

Theme of jealousy in othello by shakespeare research paper

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The play Othello is among the most famous tragic plays written by Shakespeare. The story concentrates on four main characters namely Othello, Desdemona, Cassio and Lago. Due to its varied nature and the fact that it addresses important themes such as betrayal, love, death and jealousy, it is still performed in many theatres today.

It stands out as a unique play with a personal setting describing the aspirations and private lives of the main characters. The jealousy displayed by Othello and the villainous nature of Lago are some of the qualities that impress the readers of the play.

In addition, the relationship among the characters makes the play unique (Sparknotes 1). Othello and Lago show close associations which make it difficult to figure out who has the greatest responsibility in the play. Most importantly, the role played by Lago who is the villain distinguishes the play from others. Shakespeare addresses different themes in the play and this essay will discuss jealousy as one of the themes addressed in Othello by Shakespeare.

Shakespeare was one of the most prominent writers who ever lived. He was known for addressing various themes such as betrayal, death and love in his works as evidenced in his play Othello. However, theme of jealousy stands out from the start till the end of the play. As the play begins, Roderigo is presented as he tries to be close to Desdemona.

The theme runs throughout the play until the end, leaving Othello very angry and envious because he believes that Cassio and Desdemona have been

entangled in an affair. The jealousy of some characters in the play is influenced by other characters. Lago is the greatest victim of this and creates lies and presents situations aimed at misleading the other characters. He exhibits jealousy towards Cassio and Othello because he was not appointed as a lieutenant.

Lago can be described as a jealous character since he wishes every other person could share in his feelings so he goes ahead to plant the seed of jealousy in other characters. He is driven by anger and envy and aims at instilling jealousy in all the other characters, an aim he achieves through manipulating and betraying them, particularly Othello.

The play begins with Roderigo's desperate love for Desmodena after which he decides to pay Lago to take her from Othello. This is an important scene in the play since it depicts Lago as a villainous character.

The deeds of Lago and his words portray him as a manipulative character. He designs a plan to ruin Othello by calling him a thief since he has stolen the heart of Desmodena through witchcraft. He goes on to implore Roderigo to confront Desmodena's father by telling him, ' call up her father, rouse him...poison his delights...do, with like timorous accent and dire yell' (Shakespeare 64).

In actual sense, Lago is not concerned about the heart of Roderigo. This implies that Roderigo's love for Desdemona and the fact that he wants to be with her means nothing to Lago. His intentions are not geared towards

helping Roderigo look for Desdemona but encourage Brabantio to pursue Othello because this would disturb him.

Lago perfects the art of speaking things that people would want to hear hence misleading them and making them react according to his plans. He is so witty in his diction to keep off any possible argument and confrontation.

He treats Othello in a manipulative manner when he convinces Roderigo to confront Desdemona's father regarding the conduct of the daughter.

Brabantio finds it difficult to believe the accusations leveled against her daughter by the two and dismisses them as absurd. He is angered by the two after they disturb him at night when he is asleep.

After this incident, Roderigo tries to justify his accusations but his actions only serve to further anger Brabantio. He refers to Roderigo as a villain while Roderigo calls him a senator. Brabantio is baffled by the remark made by Roderigo and sits back to reexamine the situation once more. After carefully re-examining the situation, his anger subsides and starts considering the stories told by the two especially when he discovers that Desdemona is not in her bed chamber (Sparknotes 3).

Lago chooses his words judiciously and expresses his views carefully. He knows what to say and the most appropriate time to say it in order to convince his listeners. He practices this especially when talking to Roderigo and Othello. He begins his talks with imperatives then follows them with self answered questions and concludes by making daring assertions.

The timing nature of Lago is evident when he speaks to Roderigo about the suspicions of Desdemona being in love with Othello. Lago brings out Othello as a deceitful person whose lies are believed by Desdemona. He then uses these lies to manipulate Roderigo by telling him that he is capable of distinguishing the relationship between Othello and Desdemona. However, what drives Lago to manipulate Othello is the jealousy he harbors towards him.

