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## FOR EVERY ACTION, THERE IS AN OPPOSITE REACTION: EXPLORING LITERARY EXAMPLES IN SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*, MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*, AND COLERIDGE'S *THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER*.

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### ABSTRACT

This article delves into the timeless literary theme that “For every action, there is an opposite reaction” through an examination of three iconic works: Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Each of these literary masterpieces serves as a vivid canvas upon which the intricate web of cause and effect is masterfully woven. In *Macbeth*, it is witnessed that the ambitious ascent of the titular character, whose actions driven by vaulting ambition set in motion a chain of events marked by guilt, paranoia, and the disintegration of relationships. *Frankenstein* explores the consequences of Victor Frankenstein’s impulsive ambition to create life, leading to the creation of a monster and a relentless pursuit of revenge. In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the haunting encounter between a mariner and a supernatural ghostly ship and a serpentine creature, showcasing the opposing reactions triggered by the mariner’s actions of reverence and regret. This article illuminates how these literary examples emphasize the profound principle of actions and their consequences, inviting readers to contemplate the intricate interplay of choices, motivations, and outcomes within the vast tapestry of human experience. Through the analysis of these works, readers gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of human nature and the moral fabric of our world, reaffirming the enduring power of this fundamental theme in literature.

**Index Terms:** Action, Consequences, Disintegration, Reaction

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of cause and effect is deeply ingrained in literature, just as it is in the natural world. In literature, actions taken by characters often lead to a chain reaction of events that shape the plot and reveal the underlying themes. This essay will delve into the literary world, drawing examples from renowned works such as Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to explore how actions and their opposite reactions serve as pivotal elements in storytelling. These literary masterpieces delve into the complexities of human ambition, the consequences of overstepping moral boundaries, and the pursuit of redemption in the face of profound guilt. Each work portrays characters who,

driven by their desires and choices, ultimately face the relentless and inescapable bad effects of their deeds. As the readers journey through the tragic tale of Macbeth's unchecked ambition, Victor Frankenstein's audacious pursuit of scientific knowledge, and the Ancient Mariner's transgressions against nature, readers will unravel the intricate threads of destiny that weave through these narratives. One will witness how these characters grapple with the consequences of their actions, whether through supernatural intervention, societal retribution, or personal torment.

### **AMBITION AND FATEFUL ACT**

At the heart of *Macbeth* lies the tragic protagonist, Macbeth himself. His vaulting ambition, fueled by the prophecies of the three witches and his wife, Lady Macbeth, drives him to commit a heinous act – the murder of King Duncan. This action, driven by his desire for power and the throne, sets in motion a series of events that forever alter the course of his life.

At the core of *Frankenstein* lies Victor Frankenstein's ambition to conquer death by creating life. Driven by his insatiable thirst for knowledge and a desire to transcend the boundaries of human existence, he embarks on a perilous journey to create a being from lifeless matter. This audacious action, while borne from noble intentions, sets in motion a series of events that lead to unforeseen and devastating consequences.

The poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner's* narrative unfolds as the ancient mariner and his crew set sail on a voyage across the sea. The mariner's impulsive decision to kill an innocent albatross marks the beginning of his descent into an eerie and otherworldly predicament. This act, borne out of a momentary lapse in judgment and superstition, triggers a series of events that bring about both physical and metaphysical consequences.

### **THE OPPOSITE REACTION**

In *Macbeth*, Macbeth's action of regicide sets off a tumultuous chain reaction of guilt and paranoia. Immediately after the murder, Macbeth is plagued by guilt and haunted by hallucinations of a bloodstained dagger, symbolizing his remorse. This psychological torment is the opposite reaction to his ambitious act, as his conscience becomes a relentless tormentor. Moreover, Macbeth's paranoia grows as he becomes increasingly paranoid about potential threats to his throne, leading him to commit further atrocities, including the murder of Banquo and his son, Fleance. Thus, his initial action spirals into a relentless cycle of violence and treachery, ultimately leading to his own demise.

