

Macbeth: Timeline

(Macbeth's journey from good to evil)

Act I, Scene i

3 witches plan to meet Macbeth: he is doomed from the start. Purpose: to show evil will influence events from the start.

Act I, Scene ii

Sergeant tells Duncan Macbeth wins 2 battles against Rebels and Norway, against all odds. Macbeth wins because he is good and loyal. Duncan rewards Macbeth with the title "Thane of Cawdor" because he is trusted. However, it's ironic because the first Thane of Cawdor who helped Norway is a traitor who dies for betraying Duncan and Scotland, and the same will happen to Macbeth.

Act I, Scene iii

3 witches cast a spell on Macbeth: he is controlled by them (fate). Banquo and Macbeth meet witches: Macbeth will be king, Banquo's sons will be kings (first prophecy): witches trap Macbeth, luring him towards his own destruction. "cannot be ill, cannot be good"...the prophecy must be a good thing, but it's not good because they are witches (never good!)

Ross and Angus tell Macbeth he is Thane of Cawdor: this makes Macbeth trust the witches.

Macbeth hears of Cawdor's execution and starts to think he can become king...he is on the path to evil. Irony: Cawdor is a cursed name and the name of a betrayer! Both men lose their heads.

Act I, scene iv

Duncan names Malcolm as his heir; Macbeth realizes he is in the way of himself becoming king: turning point-Macbeth sees that he must kill in order to be king.

Act I, scene v

Lady Macbeth gets letter from Macbeth and plans to help him because she thinks he doesn't have the nature to kill or enough ambition. She has ambition and gets things moving. She's a catalyst in the play. Macbeth arrives at his castle-wants to be ahead of Duncan.

Act I, scene vi

Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle (guest). Irony-he says what a pleasant place it is, but it's here that Macbeth will kill him. Macbeth owes allegiance to Duncan because he is his king, his relative, and his guest, so killing Duncan is a triple sin.

Act I, scene vii

Macbeth faces the dilemma of whether to kill Duncan or not (4 reasons) and decides not to do it: he is still good.

Lady Macbeth convinces Macbeth to kill Duncan-tells him to be a man. He has now turned onto the path of evil.

Act II, scene i

Banquo tells Fleance he can't sleep: foreshadowing-something bad will happen. Macbeth arrives and questions him to see if Banquo will be loyal to him, but Banquo is loyal to Duncan. Macbeth is deciding if he needs to get rid of Banquo=evil=he will murder his best friend!

Macbeth has a vision of a bloody dagger as he prepares to kill Duncan: blood imagery, plus shows his commitment to killing Duncan. No turning back.

Act II, scene ii

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have just killed Duncan and discuss it. He feels some guilt, but not her. The fact he is remorseful shows he is not completely evil yet. More blood imagery, also representing guilt, plus this scene lets the audience know Duncan has been killed (offstage).

Act II, scene iii

Macduff and Lennox arrive and discover Duncan's murder: Macduff is the good man, the avenger. Everyone talks about the murder, Malcolm and Donalbain decide they are not safe and run away. This clears the way for Macbeth to be king and he blames Malcolm and Donalbain for the murder.

Act II, scene iv

Macduff and Lennox talk—they don't trust Macbeth, and Macduff leaves for Fife, his home. He is loyal to Duncan, and a good man.

Act III, scene i

Banquo is afraid Macbeth killed Duncan - he remembers the prophecy. Macbeth asks where he will be later, so he can kill him. He invites Banquo to the feast. Macbeth meets with the murderers who will kill Banquo. He motivates them to kill him by blaming Banquo for their problems.

Act III, scene ii

Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth is worried he has killed Duncan for nothing because Banquo's heirs will be kings. This is the start of Macbeth becoming truly evil and ruthless because here he starts killing anyone he thinks is in his way.

