

Macbeth: the witches' responsibility for macbeth's actions

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Macbeth: The Witches' Responsibility for Macbeth's Actions The three witches that are introduced at the beginning of the play are responsible for the introduction of the ideas that caused Duncan's death and Macbeth's destruction but not for Macbeth's actions themselves. They recount to Macbeth three prophecies; that Macbeth will be: 1) Thane of Cawdor, 2) Thane of Glamis, and 3) King. Macbeth welcomes the ideas spawned from the witches' prophecies, which is what triggered the spiral of events in this story. Macbeth eventually followed through with killing King Duncan. It was sometimes thought that the witches had the ability to reverse the natural order of things. This brings to the play the idea of fate and the role it has in the play. One can wonder if Macbeth ever had a chance of doing what was right after he heard the witches' prophecies. However, it is more realistic to believe that Macbeth was responsible for his own actions throughout the play and in the end it was he that made the final decisions. The witches could predict the future, they can add temptation, and influence Macbeth, but they cannot control his destiny. Macbeth creates his own misery when he is driven by the guilt of his actions. This causes him to become insecure about his actions, which causes him to commit more murders. The witches offer great enticement, but in the end, it is each individual's decision to fall for the temptation, or to be strong enough to resist their appeal. The three witches are only responsible for the introduction of these ideas and for further forming ideas in Macbeth's head, but they are not responsible for his actions throughout the play. Lady Macbeth is partly to blame for the manipulation and the encouragement she gave Macbeth to do her evil deeds. Lady Macbeth is shown early in the play as an ambitious woman with

a single purpose. She can manipulate Macbeth easily. This is shown in the line " That I may pour my spirits in thine ear" (1. 5. 26). She is selfless, and wants what is best for her husband. Before the speech that Lady Macbeth gives in Act I, Scene V, Macbeth has decided not to murder Duncan. However, Lady Macbeth manipulates Macbeth's self-esteem by playing on his manliness and his bravery. This convinces Macbeth to commit regicide. Her manipulation of Macbeth is like a child who is easily guided. Lady Macbeth knows this and acts on it. Although Macbeth has the final say in whether or not to go through with the murder, he loves his wife and wants to make her happy. Lady Macbeth is the dominating individual in the relationship, which is shown in her soliloquy in Act I, Scene V: The raven himself is hoarse that croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan under my battlements. Come, you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, and fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood, stop up th' access and passage to remorse, that no compunctious visitings of nature shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between th' effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts, and take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers, wherever in your sightless substances you wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night, and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, that my keen knife see not the wound it makes, nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark, to cry " Hold, hold!" (38-53) It seems that she can convince him to do anything as long as she pushes the right buttons. On the other hand, as the play progresses, and Duncan is killed, there is a reversal of natural order, and Macbeth becomes the dominating partner. Lady Macbeth slowly loses her sanity. She becomes delirious and only a

shadow of her former self. Ambition plays a large role in this tragedy. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have " vaulting ambition" that drives them. Lady Macbeth's ambition drives her to manipulate Macbeth into committing regicide. Macbeth's ambition was present before the witches' prophecies. Without the witches' prophecies and Lady Macbeth's manipulation, he would never have thought seriously about killing Duncan. It is Lady Macbeth who states " Thou wouldst be great, art not without ambition" (1. 5. 17-18). Macbeth states that: " I have no spur, to prick the sides of my intent, but only, vaulting ambition" (1. 7. 25-27). Macbeth's ambition is deep within him and because of this, both the witches and Lady Macbeth are able to sway him to evil. It is this ambition that gets him into so much trouble. Yet the combination of both his ambitious nature and the prophecies leads him to kill the king. Once Macbeth kills for the first time, he has no choice but to continue to cover up his actions, or risk losing everything he has worked for. In the end, it all comes down to Macbeth. Everyone is responsible for his own destiny. Macbeth is responsible for anything he does and must take responsibility for his actions. Macbeth is the one who made the final decision to kill Duncan. He made these final decisions and continued with the killings to cover Duncan's murder. The killing of Duncan starts an unstoppable chain of events in the play that ends with the murder of Macbeth and the suicide of Lady Macbeth. Macbeth chooses to murder Duncan. Macbeth, in the beginning had all of the qualities of an honorable gentleman who could become anything. This is all shattered when his ambition overrides his sense of morality. Although Macbeth is warned of the witches' prophecies, he is tempted and refuses to listen to Banquo. When the second set of prophecies

Macbeth receives begin to show their faults Macbeth blames the witches for deceiving him with half-truths. While the witches are not totally responsible for the actions of Macbeth, they are responsible for introducing the ideas to Macbeth that in turn fired up Macbeth's ambition and led to a disastrous and unnecessary chain of events.