

## Is Lady Macbeth evil?

Over the centuries, the extent to which Lady Macbeth is responsible for the macabre events in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* have been hotly debated. For many, she is a loyal and committed wife who only desires the best for her husband in the dog-eat-dog world of politics. Others, however, think that she is a callous, power-hungry woman who drives her husband to become a murderer. This text will outline both perspectives and ask you, the reader, to make up your own mind.

We will start by looking at the popular argument that Lady Macbeth is villain of the piece. For those who identify Lady Macbeth as the primary source of evil in the story, the strongest evidence is simple: she was the one who encouraged her husband – a man over whom she has total control – to commit regicide. Furthermore, she goes on to facilitate the murder of the king by drugging his guards, and orchestrates a cover-up that protects Macbeth from discovery.

People who support this argument suggest that Lady Macbeth is actually a conniving, controlling and power-hungry character, who would do absolutely anything to further her own interests. They would suggest that Lady Macbeth's response to the witches prophecy is pure opportunism, and not the result of the witches' control over her.

Lastly they might add that if she really cared about Macbeth, would she really have risked him being accused of treason?

Defenders of Lady Macbeth, however, would refute the arguments above, suggesting that, whilst it might appear to have been her idea, Lady Macbeth did not actually carry out the murder of King Duncan. Instead of describing her as evil, they might insist that the evil-doers were, in fact, the witches who started the deadly sequence of events, or Macbeth himself for carrying out the murder.

They might further argue that Lady Macbeth's actions were not in themselves evil. Regicide was not uncommon in these times; it was quite common for a king to be removed from power when another felt he would be a better leader. The only way to remove a king was to kill him and therefore Lady Macbeth's actions were reasonable and appropriate because she believed that Macbeth, her husband, would be a better king for the people of Scotland.

Even if we accept that Lady Macbeth was partly responsible for the the death of King Duncan, it could also be argued that she was not truly evil. If she was truly evil, would she really feel guilty enough about what she had done to take her own life?

In conclusion, there are a number of arguments as to whether Lady Macbeth is evil. The decision comes down to whether you believe she was in control of her own actions, or was being controlled by forces beyond her control. If you believe she was in control of her own actions, then you must consider whether they were they justified by the circumstances, or the result of her own greed and ambition.

What do you think?