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**EXTENDED ESSAY**

**ENGLISH B**

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**Research Question:** To what extent are the events in Macbeth are outcome of fate or the outcome of the manipulation of Lady Macbeth.

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## **ABSTRACT:**

William Shakespeare is one of the greatest play-writes of the English Literature. The reason why Shakespeare is considered as one of the biggest writers of English Literature is that he has written sonnets that appeal to so many people around the world. Besides writing sonnets, he has also written comedies, historical plays and tragedies. His plays are acted out in many different countries and in many different languages.

Though Macbeth is one of the shortest plays of Shakespeare, it may be considered as one of his masterpieces. Macbeth is a tragedy about fear, ambition, lust for power and guilt. The main theme of the play, “thou shall not kill”, is projected to the reader by these themes. It asks the question, as many other of Shakespearian tragedies, if there is any goodness left in the character that has turned evil, and is there any hope for the county that has been ruled by an evil dictator.

This extended essay is based on the role of manipulation and fate on life and how it affects the actions that one does. In order to accomplish this, I have chosen the play Macbeth by William Shakespeare since the protagonist in the play, Macbeth, is under the influence of his wife.

Manipulation is the issue covered in the essay and the consequences of manipulation are also stated as the play focuses on the results of Macbeth’s actions.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

One's actions are under the influence of so many different aspects. These actions can be grouped in two: fate and manipulation. Everyone always follows their fate but sometimes one may be manipulated by a beloved. Manipulation is the act of controlling someone, especially for the benefit of another. A sentence, a phrase or even a look may change all the actions one will do. One may or may not be aware that he is under the influence but still acts accordingly. Those actions, of course, have some coincidences. These can either be good or bad. Either way, the credit will go to the main person who does the action but not to the one who manipulates him.

Similarly, Macbeth, from the play "Macbeth" by William Shakespeare, is under the manipulation of his wife, Lady Macbeth. She, unsurprisingly, wants her husband to be the king and endure the power he has gained. To accomplish her mission, she talks to her husband in to murdering the beloved King Duncan, his friend and another warrior Banquo and many others. Even though he is unwilling to do those things at first, Macbeth does as his wife says.

Nevertheless, things do not turn out to be how they were planned at first since, neither Macbeth, nor Lady Macbeth, is able to put the role of conscience into consideration. Macbeth does things he does not actually want to do. However, Lady Macbeth makes him believe that these things will eventually happen and there is nothing wrong with helping fate on the way of getting what you deserve, and what will ultimately arise. Though both the husband and the wife have guilty conscience, which leads to Lady Macbeth's death and Macbeth's losing his sanity and seeing the ghosts of whom he has murdered.

To put things in a different way, Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband hoping for a great future that they cannot have.

Macbeth is a play in which the action takes place very quickly and reaches the climax directly. The plot is easy to understand. One can understand the main theme, fair is foul and foul is fair, right from the beginning; Macbeth kills Duncan in order to be the king.

### **BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PLAY:**

The play "*Macbeth*", by William Shakespeare, is about ambition, greed, the consequences of murder and lust for power. Macbeth enters an unfamiliar world by killing King Duncan. As in many of the Shakespearian tragedies, this play also asks the question if the civilization can be built again and if there is any goodness left. Nonetheless, Macbeth is aware that he is doing something wrong so "*the question is now posed to in terms of what a man finds deep in his own heart and mind when he willingly enters the strange dark places which lie beneath the bright, familiar world of ordinary time and action.*"<sup>1</sup> Macbeth also brings out the statement "thou shall not kill" throughout the play as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth suffer from the pain caused by their conscience after slaughtering some Lords and the King.

Macbeth is a Royal man of Scotland and he is also a great warrior. After playing a big role in Scotland winning an important war, he runs into The Three Witches, The Weird Sisters, in the forest. They refer to him as "*the Thane of Glamis*", "*the Thane of Cawdor*" and "*the future king*". However, they also predict that his friend, who is also a great warrior, Banquo's descendants will be the king; not Macbeth's. Macbeth is skeptical about these prophecies at first since the Thane of Cawdor is still a wealthy man and he is still alive. Furthermore, for him, being the king is impossible. He does not believe that any of these prophecies may come true.