Victor's ambitious endeavor in *Frankenstein*, which initially filled him with a sense of godlike triumph, ultimately becomes his undoing. As he succeeds in bringing the Creature to life, he is immediately overcome by guilt and fear at the monstrous creation he has unleashed upon the world. His initial action leads to his isolation, as he withdraws from society, consumed by remorse and the need to destroy his creation. Furthermore, Victor's obsession with the Creature and his pursuit of vengeance against it cause him to neglect his family and friends. His single-mindedness in pursuing his creation results in a cascade of negative consequences, including the death of his loved ones, exemplifying the opposite reaction to his original ambition.

Following the mariner's senseless killing of the albatross in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, nature itself rises against him in a brutal and unforgiving manner. The ship becomes stranded in a windless sea, and the crew members succumb to thirst and starvation. This supernatural stagnation of the ship, with its dire consequences, serves as a direct opposite reaction to the mariner's thoughtless act. Additionally, the mariner and his fellow sailors are haunted by ghostly apparitions of the ship's crewmates, reinforcing the idea that the consequences of his action extend beyond the physical realm into the metaphysical, as the mariner is forced to bear witness to their suffering.

### **THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

Macbeth's actions also have a profound impact on his relationships. His marriage with Lady Macbeth, once strong and passionate, deteriorates as the weight of their crimes takes its toll. Lady Macbeth descends into madness, sleepwalking and obsessively trying to cleanse her hands of imaginary bloodstains, illustrating the opposite reaction of their initial ambition and unity. Additionally, Macbeth's ruthless pursuit of power alienates him from his loyal subjects, leading to a rebellion against his rule. His actions sow the seeds of discontent and chaos within the kingdom of Scotland, resulting in a tragic outcome for the land he sought to rule.

In *Frankenstein* Victor's actions not only affect him but also have a profound impact on the Creature he brings to life. The Creature, abandoned by his creator and rejected by society due to his grotesque appearance, experiences profound suffering and loneliness. This suffering is the direct consequence of Victor's action, illustrating the unintended and tragic outcomes that can arise from well-intentioned actions.

In *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as the mariner's journey progresses, he becomes increasingly isolated from his fellow sailors. His actions have not only brought calamity upon the ship but have also led to the death of all his shipmates, except himself. This isolation becomes a living hell for the mariner, as he is left alone to grapple with the guilt and despair that accompany his impulsive act.

### **THE DOMINO EFFECT - THE TRAGEDY OF OTHERS**

Macbeth's actions do not only affect him and his immediate circle; they have a domino effect on the lives of other characters as well. For instance, the murder of King Duncan leads to the exile of Malcolm and Donalbain, his sons, who flee for their lives. This action, intended to secure Macbeth's grip on the throne, inadvertently paves the way for the downfall of his own reign. Additionally, the deaths of Lady Macduff and her children, orchestrated by Macbeth in a fit of paranoia, showcase the far-reaching consequences of his actions. This tragic event exemplifies the principle that for every action, there is an opposite reaction, as it sparks a desire for revenge in Macduff, who ultimately plays a pivotal role in Macbeth's downfall.

Victor's initial action of creating the Creature sets off a domino effect that leads to the deaths of innocent people, including his younger brother William, his friend Henry Clerval, and his fiancée Elizabeth. The Creature, seeking revenge against Victor for his abandonment and the misery he has endured, becomes a harbinger of death and destruction. These deaths, which are a direct result of Victor's actions, serve as a stark reminder that for every action, there is an opposite reaction, and that the consequences of one's choices can reverberate far beyond the individual.

The mariner's journey is a stark reminder that every action has a ripple effect, touching not only the individual but also the world around them. In his solitude, he learns to appreciate the beauty and sanctity of all living creatures, and he blesses the water snakes that swim near the ship. This act of love and reverence towards nature ultimately brings about his redemption. The mariner's transformation and the eventual release from his curse show that while actions can have devastating consequences, they also have the potential for redemption and growth. His newfound understanding of the interconnectedness of all living things underscores the poem's central theme, emphasizing that for every action, there is an opposite reaction, but there is also the opportunity for atonement.

