



# OTHELLO STUDY GUIDE

NOVEMBER 6-7, 2017



**2017-18**  
POP! FIELD TRIP  
PERFORMANCE SERIES

Think'st thou I'd make a lie of  
jealousy, to follow still the changes  
of the moon with frsh suspicions?

No; t o be

reso

when

soul

surm

"Tis

my w

comp

plays and dances well; Where virtue  
is these are more virtuous: Nor from  
mine own weak merits will I draw  
the smallest fear or doubt of her  
revolt; for she had eyes, and chose  
me. No, Iago; I'll see before I doubt;  
when I doubt, prove; and on the  
proof, there is no more but this,—  
away at once with love or jealousy!

***Othello:***

***A Guide for Teachers***

The Warehouse Theatre

2017 Educational Touring Production

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## Hello Educators!



Each year, The Warehouse Theatre works with dozens of schools in South and North Carolina, bringing customized workshops to students in grades 3 – 12. We support English Language Art, Theatre, and Literature standards, by bringing the actor's approach to Shakespeare to the students, empowering them to speak the speeches and embody the words as well as learn how to apply these tools to their own experience. Through our curricular strategies and arts-integrated approach, we celebrate inclusion, critical thinking, teamwork, process, and problem solving.

Shakespeare continues to be an important part of the curriculum in most states, and regardless of changes in standards and best practices, we believe that interacting with these complex texts teaches valuable skills which have an impact on young students' lives beyond the ELA or theatre classroom. Critical thinking, close-reading, looking at situations from different perspectives, examining societal and personal morals and motives, encountering and deciphering structure, building vocabulary and cultural references – Shakespeare brings this and much more to the young scholar!

It is in this spirit that we have designed this study guide – intended for educators in middle and high schools to use as a tool to enhance student comprehension and enjoyment of The Warehouse Theatre's production of William Shakespeare's *Othello*. The exercises contained in this guide are designed to align with the curricular

goals in the middle and high school English Language Arts, Literature, and Theatre classroom. This guide may be used as a supplement to classroom study of this text—and is best used in the context of attending The Warehouse Theatre’s touring production of *Othello*. Please feel free to “pick and choose” articles and activities as they complement your work in the classroom!

This study guide is divided into Three Sections for your convenience:

**THE BASICS** for a general overview and knowledge of the play,  
**THE BARD** for information about Shakespeare’s life and time,  
and **THE BONUSES** for experiential and more advanced activities.

We hope you will find this guide useful, and that you will let us know what information, topics for discussion, and exercises you integrate into your curriculum. Please feel free to let us know what you would like for us to include in future study guides or resources.

Thank you for your support of The Warehouse Theatre! If we can support your curriculum in any additional ways, please contact me at [mallory@warehousetheatre.com](mailto:mallory@warehousetheatre.com)

All my best,

Mallory Pellegrino  
Director of Education

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*Q* THE  
*Coventry Colledge, C. Bridgman*  
Tragoedy of Othello,  
The Moore of Venice.

*As it hath beene diuerse times acted at the*  
Globe, and at the Black-Friers, by

*his Maie. Seruants.*  
**THE BASICS**



*Q. Lopez Q. B. atq.*

LONDON,  
Printed by N. O. for Thomas Walkley, and are to be sold at his  
shop, at the Eagle and Child, in Brittons Burse.

1622.

## **OTHELLO: A SYNOPSIS**

The play begins in Venice, in the middle of the night. Iago and Roderigo are meeting to discuss their hatred of Othello. Iago hates Othello because he promoted Cassio to lieutenant over Iago, and Roderigo is a heartbroken, failed suitor of Desdemona's. They decide to wake up senator Brabantio with the news that his daughter, Desdemona, has secretly married Othello, the general of the Venetian army and a Moor. Brabantio calls an emergency meeting of the senate, where Othello and Desdemona make a case for their mutual love and defy the objections of a marriage between a black man and white woman. The Duke of Venice sides with Othello, who is then called to defend Venice from attacks of the Turkish fleet.

The action of the play then moves to Cyprus, where we learn Othello has just defeated the entire Turkish fleet. Desdemona, Iago, and Emilia have just arrived in Cyprus as well. The honeymoon phase doesn't last long, as Iago doesn't waste any time enacting his evil plan to convince Othello that Desdemona is disloyal and having an affair with Cassio, bringing about both of their downfalls.

The more Othello trusts Iago, the more he distrusts Desdemona and Cassio. His jealousy begins to rule him. Othello reaches his breaking point after Iago tell him he has seen the handkerchief Othello had given Desdemona, claiming that Desdemona had given Cassio the handkerchief as a token of her love. When Desdemona cannot produce the handkerchief, Othello flies into a rage. After he leaves, Emilia suggests that Othello is jealous, but Desdemona brushes this off, swearing he has nothing to be jealous about. In actuality, Emilia has given Iago the handkerchief.