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<sup>1</sup> Selection from Shakespeare, arranges by Bülent R. Bozkurt, Beytepe, Ankara, 1978, (p.116)

After the Weird Sisters vanish into the air, two messengers come and congratulate Macbeth on the big victory and they say that they have been sent by the king, Duncan, to take Macbeth to Duncan and he is also rewarded to be the Thane of Cawdor since the present Thane is sentenced to death for treason. Macbeth is amazed by the title he has gained since one of the prophecies has come true. Macbeth starts to believe that the others may also come true. During their meeting with the King, Duncan informs Macbeth that he will visit him and Lady Macbeth in their castle.

Macbeth sends a letter to his wife explaining what has happened in the forest and later in the King's castle. He adds that Duncan will be visiting them shortly. Lady Macbeth is ambitious to be the "King's wife" so she plans the murder of Duncan when he visits them in their own castle. She is sure that King Duncan will never leave their castle and her husband, Macbeth, will be the new King of Scotland.

Macbeth hesitates about Lady Macbeth's plan of murdering King Duncan because he is aware that Duncan is an admirable king and is greatly loved in the country. Macbeth is not sure if killing Duncan is a reasonable act to do or not. Nevertheless, he is convinced by his wife. After Duncan goes to sleep, Macbeth waits for his wife's signal to murder the king. However, he still has suspicions and he imagines a bloody dagger in the air and that image scares him yet still, he slaughters King Duncan and his servants. At first, everybody frames the servants as Lady Macbeth has rearranged the room in and makes it look like the servants has got very drunk and they have killed the king and then they have committed suicide. After their father's murder, Duncan's sons, Malcom and Donalbain, flee from that country because they think they are also in danger, leading to raise a doubt that they have paid the servants to murder the king. Therefore, Macbeth is named as the King of Scotland.

After being the king, Macbeth is so afraid of losing power that he starts to murder more people. However, he always remembers the prophecy of the witches; Banquo's son will be the next king. Later on, Macbeth goes to see the witches to learn more. They show him three apparitions; one saying he must beware of Macduff; other saying "No one born of mother could kill him"; and the last one saying he will only be defeated when the Birnam Woods walks and fights him. Hearing all these prophecies Macbeth is relieved but he wants to kill Macduff. He goes to Macduff's castle but he is not there.

One night, Macbeth is having a feast and he tells Banquo certainly to be there. He gets two murderers to kill Banquo and Fleance, his son. Banquo is killed but his son manages to escape from the murderers. During the feast Macbeth sees the ghost of Banquo in his chair and he gets so scared that he starts acting weird therefore Lady Macbeth needs to tell the other guests to leave. Meanwhile, Macduff has gone to Ireland to persuade Duncan's son, Malcom, to return to Scotland and be the king as he was supposed to. Malcom says he has endless lust and he would not make a good king to test him. After Malcom is convinced about Macduff's loyalty to him, he explains that he has been planning to attack Macbeth with ten thousand soldiers.

When Macduff and Malcom return to Scotland to overthrow Macbeth, Macduff tells the soldiers to cut off some branches and walk with them so that it will be harder to be counted. Macbeth is reported that the woods are marching towards them. Meanwhile Lady Macbeth cannot take it anymore and kills herself.

During that fight, nobody wants to support Macbeth because everyone has turned against him over time. While Macbeth and Macduff are in a duel, Macbeth tells him not to bother; no one born from a mother can ever hurt him. And yet, Macduff says his mother had

cesarean section so he is not technically born from a mother. Macbeth dies there and Malcom becomes the new king of Scotland.

