

Critics' Comments

*When plays are published, critics watch and review them. The following statements are comments that have been made by critics of **Macbeth**.*

[Went] to the Duke's house, and there saw *Macbeth*, most excellently acted, and a most excellent play for variety.
—Samuel Pepys (1666)

[*Macbeth*] neither interests the mind nor moves the heart, nor fills the imagination, as do *Hamlet* and *Othello* and *Lear*.
—John Bailey (1929)

Macbeth...moves upon the verge of an abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death. The action is desperate and the reaction is dreadful.
—William Hazlett (1818)

Macbeth defines a particular kind of evil—the evil that results from a lust for power.
—L. C. Knights (c. 1905)

In the murderer, such a murderer as the poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred—which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look.
—Thomas De Quincey (1823)

The majority of readers, I believe, assign to *Macbeth*, which seems to have been written about 1606, the pre-eminence among the works of Shakespeare. The great epic drama...deserves, in my own judgment, the post it has attained, as being, in the language of Drake, "the greatest effort of our author's genius, the most sublime and impressive drama which the world has ever beheld."
—Henry Hallam (1854)

I regard the tragedy of *Macbeth*, upon the whole, as the greatest treasure of our dramatic literature.
—Thomas Campbell (1834)

I think nothing equals *Macbeth*. It is wonderful....
—Abraham Lincoln (*Complete Works*)

Macbeth has been extravagantly over-praised. [While it] contains excellencies which Shakespeare nowhere else surpassed,...it is the weakest of Shakespeare's great tragedies, and so full of blemishes that it is hard to believe that one man wrote it.
—G. B. Harrison (1951)