Identify and explain the features of Aristotelian tragedy that appear in Macbeth.

Shakespeare’s Macbeth addresses several of the basic features of dramatic tragedy as described by Aristotle, including:

* The play follows one plot – the events of Macbeth all revolve around the prophecies of the three witches and their consequences.
* The protagonist is from a position of power or importance – Macbeth begins as a general of the King, then is named the Thane of Cawdor (a rank of the aristocracy bestowed by powerful kings).
* The protagonist (tragic hero) has hamartia, a fatal flaw that brings about his demise – Macbeth's blind reliance on the witches’ prophecies is what eventually causes his death at the hands of Macduff.

Identify the qualities of the tragic hero that Macbeth represents.

Macbeth displays numerous qualities that exemplify a “tragic hero”. He initially seems of excellent character, but his manipulation at the hands of other characters facilitates the exposure of his one major flaw, leading to his tragic death.

Arthur Miller, the author of The Crucible wrote in his essay ‘The Tragedy of the Common Man’ that “it is now many centuries since Aristotle lived” and that “things do change, and even a genius is limited by his time and the nature of his society” (Miller, pp.164-5). Do you believe that Aristotle’s ideas on dramatic tragedy are still relevant today, or do we look at human experience differently now? Reference the play Macbeth in your answer.