To further seal Othello's fate, Iago plans a conversation with Cassio

while Othello hides to listen. Instead of discussing Desdemona, as Othello believes, Iago asks Cassio about Bianca, the courtesan in love with him. Enraged by what he hears, Othello asks Iago to kill Cassio and leaves to meet his wife.

Instead of killing Cassio himself, Iago tricks Roderigo into trying to kill Cassio, saying it is the only way Roderigo can win Desdemona's love. When both men are wounded, Iago enters and kills Roderigo to hide the truth. Then, he pretends to mourn the death of his friend.

Meanwhile, Othello meets Desdemona in their bed chamber. Although Desdemona protests her innocence, Othello's jealousy has consumed him, and he smothers his wife.

Emilia enters to deliver news of Roderigo's death, raising the alarm once she sees the murdered Desdemona. Realizing what has happened, Emilia denounces Iago, and he stabs her and flees.

Once Iago is brought back, the whole truth is revealed.

Overwhelmed by his own guilt at what he has done, Othello kills himself. Iago is arrested and taken away.



## A SIMPLE STRUCTURE IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS (SOMETHING YOU CAN COUNT ON)

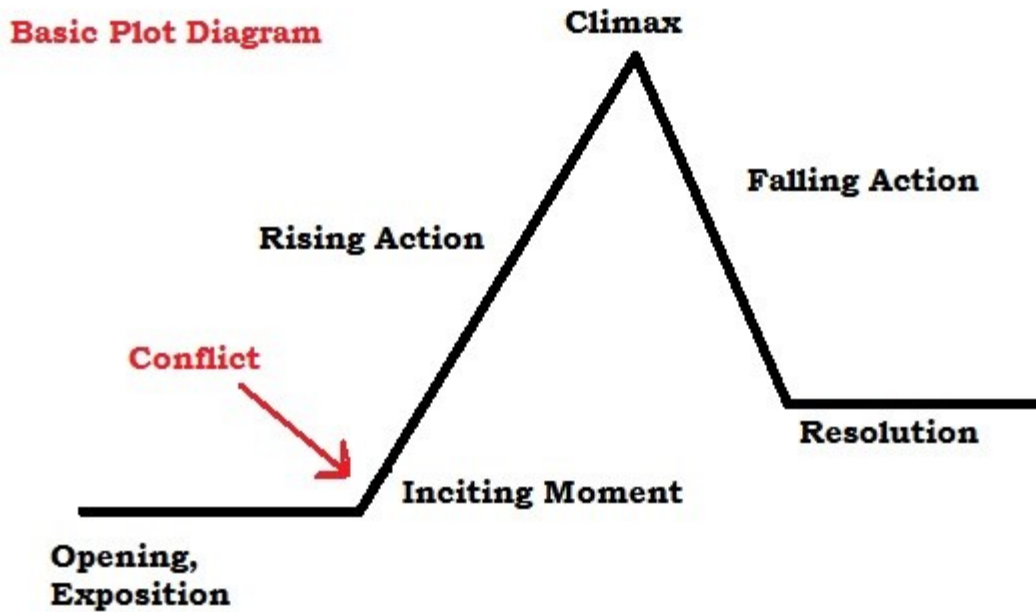
According to Louis Fantasia, scholar and author of *Instant Shakespeare*, in all of Shakespeare's plays you can count on the plot including four elements:

**ONE**: The world (or worlds) of the play begin in some sort of disorder or chaos as a result of some inciting incident.

**TWO**: Some figure of authority (a king or queen, prince, duke, parent) makes a decision that will have a significant impact on the lives of the other characters in the world of the play.

**THREE**: The dramatic or rising action of the play unfolds as the affected characters in the world of the play take some action in response to the decision made by the authority figure. Often, this will lead them on a journey to a "middle" world of the play that is in direct contrast or juxtaposition to the world of disorder or chaos that starts the play.

**FOUR**: The actions taken by the affected characters force some sort of climax or resolution based on the decision made by the figure of authority. In a comedy, this resolution comes in the form of multiple marriages. In a tragedy, it comes in the form of multiple deaths. Ultimately, this resolution restores order to the first world.



## TERMS TO KNOW:

- Plot: Events that make up a story.
- Inciting incident: The event or decision that begins a story's problem.
- Dramatic action / Rising action: A series of events that build toward the point of greatest interest.
- Climax: A decisive moment or turning point in a storyline.
- Resolution: The action of solving the story's problem.

