

Free will or
predestination: who
controls our fate?



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ If you can hold it in your hands then you can fold it by commands but if its fate to understand , fate cannot wait and is unmanned, the decisions you make will lend fate a hand. ”- Unknown After analyzing the manuscript , Macbeth, it can be said that fate is not determined by pre-destination but by free will. This is proven when Macbeth takes his fate into his own hands by killing his cousin, King Duncan, in order to become king of Scotland. It is a dispute started by Christians that has traveled throughout different time periods, races, and religions. Are our lives already planned out or do we hold the key to our own fate?

The King James bible says that pre-destination and free will can Co-exist but many choose one extreme or the other. In the story of Macbeth, the main character is visited by three witches who prophesize that he will become king of Scotland but do not give details as to how or when he will take the throne. (p. 17 lines 59-63) Under the influence of his wife, Lady Macbeth, Macbeth does not wait for the prophecy to unfold and freely kills his cousin King Duncan in order to take control of Scotland. Throughout the play, his ambitions and insecurities lead him to freely become a murderer in order to get what he wants in life.

As previously stated, the argument of free will or predestination has been around for centuries and is rooted in religion. The theory behind predestination is that God has already predetermined who will get into heaven and has planned everyone's life out for them. Every decision made, no matter good or bad, was determined by God before you were born. (David Bennett.) Those who believe in predestination are often classified as

Calvinists, after John Calvin who is the man behind many of the predestination theories, or Reformed theologians.

Free will is defined as, " The power of acting without the constraint of necessity or fate; the ability to act at one's own discretion. " (Merriam-Webster dictionary) In terms of religion, free will is the idea that gives each individual the opportunity to choose what they will believe in and make the decision to follow Christ or not. The theory behind free will is that one can act on his or her own without having their fate predetermined for them. In Macbeth's case, he acted upon free will by taking fate into his own hands rather than waiting to see how his life would unfold.

The witches role in the play is key because without their prophecy, Macbeth would have continued on living his life normally. Although it may have been controversial during the time period, the witches role is important because they add another dimension to the play, a sense of mystery. The weird sisters, as they are often referred to as, bring a supernatural feel into the play because of their appearance and abilities It is because of them that the story is set into motion and the audience witnesses the fall of Macbeth and the blood trail that he leaves in his wake.

Although some readers choose to fault the witches with the fate of Macbeth, it is ultimately his fault because he makes the final decisions to commit the murderous deeds. They planted the seeds but Macbeth nurtured them, allowing them to grow into something bigger than himself and everyone else around him. Macbeth's misinterpretation of the prophecy shows his weak character, which allows Lady Macbeth to manipulate him into doing what she

feels should be done. He believes everything he hears to be true and after the murder of Duncan, he commits crimes without hesitation.

Every decision that Macbeth made was of his own mind and action unlike Banquo who says, " Sometimes we hear favorable things that may bring us to harm. " While Banquo was also intrigued by the prophecies, he did not allow them to take over his life. In fact he says, " New honors come upon him like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould But with the aid of use. "(p. 20 lines 157-159) From this statement, the audience could gather that Banquo feels that these positions are unnatural to them.

If Macbeth was in the right frame of mind instead of being driven by greed and deadly ambition, he might have experienced the same feelings as Banquo. The murders committed by Macbeth were justified in his mind as something that just " had to be done". Immediately after the murder of King Duncan, Macbeth expresses his deep sorrow and regret. (p. 34 lines 46-51) This guilt begins to drive him insane and he becomes extremely paranoid. Lady Macbeth expresses her need to make the murder of King Duncan happen so that they can gain the titles they deserve in Scotland. p. 28 lines 53-65) In modern day interpretations, Lady Macbeth is sometimes seen as the fourth witch because she too plays an important role in Macbeth's downfall. While it is ultimately his final decision to commit these murders, she also planted deadly seeds in his head. Impatience, selfishness, and greed allow Macbeth to become victim of his own desire. Macbeth's careless use of free will eventually led to his wife's death and his lords turning their back on him. While he had high hopes for his reign, he was eventually the cause of his own demise.