
Macbeth: Descent Into Madness

Weaknesses can be the difference between success and failure. It is crucial to attempt to overcome flaws to ensure achieving goals. In the play Macbeth, written by William Shakespeare, Macbeth has many flaws which lead to his death. Macbeth's heroic downfall is caused by his moral weaknesses, being that he is too ambitious, lacks morality and is influenced easily by others.

To begin, Macbeth is far too ambitious and selfish. His goals and desires come before anything else, and he will do anything it takes to achieve them. At the beginning of the play, when the witches tell him the three prophecies, Macbeth wants to ensure that they will come true - especially the one saying that he will be king of Scotland. This motivates him to want to remove anything that can get in his way, and leads him to absolute disaster. He kills King Duncan, which is what starts the downfall of everything else in his life. Macbeth foreshadows his failure that is to come when he says "I have no spur/To prick the sides of my intent, but only/Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself/And falls on th' other-"(1.7.25-28) He is motivated by his ambition, but going too fast could lead to disaster as it did. Madness and Magic: Shakespeare's Macbeth, by Frank McGuinness shows that Macbeth has a desire for power and authority. "The hunger for information – for action – matches Macbeth's appetite for power". His determination to be king deteriorates his values and does not allow him to focus on anything else besides that.

Macbeth's drive to become king overrules his morals and his conscience. At first, he struggles to decide if he should kill King Duncan. He lists off reasons that it would be just, such as the fact that he wants to be king. He also includes why it would be morally wrong to do so, saying that he is hosting Duncan, and should be hospitable. Lady Macbeth convinces him that he needs to do it and ultimately, he goes through with the deed. Macbeth battles with his own thoughts, but in the end his lack of values leads him not to follow the morally right course. After killing Duncan, he becomes unstable, feeling guilt but still aspires to kill anyone who he still perceives to be an obstacle. Lack of values and morals make him unable to choose right from wrong. He has many evil thoughts and cannot think straight. He tells Lady Macbeth this when he says "Oh full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!" In the article entitled Macbeth: I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing." A World of Action vs. A World of Thought by EBSCOhost, it is stated that "...Macbeth's awareness that he is going to commit an execrable crime and, at the same time, it also suggests his incapacity to see beyond action to his consequences" (EBSCOhost,183). Macbeth does not think of the realistic outcome for killing Duncan - only that he will become king. Any reasonable-minded person would know that extreme repercussions come with killing someone of such importance as a king. However, Macbeth is mentally unstable and does not know how to differentiate right from wrong.

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Because Macbeth has no more morals, he can no longer think for himself and is easily swayed. He lets others control his life and decisions. There are many examples of this in the play, such as when he listens to the prophecies of the witches and psychologically lets them control his actions because he wants them to come true. Another example includes him giving in to Lady Macbeth when she questions his manhood by saying, "Wouldst thou have that/Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life/ And live a coward in thine own esteem,/Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would",/Like the poor cat i' th' adage?"(1.7.45-49). Lady Macbeth knows that he will regret not taking the crown due to being cowardly. Macbeth takes this personally and decides to commit a heinous act, wanting to prove himself. In *Madness and Magic: Shakespeare's Macbeth*, written by Frank McGuinness, it is evident that Macbeth's ability to be easily influenced, affects all of Scotland. "Circumstances in the politics of Scotland have now changed utterly. And with that change Macbeth has begun to hear another language – the language of magic, bad magic, of murder, specifically one great act of murder, regicide, the killing of the king...". Macbeth is now ill-minded, all due to giving into Lady Macbeth and the Witches. If he had chosen a better destiny and had been less vulnerable to bad influences, he would have never made a disaster of his life.

In conclusion, Macbeth's moral weakness and many faults, including egotism, lack of conscience and being easily manipulated, result in his demise and downfall. *Macbeth*, written by William Shakespeare, is a tragic portrayal of a reasonable man whose character flaws lead him gradually into a descent of madness and ruin. Had it not been for the negative influences in his life (the three witches and his wife), it would be interesting to conjecture whether Macbeth's character flaws, by themselves, would still have led him to follow the same path.

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