

William Shakespeares othello

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Emilia says, " My wayward husband hath a hundred times Wooed me to steal it" (3. 3. 291-2), so we know that Iago has earlier knowledge of its importance to the couple's relationship. Emilia also reveals that Othello has already given Desdemona some information concerning its properties when she says, " he conjured her she should ever keep it" (3. 3. 293). Emilia also lets us know that Desdemona understands it as a tangible symbol of her love for Othello, because she kisses and talks to it, and " she'll run mad When she shall lack it" (3. 3. 315).

The point that Othello hears that Cassio has the handkerchief is the moment he starts to believe Iago because he believes his mother's story and understands the handkerchief as a real indicator of the status of his relationship. On these words, he gives the order for Cassio's death, and although Desdemona doubts he even has the capacity for jealousy, he now confronts her with that emotion. His mother said, " To lose or give away were such perdition As nothing else could match" (3. 4. 67-8). In fact, he believes the story so much that the lack of the handkerchief is the only evidence that could completely turn his mind. He also has the knowledge, from his mother, that if the woman who possessed the handkerchief lost it or gave it away, her man, " should hold her loathed" (3. 4. 62), as he suddenly finds himself feeling about Desdemona.

Therefore, he becomes adamant about finding the handkerchief, because he loves her and wants to prove Iago wrong. Four times in this scene he demands that she bring the handkerchief to him, getting more anxious each time, and her insistence on revisiting Cassio's plight as he makes the demand only confirms for him the power of the napkin. He has traveled the world and seen many strange things, and the story he learned, of holy

silkworms and dye " Conserved of maidens' hearts" (3. 4. 75) adds weight to the story. This matches his understanding of the world, which we have seen earlier, for instance, when he recounts how he told the story of his life to Brabantio and then Desdemona.

This is a sad part of the play. If Othello did not believe the story he tells his wife, he might be able to believe her faithfulness. However, since he believes in the handkerchief's magic, he is doomed to believe Iago instead