The actions of Lago and Othello are based on what they say and do. Both have hidden intentions of dominating over each other. Othello is seeking answers while Lago intends to manipulate those he considers to have hurt him. As a result, Lago manipulates the conversations to cause Othello create conclusions that suit him.

By using this strategy, Lago waits for Othello's answer for him to craft a response that will increase his jealousy. For example, when Desdemona is seen with Cassio in a private place, Othello asks Lago about it. Lago answers Othello by telling him that he believes it was Cassio. Clearly, Lago evades the question asked by Othello but instead frames his own answer hence manipulating Othello to answer his own question (Shakespeare 65).

Lago employs suspicion, forestalled criticism, hints and twists reality. He frames the relationship between Cassio and Desdemona for the sake of convenience. He is so determined to ensure that Othello develops unending jealousy for Desdemona by insinuating that Desmodena is unfaithful.

The chance presents itself when Cassio and Desdemona are spotted together. Lago slyly comments about the behavior of the two, a comment that elicits serious thoughts in Othello and wonders what their intentions were. When Othello tries to get more information from Lago, he declines to give any information and this makes Othello more suspicious.

As a result, his jealousy towards Desdemona continues to grow. Lago uses implied communications to make sure that he achieves his goals. He manages to change the perceptions that Othello has towards Cassio and leaves him asking for more information. Othello tries to understand whether the accusations of unfaithfulness made by Lago against Desdemona are right.

Lago tells Othello that he should not continue thinking about the adulteries committed but instead Othello thinks about them deeply. He is persuaded by Lago and he develops jealousy towards Desdemona but never questions the two about the affair. Othello adheres to what he is told by Lago and relies on available predetermined evidence. For instance, when a handkerchief that belongs to Desdemona is found on the bed chamber of Cassio, he is convinced that Desdemona is unfaithful.

Othello's jealousy towards Desdemona continues to increase and to him the only person who can be trusted is Lago because he seems concerned about his life. Lago is engaged in many secret strategies and manipulates him to move in the direction he wants by pretending to be an innocent person. This

is a scheme that portrays Lago as a person who sympathizes with Othello but the case is different.

The deceitful nature of Lago is exhibited when he tells Othello that Desdemona lied to his father about marrying Othello. When Lago points out the past deeds of Desdemona, Othello continues developing jealousy towards her because she lied to her father regarding the marriage (Sparknotes 5).

Desdemona is represented as a mere pawn to Lago. In the first episodes of the play, Lago is not so much interested in her. He only mentions her when talking to Othello about her unfaithfulness.

Later in the development of the play, Lago feels threatened after Desdemona asks about his perception of women and how he depicts them. This compels Lago to express love that is not genuine simply because he has been forced to do so. However, this makes him angered and expresses his jealousy towards Desdemona till the end of the play.

The motivation of the evil acts that are perpetrated by Lago in the play is not brought out clearly in the play. He is angered and harbors intense jealousy towards other characters just because Cassio was appointed a lieutenant despite the fact that Lago was more experienced.

He too becomes jealous of Othello although his manipulative character is not justified by this jealousy towards Othello. The truth of the matter is that Lago is very jealous and strives towards developing the jealousy he has in other

characters. He believes that he is the person undergoing a lot of suffering and wants other characters to develop anger and jealousy.

Lago comes out as one of the villainous characters in the works of William Shakespeare. What brings out this character is the fact that he secretly creates the trouble happening in the play but he pretends to be innocent and blameless such that nobody suspects him. He achieves this by applying manipulative strategies that end up betraying other characters.

He always tells lies that cause serious consequences but he expresses sympathy and is ever ready to share his secrets with somebody. It is not clear why Lago acts the way he acts and this makes him even more frightening. He is full of jealousy and wants every other person to feel as jealous as he is. The jealousy of Lago and his efforts to develop the same jealousy in others eventually leads into the deaths of many people and his own downfall.

Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. New York: Plain Label Books, 1968. Print

Sparknotes. Themes, Motifs & Symbols. 2011. Web.