

Shakespeare's play "Macbeth" is of increasing importance and relevance in contemporary society, particularly through his exploration of political and ethical values. The play's exploration of ambition shows us the negative effects of what is normally considered a positive trait, and offers parallels to Australian politics today, while its lessons on power and how it can corrupt an individual are comparable to dictators of recent times. It is important to study Macbeth's actions and motives in order to avoid replicating similar mistakes in modern society

Shakespeare's play "Macbeth" continues to remain relevant to contemporary society through his exploration of ambition, a political and ethical value that is a double-edged sword, able to provide success and catastrophic failure. The latter applies to Macbeth, whose ambition is awakened by the three witches' prophecy, setting him on a destructive path that eventually leads to his death. Parallels to this are seen throughout modern society, particularly around politics. In Act 1 Scene 3 we see the seeds of ambition planted in Macbeth's mind, part of the witches' prophecy has come true and Macbeth is immediately filled with an overwhelming desire to complete it. Through the metaphorical "My thoughts, whose murder yet is but fantastical, Shakes so my single state of man that function Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is But what is not", Shakespeare conveys the negative effects of ambition; Macbeth is completely engulfed in thoughts of the power he could gain, leading him to consider "foul play". This directly conflicts with his own views on King Duncan, whom he is loyal subject to and holds in prestigious esteem; through the simile "Besides, this Duncan Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been So clear in his great office, that his virtues Will plead like angles trumpet-tongu'd against the deep damnation of his taking-off", Shakespeare highlights Macbeth's glistening opinion of King Duncan, and shows the audience that Macbeth's ambition alone is not a powerful enough force to enable him to kill the King. In contrast to this, Lady Macbeth's desire is so great she claims that she's willing to do it herself; through the metaphor, "Come, you spirits That tend on mortal thoughts! unsex me here, And fill me from the crown to the toe top full of direst cruelty; ", Shakespeare demonstrates that Lady Macbeth's ambition trumps all other emotions; she would have zero remorse when killing Duncan. It is this unchecked ambition that finally allows Macbeth to kill King Duncan; Lady Macbeth gives him no other alternative. By using metaphor, "Hie thee hither, That I may poor my spirits in thine ear, And chastise with the valour of my tongue All that impedes thee from the golden round", Shakespeare communicates that Lady Macbeth is willing to use all her power to force Macbeth to achieve his ambitions. The lessons learned from 'Macbeth' give a valuable insight into the dangers we still face in modern society from unchecked ambition, and the Macbeths' untimely and gruesome deaths serve as a lesson for those who put their ambition above all else. Parallels to this are seen throughout modern society, particularly around politics. In Australia the ambition of an individual has often sabotaged an entire political party from the inside, swaying the public opinion away and causing their electoral demise, an example of this being someone like Tony Abbot, who repeatedly criticized his own party while he was a backbencher, creating instability for his own personal gain. The successive deposal of prime ministers by both major parties is a modern recounting of 'Macbeth' that is happening repeatedly before the Australian people's eyes, showing why 'Macbeth' is important in contemporary society; we must learn from it to avoid making similar mistakes.

Following on from this, Shakespeare's play "Macbeth" delves into power, often the cause of ambition and an important political and ethical value in contemporary society. Power is dangerous; "absolute power corrupts absolutely" and this is especially true in Macbeth, providing us with valuable insight into the effect power has on people, including contemporary society. Macbeth has a lust for power, this desire being the catalyst that allows him to murder King Duncan. Succeeding this, his sole intent in life becomes to maintain and preserve this newfound power, an urge that manifests itself through his attempted demolition of Banquo's bloodline. Today's political leaders

mirror his actions, being willing to engage in morally wrong practices in sometimes-desperate attempts to keep power. Macbeth's greatest fear is the thought of losing his power; through the historical allusion, "There is none but he Whose being I do fear; and under him My genius is rebuk'd as it is said Mark Antony was by Caesar", Shakespeare highlights Macbeth's irrational fear of Banquo; despite Banquo being a loyal servant of Macbeth and his best friend, Macbeth still sees him as a great threat to his power. Macbeth's paranoia increases dramatically throughout the play; through the metaphor, "There the grown serpent lies : the worm that's fled Hath nature that in time will venom breed, No teeth for the present.", Shakespeare displays how power has completely engulfed and corrupted Macbeth to the point where he fears a child will take it from him, showing how a once honourable and good man has become scared and suspicious. This is further demonstrated through Macbeth's second visit to the witches; the metaphor "Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo : down! Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs: and thy hair", is used by Shakespeare to highlight Macbeth's disgust at imagining others with the power that he has now. This theme is mirrored in contemporary society through politics, where continuous power struggles are not uncommon, whether it be a leader doing anything in his reach in a desperate ploy to keep power, or whether it be a leader trying to wrest power from another. The best example of this is the "Arab Spring", a series of uprisings in middle eastern and African countries where the people attempted to depose their long-time dictators. In the 2011 Libyan civil war, Colonel Gadhafi bombed his own people in a futile attempt to keep his power, and similarly to Macbeth; this did nothing to prevent his inevitable downfall. It's parallels like this that make 'Macbeth' still important and relevant in today's society, we must learn about the effects that power can have on someone, and how to prevent them from losing control.

In conclusion, Shakespeare's play "Macbeth" is a text that transcends time; it displays political and ethical values that are still prevalent in contemporary society. His exploration of ambition show us why it is a dangerous trait in excess, and his examination of power allows us to understand the negative effect that it has on people, even if they were once great people. "Macbeth" has many lessons to offer for contemporary society; we need to embrace its messages to prevent making similar mistakes that are made in the play.