

12 - THE ARMY AND CASSIO

Does Cassio fit in?

WHAT YOU NEED

- A piece of note paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A copy of Act 1 Scene 2 to read either on the page or onscreen.
- A camera (optional: a mirror and a printer).

ACTIVITY

- Imagine you are a lieutenant in the army - recently promoted to serve an important general. Get ready to take a photo of yourself in a mirror, or on a smartphone. We are going to pretend this is your headshot that will go in your army file. (Use props or costume if you think appropriate!)
- If possible, print the image. Study the photo and analyse the character that you see. Annotate and circle traits and expressions you notice in the image. Write words that describe the character, how they might behave. What is a 'model soldier' in your eyes?
- Read Act 2 Scene 1 up to Cassio's entrance. Find and write down any mentions of Cassio.
- Go to this page on Relationships in Othello on the RSC Learning Zone [here](#) and select Cassio's icon. Look through Cassio's profile, including various past-production shots and the quotes he and others speak about him.
- Retake the photo, this time pretending to be Cassio. Notice the differences in your expressions and demeanour. What opinions have you made of the man? Do you have any expectations? Does Cassio meet these expectations?
- Ask yourself: Is Cassio your typical soldier? To what extent does he fit in to this world?

EXTENSION

- By the time we arrive in Cyprus, we learn that the Turkish have already been defeated. There is no longer a threat and the army does not need to engage in a battle. Ask yourself: Why does Shakespeare decide not to stage the war?
- Write diary excerpts for Cassio, Iago and Othello for their journey from Venice to Cyprus. Include in the entry the answer to the question: 'What does the army and military service mean to me?'
- If you have time, do the same for Desdemona and Emilia. What kind of world are they entering? How do they feel about it?