

Othello background

[Literature](#), [Character](#)



Othello BACKGROUND DIRECTIONS: You are not required to answer these questions on paper. However, I strongly suggest you research and find the answers to the following questions in order to better understand the play. 1. Who were the Moors? 2. Who were the Venetians? 3. How were the Moors/Venetians regarded in Shakespeare's day? 4. What were the military duties of ranked officers? 5. What was the military hierarchy? 6. What was the role of women? 7. What was expected of a bride? 8. What relationship between men and women were considered above reproach? 9. What rules for getting married existed at the time of the play? 10. What were the rules of courtship?

Othello STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS DIRECTIONS: You must answer each of the following questions. Note that your answers will vary in length. Some questions contain multiple questions; be sure to answer all parts of a question. Some questions ask you to describe, explain, or give examples. Pay close attention to what each question is asking and be sure to answer accordingly. TYPING IN TIMES NEW ROMAN, 12 POINT FONT IS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED AND APPRECIATED. Act I Scene i 1. Describe the sensory details of the opening scene: sights, sounds, smells, etc. 2. Why do Iago and Roderigo wake up Brabantio? Why is Brabantio angry? Why does Iago slip quietly away once Brabantio comes down? 3. Explain the relationship between Iago and Roderigo. Who seems to be 'in control'. Explain your first reaction to each of these characters. 4. Explain why Iago says he needs to get revenge on Othello. Do you think he is justified? Why is the need for revenge so powerful.. and for that matter, such a popular topic of modern music/movies? 5. How does Iago act when Desdemona's father appears at the window? Why does it take so long for Brabantio to figure out what is

going on? Why doesn't Iago just tell him what happened straight out? Scene ii 1. How does Iago lie at the beginning of this scene? 2. Is Othello afraid of Brabantio? Should he be? 3. What do you learn about Othello's background from this scene? How do you learn that information? 4. Why has the Duke called for Othello? How can you tell that Othello is highly regarded in military circles? 5. Why is Brabantio so against having Othello for a son-in-law? Does he seem to blame his daughter for running off with this man? Would he feel differently if Desi had run off with another man? Scene iii 1. How does Desdemona respond when Brabantio confronts her? What other approach to the problem could she have taken? 2. How does the Duke seem to feel about the problem of Desi and Othello? Who do you think he sympathizes with? 3. According to Othello, when did Desi and he fall in love? Why do you suppose they kept their love a secret? Does this sort of behavior fit his character as he has been described so far? 4. Like Othello, Roderigo is in love. Describe the difference between the two lovers. What is it about Roderigo that makes it easy for Iago to manipulate him? Act 1 Prediction 5. What does Iago plan to convince Othello of at the end of Act I? How do you think he will accomplish this? Act II Scene i 1. Describe the events surrounding Othello's arrival in Cyprus. Why is Desdemona nervous before he shows up? 2. How does Cassio treat Desdemona? Is there anything about this exchange that might help Iago push forward his plan? 3. What suspicions does Iago have about his own wife? What does this show us about Iago? 4. How can you tell that Cassio is devoted to Othello? Does there seem to be any jealousy or disloyalty there? 5. Describe Iago's feelings towards women and love in general. 6. How does Iago manage to convince Roderigo to provoke Cassio to

a fight? What is the real reason Iago wants the two to fight? 7. Why does Iago say of Desdemona “ Now I do love her too”? Scene ii 1. What is the mood of this scene? 2. Why the celebration? How is the celebration going to help Iago? Scene iii 1. Explain how Cassio gets drunk, even though he knows that he can't hold his liquor. 2. How does Cassio react when Iago starts to discuss Othello and Desi's sex life? 3. What do Cassio and Roderigo argue about? How is the governor of Cyprus involved? Act III Scene i 1. What is the setting of this scene? What is the mood? 2. How does Iago get Desdemona and Cassio together? 3. What is ironic about Iago's comment to Cassio that he will “ devise a means to draw the Moo/out of the way, that your converse and business/ May be more free”? 4. How does Cassio know that Desdemona has already spoken to Othello in his behalf? What do you think he arranges to meet Desdemona, then? Scene ii 1. How does this scene show you that Othello is a busy man? 2. Why is this a good time for Iago to act? Scene iii 1. Why does Cassio leave Desdemona in such a hurry? Why does Iago point that out to Othello? 2. Why is Desi so willing to speak up for Cassio? Do you think she goes to far? 3. When does Othello first begin to doubt Desdemona? Do you think most newly married husbands would be as easy to fool? 4. How does Emilia get Desdemona's handkerchief? Why does she give it to Iago? Do you think Emilia has any suspicions that her husband might be up to no good? 5. How does Iago push Othello over the edge in his doubts about Desi's fidelity? What is the “ clinching” piece of evidence put forth by Iago? What do you think Othello would have done if he discovered that Iago was lying at this point? Scene iv 1. How does Emilia respond when Desdemona asks about the handkerchief? What do you suppose she is thinking at this

