

Year 12 Knowledge Organiser: Othello

Othello Knowledge Organiser – A Level English Literature B

Characters	<p>Othello: a general in the Venetian army and the tragic hero. Despite his elevated status, he is insecure due to his race and age. He is consumed by jealousy as the play progresses, eventually murdering his wife due to believing she has had an affair.</p>	<p>Iago: Othello’s ensign and the Machiavellian tragic villain. He delights in manipulation. Desdemona: Othello’s wife, Brabantio’s daughter, and the tragic victim. She is initially determined and outspoken, but becomes increasingly passive.</p>	<p>Emilia: Iago’s wife and Desdemona’s servant. Whilst she is initially submissive, she becomes more outspoken. Cassio: despite his inexperience, he becomes Othello’s lieutenant just before the play begins. Iago convinces Othello that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair.</p>	<p>Roderigo: a gentleman of Venice who is infatuated with Desdemona. Iago uses him as a pawn in his plans, and eventually kills him. Duke of Venice: allows Othello’s marriage to Desdemona because he needs Othello to lead the army.</p>	<p>Brabantio: Desdemona’s father and a Venetian senator. Montano: original governor of Cyprus. Lodovico: related to Brabantio and the voice of reason in the play. Gratiano: related to Brabantio. Bianca: Cypriot courtesan. Loves Cassio.</p>
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Aspects of Tragedy – as set out in Aristotle’s “Poetics”

<p>The tragic hero is noble, but with hamartia (fatal flaw) that leads to peripeteia (reversal of fortune). This flaw may be hubris (excessive pride) or blindness to the truth, and leads to the hero’s isolation, emptiness, and sense of loss. The hero has a moment of anagnorisis (realisation) before his downfall. This tragic trajectory evokes pathos (pity and fear) for the hero, which is eventually purged in a moment of catharsis (release) at the play’s denouement (resolution). There is often a sense that the hero is fated to meet his inevitable downfall.</p>	<p>The tragic villain exerts external pressure on the tragic hero. He is often Machiavellian (cunning, scheming).</p>	<p>The tragic victim suffers and is killed. In Othello, this suffering is linked to society’s treatment of women. This evokes pathos (pity) and misery in the audience.</p>
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Historical Context

