

Sad, bad, or mad? do
you consider
macbeth to be a
tragic hero, evil, or
bewitched...



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A tragic hero is someone who must begin noble and good, but is imperfect, so that the audience can see themselves in him. They are doomed from the start. In Macbeth's case the witches are first on stage, and are planning to meet with Macbeth in the very beginning. FIRST WITCH When shall we meet again? ... THIRD WITCH There to meet with Macbeth.

This shows that the witches are already plotting Macbeth's fate. A tragic hero must make a wrong decision himself or has a character flaw (ambitious, greedy...) which leads them down a path of bad events because of that one choice. They must realise what they have done, so this makes the audience feel sorry for the hero. The audience also feels fear because they know that the choice they made had led the character down a path of evil from which they cannot turn back.

This follows Aristotle's theory of tragedy which should inspire pity and fear in the audience. It can't be stopped until the events have worked themselves out and their natural order restored. The real Macbeth lived 1005-1057, and he ruled for 17 years. That proves that he must have been a good king and he created peace and order.

He was also buried on Iona which was the traditional place for Scottish kings. When Macbeth was killed, his son, Lulach, took the throne, but he was nicknamed ' Simple' so only reigned for one year. Banquo is real in the play, his character is changed but he was involved in killing Duncan. James thought he could trace his ancestry back to Banquo. 1603 James I (already James VI of Scotland) – Shakespeare wanted to impress the new king so he decided to write a Scottish play. James believed in the divine right of kings.

If you kill kings you come to a horrible end. Killing kings was thought of as a crime against God and witches were associated with death. James was fascinated by witches- believed in them. He even wrote a book about attacking witchcraft, it was called: Daemonology. In 1590 Dr Fran and the witches of Berwick were tortured and made to confess.

Shakespeare adapted his historical characters and events in a play which he hoped would please the new king. At the start of the play you see Macbeth's character in several different ways. He has been fighting well in battle. '... Like valour's minion carved out his passage Till he faced the slave;' Macbeth sounds brutal but brave as well. You could say that Macbeth is a killer, but you could also say that he is noble and doing his duty for his king and country.

In general Macbeth seems to have been respected: ' Worthy gentleman! ' Just before Macbeth and Banquo meet with the witches Macbeth says: ' So foul and fair a day I have not seen. ' In scene 1 the witches have already said: ' Fair is foul, and foul is fair. ' You could say that this shows that Macbeth already has some sort of connection with the witches, which backs up the idea that he is bewitched later on in the play. Macbeth's first reaction to the witches is disbelief and he questions the witches. But he also seemed eager to know more: ' Tell me more.

' ' would they had stayed...' Macbeth was hoping and believing the witches predictions, even though he has only just met them. I think that when Macbeth is made Thane of Cawdor it is an important part of the play. I think this because it's when Macbeth starts to actually believe in what the witches

told him. And most importantly he starts to consider the idea of murdering Duncan: ' My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical. ' Macbeth was just fantasising about murdering Duncan and the good consequences for him. There was no reality in it.

I think that if it wasn't for the witches, Macbeth would never have even thought about murdering Duncan to become king. But you could argue that Macbeth may have been considering it anyway, but the witches just encouraged the idea and recognised the weakness in his character. Before Macbeth met with the witches, he was said to have been fighting well:

CAPTAIN For brave Macbeth – well he deserves that name- Disdaining fortune, with is brandished steel, Which smoked with bloody execution...This is evidence that Macbeth wasn't thinking about murdering Duncan before the witches predicted it. He was fighting well for his country, which is proof that he respects and wants to impress the king. Lady Macbeth seems determined to persuade Macbeth into going through with the murder: ' That I may pour my spirits in thine ear And chastise with the valour of my tongue All that impedes thee from the golden round...' Lady Macbeth knows that she will be able to persuade Macbeth, this shows how much power she has over him. Usually it's the husband that has power over the wife but in this case it's different.

