

Iago the villain

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



Iago the villain William Shakespeare, in his play, "Othello the Moor of Venice", brings to life one of his most complex villains, Iago. Iago plays the ancient of Othello, who is the general of the Venetian forces. As an ancient, Iago is to be a loyal servant to Othello. However, Iago has grown bitter and contempt and uses his supposed loyalty as a wedge to cause Othello's demise. It has been said of Iago that he is the devil incarnate or that he personifies the devil (pg. 244) this accusation comes to life as you read the play and discover for yourself that in each scene in which Iago speaks one can point out his deception. It is not clear whether Iago has a master plan or if he is just winged it moment by moment with his ultimate gain in mind. However, what is clear, and what we will point out in the following, is that Iago has the ability to use word play to say the right thing at the right time. He is quick witted and that is what makes him a successful villain. Iago's is filled with rage and envy because he was passed over for a position he felt he deserved. Without conscience, Iago vows to take back what he feels is rightfully his by whatever means necessary. As we can see right from the beginning of Act 1, Iago begins to weave his web by revealing his true intentions to Roderigo as he justifies his hatred toward Othello. "O, sir, content you; I follow him to serve my turn upon him." (Pg. 246, lines 41-42). Iago snares Roderigo, a man who is in love with Desdemona, by being the bearer of bad news that she has just married Othello the Moor. It appears to Roderigo that Iago has his best interest at heart and that he wants to help him to win Desdemona over from Othello. Once Iago gains the trust of Roderigo he convinces him that they must do what is right and tell of Othello's marriage to Desdemona the senator, her father. Iago accompanies

Roderigo to the door of the Senator, Brabantio, and convinces Roderigo to call up to him to tell of this news. Once the senator is waked, Iago flees to tell Othello that trouble is on its way. This was the first clue that he was up to no good. Toward the end of Act 1, we find Iago and Roderigo speaking again. This time Roderigo is at his rope's end and is contemplating suicide because of his lost love for Desdemona. Iago tries to reassure Roderigo that it is a matter of time that Desdemona will come to her senses and leave Othello. In his final soliloquy of Act 1, Iago is stating that he hates Othello and that the only reason he keeps company with him is for his own gain and sport. "For mine own gained knowledge should profane if I would time expend with such a snipe but for my sport and profit" (pg. 254, lines 384-386). . He tells Roderigo of a plan, without stating the specifics, to bring Othello to destruction. Iago feels that he has Othello by the mouth and that he can be led just as a jackass. Othello holds him in high regard and trusts him therefore; he has confidence that his plan will work. "He holds me well; the better shall my purpose work on him" (pg. 254, lines 390-391). In Act 2, Desdemona is awaiting the return of Othello from the courts. Iago expresses disgust for Desdemona and also for his wife Emilia and slanders them by implying that they are hussies. "Players in your housewifery, and housewives in your beds" (pg. 255, lines 112-113). "You rise to play, and go to bed to work" (pg. 255, line 115). As Cassio enters, Iago removes himself from the conversation and steps aside to study the interaction between Cassio and Desdemona. When he sees Cassio take Desdemona's hand he sees a way to plot against Cassio to strip him of his command and cause his demise. "With as little a web as this I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio" (pg.

256, lines 168-169). " If such tricks as these strip you out of your lieutenantry, it had been better you had not kissed your three fingers so oft" (pg. 256, lines 171-173). As plot thickens, we find that Iago has manipulated Cassio to physically harm Montano. Cassio's act angers Othello enough to remove him from his lieutenancy. This provides Iago with the opportunity to befriend Cassio. Iago persuades Cassio to drink and in his drunkenness convinces him that he needs to take up his plea with Desdemona, because if anyone can change Othello's heart it will be her. In his final soliloquy of Act 2, Iago plots to involve his wife in his plan to get Cassio and Desdemona alone together. All the while, Iago will put his plan in motion to manipulate Othello into distrusting his wife Desdemona. At the right time he will bring Othello into view of Cassio and Desdemona. " Myself all the while to draw the Moor apart and bring him jump when he may Cassio find soliciting his wife" (pg. 263, lines 376-378). Iago has played all his cards right thus far and has gained the trust of Othello, Cassio, and Desdemona. In Act 3, everything is going as planned for Iago, his wife has led Cassio to Desdemona just in time for Othello to see him in her company. Cassio flees, when he sees Othello, giving opportunity for Iago to convince Othello that he fled because he had ill intentions with Desdemona. The long awaited confrontation between Othello and Desdemona provides opportunity for Iago to turn Othello against his wife by insinuating that she has been adulterous. Othello takes the bait, however Iago urges him to not respond in anger and jump to conclusions. " Yet, if you please to hold off a while, you shall by that perceive him and his means" (pg. 267, lines 248-249). Knowing that Othello will once again remember his love for Desdemona and demand proof, Iago is one step ahead of the game. " Be

sure of it; give me ocular proof" (pg. 269, line 360). He plots to use Desdemona's handkerchief, his wife found to plant in Cassio's dwelling. " I will in Cassio's lodgings loose this napkin" (pg. 268, line 321). In Act 4, when approached again by Roderigo, Iago finds himself defending his loyalty to the original plan to win over Desdemona. " You charge me most unjustly" (pg. 279, line 184). Iago sees that Roderigo is going to spill his guts, therefore he outwits him by giving him news of a " special commission" (pg. 280, line 220) that has come to take Othello out of the picture. Iago then tempts Roderigo with the duty of killing Cassio " Ay, if you dare yourself a profit and a right" (pg. 280, line 232). In the final Act, Act 5, we find Iago's wife about to uncover his treachery, but before she can, Iago kills her to keep her quiet. In doing so he still hangs onto the hope that his plan is not all lost. Instead he flees to stall for time, however this is an admittance of guilt. " He's gone, but his wife's killed" (pg. 286, line 238). When Iago's treachery is finally unmasked the justification he offers almost cheats the audience at first glance, as he stands there almost speechless " Demand me nothing. What you know, you know" (pg. 287, lines 303-304). In his final words Iago offers no justification and conveys no expression of guilt for the treachery he bestowed upon Othello and the others. His willingness to lie, steal and kill is evidence that he is willing to go to any lengths to achieve his goal. One may ask what motivated Iago to commit these acts; it may seem that his motivation was his anger toward Othello for passing him over for the position of lieutenant. However, to the contrary, true villains need no motivation, to be malicious and evil is their motivation.