

# Analysis of othello tragedy by william shakespeare

Literature



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English Literature 8 April Othello Shakespeare's black protagonist is a multi-faceted mysterious character, whose only tragic flaw is his irrational jealousy and insecurity. Interestingly Shakespeare creates this aura of mystery around his character since the commencement of the play i. e. his character remains anonymous up till Act 1 scene 3. Although the play opens with a conversation between Iago and Roderigo yet they do not state his name he is being talked about in terms of racial epithets rather than a name. These epithets include, "" the Moor" (I, i, line 57), " the thick-lips" (I, i, line 66), " an old black ram" (I, i, line 88), and " a Barbary horse" (I, i, line 113). Although Othello is a renowned and respected warrior and is very popular because of his skill yet he is an outsider in the Venetian society. He is an integral part of the military and is in great demand by the senate as well as the duke, as it is apparent by Cassio's comment that the senate " sent about three several quests" to look for Othello (I, ii , line 46). However regardless of this popularity and importance he still remains an outsider both literally i. e. black soldier as well as figuratively i. e. a social and cultural outcast which leads to insecurity and jealousy and ultimately he destroys his life as well as Desdemona's. Although Othello tries his utmost to ignore his status of an outsider yet on a subconscious level he is well aware of this fact. As it is also apparent from his comment that, "" Rude am I in my speech, / And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace" (I, iii, lines 81-82) It is a cliché that an individual's perception of the world is shaded with his personal experiences consequently a similar situation is also observed in the character of Othello and his actions. Although he is a brave and courageous warrior yet he is still naive of the corruptness of other individuals. Although he has a strong character and personality however he is very trusting by nature hence he

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suffers at the hands of Iago. Though Iago also gives testimony against his goodness and strength of character as he says, “ He's that he is, I may not breathe my censure. What he might be (if, what he might, he is not) I would to heaven he were”( IV, i, lines 270-2). Though his trusting nature might be attributed as a gift or a positive personality trait yet ironically it led him to a life of desolation and destruction. The fact that man is a product of his experiences again proves to be true in the kind of relationship Desdemona and Othello share i. e. there is a gulf of miscommunication or lack of communication because of their two very different background and life experiences and Othello does not understand the European women. As Othello also says that, ““ She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them”(I, iii, lines 166-7). Hence, he had fallen in love with a woman whose life was boring and was in need of an adventure. Another reason that Othello so readily believed Iago was because of her past and hence Iago was able to cleverly use it as a proof for her shaded character. As he says to Othello, “ Look to her, Moor, if thou has eyes to see: She has deceived her father, and may thee” (I, iii, lines 286-7). He had thought that because he loved Desdemona nothing wrong could happen. However he learns in the end that love is not an obligation it is a responsibility towards another individual for life of trust and compromise. As he later says, “ Then you must speak of one that loved not wisely but too well” (V, ii, line 344). Towards the end of the play it is observed that Othello's insecurities and complexes regarding his black background and heritage have reached its peak and the readers rather than hating him begin to pity him for his situation. As it is stated in the text, “ Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand, Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away” (V, ii, <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-othello-tragedy-by-william-shakespeare/>

lines 344-345). Also, " I took by th' throat the circumcised dog, And smote him thus." (V, ii, lines 353-354). His speech before his suicide is a reiteration of the victimization of Othello at the hands of a foreign culture and the protagonist's willingness to torture himself by condemning and lamenting himself, it makes him a tragic figure rather than simply Iago's ridiculous puppet. From this the readers can infer the indirect message that Shakespeare conveys by using Othello as a mediator or the spokesperson i. e. that man can deny his roots or true identity to his heart's content yet life and fate does not allow an individual to forget it. Hence, an individual's actions are governed by his upbringing and place in society i. e. a man's perception of the world is not only biased but is also limited. Moreover, intelligence does not constitute as enlightenment of human mind and perception of the world.