

4 - TRAGEDY

What makes this play a tragedy?

WHAT YOU NEED

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

ACTIVITY

- Have a think about the word Tragedy and what it means in a dramatic context. Have a go at writing a definition of Tragedy. Look up a definition online: how well do your definitions match?
- Think of other Shakespeare Tragedies you may know. Take a piece of paper and divide the sheet in half: 'Similarities' and 'Differences'. From what you know about *Othello*, and anything you know about any other Tragedies, write down any similarities and differences you notice in the plays. This can be anything: relating to their plots, character types, structures, titles etc. An example for a similarity could be: '*Characters die in Act 5.*'
- Watch an excerpt of the final scene, Act 5 Scene 2, in performance [here](#).
- Read the rest of the scene. How did the characters get to this point?
- Put yourself in the mind of our hero Othello at the beginning of Act 5 Scene 2. Write the following statement '*Desdemona must die because...*' - finish this sentence. Repeat twice. (Or more if you want!).
- A 'Tragic Flaw' can be defined as the trait in a literary character leading to their downfall. From what you know about the play so far, write down any aspects of Othello's personality that contribute to his tragic flaw. Keep these to hand: we will explore these again later.

EXTENSION

- Look at Othello's first entrance, in Act 1 Scene 2. Read Othello's first speech "*Let him do his spite.*" What do we learn about Othello here? Even though Othello admits he doesn't like to boast, why does Shakespeare tell us that he fetches his "*life and being from men of royal siege*"? Notice too how is Iago different here from the previous scene?
- Take a small notebook, or notecards, Post-it notes etc. Start collecting quotes which help summarise Othello's tragic demise. Begin by finding three quotes from Act 1 Scene 2 which present Othello as 'a hero'.