

19 - OTHELLO'S LANGUAGE

How much is Othello in control by the end of the play?

WHAT YOU NEED

- A piece of note paper, or a notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#).
- A copy of Act 5 Scene 2 to read either on the page or onscreen.

ACTIVITY

- Load the Language Analysis Page of the Shakespeare Learning Zone [here](#).
- Click on 'Analysing Othello's Language,' and begin by watching 'The Role of Othello.' Think about what the actor Hugh Quarshie says about Othello's identity and belonging. Ask yourself: to what extent do you believe intimate relationships 'complete' or 'define' a person?
- Stand up and read Othello's speech in Act 5 Scene 2, beginning "*It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.*" Change direction every time you reach a punctuation mark. Notice if these changes in direction match up with a change of thought, or intention.
- Othello seems to be arguing with himself. Highlight the text in two different colours. One when you believe he is INTENT on killing Desdemona, and the other when he is NOT INTENT. Notice if your speech is more heavily coloured with one colour. What is Othello's through process? Does he have a coherent train of thought? Has he already made his decision?
- *Optional: If you have been working through all the activities, you will have collected quotes along the way that summarise Othello during the story. Have these quotes to hand.*
- From everything we have looked at regarding the 'deterioration' of Othello's language – both rhythmically and poetically (See activity 16) – ask yourself the question: to what extent is Othello in control of himself at the moment of Desdemona's death? Is he a blameless victim, or an overly-proud, egotistical murderer?

EXTENSION

- Complete the table 'Questions to Consider' on the Language Analysis [page](#). Fill in the missing Point, Evidence, Explanation boxes.
- Watch the video 'Exploring a Monologue' on the same page. (This is of the actor Mark Quartley exploring a speech from *The Tempest*).
- Read Othello's speeches:

- Act 1 Scene 3 ~Line 76 '*Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors*'
 - Act 4 Scene 1 ~Line 35 '*Lie with her? Lie on her?*'
 - Act 5 Scene 2 Line 1 '*It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.*'
- Compare and contrast these three speeches. What differences and similarities do you notice between each speech's imagery, metre and word choice? Explain what significance these differences and similarities have.