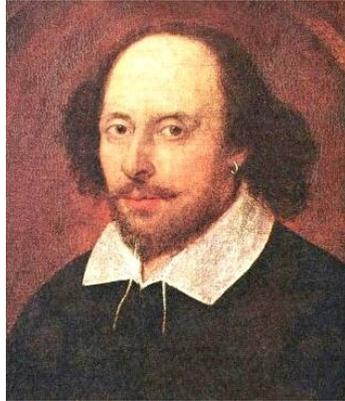


OTHELLO

by William Shakespeare



THE AUTHOR

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born into the family of a prosperous tradesman in Stratford-upon-Avon, England. While in his mid-teens, he was forced to leave school because his family fell into a period of poverty, so that he had only a rudimentary education. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior and already three months pregnant. The marriage produced three children in three years, but in 1585, Shakespeare left Stratford to go to London to seek his fortune in the big city.

In London, he embarked upon a career on the stage, becoming a popular actor by the early fifteen nineties. In 1591, he penned his first play, *Love's Labour's Lost*. His early plays were comedies, and show nothing of the depth that characterized his later works. His plots were borrowed from a variety of sources, both ancient and contemporary. During his career, he wrote 37 plays, three narrative poems, and 154 sonnets.

His writing brought him fame and popularity, but he continued to act as well as write (critics love to speculate about which of the characters in his plays would have been played by the author). He eventually became a shareholder in the Lord Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men when James I ascended the throne). Most of his plays were performed at local theaters like the Rose, the Globe, and the indoor Blackfriars. When the Globe burned to the ground in 1613 (a cannon misfired during a performance of *Henry VIII*), Shakespeare retired, and died in Stratford three years later on his fifty-second birthday.

Othello was in all likelihood first performed in 1604, during the era in which Shakespeare produced his greatest tragedies. The play has long been one of Shakespeare's most popular because of its three strong central characters (Othello, the villain Iago, and Desdemona - one of Shakespeare's most fully-drawn female characters, though women were not permitted to play the role on stage until the Restoration of 1660) and its ever-relevant theme of jealousy and suspicion (the racial angle that is viewed as so central by modern audiences would not have occurred to Shakespearean theater-goers; Othello was viewed as an exotic, not as a member of an oppressed racial group).

MAJOR CHARACTERS

- Othello - A Moor in the service of the Duke of Venice, he marries Desdemona against her father's wishes. He is duped by the villain Iago, and murders his wife in their bed.
- Desdemona - The daughter of Brabantio, she loves Othello because of the tales of heroism he has told at meals in their home. She marries him and accompanies him to Cyprus, where the tragedy unfolds and she is ultimately killed.
- Iago - The villain of the piece, Iago is Othello's ensign. Jealous both because he is passed over for a promotion and because he wrongly suspects Othello has been bedding his wife, he determines to destroy Othello by subtly maneuvering him into a jealous rage against his wife.
- Cassio - Othello's honorable lieutenant who has a weakness for alcohol that leads to his manipulation by Iago.
- Emilia - Iago's wife, innocent of his schemes, who eventually betrays his treachery, though her warning comes too late to save Desdemona.
- Roderigo - A foppish gentleman who is easily taken in by Iago and convinced that there is hope for him to realize his unrequited love for Desdemona. He becomes both Iago's pawn and his source of money.
- Bianca - A courtesan who plays a key role in the deception of Othello.
- Brabantio - Desdemona's father, who opposes the marriage but finally gives his reluctant blessing after the fact.
- Gratiano and Ludovico - Brabantio's brother and kinsman, two noble Venetians.
- Duke of Venice - Othello is fighting the Turks in his service.
- Montano - Governor of Cyprus.