## ACTIVITIES:

1. Recognize It: Identify these four structural elements in *Othello*.
2. Support It: Find textual evidence (i.e. direct quotations) that show each of the four elements.
3. Visualize It: Create a chart, illustration, or some visual aid to represent your findings.
4. Physicalize It: Construct a tableau (frozen picture made with your body) to represent each of the four phases. Put them all together in a physical slide show.
5. Go Further: Apply this test to another of Shakespeare's plays to see if it holds up. Compare your results.

## CHARACTERS IN *OTHELLO*:

- **Othello**—a Moor, General in the service of Venice
- **Desdemona**—his wife, a Venetian lady
- **Brabantio**—her father, a Venetian senator
- **Iago**—Othello's ensign
- **Emilia**—Iago's wife and Desdemona's waiting woman
- **Cassio**—Othello's lieutenant
- **Roderigo**—suitor of Desdemona, a Venetian gentleman
- **Bianca**—a courtesan in Cyprus in love with Cassio
- **Duke of Venice**
- **Senators**
- **Montano**—a Venetian official in Cyprus
- **Gratiano**—Brabantio's brother
- **Lodovico**—Brabantio's kinsman and Desdemona's cousin
- **Various Officers, Gentlemen, Sailors, and Messengers**

### THINK LIKE A DIRECTOR:

In The Warehouse Theatre's touring productions, we are often limited to a 6-7 actor cast. This means that actors have to play multiple roles and oftentimes minor characters are cut. Given the list above and what you know about the story of *Othello*, which characters do you think you could cut? Which characters do you think could be doubled with another character?

## CHARACTERS, ACCORDING TO THEMSELVES:

### Othello

- My noble Moor is true of mind and made of no such baseness as jealous creatures are. (Desdemona, III, iv)
- I will be found most cunning in my patience but – dost thou hear? – most bloody. (Othello, IV, i)
- Is this the noble Moor whom our full senate call all in all sufficient? Is this the noble nature whom passion could not shake? (Lodovico, IV, i)
- Speak of me as I am ... one that loved not wisely, but too well; of one not easily jealous but being wrought, perplexed to the extreme. (Othello, V, ii)

### Iago

- I am not what I am. (Iago, I, i)
- I follow him to serve my turn upon him. (Iago, I, i)
- And what's he then that says I play the villain? When this advice is free I give and honest... (Iago, II, iii)
- When devils will the blackest sins put on they do suggest at first with heavenly shows as I do now. (Iago, II, iii)
- I do think it is their husbands' faults if wives do fall. (Emilia, IV, iii)

### Desdemona

- She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them. (Othello, I, iii)
- That I did love the Moor to live with him, my downright violence and scorn of fortunes may trumpet to the world. (Desdemona, I, iii)
- Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see; she has deceived her father, and may thee. (Brabantio, I, iii)
- Has she forsook so many noble matches, her father, and her country, and her friends, to be called whore? (Emilia, IV, ii)

## MAJOR THEMES AND MOTIFS

**Theme** is defined as the central idea in a piece of writing or other work of art.

**Motif** is defined as a distinctive feature or dominant idea in an artistic or literary composition.

In drama, the central theme is usually an intrinsic or essential idea surrounded by several more literal or representative motifs. Below is a list of words representing either themes, dominant images, or motifs from *Othello*.

<b>Prejudice</b>	<b>Reputation &amp; Honor</b>	<b>Men vs. Woman</b>
<b>Race</b>	<b>Love: Romantic &amp;</b>	<b>Human Nature</b>
<b>Rank/Status</b>	<b>Brotherly</b>	<b>Proof &amp; Judgment</b>
<b>Appearance vs.</b>	<b>Action vs. Reaction</b>	<b>The Handkerchief</b>
<b>Reality</b>	<b>Truth vs. Lies</b>	<b>Water</b>
<b>Jealousy &amp; Trust</b>	<b>Black vs. White</b>	<b>The Devil</b>

**ACTIVITY:** Themes and motifs often help directors and designers choose their concept.

1. Recognize It: Choose what you believe to be the one central theme in *Othello*.
2. Support It: Find *at least three lines of text to support your chosen theme*.
3. Visualize It: Assign students different elements of design (set, costumes, lights, sound). Collect visual research that supports your theme. How would this research impact your design?
4. Physicalize It: Present your theme and research to the class. Read your lines of text aloud. Focus on highlighting your particular theme.
5. Go Further: Choose another theme but keep the same chosen three lines of text. Can you make your theme work for these lines?

## **SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION IN OTHELLO: CHALLENGES FOR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY DIRECTORS**

Thoughts from Directors Anne Tromsness and Maegan Azar

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When we were hired to co-direct *Othello*, one of the first conversations we had was about how fraught this text might be for a 21st century Southern audience comprised primarily of young people. We live in a culture where **racism, misogyny, and other forms of inequity and systems of oppression** are at the front of most discussions about our nation's greatest challenges and our identity. Producing a play which simultaneously points up inequity and also normalizes it offers special challenges.