Lady Macbeth even asks to be man: ' unsex me here and fill me from the crown to the toe topfull of direst cruelty...' Lady Macbeth's words are very strong in contrast to Macbeth's; it makes Macbeth seem good, in comparison. Lady Macbeth is completely driven by ambition, without

thought. Whereas Macbeth thinks things through and reasons with himself, it <https://assignbuster.com/sad-bad-or-mad-do-you-consider-macbeth-to-be-a-tragic-hero-evil-or-bewitched/>

takes him ages to be sure of a decision. Macbeth decides that he is not going to go through with it: '...If th'assassination Could trammel up, the consequences...' This proves that Macbeth still has a moral conscience and is aware that if he did the deed there would be consequences. It also shows that Macbeth isn't all evil and knows that what he plans to do is wrong. '... But in these cases We still have judgement here that we but teach Bloody instructions, which being taught, return To plague th'inventor.

' Macbeth is saying that evil actions had a habit on rebounding on the people who do it. Macbeth is really thinking about whether he should do it or not. He seems fully aware that it will fire back on him. Macbeth's moral state is good here, he is realising how serious it really is.

Another of Macbeth's reasons not to do it: '...he's here in double trust: First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,' This shows that Macbeth does have a lot of respect for the king and knows that it is his duty to look after the guest. It is evidence against the argument that he is evil. Macbeth thinks that Duncan has been a good king: ' So clear in his great office...' He has many reasons why he shouldn't kill Duncan, and he seems almost positive that he isn't going to go through with it. Even the audience starts to have respect for Macbeth compared to in act 1 scene 4, when Macbeth is deceiving Duncan about the true nature of his friendship, our emotional response to him is one of intense dislike. ' The service and the loyalty I owe, in doing it, pays itself. ' Macbeth exaggerates his respect for Duncan.

You could say that he resembles a tragic hero because he knows how terrible the deed is and is deciding for himself. But then Lady Macbeth seems to be able to change his mind with her harsh and exaggerated words: ' And live a coward in thine own esteem,' One of Lady Macbeth's main tactics of persuading Macbeth is to make him feel guilty: ' From this time, Such I account thy love. ' Just because Macbeth won't kill the king Lady Macbeth is accusing Macbeth of not loving her. She speaks to Macbeth with disdain, and she is always the one in control. In those days it was thought that the man should be the one in control.

I think that is one of the main reasons why Macbeth gives into Lady Macbeth. He wants to prove Lady Macbeth wrong and show that he is a man and isn't a coward. ' When you durst do it, then you were a man. And to be more than what you were, you would Be so much more the man. ' Lady Macbeth is saying that she is more a man than he is.

That can't have made Macbeth feel good about himself. Everyone has been saying what a great and noble fighter he has been. Lady Macbeth says some really grotesque things, which just show what a vile and evil person she is. In contrast Macbeth doesn't seem bad at all. Lady Macbeth says: '...I have given suck and know How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me: I would, while it was smiling in my face, Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums And dashed the brains out,' Lady Macbeth uses this horrifying imagery to persuade Macbeth, and it seems to work. In this scene Lady Macbeth never shows any sign of doubt or fear, in fact you could say that she almost seems excited: '...our great quell...' And very confident: ' Who dares receive it other...' She is talking from a position of evil strength.

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At the very end of the scene when Lady Macbeth has succeeded in convincing Macbeth to go through with it, Macbeth seems like he'll do it just to stop Lady Macbeth insulting him. He says: ' I am settled and bend up Each corporal agent to this terrible feat...'Macbeth has given in to Lady Macbeth, this shows that Macbeth is under the influence of her, and is worn down by her endless insistence. ' False face must hide what the false heart doth know. ' It could be interpreted that Macbeth is saying that he has to hide his face with a mask to convince those around them of their pretend grief. They need to act as if everything is normal so that nobody suspects them.

Macbeth thinks that it will be difficult to cover it up. He recognises his ' false heart' which implies that he isn't totally happy with Lady Macbeth's plan. After Lady Macbeth's persuasion it is obvious that Macbeth is feeling very uneasy and nervous. (When he sees the dagger: ' Is this a dagger which I see before me...') When Banquo asks: ' Who's there? ' Macbeth replies: ' A friend. ' That is a good example of dramatic irony, because the audience may suspect what Macbeth does later on to Banquo, and that Macbeth really isn't a good friend.

There is more evidence that Macbeth is feeling unsettled. He lies to Banquo: BANQUO I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters... MACBETH I think not of them. If Macbeth was genuine there would be no need to lie. Also when Macbeth says: '..

being unprepared... ' That could be a reflection of how he is feeling about the whole plot to murder Duncan.