NOTABLE QUOTATIONS

“Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end;
For when my outward action doth demonstrate
The native act and figure of my heart
In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at. I am not what I am.” (Iago, II, 63-69)

“Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise!
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.” (Iago, Ii, 96-99)

“She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them.” (Othello, Iiii, 183-184)

“My noble father,
To you I am bound for life and education;
My life and education both do learn me
How to respect you: you are the lord of duty;
I am hitherto your daughter. But here’s my husband;
And so much duty as my mother showed
To you, preferring you before her father,
So much I challenge that I may profess
Due to the Moor my lord. (Desdemona, Iiii, 198-207)

“Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see.
She has deceived her father, and may thee.” (Brabantio, Iiii, 317-318)

“My life upon her faith!” (Othello, Iiii, 319)

“Virtue? A fig! ‘Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop or weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many - either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry - why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most prepost’rous conclusions.” (Iago, Iiii, 344-354)

“Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
If I would time expend with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor;
And it is thought abroad that ‘twixt my sheets
‘Has done my office. I know not if’t be true;
Yet I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well;
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio’s a proper man. Let me see now:
To get his place, and to plume up my will
In double knavery - How, how? Let’s see.
After some time, to abuse Othello’s ear
That he is too familiar with his wife.
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected - framed to make women false.

The Moor is of a free and open nature
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.
I have't! It is engend'ed! Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light. (Iago, Iiii, 401-422)

“Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,
You would have enough.” (Iago, speaking of Emilia, Ii, 115-117)

“O gentle lady, do not put me to't,
For I am nothing if not critical.” (Iago, Ii, 136-137)

Not tonight, good Iago. I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking. I could well wish
courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.” (Cassio, Iiii, 31-33)

“Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal
part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!” (Cassio, Iiii, 269-
272)

“As I am an honest man, I thought you had received some bodily wound; there is more sense
in that than in reputation. Reputation is an idle and most false imposition; oft got without merit and
lost without deserving. You have lost no reputation at all unless you repute yourself such a loser.”
(Iago, Iiii, 273-278)

“O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains!” (Cassio,
Iiii, 294-296)

“And what's he then that says I play the villain,
When this advice is free I give and honest,
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
Th' inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit. She's framed as fruitful
As the free elements And then for her
To win the Moor - were't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin -
His soul is so enfeathered in her love
The she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function. How am I then a villain
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,

As I do now. For whiles this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortune,
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear -
That she repeals him for her body's lust;
And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
that shall enmesh them all." (Iago, IIIii, 338-364)

"Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again." (Othello, IIIiii, 102-104)

"Good name in man and woman, my dear lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls.
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed." (Iago, IIIiii, 180-186)

"O, beware, my lord, of jealousy!
It is the green-eyed monster, which doth mock
The meat it feeds on. That cuckold lives in bliss
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;
But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er
Who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet strongly loves!" (Iago, IIIiii, 191-196)

"I'll see before I doubt; when I doubt, prove;
And on the proof there is no more but this -
Away at once with love or jealousy!" (Othello, IIIiii, 217-219)

"I know our country disposition well:
In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown." (Iago, IIIiii, 228-231)

"'Tis not a year or two shows us a man.
They are all but stomachs, and we all but food;
They eat us hungerly, and when they are full,
They belch us." (Emilia, IIIiv, 116-119)

"This is the night
That either makes me or fordoes me quite." (Iago, Vi, 150-151)

“Soft you! a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know’t -
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand
(Like the base Indian) threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum. Set you down this;
And say besides that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the throat the circumcised dog
And smote him - thus.” (Othello, Vii, 392-410)

“I kissed thee ere I killed thee. No way but this -
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.” (Othello, Vii, 413-414)

NOTES

Act I, scene 1 - Iago and Roderigo are in conversation about the midnight elopement of the Moorish general Othello with Desdemona, the daughter of the noble Brabantio. While Roderigo had hoped to win the hand of Desdemona and was roughly rebuffed by her father, Iago had hoped to become Othello’s lieutenant, but the office had instead been given to a desk soldier named Cassio, while Iago, a battle-hardened veteran, had to settle for the position of ancient (ensign). Iago, under the guise of pressing Roderigo’s case for Desdemona’s hand, has been taking money from him on a regular basis. He now convinces Roderigo to wake Brabantio out of a sound sleep and inform him of Desdemona’s elopement and marriage. Roderigo does so, is insulted for his pains, but then has the satisfaction of hearing Brabantio say that he wished he had given his daughter to the poor fool rather than having been deceived by her. The scene serves the purpose of setting the plot in motion by means of the elopement and making clear both the duplicity and hatred of Iago and the role of Roderigo as his dupe.

