Chelsea St. Cyr

English 12

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Macbeth Timed Essay

The Vain Quest for Power

Doesn’t everyone want to have power over certain things in life? For example, parents want power over their children. They only way they can get them to obey them is by exerting power and authority over them. The same goes with teachers. Each and every teacher desires power over their classroom. If they don’t have that, then their class would be in constant chaos. Macbeth, too, wanted power. He wanted it so much that he went to great lengths to get it. He struggled through guilt, haunting, and the act of murder in order to achieve more power.

First, he had to overcome remorse. The first time the thought of murdering King Duncan came across his mind, he was scared to do it. Being pushed by his wife and nagged by her for not reaching the criteria of a man motivated him to commit the act. He felt guilty immediately after he committed the crime. He was “afraid to think what I have done” (Shakespeare). Shame took him over! However, he didn’t let this feeling prevent him from getting closer to being King of Scotland. From there on throughout the remainder of the play, he was guiltless in the murders he committed.

His next obstacle after guilt was being haunted. On the same night that he orchestrated the murder of Banquo, his ghost appeared at his dinner party. He was so startled that he started shouting at the apparition in front of everybody! He yelled, “Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold” (Shakespeare). All this bellowing didn’t work, though. His wife had to help him to calm down, and he got settled. Then, the ghost of Banquo returned! Macbeth was mortified. Nonetheless, he continued murdering people to get closer to the throne.

The very act of murdering people was hard for him to control. When he decided to murder Banquo, he ordered that his son, Fleance, be murdered as well. He made sure that the men he hired to do the job knew what they were doing. They said themselves, “Banquo, thy soul’s flight, if it find heaven, must find it out tonight” (Shakespeare). The act was going to be committed very soon. His plan didn’t go according to his wishes, to his dismay, because Fleance escaped. In addition to that, he arranged for Macduff to be murdered along with his family. Only his wife and children were murdered, but not him.

In conclusion, this intense struggle portrays the message that power isn’t worth killing oneself and others over. Macbeth, in the beginning of the play, was both overcome with guilt and diminished it. He no longer had a conscience at that point. Secondly, he was deeply troubled by the ghost of the person he murdered. It appeared to him twice in one night. Lastly, he risked so much for a failed attempt. He couldn’t even get all the people he wanted gone murdered. Learn from Macbeth’s tragic mistake and weight the profits with the costs.