Theatre has the capacity to promote conversation, transform thought, and to give its audiences an opportunity to examine their own points of view, positions, privileges, and **prejudices**. Theatre does this because it employs - simultaneously - distance for its audience through (primarily) fictional events and characters, while making the watchers witnesses, and therefore complicit in the events of the play and the actions of the characters. Good theatre, while reflecting the very intentional choices of directors, actors, and designers, also doesn't preach or dictate the audience's response to it. It is in this free and open exchange between audience and performance that theatre wields both the power of transforming thought, and the potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

We asked ourselves in the early days of our process - and throughout - what statement(s) are we making with this play right here, right now? How do systems of oppression play out in the text, and in our production specifically? How can we honor the text, as well as our own points of view, without imposing them on the audience? But also, how can we make sure we don't do harm to the populations that are affected by the systems of oppression in the play?

As we moved forward, we were moved by moments in the text, quotes and passages, actions, which both resonated with us in terms of contemporary culture, shocked us, and which left us wondering what the effect of such a text might be on a young, 21st century audience.

The following are a few key foundational ideas in terms of examining and illuminating the systems of oppression in the text:

- As **feminist** co-directors, we look at the world of the play and its systems of oppression in terms of race, class and gender. The dominant oppressions in this play center around race and gender; they function both separately, and together - as they are part of a web - as Iago states - "that will enmesh" all of the characters. This is not to equate their natures - racism and misogyny are entities with their own characteristics, forms, and consequences in the play and in our world. However, they are both connected under the umbrella of "**othering**" - which means they often do work together as Iago enlists them in his plans, and the violent culmination of his manipulations has everything to do with his exploitation of both.

- In the world of *Othello*, and, as we might argue, in our world today, racism and sexism are **normalized**. Their power often exists in the fact that they occur so often and as such a matter of course, that they often seem to be "everyday" or "harmless" occurrences. That Desdemona and Othello's marriage is questioned and scrutinized because of their races is understood, and, from the beginning, is normalized. Othello's identity is linked to his race as others name and define it - he is called "The Moor" by everyone from his wife to his enemies, and this designation immediately sets him apart - even from his rank (achieved by deeds) and it gives most of the play's characters a seemingly accepted place from which to assign all manner of characteristics to his temperament, behavior, and very nature. Even when Desdemona favorably describes how Othello has never been jealous, she says "I think the sun where he was born drew all such humors from him." Even her benevolent characterization of him indulges in **exotification** of his race.

- In our production, Othello, and the actors who play Cassio and Emilia are also actors of color, which underlines that systems of oppression are more complex than simple othering of a minority population by a majority population. Internalized oppression (as we see in Emilia's calling Othello a "blacker Devil" and "dull Moor") as well as the idea of a hierarchical structure Othello has "conquered" but still is placed in relationship to become more evident. Also, Iago's relationship to Cassio is complicated - as Iago believes that Othello has promoted him - not because he is a good warrior - (Iago is angered that Cassio is well educated in strategy but has no practical experience in the field

and cannot understand why someone like him would be promoted), but for another reason - in this context, race.

- Misogyny, too, is normalized. For example, Iago's language in referring to his wife - even though he is joking - as "foul and foolish" belies a more sinister truth. His hatred of her and of women in general, his distrust of his own wife, and his view of Desdemona as a pawn, defined by her sexuality, come out in casual conversation. While these underlying prejudices may not seem too obvious or harmful at first - they ooze and seethe and grow from comments and jokes to controlling behavior, and to physical and emotional violence. We see this in our contemporary culture, where the "harmless" banter or "locker room talk" between men can lead to real-world oppression of and violence against women. And while Cassio may refrain from such talk when Iago openly discusses Desdemona's sexual prowess, he does not openly object to or stop Iago from doing so. This passivity in the face of **micro-aggressive** behavior condones it and helps it flourish.
- Those who participate in racist beliefs and behavior often disguise them publicly. This type of behavior is mostly Iago's burden in the text. Iago speaks at length about putting a "show" of support for his General, but that this is nothing but show, "I must show out a flag and sign of love -- Which is indeed but sign" (Act I, Scene 1). In our culture, racism often hides its rawest expression, but, it is in seemingly mundane, sometimes private acts that it continues to strengthen its foothold. Racist jokes among friends, denying a service or opportunity to someone based on race but thinly disguising it as another reason - these types of de facto prejudicial acts happen everywhere.
- For example, Iago only SUSPECTS Othello has slept with his wife - but he openly declares that he will act upon this suspicion AS IF it were truth. This logic carries through with regards to race - baseless assumptions and stereotypes about "The Moor" become the foundation upon which Iago can act against him with complicity from those around him.
- Another theme in our production is how oppression can develop, flourish, and escalate in a climate where people are isolated from other points of view. Social media may create the illusion of open