Act I, scene 2 - Iago slyly runs to Othello to warn him of Brabantio’s rage, pretending to have been on the verge of attacking the old man instead of having been the one to instigate the warning in the first place. Othello professes true love for Desdemona, along with confidence that his faithful service to the state will stand him in good stead. Cassio then arrives with a summons for Othello to an emergency meeting of the Council regarding the war against the Turks in Cyprus, which Othello is to lead. Before they can leave for the Duke’s palace, Brabantio, Roderigo, and their men arrive, accusing Othello of having gained control over Desdemona by sorcery. Brabantio wants

Othello arrested, but when he hears of the meeting at the Duke's palace, he determines to raise the issue with the nobility present there.

Act I, scene 3 - The Council receives a message that the Turkish fleet is heading for Rhodes, but believes the maneuver to be a feint, which is quickly confirmed by another messenger who brings news from Montano, governor of Cyprus, that the latter island is certainly the target of the Turkish navy. Brabantio, Othello, and the others then arrive at the meeting, and Othello is ordered immediately to Cyprus to superintend the defense of the island. Brabantio, however, interrupts the meeting with complaint of his personal grief - the loss of his daughter by means of the alleged wizardry of the Moor. Othello defends himself by describing the manner in which he wooed Desdemona through tales of valiant conduct on the field of battle, and invites the Council to summon the young lady themselves in order to hear her account of their courtship. Iago is sent to fetch Desdemona, and when she arrives, she confirms Othello's account of the affair, affirms her love for him, and begs to be allowed to accompany him to Cyprus.

It is agreed that Othello will leave for Cyprus that night, and that Iago will follow with his orders from the Council, accompanied by Desdemona and her maid Emilia, who is Iago's wife. After all depart, Roderigo, in despair, threatens to drown himself. Iago encourages him to go along to Cyprus in disguise, bringing plenty of money with him, and promises that he will yet enjoy Desdemona. After Roderigo departs, Iago hatches his plot to bring down Othello by making him jealous of the young and handsome lieutenant Cassio.

Act II, scene 1 - Montano receives word on Cyprus that the Turkish fleet has been destroyed by a storm at sea, and expresses concern that Othello and his compatriots might have perished also. Iago's ship arrives safely, followed shortly by that bearing Othello. Iago continues plotting against Othello and Cassio after noting the latter's courtly manners when around Desdemona. He first convinces Roderigo that Desdemona is in love with Cassio, then instructs him to pick a fight with Cassio during the revels that night. Iago plans to use this as an occasion to get Cassio fired from his position as Othello's lieutenant. At this point, his plan is not fully formulated, but he finds the circumstances promising indeed.

Act II, scene 2 - A herald announces a feast to celebrate the destruction of the Turkish fleet and the wedding of Othello and Desdemona.

Act II, scene 3 - During the feast, Othello assigns Cassio to supervise the watch. Iago intends to get him drunk and then instigate a brawl. Despite Cassio's initial objections, Iago plies him with liquor, then insinuates to Montano that Cassio is in such a condition nightly. Roderigo insults Cassio and starts a brawl, in which Montano intervenes, and is attacked and wounded by Cassio; Iago then sends Roderigo to rouse Othello from his bed. Othello halts the fighting, rebukes all concerned, and demands of Iago to know the truth about how the brawl began. Iago "reluctantly" fingers Cassio as the culprit, attempting to excuse his behavior, but knowing full well that Othello is in no mood to hear any excuses. Othello then dismisses Cassio from his service. Cassio bemoans the loss of his reputation, but Iago convinces him that Othello's confidence may be regained through seeking the good graces and intercession of Desdemona, while at the same time he plans to insinuate to Othello that she pleads for Cassio because she lusts after him.