### **EXAMPLES OF FATE:**

There are some examples of fate in the play "Macbeth". To start with, King Duncan hears about the great victory Macbeth has won in the war and he rewards him as the Thane of Cawdor since the present Thane is accused of treason. Therefore, Macbeth is announced as the Thane before he has met the Weird Sisters. One should notice that this announcement may be considered as the beginning of all the events since if Macbeth has not named as the Thane of Cawdor, he would not believe in what the witches have said and he may not murder so many people.

Furthermore, one of the prophecies of the witches is that one born from a woman can ever kill Macbeth. Nevertheless, Malcom is the one to kill Macbeth and he is not technically "born from a woman"; he is taken out by cesarean section. One may say that this is a display of fate in Macbeth's life and in plot of the play. Moreover, the Three Witches also prophesied that Macbeth will not be defeated unless the Birnam Woods march towards the castle. Macbeth knows that this is impossible, however Malcom's plan is to cut some branches from the woods, to make it harder to count. As the soldiers march towards the castle with the branches the image is like the Birnam Woods are walking, as reported to Macbeth. If the Witches are considered as the "Goddesses of Fate", when their prophecies come true, one may say that fate has been set earlier.

## **EXAMPLES OF LADY MACBETH MANIPULATING MACBETH:**

Manipulation is defined as “the behavior that influences someone or controls something in a clever or dishonest way”<sup>2</sup> in the Macmillan English Dictionary. The act of manipulation is often used by writers and play-writes.

Macbeth is a play about greediness and passion for power. Being one of the greatest generals of Scotland; Macbeth’s success, ambition and courage is also well-known by King Duncan. After hearing about the great victory Macbeth and Banquo achieved against two different armies, Duncan decides to give the title of “The Thane of Cawdor” to Macbeth. Unaware of this, Macbeth encounters the Three Witches that greet him as the “*the Thane of Glamis*”, “*the Thane of Cawdor*”, “*the King hereafter*”(299) and they vanish soon after. Macbeth do not believe that these prophesies might become true until he hears that he is named as the Thane of Cawdor. After that, he starts to think that he might be the king in future.

When King Duncan lets Macbeth know that he will be visiting him and Lady Macbeth in their castle. Lady Macbeth sees this as an opportunity for Macbeth to kill Duncan and become the King himself. At first, Macbeth is unwilling to murder Duncan as Duncan is a admired king. Nevertheless, Lady Macbeth accuses her husband of being a coward. She persuades him that if he wants to be the king, he needs to step up and do something. She explains Macbeth that this murder will change their lives completely and it is a necessary act to do. She is sure that Duncan will not leave the castle but in order to accomplish this, Macbeth should behave normal, he should behave like how he is expected to, be the great host he is supposed to be and Lady Macbeth will plan for the murder:

*“O, never*

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<sup>2</sup> Macmillan English Dictionary For Advanced Learners- International Student Edition.

*Shall sun that morrow see!*

*Your face, my thane, is as a book where men*  
*May read strange matters. To beguile the time,*  
*Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,*  
*Your hand, your tongue. Look like th' innocent flower,*  
*But be the serpent under 't. He that's coming*  
*Must be provided for; and you shall put*  
*This night's great business into my dispatch,*  
*Which shall to all our nights and days to come*  
*Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.”(Harbage, 302, Penguin Books )*

That speech Lady Macbeth is giving is very important as a means of manipulation. One must realize that Macbeth is not the one that wants to kill Duncan but Lady Macbeth is. Macbeth thinks about killing him saying that if he could take care of it without any consequences, he would have done it quickly, however, there will be consequences he will face and he is aware of them. Another reason why Macbeth does not want to kill Duncan is that he has just honored Macbeth, he is a kinsman of Duncan and he should always be protecting his King. In addition, Macbeth is now Duncan's host. He should be the one to close the door to anyone who might try to hurt Duncan but instead Macbeth is thinking of murdering Duncan himself. Last but not the least, Macbeth believes that Duncan is a good king and he will always be remembered. One should realize that Macbeth's reluctance towards the murder is shown when he hallucinates a bloody dagger in the air before he kills Duncan and his servants. After seeing that bloody dagger Macbeth wants to give up killing the king but Lady Macbeth persuades him and therefore he agrees to kill Duncan. He has only one reason to kill Duncan and that is his everlasting ambition:

