

Background of Macbeth

With good cause, Macbeth is still one of Shakespeare's most well-liked pieces for classroom study and performance. This play, while shorter than others, is perhaps the most intensive of the dramatist in terms of action and human interaction description. The "butcher and his fiend-like queen" are two of the most alluring villains in theatre history, and both students and theatregoers will find great pleasure in the deep psychology Shakespeare bestows upon them.

Shakespeare had studied the history of Macbeth, a real Scottish ruler from the eleventh century, from a number of sources, most notably the Chronicles of Holinshed, which he employed as a source for many of his other historical tragedies. According to Holinshed's story, after winning King Duncan over in a conflict with the Danes, Banquo and Macbeth work together to murder him. The original account is replete with amazing details that highlight the slyness of the Scots and Macbeth, who, rather than using force to defeat an entire Danish army, used ingenuity to make a sleeping potion and then deliver it to the opposing army as a gift, much like the Trojan horse. Macbeth killed them with ease once they fell asleep. Shakespeare's idea to have Lady Macbeth give the guards of King Duncan's bedroom a sleeping potion most likely came from this episode.

But although Holinshed tells us that Macbeth's wife is determined to become queen, Lady Macbeth is not mentioned as an accomplice. Despite the fact that Holinshed's story reveals Macbeth's wife's ambition to become queen, Lady Macbeth is not mentioned as an accomplice. Rather, Banquo teams up with Macbeth to assassinate Duncan. Shakespeare faced an issue with this specific group of killers, as we will see in a moment.

Shakespeare received more from Holinshed than just a compelling tale; Macbeth has numerous instances of language and imagery that Shakespeare explicitly lifted from Holinshed, a technique that all authors engage in. For instance, contrast these quotes from Holinshed with those from Shakespeare.

Holinshed

"What manner of women (saith he) are you, that seeme so little favourable unto me, whereas to my fellow heere, besides high offices, ye assign also the kingdom?"
Banquo "My noble partner / You greet with present grace, and great prediction / Of noble having, and of royal hope . . . to me you speak not." Banquo

Shakespeare

Macbeth fears "lest he should be served of the same cup, as he had ministered to his predecessor." Macbeth is aware that "... even-handed Justice / Commends th'ingredience of our poison'd chalice / To our own lips" much too frequently.

These kinds of cases abound. Then, what does Shakespeare add? Shakespeare can analyse the emotional interactions between characters in plays with considerably greater realism because of the conversation form.

Instead of hearing about ambition, accusations, fear, sadness, courage, hatred, and lunacy from a narrator, an audience seeing Shakespeare's play would witness these emotions directly.

Second, Shakespeare's greatness is found in the humane treatment of every character, just as it is in his other plays. The individuals are so well realised that the viewer is left with the impression that this terrible event could very well transpire. Lady Macbeth's ruthless façade is untenable, as Macbeth's conscience is troubled. Shakespeare's depiction of Banquo portrays him as a kind guy, but he also has ambition.

Thirdly, sarcastic connections and patterns between events are made possible by drama. Act V actually illustrates the concept of insomnia, for instance, as the penalty of a guilty mind when Lady Macbeth sleepwalks and admits to her role.

Shakespeare's skill at the soliloquy, or solo speech, also allows the audience to go inside a character's head and witness, with a degree of psychological truth, the goals, aspirations, and anxieties of these historical figures—something that a historian is unable to accomplish.