

# Example by StudyDriver

Source: <https://studydriver.com/the-tempest-vs-macbeth/>

---

## The Tempest Vs. Macbeth Example

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *Macbeth*, supernatural elements and magic are quite prevalent throughout the stories. From witches to spirits readers experience these other worlds that Shakespeare creates in his writing. The way magic is used and represented in these two plays is very different. Magic in *Macbeth* is used to show evil and darkness while the magic in *The Tempest* is far more natural and follows the laws of nature. The very first people in *Macbeth* that speak are the three witches. They are seen chanting and seemingly predicting future events. The play is set up right away with this idea of the supernatural world. The witches put you right into a place of magic and wonder. The strategic use of the witches at the beginning tells you that magic will be a part of the play. The witches being used as foreshadowing agents allows the readers to get the supernatural essence that the characters bring. They end the first scene with the famous line Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air (1.1, 12-13). As the play progresses into the third scene, Macbeth states So foul and fair a day I have not seen (1.3, 137). By using the exact same words as the witches used in scene one, it clearly shows that the witches have these powers to see into the future. Banquo even refers to the witches as instruments of darkness and they are symbolized as evil beings (1.3, 236). Another way that magic and the supernatural is symbolized as evil in *Macbeth* is with the floating dagger. In the first scene of act two Macbeth is plotting the murder of Duncan in order to fulfill the witches prophecies. While this plotting is happening, Macbeth sees a dagger floating towards

him. As Macbeth gets his first look at the dagger he says, Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee. I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible to feeling as to sight? Or art thou but a dagger of the mind, a false creation, proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain? I see thee yet, in form as palpable as this which now I draw (2.1, 613-620). It is unclear if this is a hallucination or a ghostly omen, but this proves to the audience that the supernatural occurs whenever something evil is stirring. As the play continues into act three after the murder of Banquo we see his ghost appear during the banquet. Macbeth is the only one who can see Banquo's ghost, so this begins to show Macbeth's mental state in the play. I believe Banquo's ghost is used to represent all the crimes that Macbeth has committed. Overall, the supernatural elements in Macbeth are used to depict evil and darkness. In *The Tempest* the magic doesn't feel as dark and sinister as it does in Macbeth. The story of *The Tempest* really revolves around magic and the plot wouldn't exist without it. While the magic of this show really drives the plot, it is also used as a tool to mesmerize its audience. Several of the characters in this play have magical powers. Perhaps the most central magical character is Prospero. His magic is not evil, nor does it represent evil in the story. In act one Prospero says The direful spectacle of the wreck, which touched the very virtue of compassion in thee, I have with such provision in mine art so safely ordered that there is no soul No, not so much perdition as an hair, Betid to any creature in the vessel (1.2.33-38). This proves that Prospero has been thoughtful in the fact that he is trying to make sure that everyone is safe. So, even though his magic may seem to be bad, his intentions are good and he wants to make sure that everyone is safe in the process. The magic of *The Tempest* is different because instead of representing something evil, Prospero's true purpose is to use man's natural born goodness to create change a potential path of evil and turn it into something good. His powers allow him to manipulate what happens in the story and gives him the power to affect people's lives and relationships. After reading *The Tempest*, I considered Prospero's magic more as a use of metaphorically being the playwright of the story. His powers allow to essentially control everything that is going to happen to the people around him, therefore seemingly being the puppet master to this entire story. This is different from Macbeth because the magic or supernatural elements don't necessarily drive the plot of the story. They are just there to be symbolic elements. Whereas *The Tempest* would not exist without magic. In the fourth act Prospero says Our revels now are ended. These our actors, as I foretold you, were all spirits and are melted into air, into thin air; and like the baseless fabric of this vision, the cloud-capped towers, the

gorgeous palaces, the solemn temples, the great globe itself, ye all which it inherit, shall dissolve, and, like this insubstantial pageant faded, leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep (4.1.165-175). This to me is very representative of theater and storytelling, thus proving that Prospero could be a metaphor for a playwright. Shakespeare was great at incorporating magic and the supernatural world into his stories. What is more amazing though is that he was able to incorporate it into multiple stories and making them completely different. Macbeth and The Tempest may have both included supernatural elements, but they couldn't be more different stories. Macbeth was able to tell a darker story with its supernatural elements while The Tempest went in a completely different direction with its magic.