Concept Of Masculinity, Violence And Strength In Macbeth Written By William Shakespeare

The theatrical piece, ‘Macbeth’, written by William Shakespeare in the 1600’s explores the broad concept of masculinity and the qualities, such as violence and strength as well as ‘what it is to be a man’. The play takes place in 11th century Scotland, where Shakespeare illustrates the Patriarchal society. During these times men had superiority over women, as women were perceived as weak and afraid. The societies normality for masculine qualities included bravery, violence and strength, while the feminine qualities such as confidence and kindness were rejected and put down. Shakespeare’s tragedy of a play ‘Macbeth’ insights into masculinity and leaves the audience with “what it is to be a man”.

Shakespeare’s ‘Macbeth’ goes deep into the concept of masculinity and discusses the set of expectations that were placed on the men during this Elizabethan era. Shakespeare implied that these stereotypes of men and women were reversed and proves how it can deceptive for a man if they stick to those expectations too much. Shakespeare presents the social normality during this time of the Elizabethan era was men were seen as brutal, strong and prepared to take on any difficult roles such as going to war at an unexpected time, while the women were perceived as to stay at home, do chores and take care of the family. At the very start of the play Macbeth and Banquo are seen entering the battle and are perceived by the audience as masculine as they are doing exactly what a man was expected to do during this time, while the women stay home and take care of the family and cook. During the play Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as an anomaly as we are displayed a woman who would take control over Macbeth numerous times and insult him for being too weak. “It is too full of milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great, art not without ambition, but without the illness that should attend it” She is saying that Macbeth is too kind-hearted to do anything dreadful to become king. This is displaying irony as clearly Macbeth is not showing the full expectation of a man and is getting told by Lady Macbeth when she is seen as the inferior in society.

‘Being a man’ is explored during the middle of the play when Macbeth is being pressured and manipulated by his wife Lady Macbeth as they are planning to kill king Duncan, so Macbeth can become King. Shakespeare presents to us that violence changed Macbeth as a character, in a negative way as he starts to become more ruthless through the emotions of guilt and fear. Shakespeare presents us with Macbeth as he slowly lost the plot and the idea of ‘what it is to be a man’. The character of Banquo is presented to have the masculine traits and expectations of a man during the Elizabethan era. However, Banquo is a target of Macbeth’s as the three witches told Macbeth that Banquo’s son will one day become king. Macbeth’s ruthlessness and violence of his unchecked ambition is used as he murders Banquo and attempts to murder Banquo’s son, Fleance, however, Fleance escapes to Scotland. At this point of the play, Shakespeare has presented us with Macbeth’s big change in character as he has gone from “loyal and honourable” to ruthless and extremely guilty of many treacherous actions. Lady Macbeth has also started to display masculine qualities as she is manipulating Macbeth as she says “unsex me here”, suggesting that if Macbeth cannot show these qualities of a man, then she will instead. Another character who goes by Macduff is a true stereotype of a man. This is demonstrated as he willingly stands up and demonstrates the qualities of a man that Macbeth simply cannot.