*Othello* Act 1, Scene 3

Close Reading Guide

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| **Answer the questions that follow fully and in complete sentences.** |

1. How does Othello present himself in his first two addresses to the duke and the senators? What inferences can you make about his character based on his speech?

2. What opinion do the others have of him? Cite evidence from the text to support your response (with a proper citation!).

3. Why does Brabantio say that Desdemona could not actually be in love with Othello? What does this tell you of the time period and how Othello might be treated?

4. Give a synopsis of Brabantio’s speech about Desdemona (1.3.94-105). What opinion does he seem to have of his daughter?

5. Give a detailed synopsis of Othello’s speech detailing how he and Desdemona fell in love (1.3.127-169).

Her father loved me; oft invited me;  
Still question'd me the story of my life,  
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,  
That I have passed.  
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,  
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;  
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,  
Of moving accidents by flood and field  
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,  
Of being taken by the insolent foe  
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence  
And portance in my travels' history:  
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven  
It was my hint to speak,--such was the process;  
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,  
The Anthropophagi and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear  
Would Desdemona seriously incline:  
But still the house-affairs would draw her thence:  
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,  
She'ld come again, and with a greedy ear  
Devour up my discourse: which I observing,  
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means  
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart  
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,  
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,  
But not intentively: I did consent,  
And often did beguile her of her tears,  
When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
That my youth suffer'd. My story being done,  
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:  
She swore, in faith, twas strange, 'twas passing strange,  
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:  
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd  
That heaven had made her such a man: she thank'd me,  
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,  
I should but teach him how to tell my story.  
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake:  
She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,  
And I loved her that she did pity them.  
This only is the witchcraft I have used:  
Here comes the lady; let her witness it.

6. Why do you think Desdemona is attracted to Othello? Do you find their love believable as Shakespeare presents it, and for the time period?

7. What are Brabantio’s parting words to Othello? How does Othello respond?

8. Although Iago and Roderigo share a hatred of Othello, they are **foils**, or opposites, in many ways. How are their differences revealed in their dialogue near the end of Scene 3? Compare and contrast them below.

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| Iago | Same | Roderigo |

9. Through Iago’s **soliloquies**—the speeches he makes when he is alone onstage—we glimpse his true feelings and motives. Translate his speech below.

**Iago**

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse; 375

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

H’ as done my office. I know not if’t be true, 380

But 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 385

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. 390

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 th’ nose

As asses are.

I have’t! It is engendered! Hell and night 395

Must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light.

10. What additional grievance against Othello does Iago reveal, and what plan does he hatch, at the end of Act 1?