*“If it were done when ’tis done, then ’twere well  
It were done quickly. If the assassination  
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch  
With his surcease success; that but this blow  
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,  
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We’d jump the life to come. But in these cases  
We still have judgment here, that we but teach  
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return  
To plague th’ inventor: this even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice  
To our own lips. He’s here in double trust:  
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against  
The deep damnation of his taking-off;  
And pity, like a naked newborn babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven’s cherubim, horsed  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur*

*To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on th' other.” (herbage, 303, Penguin Books).*

From the extract one may say that Macbeth kills Duncan to fulfill his hunger for power. Nevertheless, one must never forget that Lady Macbeth was the one to put the idea of killing Duncan in Macbeth's mind in the first place. Macbeth has never thought about committing such a homicide. Lady Macbeth needs to persuade her husband to kill their guest. Therefore it might be said that the felony is committed as a result of Lady Macbeth's ambition to gain power. After Lady Macbeth wheedles her husband to the crimes and assures that they will not fail, Macbeth is convinced and ready to change his fate on his own. Lady Macbeth's comforting words, combined with Macbeth's lust for power, helps Macbeth to justify the felony he is committing. Macbeth does not want to face the consequences of the murder he needs to commit in order to be the king and that fear is the reason for him to avoid the felony. Lady Macbeth makes him believe that there will be no consequences and Macbeth will live as the King happily and one murder may provide this great life above them. Lady Macbeth says that Macbeth has nothing to be afraid of and he should commit the murder.

*“How now, my lord! Why do you keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,  
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
Should be without regard. What's done is done.” (Harbege, 309, Penguin Books)*

However, Macbeth is uncomfortable with the murders he has committed and he thinks they have only hurt themselves by killing Duncan. He thinks that the biggest crime Macbeth and his wife have committed is treason since Duncan is now dead and he cannot feel anything and nothing can be a danger for him anymore. Death is not a penalty for Duncan but the guilt of the crime makes Macbeth restless. Lady Macbeth is aware of this situation and therefore she tries to calm her husband down. She says that Macbeth's fears are unnecessary and unreasonable as nothing that can be done anymore as the murder has been committed.

Macbeth is tranquilized by Lady Macbeth's words and he is ready to kill again. Nevertheless, he does not share his idea of murdering Banquo with his wife. Macbeth gets used to the fact that he needs to slaughter some other people in order to maintain his power and protect his titles. It can be said that Macbeth is killing without Lady Macbeth's manipulation but one should be aware that the first murder Macbeth has committed has caused a lust for power in Macbeth and he is trying to endure the power he has gained after killing Duncan. In order to maintain the power and his throne Macbeth thinks he needs to continue killing people as the prophecies say Banquo's descendants will be the future king. That king of a lost in power scares Macbeth and he does not want to lose the power he has so he continues slaughters. One must keep in mind that the origin of all the murders Macbeth has committed is Lady Macbeth's manipulation.

## **CONSEQUENCES OF MANIPULATION:**

After unwillingly killing a number of people, including the beloved King Duncan of Scotland and one of the great warriors, Banquo, Macbeth faces some consequences of his acts.

First of all, at the very beginning of all the events, just before the murder of Duncan and his servants, Macbeth hallucinates a bloody dagger in the air outside of the room, where Duncan and his servants are asleep, waiting for Lady Macbeth's signal to kill the king. That hallucination forces Macbeth to double think before killing the beloved King but after Lady Macbeth accuses him of being a coward, he murders the King and his servants. After the homicides, Macbeth regrets committing these murders and he is unable to see the bodies again. So Lady Macbeth is the one who organizes the room to make it look like servants have killed Duncan. One should notice that if Macbeth had willingly committed the murders he would not feel so remorseful.