<p>Race in Renaissance England: at a time when global exploration and slavery were in their infancy, racism was rife in England (Elizabeth I ordered that black people should be exiled). There was a belief in the Great Chain of Being, which placed God at the top, followed by angels, white people, black people, and animals. Thus, Iago’s animalistic descriptions of Othello reflect contemporary xenophobia. Post-colonial literary theory explores the impact of colonialism on literature. Post-colonial critics argue that in literature people of different races are presented as the “other” – as different, and possibly to be feared. Whilst Shakespeare communicates these racist ideas in 1.1, in 1.2 he presents Othello as the antithesis of such stereotypes, thus exposing the baselessness of racism. However, Othello internalises the racist ideology of those around him, and this leads to the insecurity he feels in his marriage. Thus the external pressures on Othello become internal pressures.</p>	<p>Gender and the patriarchy: Renaissance women were expected to be subservient to men and did not have many rights. Many were consigned to the domestic sphere and were expected to provide a stable point of morality and innocence in a chaotic, corrupt world. Othello does not challenge this – rather the fact that he “won” Desdemona shows that he confirms this ideology. A time of change: despite traditional beliefs regarding race and gender, the 17th century was a moment time of change from traditional to modern ideas. E.g., Queen Elizabeth had shown that women could hold power. Similarly, emerging sciences challenged belief in the supernatural. Shakespeare’s characters are caught in the midst of this change, and whilst they often hope for a different, better world, they find themselves entrapped by the expectations of traditional society.</p>
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Scene	Plot	Symbols	Quotations	Vocabulary	
Act 1: Exposition – establishing Othello’s nobility, and sets a backdrop of Venetian politics	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Roderigo and Iago inform Brabantio of Desdemona’s secret marriage to Othello. o Enraged, Brabantio sets out in search of his daughter. 	<p>Venice: a bastion of cosmopolitan civilisation and commerce, protecting the boundaries of Europe from the Ottoman Empire. Also corrupted by debauchery. Animal imagery and failure to name Othello: racism and continual dehumanisation of Othello.</p>	<p>:/ Cassio is an “arithmetician” and like a “spinster”. :/ “I follow him to serve my turn upon him.” :/ “I am not what I am.” :/ “Poison [Brabantio’s] delight...plague him with flies.” :/ “An old black ram is tugging your white ewe.”</p>	<p>Meritocracy: a society based on personal achievement, not wealth. Duplicitous: deceptive, Machiavellian. Debased value system: lacking integrity. Prejudiced / xenophobic: racist.</p>
	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Iago warns Othello about Brabantio. o The Duke calls for Othello. o Brabantio accuses Othello of abduction. 	<p>Disease: uncontrollable spread of evil; one person’s evil can infect another; destruction. Misogynistic language is used to objectify Desdemona, suggesting that she is “owned” by her father/ husband. She is diminished to a sexual symbol.</p>	<p>O: “’Tis better as it is.” O: “My services, which I have done the signiory, / Shall out-tongue his complaints.” O: “I love the gentle Desdemona” “I won his daughter.” :/ Othello “hath boarded a land carrack.”</p>	<p>Rational: thinking clearly and logically. Noble: possessing outstanding moral virtues; of high rank. Integrity: soundness of moral character. Misogynistic: hatred of women.</p>
	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The court hears of the Turkish threat to Cyprus. o Othello and Brabantio enter. Brabantio accuses Othello. Des. is called to assert her love. o The Duke agrees to the marriage. He orders Othello to lead the fleet to Cyprus. Des. will accompany him. o Iago plots to destroy Othello. 	<p>Council chamber: Othello is welcomed into a place of power at the heart of Venetian society. His elevated place in the social hierarchy is confirmed – and political imperatives (war) are judged to be more important in deciding this than personal conflict (his illicit marriage). Marriage: in a world of war, Othello’s marriage appears to be an oasis of calm. It offers a possible escape from conflict, and potential reconciliation between different groups.</p>	<p>O: “most potent, grave, and revered signiors”. O: “A round, unvarnished tale will I deliver.” O: “She loved me for the dangers I had passed, / And I loved her that she did pity them.” D: “I do perceive here a divided duty.” B: “She has deceived her father, and may thee.” :/ “The Moor is of a free and open nature.” :/ “I have it, it is engendered! Hell and night / Must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light.”</p>	<p>Sprezzatura: concealing one’s skills. Self-possessed: confident, assertive. Precarious foundations of the marriage: unstable basis for marriage. Embittered: filled with resentment. Malevolent: evil, immoral. Complicit: helping to do wrong. By confiding in the audience, Iago makes them complicit in his actions.</p>
Act 2: Rising Action – destabilising the	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Storm destroys the Turkish fleet. o Des, Iago, Emilia and Cassio arrive at Cyprus. They jest bawdily while waiting for Othello. Emilia is teased and berated by her husband, Iago. o Iago hints that Des loves Cassio 	<p>Storm: increasing chaos; the magnitude of natural forces that dominate mankind; foreshadows the murder of Des. Cyprus: this “warlike isle” on the edge of civilisation symbolises chaos and society’s precarious balance. It was also Aphrodite’s birthplace (she was accused in infidelity). The sea symbolises the vastness of Othello’s love, and suggests that the marriage is natural (in contrast to racist beliefs). Yet mankind is at the mercy of the sea’s currents.</p>	<p>C: “Our great Captain’s captain.” O: “My soul’s joy”. “My fair warrior.” O: “If it were now to die, /Twere now to be most happy” :/ “You are well tuned now: but I’ll set down / The pegs”. :/ “I do suspect the lusty Moor / Hath leaped into my seat, the thought whereof / Doth like a poisonous mineral gnaw my inwards”</p>	<p>Jesting bawdily: risqué joking Courteous: polite Laudatory: celebratory Infatuated: overwhelmed by passion Amorous: loving Marginalised: silenced, ignored, subservient</p>
	2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o There will be free drinks for all, in celebration of the marriage and the victory. 	<p>Herald: “Our noble and valiant General.”</p>		

