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Shakespeare wrote “Macbeth” around 1606 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. Shakespeare wrote “Macbeth” because he wanted to impress or flatter King James I, by including elements of Scottish history. King James I was also interested in witchcraft. Hence the “three witches” coming into the story. “Macbeth” is a true story that happened around the eleventh century, although Shakespeare’s play of “Macbeth” was not accurate. In “Shakespeare’s Macbeth”, the corrupting power of ambition is often shown through the relentless pursuit of power, which leads to the downfall of Macbeth and the people supporting him.

At the beginning of the play, Macbeth is portrayed as a loyal and honorable warrior, but his ambition quickly begins to overshadow his morals. Encouraged by his wife, Lady Macbeth, he decides to murder King Duncan to take the throne. This initial act of ambition sets off a chain reaction of violence and paranoia. Macbeth's ambition blinds him to the moral consequences of his actions, and he becomes increasingly ruthless in his pursuit of power.

Macbeth let his ambition get the best of him, through the prophecies that the witches told him. Macbeth was a very loyal soldier, when he was in battle with his loyal friend Macduff, the two of them came upon three witches. The witches told them prophecies, they told Macbeth that they hail him as the Thane of Glamis and then the Thane of Cawdor, which are both accurate at the time, but then add the significant prophecy that he will become king. Macbeth was intrigued although, did not think anything of it because Duncan was King. Eventually the prophecies got

to Macbeth and he told Lady Macbeth (his wife) about the witches; she believed him, and made a plan for the prophecies to come true. Lady Macbeth came up with a plan to kill Duncan so that Macbeth would become the King of Scotland. So Duncan came to stay at Macbeth's home and when Duncan was asleep. Lady Macbeth's plan was to get the guards drunk and blame it on them. Macbeth killed Duncan in his sleep with a dagger. Immediately after Macbeth had regret and started hallucinating. Macbeth's ambition just kept getting worse; he thought everyone was being suspicious including Macduff and Banquo. Banquo was one of Macbeth's most loyal friends. So Macbeth hired two murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance Banquo's son, when they were on the way to the coronation dinner. The murderers killed Banquo but Fleance got away. Macbeth starts hallucinating and sees Banquo's ghost, everyone thought Macbeth was insane.

Macbeth's ambition drove him mad so he killed Macduff's family; his wife and kids. Macbeth went on a charge and decided to kill Macduff's family, because Macduff went to England, so Macbeth saw him as a traitor. Macbeth ordered that his guards go and kill Macduff's wife and children, so they were all stabbed to death. Macduff's family was forced to face death because of the man of their house fleeing the country with no answer as to why.

Ambition in "Macbeth" is a central theme that drives the plot and character development throughout the play. William Shakespeare explores the destructive nature of unchecked ambition through the character of Macbeth, whose desire for power leads him down a dark and tragic path. Macbeth's ambition is ignited by the prophecy of the three witches, who predict that he will become the King of Scotland. This prophecy plants the seeds of ambition in Macbeth's mind, leading him to contemplate and eventually commit heinous acts to achieve his goal.

In the final acts of "Macbeth," the once ambitious and ruthless character begins to show signs of regret and despair. As the consequences of his actions catch up with him, Macbeth becomes increasingly aware of the futility of his quest for power. His soliloquy in Act 5, Scene 5, upon hearing of Lady Macbeth's death, is a poignant moment that reveals his deep sense of regret. He reflects on the meaningless nature of life, stating, "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more." This speech highlights his realization that his ambition has led him to a hollow existence, filled with guilt and devoid of true fulfillment.

Macbeth's regret is further evident in his interactions with others as his reign crumbles. He becomes increasingly isolated, and the weight of his crimes begins to take a toll on his psyche. In Act 5, Scene 3, he admits to Seyton that he is weary of life and expresses a longing for the peace that death might bring. This weariness indicates a deep-seated regret for the path he has chosen, as he recognizes that his ambition has led him to a state of perpetual fear and unrest. His once unyielding determination is replaced by a sense of hopelessness, as he understands that his actions have irrevocably damaged his soul and his kingdom.

In the final confrontation with Macduff, Macbeth's regret reaches its peak. Though he initially clings to the witches' prophecies, he soon realizes that they have deceived him. As Macduff reveals that he was not "born of woman" in the usual manner, Macbeth's confidence crumbles, and he resigns himself to his fate. In this moment, Macbeth's regret is palpable; he understands that his ambition has led him to a tragic end. His refusal to surrender, despite knowing he is doomed, can be seen as a final act of defiance, but it also underscores his recognition of the irreversible consequences of his actions. Ultimately, Macbeth's regret is a

powerful reminder of the destructive nature of unchecked ambition and the inevitable downfall it brings.

Shakespeare, William. *Macbeth*. Edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine,
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