dialogue and global discussion, but it can also push people into bubbles where all they see and hear supports their point of view or fuels conspiracy about “others.” It can be used to promulgate suspicions, false or incomplete information, and even lies as outright truth. If the characters in *Othello* sat down and sorted out Iago’s claims face to face - they might have been able to determine that Iago had lied, and perhaps prevent the tragedy from occurring. In a world where this type of isolation is nurtured, there are moments in the play when lies are questioned, when characters are confronted with the truth, and they still believe the falsities. Often, in our culture, half-truths, rumors, exaggerations and outright deceit distract and attract our attention away from the truth. Is our contemporary relationship to social media benefitting communication and understanding, or is it “a pageant to keep us in false gaze?”

- Iago states that his two reasons for plotting against Othello (and Cassio) are because he has been passed over for a promotion by Othello, and that he suspects Othello and his wife, Emilia, have slept together. Therefore, it is a combination of both mistrust in women (specifically his wife, but we see his thoughts about women extend to Desdemona as he makes his assumptions about her sexuality and enlists it as the commodity by which he sets his plan in motion), racism (which we see in his descriptions of Othello in the language of the first and subsequent scenes), and his use of others’ (Roderigo’s and Brabantio’s) racist misgivings about the title character. In our society, prejudices in different spheres work together to magnify inequity in both. As Martin Luther King, Jr, wrote - “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Ultimately, the play does not provide much opportunity for equality and fairness to win out. It is more of a cautionary tale than anything else. Our hope is that this production will illuminate how aggression and othering, combined with the manipulation of power and people for malevolent ends, can so easily occur in a society where empathy, communication, and personal prejudices and privilege are not attended to. Othello, in the end, characterizes himself as one who “loved not wisely, but too well.” We must, as artists and as a culture, enlist our wisdom to not cling to the mores of our time and culture, but to question our motives, beliefs, and societal systems if we are to escape Othello’s fate.

## A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Exotification:** to aestheticize or sexualize difference, racial or otherwise, for sexual or nonsexual purposes

**Feminism:** the advocacy of women's rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes

**Inequity:** lack of fairness or justice

**Micro-aggression:** a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority

**Misogyny:** dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women

**Normalize:** to make conform to or reduce to a norm or standard

**Othering:** viewing or treating (a person or group of people) as intrinsically different from and alien to oneself

**Prejudice:** preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience

**Racism:** prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is superior, manifested not only individually but also in terms of a power structure which protects the interests of the dominant culture and actively discriminates against ethnic minorities

**Systems of Oppression:** the interconnected, structural, and prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or control of one group or multiple groups of people by another group

## FAMOUS OTHELLOS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

**Richard Burbage:** Star actor of The King's Men, Burbage played all of Shakespeare's most famous roles. It is widely believed that he starred as Othello in the 1604, although his costuming or whether he appeared in blackface is unknown. His casting as the first Othello set the standard for white men playing the Moor.

**Ira Aldridge:** The first black man to play Othello, Ira appeared in the title role of Othello at the London Royalty theatre in 1826. Originally from America, Ira emigrated to England in hopes of finding more success as an actor; however, there was still considerable resistance to a black Othello. Aldridge did find more success and better reception in touring continental Europe.

**Paul Robeson:** A century after Ira Aldridge, Robeson was the second black actor to be cast as Othello in a major production which debuted in London's Savoy Theatre on March 19, 1930. The play was a huge success, running 295 performances. In 1943, Robeson reprised the role on Broadway at the Shubert Theatre, becoming the first African American to play the part in an American playhouse. This run was also a huge success, running 296 performance (twice as long as any other Shakespeare play on Broadway). Robeson was not immune from discrimination, however, as segregation was still the law of the land in the United States, keeping Robeson from eating at the same restaurants as his cast mates.

**Sir Lawrence Olivier:** The famous British actor played Othello in the 1965 movie (in color). Olivier wore blackface for the role, a fact

which troubled American audiences watching the movie in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement.

**Laurence Fishburne:** The first black actor to be cast in a movie adaptation of *Othello*, Fishburne starred in this sexual thriller meant to appeal to modern audiences. When the film was released, critics drew parallels with the OJ Simpson trial.

**Patrick Stewart:** The first white Othello in decades, Stewart played the title role in a “racial re-interpretation” at the Shakespeare Theatre in Washington DC in 1997. All other cast members were black.