Scene	Plot	Symbols	Quotations	Vocabulary	
2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Iago makes Cassio drunk, and he fights. Othello fires Cassio. o Cassio is distraught. Iago suggests that Des. could plead with Othello to have him reinstated. o Iago outlines his plan. 	<p>The <i>drunken brawl</i> symbolises the shift from <i>political and social order to chaos</i>, just as the natural world has already had a moment of chaos in the storm at the start of Act 2. This <i>shift from blank verse to prose</i> signals increasing <i>disorder</i>. Previously, we have heard Iago speaking in prose and so it is associated with his malevolence and <i>destructive impulses</i>. Later, Othello will also begin to speak in this way.</p>	<p>O: "my blood begins my safer guides to rule / And passion... Assays to lead the way." O: "never more be officer of mine" D: "What's the matter?" O: "All's well now, sweeting." C: "Reputation, reputation, reputation! ... I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial." I: "Divinity of hell!" I: "I'll pour this pestilence into his ear." I: "the net...that shall enmesh them all"</p>	<p><i>Dissipated / debauched</i>: drunk, hedonistic. <i>Opportunistic</i>: taking opportunities. <i>Base instinct</i>: acting on immoral desires. <i>Stage manager of chaos</i>: Iago seizes control. <i>Voice of order</i>: Othello restores control. <i>Diminutive</i>: making someone feel small. <i>Dishonoured</i>: made to appear immoral.</p>	
Act 3: Climax – the destructive power of Iago becomes clear	3.1: Cassio brings musicians to serenade Desdemona and asks Emilia to let him see Desdemona.	3.2: Othello leaves his quarters to inspect the island's fortifications.			
3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Des. pleads for Cassio, and Othello listens, but Iago causes Othello to doubt. o Des. loses her handkerchief. Emilia gives it to Iago. o Iago fans Othello's suspicions further, claiming to have seen Cassio with the handkerchief. 	<p>The <i>handkerchief</i> is a traditional love token and symbolises Othello and Desdemona's passion. It was also a family heirloom, suggesting Desdemona's acceptance of Othello's different background. It becomes a representation of Othello's jealousy and suspicions of his wife. In some ways, it could represent Desdemona's body, which Othello believes has been handled by Cassio.</p>	<p>D: "Whatever you be, I am obedient" I: "Beware, my lord, of jealousy! / It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock / The meat it feeds on." O: "when I love thee not / Chaos is come again." O: "I had rather be a toad / And live upon the vapour of a dungeon / Than keep a corner in the thing I love / For others' uses." O: "I'll tear her all to pieces!"</p>	<p><i>Aesthetic delight in destruction</i>: Iago seems to enjoy causing misery. <i>Credulous</i>: unquestioning <i>Myopic</i>: blind to the truth <i>Conciliatory</i>: attempting to end a disagreement <i>Misconstrued</i>: misinterpreted <i>Disorder</i>: disintegration into chaos</p>	
3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Othello is enraged when he asks Des. for the handkerchief, but she talks about Cassio. o Emilia suggests that Othello is jealous; Des. rejects this idea. o Cassio finds the handkerchief. 	<p><i>Monstrous imagery</i>: the concept of being monstrous refers to unnatural, deviant or immoral behaviour in the play. Iago refers to his plot as a "monstrous birth" and Othello calls Desdemona's alleged infidelity "monstrous". This demonic imagery alludes to complete, unstoppable and almost unspeakable destruction.</p>	<p>D: "My noble Moor / Is of true mind, and made of no baseness / As jealous creatures are." O: D's hand is "A young and sweating devil, here / That commonly rebels" E: "They are all but stomachs, and we are all but food." E: Jealousy "is a monster begot upon itself."</p>	<p><i>Cynical</i>: distrusting, disparaging of others <i>Ensnared</i>: entrapped, caught <i>Accusatory</i>: applying blame <i>Accident of birth</i>: one's circumstances are determined by the class one is born into</p>	
