However, **suspicion is cast over his character from the beginning**, as Shakespeare **foreshadows** what is to come:

1. The **Witches**, who embody evil, determine to meet with him
2. He is soaked in blood and **associated with extreme violence**
3. His **reaction to the prophesy** suggests extant corruption – he immediately thinks of regicide, with no prompting from the Witches or Lady Macbeth
4. The **association with the traitor Thane of Cawdor** is indicative of his true character
5. His **aside following Malcolm’s appointment as Prince of Cumberland** is sinister
6. The **relationship with Lady Macbeth** illustrates his corruption

**The ‘*Heroic’* Macbeth of Act I**

1. Brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name.’ **(Sergeant)**
2. *‘Disdaining fortune...Valour’s minion...’* ***(Sergeant)***
3. *‘Valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!’* ***(Duncan))***
4. *‘Bellona’s bridegroom, lapp’d in proof.’* ***(Ross)***
5. *‘If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs.’* ***(M)***
6. *‘My Dearest partner in greatness.’* ***(M)***
7. *‘I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition.’* ***(M)***

In **Act I**, Macbeth is an **heroic and sympathetic** figure because he is

1. An admired warrior
2. Scotland’s saviour
3. The personification of duty
4. In love with his wife
5. Purposefully targeted for manipulation by the witches
6. Possessed of a conscience that conflicts with his ambition

**Macbeth Character Development**

*‘He shall spurn fate, scorn death and bear his hopes ‘bove wisdom, grace and fear.’* ***(Hecate)***

Macbeth is a **TRAGIC HERO**

The Literarydevices.net website states:

*Aristotle characterized the qualities of classic tragic hero as in general, a male character of noble birth who experiences a reversal of fortune due to a tragic flaw. In addition, the realization of this flaw evokes sympathy from an audience.*

1. *‘There to meet Macbeth.’* **(3rd Witch)**
2. *‘He unseamed him from the nave to the chops.’* **(Sergeant)**
3. *‘This supernatural soliciting cannot be ill, cannot be good.’* ***(M)***
4. *‘Two truths are told / As happy prologues to the swelling act / Of the imperial theme.’* ***(M)***
5. *‘He was a gentleman on whom I built / An absolute trust.’* ***(D)***
6. *‘Stars, hide your fires / Let not light see my black and deep desires.’* ***(M)***
7. *‘Hie thee hither / That I may pour my spirits in thine ear; / And chastise with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round.’* **(LM)**

His first **soliloquies** are poetic and suggestive of a man possessed of both a **conscience** and **free will**.

1. *‘If the assassination / Could trammel up the consequence, and catch / With his surcease success’*
2. *‘This even-handed justice / Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice / To our own lips...’*
3. *‘His virtues / Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against / The deep damnation of his taking-off*
4. *‘Art thou but / A dagger of the mind, a false creation, / Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?’*
5. *‘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 to hell.’*

Once King, Acts II-IV show how **Macbeth’s egoism, paranoia and innate cruelty mean that he quickly transforms into a tyrant**

1. He rejects his loyal and loving wife
2. He frames Malcolm and Donalbain for the twin crimes of regicide and patricide
3. He orders the murders of Banquo and Fleance
4. He celebrates corruption and murder
5. Following the appearance of Banquo’s Ghost, confirming his damnation, he determines to hold on to power through violence and terror
6. His desperation makes him the Witches’ pathetic dupe
7. He orders the slaughter of the Macduff clan
8. *‘Our bloody cousins are bestowed in England and in Ireland, not confessing their bloody parricide.’*
9. *‘To be thus is nothing but to be safely thus...’*
10. *‘Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown / and put a barren sceptre in my gripe...’*
11. *‘Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck.’*
12. *‘Fleance his son...must embrace the fate of that dark hour.’*
13. *‘Thou art the best of cut-throats.’*
14. *‘I am in blood, stepp’d in so far that, should I wade no more, returning were as tedious as go o’er.’*
15. *‘The castle of Macduff I will surprise...give to the edge of the sword his wife, his babes and all unfortunate souls that trace him in his line.’*

Macbeth’s **reaction to the regicide** indicates his **regret**. However, that regret is not for Duncan’s death, but for **the personal consequences for Macbeth himself.**

1. *‘Will all great Neptune’s oceans wash this blood clean from my hands?’*
2. *‘Glamis hath murder’d sleep...Macbeth shall sleep no more.’*
3. *‘I am afraid to look upon what I have done; look on it again I dare not.’*
4. ‘Till Birnam Wood remove to Dunsinane, I cannot taint with fear.’
5. ‘Skirr the country round; hang those that talk of fear.’
6. ‘She should have died hereafter.’
7. *Out, out, brief candle! / Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more: it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.*

In **the final scene of Act IV**, **Malcolm** described Macbeth as ‘*This tyrant whose sole name blisters our tongue.’*

He goes on to describe Macbeth’s brutality: *‘I think our country sinks beneath the yoke; it weeps, it bleeds and each new day a gash is added to her wounds.’*

**Macduff** laments life in Scotland under King Macbeth’s reign, a place where *‘new widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows strike heaven in the face.’*

**Macduff** captures Macbeth’s fall from grace when he claim ‘*Not in all the legions of horrid hell can come a devil more damned in evils than Macbeth.’*

There can be **no redemption for Macbeth**. From the beginning, he was under the sway of three powerful forces – the Witches, his wife and his own ambition.

Ultimately, **he put his own interests and desires about the welfare of others, and showed no regret other that for himself.**

When Macduff kills him, the audience can only feel relief that Scotland is at last released from the grip of this bloody, **brutal tyrant**.

There are **reminders of Macbeth’s formerly heroic status in Act V**, not least in his **physical bravery**:

1. *‘I’ll fight till from my bones the flesh be hacked’*
2. *‘The mind I sway by and the heart I bear / Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.’*

Therefore, when the end come in, **there is little sympathy for Macbeth.**

**Act V confirms his status as a fearful, narcissistic villain, a man utterly transformed from the hero of Act I:**

1. He pathetically **clings to the Witches’ prophesies**
2. He **propagates violence** with no possible hope for success
3. He is **indifferent to his wife’s death**
4. He **kills a child** (Young Siward – the only time Macbeth kills on stage)
5. His **final soliloquy** is beautiful, poetic and philosophical but self-pitying and contains no moment of catharsis or guilt for his crimes