**Chiwetel Ejiofor:** Starring In a “back to the basics” production alongside Ewan McGregor, Ejiofor won the 2008 Olivier Award for his performance. Tickets sold out hours after their release, and some were rumored to sell on ebay for £2,000.

### **ACTIVITY:**

Go Further: How did the events of the world affect the perception of *Othello* (Segregation, Civil Rights Movement, OJ Simpson trial, Obama presidency)? Do some research on a particular time period and production to see how life imitates and informs art.

## WHAT MAKES A TRAGEDY?

When we ask modern audiences this question, we often receive the response “it’s sad.” True enough, but many Shakespearean tragedies have a good deal of humor (usually from a clown or fool). The truest marker of distinction between comedy and tragedy is how the play ends. If the play ends in death (or, as is generally the case, multiple deaths) it is a tragedy. If the play ends “happily ever after,” which is to say in marriage (or multiple marriages), then it is a comedy.

But is that it? Of course not. Many Shakespearean tragedies often have other tragic elements in them. Here are some common ones:

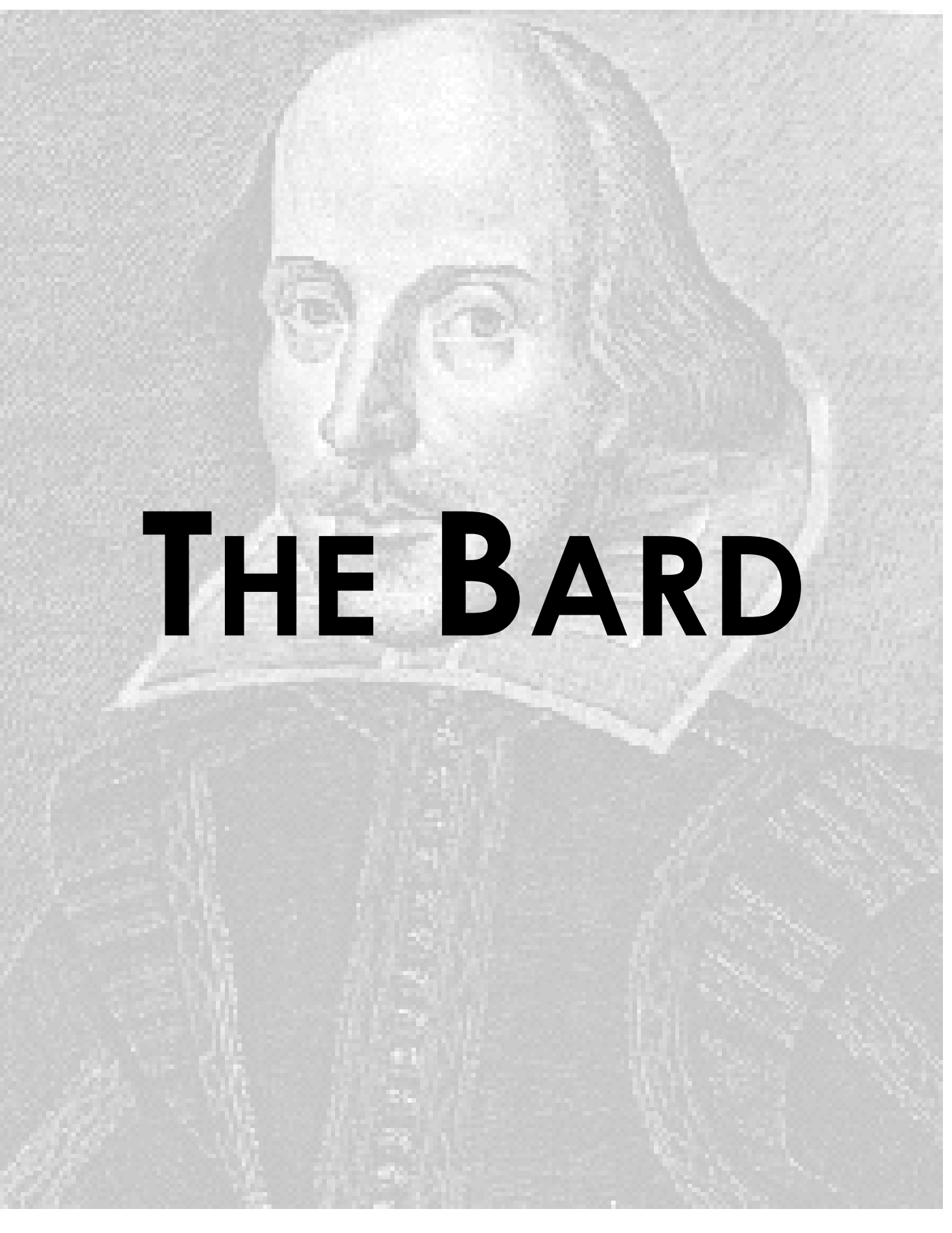
1. **A tragic hero:** Oftentimes, this is a person of nobility, although it does not have to be. Regardless of class, this person has a towering personality and is in good standing with his state.
2. **Good vs. Evil:** This is so common a theme that we often forget it is worth mentioning, but tragedies show us the struggles between good and evil.
3. **The fatal flaw:** Sometimes referred to as hamartia meaning “sin” or “error,” all tragic heroes have some sort of fatal flaw. This flaw will lead to his (or her) eventual destruction and death.
4. **Conflict:** Both internal and external, tragedies are full of conflict. Often, our tragic heroes struggle with conflict in themselves (emotions) as much as they do with conflict from external sources (a villain, the supernatural, fate, etc).
5. **Tragic waste:** The death of a hero of such esteem or high profile is a waste of human potential that often leads to a feeling of regret or sadness in the audience witnessing the tragedy.

