

## Race in Shakespeare's 'Othello'

**Task 1A: You are going to read some lines from Act 1, Scene 1. Read about the scene, then read the lines using the glossary.**

Act 1, Scene 1: Venice, the middle of the night.

Iago is shouting up at the window of Brabantio, Desdemona's father. He has the shocking news that Desdemona, his daughter, has secretly married Othello.

IAGO:

- 90 Sir, you're robbed! For shame, put on your gown.  
 91 Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul.  
 92 Even now, now, very now, an old black ram  
 93 Is tuppung your white ewe. Arise, arise,  
 94 Awake the snorting citizens with the bell  
 95 Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.  
 96 Arise, I say!

### Glossary

gown = coat  
 ram = male sheep  
 tuppung = having sex with  
 ewe = female sheep  
 arise = get up  
 snorting = snoring  
 grandsire = grandfather

**Task 1B: Discuss these questions about lines 90-96 in Act 1, Scene 1.**

1. Who is Iago talking about when he refers to
  - 'an old black ram' (line 92)
  - 'your white ewe' (line 93)
  - 'the devil' (line 95)
2. What does Iago want Brabantio to do?
3. What kind of language does Iago use? Why does he use this language?
4. How do you think Brabantio feels?
5. What do these lines tell you about Othello?

**Task 2: Read about Act 1, Scenes 2-3.**

Shocked by Iago's news, Brabantio gathers a group of men with swords and torches, and goes to find Othello. Brabantio tries to arrest Othello, who is on his way to see the Duke about a military matter. Even though it is the middle of the night, they put the case before the Duke, who will decide whether or not the marriage is legitimate. Brabantio accuses Othello of stealing his daughter. Othello defends himself. Desdemona speaks out about how she feels about Othello.