Act 4: Falling Action – Othello's increasing disorientation	4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Iago continues to provoke Othello's jealousy. o Lodovico is horrified when he seeks Othello strike Des. 	<p><i>Epileptic fit</i>: this "savage madness" emphasises the tragic hero's lack of power and agency, and his vulnerability to Iago. Othello appears unfit to lead. <i>Striking Desdemona</i> shows the progression from passionate infatuation, to verbal violence, to physical violence. It is a key turning point in their relationship.</p>	<p>O: "The raven over the infectious house." O: "Lie with her? Lie on her? [...] Zounds [...] Noses, ears and lips. [...] Confess! Handkerchief!" O: "Let her rot and perish and be damned tonight, for she shall not live. No, my heart is turned to stone." Lodovico: "Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate / Call all in all sufficient?"</p>	<p><i>Moral commentary</i>: Lodovico explains the rights and wrongs of the situation <i>Descent into irrationality</i>: disintegration of Othello's psychological state <i>Brutality</i>: violence, callousness</p>
4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Othello questions Emilia, but refuses to believe her. He confronts Des. o Des. turns to Iago for reassurance, and Roderigo reproaches Iago for unfair dealing; Iago reassures both. 	<p><i>Water</i> symbolises purity and innocence, but is also connected to trade and therefore is a symbol of affluence and cosmopolitan culture. The free-flowing water at the start of the play has now become a foul trickle, showing how Othello and Desdemona's love has been corrupted. Othello's attitude to love had been debased and he is obsessed with obscene physicality.</p>	<p>E: "I thirst, my lord, to wager she is honest, / ..." D: "My lord, what is your will?" O: "the cunning whore of Venice." O: "The fountain from the which my current runs / Or else dries up ... / Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads / To knot and gender in."</p>	<p><i>Isolated</i>: alone <i>Callous</i>: unfeeling <i>Inhumane</i>: lacking in compassion <i>Contemptuous</i>: disgusted, scathing, dismissive <i>Relentless</i>: unstoppable</p>	
4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Des. prepares for bed, singing an old song from her youth. 	<p>The <i>wedding sheets</i> symbolise the failure of the marriage, and have become a shroud, foreshadowing Des's death. The <i>willow song</i> heightens pathos for Des.</p>	<p>E: ""The world's a huge thing: it is a is a great price for a small vice."</p>	<p><i>Melancholic</i>: unhappy, depressed <i>Disillusioned</i>: losing faith in something <i>Pragmatic</i>: practical</p>	
Act 5: Denouement – Othello's downfall and an attempt to restore	5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Roderigo and Iago wait for Cassio; Roderigo injures Cassio. Roderigo is killed by Iago. 	<p><i>Darkness</i>: the play's circular structure indicates Iago's role as stage-manager, and the inescapability of immorality and chaos. The characters are unable to see (the truth?).</p>	<p>I: Cassio "hath a daily beauty in his life / That makes me ugly."</p>	<p><i>Mastery</i>: total control <i>Triumphant</i>: victorious</p>
5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Othello is strongly affected by the sight of a sleeping Desdemona, but kills her. o Emilia discovers the murder and proclaims Desdemona's innocence. She reveals what Iago has done. o Iago kills Emilia, and Othello is arrested by Lodovico. o Othello stabs himself. Iago is arrested. 	<p><i>White objects</i> symbolise unchanging innocence – indicating that Othello desires a wife who can be controlled and will not alter with time or mood. The references to white also indicate how Othello has internalised racist ideas and is preoccupied with Desdemona's whiteness; he believes that she will not love him because of the ethnic differences.</p> <p><i>Light</i>: hope, innocence, purity, heavenliness, life.</p>	<p>O: "I'll not shed her blood / Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow / And smooth as monumental alabaster." O: "I know not where is that Promethean heat / That can thy light relume." D: "Some bloody passion / Shakes your very frame." E: "May his pernicious soul rot half a grain a day." E: "I'll speak." I: "From this time forth I never will speak a word." O: "I have done the state some service, and they know it." O: "Of one that loved not wisely, but too well. / Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought, / Perplexed in the extreme."</p>	<p><i>Passive</i>: unresponsive <i>Seeking retribution</i>: looking for revenge <i>Automaton</i>: robotic, following instructions <i>Self-aggrandising</i>: increasing one's power <i>Tormented by remorse</i>: guilty <i>Heinous</i>: horrific, reprehensible, unforgivable <i>Irrefutable, righteous anger</i>: justified anger that cannot be denied <i>Evasive</i>: avoiding responding to questions</p>	