### **EMOTIONAL IMPACT AND CATHARSIS**

*Macbeth* evokes a strong sense of fear and suspense as the audience witnesses the protagonist's descent into madness and the consequences of his actions. The murder of King Duncan and subsequent killings create a tense atmosphere, generating fear and anticipation among the audience. The emotional impact of guilt and regret is palpable, particularly in Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene where she tries to wash away her guilt. Macbeth's own guilt and paranoia are also deeply felt emotions that resonate with the audience. *Macbeth* is a classic tragedy, and its cathartic effect is achieved through the protagonist's downfall. The audience experiences catharsis as they witness the consequences of Macbeth's unchecked ambition, and they can reflect on the dangers of unbridled desire for power. The play prompts viewers to reflect on the moral choices made by its characters, leading to catharsis as they contemplate the consequences of immoral actions.

*Frankenstein* elicits a strong emotional response of horror when the Creature is brought to life. The audience sympathizes with the Creature due to his isolation and mistreatment, which invokes feelings of pity and empathy. The emotional impact of isolation and loneliness is central to the story, as both Victor Frankenstein and the Creature experience profound solitude. These emotions resonate with readers and provoke empathy. Mary Shelley's novel achieves catharsis through the readers' sympathy for the Creature, prompting them to reflect on

themes of compassion and the consequences of societal rejection. *Frankenstein* encourages readers to reflect on the ethical implications of scientific experimentation and the responsibility that comes with creating life.

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* instills a sense of dread as the mariner and his crew face supernatural consequences for their actions. The mariner's guilt and remorse are powerful emotional elements. The emotional impact of suffering is evident as the mariner and his crew endure torment and hardship. The theme of redemption also evokes emotions as the mariner seeks to find salvation. The poem achieves catharsis as the mariner undergoes a transformation from a cursed, guilt-ridden figure to one who finds redemption and an appreciation for the natural world. This transformation provides a sense of closure and emotional release. Readers are prompted to reflect on the consequences of impulsive actions and the potential for redemption, leading to catharsis through moral contemplation.

In all three works, emotional impact and catharsis are achieved through the portrayal of intense emotions, such as fear, guilt, and sympathy, as well as through the exploration of moral and ethical themes. These elements engage the audience and offer opportunities for reflection on the human condition and the consequences of our choices, ultimately leading to a sense of emotional release and catharsis.

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## CONCLUSION

Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* serve as a compelling literary example that vividly illustrates the age-old adage, "For every action, there is an opposite reaction." *Macbeth*'s ambition and pursuit of power set in motion a chain of events marked by guilt, paranoia, the disintegration of relationships, and tragic consequences for himself and those around him. Readers are reminded that in literature, as in life, every choice made by a character carries consequences that may be anticipated or unforeseen, leading to a deeper understanding of the intricacies of human nature and the moral fabric of our world. "*Macbeth*" stands as a timeless testament to the enduring power of this fundamental principle in storytelling and in the human experience.

Victor Frankenstein's ambitious creation of life leads to the tragic existence of the monster, setting in motion a chain of events marked by suffering, revenge, and destruction. The novel serves as a cautionary tale about the consequences of unchecked ambition, the pursuit of knowledge without moral consideration, and the human capacity for both creation and destruction. *Frankenstein* challenges readers to reflect on the far-reaching implications of their own actions and decisions and the potential for unintended and opposite reactions. It remains a timeless masterpiece that continues to resonate with audiences, inviting them to grapple with the complexities of human nature and the consequences of playing the role of creator.

The mariner's impulsive act of killing the albatross in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* sets in motion a series of events marked by supernatural curses, suffering, and his own psychological torment. Yet, through repentance and a newfound understanding of the consequences of his actions, the mariner ultimately breaks the curse and finds redemption. The poem serves as a haunting reminder of the intricate web of cause and effect that governs not only the natural world but also the human experience. It invites readers to contemplate the profound consequences of their actions and the interconnectedness of all life, making it a timeless exploration of the universal theme of actions and their opposite reactions in literature.

In literature, the principle that "for every action, there is an opposite reaction" is a fundamental driving force behind the development of plot, character, and theme. The examples from *Macbeth*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* illustrate how actions and their consequences serve as powerful narrative devices. These stories remind the readers that the choices a person makes, whether driven by ambition, love, scientific curiosity, political ideology, or friendship, have far-reaching and often unpredictable effects on the world. Literature invites



readers to reflect on the complex interplay between cause and effect and the moral dilemmas that arise when characters confront the consequences of their actions.

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