Name

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*Macbeth* Essay

*Macbeth* is a tragedy written by Shakespeare and it was first performed in the early seventeenth century, however, it’s striking subject matter and themes create an element of universality in it. The character of Macbeth is shown as a brave soldier nonetheless but the weaknesses present in his moral character, make him appear as a misguided and flawed human being. In the play, the themes of ambition, corruption, sin and guilt create a universal appeal as men, in general, are driven by these factors in their real lives.

Ambition drives Macbeth insane and also serves as his tragic flaw because it causes unrest inside him and the weakness of his character overpowers his abilities and services to the kingdom as a veteran soldier. His intensity of ambition drives him to the point of insanity where he loses humanity and starts the mass killing of innocent humans to gain authority of the kingdom. He listens to the prophecies of the wicked sisters and kills many characters including King Duncan, his progeny and Banquo. Likewise, his mad ambition pushes him to disrupt everything to achieve power and kingship. The mad ambition soon overcomes his doubts and fears of killing King Duncan and these lines describe his thoughts, “I have no spur ,To prick the sides only, Vaulting ambition, which oerleaps itself, And falls on the other” (Act 1, Scene 7, lines 25-28). Moreover, Lady Macbeth knows the weakness of his character and persuades him for the killing and utters these lines to highlight his doubts, “Thou wouldst be great Art not without ambition,” (Act 1, Scene 5, lines 5-6). He becomes a tyrant, loses his conscience and becomes a tyrant. This weakness of his human nature manifests itself as a universal phenomenon because ambition is a driving force, however, mad ambition always results in injustice and tyranny.

Corruption is another universal theme in the play as it symbolizes the human nature of greed and lust for more authority and power. It also upsets the balance in a society and a brave soldier like Macbeth rules over the kingdom through corruption and revolts against the divine balance. In the play, moral corruption symbolizes both the weakness and the residing fear in Macbeth's character, as he allows mass killing even after murdering Duncan but his fear persuades him to stop rebellion. In an instance, the playwright has established the connection between fear and its influence on human corruption, “When our actions do not, / Our fears do make us traitors” (Act 4, Scene 2, lines 2-3). The sense of right and wrong blur for him and he gains power which results in more corruption. In the first act, the line spoken by the weird sisters, hint to the notion of corruption, “Fair is foul, and foul is fair” (Act 1, Scene 1, line 12). He wants to acquire more so he does not settle on enjoying the status of “Thane of Cawdor” and soon becomes the king. Moreover, as George Orwell has said that corruption occurs as a result of power but when a person gets overtly authoritative, he cannot stop himself from doing corruption.

The theme of Sin in this play depicts the human essence and its initial effect on Macbeth. When the earlier prophecies and Lady Macbeth insist him for the sinful acts, he resists but soon gives in to the temptation. After murdering Duncan and Banquo, the notion of sin loses its meaning and repercussions for him as he does not resist his sinful thoughts and plans later in the play. Apart from the sin of the mass killing, he also indulges in the sins of pride, envy and wrath according to the seven deadly sins. He takes pride in his bravery and Warcraft but he loses humbleness and honor when he stops resisting these thoughts. In one of his asides, he expresses his utmost desire of kingship when Malcolm is announced as the future prince of Cumberland, “For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires!” (Act 1, Scene 4, line 50). Man cannot stop sinning but his instincts can decrease his sense of morality and his power of redemption. Similarly, his guilt does not become apparent in the play when he rules over the kingdom and enjoys the status of the most powerful person.

Shakespeare has manifested the striking idea of guilt in Macbeth because it is also a part of human condition and vulnerability. It also serves as a reminder that Macbeth, is a flawed human being. Guilt surfaces in him at the end of the play when fate and nature restore its order and all the prophecies appear as two-fold. His ambition, corruption, desire for authority and control drives him negatively and his hope for redemption also stems from his sense of guilt. However, he knows that he cannot return his sinful deeds and the corruption of his character cannot be undone. Both he and Lady Macbeth can never get any redemption now because they compromised their morals. “Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player That struts and frets his hour upon the stage And then is heard no more” (Act 5, Scene 5, lines 24-26). Their guilt is also significant because the sin hardened their emotions of kindness and pity. Besides, this theme also establishes Macbeth as a tragic hero who contributed to his fall. His respect and consideration for the natural order and fate restore at the end of the play and his ambition subsides. A critic, Edward Dowden, asserts that Macbeth's tragedy symbolizes the lack of control and guidance in a human soul (Dowden 66).

Macbeth is a tragedy and the weakness of his character is shared by all human beings in the world. Nowadays, one does not indulge in Warcraft as compared to the classical age but the fights everyone faces are between his desires and his morals. The fight Macbeth fought was also between his morals and his mad ambition. These very themes of ambition, corruption, sin and guilt make this play a universal play and create a sense of universality.

# Works Cited:

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