



OTHELLO

CHARACTER ACTIVITIES

Activities to develop thinking about character and motivation

Click on **'Language'** page on the website and find the essay **'Women in Othello'**.

Focus on the first paragraph and think about Desdemona's situation after she had met and fallen in love with Othello. What do you consider to be the most important factors she needed to think about as she made the decision to go through with the secret marriage to Othello?

Draw up a chart Desdemona might have created listing the reasons for and against marrying Othello.

Click on **'Interviews'** page on the website. Listen to Interview 1 with **Lloyd**, the actor playing **Othello**. He talks about the way Othello, as an outsider, a black man, *'has the weight of the nation on his shoulders'* and how he has to *'set an example'*.

In Act 2, Scene 3, lines 148 to 233, Othello is clearly setting a strong example by breaking up the brawl and dismissing his friend Cassio from his post. Draw up a list of examples from the play and describe how they show Othello presenting himself to the rest of the army as a strong leader.

Click on **'Interviews'** page on the website. Watch the interview **'The relationship between Iago and Othello'** with Bill Buckhurst, the director of the play.

Bill explains the way that their time serving as soldiers together has created a strong bond between Iago and Othello. Concentrating on the first act find evidence for this strong bond, such as the way Othello uses the words 'my' or 'mine' when he talks about Iago: *'So please your grace, my ancient: / A man he is of honesty and trust.'* (Act 1, Scene 3, lines 280-1).

Next, think about the way the events develop during the play. Explain why you think it is vital that the strong bond between the two men is established at the start of the play.

Read the essay **'What You Know You Know'** which is on the **'Language'** page on the website. Gwen Adshead considers Iago's motives for his destruction of Othello.

Possible motives for Iago's behaviour she identifies include: his failure to be promoted; jealousy of Cassio; his belief that Othello has slept with Emilia and racial prejudice towards Othello.

Focus on **Act 1** and find evidence to support each possible motive Gwen suggests. With fellow students discuss your feelings about Iago's motives and decide how you would order them from the strongest to the weakest possibilities.

Click on '**Interviews**' page on the website. Watch the interview '**Prejudice and Racism in Othello**' with Bill Buckhurst, the director of the play.

In the interview Bill picks out a link between Iago and Emilia. He suggests she is racist like Iago as her own racism is revealed in the final scene when, talking of Desdemona's love for Othello, she says '*She was too fond of her most filthy bargain*'. Bill also picks out the prejudice which Emilia expresses against Bianca when she describes Bianca as a 'strumpet'.

Bill describes Emilia as a complex character. Draw up a list of incidents in the play which influence the audience's opinion of Emilia's character. How is she different from the other women in the play?