- Ultimately, the tragedy is that Othello and Desdemona's optimistic desire for a world in which all races and genders can achieve autonomy is destroyed by forces that wish to maintain the status quo. This is a play about racism and misogyny; but it is also about the failure of the individual to combat oppression.
- *Othello's* assertion of nobility and integrity during the exposition is admirable; through his eloquent speeches, Shakespeare challenges contemporary racist stereotypes. However, Shakespeare also uses Othello to demonstrate the power of such ideologies; Othello's racial identity makes him vulnerable to Iago's schemes, and as he internalises preconceptions of his identity he is shaped into the very stereotype he refuted in Act 1.
- *Iago* is the quintessence of prejudice and discontent; not only does he rail against anyone who is an outsider, but he also attempts to manipulate them to their downfall. His character is used to demonstrate mankind's capacity for evil, something made all the more unsettling when it is set in the context of Iago's apparent amorality.
- Initially *Desdemona* provides a glimmer of hope for women; her outspoken nature and her determination to make her own choices shows that women can have agency. However, ultimately the play suggests that female empowerment is not possible within Renaissance society.

- *Emilia's* development as a character is the mirror image of Desdemona's trajectory; as Desdemona becomes increasingly passive, Emilia finds her voice. Yet both women face the same fate: death at the hands of their husbands. Within the patriarchal world of the play, women who attempt to assert their views find themselves literally silenced.
- The parallels between *Bianca* and Desdemona suggest that an individual's fate is purely an accident of birth. Shakespeare also uses Bianca's character to suggest that survival is dependent on treading a fine line between maintaining one's integrity and being worldly-wise.
- *Cassio's* character demonstrates that it is possible to maintain one's integrity and morality, even in the face of being reduced to a debased pawn. He becomes a voice of reason and order at the play's denouement.
- *Lodovico* is a voice of reason, and also provides a moral commentary, highlighting the dramatic shifts in Othello's character.
- *Brabantio* symbolises the traditional values of Venice, and is therefore an embodiment of reprehensible racism and prejudice, as well as of the patriarchy. Roderigo symbolises the myopic materialism and lust of Venice.

Quotation	Analyses
Iago	
<p><i>“Even now, now, very now, an old black ram is tugging your white ewe.” (1.1)</i></p> <p><i>-bestial imagery</i> <i>-juxtaposition</i> <i>-opening characterisations of our tragic hero and tragic victim</i> <i>-structural significance of encountering the tragic villain before the tragic hero</i> <i>- adverbs paired with present tense</i> <i>-prose</i> <i>-night-time setting</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encapsulates the racist and misogynist context of the play. • Bestial imagery evokes an image of an act of passion which is savage and uncontrolled. It indicates the Jacobean fear of ‘the other’. We realise, later, that Brabantio was previously fascinated by Othello and asked him to tell stories. Here, we see how quickly that turns to fear and disgust, once ‘the other’ steps from the fetishised roles of military hero and exotic storyteller, to real human in the domestic, romantic sphere. • Iago’s role as the tragic villain established - the provocative, vulgar ‘ram’ aligns Othello with irrationality and perhaps points to how the marginalised are dehumanised by those who fear difference. • Indeed, the character of Othello is arguably marginalised within the structure of the play itself – he is kept on the peripheral of the play at the beginning, introduced after our tragic villain. Thus, Iago’s power and Othello’s marginalisation are immediately established already hinting that Othello’s tragic downfall is inevitable. • The coarse verb ‘tugging’ highlights Iago’s misogyny as Desdemona is objectified by Iago and depicted as a passive victim of brute force. • Found amid Iago’s prejudiced tirade in Act 1 Scene 1, it helps to establish the oppressive culture which Othello and Desdemona defy. • This quotation encapsulates how love and hope are pitched against hate; how purity is pitched against debasement; lifelong commitment against animalistic passion, and how society is pitched against the individual. • Highlights Desdemona and Othello’s naïve misjudgement. In Shakespeare indicating that the protagonists believe that their commitment to one another might triumph over society’s prejudices, then this line undercuts any attempt to break free from hierarchies based on race, gender, and social class. • What is striking about this line is its urgency. Through the repetition of the adverb “now” and the present tense, Shakespeare establishes Iago’s insistent and forceful tone – used to elicit the strongest possible emotional response from Brabantio. • Pronoun “your” reveals the patriarchal norms to which Iago and Brabantio adhere; Shakespeare shows us that Desdemona is regarded as a possession who has been “stolen” from her father.