Act III, scene 1 - When the scene opens, Desdemona has already spoken of Cassio to Othello, but Cassio summons Emilia and begs for a private audience. Iago promises to arrange it, especially since it fits so well into his plans.

Act III, scene 2 - Othello gives Iago letters to be sent to the Senate, while he leaves to inspect the fortifications of Cyprus.

Act III, scene 3 - Desdemona promises to plead Cassio's case, and Iago begins to plant suspicions in Othello's mind by implying that something is amiss about the conversation the two have just concluded. Desdemona immediately begins to plead repeatedly for Cassio's reinstatement, to which Othello responds with a cold and aloof manner surprising to the new bride. After she leaves, Iago continues to stir Othello's jealousy by implying that he knows or thinks more than he is willing to say about the relationship between Desdemona and Cassio. Othello demands proof, and Iago warns him to watch his wife carefully when she is with Cassio, reminding him that she had deceived her father in marrying him. Iago also encourages Othello to put off restoring Cassio to his office in order to see if Desdemona continues to press Cassio's case.

Jealousy is already preying on Othello's mind by the time Desdemona arrives. He tells her he is out of sorts because he has a headache, and when she tries to soothe him, she drops her handkerchief - a special gift from Othello that he had insisted she keep always with her. Emilia then picks it up, intending to give it to Iago, since he had often begged her to steal it. Iago arrives and takes it from her with the intention of dropping it in Cassio's lodgings. Othello then returns, obviously in agony because of his doubts and fears. Iago tells him of a dream that Cassio supposedly had when the two were sleeping in the same quarters in which he spoke of making love to Desdemona in his sleep, then asks about the handkerchief that Othello had given to Desdemona, claiming that he had seen it in Cassio's possession. Othello, now convinced, swears an oath of vengeance. Iago swears to assist him no matter the cost. Othello asks Iago to kill Cassio, while he begins to plot how he might wreak his vengeance on his wife.

Act III, scene 4 - Desdemona, in all innocence, continues to plead with Othello for Cassio. He then demands the handkerchief, which she insists has not been lost. The more he speaks of the handkerchief, the more she pleads for Cassio. He finally storms out of the room in a towering rage. Cassio, meanwhile, gives the handkerchief that he has found in his room to his mistress, the courtesan Bianca, and asks her to copy the needlework.

Act IV, scene 1 - Iago continues to feed Othello's jealousy by painting mental pictures of Desdemona's infidelity. Othello, on the verge of madness, falls into an epileptic fit. When he revives, Iago tells him to conceal himself while Iago speaks to Cassio, drawing him out about his liaisons with Desdemona. When Cassio arrives, Iago asks him, in a voice Othello cannot hear, about Bianca. When Cassio describes their romps, in exceedingly careless terms, Othello believes him to be speaking of Desdemona. Bianca then arrives, and gives the handkerchief back to Cassio, insisting that it must have come from another lover. Othello, of course, recognizes it as his own. After Cassio leaves, Othello vows to kill Desdemona (he thinks to poison her, but Iago advises strangling her in her bed as more poetic justice), and Iago insists that he will murder Cassio. Lodovico, an emissary from the Duke of Venice, then arrives with a letter calling Othello home and making Cassio captain in his place. Desdemona professes to be glad of it, but Othello misconstrues her statement and

strikes her across the face. Lodovico can't believe his eyes, but Iago tells him that Othello is much changed, which Lodovico readily believes.

Act IV, scene 2 - Othello interrogates Emilia, who swears that Desdemona is virtuous, but he refuses to believe her. He then summons Desdemona, and accuses her of infidelity to her face. Desdemona protests her innocence, and thinks that perhaps Othello is angry because he believes her father is behind his recall to Venice. Othello continues to rail at her, while she demands the cause of his abuse. When he calls her a strumpet, she denies it; he calls her a liar, and she is stunned into silent submission. After Othello leaves, Emilia and Iago comfort her, and Emilia suggests that some scheming villain has planted these rumors in Othello's brain. After Emilia and Desdemona leave, Roderigo arrives and accuses Iago of deceiving him by not giving the jewels to Desdemona that Roderigo had given to Iago for that purpose. Iago assures him that he will soon share Desdemona's bed, but then tells him of Othello's recall and Cassio's promotion, insisting that the only way to prevent Desdemona's immediate departure from Cyprus is to kill Cassio that very night.

