

Peer pressure leads
to guilt and
destruction



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Macbeth, written by Shakespeare, is a tragedy that showed the consequences of Macbeth's guilt from the peer pressure of Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth questioned Macbeth's manliness several times throughout the story. Macbeth wanted to prove that he was a stronger person. Even though Macbeth proved his manliness, he regretted his decision. Macbeth's decision to kill Duncan was based off of peer pressure from Lady Macbeth.

The character Macbeth had been told by the three weird sisters that he was going to be the Thane of Cawdor and king of Scotland. In order for Macbeth to take the throne, he had to kill King Duncan. Macbeth never asked the question, "Do I really have to kill Duncan in order to become king?" Instead, Macbeth was pressured into his decision by his wife, Lady Macbeth. From Macbeth's decision some ask the question, "Was Macbeth really pressured by Lady Macbeth?" Another question often brought up is, "Why did Macbeth make the decision to kill Duncan?" I believe the main reason for the murder of Duncan was from the peer pressure of Lady Macbeth.

Macbeth had just returned from stopping two invading armies, but that did not stop him from wanting more power. Macbeth was ambitious but lacked he lacked the effort to make it happen (Snodgrass 37). He often thought about the consequences that would happen if he were to proceed in killing Duncan. Macbeth also thought about the things Duncan had done for him when he served him as king. He decided he could not bring himself to kill Duncan, but he wanted more success. On the other hand Lady Macbeth was far more ambitious than her husband. Lady Macbeth was described as 'very ambitious, burning in unquenchable desire to have the name of queen' (Quennell 133). After Lady Macbeth read the letter her husband wrote her

she said, "Hurry home so I can twist your thinking with my sharp words toward the obstacles that stand in the way of your crowning, a rise to greatness that destiny and the witches have promised" (I. V. 24-29). She had a plan up her sleeve to kill Duncan. Lady Macbeth did not see anything wrong with killing Duncan; she only saw a way to gain more power.

Lady Macbeth called upon evil spirits to get her in the right mind-set to pressure Macbeth. She said, "Come you spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, and fill me from the crown to the toe, top full of direst cruelty" (I. V. 38-41). "Come to my woman's breasts, and take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers, wherever in your sightless substance you wait on nature's mischief" (I. V. 45-46). "Come thick night, and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell, that my knife see not the wound it makes, nor heaven peep through the blanket of dark" (I. V. 48-51). First Lady Macbeth said, "Unsex me here," to prove that she would be willing to become the opposite sex. Lady Macbeth practically wished at this point that she was not a woman anymore, so she could kill Duncan. Then she called upon the evil spirits to replace her breast milk with bitterness. Lastly, she asked for the night to be covered with fog so she would not be able to see the wound of Duncan. This showed how much she was willing to kill King Duncan.

Macbeth told his wife Duncan will be staying with us but he will leave the next morning. Lady Macbeth said, "O! Never shall sun that morrow see/ your face, my thane, is as a book where men may read strange matters" (I. V. 58-61). She told Macbeth, "Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under't" (I. V. 63-64). She then said, "Leave all the rest to me" (I. V. 71). Lady Macbeth meant go and treat Duncan like royalty and keep your

murderous intent hidden. Lady Macbeth then planned out the plot to kill Duncan. That greatly showed her ambition and hunger for power.

Macbeth contemplated if he should kill King Duncan. Macbeth had thought of several reasons why he should not and did not want to kill Duncan. First, Duncan was king over him. Second, Macbeth was his protector and host because he was staying at Macbeth's house, and he should not harm him. Lastly, King Duncan had been a good and kind ruler, so Macbeth felt he should never hurt him. Macbeth brought to his wife's attention that he did not want to go through with the plan to kill King Duncan. He said, " We will proceed no further in this business; he hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought golden opinions from all sorts of people, which would be worn now in their newest gloss, not cast aside so soon" (I. VII. 31-34). That should have been the end, but Lady Macbeth would not take no for an answer.

