

Conflict in the stone angel and macbeth developing theme



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Imagine a world where you were destined for a dramatic downfall. It is such a world that becomes the fate of a tragic hero. A tragic hero possesses a tragic flaw, which ultimately leads to their downfall. Within both selections, the tragic Shakespearian play Macbeth, as well as, the dystopian novel The Stone Angel, by Margaret Laurence, the audience is revealed to two themes that relate not only to the play and novel, but to life in general; the destruction of vaulting ambition, as well as, hubris can lead to a downfall.

Such themes were clearly portrayed through the use of the tragic heroes, and their decisions, in both Macbeth and The Stone Angel. Within Macbeth, the protagonist, Macbeth, is introduced in the play as being the bravest, most selfless Scottish general in Duncan's army. Though he admittedly had many deep and dark desires, it was not natural for him to commit evil deeds. However, over time, as his ambition grew, it caused Macbeth to make bloody, murderous decisions igniting his conflicts with King Duncan, his best friend Banquo, and within himself. Slowly, his once perfect image crumbled apart portraying the corruption of vaulting ambition.

Similarly, Hagar Shipley, the proud protagonist of The Stone Angel faces a similar fate, as her pride consumes her 90 years of life. Brought up to believe showing emotion is a sign of weakness, Hagar transforms into the stone angel, herself. Although she knows that she treats others with irreverence and cruelty, her pride disenables her from apologizing for her actions. This decision of pushing those away from her not only creates a conflict with her ex-husband Bram Shipley, ruining their marriage, but also her son, John, resulting in his death, both conflicts resulting in her having internal conflicts.

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Though created thousands of years apart, both selections use the protagonists' decisions caused by their ambition and hubris to shed light to the theme of ambition and hubris can lead to a downfall, as Macbeth and Hagar face life changing consequences, as a result of it. As the play of Macbeth begins, the audience is introduced to a highly respected general, a caring husband, a loyal kinsman, and a role-model for many Scottish people.. Macbeth. Macbeth fought for the rights of his country, and used his determination courage, and bravery for the better of he people around him.

This image of perfection enabled Macbeth to easily hide his ambition and desires to become King from the public. However, through the help of several motivating factors, Macbeth's ambition heightened to a point where it could no longer be concealed. Together, the three witches' prophecies of him becoming King, as well as, Lady Macbeth's deception sparked Macbeth's conflict with King Duncan. While the King admired Macbeth for his " nobility", " O worthiest cousin! " and calls him a " peerless kinsman", little did he know Macbeth wanted to kill him.

Although Macbeth found several reasons not to kill Duncan, the idea of becoming the King of Scotland silenced them. The close relationship that Duncan believed he had with Macbeth was nothing more than a show, for when Duncan closed his eyes to fall asleep, soon after he was stabbed to death, and Macbeth stained his hands with blood and guilt. From his ambition, Macbeth faced his immediate internal conflict, as he destroyed his conscience, " Methought I heard a voice cry, ' Sleep no more!

Macbeth does murder sleep," and "'Will all of great Neptune's ocean wash this blood/ Clean from my hand? No..." Macbeth's ambition of needing to become King, not only caused him to conflict with Duncan and within himself, but resulted in his conflicts with many others. After Duncan's murder, Macbeth's ambition exponentially intensified. Over time, Macbeth's fire of ambition and paranoia caused him to commit evil actions in an attempt to protect himself and his position as King. This growing paranoia leads him to come in conflict with his former best friend, Banquo.

It was Banquo who was accompanying Macbeth when he had first come in contact with the witches, when they told Macbeth he was to become King. Knowing that Banquo had witnessed this encounter bothered Macbeth, as he began to question whether Banquo would accuse him of killing Duncan. These thoughts quickly forced Macbeth to do bloody actions, as his ambition would not allow him to jeopardize his position as King, " Cancel and tear to pieces [kill] that great bond [Banquo]/ Which keeps me pale! " Similar to Duncan, Banquo was murdered.

Immediately after, once again Macbeth suffered. Not only did he imagine Banquo's ghost coming back to haunt him, but he begins to internally battle about questioning the point of life, " It [life] is a tale told by an idiot , full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. " The result of Macbeth's conflicts caused an uprising against him, ultimately leading to his death. As a result of ambition, Macbeth not only killed a man he admired and his best friend, but lost his conscience and his love for life. Macbeth, however, is not the only protagonist to suffer for his actions.

