

English macbeth is a
kind, brave, and
honorable



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English 1222 November 1996 William Shakespeare, when writing The Tragedy of Macbeth, tried to establish two important characteristics of man for the time setting of the play. Macbeth is a thane in Scotland who is at first faithful to his king, Duncan, but later turns against him and becomes king himself through murder.

The characteristics that Macbeth has to have and does at the opening of the play, are loyalty to one's king and loyalty to God. Shakespeare shows that like all tragic heroes, Macbeth has a fatal flaw, ambition, and because of it he loses all his goodness and becomes a corrupt, cold-blooded killer, who only cares about himself. At the opening of the play, Macbeth is noted for his courage in battle with the king's enemy. He is praised for his loyalty and is considered a good friend by Duncan.

In the first scene, Macbeth is the hero because he saves the king and his kingdom from the attack of a traitor, the Thane of Cawdor. Every character that the reader meets up to that point says that Macbeth is a kind, brave, and honorable man. A wounded soldier in the first Act scene ii says: "For brave Macbeth, - well he deserves that name, - Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel, Which smok'd with bloody execution, Like valour's minion, Carv'd out his passage till he fac'd the slave; And ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him, Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps, And fix'd his head upon our battlements." (27-34) As far as the other characters can see he deserves nothing but praise for his heroism. Macbeth has no intention of killing his ruler or of even betraying him until he meets the three witches who tell him that he will become king.

They also tell him that he will become the Thane of Cawdor, which he does not believe because he is not told yet about the Thane of Cawdor being a traitor and being executed. When Macbeth reaches the castle he is officially given the title of Cawdor and that is when he gets ambitious and begins to think of murdering Duncan for his title. In scene iv Act I, Macbeth finds out that while he gets a bigger title, Duncan's son gets the title of Prince of Cumberland, which makes him next in line for the throne. In an aside Macbeth says to himself: "The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step, On which I must fall down, or else o'er leap, For in my way it lies. Stars hide your fires! Let not light see my black and deep desires: The eye winks at the hand! Yet let that be, Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

"At first he expresses his desire to become king in an unnatural way if that be necessary. Then he stops himself, almost convinced that what he is thinking of doing is wrong. That night Macbeth goes home with Duncan for a feast and when Duncan is fast asleep, Macbeth stabs him in the back. He has lost one of the main characteristics by the end of the first act and is already becoming a corrupt individual. Before the murder actually happens, Macbeth shows his feelings on the subject when he says: "He's here in double trust: First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, Strong both against the deed; then, as his host, Who should against his murder shut the door, Not bear the knife myself." (12-16) Because he is not completely corrupt he still feels some remorse for the deed he is about to commit, although it does not stop him from doing it.

Throughout the play, Macbeth loses all feeling of honor or repentance. He kills his friend Banquo because he poses a threat to his future and the future

of his children (whom he does not yet have), he pits all of the nobles against the two sons of Duncan because it is convenient for him, even though they are innocent. Later he does the same to the son of Banquo, Fleance, but only because his men do not get the chance to kill him.

Shakespeare shows Macbeth's final and complete loss of any semblance of morals when Macbeth sends murderers to kill Lady Macduff and her children although they have done nothing and are paying with their lives for something that Macduff did to