This shows that Macbeth is not confident about it and very anxious. When Macbeth appears to see a dagger you could argue many things. Either Macbeth is going mad and hallucinating it or the witches created it. In Macbeth's speech there is the whole idea of things being supernatural, and nature being turned on its head, which is associated with the witches. 'Nature seems dead and wicked dreams abuse the curtained sleep. Dreams are meant to be positive, sleep is a time of rest, restoration and comfort – you're meant to enjoy it.

Without sleep you wouldn't be able to think straight. However after Macbeth murdered Duncan he said: 'Macbeth does murder sleep'. Macbeth describes his dreams as unpleasant and 'wicked'. This shows that sleep is more like torture than a time of rest. That could be another excuse for Macbeth's strange behaviour later on in the play.

Death is obviously on his mind: 'Moves like a ghost' Again the idea of things being supernatural – ghosts can go through walls. They are also associated with the after life and that could be associated with consequences. Macbeth is still having doubts about whether he should do it. The audience doesn't feel sure whether Macbeth is good or bad at this stage, because he is so aware of how evil it is. We know that Macbeth does have a good side to him, but he is so mixed up in whether to murder Duncan or not, he doesn't seem to care anymore.

Then 'A bell rings'. Shakespeare obviously put that there for a reason. It seems as if the bell finalised Macbeth's decision. It's telling him to stop

thinking it over and just go through with it. MACBETH I go, and it is done: the bell invites me.

Hear it not Duncan: for it is a knell That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

At this point you feel sure that Macbeth is going to murder Duncan.

Macbeth's words here are short and final, whereas in previous scenes he has made long speeches and changed his mind several times. Again this indicates that Macbeth is fed up with trying to decide, even though deep down we know that he knows that what he is doing is wrong. Lady Macbeth shows a side of her that is almost vulnerable and sad. LADY MACBETH ...Had he not resembled My father as he slept, I had done't.

This shows that lady Macbeth isn't as tough and manly as she makes herself out to be. But it could be argued that she is just making excuses, because she didn't want to do it. After Macbeth has done the deed he doesn't seem happy or even relieved. MACBETH (looking at his hands) This is a sorry sight.

LADY MACBETH A foolish thought to say a sorry sight. Lady Macbeth talks as if nothing has happened, as if everything will go back to normal. Macbeth could not say Amen, he feels cut off from God. MACBETH But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'? This could be proof of Macbeth being bewitched, not being able to say something.

Or Macbeth could be feeling guilty about killing Duncan, because it was an act against God. It shows that Macbeth is aware that what he did was terrible, and the audience does feel empathy for him when he says he feels too evil to say prayers, which is evidence that he could be a tragic hero. At

least Macbeth still has some moral judgement. Macbeth thought he heard
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voices: ' Me thought I heard a voice cry, ' Sleep no more, Macbeth does murder sleep. ' Macbeth is hinting that by murdering Duncan he has also murdered sleep, and can no longer sleep.

It is not normal to hear voices, so this backs up the theory of him being mad, or bewitched. But it could be Macbeth's conscience, trying to warn him, or tell him that he shouldn't have done it. His guilt may have triggered it. It is ironic when Lady Macbeth refers to the two of them going mad: ' These deeds must not be thought After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

We know that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth will not be able to ' just not think about it' very easily. Once again Macbeth mentions voices telling him that he will not sleep. Sleep would help to clear his mind, but if Macbeth cannot sleep then he will not be able to get the murder out of his head, and it will drive him mad. Macbeth is obviously feeling really bad after what he has done and is starting to see no point in doing it. He feels terrified to look back on it: ' I'll go no more. I am afraid to think what I have done – Look on't again, I dare not.

' Macbeth is so ashamed of what he has done, he wants to forget about it and push it out of his mind -but he can't: ' Clean from my hand? No – this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red. ' Macbeth fears that his conscience will never be clear again, he will always feel guilty. He even wishes that Duncan will awake: ' Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would though couldst.

This makes you feel sorry for him, because he feels true remorse for what he has done. This backs up the theory that he is a tragic hero. Macbeth kills the <https://assignbuster.com/sad-bad-or-mad-do-you-consider-macbeth-to-be-a-tragic-hero-evil-or-bewitched/>

two guards in case they deny murdering King Duncan. When Lady Macbeth finds out she is so surprised that she faints. LADY MACBETH Help me hence, ho! Lady Macbeth reacts like this because it took a lot of persuasion and time to get Macbeth to kill Duncan.

