

# [Evaluate the dramatic treatment of jealousy and revenge in othello](https://assignbuster.com/evaluate-the-dramatic-treatment-of-jealousy-and-revenge-in-othello/)

[](https://assignbuster.com/)[Literature](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/literature/), [Character](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/literature/character/)

Shakespeare explores the universal concepts of jealousy and revenge, and their implications on individuals, through his Venetian play; Othello. He enables the audience to witness the demise of the respected protagonist as a result of his fatal flaws which are relatable to his audience. Noble Othello’s jealousy and passion is heightened by Iago; an external force who takes advantage of Othello’s naivety and trust in him. Iago’s motives for revenge are manifested in his soliloquy, where he reveals his hatred for the black outsider, as well as his jealousy of Cassio. Whilst Iago manipulates Othello’s rationality by misrepresenting Desdemona’s relationship with Cassio, one can justify that it was Othello’s response to what was presented to him which ultimately led to such calamitous destruction; foreshadowed throughout the play. It is evident, that jealousy can be dealt with in many ways; inevitably defining one’s true nature. For Othello, his intense passion and rage consumed his composed and coherent exterior, confirming the tragedy of a good man who fell as a result of jealousy and revenge. The five act structure enables the audience to identify the development of this catastrophe from Othello’s arrival at Cyprus to his ultimate fall from grace. Jealousy; a collective emotion is dealt with in various ways and can often influence individual’s state of mind and amplify one’s undesirable qualities. The audience is assured of how powerful jealousy is through a simile in Iago’s soliloquy ‘ Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards’. (act 2, scene 1). Thus, by comparing the fatality of a poisonous substance with jealousy, Shakespeare foreshadows the control Othello’s flaw will have on his temperament. Othello’s calm and measured responses in the beginning of the play, gives the audience an initial impression that he is a dignified and proud African soldier; illustrated through the repetition of ‘ valiant Othello’ by the Duke. However, it only takes a seed of doubt to instigate his consuming suspicion; thus beginning his downfall; ‘ Look to her moor… she has deceived her father and may thee’. Brabantio is the first character to speak in couplets, signifying to the responder that this is important information as it implies that Othello and Desdemona’s relationship will soon end in chaos and therefore maintain the structure of a five act play. Thus, planting suspicion in Othello’s mind makes it easier to doubt his wife. One can propose that jealousy forces individuals to become impulsive and irrational in their thoughts, as Othello’s attitudes and values change respectively with his increasingly doubt in Desdemona’s loyalty and purity. His newfound rage is displayed when he strikes Desdemona;’ if that the earth could teem with woman’s tears’. This not only reflects his recent misogynist view of women, but it conveys that his passion is overtaking his rational thinking. This is reinforced with Othello’s change in language from blank verse to prose, representing of his transition from a elegant and dignified man to an embodiment of the ‘ green eyed monster’. Furthermore, it can be argued that Othello’s composure and humbleness is only his exterior appearance, as after witnessing a different side of him, the audience is able to relate back to his mention of ‘ tented field’, symbolising that he is a traveller and outcast, which is strengthened with Fintan O’Jooles reference to Othello blaming his colour for Desdemona’s affair; ‘ Haply for I am black…She’s gone’. Thus, his jealousy acts as revelation to his insecurities as the only Moor in his society. This concept supports his envy of Cassio, a white, respected and accepted man, possibly threatening his relationship with Desdemona and in turn, his security of being recognized in society. Act 4 establishes Othello as an irrational man consumed with passion as he impulsively is set on murdering Desdemona, confirmed through his dismissive conversation with Emilia. Desdemona’s responses reveal Othello’s insecurities as an amplifier for his jealousy; ‘ an I the motives of these tears, my Lord?’, suggesting that jealousy has made Othello vulnerable to Iago’s manipulation, and as a result, knows only to reject his wives’ plea of innocence. The play explores the common notion that ignorance is bliss; “ I swear tis better to be much abused…", suggesting to the responder that one might prefer to be naive and trusting, in order to avoid the destructive nature of the jealous. Therefore, in analysing Othello, one can conclude that jealousy is unpredictable and uncontrollable, and will only end in chaos. Vengeance does not always have to be clearly justified, however, it is certain that a strong desire for retaliation, will ultimately lead to destruction. The audience is positioned to perceive Iago as a Machiavellian villain through Shakespeare’s use of soliloquies, which also allow the view to be privy to his motives. The audience is aware of Iago’s disgust of the moor through his constant repetition of ‘ I hate the moor’, however, we are never given a proper answer as to why this is. Iago firstly suggests it is Othello’s betrayal in choosing Cassio over himself to be his lineament, whilst also acknowledging Othello’s African race and colour to have heighted his hatred, manifested through his imagery of animals; ‘ old black ram’. However, as his plan progresses, he tells the audience of his suspicion that Cassio is also having an affair with his wife; ‘ for I fear Cassio with my night-cape too‘. Iago’s indecisive motives enable one to believe he is trying to convince himself to follow through in his orchestration of the Moor’s downfall, proposing he has his own psychological turmoil and paranoia, in turn suggesting that revenge does not have to have a reasonable purpose behind it, rather, solely strong emotions. Act 1 Scene 3 emphasises the tragic circumstances of the play as Shakespeare permits the audience to dread the forth coming calamity even when the ‘ tragic hero’ is oblivious to it; ‘…to abuse Othello’s ear’. Iago assures the viewer that the Moor will be demised because he is easily manipulated; ‘ that thinks men honest that but seem to be so’, thus revealing his tactic to play on Othello’s naivety and trust. His ‘ two-faced’ nature is continually exposed through the repetition of ‘ honest Iago’, ironic however, as this trust in Iago allows for easy deception of Othello’s thoughts, and ultimately, costs him his life. Iago’s influence over Othello’s intense passion exemplifies Iago’s forte of manipulation in order to bring about Othello’s downfall; ‘…when I love thee not, Chaos is come again’; which foreshadows Othello’s seizures; signifying his emotions have surpassed him. Iago’s manipulative and sinister power is again revealed in Act 5 where he convinces Roderigo to murder Cassio who really has ‘ no great devotion to the deed’. Iago then misrepresents the handkerchief in the hands of Cassio as evidence of Desdemona’s infidelity, ultimately succeeding in his plot to amplify the rage and violence in the Moor. One can induce that Iago’s vengeful plan has influenced his subject to adopt the common view of how to deal with revenge. By looking into Fintan O’Joole’s insights, one can grasp that Othello; influenced by Iago, turn the innocence of Desdemona into unfaithfulness; confirmed with the similarities of Othello and Iago’s responses; ‘ Exchange me for a goat’, highlighting that Iago’s act of revenge has made Othello murderous and lustful; thus, surrendering to the assumption that Othello is a ‘ cursed slave’. Therefore, one can conclude that revenge will take its course if driven by a strong determined force.