

20 - THE DEATH SCENE

Are the deaths of Desdemona and Othello inevitable?

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

- Watch the clip of the final scene in rehearsal from the page above. Think about the director Iqbal Khan's point at 0:40 '*People aren't in control of how their ends happen.*'
- Read Act 5 Scene 2 up to the point of Desdemona's death.
- Draw a simple outline of Othello and Desdemona on two pieces of paper. There needs to be space to write both inside the body and around the outside.
- For both characters, write their own faults inside the body, and the faults of others around the outside.
- If you completed activity 4, compare this work with the personality traits you wrote down while exploring Othello's tragic flaw.
- Evaluate *Othello* as a tragedy – *Othello*, in terms of scale, begins quite wide and far-reaching. (Othello and Desdemona's marriage concerns the whole of the Venetian court, and there is the threat of a foreign enemy: The Turkish fleet.) The play ends in an incredibly intimate and domestic setting (the bedroom). Othello as our protagonist also begins the play as an 'outsider.' Most tragedies seem to be the opposite of this: they begin on a small domestic scale with the protagonist in harmony with their community and, as the plot unravels, the scale expands (into whole countries divided, or outright war).
- How does *Othello* subvert the genre of tragedy and what effect does this have on the audience?

EXTENSION

- Is *Othello* a racist play? Watch the debate hosted at the RSC in 2015 [here](#).
- Ask yourself: to what extent do I believe Othello's fate is linked to his race?