Macbeth: Be Bloody, Bold And Resolute

Analytic essay

Question: How does Shakespeare’s Macbeth explore the ideas in the following statement: “Be bloody, bold and resolute.”

Thesis:

‘Macbeth’ by William Shakespeare is a play abundant in brutality and extensive schemes that all contribute to an unfolding tragedy. The main character, Macbeth struggles on his bloody quest to become king; his major flaw being his ambition and pride. During Act 1 Scene 4, a bloody child urges Macbeth to be “bloody, bold and resolute,” and in this apparition, Macbeth is emboldened in his plans for the future. Shakespeare has used this child to focus the major themes of the play that encapsulate the characters motives and feelings; being bloody, bold, and resolute. He uses literary devices such as visual imagery, paradoxes, high-modality word choices, and rhyming to do so.

Blood is a recurring theme in Macbeth in both realistic and allegorical ways. The physical blood is associated with the murders Macbeth and Lady Macbeth commit, as well as the battles that occur in the play. Blood is mentioned quite early on in Act I scene II where Duncan greets the captain who is covered in blood: “What bloody man is that?” It is constantly mentioned throughout the play; a persistent reminder of the consequences of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s actions and their misuse of power. The word bloody also refers to invisible blood in the play. This blood is a manifestation of guilt and remorse felt by the characters witnessed in hallucinations that remind them of their sinful actions. Lady Macbeth hallucinates that there is blood on her hands and states that she can still “smell the blood.” She knows that all the evil crimes she has committed will not be wiped clean by any fine scent - “Here's the smell of the blood still, All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand” - Act 5 Scene 1. “I see thee still, and on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood” - Act II scene 1. Shakespeare uses visual imagery to describe the blood Macbeth will see once he has murdered King Duncan, which evokes a vivid image in the responder’s brain. Shakespeare uses this literary device to stress to the audience the true horror and brutality of the storyline. He also uses hyperboles such as “Will all great Neptune’s ocean wash this blood Clean from my hand?” which demonstrate the intensity of Macbeth’s emotions and the tremendous effect the murder of king Duncan has had on Macbeth.

The concept of being bold; courageous and daring, is explored throughout the play with Macbeth and predominantly Lady Macbeth. She along with the witches are the prime influence of Macbeth’s bravery, shown in the play through the use of figurative and persuasive language. Macbeth is bold partially because he is an easily manipulated character, but also because of his ego and ambition. It is shown throughout the play that Macbeth isn’t always the one behind the treacherous murders he commits. Lady Macbeth is the driving force of Macbeth’s boldness, portrayed by her ‘male aggression,’ which she uses to her advantage to persuade Macbeth to complete unthinkable tasks. Lady Macbeth is unable to assist Macbeth in the murders, because of social constraints hinged on gender stereotypes, and in this way, Shakespeare questions our

idea of masculinity and womanhood. In Act 1 Scene 7, Lady Macbeth convinces Macbeth to follow through with the killing of Duncan, by insulting and questioning his masculinity until he feels he must prove himself - “When you durst do it, then you were a man.” She reveals her bold nature to the viewer by using her persuasive character to control Macbeth and by drinking the same drink she drugs the servants with. Shakespeare uses a paradox to deceive the reader to secrete the real meaning behind the contradiction stating, “That which hath made me drunk hath made me bold; what hath quenched them hath given me fire.” By using the word fire in this line, Shakespeare reinforces the theme of fearlessness and invincibility.

Resolute; admirably purposeful, determined, and unwavering. Throughout the play, Macbeth is resolute in his decisions, mainly due to the apparition from the witches which tells Macbeth to “Be bloody, bold, and resolute”, and to “laugh and scorn in the power of man because nobody born from a woman will ever harm him.” Although it is ironic that Macbeth succumbs to the witches equivocations, it is a large factor for Macbeth and Lady Macbeth’s resolute behaviour. This apparition is possibly the lead up to Macbeth’s downfall, as it provides him with a feeling that he will sustain his position as king, and that Macduff is not a threat to his throne - “Then live, Macduff. What need I fear of thee?” (Shakespeare has used a high-modality sentence to acquire a more convincing character). This prompts Macbeth to become strong-willed and relentless, oblivious to the troubles his decisions could cause him in the killing of Banquo and Macduff’s wife and children. He acts out of pure ambition tyrannically as he feels threatened, and tries to get rid of any people in his way, without second thoughts -“Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires.” In this line, Shakespeare uses a metaphor to indicate that Macbeth doesn’t want the stars to illuminate or shed light on his true ambition, so he can get away with the murder.

To conclude; Shakespeare’s tragedy, Macbeth is a play involving ambition and morality. The storyline is centered around the three themes of being bloody, bold, and resolute, which I have provided evidence of in my previous points. Shakespeare has used the bloody baby - the second apparition to highlight these primary themes as well as the use of literary devices which enhance the characters true intentions and motives.