



GLOBE  
EDUCATION

PLAYING  
SHAKESPEARE  
WITH DEUTSCHE BANK

# OTHELLO

## PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

### Activities to develop thinking about the text in performance

Click on the **'Interviews'** page on the website. Watch the interview with the director of the play Bill Buckhurst entitled **'World War One and Othello'**.

He describes the process of deciding to give *Othello* a World War One setting. He emphasises the importance of the life of soldiers in the play and the fact that the 100th anniversary of World War One is in everyone's minds and has been a topic in schools. Listen out for the other links between the play and World War One, such as the role of black soldiers in the army and the importance of Cyprus on the eastern front of the war where Italians were fighting Turks.

How would you persuade someone who said that Shakespeare's plays should only be performed in Elizabethan or Jacobean settings, and that using a modern setting can enhance the experience for a modern audience?

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In **'Teacher's Mode'** on the website, click on the **'Reception of the Play'** download. In this essay you will see that one of the aspects of the response of 17th Century audiences which has most puzzled historians is that there was very little reaction recorded to the interracial love story of Othello and Desdemona.

Drawing on your own reactions when you first read or saw the play, explain what aspects of the action and performance would have enthralled the audiences in Shakespeare's time so much that they seemed to ignore the racial aspects of Othello.

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In **Act 1** the audience first sees the contrast between Othello's deep trust of Iago and Iago's own untrustworthy behaviour.

Click on the **'Interviews'** page on the website. Listen to **Interview 1** with **Jamie**, the actor playing **Iago**, where he talks about the way in which the character of Iago is *'ducking and weaving'* as he carries out his terrible deception.

[2015.playingshakespeare.org](http://2015.playingshakespeare.org)

Look at **Act 1, Scene 2** where Iago pretends to Othello he was angry with Roderigo in Scene 1, when the audience knows the truth is the opposite. As soon as Othello leaves the stage Iago changes and insults Othello to Cassio.

Imagine you were directing the play and explain how you would tell advise the actor playing Iago to behave in this scene. Look at each of the sections in the scene and think about how the actor should say the lines, his facial expression and how he should move. You can offer several interpretations.

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In the **Week By Week** section of the website, find **Week 5** and watch the video with Bill Buckhurst, the play's director. Bill describes the design of the stage for this production. He explains that an extra piece of staging is being constructed in the space in front of the main stage. Bill hopes this will make the audience feel involved and perhaps confused by the events as soldiers would be in a battle.

Which parts of the play do you think will be able to use this extra piece of stage to create this feeling in the audience? If you have already seen the production, how did this extra stage help your experience of the play?