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Macbeth

Macbeth is a tragedy written by William Shakespeare that is set during the 11th century in Scotland. In the beginning of the play, Macbeth and his friend Banquo meet with 3 witches that ultimately decide Macbeth's fate in the story. After talking to the witches, and finding out he can become king, Macbeth talks to Lady Macbeth and decides to kill the current king, Duncan. This one decision changed everything and started his downfall. Throughout Macbeth, ambition had a huge impact on the characters and their minds including causing death, affecting the decisions of characters, and eventually leading to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's downfall.

As a main theme in *Macbeth*, ambition gave way to many problems the characters faced and caused the deaths of many. Lady Macbeth wanted to be queen so badly she was willing to do whatever she needed if she promised to do so, even if that included killing her own child. She told Macbeth

How tender tis' to love the babe that milks me.

I would, while it was smiling in my face,

Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums

And dashed the brains out had I so sworn (Shakespeare 1:7:55-58).

She uses this as a way to convince her husband that because he promised to do something, it should be done no matter what. Another way ambition controlled Macbeth is when he decides to kill Banquo and Fleance just to make sure his family line can not take the throne. He tells the

murderers “So is he mine - and in such bloody distance / That every minute of his being thrusts / Against my near’st of life;” (Shakespeare 3:1:115-117). By saying this he means every minute that goes by is being ruined by Banquo and it needs to end. To make sure Banquo and his family can not take the throne, Macbeth hires two murderers to find and kill Banquo and Fleance. Macbeth says to them “And I will put that business in your bosoms / Whose execution takes your enemy off, / Grapples you to the heart and love of us.” (Shakespeare 3:1:103-105). This means if they complete the task it will get rid of both of their enemies and also bring them closer. These circumstances create a great impact on the outcome of events and decisions made throughout Macbeth’s reign.

Ambition affects everyone’s decisions in the play in many different ways. An example of this is when Lady Macbeth convinces Macbeth to kill Duncan because she wants to be queen. She says to him

Lady Macbeth: When you durst do it, then you were a man;

And to be more than what you were you would

Be so much more the man.

Macbeth: I dare to do all that may become a man;

Who dares do more is none. (Shakespeare 1:7:41-47 and 50-52).

She says this as a way of getting her husband to move forward with his promise. After killing Duncan, and people find out, Macbeth goes into his room and kills the guards to make sure there are no other witnesses of his crime. “O, yet I do repent me of my fury, / That I did kill them.”(Shakespeare 2:3:103-104). His statement proves that he is the one to kill the guards. These decisions made by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth lead to the actions that bring about their downfall.

Macbeth's downfall begins with him hearing the witches apparitions and believing everything they tell him. The three apparitions that appear tell Macbeth to fear Macduff, that no one born of woman shall harm him, and he will not fall until Birnam wood marches on Dunsinane (Shakespeare 4:1:78,87-89,101-103). Believing all of this to be true, Macbeth comes to the conclusion that he is immortal and no one can kill him. On the other hand, the doctor is called about Lady Macbeth sleepwalking. She is going crazy and, to make it stop, she decides to kill herself. Macbeth finds out when Seyton hears her cry and comes in to tell him "It is the cry of a woman, my good lord. / The queen, my lord, is dead." (Shakespeare 5:5:8,16). After hearing this, Macbeth decides he has nothing left to live for and is no longer worried about dying because Lady Macbeth is all he has. He says "And then is heard no more. It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing." (Shakespeare 5:5:26-28). This proves to him that life means nothing anymore. The last part of Macbeth's downfall is Macduff. He says he needs to be the one to kill Macbeth, otherwise his family died for nothing. "If thou be'st slain and with no stroke of mine, / My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still." (Shakespeare 5:7:16-17). Once Macduff finds Macbeth they argue and then fight.

Macduff: My voice is in my sword.

Macbeth: I bear a charmed life which must not yield

To one of woman born.

Macduff: Tell thee – Macduff was from his mother's womb

Untimely ripped. (Shakespeare 5:7:37-46).

Once Macbeth hears this, he realizes Macduff is the one who can kill him. He decides not to surrender and he dies, leaving Malcolm as King of Scotland.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* continues to show how underestimating people leads to horrible consequences. Throughout the play it is made known that ambition and poor decisions can get people killed. Macbeth finds this out the hard way by being overconfident in himself and making the wrong choices. In the end, all of Macbeth's hard work ultimately leads to his downfall.

Works Cited

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