
Macbeth: Consequences Of Power Corruption

Macbeth, the eponymously titled protagonist of the play written by Shakespeare in 1605 explores the excessive desire of power that holds a mirror up to ourselves and is a reflection of our morals. Throughout the play, Shakespeare utilises several of the character's ambition of power as a reflection of how problematic the corruption of power can lead to and the psychological consequences of their desire, teaching us many morals, applicable to the modern-day audience.

Without the notion of power, Macbeth would not have been blinded by the possibility of usurping the throne. Shakespeare embedded morals within the play for the readers' to question their own principles.

Straight from the protasis of the play, the notion of gaining power is seen. "I am Thane of Cawdor. If good why do I yield that suggestion." Although Macbeth now possesses more power over others, as he is the Thane of Cawdor, a notable position whom is well respected throughout society, he becomes overtaken by thoughts of greed and considers murdering King Duncan. Utilising the quote, Shakespeare also questions our morals, he warns us that the metaphor "the grass is always greener on the other side" is a likely misconception. Macbeth's moral and immoral thoughts begin to blur foreboding a fatal decision. "When you durst do it, then you were a man." Provoked by Lady Macbeth's mocking, Macbeth eventually kills King Duncan, disrupting the Great Chain of Being, in which even the weather howls at the unnatural and immoral act. Macbeth descends over the boundary of morality, his appetite for power starting to become overwhelming and insanity decaying his mind.

Shakespeare has utilised Macbeth's excessive desire for power to seize the throne as a way to also reflect on the readers' morals.

Throughout the play, Shakespeare has weaved in repetitive symbolism of blood, which represents guilt for the characters' fateful actions. This allows the readers to reflect on the psychological consequences of how far one will go to gain power.

The first sight of blood is seen physically when Macbeth contemplates the murder of King Duncan. However, as the play progresses, the physical blood turns into imaginary blood as does Macbeth's separation between sanity and insanity reach closer, he contains a part of humanity he has yet to lose, guilt. "What hands are here?... They pluck out mine eyes. Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? This my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red." Macbeth has come to the realisation that even if King Duncan's blood can be easily washed from his hands, his guilt can never be cleansed or washed off by "all great Neptune's ocean." Instead, his guilt will poison the world around him, which he compares to turning the oceans red. Macbeth's guilt grows as he imagines his hands plucking out his eyes in retribution for the murder of Duncan. The imaginary blood is illustrated at the climax of the play. "Out, damned spot! out, I say!... Will these hands ne'er be clean?... Here's the smell of the blood still." Lady Macbeth tries to exorcise her demons, rubbing her hands together to rid herself of a psychological "stain" of blood on her hands. This is in accordance to A.C. Bradley who indicates that Lady Macbeth's

recollections are brought forth from her disordered mind expressing “desolating misery” and guilt.

In the pursuit of power, Shakespeare utilises a recurring symbolism of blood as Macbeth fails to realise the gravity of his deeds, allowing readers to reflect on the psychological burden that committing these crimes entail.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* effectively shows how corruption of power can lead to problematic issues. The symbolism and morals woven throughout the play is applicable to the modern-day audience. By addressing the complications of power, Shakespeare challenges readers to reflect on themselves in comparison to the characters within the play, some of their actions or thoughts may not be as other-worldly as readers think.