

# Year 11 advanced english 2012

Literature, Character



Year 11 Advanced English 2012 Assessment Task #1 Task: "The Moor is of a free and open nature, That thinks men honest that but seem to be so, And will as tenderly be led by the nose As asses are." Iago — Act 1, scene III.

Evaluate Shakespeare's representation of Iago as central to an understanding of the text Othello. Othello by William Shakespeare is a tragedy that depicts the fall of an honourable man through the deliberate deception and manipulation of a dishonourable man. The play describes the protagonist Othello's disintegration and the tragic consequences of his moral deterioration. In the tragedy Othello, Shakespeare develops themes of trust and betrayal and employs dramatic conventions such as irony, the fatal flaw of the protagonist and the use of the five-act structure. In William Shakespeare's Othello, the manipulative nature of the character Iago is directly linked to the idea of trust and betrayal, this is predominantly shown in Iago's betrayal of his master Othello. Throughout the play Iago displays an ability to identify flaws and weaknesses of others, which allows him to create devastation through subverting others who follow their own agenda, to achieve a web of events. In the quote "Where I the Moor, I would not be Iago. In following him, I follow but myself" — Act I, Scene I, Iago explains to Roderigo, that he follows Othello, not out of love or duty, but because he feels he can exploit Othello's flaws. Iago identifies Othello's trusting nature, as seen in the quote "That thinks men honest that but seem to be so" Act I, Scene II and plans to use Othello's trust in him, which he considers is a flaw, to bring about Othello's downfall. Shakespeare uses the character Iago to highlight issues relating to trust and betrayal "I follow him, to serve my turn upon him"- Iago, Act I, Scene I. Iago is the ultimate protagonist, his lack of

morals, duplicitous nature and ability to manipulate others allows him to make Othello trust in the untrustworthy, Iago, and betray the people loyal to him, Desdemona. The central themes of trust and betrayal in Othello are reliant on the character Iago to create and accentuate. It is this reliance on Iago that suggests that he is a central for the understanding and interpreting of the play Othello. In the play Othello, William Shakespeare uses the tragic convention of the "fatal flaw" in his characterization of the protagonist Othello. The fatal flaw or weakness is one that will eventually bring about the downfall of the hero. In Othello, the protagonist Othello's fatal flaw is jealousy. Othello allows Iago to suggest ideas to him and provoke doubts about Desdemona's fidelity. This rekindles Othello's jealousy and leads him to the conclusion that Desdemona was unfaithful, which ultimately results in the tragic downfall of the protagonist. In the quote: "Did Michael Cassio, When you wooed my lady, know of your love?" — Iago, Act III, Scene III. Iago subtly suggests the idea of Desdemona and Cassio having relations, but immediately casts doubt on the idea, saying "But for satisfaction of my thought; no further harm". This plants a seed of doubt in Othello's mind, when combined with Othello's jealousy, spreads in his mind, which ultimately results in the death of Desdemona and himself. Iago is the catalyst required to make Othello's jealousy to grow. While it is ultimately Othello's fatal flaw that leads to his demise, without the Iago's manipulation Othello's jealousy would not have been so tragically accentuated, thus Iago is central to the understanding of the text Othello. Shakespeare frequently employs irony throughout his play Othello. Shakespeare uses situational, verbal and dramatic irony in Othello. It is these 3 types of irony, which add tension and

humor as well as create interest in the plot of the play. One such example of situational irony in Othello is that Michael Cassio was the person that Iago originally wanted dead or demoted, so he could take the position he saw as rightfully his, and return to being Othello's right hand man. However at the conclusion of the play both Othello and Iago are dead, and Cassio remains alive. Shakespeare uses situational irony to highlight a moral perspective to the tragic turn of events in Othello. Shakespeare frequently uses verbal irony in Othello. One clear example of this is "Honest Iago" — Othello. Othello says this several times in Act I, II and V. Another important example of verbal irony is "It is not just words that shakes me thus" - Othello, Act IV, Scene I. Othello reveals that he is convinced that his suspicions about Cassio and Desdemona are true and that he has seen proof. Although it is Iago's deception of Othello and it is simply words causing his distress. These two examples of verbal irony are also examples of dramatic irony, where the audience has knowledge, which is hidden from the character, allowing Shakespeare to engage the audience further. Shakespeare uses irony in Othello, to create interest and humor in the plot of the play. William Shakespeare uses the Elizabethan tragic convention of the five-act structure in his play to develop suspense and create interest in the plot of Othello. Iago's significance in each act demonstrates his central role in the play. It is Iago's actions that produce Shakespeare's intended purpose. In the first act, the protagonist Othello, and the antagonist Iago are introduced, and there is a suggestion of the irony of the circumstances about to unfold i. e. "The Moor is of a free... tenderly be led by the nose as asses are". Iago's soliloquy at the end of act one reflects his importance to the understanding of the text

as it informs the audience about the thoughts, motivation and plans of Iago. This is illustrated in the quote " But it is for sport and profit. I hate the Moor," - Iago, Act I, Scene III. This illustrates Iago's feelings and intentions towards Othello. Iago's scheming and manipulations similarly dominate Act Two, as his plans are revealed. This is demonstrated in the quote " Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me, for making him egregiously an ass"- Iago, Act II, Scene I. Act Three reveals the climax of the play with the fall of the protagonist, Othello into dishonor and disgrace. Iago's role in Othello's demise is crucial to the text. The fourth act exposes more and more, the evil intent of Iago and its tragic results. " Do it not with poison, strangle her in her bed, even the bed she hath contaminated"- Iago, Act IV, Scene I. The fifth act concludes the tragedy and Iago's evil intentions are further revealed in his attempted murder of Cassio and actual murder of Roderigo. Iago's character remains significant to the events. Iago is central to the understanding of Othello as his influence dominates the five-act structure and his manipulation becomes a catalyst for the fatal flaw of Othello. Shakespeare uses Iago to demonstrate the issue of trust and betrayal as well as create situational, verbal and dramatic irony throughout the play. Iago's prevalence on the events of the play depicts his character as central to an understanding of the text Othello.