

# Iago, the most villainous character in Othello

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Humans are said to be born with a moral compass telling them what is wrong and right, if not society does a good job instilling their views of what is good or bad into people. In Othello, written by William Shakespeare and performed by Mixed Magic Theatre, the character Iago seems to be easily placed in the group of a bad person. What makes him a bad person? Well there are various reasons that can be stated, but I find the most compelling the fact that he used manipulation many times as a tool to go forward with his plans.

Another characteristic that shows his malicious nature is how he often lies to people. These two along with his unwarranted desire to destroy Othello and Desdemona's relationship.

Iago's disregard for others is very apparent in his constant manipulation of them. Roderigo is one of the characters that would fall victim to Iago's manipulation, being used merely as a puppet. Iago seems aware that he has Roderigo in the palm of his hand, ready to be used for his own gain. Iago shows this by saying, "Thus do I ever make my fool my purse" (Othello. 1. 3). Here Roderigo is referred to as a fool, and then is also said to be Iago's "purse" because he is a utility that Iago would use for his goals. Even when Roderigo has enough sense to question Iago, Iago is able to appease him and get what he wants. "I have no great devotion to the deed, and yet he has given me satisfying reasons" (Othello. 6. 1). Even though Roderigo doesn't want to kill Cassio, Iago shows his master manipulation skills and is able to get Roderigo to comply. If manipulating Roderigo isn't enough to see Iago is a villain, the act that Iago is getting him to do (killing Cassio) should make it clear.

Roderigo isn't the only one to fall victim to manipulation as Iago takes advantage of Othello as well. Iago is able to manipulate Othello by getting into a position where he is trusted by him. Othello even has a conversation with Iago's wife where he says, " My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago" (Othello. 5. 2). Othello clearly is unable to see through Iago's disguise as a good trustworthy friend, and even gives him compliments, all while he is being plotted against. Iago even says to Roderigo, " I follow him to serve my turn upon him" (Othello. 1. 1). He clearly states that he is serving under Othello to someday take his place.

Iago can also be considered the most villainous person because he continuously lies, but makes himself look venerable at the same time. By doing this he appears as sincere and reliable to the other characters, but he is truly deceiving. Iago incessantly lies to Othello about Desdemona having an affair with Cassio. He purposely uses Cassio because he wants to show Othello how noble he is by making Cassio look deficient. It is effortless for Iago to lie to Othello because Othello holds Iago to be a close friend and advisor. One instance where Iago lies to Othello is when he says, " Look to your wife. Observe her well with Cassio. Wear your eyes thus, not jealous nor secure" (Othello. 3. 3.). As Iago lies to Othello about how Cassio is sleeping with Desdemona, he makes himself appear loyal and concerned for Othello's well being. Lying is a villainous act that Iago resorts to because it can have unintended consequences and be hurtful when the truth is exposed. By lying Iago is able to manipulate others and have them unknowingly follow his conspiracy.

Through words and actions Iago is capable of manipulating his own wife, Emilia. Iago uses Emilia as part of his plot. Emilia has a vital role in Iago's plan because he has her take Desdemona's handkerchief so that he can leave it in Cassio's house. " My wayward husband hath a hundred times / Wooed me to steal it" (Othello. 3. 3). Iago consistently convinces his wife to steal Desdemona's belongings without giving any explanation. Since he manipulates his own wife it portrays how evil he really is because he does not actually care for her he only uses her. Emilia does not even question Iago about the handkerchief she only does what she is told because she does not want to displease him. Emilia is only one of the numerous characters that Iago is able to manipulate.

Othello is another major character that Iago is able to manipulate. With his words he can make Othello believe that Desdemona is having an affair with Cassio without any concrete proof. Iago willingly destroys the relationship between Othello and Desdemona without the slightest feeling of guilt. Iago lures Othello into his plan when he says, " She did deceive her father, marrying you, / And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks, / She loved them most" (Othello. 3. 3). Iago's manipulative words are all what Othello needs to hear to believe that Desdemona is cheating on him. " As to be bold with you, / Not to affect many proposed matches / Of her own clime, complexion, and degree" (Othello. 3. 3). Iago tells Othello that Desdemona is not who he thinks she is. Iago persuades Othello into believing that Desdemona is unfaithful, even though she is the most innocent character throughout the play. Iago manipulates Othello with his words because without any ocular evidence Othello is still able to believe him. Iago can be considered as a villain by

manipulation because he uses it to benefit himself and he does not have sympathy for who he is hurting.

Iago's character in Shakespeare's play, Othello is one of the greatest villains in literature. His deceit and manipulation of Othello ultimately cause the death of three innocent characters Desdemona, Othello and Roderigo. Iago deceptively takes advantage of people; he lies while making himself look highly regarded and manipulates people that will bring him closer to his goals. In the end of the play the characters are finally able to realize that Honest Iago is not as honest as he presented himself to be and he proves himself to be the most villainous character in the play.