

Macbeth: destructive ambition essay

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Many have probably heard the saying: “ Ambition is the key to success. ” If one has a strong enough desire and is willing to try to achieve it, he will succeed. But as seen in the book Macbeth by William Shakespeare, ambition is instead the key to Macbeth’s tragic downfall. Even though his ambitions were influenced by the witches and Lady Macbeth, Macbeth builds upon them himself which ultimately leads him to cause his own destruction. Throughout the book, the witches make prophecies of Macbeth’s future, telling him that he will be king. After hearing the prophecies, Macbeth’s ambitions begin to grow.

Stars, hide your fires/ Let not light see my black and deep desires. ” (I, iv)

Macbeth says this quote after he hears the prophecies of the witches.

Noticeably, Macbeth believes what the witches say and deep inside wants them to be true. Though the witches are responsible for giving Macbeth the ideas, it is his own fault for believing it and trying to pursue it. Lady Macbeth also strongly influences Macbeth’s ambitions. Lady Macbeth, being quite an ambitious woman herself, wants to be queen so she tells Macbeth how he should get his title. Art not without ambition, but without/ The illness should attend it” (I, v) She urges him to act on his desires and seeing as Macbeth is ambitious and wants the title as well, he agrees to murder King Duncan.

After becoming king, Macbeth feels he must continue to gain more power or else the murder was worthless.

I am in blood/ Stepp’d in so far that, should I wade no more/ Returning were as tedious as go o’er. ” (III, v). He sees how the prophecies are coming true and tries to control his future. His ambitions begin to grow since he now

possesses power and strength that he hadn't before. He feels a new sense of control and begins to make decisions on his own.

He no longer hesitates to commit crime and will do anything to ensure his title as king, even if this means killing those whom he was once loyal to such as Banquo. As the play progresses on, Macbeth changes from a loyal and honorable man with moral sense to one who will stop at nothing to get and keep what he desires. He loses all emotion and can't even react to his wife's death. He refers to life as being " a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury/ Signifying nothing. " (V, v) He becomes so corrupt that he doesn't care about anything else except for the throne.

His thirst for power overshadows his moral heart. Though Macbeth's ambitions were what brought him to his height, they were also what brought him to his death. The play shows that if one is too ambitious, it is easy to become influenced by others. Even though he was influenced, he is still responsible for his own destiny. Until Macbeth hears the prophecies, he is loyal to all, but if he had not desired to become king, the prophecies would not have made a difference in his life. His ambitions destroy his good nature and force him to lose his morality.

Macbeth's ambitions are what caused him to later be overthrown and killed.