

How does Shakespeare present Macbeth to the audience in Act 1 Scene 1 and 2?

In the first two scenes, Macbeth is presented as brave warrior who is confident and loyal towards the King. Shakespeare uses clever dramatic techniques in the first two scenes as Macbeth is not present here, but the main topic that is discussed throughout involves Macbeth. From this we get an understanding of how the other characters in the play see Macbeth as well as putting doubts in the audience's mind whether Macbeth is truly like he is described.

As the first scene opens up, we see three witches arranging to 'meet with Macbeth' which creates the supernatural theme in the play. During the first scene, the audience will be filled with suspense and curiosity about why these three unnatural figures are going to meet Macbeth. The audience might feel that Macbeth is an innocent victim being picked on by the audience. The suspense builds on as the setting of the first scene is a battlefield which creates gloomy and dull atmosphere for the audience. Shakespeare also uses words like 'hurlyburly' which shows chaos and confusion. The weather includes 'thunder and lightning' which is wild showing the unnatural events at the time. Shakespeare uses pathetic fallacy to create the dark, evil and violent mood as well as foreshadowing to show that something is going to happen. This creates a sense of fear for the audience as they will start to think if Macbeth is safe or in danger.

In the second scene, Shakespeare uses many adjectives in the semantic field of heroism to portray Macbeth. In this scene, the captain praises 'brave Macbeth' who performed a 'bloody execution'. This shows that Macbeth is courageous and brave as he was able to stop the 'captivity' of Malcolm and save Scotland. The image of courageous Macbeth continues to build up as he portrayed as man who is 'lapp'd in proof' and 'Bellona's bridegroom' meaning that Macbeth is like God or like the husband of war. Shakespeare uses a lot of similes to describe the confidence and bravery of Macbeth for example he is as brave as sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion' or he is like 'cannons over-charged with music cracks' showing that he is strong, confident and fast. Shakespeare uses a lot of language techniques to describe Macbeth's bravery.

As well as describing Macbeth's bravery, Shakespeare uses a lot of dramatic irony from the theme trust and loyalty to foreshadow Macbeth's future. The second scene unfolds with the Captains and Duncan disgracing the 'merciless Macdonald' who was 'worthy to be a rebel' meaning that he was a traitor that acted against the King. The Captain clearly states the result of someone going against the King as they 'choke their art'. This quote is an irony used by Shakespeare presenting Macbeth's downfall at the end but for the audience it gives them the knowledge of the consequences that can happen. The captain moves on to comment on Macbeth's loyalty towards his King. He is described as 'valiant', 'worthy' and a 'slave' towards the King. Shakespeare also uses a simile that describes him 'like a valour's minion', showing the trust and the loyalty that he has for King Duncan. Some of the audiences may think that Macbeth is really like this but for some it can come back to the mantra that the witches was saying in the first scene which is 'fair is foul, and foul is fair', This paradox shows that nothing is what it seems so you should not trust appearances. This might create a question for the audience as to whether Macbeth is really as what is he is being presented.

Although the olden audience might see Macbeth is brave and courageous, the modern audience will see that Macbeth is a bloodthirsty man who loves the battlefield, violence and murder. He is a complicated character with no emotions and can go to any extent with his violence. Shakespeare makes his violent act like 'unseam'd him from the nave to th' chaps' an irony for his own downfall at the end of the play. His action will also shock the audience and make him as a person who simply enjoys killing and treats it as a hobby. The modern audience will see him as a cruel human who is trying to replicate the 'Golgotha' and make his murderous action as memorable as the scene of Christ's crucifixion.