A bridge connected Macbeth to The Stone Angel, in that the theme that an excessive flaw will lead to a downfall was similarly shown in the play. Within the selection, The Stone Angel, the audience is introduced to a very unusual 90 year old woman, Hagar Shipley. Defying the stereotype of being kind, caring and loving, Hagar's hubris causes her to be the opposite. Raised by a proud father, Hagar learned that showing emotion was a sign of weakness. It was this idea that became the motivating force behind all that Hagar battled. Hagar treated others with a cruelty that she knew deep down was not acceptable.

Unfortunately, her pride held her back from apologizing for her actions. For 23 years, the marriage between Hagar and Bram Shipley, became nothing more than a struggle, due to Hagar's decision to treat Bram unfairly. Though Hagar marries Bram for his crude, loud-mouthed personality, it becomes evident that this is what she hates most about him. Bram act as a foil character to Hagar, which motivates to treat him with irreverence. She chooses to constantly criticize him for speaking incorrectly, being rude, and even feels embarrassed to be seen with him, " I spoke my disgust in no uncertain terms, not for the first time. , yet she is never able to praise him.

Though Bram was once a very loving and funny man, Hagar brought forth the worst in him, as she was unable to give him the loving and devotion he desires. This not only causes her to lose Bram as a husband, but also to battle for her treatment towards him for the rest of her life. The audience can see this when Hagar says, " I wish I could call him back from where he had gone, to say even once what Marvin had said [sorry]. ", after Bram

passed away. Hagar realizes too late that her hubris destroyed their relationship.

However, Hagar's hubris creates a conflict with more than just Bram, as she treats all of the people around her with the same attitude. Hagar's inability to show emotion, not surprisingly, caused her to be more than just a horrible wife, but a terrible mother. Aside from being far from nurturing and loving, Hagar was unable to praise her sons. While, Marvin, the oldest son, was never able to live up to Hagar's expectations, as she believed he was "Bram's son", Hagar's expectations for John, the younger son, were set so high, they were destined for failure.

Ever since John was younger, Hagar's decision to put pressure on him to become successful, hard-working, and well-mannered, caused John to resent his mother and become the opposite. John purposefully conflicted with Hagar by becoming a drunk, and dating "no-name Loittee's" daughter, Arlene. Hagar looked down upon Loittee, and therefore viewed Arlene as inadequate for her son. Hagar's decision of pressuring her son, and not allowing John and Arlene to spend time in the house, caused a conflict of opinion with John. John and Arlene had to bond in his truck. This led to them getting in a car accident, when John hit a train.

After John passed away, Hagar spent the rest of her life fighting internally for her interpersonal conflict, as she knew she was the cause. Immediately after John died, she became the stone angel, "The night my son died I was transformed to stone and never wept at all." Hagar held herself back from crying in the hospital which caused her to not cry in general over her loss.

Hagar spent the rest of her life wishing that she showed John how much she loved him and wishing she just let him stay at the house. Only in her last hours of life does Hagar say, "Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that led me there was fear."

Hagar's decision of never being able to treat anyone right, resulted from her hubris, creating the theme, hubris leads to a downfall, as she lost everyone and everything, as a result of it. Unfortunately, Hagar only made this realization too late, as Bram and John had already died, and Marvin was not ready to mend a relationship. Within both selections, Macbeth by Shakespeare, as well as The Stone Angel by Margaret Laurence, we can see how decisions, due to ambition and hubris, can lead to the downfall of any character. Both Macbeth and Hagar are similar, in that their flaws began to rule each of their lives.

Though Macbeth may have become the King of Scotland, it was ambition that became the ruler of him. Macbeth's ambition and paranoia made him unable to act as a true King, as it caused him to make irrational decisions, ultimately ending the lives of his loved ones, and his own. It can be argued that Hagar, too, was killed by her flaw. Though she lived many years, these years were actually quite short, due to their lack of good memories, happiness and love. Hagar's hubris caused her to treat everyone unfairly, pushing everything that she could have loved away.

For dozens of years, Hagar had to deal with the way she treated Bram and how she figuratively killed John. Through the decisions made by each of the characters, the audience is able to make the realization of just how realistic

the theme of ambition and hubris can lead to a downfall. Therefore, ask yourself, just how much ambition do you have? How about pride? Will the decisions you make today, affect your destiny? Perhaps, if you are not careful, you choose the wrong decisions in life, and only realize it when it is too late, and your destiny will become one of a tragic hero.