
The Analysis of the Theme of Ambition in Macbeth, a Play by William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" is a play in which a major theme is explored throughout the play. Ambition as a human weakness is developed and shown through a variety of techniques. Macbeth is a play in which the main character is thought to be brave and heroic, yet as the play progresses we see his descent into becoming a cowardly thief.

Macbeth is thought of as a noble soldier at the start of the play. After a battle that he played a crucial part in winning, we overhear another man discussing his actions.

"Brave Macbeth

He well deserves that name"

This shows that Macbeth is a respected member of society before his ambition takes over. He is currently entitled to the names given to him, yet as the play continues, he quickly becomes less and less worthy of his titles.

Macbeth is unsure that he deserves to become Thane of Cawdor. He is stunned to have been given this title. However, as he has heard the witches' predictions, he starts to wonder if the future has more in store for him.

"I know I am of Glamis

But how of Cawdor? The thane of Cawdor lives [...] and to be king, stands not within the prospect of belief"

Macbeth is aware this brings him closer to his final goal of king yet is hesitant. This shows all three titles the witches promised him and foreshadows the events to come. Shakespeare often uses foreshadowing to add tension to scenes which is what made this one so effective in showing ambition as a weakness.

Macbeth is aware of what he wants yet he is unwilling to share his thoughts with anyone other than his wife. His ambition allows for him to participate in treason if it means his desires could become reality.

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"Stars hide thy fires

Let not light see thy dark and deep desires"

Shakespeare compares Macbeth's ambition to a fire, bright and growing. However Macbeth also hopes to smother this fire as he knows he is wrong to plot against his friend and king.

Macbeth, through the manipulation of his wife, has decided that to become king, he must kill Duncan. Macbeth's ambition becomes even clearer here when, in an attempt to keep his throne, he plots to murder Banquo without the manipulation of his wife.

"Our fears in Banquo stick deep"

This shows the only thing he cares about now is his throne, he has even thrown his once loved wife aside. Macbeth's decision to kill his friend shows how far his ambition has taken him from when he was debating against himself to kill Duncan or not.

Macbeth has become so obsessed with power that his wife's death means nothing but inconvenience to him. After lady Macbeth's suicide, Macbeth is unconcerned, focusing only on how he can keep his crown.

"She should have died hereafter

Out, out brief candle

Life's like a walking shadow"

He compares her to a small flame that had no impact on the world. He also claims her life was spent walking in his shadow. This could convey how Macbeth also only ever lives in the dark, following the prophecies shown to him.

In conclusion, William Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' is a play in which the theme of ambition is shown and developed. Shakespeare, using many techniques, is able to show that ambition, if left unchecked can be disastrous.

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