

THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH

The play MacBeth is considered a tragedy. But more specific, MacBeth as an individual has a fall from heroic greatness. This is caused by a number of elements, both internal and external. Ambition was an enormous factor that weighed heavy upon MacBeth. For this reason, more people suffered than just himself.

MacBeth's ambition kicked in soon after he became a war hero. In battle he was said to have "unseamed him from the nave to the chaps, and fixed his head upon our battlements." Triumphant from battle, he and a companion Banquo came upon three weird sisters. The witches foresaw MacBeth as the Thane of Cawdor and a king thereafter. Unto Banquo they said he would beget kings. The ambition to strive to actually become these powerful figures had great influence on MacBeth's decision making.

MacBeth proceeded to plot the murder of his king, Duncan, with the encouragement of Lady MacBeth. She went to drastic verbal measures to try and get his self-esteem and confidence up, even so far as to say, "I have given suck and know 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 his bra

ins out." She knows MacBeth cares for Duncan, but, nevertheless, thinks power is more important in this situation. MacBeth has mixed feelings along with a strong side of fear, and led to confusion by his wife's strong pressure, finally kills Duncan while he slept.

MacBeth's next fear is of Banquo's kingly nature. If the witches's prediction is true, Banquo could win the throne from him. "There is none but he (and his heirs) whose being I do fear." The new king reveals his growing jealousy and commands the murderers to kill Banquo. The reason he orders other men to kill him is because, as MacBeth says, "For certain friends that are both his and mine, whose loves I may not drop, but wail his full." He wants to remain above suspicion although he will be the one to have "struck him down." Already, MacBeth has seized the ambition and has become quite aggressive toward anyone or anything that stands in his path.

Soon MacBeth begins his internal conflicts. His first hallucinations began even before Duncan's death, with the temptation of the dagger before him. He said aloud, "Art thou but a dagger of the mind, a false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain." Hallucinations began to worsen when they became "hauntings." Banquo's ghost appeared unto MacBeth twice. The first when MacBeth's colleagues came to feast in the castle, directly after Banquo's actual murder. At first sight he speaks to it openly in his disbelief, so that he almost confesses his crime. At first Lady MacBeth tries to convince the company that her husband was occasionally like this by saying, "My lord is often thus, and hath been from his youth." Later, she makes the friends leave when she realizes what's going on. She comments, "He grows worse and worse. Question enrages him. At once, good night."

Because of MacBeth's insecurity, he returns to the witches to have his new questions answered. They give him answers from their master, the Devil, in a series of apparitions. The first relays this, "Beware MacDuff, beware the Thane of Fife." The second, "Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn the power of man, for none of woman born shall harm MacBeth." The third, "MacBeth shall never be vanquished until great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him."

The final vision MacBeth witnesses is of eight kings, the last holding a mirror followed by Banquo. This is the second of two occurrences in which MacBeth views Banquo's ghost. Seeing that which the apparitions have told him is impossible, MacBeth is given a false security by the new answers, because he now thinks he is as invincible as he is mighty.

The one time friends of MacBeth begin to turn on him. MacDuff flees the area and in turn, his wife and son are killed. MacDuff as well as Malcolm suspect MacBeth of this crime. In a rage for revenge, MacDuff gathers men to go to the castle and rise up against MacBeth. In doing this, on the Hill of Dunsinane, the men each carry a bough of a tree to disguise their great numbers. This event makes the third apparition's revelations come true, an omen that has impact on MacBeth. He now realizes the other apparitions are just as possible to come true as well. He says, "I pull in resolution, and begin to doubt the equivocation of the fiend that lies like truth." He goes to look for MacDuff, to slay his once friend.

Eventually MacDuff ends up with the final glory. Both he and MacBeth want to eliminate each other, but before any of this can occur it is revealed, "MacDuff was from his mother's womb untimely ripped." MacBeth now has even more fear of him because the second apparition has become true as well as the first warning. As a witch once said, "False securities are man's worst enemy." This truth becomes apparent when MacBeth is beheaded along with all confidence he temporarily possessed. MacDuff becomes not only a hero, but a king as well.

In conclusion, MacBeth was both influenced greatly by internal, as much, if not more than by external conflicts. People such as Lady MacBeth, the three witch sisters, Duncan and Banquo in their relationship to MacBeth had something to do with his downfall. Most of all the confusion and guilt going on in his head prevented clear thinking. If he had been thinking straight, he could have been more rational about his decision making and might just have figured out the prophecies and apparitions instead of being tricked by them.

The ambition that drove MacBeth made him wear blinders. Therefore, he only saw what he wanted to see. A perfect example of this was when MacBeth said, "I am in blood stepped in so far that I should wade no more, returnings were as tedious as to go o'er." This shows him seeing the situation in this way to convince himself of doing the correct action at the time. The conflict of MacBeth and the suffering of not only a hero, but of others around him, made the story of MacBeth th