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Ambition

In his play *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare's characters have unchecked ambition that ultimately leads to their downfall, as it corrupts their morals, fuels their paranoia, and results in a series of tragic events. Through the characters' journeys, Shakespeare highlights the destructive nature of ambition when it is not tempered by ethical considerations and the consequences of allowing ambition to overpower one's sense of right and wrong. In Shakespeare's '*Macbeth*,' ambition serves as the driving force that leads to the tragic downfall of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, illustrating how the relentless pursuit of power can corrupt and destroy even the noblest of characters.

Shakespeare presents ambition as a force that can be inherently destructive, depending on the moral choices of individuals. The play demonstrates that unchecked ambition can lead to catastrophic consequences. Macbeth's initial reluctance to commit regicide is evident 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 the other" (Shakespeare 1.7.25-28). This quote illustrates how Macbeth's ambition drives him to consider actions he knows are morally wrong. Similarly, Lady Macbeth's ambition is evident when she fears that Macbeth is "too full o' the milk of human kindness / To catch the nearest way" (Shakespeare 1.5.17-18). Her ambition leads her to

manipulate Macbeth into committing murder, showcasing the destructive potential of unchecked ambition. As the story goes further Macbeth's ambition makes a turn for the worse.

Macbeth's ambition ultimately leads to his downfall. Initially, Macbeth is a loyal and honorable soldier, but his encounter with the witches awakens his latent ambition. His ambition drives him to murder King Duncan, an act that sets him on a path of moral decay. Macbeth's paranoia is evident when he says, "To be thus is nothing; / But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo / Stick deep" (Shakespeare 3.1.52-54). This paranoia leads him to commit further atrocities, including the murder of Banquo and Macduff's family. Macbeth's ambition drives him to isolate himself from those around him, ultimately resulting in his downfall. His realization of his tragic fate is evident when he says, "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more" (Shakespeare 5.5.27-29). This quote underscores the futility of his ambition and the emptiness of his achievements. Similarly, Lady Macbeth shows similar ambitious qualities as Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth's ambition also contributes to her ultimate demise. Her initial resolve and manipulation of Macbeth demonstrate her ambitious nature. She calls upon the spirits to "unsex me here, / And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full / Of direst cruelty" (Shakespeare 1.5.48-50), indicating her willingness to abandon her morality to achieve her goals. However, the consequences of her ambition become apparent as guilt and madness consume her. Her descent into madness is evident when she says, "Out, damned spot! out, I say!... Hell is murky!" (Shakespeare 5.1.37-38). Lady Macbeth's ambition, which initially appears as strength, ultimately leads to her psychological breakdown and death. This leads to the natural destruction of ambition.

The destructive nature of ambition is further highlighted by the downfall of both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Their unchecked ambition leads them to commit heinous acts, resulting in their isolation, paranoia, and eventual demise. Shakespeare uses their tragic ends to illustrate the corrupting power of ambition. The play suggests that ambition, when not tempered by moral considerations, can lead to one's ruin. As Macbeth's ambition drives him to murder King Duncan, he becomes increasingly consumed by guilt and fear, causing him to lose touch with reality and spiral into madness. Similarly, Lady Macbeth, who initially appears strong and ruthless, is ultimately overwhelmed by guilt and descends into madness, leading to her tragic suicide. The play portrays how their relentless pursuit of power alienates them from those around them, leaving them isolated and vulnerable. Their tragic ends serve as a powerful warning about the dangers of unchecked ambition and the moral decay that can result from the relentless quest for power. Through the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare masterfully depicts the devastating consequences of allowing ambition to override one's ethical principles and the inevitable downfall that follows.

Ultimately, "*Macbeth*" presents ambition as a powerful and potentially destructive force. The actions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth demonstrate how unchecked ambition can lead to moral decay and eventual destruction. Shakespeare's portrayal of ambition serves as a cautionary tale, warning of the dangers of allowing ambition to override one's moral compass. Through the tragic fates of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, the play underscores the importance of balancing ambition with ethical considerations.