point? 2. According to Othello, what is the history behind the handkerchief? Do you think he has revealed this information to Desi before? 3. Why is Bianca mad at Cassio? How is her anger like Othello's? What sort of relationship do Bianca and Cassio have? 4. So far, who thinks that the handkerchief is special? Is it really supernatural? Who thinks so? 5. What is Emilia's opinion of men? How does Desdemona's opinion differ? Whose side are you on? 4. What advice does Iago offer to Cassio after he is demoted? How might this advice, which Cassio takes, play right into Iago's plan? 5. Explain how Iago's plan seems to be progressing ... what other events could happen that would play right into Iago's plan? Act IV Scene i 1. Why does Othello fall unconscious? 2. According to Iago, why is Othello luckier than many other men who have been cuckolded? Do you agree with his reasoning? Would you rather not know if someone had betrayed you? 3. What is Cassio saying to Iago, as Othello stands hidden? What does Othello think he is saying? How is this all part of Iago's plan? Why do you suppose Othello doesn't confront Cassio right then? 4. According to Iago, why should Othello strangle Desdemona rather than poison her? What do you think his real reasons are? 5. Why do you think Shakespeare has Othello welcome Lodovico to Cyprus with the phrase "goats and monkeys!" Does Lodovico realize that Othello is upset? Scene ii 1. Why does Othello summon Emilia—if he is not going to accept her testimony? Why do you think Emilia didn't speak up earlier? 2. How does Desi react when Othello calls her a whore? How does she explain his behavior to herself? Are you surprised she doesn't act differently? 3. How can you tell Desi trusts Iago? Is she being more naive than most women would be about he backbiting? 4. How does Iago plan

Cassio's murder? How does he convince Roderigo that Cassio must die? Why do you think he involves Roderigo instead of handling it himself? Scene iii 1. Why do you think Desdemona obeys Othello so meekly when he sends her to bed? Do you think she has any suspicions that he intends to hurt her? 2. Has Desdemona fallen out of love with Othello? Would you? 3. How is the story in the "Willow song" like Desdemona's life? 4. How does Emilia feel about the double standard that applies to men and women? Does Desdemona agree with her? 5. What does Desdemona mean when she says, in the closing lines of the scene, "Good night, Good night. God me such uses send/Not to pick bad from bad, but by bad mend!" Do you agree with that philosophy? Act IV Prediction 6. What could possibly happen now to make Othello see the error of his ways? Act V Scene i 1. How is Roderigo killed? 2. Why does Othello think that Iago has carried out his promise to kill Cassio? What do you think Othello would have done if he had realized that Cassio was merely wounded? 3. How can you tell that Lodovico and Cassio-like most others in the play-think that Iago is honest and courageous? 4. How does Iago cast suspicion on Bianca for Cassio's injuries? Why, do you suppose? What do you think Cassio's reaction to this is? 5. How does Emilia react to all this violence? Scene ii 1. How can you tell that Othello still loves Desdemona and does not wholly want to kill her-moments before he does? Is there any way that Desdemona could have prevented him from killing her? Do you think she resigned herself to die, in the end? 2. Why has Emilia come? Why do you think Desdemona doesn't tell her the truth before she dies? 3. When does Emilia realize that her husband is behind all this? How does she react? Does she feel guilty for her own part in it? 4. Why does Iago kill his wife? Do you think he has any regrets about that? Why

didn't anyone stop him? 5. How does Othello die? Why does he want to die? Why wasn't he disarmed? If he hadn't died, what do you think would have happened to him? 6. What will happen to Iago now? How do you think he feels about being caught? What scenarios do you think would have made this ending more satisfying?