

Argumentative essay – macbeth is a tragic hero not a villain

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William Shakespeare's Macbeth is a story of regicide and a warning against black magic.

It's easy to see Macbeth as the primary antagonist, because he becomes the face of the cast of villains, and the focus of the main characters' anger.

Macbeth, though, was not a maker of his destiny. The true antagonists lie behind him in both Lady Macbeth and the three witches. The three witches are the most obvious villains. To see this, we have to look at the time in which this was written.

Shakespeare wrote his plays in a time where black magic was considered taboo. People were deathly afraid of it and the sentence was death for anyone who practiced it. Shakespeare wanted to appease his audience, therefore he invented the witches as the main driving force of villainy.

Macbeth was the hero of Scotland at the beginning of the story. It's why he was presented with the title of Thane of Cawdor and Glamis in the first place. In the beginning, Macbeth never entertains the prospect of becoming king or killing his monarch in King Duncan.

It's the witches who leave these toxic thoughts to fester in his mind. It would be easy to argue Macbeth could have easily ignored the witches. Although he willingly collaborated with them, it could be argued his loyalty to his family and his country would have overwritten the words of the witches.

Macbeth does initially refute the idea of killing Duncan. It's only when Lady Macbeth convinces him he does it. Lady Macbeth uses all the powers at her disposal to convince Macbeth to kill Duncan, including questioning his manhood.

To further cast Lady Macbeth in the shadow of an antagonist, Shakespeare causes her to die because of her own guilt. When she begins sleepwalking and rubbing her hands together, it's clear her guilt has overtaken her. Her admission of guilt is an example that she herself knows she did wrong, although she never admits this on stage before her suicide. The issue with Macbeth is once he kills Duncan he would find it impossible to return to what he was before. He had no choice but to become king and rule the country. Some people may argue the killing of his former friend Banquo is an example of the villainy that lays beneath Macbeth's character, but this is not the case.

By this point, Macbeth is in an inescapable position. He has reacted like humans do in such situations, by entering a form of survival. He knows he has to be harsh to maintain himself. The presence of the ghosts and his subsequent madness demonstrates he always feels guilty and he never revels in his new position. In many ways, he despises what he has become and he doesn't thank Lady Macbeth or the three witches for the parts they played in his story.

Overall, Macbeth has been directed by powerful forces influencing him. After he kills Duncan, he has no choice but to keep up the charade, because he knows if the truth was ever known he and his family would be executed.