	<p>The impact of this line is, therefore, a sense that the natural order of things has been overturned, and that the very structures which uphold Venetian society are being shaken.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of prose, the night-time setting, and the juxtaposition of the anarchy of the street with the domestic order of the house consolidate the idea that the marriage has triggered a descent into chaos. • Whilst Shakespeare uses this opening scene to establish the pressures which society places upon our tragic hero, Othello, he also uses these lines to introduce Iago's manipulative and opportunistic nature. It could be argued that Iago's attitude to the reprehensible ideas he articulates is ambiguous. • Iago may despise Othello, yet he is presented as having this attitude towards all the characters, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or social class. And in this opening scene, there are indications that Iago only launches into this increasingly offensive list of debased acts because Roderigo is not doing a sufficiently successful job at arousing Brabantio's anger. So, does Iago describe Othello and Desdemona in these terms because it is useful to him to do so? • Perhaps Shakespeare presents Iago as enjoying the chaos he is causing and the language he is using. Coleridge famously described Iago's "motiveless malignity", and here there is a suggestion that the tragic villain relishes the act of destruction, and that this enjoyment is an end in itself. After all, one of the key messages of tragic texts is that mankind is fundamentally at war with itself, and that evil impulses are continually fighting for dominance.
<p><i>"I am not what I am." (1.1)</i></p> <p>-biblical allusion -<i>façade</i> -antithesis -paradoxical -Monosyllabic -present tense verb</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iago's assertive statement is perhaps paradoxical, as he honestly admits his deceptive nature. Iago informs Roderigo that he adopts a façade, hiding his true self and feigning loyalty to Othello. • The blunt monosyllables and simplistic language (in contrast to the complexity of the imagery and grammatical structures in the preceding speech) contributes to the sense of sincerity, whilst the repetition of the present tense verb "am" indicates that Iago is presented as being at ease with his dual nature, and that he has no intention of changing this state. • Biblical allusion. In Exodus 3:14, God tells Moses that "I am who I am", and refers to himself by the phrase "I AM". Through Iago's inversion of this statement, Shakespeare presents him as a "demi-devil" (Othello, Act 5 Scene 2) who joyously embraces "hell and night". • Shakespeare inverts God's divine expression of wholeness 'I am what I am'. Iago, therefore, represents the antithesis of wholeness and perfect being.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From the very outset of the play, the audience is aware of the dramatic irony which defines Shakespeare’s characterisation of Iago; because we are aware of his villainy and determination to “set down the pegs” of Othello and Desdemona’s relationship, we realise that the tragic outcome of the marriage is inevitable. •
<p><i>‘follow [Othello] to serve [his] turn upon him’ (1.1)</i></p> <p><i>-juxtaposition</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juxtaposition between ‘follow’ and ‘turn’ - Iago plays with language just as he plays with identity. • At the beginning of this speech, Iago mocks those who are credulous and gullible, like Roderigo. The audience see how blind loyalty leads to failure when manipulated by Iago, thus establishing the core drama of the play to come. Iago eschews [avoids/escapes] clarity and identity – he does not claim his own identity.
<p><i>‘with as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio.’ (2.1)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iago comments on the action using asides which emphasise his Machiavellian duplicity. He takes pride in his role as the malcontent and the audience see that he is powerful. The metaphor of ‘web’ accentuates his deadly and yet hidden evil as well as suggesting something intricate and beautiful.
<p><i>“And out of her own goodness make the net / That shall enmesh them all.” (2.3)</i></p> <p><i>-animalistic imagery</i> <i>-soliloquy</i> <i>-Dramatic irony</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.3 is a key turning point in the play as the action starts to move from personal and social order to barely controlled chaos. • Othello loses his grip on his rational mind,- ‘my blood begins my safer guides to rule’; Cassio laments that he has ‘lost the immortal part of’ himself ‘and what remains is bestial’. • Left alone onstage, Iago then commits to ‘make the net’ in which he will ensnare the other characters. In using the image of the net, Shakespeare casts Iago as the hunter intent on bringing down his prey. • Presents Iago as a Machiavellian, opportunistic, and ruthless villain who consistently uses animalistic language to describe others. Links to “web”. • This vendetta is as much about control and power as it is about triumphing. The confidence of the modal verb ‘shall’ allows Iago to proclaim his certainty that he will prevail, whilst the indiscriminate word ‘all’ implies that the scope of his revenge is broad – Shakespeare is at pains to remind us that this vengeance is not simply against Othello, but that it is about dismantling a social system which Iago believes does not recognise his value thus he is effectively placed as the malcontent of the play. • These lines are spoken as the conclusion of a soliloquy - contribute to the development of dramatic irony throughout

