

Discuss the ideas(s) developed by the text creator about the significance of an truth and idealism in an individual's life

Truth and idealism are two concepts which exist in opposition to each other: having one means losing sight of the other. Therefore, individuals who pursue idealism often find themselves moving away from the truth. In William Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*, Macbeth is a thane of Scotland who's idealism is being king of the country. Obtaining the position through violence and murder. Throughout his rule as tyrant king, Macbeth struggles to find a balance between what he considered to be the ideal and the reality of his life. Shakespeare suggests to us individuals in pursuit of paths toward idealism are oftentimes willing to sacrifice whatever necessary. This causes individuals to place great significance upon attaining and securing their ideal positions, hindering their ability to see the truth. As a result, when individuals obtain the status they covet, they are forced to realize a reality of unhappiness and discontentment.

While individuals may initially be resolved to utilize peaceful methods, the promised attainment of their idealism results in the undertaking of drastic methods. At first, Macbeth was a character loyal to his king and held in high regard by his fellow countrymen. However, a chance encounter with the witches and an ensuing prophecy would foresee Macbeth crowned as king; planting the first thoughts of betrayal. Despite this prophecy, Macbeth originally resolves himself to passively waiting it out, believing that "If chance will have me king, why, chance may / crown me / Without my stir." Here, Macbeth believes there may be a way for him to peacefully obtain the title of crown without doing anything. Macbeth is still grounded in truth, understanding the consequences of going against the divine right of kings and how a murder of a king would be the

highest crime in the country. His body even reacting unnaturally as considers murder. He is still doubtful of the witches' prophecies, not wanting to completely believe in the idealism they promise him. However, upon hearing Duncan announces his son Macolm to be the next king of Scotland Macbeth's attitude shifts. Now, Macbeth believes that it is impossible to become king without murdering Duncan. Despite this belief, Macbeth still faces a conflict between his desire of wanting to become king and his understanding of the truth that Duncan is a good king. However, with the promise of the title king dangling in front of Macbeth, he is unable to resist the allure of attaining his idealism, killing Duncan and becoming king of Scotland.

After acquiring their ideal position, individuals will place great significance upon it. This makes them desperate to maintain and secure it, becoming blind to the truth of their actions. Macbeth is able to achieve his initial idealism, becoming the king of Scotland, but is aware of the significance of the actions taken in order to gain that title. This causes him to place great importance upon it, as without the title everything he worked towards would be for nothing. Here, Macbeth's idealism switches from becoming king to having security in the title. As "to be thus is nothing, / But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo, / Stick deep," Being extremely insecure, Macbeth is unable to forget the other part of the witches' prophecies promised to Banquo; Banquo would be father to a line of kings. As Macbeth's part of the prophecy came true for him, he fears Banquo's part of the prophecy will also be fulfilled, deeming him a threat to his kingship. This causes Macbeth to decide on the murder of both Banquo and his son Fleance. Mistakenly believing the removal of these two characters will result in the attainment of his ideal. Macbeth is blind to the truth, that murdering Banquo will neither secure his kingship or bring him his idealism. Instead, it will bring upon the opposite effect of what Macbeth intended,

as the suspicion around murders continue to increase towards him and the more heinous acts that he commits the more shakey his kingship will become. As Macbeth becomes increasingly desperate to maintain his security, he consults the witches again, hoping to see prophecies of his kingship being secure. The witches take advantage of this, understanding “[that] you all know, security / is mortals’ chiefest enemy”. They understand that by making Macbeth overconfident, he will be more likely to make mistakes and be brought down himself. The prophecies tell Macbeth promises of his kingship being stable unless a whole forest is moved; that men born of women are unable to defeat. With an obsession of his idealism of stability the only thing in Macbeth’s mind, he becomes blind to the many other truths that exist around him. Failing to realize the dependency he has come to have on the witches' prophecies and the truth of the witches themselves. They are not benevolent characters with Macbeth’s best intentions in mind, rather often speak in large amounts of equivocation in order to trick or mislead him. Macbeth’s fixation on the stability of the throne has immensely hindered his ability to judge the truths of his actions.

The long term fulfillment of an individual's ideal exposes them to the reality of their choices and circumstances, leading to unhappiness and unfulfillment. Macbeth is able to achieve what he believed to be the ideal for a long period of time, stability of the throne. However, this extended period of living his supposed ideal forced Macbeth to look at the truth of the situation around him. Macbeth understands all the things a person who lived honourably at his age should have: friends, honour, love, ect. But that instead, the life he lived has caused it to “[fall] into the sere, the yellow leaf,” with nothing but a barren and withered wasteland left for him. Being king neither brought Macbeth happiness nor satisfaction, rather forced him to walk a path of murder and bloodshed. His time as king corrupted the country of Scotland, causing men to die young,

murder to happen at dinner tables and meat never to be seen. Macbeth is unable to claim fulfillment from any of these actions. In addition to this, Macbeth also realizes the pointlessness of his life, claiming it be “a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.” Here, Macbeth reflects on the futile endeavors of his life, how all the bloodshed, murder and violence that he committed, resulted in a kingship that meant nothing to him. He has nothing in his life to move forward to, finding it easier to stay ruling as tyrant king rather than try to reform to become a good one. Nothing at this point can give him happiness. Ultimately, Macbeth understood his idealism of a secure kingship he thought would bring him happiness instead resulted in the undertaking of actions that brought him despair.

An individual's idealism seems alluring to them, the best possible thing they are able to obtain. After all, it is their ideal. However, it is specifically because to that individual, it is what they considered perfect, that it causes them to lose sight of the truth. Individuals will even choose to sacrifice or compromise themselves in order to reach what they perceive to be their ultimate goal. Truths of their situation and actions are cast aside for ignorant belief that everything will be alright once they get to the ideal. However, when this ideal is reached, individuals are left with no choice but to see the truth of their decisions, a truth far from what they originally believed their ideal to be.