

## Race in Shakespeare's 'Othello'

### Group Brabantio

**Task 2: You are going to read some lines from Act 1, Scene 2. Read about the scene, then read the lines using the glossary.**

Having found Othello, Brabantio angrily accuses him of stealing his daughter, Desdemona.

75 O thou foul thief, where hast thou stowed my daughter?  
 76 Damned as thou art, thou hast enchanted her!  
 77 For I'll refer me to all things of sense,  
 78 If she in chains of magic were not bound,  
 79 Whether a maid so tender, fair, and happy,  
 80 So opposite to marriage that she shunned  
 81 The wealthy curlèd darlings of our nation,  
 82 Would ever have, t' incur a general mock,  
 83 Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom  
 84 Of such a thing as thou—to fear, not to delight.  
 85 Judge me the world if 'tis not gross in sense  
 86 That thou hast practiced on her with foul charms,  
 87 Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals  
 88 That weakens motion. I'll have 't disputed on.

### Discuss the questions:

1. How is Brabantio feeling? How do you know?
2. What does he accuse Othello of doing?
3. Who did he expect Desdemona to marry?
4. What language does he use to describe
  - Desdemona
  - Othello?
5. Compare the two descriptions.

### Glossary

thou = you

hast thou stowed = have you hidden

enchanted = put a spell on

tender, fair = young, beautiful / white

opposite to = opposed to

shunned = rejected

wealthy curled darlings of our nation = handsome young men of the city

t'incur a general mock = be universally scorned

guardage = guardianship of her father

practiced on her with foul charms = tricked her

## Group Desdemona

**Task 2: You are going to read some lines from Act 1, Scene 3. Read about the scene, then read the lines using the glossary.**

Desdemona describes her feelings for Othello to the Duke.

263 That I did love the Moor to live with him,  
264 My downright violence and storm of fortunes  
265 May trumpet to the world. My heart's subdued  
266 Even to the very quality of my lord.  
267 I saw Othello's visage in his mind,  
268 And to his honours and his valiant parts  
269 Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.  
270 So that, dear lords, if I be left behind  
271 A moth of peace and he go to the war,  
272 The rites for which I love him are bereft me,  
273 And I a heavy interim shall support  
274 By his dear absence. Let me go with him.

### Discuss the questions:

1. How does Desdemona feel about Othello?  
How do you know?
2. What imagery does she use?
3. Look at lines 270-274. What does Desdemona want to do and why?
4. How does she describe Othello?
5. Compare Desdemona's description with Iago's description in Task 1.

### Glossary

violence = extreme strength of feeling

storm of fortunes = disruption of my privileged life

subdued even to = wholly conquered by

visage = true face

parts = qualities

consecrate = devote

if I be left behind a moth of peace = if I were left a home uselessly

The rites for which I love him are bereft me = I am separated from my husband

a heavy interim shall support by his dear absence = I'd be miserable without him

## Group Othello

**Task 2: You are going to read some lines from Act 1, Scene 3. Read about the scene, then read the lines using the glossary.**

Othello defends his marriage to Desdemona. He describes how he and Desdemona fell in love.

142 Her father loved me, oft invited me,  
 143 Still questioned me the story of my life  
 144 From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,  
 145 That I have passed.  
 148 [...] Wherein I spoke of most disastrous chances,  
 149 Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
 150 Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' th' imminent deadly breach,  
 151 Of being taken by the insolent foe  
 152 And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence  
 153 And portance in my traveler's history.  
 154 Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
 155 Rough quarries, rocks, hills whose heads touch heaven  
 159 [...] these things to hear  
 160 Would Desdemona seriously incline.  
 172 [...] My story being done  
 173 She gave me for my pains a world of kisses.  
 174 She loved me for the dangers I had passed,  
 175 And I loved her that she did pity them.  
 176 This only is the witchcraft I have used.

### Glossary

oft = often  
 hair-breadth 'scapes = hair-raising adventures

th' imminent deadly breach = the dangerous gap in a fortification  
 taken by the insolent foe = captured by the enemy

of my redemption thence = how I bought my freedom  
 portance = conduct  
 antres vast and deserts lie = large caves and empty wildernesses  
 seriously incline = listen attentively / lean in physically  
 pity = feel strong emotions

### Discuss the questions:

1. How did Brabantio use to feel about Othello?
2. What has happened to Othello in his life?
3. How does Desdemona respond to hearing Othello's life story?
4. How do you feel about Othello after hearing his side of the story?