He spent time thinking it over, he listed many reasons why he shouldn't do it, and it was generally important to Macbeth. Then suddenly Macbeth kills another two men without even telling Lady Macbeth. MACBETH O, yet I do repent me of my fury That I did kill them. Macbeth says it as if it was nothing –killing the guards.

He made the decision himself whereas before, he was led on by the witches and Lady Macbeth. This is where the chain of events starts; he's killed three people and if someone is even the tiniest bit in the way of his plans, he will have to kill them. I think that Macbeth does set in motion the chain of events himself, because no body told him to murder the guards, he made the decision himself. When Macbeth ordered Banquo to be murdered it was for his own selfish security. To be thus is nothing but to be safely thus. ' Macbeth is willing to get his innocent ' friend' murdered just for power.

It shows what a monster he is turning into. Macbeth is presuming that the witches other predictions will come true: ' They hailed him father to a line of kings. ' Macbeth obviously doesn't want that to happen so he has to act on it. You could argue that this shows that he is bewitched because he believes that what the witches said will come true. He believes them because their predictions ' hail thee, Thane of Glamis' ' Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor,' and ' All hail Macbeth that shalt to King hereafter! have all come true.

Macbeth lays all the blame onto the murderers, as if it was their plan to murder Banquo in the first place. He echoes Lady Macbeth's words by questioning their manhood: ' Do you find Your patience so predominant in your nature That you can let this go? ' Macbeth makes them out to be wimps if they don't do it, which is exactly what Lady Macbeth did before Macbeth murdered Duncan: ' Are you so gospelled To pray for this goos man and for his issue, Whose heavy hand bowed you to the grave And beggared yours forever? ' Like lady Macbeth did, Macbeth made excuses why he wasn't doing the deed himself. MACBETH ... and thought I could With barefaced power sweep him from my sight... Also like Lady Macbeth had, Macbeth had it all planned out, and orders the murderers: ' Acquaint you with the perfect spy o'the time...' This makes you wonder whether Macbeth is turning into the evil and dark lady Macbeth, who called all the evil spirits onto her (' Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here...') and by Macbeth echoing her words when speaking to the murderers, you could say he is associating himself with Lady Macbeth's evil.

Lady Macbeth and Macbeth are both having regrets about murdering Duncan, and realising that they are getting nothing good out of it. LADY MACBETH Nought's had, all's spent. But they still carry on because of their greed to keep their position and they probably don't know what else to do. Also Macbeth doesn't seem to care that much about what he does. He says he wishes he were dead: ' Better be with the dead. ' This shows how horrible Macbeth is feeling, he seems almost bored with life.

But yet he still feels the draw of evil, pulling him into an ever more complicated web of deceit and destruction. He has gone too far to go back.
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(Later on in the play Macbeth says: ' Stepped in so far that I should wade no more. ') It shows how much more independent in deed Macbeth is getting, when he won't tell Lady Macbeth about his plans of murdering Banquo.

MACBETH ...there shall be done A deed of dreadful note. LADY MACBETH What's to be done? MACBETH Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck Till thou applauded the deed. Macbeth no longer needs Lady Macbeth to support him, and he hardly thinks it through himself. He has swapped roles with Lady Macbeth and he is now instigating the evil. In the next scene, there is evidence that , Macbeth is bewitched, mad or just feeling incredibly guilty for being responsible for the murder of Banquo, when he sees Banquo's ghost. MACBETH Thou canst not say I did it; never shake Thy gory locks at me! ' Lady Macbeth is embarrassed about Macbeth's behaviour and asks them to leave straight away: ' At once, good night.

Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once. ' This is another example of how things have been disturbed since the witches were introduced; even the order of them leaving is not how it usually is. Another piece of evidence of how Macbeth is feeling about everything: MACBETH I am in blood Stepped in so far that should I wade no more, Returning were as tedious as go o'er. The word ' tedious' shows that Macbeth is not getting any joy out of what he has done. He has more things on his mind that need doing before he actually stops and thinks. When Macbeth goes to the witches for the second time it is he who finds them, not them who find him.

MACBETH I will tomorrow – And betimes I will – to the weird sisters. He has been influenced by the witches. He wants to find out his future from them.