Those consequences often come out under so inappropriate situations; such as the feast that Macbeth is having in his castle with the Thanes and the kinsmen. Right before that meal Banquo gets killed by some murderer that Macbeth has hired to kill Banquo and his son Fleance. Macbeth hears the news about the death of Banquo during the dinner and soon after, he starts to see the ghost of Banquo at the table covered with blood. This image scares Macbeth a lot and makes him act like a crazy man, not knowing what he is doing; eventually leading Lady Macbeth to tell the guests to leave the castle. One may easily say that the hallucination is a result of the guilty conscience that Macbeth has. Since Macbeth kills Banquo to ensure his power on the country, he does not tell what he is about to do to Banquo and his son to Lady Macbeth. Banquo's murder is a decision that seems to be made intentionally. Nonetheless, Macbeth is under the influence of his wife's desires, and his own

as well, and his lust for power. One should notice the fact that if Macbeth had never murdered King Duncan, he might continue living in peace and his lust may not show up leading the slaughter of so many men.

Last but not least, another consequence of the murders he has committed while he is being manipulated by Lady Macbeth, and governing Scotland firmly, lots of the Lords have turned against him over time. Therefore, when Malcom attacks Macbeth's castle to overthrow him, nobody supports Macbeth. He is killed during that attack so one may say that if he had some back up, Macbeth may be able to fight and resist the rebellion.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Macbeth becomes the King but he is not in peace. His remorse does not let him feel comfortable. At the same time his lust for power always urges him to act; in fact to kill some other lords to ensure his throne. At first he is not willing to kill Duncan or any other one. He is activated and encouraged by Lady Macbeth; in a way he is forced by her to slaughter Duncan. Macbeth is not aware that he is being manipulated by Lady Macbeth. He does what she says even though he is not in favor of the murders. Duncan's murder leads him to the servants' murders, which causes a threshold in his life. From that time on, Macbeth is completely a different man, more vicious than ever. He finds reasons for his cruelty and murders. He even does not inform Lady Macbeth about his intention to kill Banquo and his son, Fleance. Before his first murder, Macbeth is uneasy and he is reluctant about the killing. Nevertheless, as time goes by, Macbeth gets used to slaughter and murder becomes a part of his life; something that needs to be done to maintain his power and throne. He has now taken over the power from Lady Macbeth. He kills Banquo, and attempts to kill his son, by his own decision. Macbeth becomes a man of ruthless actions.

The Weird Sisters can be considered as the “Goddesses Of Fate” by some authorities. And Macbeth has failed to interpret their prophecies. They have said that he will be the King of Scotland one day but they have never said he needed to murder anyone. One should consider the possibility of old Duncan dying from natural causes leading Macbeth to become the new king. In addition, Macbeth also wanted not to kill Duncan but the manipulative words of Lady Macbeth have convinced Macbeth to kill Duncan leading to the other murders.

Even though Macbeth is one of Shakespeare’s shortest plays, it is also one of his masterpieces. Macbeth is a play of evil and fear and it asks the same question as in his other plays: Is there any good left in so much evil and cruelty? Can this cruelty be eliminated?

“Tragic flaw is a weakness or limitation of character, resulting in the fall of the tragic hero.”<sup>3</sup> As in many tragedies, the protagonist in “*Macbeth*” also has a tragic flaw leading Macbeth’s fall and making him uneasy. The tragic flaw of Macbeth is his ambition. His ambitious acts make him so coldhearted. His endless passion for power leads everyone to turn against Macbeth which slowly prepares his end.

Macbeth’s greatness can be seen in different aspects. The characters are individuals of temptation, sin and cruelty. Taking the historical events into account, one can realize the fall of a country due to a dictator and the sufferings he brings. This terrible situation changes with the establishing law and order by the liberating forces. As modern readers, the people today can see the vicious drive for the throne and an endless fight for freedom against cruelty.

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<sup>3</sup> <[http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student\\_view0/drama\\_glossary.html](http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072405228/student_view0/drama_glossary.html)>

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