Lady Macbeth urged Macbeth to kill Duncan, which eventually led to his downfall. She did not only question his decision, but she questioned his manliness. Men never like to feel weaker than women. Macbeth's wife said, " When you durst do it when you were a man; and, to be more than what you were, you would be so much more the man" (I. VII. 49-51). Lady Macbeth meant if you murder Duncan and do what you plan, then you will be a ' real man'. Lady Macbeth showed she could be masculine when she said, " I have given suck and know how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me; I would, while it was smiling in my face, have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums, and dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you have done" (I. VII. 54-59). Lady Macbeth expressed a very powerful statement when she said she would be able to kill her own child. Lady Macbeth's words were a great

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challenge for Macbeth. Macbeth said, "Bring forth men-children only for thy undaunted mettle should compose nothing but males" (I. VII. 72-74).

Macbeth meant you have such a hardened heart that you should only bear male babies (Snodgrass 51). Lady Macbeth felt he was too compassionate to kill Duncan in order to claim the throne. He would rather take the throne fairly (Snodgrass 37). Questioning Macbeth's manliness pressured him into killing King Duncan.

"Lady Macbeth gave the excuse that she could not kill Duncan because he looked too much like her father. She said, "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it" (II. II. 12-13). She was giving an excuse for why she did not want to kill Duncan. This showed she lost strength when she saw Duncan sleeping, for he reminded her of her father. It showed she became weak inside and pressured Macbeth instead. Lady Macbeth tried to sound tough when she said, "Unsex me here," but became weak when she saw him sleeping.

Macbeth was afraid that the plan will fail, and the people will find out that he murdered Duncan. She told Macbeth, "Screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we will not fail" (I. VII. 60-61). Lady Macbeth said, "If we pretend to grieve for the king no one will challenge us" (I. VII. 77-79). He finally decided he wanted to prove to Lady Macbeth that he was a 'real man'. Macbeth went through with the decision and murdered Duncan. She said, "Smear the faces with blood." Macbeth refused, "Mocking his weakness, she takes the daggers and performs the task herself" (Rozakis 240). Lady Macbeth put blood on Duncan's guards and laid the daggers next to them.

She left the people thinking it was Duncan's guards who planned the murder of their king.

The Bible gave us many good examples of how we need to submit ourselves to our husbands. God gave a command that said, "Wives submit to your husband as is fitting in the Lord" (NIV Colossians 3: 18). Lady Macbeth should have let Macbeth make the decision based off of what he was right and what he felt was the right decision. She was only thinking of herself and what she got from the situation. She knew she wanted to have the title of becoming queen and did not think of the consequences that could come from the situation. I Corinthians 11: 3 stated, "The husband is to assume leadership in the home." The husband and wife should both show love and respect towards each other, but he should have told Lady Macbeth "I will do what is best for us."

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth experienced guilt and regret after the murder of King Duncan. Macbeth experienced regret because he had to hire murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance to cover up the slaughter of Duncan (Rozakis 240). Macbeth began to feel insanity from the whole situation. Lady Macbeth was affected from the situation when she began to sleep walk. As Lady Macbeth was sleep walking, she began rubbing her hands. She rubbed her hands trying to get the blood off of them (Quennell 134). She kept thinking that her hands were bloody from when she smeared the blood on the faces of Duncan's guards. This drove her into insanity, which eventually led her to commit suicide.

The story of Macbeth was a good example that showed the effect of peer pressure. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in America among teens. Peer pressure has not only led to suicide, but also drug overdoses, fatal car accidents, violent crime, and unwanted pregnancy (Unknown Author). Teens, who have been pressured by their friends, sometimes turn to suicide as a way out (Unknown Author). Lady Macbeth only thought about fame and power and did not think about the consequences of her actions. She pressured Macbeth, which led to Duncan's murder. She did not only think about how this decision could affect her. She felt guilty, which led to her insanity. One action led to not only the murder of Duncan, but the murder of herself.