

Victim of Circumstances

Macbeth, a victim of circumstances or not? He was a victim of circumstances. The witches, Lady Macbeth, and Macbeth himself all contribute to the murdering of Duncan.

The first of the three major circumstances Macbeth falls victim to is the witches' prediction. The third prediction that the witches make is that he will be king "All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!"¹.

The second of the circumstances is Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth, at first, skillfully pushes Macbeth to murder Duncan by mocking him "Was the hope drunk; Wherein you dressed yourself?"², doubting his love for her "Such I account thy love,"³ accusing him of cowardice "And live a coward"⁴. She finally convinced him by pointing out how easy it would be "When Duncan is asleep-"⁵. Macbeth loved his wife very much and valued her opinion, perhaps too much.

The last of the major circumstances is simply himself and what he is deep down. Macbeth has no control over the way he is. It is his vaulting ambition that makes him the way he is. This is why I consider it a circumstance where others may not. Macbeth is weak. He gave in to his evil side by even considering murdering Duncan. We can see him questioning himself in his aside in Act I scene 3 "Why do I yield to that suggestion whose horrid image ... Are less than horrible imaginings;"⁶. He cannot seem to be able to control his thoughts. He lets his ambition to become king run a wild. The murder of Duncan is the first and biggest step in Macbeth's moral degradation. From here evil deeds become easier because he feels he has gone too far to turn around.

I am in blood;

Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.⁷

Later Macbeth is so hardened by his sins "The time has been my senses would have cooled To here a night-shriek"⁸ that a woman's shriek does nothing to him.

Now, in order for this essay to show that Macbeth is a victim of circumstances I must prove the importance of each major circumstance. Without any one of these reasons I do not believe that Macbeth would have gone through with killing Duncan.

If I take away the witches' prediction, Macbeth would never have thought about becoming king. Thus he would not have given even a thought to murdering Duncan. Now, if he never murdered Duncan, he would have had no reasons to have Banquo or Macduff's family killed and this whole play would never have existed.

Lady Macbeth's attitude has a great influence on Macbeth. Let us say Lady Macbeth opposed the idea of murdering Duncan. I think Macbeth would not have even given the idea another thought simply because he loves his wife and values her opinion.

The third point I made in this paper was who Macbeth is inside. If Macbeth was a gentle, kind soul that never had that terrible vaulting ambition he would never, even with the predictions and his wife's attitude murder Duncan. He would ignore the predictions and set his spouse strait and go on loyally serving his king.

The witches, Lady Macbeth, and Macbeth all contribute to Macbeth's downfall. In another time, another place Macbeth would not have been a victim of these circumstances and would not have murdered Duncan.

¹Helen McDonnell et al, England in Literature. (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1979) 140 ll. 50

²Ibid, 148 ll. 36-37

³Ibid, 148 ll. 40

⁴Ibid, 149 ll. 43

⁵Ibid, 149 ll. 61

⁶Ibid, 143 ll. 137

⁷Ibid, 171 ll. 136-138

8Ibid, 195 ll. 10-11