

Contrast between  
iago and othello is the  
most important  
contrast in the play  
essa...

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



How far do you agree with the view that the contrast between Iago and Othello is the most important contrast in the play? In the play Othello, there are many forms of contrast, one of which is the contrast between the characters of Othello and Iago, which could be argued as being the most important contrast in the play. In this essay I am going to discuss various contrasts between these two characters as well as others which are shown in the play. An example of contrast between Othello and Iago is the contrast between manipulated and the manipulator. Iago lures Othello into a false sense of security by using language such as "my lord" when talking to him and keeps all his true intentions hidden so Othello believes that he is an honest man. He manages to manipulate Othello easily by playing on his weaknesses which are his love for Desdemona and his jealousy. Iago who is both clever and charismatic, plants ideas into Othello's head, such as Desdemona having an affair with Cassio, and allows him to draw his own conclusions by seeing what he wants to see. He rarely explicitly states that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair, but instead uses Othello's belief that he is an "honest" man and implies other people's guilt as a way of convincing the gullible Othello.

Another form of contrast in the play is the contrast between Venice and Cyprus, which is closely linked with the contrast between Othello and Iago. There is a large contrast between Othello's behaviour in the ordered world of Venice compared to the chaotic one of Cyprus. In Venice Othello was perceived as a noble, respected military general that was highly regarded by many. However in Cyprus he behaves very differently, even striking Desdemona at one point. Lodovico's response to this was one of horror

which we can see when he exclaimed, “ My Lord! – This would not be believed in Venice, though I should swear I saw’t.” Which shows how shocked he was with Othello’s actions and how that they appear to be incredibly out of character. Whilst Cyprus is an environment in which Othello struggles in, Iago on the other hand thrives in Cyprus. In Venice, Iago’s plans to destroy Othello were unsuccessful; however in Cyprus he succeeds and manages to convince Othello of his wife’s affair. There is also contrast in both the language Iago and Othello use in both Venice and Cyprus.

In Venice, Othello’s speech was stately, poetic and respectful which we can see in the quote “ Most potent, grave, and reverend seigniors”. This would have been unexpected for those living in Venice as they would have expected Othello to have been speaking crudely. Iago on the other hand prefers the use of animal imagery such as when he is talking to the suicidal Roderigo and he says “ Ere I would say I would drown myself for the love of a guinea hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon.” Meaning that he would rather be a baboon than kill himself for a woman and he is in fact mocking Roderigo and implying that he is weak. He also makes multiple references to the devil, which could be considered to be a sign of the evil within him. As the play continues and Othello’s relationship with Desdemona begins to break down, we see the contrast in his speech from the start of the play as he begins to mirror Iago’s choice of language.

As the play progresses, he no longer uses heavenly imagery such as describing his love as ‘Olympus-high’, and instead uses words related to the devil as well as animal imagery for example in the phrases “ false as hell”

and “ blood sucking flies”. By the end of the play, Othello is a shadow of his former self and is speaking in jagged, disordered prose. Overall, I do believe that the contrast between Othello and Iago is the most important in the play as it is the contrast which is most prevalent throughout the play and can be linked to many other contrasts in the play such as such as the changes in behaviour between Venice and Cyprus as well as the contrast between good and evil and the manipulated vs the manipulator.