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Mrs. Graning

Macbeth

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Macbeth

In William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the characters' actions often reflect on their ambition for themselves and the world. The play demonstrates how a character's ambition can lead to destruction of the character's morals and the characters around them. The main characters, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, are a clear example of how a person's ambitions often lead them to act cruel and immoral. They both destroy those around them due to their own greed and because of this Macbeth and Lady Macbeth face many consequences due to their own ambitions and the choices they made to see and keep Macbeth on the throne of Scotland.

At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is presented as a loyal and fearless warrior. He is given great honor by King Duncan due to his bravery. But then, a hidden ambition was stirred in him upon hearing the prophecy from the witches: "All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis! / All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor! / All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter! " (Act 1, Scene 3) Macbeth started to think that he could also become king. The prophecy in itself did not tell Macbeth to do something, but the thought that he would reach the throne was set in his head. Macbeth's conscience immediately began to have a battle inside his head because, although the ambition was arising, he didn't want to kill Duncan. He acknowledges Duncan's virtues and the loyalty he owes as Duncan's subject and host. In one of

his rare moments of self-reflection, Macbeth confesses, "I have no spur / To prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself / And falls on the other" (Act 1, Scene 7). Here, Shakespeare brings forth the fickle nature of ambition. Although ambition is what may give the spark to begin something great, Macbeth interprets it as greedy and dangerous yet still allows it to overcome his morality. Macbeth, once convinced by Lady Macbeth and after having murdered Duncan, embarks on a road to tyranny. His ambition, now insatiable, goes on overdrive to consolidate his position as king. This he does by his resolve to murder Banquo and Fleance because they could threaten the throne. Paranoia and ambition are intertwined in Macbeth, leading him to commit increasingly ruthless acts.

Lady Macbeth's ambition mirrors her husband's but manifests differently. From her first appearance, she is portrayed as fiercely determined and willing to abandon all moral considerations to achieve her goals. Upon hearing of the witches' prophecy, she immediately resolves to push Macbeth toward the throne. She conjures the dark forces to divest her of her femininity and all traits of mercy, saying, "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! " (Act 1, Scene 5). This invocation underlines the extent she is prepared to go to achieve power. Indeed, Lady Macbeth's ambition is very much intertwined with how she manipulates Macbeth. She had questioned his masculinity and resolution and even called him a coward for not killing Duncan when he showed hesitation. Taunts she had thrown at him, such as "When you durst do it, then you were a man" (Act 1, Scene 7), preying on Macbeth's insecure moments compelled him to commit murder. While she at first appears resolute in her ambition, the first cracks of guilt soon begin to appear. Whereas Macbeth's ambition is increased after the murder of Duncan, Lady

Macbeth is increasingly tormented by remorse. Lady Macbeth who had orchestrated Duncan's assassination later appears sleepwalking, haunted by the memory of her crimes. She says in Act 5, Scene 1, "Out, damned spot! Out, I say! ... Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? " Her obsession with washing away imaginary blood reflects her inability to escape the consequences of her ambition. Ultimately, her guilt drives her to madness and suicide, showing how ambition, unchecked by morality, leads not only to destruction but also suffering due to her guilt.

Shakespeare uses Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to show that ambition is a strong force but morally neutral. It is not ambition in itself that brings about destruction, but the choices made by an individual to reach their goals. Their fall is thus not solely because of ambition but due to their agreement to violate ethical principles for the fulfillment of their desires. Shakespeare contrasts their path with that of Banquo, who also received a prophecy from the witches but never chose to act immorally to fulfill it. Banquo's integrity and restraint serve as a foil to Macbeth's recklessness, highlighting how ambition can be tempered by virtue. Shakespeare also points out the results of ambition through the wider results of the actions of Macbeth. His reign as king turns Scotland into a place of chaos and sorrow, which is used figuratively to reveal that personal ambition, if pursued without any regard for morality, may have widespread effects. The tyranny of Macbeth leads to rebellion; at the hands of Macduff, he is defeated, which again shows that ambition without ethical restraint is self-destroying. Ambition is revealed in the tragedy of Shakespeare's Macbeth and the post-incident events of the same. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth were, initially, two noble souls but the uncontrolled ambition found ways to impel them towards such immoral activities which resulted in their fall.

Through their tragic curve, Shakespeare drives home the point that ambition in and of itself is not a destructive force; it is instead the morals one chooses that determine the outcome in the attainment of one's goals. By setting Macbeth's reckless ambition against Banquo's integrity, Shakespeare warns of the risk in making power more important than morality. Ultimately, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth prove that ambition, if used the wrong way can lead to many consequences.