

Taylor Horton

Kaylee Granning

English II

23 January, 2025

English playwright and poet, William Shakespeare, wrote a play called Macbeth with main characters that are named Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and King of Scotland, his wife, Lady Macbeth, King Duncan and Banquo. In the story Macbeth, Macbeth is given prophecies that lead him to commit murder due to ambition to become King. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth let the prophecies that Macbeth was given drive them to commit multiple murders, manipulate others, and isolate themselves from everybody else in order to take the throne of Scotland, which inevitably led to their death. Therefore, ambition and moral choices of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth led to their downfall due to Lady Macbeth's influencing of Macbeth to commit heinous acts, Macbeth's sending murderers to kill Banquo, and the guilt they feel about their actions.

In the story Macbeth, Macbeth is given prophecies that lead him to commit murder due to Lady Macbeth influencing Macbeth to commit horrible acts due to their ambition to rise in power. In the story, both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth murder King Duncan by getting the guards drunk and using their daggers to kill Duncan in order to make it seem that the guards were involved. Macbeth shows guilt after this, saying, "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand?" (Shakespeare II:2:57-58). The line represents that Macbeth regrets what he has done and feels disturbed about Duncan's blood on his hands, which shows that he has a weakness that leads to his downfall. Before they went through with the plan to murder Duncan by framing the guards by getting them drunk and using their daggers, Macbeth was hesitant.

However, Lady Macbeth, to pressure him into going through with it, says, “When you durst do it, then you were a man” (Shakespeare I:7:49), and he gives in and agrees to follow through with the plan, which symbolizes Lady Macbeth’s influence on Macbeth’s decisions, using her ambition and hunger for power to overturn his hesitations. The murder of Duncan eventually led Macbeth to become extremely paranoid, ultimately leading him to isolate from others and eventually be defeated in battle. Hence, Lady Macbeth played a part in Macbeth’s downfall due to manipulating Macbeth to go through with the murders. Overall, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s demise was influenced by their impact on each other and the guilt they felt from what they had done.

In the story, Macbeth, Macbeth sends murderers to kill Banquo due to his discovery that Banquo’s descendants will be heir to the throne according to the witches’ prophecy, an action that would lead to his downfall. After the murderers Macbeth sent to Banquo killed him, Macbeth spiraled with guilt and fear about what he had done. One night when Macbeth held a feast to celebrate his kingship, he saw the ghost of Banquo sitting in his chair. When he noticed, he was horrified, started to panic, and talked to Banquo’s ghost. During the scene, Macbeth tells the ghost of Banquo to “Avaunt and quit my sight; let the earth hide thee / Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold” (Shakespeare 3:4:97-98). Macbeth’s reaction contributes to his downfall because he shows a representation of his guilt and paranoia over murdering Banquo. When the murders that Macbeth sent found Banquo, he told his sons to escape, and Fleance was able to escape, signifying the witches’ prophecy that Banquo’s descendants would become king will come true. After Fleance escaped, Macbeth admits that he is “now cabined, cribbed / confined, bound in / To saucy doubts and fears”, revealing that he is becoming paranoid and dreadful, a factor that leads to his downfall. Killing Banquo caused a turning point in which

Macbeth's desire for power spirals out of control and causes him to commit murders over again in order to remain in power. Therefore, Macbeth's downfall was influenced by his goal to remain King and fear that Banquo's descendants will become kings due to his captivation of the witches' prophecies.

By the end of the story, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are plagued with guilt and fear by their sinful actions, guilt that would eventually lead them to reveal what they have done. In time, Lady Macbeth's sense of guilt was strong enough that she began sleep-walking and talking like she was speaking to Macbeth. While sleepwalking, she acted like she was washing blood off of her hands saying, "Yet who would have thought the old man / to have so much blood in him" (Shakespeare 5:1:35-36). Therefore, Lady Macbeth confessed what she has done while sleepwalking due to heavy burdens she had in her heart, and eventually, she committed suicide due to unbearable remorse she felt. Toward the end of the story, the witches show Macbeth apparitions, one being a crowned child holding a tree, symbolizing that when Macduff's army marches on Dunsinane with Birnam wood, Macbeth would be defeated, ultimately leading Macbeth to become apprehensive. An example would be when Macbeth says "Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane, / I cannot taint with fear" (Shakespeare 5:3:2-3). With this quote, Macbeth illustrates that his confidence from sticking with the prophecies is the only thing keeping him sane from what has conspired due to his actions.

Overall Macbeth represents as a character that you should not let ambition cloud your judgement and blind you from reality or lies that people tell you. The desire for power can lead a person to do unimaginable things, especially to others. Someone like Macbeth would want to have authority so bad that they do not realize the inexcusable things they have done to get to that point. The play highlights the importance of balancing ambition with morality.