

Worksheet 13 – Act 3, Scene 3: The Seeds of Jealousy are Planted

Review: Lecture 12

In Lecture 12, Prof. McRae discussed the section of Act 3, Scene 3 where Desdemona agrees to help Cassio win Othello's favour.

- Complete this quotation by filling in the blanks spaces:

Othello
Excellent _____! _____ catch my soul,
But I do _____ thee! and when I love thee not,
_____ is come again.

Recall: Lecture 13

Complete this section after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. Make two mind maps of all the key quotations from Othello and Iago that you can remember from this scene.
Challenge: Aim to get at least three quotations for each character.

Analysis

2. At the beginning of Act 3, Scene 3 Othello is completely in love with Desdemona. By the end of that scene, 480 lines later, Othello is ready to murder her for having an affair with Cassio. How have we gone from the first position to the second position so quickly?
 - a) Find three quotations that show how Iago plants the idea of Desdemona's infidelity in Othello's mind.
 - b) Write a short explanation of the significance of each quotation.
3. Reread the speech below by Othello, which Prof. McRae explores in his lecture (8:26 – 9:00):

Haply, for I am black
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declined
Into the vale of years, — yet that's not much —
She's gone. I am abused; and my relief
Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses. Yet, 'tis the plague of great ones;
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base;
'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death:
Even then this forked plague is fated to us
When we do quicken.

- a) Why reasons do Othello give for why Desdemona might cheat on him?
- b) What does this reveal about Othello's self-confidence? How does this contrast with the way he presents himself in Act 1?

- c) What is the significance of the reference to animal imagery ('toad') and death?
- d) Given the historical context of *Othello*, why might Shakespeare present Othello as experiencing self-doubt?

Evaluation

4. Watch a performance of this scene from the 2015 Royal Shakespeare Company's production, starring Hugh Quarshie as Othello and Lucian Msamati as Iago:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1c_HQijEBo
- a) How does Iago manipulate Othello in this scene? Consider: Iago's use of language; Msamati's use of tone of voice and body language.
 - b) How does Quarshie portray Othello's growing self-doubt? Do you find it believable?
 - c) Why do you think this is considered such a key scene in the play?

Glossary

- **Susceptible** – likely or liable to be influenced or harmed by a particular thing.
- **Dissembling** – conceal or disguise one's true feelings, intentions, or beliefs.
- **Hypocrite** – someone who claims to have higher moral standards than they actually do.
e.g. She says she gives £10 a month to charity, but she actually spends it all on herself. She's a real hypocrite.
- **Chamberer** – a man who spends all his time flirting with women, often in court; a servant to a courtier.
- **Vale** – valley.
- **Prerogative** – an inherent advantage or privilege; a gift, a talent.
- **Unshunnable** – unavoidable.