Macbeth Essay, Research Paper

Without literary techniques most literature would be colorless. Therefore these techniques are very crucial in producing successful writing. Not only do they create interest, they also help in development of characters, this is especially depicted in the Shakespearean play, Macbeth. The characters developed from the different literary techniques such as irony, paradox, and imagery assist in conveying the many themes throughout the play.

In this play different types of irony help in the development of characters, and as a result convey the themes of the play. First, Macbeth invites Banquo to his feast, “Fail not our feast,” says Macbeth, “My lord I will not,” replies Banquo ( , , 29-30 ). This is an illustration of dramatic irony because it is known before this quote that Macbeth is planning to murder Banquo and that he will not be alive to attend the great feast. Consequently this quote depicts a lot about Macbeth’s character because is shows that he is very conniving and heartless due to the fact that he wants to murder one of is only friends, and his innocent son. This also follows the theme of appearance versus reality in the play. When saying this Macbeth seems to be genuine and sincere, but in reality the audience/reader know are already aware of his evil and vicious plans. Lady Macbeth speaks another example of irony, as she talks of her account with Duncan: “Had he not resembled my father I had done’t.”( , . 13-14) This is an example of thematic irony, because shortly before Lady Macbeth seems be very strong and determined but when she comes face to face with the deed she is unable to do it. This shows that Lady Macbeth is not as sinister as she seems. She just tries to act tough but in actuality she is recreant. Thus this quote follows the theme of appearance versus reality because Lady Macbeth tries to put on an appearance of being inconsiderate and shallow but underneath she is exactly the opposite. Furthermore tragic irony is shown when Macbeth arrogantly says, “Then Live Macduff what need I fear of thee?” ( , , 82) This is tragic irony because Macbeth acts very hubris. He thinks that he is invincible, but eventually he realizes that he should have been more careful because Banquo ironically ends up killing him. Further, it develops the theme of appearance versus reality because to Macbeth it seems that he does not need to be afraid of Macduff because the witches trick him into thinking that he is immortal when in reality he is not. As has been noted dramatic, thematic, and tragic irony aid in the development of characters and with it help expand the theme of appearance versus reality.

In addition to irony, Shakespeare’s use of paradox develops character and themes in the play. In particular when the second witch says: “ When the hurlyburly’s done, when the battles lost and won.” ( , , 3-4) This is a paradox because at first this quote is very confusing and does not make any sense, but after reviewing one can see that the witches are talking about the war and when it will end; when there will be a winner and a loser. The witches are very unusual characters; they are conniving and un-trustable. This is shown in this quote because they are not bluntly saying what they mean; they say it in a confusing manner in which they may be sending more then just the literal meaning. This illustrates the nature of violence and lost of lives in the play because the witches are talking about war and fighting. Likewise, earlier on in the play Duncan says, “ What he hath lost noble Macbeth hath won!”( , ,70) This is a paradox because the quote does not at first make sense but when reevaluated one can see that Duncan is idealistic. It illustrates that Duncan makes quick decisions without really putting thought into them. Duncan is very affable, he basically trusts everyone and this is why this quote represents he theme of appearance versus reality. To Duncan it seems that Macbeth is just another one of his ‘noble’ servants and therefore he trusts him, but in reality Macbeth is corrupt and superficial. Macbeth is not what he appears to be. Furthermore, Shakespeare use of paradox is shown when Lady Macbeth says:

That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold,

What hath quench’d them hath given me fire. ( , , 13-14)

By saying this quote it shows the audience/reader that she is mentally deficient and that she has to drink to make herself valiant and therefore hide from her guilty conscious. This illustrates how ambitious she is. Lady Macbeth and Macbeth are ready to do anything so that Macbeth can become King; this includes murdering the King and any others who come in their way. Overall the literary technique of paradox develops the characters and themes in the play.

Similarly to paradox, Shakespeare’s use of imagery assists in the development of characters and themes in the play. For instance when Macbeth says, “Upon my head they plac’d a fruitless crown.” ( , ,61) This example of clothing imagery puts a vivid picture in the reader/audience’s mind. It shows that Macbeth is upset and envious of Banquo because he has kids and Macbeth does not. He is also upset because the witches promised Banquo that his kids would be kings while Macbeth’s would be the only king in his family. This develops the theme of ambition because Macbeth is jealous of Banquo. It also shows that Macbeth does not always get what he wants. Another example is of animal imagery which is said by Macbeth to Lady Macbeth is, “O full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife; thou know’st that Banquo and his Fleance lives” (, , 37-38) This is a great example of animal imagery because scorpions are poisonous and therefore the reader/audience understand that Macbeth is having evil thoughts. The imagery illustrates a lot about Macbeth’s character because one can see that Macbeth is very evil and vicious because he wants to murder two innocent people. The theme that this quote conveys is good versus evil because Macbeth is evil and Banquo is good. The former knows that his thoughts are evil about the later, but due to the fact that the former has already shed so much blood he fails to refrain himself from his savage feelings. In the same way, clothing imagery is used when Macbeth says, “The Thane of Caldor lives: Why do u dress me in borrowed robes.” ( , ,109) This type of imagery puts a clear image in ones mind of what Shakespeare is trying to say. It also depicts Macbeth’s character because it shows that Macbeth does not want to take a title which is not his. This is also a great comparison because it illustrates the change in Macbeth from the beginning of the play to the end. At the beginning he is generally a good person but as the play goes on there is a drastic change in the character, he becomes evil and takes over many things which are not his. The theme that this quote develops is appearance versus reality because Macbeth does not want to be something he is not and also it shows that just because one dresses like something does not necessarily mean that, that is who they are. In simpler terms clothing and animal imagery help create the characters personalities and by doing this aid in the production of the themes.

All in all Shakespeare’s Macbeth, accurately uses the literary techniques of irony, which show that things aren’t always what they seem; paradox which depict that sometimes things should be reexamined to find out the real or other then literal meaning of what is being said, and imagery which illustrates that putting images in peoples minds is one of the best ways to convey a message. Together these techniques develop the characters and themes in the play. There are many lessons to be learnt in this play, when comprehended correctly they can help one unravel some of man’s modern day difficulties in life.