

# Othello essay



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Emilie, Sago's wife, is neither fully honest nor fully dishonest in her actions and dialogue, providing an interesting role in the play. The central theme of honesty is linked to motifs in the play, including reputation and irony. Ago is an extremely manipulative character and a very good liar. He uses his skills in deception to lie to almost every other character in the play -? in particular Othello, but also to Eroding and Cassia.

It is only the audience that knows of Sago's true intentions and feelings. Ago tells the viewers in a soliloquy – “ I do hate [Othello] as I do hell's pains” and “ nothing can... Intent my soul till am evened with him”. Despite his consistent lying, he holds a reputation for being honest. It is this reputation that makes Othello believe every word Ago says, even calling him “ honest Ago”. Othello appointment of Ago as an officer (because “ a man he is of honesty and trust”) and also him giving Ago the duty of transporting his beloved wife to Cyprus clearly show that Othello had full trust in Ago.

This ultimately leads to Othello death. Although certain aspects of Othello personality (such as his tendency to trust people easily and his aloes nature) played a part in his downfall, Sago's skill and care in his dishonest deeds could have fooled the biggest disbeliever. The original Elizabethan audience of Othello would have known that Satan is called ‘ the father of lies’, so Sago's dishonesty increases his villain status.

The Elizabethan connection between the devil and lying is also seen when Othello “ look[s] down toward [Sago's] feet” when he discovers the truth about him – Othello was seeing whether or not Ago had devils hooves for feet. Ago is a main character whose dishonesty results in several main

events in Othello. His resonantly emphasizes the central theme of honesty because his complete lack of it highlights the truthfulness of other characters. Honesty in the 21st century is usually defined as telling the truth, but in the context of Othello is also means chastity. Desman is honest in both senses of the word. She remains completely faithful to her husband Othello and never tells a lie in the play.

However, her secret marriage to Othello can be seen as deceptive. One can assume that she may have had to lie, or at least hide the truth from certain people, in order for her marriage to be carried out. She redeems herself somewhat when she whole-heartedly professes her love towards Othello in front of her father and the court. Still, the cunning Iago uses the fact that Desman betrayed her father to his advantage when trying to convince Othello of Desman's unfaithfulness – “ she did deceive her father, marrying you”. The one thing that Desman does which is somewhat untruthful is used by Iago, in a way that eventually leads to her murder.

There is much irony in the fact that Othello chooses to believe everything the lying Iago says, while not believing anything the truthful Desman has to say. Furthermore, the more Desman tells the truth, the less Othello is inclined to trust her. When she repeatedly tries to convince Othello to reinstate Cassia, she thinks that she is doing a good thing, when she is really just increasing Othello suspicions. Shakespeare shows in Othello that though honesty is a worthy trait to have, there are many other factors that will affect others opinions of oneself. In the case of Desman, her honesty was not enough to save her life. Iago's dishonesty is contrasted with Desman, but is also contrasted with the character of Cassia. The word honest is used several

times to describe Cassia and although Cassia considers Desman to be “indeed perfection” he never pursues Desman, knowing that she and Othello are in a loving relationship. Cassia is also the only attendant at their wedding.

The differences in Ago and Cassia in terms of honesty relate well to the motif Of reputation. Despite his lying ways, Ago retains his honest facade right until the end of the play. On the other hand, Cassia’s reputation is ruined when he takes part in a drunken fight, costing him his esteemed military position. From this point onwards, Othello no longer fully trusts Cassia. This demonstrates the importance of reputation, whether one’s reputation is actually valid or not.

Cassia knows of the importance of reputation, when he loses his, he is beyond disappointed – “ O, I have lost my reputation! Have lost the immortal part of myself, what remains is bestial. My reputation...

My reputation! ” Othello continued to trust Ago throughout the play because Ago was still seen as a very honest man. If Othello ever doubted Ago, the play could easily have been very different. Ago may not even have been honest but his honest reputation served him well and allowed him to carry out his scheming plans.

Emilie is an interesting character in Othello in regards to honesty. She did take Adhesion’s handkerchief and give it to Ago, which he then used to fully convince Othello of Adhesion’s infidelity. As Sago’s wife for a number of years, one assumes that she must have had some idea of Sago’s dishonesty. Since he lies so well in Othello, he has probably had much practice over the

years. If Emilie did suspect something during her marriage to Ago, was it untruthful of her to not investigate it rather? Would it be possible for Emilie to prevent Sago's actions in the play if she had recognized his untruthfulness earlier in their marriage, before Ago started lying to Othello? However, one must remember that in Shakespearean time women were always inferior to their husbands, and if Emilie were to risk her marriage she would also risk any hope of leading a respectable life. When Emilie does find out that Ago lied about Desman and Cassia, she is horrified – “ My husband say that she was false?..

. F he say so, may his pernicious soul rot half a grain a day! He lies to thereat. ” Despite threats from Othello – “ peace, you were best” , she is the one that tells everyone that of Sago's lies and that Othello killed Desman. There is irony when she speaks of the consequences of dishonesty in front of the most dishonest character in the play, Ago.

She says that the person who lied about Desman is an “ eternal villain, some busy and insinuating rogue, some cogging, cozening slave”. This person is of course Ago himself. Emilie may speak so strongly about the damage that can result from slander because of arsenal experiences – she knows that some “ base notorious knave” gave Ago the idea that she was unfaithful to him with Othello. Emilie is important to the central theme of honesty in Othello because while she was technically, though unknowingly, Sago's accomplice, she clearly did not stand for deceitfulness and was brave enough to tell the truth, even when it cosseted Emilie her life.

In Othello, the stark contrast between the innocence of Desman and Cassia and the double nature of the villainous Ago promotes the central theme of honesty. As the audience are the only people ho know of Sago’s plans, much tension is created as Othello continues to trust Ago due to his honest reputation, while holding his disbelief in the honest characters Cassia and Desman. The irony of this situation keeps the audience engaged, while the role of Emilie as the truth teller of the play provides interest and also is another contrast with her lying husband Ago. The interactions between honesty and dishonesty are vital to the play Othello because they lead to the occurrence of significant events, most notably the event that makes this play a tragedy, the suicide of the protagonist Othello.