

# 3 - THE CHARACTERS

Who are the main protagonists of this story?

## WHAT YOU NEED

- A piece of paper, landscape (minimum size A4) or a large notebook and something to write with.
- A computer with internet connection, ready to visit [this page](#).

## ACTIVITY

- Take a landscape piece of paper, and divide the page into 5 columns. At the top of each column write the following characters: Othello, Desdemona, Iago, Emilia, Cassio. Underneath give each character a one-line summary (from the point at which we first meet them): i.e. *Othello: a Venetian General, recently married Desdemona in secret.*
- Go to the Character page on the RSC Learning Zone [here](#). Click 'Test Yourself' and play the game of Who's Who.
- For each of your five characters, think about what they want the most at the moment when we first meet them in the play. Write in the form '*Iago wants...*' It can be as simple as '*Iago wants a promotion.*'
- Actors sometimes use this exercise to explore the emotional journey their character goes through in the course of the play. Ask yourself: Does each character ever get what they want? How do their wants clash with the wants of other characters?
- Do the same activity but this time for a moment in Act 5. What are the wants of your five characters now? Write them at the bottom of the column.
- Think about the journey of the characters - where do they begin and where do they end up? The actions of which characters affect the others most?

## EXTENSION

- Fill in the middle sections of the columns by 'mapping' the character's wants as the story progresses. Maybe choose 2 or 3 pivotal moments between Act 1 and Act 5 for each character and write what you believe their greatest wants to be at these pivotal points. Keep the sentences simple.
- Give each of the five characters another one-line summary, this time describing them at the end of the play. Notice any emotive adjectives or descriptions that you use when describing them i.e. Desdemona: a **wronged** wife, **cruelly** murdered. Why did you choose these words?
- Write a speech justifying these one-line summaries. Members of an audience may all respond differently to the story and the actions of the characters based on their own experiences. Pretend

now it is your job to convince the whole audience at the end of the play. Are your statements based on fact, or opinion?

- Do the exercise again, this time pretending you are the character presenting themselves. Do the summaries change when speaking in the first person? Which characters are better 'convincers'? What are the character's own impressions of themselves?