Act IV, scene 3 - After dinner that night, Othello orders Desdemona to prepare immediately for bed and then dismiss Emilia. While getting ready for bed, Desdemona sings a sad lullaby she had learned from her nurse as a child, and asks Emilia if she would ever be unfaithful to her husband. When Emilia says she might if the reward were great enough, Desdemona denies that she would ever do so.

Act V, scene 1 - Iago, having plotted to rid himself of Cassio and Roderigo in one fell swoop, draws Cassio into Roderigo's ambush. In the ensuing fight, Cassio wounds Roderigo, but remains unharmed himself. Iago then enters the fray, wounds Cassio, and later kills Roderigo. Othello, seeing Cassio bleeding in the street, concludes that Iago has fulfilled his oath, and heads home to do his part. Iago accuses Bianca of having been involved in the stabbing of Cassio, who is then carried off to have his wounds tended.

Act V, scene 2 - Othello gazes upon the sleeping Desdemona and is almost tempted to believe in her innocence. He wakes her, however, and again accuses her of unfaithfulness. She denies it, but he smothers her with a pillow. Emilia, hearing her cries, enters to find her dead, and calls for help. When Iago and others arrive, Othello reveals that Iago was the source of his information concerning the affair between Desdemona and Cassio. Emilia then uncovers Iago's villainy, and he stabs her to death. Othello, finally aware of the monstrous nature of his deed, stabs himself and dies. As the play ends, Iago is led off to torture and execution.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Discuss the following in a five-paragraph essay:

1. "O, beware, my lord, of jealousy! It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on." In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, jealousy is clearly the fatal flaw that brings down the protagonist, but Othello is not the only character in the play plagued by jealousy. Choose one other character in the play who is destroyed by his or her jealousy, and describe both the progression and ultimate consequences of jealousy in the character's life.

2. In three of William Shakespeare's plays, the main character is alienated from the society in which he lives because of what would today be considered his status as a minority - Othello is black, Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* is Jewish, and Richard III, a hunchback, is physically handicapped. Based on the content of the plays themselves, which minority group would you conclude was the object of the greatest discrimination in Elizabethan England? Which of the three treatments is most acceptable to modern sensibilities? Why do you think so?
3. In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, is the protagonist to be viewed as a man who brings about his own destruction, or should we sympathize with him as a helpless victim of Iago's villainy? Critic F.R. Leavis commented that "Othello yields with extraordinary promptness to suggestion, with such promptness as to make it plain that the mind that undoes him is not Iago's but his own." Do you agree? Support your conclusion with specific details, including quotations, from the play.
4. In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, the villain Iago describes himself to Roderigo in Act I, scene 1 by saying, "I am not what I am." By this ironic reversal of God's description of Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14), Iago identifies himself with the powers of evil. By citing specific incidents and speeches from the play, show how Iago indeed may be compared with Satan in his role as the tempter of the innocent.
5. Compare the fall of the protagonist in William Shakespeare's *Othello* to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. In what ways are the tactics of the tempter and the steps by which the fall from grace is brought about similar in the two stories?
6. The decline of the protagonist in the course of William Shakespeare's *Othello* may be viewed as a regression from Christianity into paganism, from manhood to bestiality, as illustrated in his death speech - "And say besides that in Aleppo once, where a malignant and a turbaned Turk beat a Venetian and traduced the state, I took by the throat the circumcised dog and smote him - thus." Trace the steps of that decline by citing appropriate incidents and quotations from the play to support the thesis.
7. In Act III, scene 3 of William Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago speaks the following lines: "Good name in man and woman, dear my lord, is the immediate jewel of their souls. Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing; 'twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands; but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him and makes me poor indeed." He speaks cynically, of course, but his words contain much truth. Illustrate using specific incidents from the play the truth that a person's reputation is of incalculable value.
8. In Act I, scene 3 of William Shakespeare's *Othello*, the protagonist describes himself by saying, "Rude am I in my speech." Do you agree with him? By choosing one of Othello's long speeches and analyzing the poetry found in the speech, evaluate the verbal skills of the Moor.

