

Macbeth historical context essay sample

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



In William Shakespeare's Macbeth the male characters Macbeth, Macduff, Banquo and Duncan really give you an insight into the time the play was written. Shakespeare's Macbeth was written in the Elizabethan era during King James' reign as King over 400 years ago.

King Duncan is introduced to the play in act 1 scene 2. King Duncan is seen as a great, noble, highly thought of King. He is the Monarch which is the highest in the social order. "Go pronounce his present death,

And with his former title greet Macbeth." This quote conveys the power King Duncan has and the price you have to pay for committing treason. King Duncan also thought highly of Macbeth and Banquo and considers them high up in the social order, as this quote highlights; "Dismayed not this Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?" "This castle hath a pleasant seat" This quote shows how wealthy you were if you were high up in the social order that they could have castles and could have lavish parties/banquets. When King Duncan was killed he was seen as a virtuous King which would've appealed to King James.

Banquo is an acquaintance of Macbeth. Banquo was a thane and he was apart of The Nobility in the social order, which is just below the king. Banquo would've been a far off relative of King James and Shakespeare portrayed him as a noble, brave, great thane but in reality he was an evil tyrant. "Speak if you can: what are you?" Banquo is desperate for the witches to tell him his prophecy and they tell him he is less than Macbeth but he is still basically high up in the social order which was important to them. "O treachery! – Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!"

Thou mayst revenge! – O slave” This quote shows the importance of vengeance which was very important to men’s reputation.

Macduff is the darkhorse of the play. Macduff is also a thane and is also part of The Nobility “ O gentle lady,

Tis not for you to hear what I can speak.” This introduces us to the note of women being seen as less tough/strong than men and Macduff is saying Lady Macbeth shouldn’t hear about the gruesome murder of King Duncan. Macduff and Malcolm plan to overthrow Macbeth as he has turned into an evil tyrant and is running Scotland into the ground. “ Make all our trumpets speak give them all breath,

Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death!” In this era wars happened quite often because of a disagreement or problems with a country.

Macbeth is a true example of a tragic hero. At the beginning of the play Macbeth is seen a noble, brave, great thane and part of The Nobility. In the play the witches played a major part of Macbeth’s downfall. “ Speak if you can: what are you?” This quote is the first encounter has with the witches. King James was very interested in the supernatural and even wrote about it. Shakespeare may have put aspects of the supernatural in the play to keep the King intrigued.

Once Macbeth starts to have murderous thoughts he says this very famous quote; “ Stars hide your fires,
Let not light see my black and deep desires.”

In the play it emphasises that every evil happened in darkness. Elizabethans

also believed in this. “ I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent but only Vaulting ambition.” In theatre Macbeth is known for being ambitious but his ‘ vaulting ambition’ ended up being his downfall.

In Macbeth, Macbeth was known for his relationship with his controlling wife, Lady Macbeth. “ My dearest love.” Not all relationships in that era were genuine but Lady Macbeth and Macbeth seemed to have an affectionate/strong relationship as the quote shows. In the Elizabethan era men were seen as the superior sex and were seen as being brave and noble. “ When you durst do it, then you were a man.” This quote is Lady Macbeth questioning Macbeth’s manliness for being hesitant for King Duncan’s murder which would’ve been a massive insult to a man as they were seen as being superior. At the beginning of the play Macbeth is seen as a noble, great thane but by the end he is seen as an evil tyrant, he is a true example of a tragic hero. William Shakespeare’s the characters really give you an insight into the Elizabethan era. The male characters shows us how they were seen as being superior and how important being high up in the social order really is and we can see the contrast in our day age now compared to their era.