the text. Makes the audience complicit with the **tragic villain's** agenda.

- The directness of Iago's speeches forces the audience to engage with his plotting. Like the character of Satan in Milton's 'Paradise Lost', the figure of Iago is more compelling than the heroes of the piece, and so the audience finds themselves torn between repulsion at the villain's immortality and interest in his undeniable charisma.

“Demand me nothing. What you know, you know. / From this time forth I never will speak word.”
(5:2)

- Iago’s final words in the play – lines are stark and bare **in contrast** to previous lines which were rich in evocative imagery - enigmatic – maintains power as he previously used words to manipulate and control and now maintains power by denying explanation.
- Coleridge “motiveless malignity” (enjoyment of an evil act)
- One explanation of Iago’s actions is that the tragic villain has a bitter and deep-seated hatred of goodness, born out of jealousy: (Cassio “hath a daily beauty in his life / That makes me ugly”).
- Iago’s determination is conveyed in the use of **definite modal verbs**. This display of power is cemented by the **imperative** “demand” and the **laconic repetition** of “you know”.
- Iago’s refusal to speak means that he survives the play – unusual for a tragic villain. This failure to vanquish the villain means that all efforts at re-establishing order on Cyprus seem futile. The usual tropes of ‘restored order’ seen in Shakespearean tragedies e.g., appointing a new leader (Cassio), lamenting the dead, and finishing with a rhyming couplet are all destabilised by the audience’s knowledge that although Iago has been condemned, he has not been beaten.

Othello

[about Brabantio]

‘Let him do his spite: / My services which I have done the signory, / Shall out-tongue his complaints.’
‘My parts, my title, and my perfect soul / Shall manifest me rightly.’
(1.2)

-imperative
-self-fashioning

1. Shakespeare presents Othello as supremely confident in his military power and reputation, contrasting with what the audience were led to expect from ‘the other’. Othello is a typical **Aristotelian** hero: high status, pride, confidence, **articulacy**.
2. The **imperative** ‘let’ and ‘out-tongue’ display Othello’s confidence in his narrative control.
3. A post-modern reader might question whether Othello is presenting a truthful view of himself here or whether he is, as **Stephen Greenblatt** terms it, ‘self-fashioning’ and performing through language. They might question the trustworthiness of Othello’s presentation.
4. Arguably, Othello is aware of his status as the outsider and so self-fashions.

