

The downfall of macbeth term paper

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The Tragedy of Macbeth is a play written by the renowned English playwright William Shakespeare about a Scottish general who learns that he could become a king through a prophesy from three witches. The play falls under the tragedy genre as the protagonist Macbeth ends up facing death at the end of the story.

The tragedy was written in 1606 during the renaissance literary period, which ran from 1485-1625. The play was written during the reign of James I after the death of Queen Elizabeth I. The time around which the play was written was also called the Elizabethan era. Macbeth is ambitious for power and his character deteriorates as he acquires and tries to maintain it leading to his downfall.

Macbeth comes across as a man of great character at the opening of the play. The king together with the people respects him because of his nobility and bravery. He is honored for his great contribution in the war by saving the life of the king's son Malcolm. He tells his father about the courage of Macbeth, " This is the sergeant who like a good and hardy soldier fought ' against my captivity.

Hail brave friend!" (Shakespeare 1. 2. 4-5). Malcolm is loved and his self-esteem is high, as he feels proud of serving his country. He is content with his position during this time until the three witches prophesy to him that he would become king.

The prophesy marks the turning point for Macbeth from a noble man to a greedy man consumed by ambition to become king and his character starts changing. He thinks about the prophesy and decides to leave it to chance

but the more he thought about he knew he had to take an action. His wife urges him to take King Duncan out and portray his bravery as she accuses him of cowardice.

His conscience bothers him and he asks, “ Will great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood/clean from my hand?” (Shakespeare 2. 2. 58-59). Nonetheless, he goes on to murder the king and his character takes a turn for the worst as he kills the chamberlains who would give witness of the king’s death and he claims he killed them due to fury for their killing of King Duncan.

Banquo also knew about the witches’ prophesy and he could become a liability to him later. That means he had to deal with Banquo also to remain in power just as he had killed the chamberlains. He hires murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance as the witches had predicted that Banquo’s sons would inherit the throne. “ ...Now he will murder for no reason other than to habituate himself to the terrors of his corrupted state and make himself comfortable among them...” (Cunningham 295).

His character is deteriorating and killing has become so easy for him and he has lost his sense of morality. The more he kills the further he deteriorates and becomes violent because he does not gain the security he intends from the murders. He also plans to kill Macduff in order to keep his throne “ I am in blood/stepped in so far that, should I wade no more/returning were as tedious as go o’er” (Shakespeare 3. 4. 153-137).

The life of Macbeth takes a different turn from act four as he decided to consult the witches to know his fate and people planning to overthrow him.

He seems to be on road to self-destruction and nothing will save him from the cruel man he has become. Moreover, he drops deeper into darkness when he orders the killing of Macduff's wife and children yet they are not a political threat to him.

He says of Macduff's family " Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword /His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls/That trace him in his line (Shakespeare 4. 1. 131-135). His character also deteriorates when the witches tell him that he no man born of woman can kill him thus think he is invincible.

He boasts and says that he will defeat the enemy but his end is evitable as Malcolm and his fighters advance to Macbeth's castle. Macbeth comforts himself and says, " I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm? Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know. All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus: ' Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman Shall e'er have power upon thee" (Shakespeare 5. 3. 3-7). However, he is killed bringing an end to his tyrannical rule and a new beginning for Scotland.

Macbeth faces his death because he allows ambition change him from a noble man to a vicious monster. His character deteriorates from the time he agrees to commit his first murder of king Duncan and is forced to kill many other power in order to hold on to power that he acquired illegitimately that eventually leads to his disintegration.

Cunningham, Dolora G. " Macbeth: The Tragedy of the Hardened Heart." Shakespeare Quarterly, 14. 1 (winter1963): 39-47. Reprinted in Shakespearean Criticism. Vol. 69. Ed. Lynn M. Lott. Detroit: Gale, 2003. 293-298

Shakespeare, William. The Tragedy of Macbeth. n. d. Web.
<http://shakespeare.mit.edu/macbeth/full.html>