

Is othello a racist play?

Literature, Russian Literature



Othello is a play in Elizabethan times into Jacobean times. During this time all of Britain was racist and almost all of them weren't exposed to people different from them some of them believed that the "moors" didn't even exist and was a myth.

When Shakespeare wrote the play he was careful not to base the play in Britain as none of the Elizabethans would watch it, instead as there was a lot of trading going on in Venice between North Africa Shakespeare thought that this was a most suitable place as the Venetians would obviously be dealing in slave trade.

He also made sure that he wouldn't keep the North African his religion, which was most probably Islamic, but he thought that if he could add a little twist to it he could get more audience so he changed the Arab to a Christian.

During Shakespeare's time Elizabeth herself didn't like the "black moors" and "negars" which had crept into the realm (Cambridge school/Othello pg 227).

Here we can clearly see that Elizabeth herself was quite racist.

Shakespeare had to know audiences' tastes as the Elizabethans were quite sensitive to this kind of things. They would expect that a black man would be lucky enough to get a chance to stay in Venice but he actually being someone of such a high position as a general is madness so before bringing Othello out he had to make Iago seem to plan everything so that it wouldn't seem too shocking for the audience to see Othello.

William Shakespeare has written a few racist plays but in this one I think that he clearly states that not all people should be judged the same way.

Shakespeare cleverly set up the play to show the audiences that Iago is evil and cunning from the start, and that Othello isn't a devil at all.

Amelia who is Iago's wife had never been racist until Othello had killed Desdemona; she said this by calling him even a "blacker devil".

Iago uses racism all throughout the play he doesn't actually tell Othello to his face but criticises him from the back.

Writer Paul Roberson who is well known says "Othello wasn't meant to be racist but Shakespeare had to let the public know that all humans are the same"