‘She loved me for the dangers I had passed, / And I loved her, that she did pity them’ (1.3)

1. Desdemona is drawn to both Othello’s poetry and his military prowess. He loves her for her sympathy. The balance of the relationship is established, with Othello as the powerful speaker and army general, and Desdemona adoring him. Othello is **steadfast** and confident: he believes entirely in Desdemona. Here, Shakespeare lays the foundations for the later tragic drama and Othello’s inevitable tragic fall from this state of over-confidence
2. In Act 1, Othello’s speeches are central to his concept of self
3. Othello testifies to the fact that everyone is a biography, a life-story constantly written and revised, told and retold. In Act 1, Scene 3,

	<p>Shakespeare's dramatic story yields to Othello's senatorial story which yields to stories of cannibals and Anthropophagi.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The narrator is the subject – divided perspective of Othello- as a story-telling subject he is in command, autonomous, present- all words and meaning come under his monopoly- he wins Desdemona and the senate. 5. He imposes his image of himself on others through sheer force of continuity- sustained syntactic complexity- his walls himself up in words – fashions unalterable verbal structures that deter interruption. 6. Aggrandises (increases power) as the subject. He is a voice telling about himself telling about himself. In addition to saying Othello is being said. His being and doing are embedded in speech, as though the events in his life were being lived just one step ahead of the words that seize and digest them into story.
<p><i>'O my fair warrior!', 'O my soul's joy!' (2.1)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -military language -exclamation -motif (soul) -possessive pronoun "my" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Othello sees Desdemona as an equal and uses military language to greet her. 2. Othello recognises Desdemona's genuine and natural love/dedication towards him – "fair warrior". Her plea to accompany Othello on what should have been a warfare enterprise shows how she self-identifies with her warrior husband, and she recognises this. Therefore, affirming their partnership. She later self-accusingly echoes this in Act 3, Scene 4 'unhandsome warrior" when she thinks she has put her womanly concern before her soldierly understanding. 3. Their love is hyperbolic and ecstatic and this is set alongside the machinations which Iago has just made clear. The audience is encouraged to believe in and fear for their love. 4. Their marriage seems to be one in which the emotional and psychological connection are foregrounded in contrast to Iago's debased assertions in Act 1. 5. The exclamation "O" highlights the depth and honesty of Othello's feelings, and hints at his lack of self-understanding. Whilst Othello is presented as believing in the profundity of his love for Desdemona, the audience are aware that the relationship is built on precarious foundations and that the emotions Othello experiences are more akin to infatuation than lifelong love. 6. Motif of the 'soul'. Here, could represent pure love. The soul is also associated with integrity and honesty perhaps indicative that Othello's 'perfect soul' is still intact at this point in the play. 7. Perhaps this indicates the Othello believes he is in control of his own soul – possessive pronoun "my". If soul is within ownership and control of the individual, it is their responsibility to safeguard its purity. Othello fails to do this.

	<p>8. "soul" as a symbol for honesty, purity, integrity and self-control this is emblematic of 2.1 – calm before the descent into chaos (2.3)</p>
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Other key quotations

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<p><i>"She has deceived her father, and may thee."</i> (Brabantio, 1.3)</p> <p>- <i>rhyming couplet</i> - <i>self fashioning</i> - <i>third person</i> - <i>symbolises traditional ideologies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • half of a rhyming couplet - intended to be remembered and to resonate throughout the play. Has a sense of finality which indicates that the newly-married couple's fate is sealed. • Echoed by Iago in 3.3 "She did deceive her father, marrying you". • Brabantio – not Iago – who is presented as sowing the first seeds of doubt in Othello's mind, and then Iago capitalises on this. Acts as further evidence of Iago's self-fashioning – opportunism - portrayed as noticing and exploiting details discussed by those around him, weaving them into his web of deception and false representation. • Dissociation – Brabantio rejecting his child due to her defiance of patriarchal expectations. • Third person 'her father' – distance and formality – legal relationship remains yet emotional bond severed. He dies of "pure grief". • His prejudices and rigid view of the world which destroys this relationship. • Kiernan Ryan argues that Desdemona and Othello "act ... as if they were already free citizens of a truly civilized future, instead of prisoners of a time when racial prejudice and sexual inequality are so ingrained that even their heroic hearts are tainted by them". If
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	<p>this is the case, then Brabantio symbolises the traditional ideologies that prevent progress towards a brighter future.</p>
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