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### Ambitions Role in *Macbeth*

The play, *Macbeth*, written by William Shakespeare, is a tragedy with the key themes of ambition and corrupting powers. The protagonist, Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, is a noble trustworthy man at the beginning, but that quickly changes at the end of the play. His wife, Lady Macbeth, has a large impact on his actions, which leads the audience to see her as a villain. Macbeth and his best friend, Banquo, meet three witches and they give them three prophecies each. Macbeth's prophecies were that he will become Thane of Cawdor, King of Scotland, and Banquo's descendants will become kings. After he is told this, he is even more influenced to have the most power. Ambition drives the main characters in the play to conduct wicked acts to gain power, which ultimately leads to their downfall, presenting this theme as inherently destructive.

Macbeth committed several wicked acts to get what he wanted even though feeling guilty was always a consequence of his actions. Lady Macbeth talks Macbeth into his evil acts and is not sympathetic about it. She does this first with the plan to kill Duncan, the King of Scotland, by saying,

Art thou afeard

To be the same in thine own act and valor

As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that

Which thou esteem'st thou ornament of life

And live a coward in thine own esteem, (Shakespeare 1:7:39-43).

Lady Macbeth is angry with him and does not understand why he will not just kill him. Duncan needs to be killed so the witches prophecy will come true and Macbeth can be King of Scotland. She finally gets in Macbeth's head and he kills Duncan. This is shown when Macbeth says, "I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?" (Shakespeare 2:2:15). The deed is killing Duncan and Macbeth wonders if anyone is awake that could catch him. As a result, he feels guilty and starts hearing voices. The next murder he commits is killing Banquo. Macbeth kills him, so he has no way of making his descendants become kings. Macbeth hires three murderers to kill Banquo and his son, Fleance. Banquo says, "O, treachery./Fly good Fleance, fly, fly, fly-thou mayst revenge./O slave." (Shakespeare 3:3:19-21). Banquo dies and his last words were to Fleance telling him to run and get revenge. The murderers failed to kill Fleance and he fled. The last murder Macbeth committed was Macduff's family. Macduff is a Thane on Duncan's side and gets suspicious that Macbeth claims his servants killed Duncan. He decides to kill Macduff's family for revenge for fighting against him. The son who dies says, "He has killed me, mother. Run away, I pray you." (Shakespeare 4:2:86-87). The son has died and is trying to save his mother by telling her to run. All these actions lead to Macbeth's downfall.

Suspicion arising, and Macbeth's selfish needs lead to his defeat. Banquo becomes suspicious and thinks Macbeth killed Duncan. This is revealed when Banquo says, "As the weird women promised, and, I fear,/ thou played'st most foully for't." (Shakespeare 3:1:2-3). This is Banquo's way of calling him out. Banquo needed to confront him because all he is is selfish and only trying to fulfill his needs. Macbeth killed Macduff's family for no reason. It did not benefit him in any way. The conversation between the murderers, Lady Macduff, and the son reveal it was not necessary for them to be killed. It states,

Lady Macduff: What are these faces?

First Murderer: Where is your husband?

Lady Macduff: I hope, in no place so unsanctified

Where such as thou mayst find him

First Murderer: He's a traitor

Son: Thou liest, thou shag-eared villain. (Shakespeare 4:2:79-84).

The murderers were looking for Macduff because they were irritated with him, but the Son made a comment and death was the consequence.

This all leads to Shakespeare's inherently destructive theme. There is plenty of betrayal throughout the play. The most important betrayals were between Lady Macbeth, Macbeth, and Duncan, Macbeth and Banquo, and Macduff and Macbeth. Lady Macbeth and Macbeth betray Duncan by killing him. Macbeth betrays Banquo by acting like they were good friends then killing him because he is selfish. Lastly, Macduff betrays Macbeth by joining the side that was fighting against him and kills him. Macduff says, "Hail king, for so thou art. Behold where stands/ the usurper's cursed head; the time is free." (Shakespeare 5:7:84-85). Macduff is presenting Macbeth's head and announcing that they are free. Macbeth's selfish actions finally lead to his defeat. Macbeth is so thirsty for power he did anything no matter the consequences. Eventually, all of his misdeeds made Lady Macbeth kill herself because of the guilt.

Overall ambition took over Macbeth, mainly, and his wicked acts led to his death. When power is in the picture, people like Macbeth are thirsty for it. At the end of the play before Macbeth is killed, his personality change is seen. He used to feel guilt and scared, but that changed to being detached. Macbeth struggles with not having enough power and lets it take over his life.

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