*Othello* Act 3

Close Reading Guide

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| **Directions: Answer the following questions fully and in complete sentences to receive credit.** |

**Scene 1:**

1. Find an example of a pun in Scene 1. Cite and explain it.

2. Find an example of dramatic irony in Scene 1. Cite and explain it.

**Scene 3:**

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| **To do while reading Scene 3:** 1. Scene 3 is often referred to the *temptation scene*, in which Iago, like Satan, misleads Othello. As you read, locate some of the techniques that Iago uses to plan suspicion in Othello’s mind. Discuss his techniques below. 2. Scene 3 also contains what many critics call the *turning point* of the play. Try to find the exact line where you think things change dramatically in the play. Cite it and discuss why you think it is the turning point.3. Several references are made to monsters and poison in this scene. Find the references and explain them below. |

1. Translate the following lines of Desdemona’s (3.3.19-28):

Do not doubt\* that; before Emilia here

I give thee warrant of thy place. Assure thee,

If I do vow a friendship, I’ll perform it

To the last article. My lord shall never rest;

I’ll watch him tame\* and talk him out of patience;

His bed shall seem a school, his board a shrift;\*

I’ll intermingle everything he does

With Cassio’s suit; therefore be merry, Cassio,

For thy solicitor\* shall rather die

Than give thy cause away.

2. How does Desdemona describe herself? How will this fit into Iago’s plan?

3. What is the significance of the handkerchief that Emilia finds? What is Iago’s plan for it? Explain his comment, “Trifes light as air / Are to the jealous confirmations strong / As proofs of Holy Writ” (3.3.319-21).

4. What kind of proof from Iago does Othello demand? Does he wait for Iago to provide this proof? What does this tell you about Othello?

5. Translate Othello’s lines (3.3.439-457) below:

O, that the slave\* had forty thousand lives!

One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.

Now do I see ‘tis true. Look here, Iago:

All my fond\* love thus do I blow to heaven.

‘Tis gone.

Arise, black vengeance, from the hollow hell!

. . . Like to the Pontic Sea,\*

Whose icy current and compulsive course

Nev’r keeps retiring ebb, but keeps due on

To the Propontic\* and the Hellespont,\*

Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,

Shall nev’r look back, nev’r ebb to humble love,

Till that a capable\* and wide revenge

Swallow them up.

5. What is Othello claiming in the previous lines? Do you think he will keep this promise? Explain.

6. At the end of Scene 3, Iago has gotten what he wanted, has he not? Will he back off now that he has been made lieutenant? Explain your reasoning.

**Scene 4:**

1. From where does Othello say the handkerchief came? What special powers does it have, according to Othello? What do you make of this story? Is it believable?

2. Why does Desdemona lie to Othello? Is it a forgivable offense?

3. Desdemona claims that she “never gave [Othello] cause” to be jealous (3.4.158). Has Shakespeare given Othello sufficient cause to be jealous? If so, or if not, what does this imply about Othello?

4. Translate Emilia’s response to Desdemona:

But jealous souls will not be answered so;

They are not ever jealous for the cause,

But jealous for they’re jealous. It is a monster

Begot upon itself, born on itself.

5. What is Emilia saying about the very nature of jealousy? The comparison of jealousy to a monster is a motif in the play. Where else have you seen this comparison? How are what the two characters saying similar and different?

6. Why do you think Desdemona takes up Cassio’s suit so wholeheartedly? What does this tell you about her?

7. What do you think of Othello and his behavior when he begins to doubt Desdemona? Does this change your opinion of him?

8. Chronicle the progression of the handkerchief (i.e., write a list, in order, of who has been in possession of it).