manipulation techniques, it succeeds, in the sense that we can identify with Macbeth, even though he is a cold-blooded killer. Macbeth can be approached from many different angles, depending on your viewpoint, and that is what has contributed to its success as a play, as well as a piece of expertly crafted moralistic storytelling.