Act III, scene iii

Banquo is murdered, and Fleance escapes. This is a problem for Macbeth because it still means that Banquo's heirs will be kings, and not Macbeth's heirs. (Who is the 3rd murderer?)

Act III, scene iv

Feast: Macbeth learn Banquo is dead, sees Banquo's ghost, goes mad, makes others suspicious that he has killed Duncan and Banquo, so he

loses support. His madness doesn't lead to catharsis (purification) but instead leads to more evil.

Act III, scene v

Witches meet with Hecate and plan to further contribute to Macbeth's downfall and destruction. Macbeth is doomed and going to hell.

Act III, scene vi

Lennox and Lord plan to defeat Macbeth. Others start to turn against Macbeth.

Act V, scene i

Witches cast their final spell to control and destroy Macbeth. We know Macbeth will be destroyed and that there will be no redemption for him. He cannot be saved.

Macbeth goes to see the witches for answers. He is given 3 prophecies:

1) armed head = Macbeth's own head cut off, 2) bloody child = Macduff (born by caesarian and not usual birth), 3) child crowned with tree in his hand = Malcolm, the new king at Birnam Wood. Then, 4) show of 8 kings = Banquo's heirs. Macbeth is not happy!

Lennox tells Macbeth that Macduff has fled to England, Ross and Lady Macduff question if Macduff is a traitor. Purpose: to show that Macduff has always been loyal to Duncan.

Act IV, scene ii

Messenger warns Lady Macduff, but it's too late and she and her children are murdered by Macbeth's men. Purpose: to show that Macbeth is so evil that he will murder the innocent, so that when Macduff kills Macbeth, it is as an avenger, and it is a righteous act.

Act IV, scene iii

Macduff goes to England and convinces Malcolm to return to Scotland to lead an army against Macbeth. We learn Macduff is loyal to the true king and that Malcolm is only about 16, but will be a good man, even though he fears he is not. He compares himself to Macbeth, thinking he is not good, but Macduff proves him to be good.

Ross tells Macduff his wife has been murdered. This is the sacrifice he has made to do the right thing and go against Macbeth.

Act V, scene i

Doctor and gentlewoman discuss Lady Macbeth's madness and discover the truth about her part in Duncan's murder.

Act V, scene ii

Lennox and friends prepare for battle against Macbeth.

Act V, scene iii

Macbeth is now completely evil. He forgets about the prophecies and that some already came true-he refuses to believe that he will lose.

However, he knows he will go to hell for his evil deeds and that he is damned.

Macbeth asks the doctor to cure Lady Macbeth, but the doctor says he cannot. Symbolism: Macbeth himself is the disease, and Scotland is the patient that can be cured only by getting rid of Macbeth.

Act V, scene iv

Malcolm's army plans to hide its numbers behind tree branches cut from Birnam Wood: Birnam Wood will indeed move!

Act V, scene v

Seyton tells Macbeth that Lady Macbeth is dead. She has killed herself = more honourable death. Macbeth is now so evil/desensitized that he has no fear any more. A messenger tells Macbeth Birnam Wood is moving = prophecy is coming true.

Act V, scene vi

Malcolm and Macduff prepare to fight Macbeth.

Act V, scene vii

The final battle: Macbeth is trapped and has nothing to lose, so he deliberately kills young Siward: Macbeth is now a coward and kills for the sake of it-he has no honour. Macduff looks for Macbeth to avenge his wife and children.

Act V, viii

Macbeth finds out that Macduff is the "man not born of woman", refuses to surrender, and is killed by Macduff. The prophesy has come true, but not in the way Macbeth believed-he thought no man could kill him.

Malcolm's army wins-Macbeth loses because he is truly evil.

Macduff enters with Macbeth's head = the final prophesy has come true. Macduff is Macbeth's nemesis.

Malcolm gives a final speech of peace and becomes the rightful king.

***Macbeth is a tragic hero, a good man who suffers a downfall because of a character flaw. In this case, the flaw is ambition that the witches use against him.