This could back up the argument that he is bewitched because he is going back to them and maybe they have bewitched him to take their word, even though he knows it is wrong. However I feel that this shows he is a tragic hero, because a tragic hero has to make his own choices. Once Macbeth has made one wrong decision, he can't stop.

Macbeth knows that the witches are bad, and at the beginning of the play he probably would have never even dreamt of going to them. But now everything is going downhill for him, and he knows it. Yet still he wants to know the worst that could happen to him. MACBETH Even till destruction sicken – answer me To what I ask you. Another piece of evidence showing how evil Macbeth has become: MACBETH Then live, Macduff, what need I fear of thee? But yet I'll make assurance double sure. And take a bond of fate – thou shall not live Even though Macbeth has been told he shouldn't fear Macduff he is still planning to kill him.

He has killed so many people it isn't an issue for him any more. For all of Act 2 scene 1 Macbeth was really indecisive about whether he should murder Duncan or not and then he felt seriously guilty about it. But now he has made his decision about murdering Macduff in the space of two lines. When Macbeth hears that Macduff has ' fled to England...' Macbeth immediately decides to get Macduff's wife, children and anyone else unfortunate enough to be in the castle killed. MACBETH ... seize upon Fife, give to th'edge o'th'sword His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls That trace him in his line. Macbeth has become insensitive.

He hardly even thinks about it. -' To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done. He has definitely moved on from the stage of indecisiveness and he's even moved on from thinking about the murders and doing it. He's not even thinking now.

This demonstrates Macbeth's decline in morality. There are logical reasons why Macbeth committed all these murders, if you ignore the morality. When he murdered Duncan it was because he wanted to be king. He murdered the two guards so they couldn't prove his guilt. He got Banquo murdered because Banquo was getting suspicious of Macbeth and the witches said his sons would be kings. Macbeth tried to get Fleance killed because he is Banquo's son.

But Macbeth had no reason at all to kill Macduff's wife, children and servants. Lady Macduff cannot be to blame for Macduff fleeing to England, when she was talking to Rosse she was complaining about it. It was completely unnecessary and motiveless of Macbeth to murder them. This backs up the idea that Macbeth has become a pure evil killer. When Macbeth finds out that Lady Macbeth is dead, the audience feels sorry for him.

SEYTON The queen, my lord, is dead. MACBETH She should have died hereafter, Macbeth is feeling guilty and saying that Lady Macbeth should have died peacefully in her bed and none of this should have happened. But you could also say that he is saying that Lady Macbeth should have lived through the consequences and realised what she had done. Then Macbeth goes on to say how pointless life is. MACBETH ... To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow.

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day ...Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player... In this speech it is hard not to feel sorry for Macbeth. This is evidence that he is a tragic hero; he has realised what he has done, and has realised how bad he has been, and that there is nothing he can do about it. By using the phrases 'petty pace' and 'poor player' it shows that it hasn't brought Macbeth any benefit. But when Macbeth hears about Birnam wood coming towards Dunsinane he pulls himself together.

Although he may not have realised it deep down Macbeth knows that his life is coming to an end, but he isn't going to give in, he is going to die doing what he does best -fighting. MACBETH Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! Come, wrack! At least we'll die with harness on our back. Macbeth's last words are of courage: 'yet I will try the last. Before my body I throw my warlike shield. Lay on Macduff, and damned be him that first cries, 'hold, enough!' The first and the last you hear of Macbeth, he is fighting. This shows that Macbeth still had some pride and hadn't given up on life completely, unlike Lady Macbeth; who just gave up.

In conclusion, I don't think Macbeth is completely a tragic hero, bewitched, mad or bad. There is a lot of evidence to support all of them. There are many points to back up that he is a tragic hero, for after he murdered Duncan he made all his own decisions, he realised what he had done and the audience felt sorry for him. There is evidence that he is bewitched: he believed in what the witches had said almost straight away, he was hearing voices, he was seeing ghosts and objects and he was doing things without even thinking. And there is also evidence that he is mad -he was hallucinating and hearing

things. And finally there is evidence that he is bad: After he murders Duncan he is numbed to the consequences of his actions.

If it wasn't for the influence of the witches and Lady Macbeth, Macbeth wouldn't have murdered Duncan, which was the beginning of the end. Macbeth deserved his fate.