

Othello paper the heroism of othello



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The Heroism of Othello In his final words, Othello confesses that he has “loved not wisely, but too well” (V, ii, 353). This insight goes a long way toward explaining Othello’s character. It is because of where he’s placed his love that he behaves the way he does. He is a hero because of his ability to act according to what love dictates and is brought to his ruin because of where that love had been placed.

Generally, heroism refers to a character that embodies our concepts of what is good and noble in the human race. A more classical definition of the heroic figure would indicate that this character should also have some kind of tragic flaw that leads to their downfall. These kinds of characters are plentiful in Shakespeare’s works, including the character of Othello. In this simple statement at the end of his life, he is pointing out for us what his tragic flaw was as well as the source of his heroism.

It is in his love for Desdemona that his nobility shines through. The play opens with a mob of angry townspeople coming to do harm to Othello because they believe he has shamed the daughter of one of the merchants. Instead of running, as he is urged to do by Iago, Othello chooses to stand up to these people and make sure that the good name of his legally bound wife is defended. Rather than fighting with these people, he tells them, “Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them / Good signior, you shall more command with years / Than with your weapons” (I, i, 59-61). In this statement, his nobility shines through as he defends his wife’s honor, acknowledges the respect owed to his elders and refuses to cross swords with them.

However, his power to love is flawed by his inability to judge which of his contemporaries he should trust with it. This is demonstrated first through his <https://assignbuster.com/othello-paper-the-heroism-of-othello/>

relationship with Cassio. Cassio is clearly Othello's favorite officer as he promoted Cassio over Iago. While there may have been other qualifications involved in the decision, there also was reason for Iago to believe he should have been promoted over Cassio. However, when Othello finds Cassio brawling in the streets with gentlemen and drunk, he immediately doubts his own wisdom in placing his affections with this man. Though he still has affection for the man, "Cassio, I love thee; But never more be officer of mine" (II, ii, 239-240), he cannot respect him and his confidence in his own judgment is thrown into doubt. Cassio's time with Desdemona further introduces doubt and suspicion into Othello's mind.

Finally, Othello's foolishness in placing his love in Iago proves to be his final undoing. Just as in everything else, once he decides to love Iago, he finds it impossible to doubt him, even when Iago is telling him he should doubt. He loves him too well and believes Iago has the same depth of affection for him and is therefore only looking out for Othello's best interests. It is only at the end, when he realizes that he has allowed his affection for Iago to abuse his love for Desdemona, twisting it to the point where it was murderous rather than compassionate, does he understand that his choice on whose love to have faith in was unwisely made.