

What was the main cause of macbeth's downfall

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Lady Macbeth and the witches appear to play a vital role in the actions of Macbeth in the play by William Shakespeare. From the opening scene the witches prophesy sets the course for the rest of the play. In act 1, the witches predict that Macbeth will one day become king. The opening scene tells us a lot about the play. Shakespeare immediately portrays to the Elizabethan audience that something sinister is to happen during the course of the play. The mention of Macbeth in the scene puts Macbeth in a negative light as the Elizabethan audience is greatly superstitious.

The moment that they saw witches on stage, they were likely to assume evil and treachery was to happen involving Macbeth. During scene 1, the witches end by saying 'Hover through the fog and filthy air'. This gives the audience a sense of mystery; an idea that something supernatural is at work. They're given the impression that something is being hidden in the darkness. It gives the impression of more to come and something deeper the audience is yet to see. Also, the conundrum, 'Fair is foul and foul is fair' causes them to think of the implications (apparently evil) that will come of this gathering.

In scene 5 of the same act, we see Lady Macbeth for the first time. She comes across to us as an ambitious woman, striving for greater things. To some, she appears admirable. A woman living in a time when she know that she cannot advance much higher than her current status, seizing an opportunity to better herself. Others have argued that in lady Macbeth, we possibly see a facet of the witches. It has been suggested that perhaps she is being controlled by them in the same way she manipulates her husband.

Furthermore, the darkness mentioned in line 49 of this scene 'come thick night...

Smoke of hell', gives the impression that there is some reference to the witches, and the assumingly unnatural fog from the opening scene. Many argue that this is evidence proving that the witches do have a hand in this plot. In this scene she has just received a letter from Macbeth telling of the witches forecast for him. It appears that from the moment she receives the letter, the Lady is plotting or perhaps contemplating how many people will have to be removed from the line of the throne for them to inherit. The audience is left wondering, does she do this for herself, or is she working for her husbands benefit?

The audience begins to consider that Macbeth is not the one pulling the strings as Macbeth seems content to wait for the witches predictions to prove true or false, whereas his wife seems to be more set on making these things happen. She appears ruthless; and when she says later in the scene, 'unsex me here, and fill me with the direst cruelty! ', we begin to see how badly she truly wants to succeed to the point she is almost pleading or praying to god (Elizabethans were extremely religious) to take away her not only her femininity but her humanity also. She is asking to become ruthless where Macbeth isn't.

These are traits which the audience would have compared with the witches. Earlier in the scene she says, "Thus thou must do', if thou have it, and that which rather thou dost fear to do [in reference to the killing of King Duncan]

than wishest should be undone'. She is saying that Macbeth is ambitious but scared to do what is required to achieve it; that he lacks the ruthlessness needed become king and to make her queen. Some argue that this scene proves that Macbeth alone would have been incapable of killing the king due to his loyalty and the character that Shakespeare built him up to be.

However, when Macbeth and Banquo hear the witches' prophecies for them, he seems eager where Banquo has reservations. Banquo doesn't necessarily believe the witches or at least is wary of their prophecies - dismissing them. In contrast, Macbeth is eager and wants to hear more. Macbeth says, ' Say you imperfect speakers tell me more'. He is pleading for more information. Throughout her second soliloquy, Lady Macbeth makes several references to her religion, asking for heaven's sight to be blinded. Shakespeare writes as her '...

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark, To cry 'Hold! Hold! ' She is hoping that God doesn't see what she is planning to do; which shows that although she is willing to do whatever it takes to achieve her goals, she still fears God. Macbeth in contrast, appears heroic before this. A champion fighter, prided for serving his country and his king in battle (a concept not unknown to the Elizabethans). He is comes across a loyal man, succumbing to the influence of evil (the witches) and overwhelmed with the ambition of his wife.

On the other hand, some might comment that Macbeth agreed to easily for any pressure to be inflicted upon him or more commonly that he was not

without ambition. Throughout the play we see time and time again Macbeth giving into his wife but ultimately to achieve his own goals. From the moment he and Lady Macbeth are reunited, they both seem to simply accept that the killing of Duncan was imminent. An event for their future set in time by God or fate. Lady Macbeth hails her husband, addressing him with his titles as she would a king.

She is already looking to their future as if it was the present and feels ruthless enough to bring it about, firstly by killing Duncan. She is constantly plotting to further herself which leads the audience to believe that if she is not influenced by the witches then act 1 scene 5 cannot be the first time she has contemplated her route to the throne are at least to a higher rank. The lady knows that without her husband her ambitions will never be fulfilled. Lady Macbeth is in a position where she can easily manipulate her husband as he trusts her.

Conversely, it doesn't often appear that she trusts or particularly loves him. She seems to see him only has ticket to royalty. Her steely determination eliminates all other thoughts in her mind in an arguably inhuman manner. Her whole demeanour is vicious and witchlike. Whether she is being manipulated by the witches or not could be irrelevant as she still contributed to Macbeth's downfall and she did influence him. After this however, Macbeth seems to be questioning their decision to kill the king. In this soliloquy, as in all soliloquies, the author gives us insight into the mind of his characters.

We have a chance to see exactly what Macbeth is thinking aside from the possible influences of his wife. The protagonist is struggling with his conscience, weighing the possible consequences against the possible gains. He knows that killing the king brings him one step closer to the throne; but he also believes that that will not be the end. Macbeth is scared, like his wife that their actions will have consequences in the afterlife (not going to heaven) - however unlike his wife, Macbeth doesn't know at this point, whether or not achieving aspirations in this life would be worth sacrificing life in heaven.

Shakespeare reveals in this soliloquy that Macbeth's loyalty to Duncan is also troubling him. He says that Duncan is there 'In double trust', implying that as the King's kinsman and subject as well as being his host, he should 'not bear the knife [himself]'. By the end of the soliloquy, Macbeth is expressing his awareness that such a 'Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself [can] fall on th'other'. He is saying that he knows that aspirations such as his have been known to bring about that persons downfall.

At this point, the audience begins to reconsider Macbeth and ponder his motivations and those of his wife. Macbeth doesn't feel that Duncan deserves death. He says 'Duncan has borne his faculties so meek... that his virtues will plead like angels'. He is saying that the king will have the heavens and their angels grieving for his death. Macbeth's soliloquy in Act two scene one makes us question Macbeth's sanity. Just beforehand, Macbeth and Banquo are discussing the queens as 'the three weird sisters'.

This reminds the audience of the witches, which brings them to consider the sisters when listening to his soliloquy. In the soliloquy, Macbeth is seeing a bloodied blade that is not their. He asks himself if he is going mad and therefore imagining it. He sees it as a sign almost, telling him to decide whether to kill Duncan or not as the bell rings. He seems afraid that Duncan will see through his plot as he hears the bell - which Macbeth sees as a call to come and fulfil his plot, sentencing the king to heaven or to hell.

Perhaps the influence of the witches was in hand here, spurring Macbeth onwards with his task. The witches and Lady Macbeth set all the wheels in motion for Macbeth's downfall. By the end, the Lady goes mad with guilt and kills herself which further persuades some that she was not herself before that point. Shakespeare makes many references to the opening scene with the witches which could suggest that they constantly had a hand in the events that led to Macbeth's downfall.