9. In Act I, scene 3 of William Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago, while trying to talk Roderigo out of drowning himself, says, "If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most prepost'rous conclusions." Much of the plot, as it unwinds, pits reason against passion. According to Shakespeare, which of the two should be the governing force in a person's life? Support your answer with specific incidents and quotations from the play.
10. In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago's character as the Deceiver is summed up by his description of himself, "I am not what I am." Othello, on the other hand, seems incapable of deceiving others. For him, to think is to act, and he wastes little time translating thought into action. Is this an admirable trait? Why or why not? Support your answer with specific incidents and quotations from the play.
11. In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, the villain is often referred to as "honest Iago." He obviously convinced many people of the reliability of his character. How had he done so? What was there about Iago that caused other people - including Othello, Roderigo, Cassio, and Emilia - to trust him implicitly?
12. True tragedy only occurs when a noble individual is destroyed by a flaw in his own character. In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, the prodigious art of the playwright is seen partially in his ability to make the reader sympathize with a man who murders his wife. By what strokes of the poet's pen does Shakespeare convince us that Othello is indeed a noble figure, and thus more to be pitied than despised?
13. To what extent is the protagonist's color crucial to the plot of William Shakespeare's *Othello*? Could Shakespeare have accomplished the same thing by making his tragic hero an Indian or a Jew, or is blackness an essential component of both the plot structure and meaning of the play? Support your conclusion with specific incidents and quotations from the text.
14. In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, we meet Iago, considered by many to be Shakespeare's greatest villain. In his soliloquies, Iago opens up to the audience both his character and his plans as they develop. Yet Iago is not just a brilliant plotter; he is also an inspired improviser. Would you say that the success of Iago's revenge depends more on his capacity for intricate plotting or on his ability to seize the moment and use it to his advantage? Support your conclusion.
15. According to the time indicators in William Shakespeare's *Othello*, the action of the play takes place in a span of only forty-eight hours. Is this short time span credible for the unfolding of the action of the play? In your opinion, does the brief span of time in which the action takes place stretch the audience's "willing suspension of disbelief," or does it enhance the impact of the plot? Support your conclusion.
16. Evaluate the views of love espoused by Othello and Iago in William Shakespeare's *Othello*. Does the passionate romantic hold any advantage over the animal-like materialist, or are both views of love equally inadequate and ultimately disastrous?

17. In William Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago gives a variety of reasons throughout the play for his hatred for and destruction of Othello. What do you consider the primary motive for his actions? Support your conclusion with specific incidents and quotations from the play.
18. The Turks are as much an unseen presence in William Shakespeare's *Othello* as the Norwegian armies of Fortinbras are in *Hamlet*. Compare and contrast the roles played by these threatening armies in the respective atmospheres and plots of the two great tragedies.
19. In much of the literature of the classical world, good is identified with order and evil with chaos. To what extent is such a view of the world portrayed in William Shakespeare's *Othello*? What does the end of the play indicate about Shakespeare's view of the relationship between good and evil in the world?
20. Compare and contrast the villains in Herman Melville's *Billy Budd* and William Shakespeare's *Othello*. What do Claggart and Iago have in common? Consider their reputations, their inner motives and attitudes, and the nature of the plots they concoct. Note that significant differences also exist; be sure not to ignore these.
21. Ancient Stoics viewed suicide as a noble denouement to one's life, while Christians viewed it as a mortal sin. Compare and contrast these views of suicide as they appear in Shakespeare's pagan plays, such as *King Lear* and *Julius Caesar*, and his Christian plays, such as *Hamlet* and *Othello*.
22. Both Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and William Shakespeare's *Othello* have much to say about the importance of reputation. Compare and contrast the views of the two authors on the importance of a good name, being sure to cite incidents, characters, and quotations from both works in your answer.
23. Compare and contrast the treatment of the vice of jealousy in William Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Othello*. Be sure to go beyond the obvious differences between farce and tragedy and consider how jealousy itself is presented in the two plays.
24. Compare and contrast the treatment of the sin of jealousy in John Knowles' *A Separate Peace* and William Shakespeare's *Othello*. In your essay, be sure to bring out both similarities and differences in the ways the two authors treat the subject. Which one takes a more biblical approach, and why?
25. Many people over the years have argued that love and hate are kindred emotions. Why do we find it easiest to hate those we love? Compare and contrast the relationship between love and hate as it is portrayed in John Knowles' *A Separate Peace* and William Shakespeare's *Othello*. Do the two authors see the connection between the two in the same way, or is their vision significantly different? Use details to support your arguments.

