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The drama, Othello, is considered as one of Shakespeare's great catastrophe themed plays and its uniqueness is evident in the sense that it is set in a private world in which its events center on the passions and personal lives of its main characters.

This is a major distinguishing feature of this play as the other catastrophe plays are set against a backdrop of affairs of state that echoes universal human needs. Written in 1604, Shakespeare adapted the plot of the drama from 16th century Italian dramatist and novelist Giraldi Cinthio's Gli Hecatommithi and created the play's ominous events without incorporating subplots or humor to relieve the tension (Mussari, 39). Even though it is narrow in scope, the play is filled with tightly constructed tragedies. An analysis of the play reveals that it is one of Shakespeare's most touching and the most agonizing plays. The characters in the play, through their different behaviors, assist in establishing the plot of the story. Othello, an eloquent and physically fit person is considered as the protagonist and hero of the play; however, in spite of his elevated status, he is nonetheless an easy prey to insecurities due to his age, his life as a general of the armies of Venice, and his race. The Moor, as most of the people referred to him, controls every move in the play. His character is that of a dark man, not only because of his race, but also due to the mystery of his entire personality.

Iago is a twenty-eight years old young man who is the villain of the play. He is presented as a collection of unresolved puzzles and he is the character who basically makes the plot of the story to move. He participates actively in the development of the plot and everything he says is a cause for anxiety.

Iago is a dominant force in the play who gives first-hand instruction to

others, especially to Othello. Notably, Iago ensured that Othello knew the unfaithfulness of his young and beautiful wife, Desdemona, who got married to him secretly before the start of the play.

In developing the character of Iago, the writer borrowed from the Biblical account in which God told Moses that he is “I am whom I am” (Ex. 3: 14). This implies that Iago’s self-depiction as “I am not whom I am” is the direct opposite of the character of God; therefore, Iago’s evil ways make him to be the devil in the play who tells lies and makes empty promises.

In Othello, irony plays a significant role as it develops suspense and increases the interest of the readers in the story. Shakespeare used three types of irony in the play, which are situational, verbal, and dramatic ironies to make the story to be more enjoyable. An example of situational irony is that at the culmination of the play, Cassio was not murdered regardless of the fact that he was the one that Iago wanted dead at the beginning of the story. In fact, Cassio received a promotion in his position and Iago never achieved what he wanted to do; that is, to take Cassio’s place in the military. Another example of situational irony is depicted in the lives of Othello and Iago. Although they have a good reputation, their lives do not depict this.

Notably, they treat their wives miserably despite their innocence and ultimately kill them. Shakespeare’s use of verbal irony in the play incorporates some aspects of humor in it. Othello usually said things that were not consistent with the evil character of Iago:” Honest Iago . . .

“(Shakespeare, 43), ” I know, Iago, Thy honesty and love ...”(Shakespeare, 86). This depicts the confidence that Othello erroneously placed on his “ best

friend,” even though he was constantly saying lies and doing other evils. Lastly, Shakespeare used dramatic irony in the play to make it more captivating by introducing something that the audience knows about while the characters are not aware of. A notable example that is evident all through the story is the fact that the audience is aware that Desdemona is innocent and that Iago is a wicked man whereas Othello is not aware of these things.

The major themes in the play are race, misrepresentation, and good versus evil. Race is an essential theme in the play because it dictates how people perceive Othello, a black military general, and it also determines what Othello thinks of himself as a rough outsider (Croft, 5). Othello’s status as a black-skinned foreigner makes him very self-conscious. And, it also makes him to put extra effort so as to be perceived as equal to the white individuals around him. As mentioned earlier, misrepresentation is depicted in the sense that Iago appears to be a “good man” whereas he is in fact a wolf in sheep’s clothing. The theme of good versus evil is depicted in Iago’s consistent battle against the supremacy of Othello as well as of other characters who he considers as a threat to him. Although he succeeded to some extent, his actions are revealed as the play ends and he gets his due punishment.

In conclusion, Othello is one of Shakespeare’s most touching and agonizing plays because of its rich content. Shakespeare cleverly incorporated various characters to depict his intent of writing the play. As such, the themes of race, misrepresentation, and good versus evil are notably portrayed in the play.

## **Works Cited**

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