
Weather And The Supernatural In Macbeth

William Shakespeare's use of weather and supernatural elements creates an ominous atmosphere throughout *Macbeth*. Both aspects play an important role as they complete the plot of the renowned tragedy, which recounts the murderous rampage of Macbeth, a character with "vaulting ambition." Set in eleventh-century Scotland, Macbeth, along with many of his companions, fight for political ambition, selfishly craving power for themselves. The weather sets the tone for each scene and foreshadows the murderous events that will occur. The supernatural elements reveal a mysterious, eerie sense to the play, a style of writing that was very popular during the Jacobean period. The weather and supernatural elements in *Macbeth* reinforce the drama and tragedy by generating an emotional response from the audience in a captivating manner.

The weather is significant in *Macbeth* as it foreshadows the mood and is symbolic of the period in which Shakespeare wrote. Oftentimes in Shakespeare's plays, he uses weather in place of stage directions to create a mysterious mood, a technique he uses multiple times in *Macbeth*. Many scenes in open with thunder and lightning, implying that the characters are about to experience physiological or physical anguish. During the Renaissance, it was believed that people's actions impacted the weather. Appropriately, Shakespeare uses the rebellious weather to represent that disaster in Macbeth's society. Thunder, lightning, fog, rain, and wind are among the many examples of weather that reinforce the drama in each scene and allow the audience to perceive the suspense of the tragedy.

The most significant use of weather in *Macbeth* is found in act one, where stormy weather and the supernatural three Witches work hand in hand to set the tone that will be evident over the course of the tragedy. The play opens with the three Witches meeting during a thunderstorm, cunningly discussing when they will meet again. The Witches declare that they will meet "In thunder, lightning, [and] rain...to meet with Macbeth" (Shakespeare 1.1.2-8). They exit into the fog as they exclaim, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair;/ Hover through the fog and filthy air" (Shakespeare 1.1.12-13). In the following scene, King Duncan executes the treasonous Thane of Cawdor and rewards Macbeth with the coveted title and Duncan sends messengers to inform Macbeth of the news. Again in scene three, the three Witches meet in a thunderstorm, this time telling Macbeth and Banquo their prophecies. The Witches predict that Macbeth will become Thane of Cawdor, and the audience knows this is already true because of the previous scene. They also reveal that Macbeth will later become king, which is exactly what Macbeth wants to hear. As for Banquo, the Witches predict that his sons will take the throne. Ross and Angus, the messengers sent by Duncan, come to Macbeth and deliver the news to him by saying, "We are bid, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor, / In which addition, hail, most worthy thane, / For it is the" (Shakespeare 1.3.110-113). Their message from the king proves the Witches' prophecy for Macbeth to be true. This alarms Macbeth because he does not want Banquo's sons to be kings; Macbeth wants the throne all to himself. He begins plotting the murders to take the throne before Banquo's heirs have the chance. The grim weather and suspicious Witches in act one foreshadows the Witches' intent for the widespread catastrophe which will occur during Macbeth's bloody future as Thane.

The supernatural elements in the tragedy represent the inner demons Macbeth is constantly

fighting: guilt and fear. Shakespeare strategically placed the supernatural in scenes where evil is present in the characters, making it symbolic to the plot of Macbeth. The elements add a dramatic effect by creating suspense and generating an emotional response from the audience. The most significant elements are the dagger and the three Witches.

In act two, scene one, Macbeth contemplates the possibility of murdering King Duncan for the sake of gaining political power. He sees a floating dagger and curiously asks, "Is this a dagger which I see before me/ The handle toward my hand?/ Come, let me clutch thee" (Shakespeare 2.1.33-35). The dagger is proof of the supernatural and embodies Macbeth's fatal flaw: vaulting ambition. Macbeth will do anything to possess the throne, even if this leads to his downfall. The dagger also illustrates the murderous actions that he will pursue, starting with killing the King. As the dagger floats before Macbeth, he gives his famous soliloquy, which provides the audience with a deeper insight into his selfish mind and a guilty conscience. A bell rings and Macbeth exits as he says, "I go, and it is done. The bell invites me. Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell/ That summons thee to heaven or hell" (Shakespeare 2.1.75-77).

The three Witches, also known as the weird sisters, appear multiple times in Macbeth, especially in the tragedy's most suspenseful moments. The Witches are the external force working against Macbeth and are a physical example of the evil and darkness in his soul. They fully understand his weaknesses and use this to their advantage as they fulfill their intent of tormenting Macbeth, most significantly through the apparitions in act four, scene one. In this scene, the witches gather around a cauldron creating a potion to use on Macbeth. As thunder sounds, they say, "Double, double toil and trouble;/ Fire burn, and cauldron bubble" (Shakespeare 4.1.10-11). They complete the potion and the second Witch senses someone has entered, exclaiming, "By the pricking of my thumbs,/ Something wicked this way comes" (4.1.44-45). Macbeth arrives and the Witches show the three apparitions to him. The thunder roars as the first apparition, an armed head, gives a warning, saying, "Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff!" (Shakespeare 4.1.81). The second apparition is a bloody child that tells Macbeth, "...none of woman born/ Shall harm [him]" (4.1.91-92). In the final apparition, a crowned child with a tree in his hand appears and states, "Macbeth shall never vanquish be until/ Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill/ Shall come against him" (4.1.105-107). The apparitions descend, and Macbeth decides that he will no longer contemplate his decisions and will act without thinking, starting with murdering everyone in Macduff's castle. The Witch's intent is to torture Macbeth because and they do so in act four by using the apparitions.

Weather and the supernatural are key elements that Shakespeare uses to emphasize evil and heighten the suspense in Macbeth. These important details such as thunder, lightning, rain, the three Witches, and the dagger engage and entertain the audience by creating an ominous mood. The weather and supernatural elements complete the plot of Shakespeare's tragic drama and are representative of the deeper ideas and feelings of the characters.