26. Jealousy is an important theme in William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*. Compare and contrast the treatment of the subject in the two plays. Which more clearly shows the consequences of jealousy in ruining the lives of those involved? Which is more powerful, and which more realistic? Why do you think so?
27. In William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello*, the central characters, Leontes and Othello, are consumed with unjustified jealousy, fearing their mates have been unfaithful. Analyze the psychological consequences of jealousy in the lives of those consumed by it, citing incidents and quotations from both plays in your analysis. What biblical principles are illustrated in the two treatments?
28. William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello* have many thematic similarities, and these may be seen in the roles played by similar characters. Compare and contrast the roles played by Hermione and Desdemona, respectively, as the innocent victims of their husbands' insane jealousy. Pay particular attention to the interactions between Hermione and Polixenes on the one hand and Desdemona and Cassio on the other.
29. William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello* have many thematic similarities, and these may be seen in the roles played by similar characters. Compare and contrast the roles played by Paulina and Emilia, respectively, as the voices of reason in the midst of insane jealousy.
30. William Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and *Othello* have many thematic similarities, but one key difference is that the former play lacks any character corresponding to the villain Iago. Why is this difference important? How does the fact that Leontes' jealousy is driven entirely by his own fancy rather than by the machinations of an enemy contribute to the eventual resolution of the conflict? Why could *Othello* never have had such a happy ending?
31. Compare and contrast the actions and motivations of Heathcliff in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and Iago in *Othello* in their monomaniacal obsessions with exacting revenge upon their perceived enemies.
32. The death scene at the end of Act IV in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* bears certain similarities to the death of Desdemona at the end of William Shakespeare's *Othello*. Compare and contrast the two death scenes, being sure to consider not only the way in which death occurs, but also the words and attitudes of the dying women and their murderers.
33. In Act III, scene 2 of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, Ferdinand tells a tale about Death, Love, and Reputation to make the point that the Duchess has irretrievably lost her reputation by giving birth to illegitimate children. Compare and contrast this discourse on the subject with Iago's treatment of it in Act II, scene 3 and Act III, scene 3 of William Shakespeare's *Othello*. How do the two men approach the subject differently, and for what purposes do they speak of it?

34. In Act IV, scene 2 of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, Ferdinand says, "I bade thee, when I was distracted of my wits, / Go kill my dearest friend, and thou hast done 't." Compare this with the grief shown by the protagonist at the end of William Shakespeare's *Othello*. Do the two men have equal cause for their grief? Is one more or less culpable than the other? Why or why not?
35. Both Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and William Shakespeare's *Othello* involve protagonists who are determined seekers after truth and whose search for truth ultimately leads to their downfall. Compare and contrast the two tragic heroes in terms of their characters, the reasons they seek truth, the ways in which they go about their searches, and the consequences for themselves and for others.
36. Compare and contrast the attitudes toward suicide in Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* and William Shakespeare's *Othello*. The two protagonists both believe their final acts are noble and that the shame they have brought on themselves leaves them no choice. Do you agree? Are their motives really similar? Cite details from both works of literature to support your arguments.