

The Use of Symbols in Macbeth

In the play Macbeth, Shakespeare uses many symbols to add to his story. His use of blood, water, light, dark, rampant animals, and even the witches are examples of how he used symbols to add depth to his play. These symbols were often times recurring and they were all related to the central plot of the play.

Shakespeare used blood in this play several times. Blood is first mentioned by Macbeth shortly after he had slain Duncan. The subject of blood was introduced again when Duncan's murder was brought up by Lady Macbeth, as well as others later in the play. In the aforementioned circumstances, blood was used to symbolize the guilt, and pain that Macbeth and his wife were experiencing as a by-product of the murderous rampage which consumed Macbeth, and later drove Lady Macbeth to suicide.

If blood symbolized death, guilt, and pain, then surely water symbolized cleansing and peace, and is used in this regard in many literary pieces. In fact, even in the bible, Pontious Pilate washed his hands in water after sentencing Jesus to be crucified. However, Macbeth mentions that all of the water in the sea would turn red from the blood on his hands; which leads me to the conclusion that blood was a much more powerful symbol than water in this play.

In Macbeth, light and dark was used in a classic sense. Light symbolized all that is good, and it is no coincidence that when a scene included Banquo or another of the innocent victims in this play, the setting was bright. On the other hand, when a scene involved murder or the supernatural, such as the scenes involving the witches, a dark setting was used.

The strange acting animals which were spoken of periodically during the play were used to symbolize chaos. When Duncan was murdered, Shakespeare used these irate animals to show that something horrible and irreconcilable had occurred in the kingdom. The use of these animals was extended to symbolize the unrest that Macbeth was personally experiencing due to the witches' prophetic statements. Furthermore, the Witches themselves are used to symbolize the unexplained, or supernatural, which was held in high regard at the time this play was written.

Shakespeare used symbols in many ways throughout the course of Macbeth. Blood, Water, Light, Dark, Animals, and the supernatural were The. major symbols that recurred throughout the play and were used in a way so that the audience could really feel the emotions of

the characters. Shakespeare's s utilization of symbols is a big part of what has made him one of the greatest playwrights of all time, and has perpetuated the performance of his plays for future generations.