6. **Catharsis:** Meaning the purgation or release of one's emotion, catharsis gives the audience an opportunity to feel pity, fear, hate, or any variety of emotions for a certain character in a tragedy. Frequently, we also see ourselves in the characters of a tragedy, which allows us to go through their emotional journey in a "safe" way.
  
7. **Poetic Justice:** This is when everyone gets what is coming to them— good is rewarded, and evil is punished.

**ACTIVITY:** Examine the tragic elements laid out in this article

1. Recognize It: Does *Othello* contain all of the listed tragic elements? Is it missing one or more?
2. Support It: Find textual support from the play to support each one of your claims.
3. Visualize It: Choose one tragic element. Trace the evolution of this tragic element throughout the play in a visual map. Where does it begin? Where is it strongest? How does it end?
4. Physicalize It: In small groups, make a tableau (or frozen picture) for the definition **and** examples of each tragic element. There will be two tableaux for each element.
5. Go Further: Is there an element of tragedy that we left out that you see in *Othello*? What is it? Define and support it.





# THE BARD



## SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE AS A PLAY

### **ACT I 1564-1576/78                      Sense and Sound, Family, Foundation**

Shakespeare's personal history is actually quite a mystery. What we know of him is based mainly on his plays and a few legal and church documents. He is thought to have been born on April 23, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, near Warwickshire. His father, John, was a glover (a tradesman and craftsman who works in fine leather), and later an alderman and bailiff. Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, was a landed local heiress; her family was an old and respected one in the area. According to church record, William was the third of eight children. During this time period, Shakespeare learned Latin, philosophy, theology, history, and classic mythology at the local grammar school, but he also learned the day-to-day customs, manners, and language of rustic and country life.

### **ACT II 1576/78-1582                      Work? Apprentice? Tutor?**

Shakespeare did not proceed to university after Grammar school. Other than this, little is known for sure. During this next span of time, Shakespeare probably learned his father's trade and may have been engaged as a tutor for children of local noble families.

### **ACT III            1582-1590/92                      Marriage, Family**

Documents concerning Shakespeare's marriage to Anne Hathaway, a woman some seven or eight years his senior, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November in 1582 and the births of their children Susanna in May of 1583, and twins Hamnet and Judith in February of 1585, provide some of the only information we have about William Shakespeare during this time. Shakespeare all but vanishes from record for seven years after the birth of the twins. This period in his life is often called the "Lost Years." How or why he ends up in London writing plays and acting is a mystery that has sparked many theories and arguments among scholars and historians.

### **ACT IV            1588-1603                      London, the age of Elizabeth**

Even less is known for certain as to how Shakespeare came to join a professional troupe of actors and then become a playwright. What we do know is that by the year 1588, he was gone from Stratford and living in London working as an actor and later as mainly a playwright. In 1592, a

rival playwright named Robert Greene publically attacked Shakespeare in a critical article in which he refers to Shakespeare as an “upstart crow.” By 1594, Shakespeare was a managing partner of one of the most popular theatre companies in London, the Lord Chamberlain’s men (later the King’s Men) and the company’s principle playwright. His star was on the rise. In 1596, his son Hamnet, twin brother to Judith, dies.

### **ACT V 1603-1616                      Wealth, Fame, Return to Stratford**

Shakespeare achieved a significant fame and notoriety by this time. His company was successful and his plays well known and even published during his lifetime (not a usual occurrence during this era). By the end of his career, Shakespeare was a part owner in the company, the Globe theatre itself, and was involved in the establishment of one or more other theatres. He was wealthy enough in 1611 to purchase a new house in Stratford and retire in comfort; a highly respected, and distinguished gentleman. He is reported to have died on his birthday, April 23 in 1616. His last lines of verse to us are those of his epitaph:

*Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here.  
Blessed be the man that spares these stones,  
And cursed be he that moves my bones.*

### **EPILOGUE 1623 and beyond**

John Hemminges and Henry Condell, two of his theatrical partners, organized and had printed the First Folio edition of the collected plays of their friend William Shakespeare. Half of this collection included plays that had previously been unpublished. We owe these two gentlemen a great debt.

