

Macbeth

Architect Of His Own Downfall

Passion for Power

- Macbeth admits he has no good reason to kill Duncan: 'I have no other spur / to prick the sides of my intent but only / Vaulting ambition' (Act 1 Scene 7)
- Macbeth's desire for power and self-advancement is so strong that he allows it to overcome his better judgement.
- Even when he realises the kingship can bring him nothing but misery, he does not relinquish it.



Soliloquy

- The soliloquies are important as they give us an insight into the characters' true thoughts and intentions.
- Macbeth explains why he should not kill the king.
- 'He's here in double trust': Duncan is both Macbeth's kinsman and his guest.
- Macbeth - in one of the play's greatest ironies - lists Duncan's good qualities.

- He admits Duncan has been a noble, good king:
- 'this Duncan / Hath borne his faculties so meek,
hath been / So clear in his great office, that his
virtues / Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued,
against / The deep damnation of his taking-off'.

A Victory for Conscience?

- Macbeth's conscience tells him that he should not kill the king and he tells his wife as much: 'We will proceed no further in this business'.
- Her intervention at this stage is highly significant.

Lady Macbeth's Role

- In only fifty short lines, she wins her husband over to her point of view, using arguments that do not hold up to any scrutiny.
- Her argument is a triumph of persuasion over logic.

Lacks Ambition

- Was the hope drunk / Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since? / And wakes it now, to look so green and pale / At what it did so freely?

Cowardice

- 'Art thou afeard to be the same in thine own act and valour as thou art in desire?'
- If he does not kill the king - an old man and his guest - Macbeth is a coward

Doesn't Love Her

- 'From this time / Such I account thy love'
- If he doesn't kill the king, he doesn't really love his wife.

Reneging on a Promise

- She says that he has sworn to kill Duncan and not to do so now would be to renege on a vow.
- If SHE had promised to kill her baby, she would have 'dashed the brains out' rather than break a promise.

Crucial in Macbeth's Decision-Making Process?

- Would Macbeth have done the deed without his wife's urging?
- He immediately moves to wondering what would happen if they failed. He has accepted that the murder will take place.
- 'But screw your courage to the sticking place
- And we'll not fail.'