William Shakespeare is arguably the greatest playwright of the English language. His body of work has stood the test of time and distance with his plays still being produced all over the world on a regular basis. He is one of the most produced playwrights in history.

# SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

## THE RULERS:

Most of Shakespeare's plays were written during what is referred to as the Late or High Renaissance period. In England, this era is also referred to as the Elizabethan Period after Queen Elizabeth I. It is important to note that

Shakespeare's world, while dominated by Elizabeth, was shaped by other monarchs before and after her reign. Starting with her father, Henry VIII, and concluding with her nephew, James I, we see that Shakespeare was the subject of a turbulent and volatile royal family.



**Henry VIII** (reigned: 1509-1547)  
Excommunicated, started English Reformation



**Edward VI** (reigned: 1547-1553)  
Devoted Protestant, died young



**Mary I** (reigned: 1553-1558)  
Fanatical Catholic, persecuted protestants

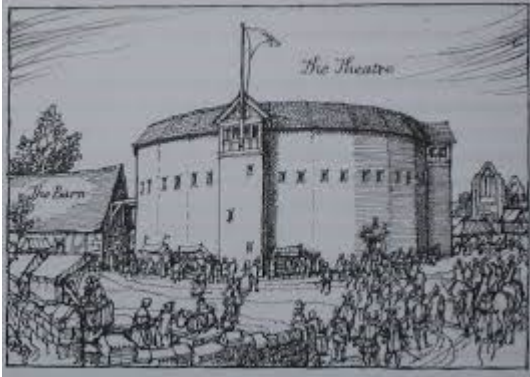


**Elizabeth I** (reigned: 1558-1603)  
Protestant but tolerant of the old faith to a point

**James I** (reigned: 1603-1625)  
More political than devout,  
fascinated by the occult

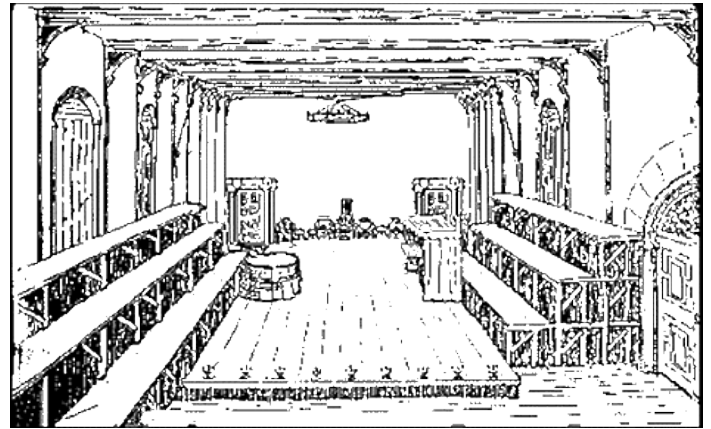


## THE THEATRES:



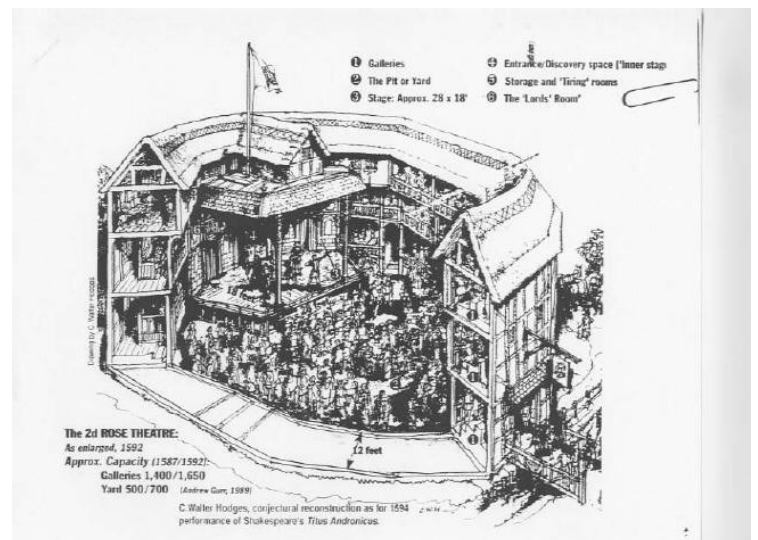
**The Theatre:** 1576-1598. The first public theatre in London. When it was torn down its timbers were used in constructing the first Globe Theatre. It was owned by James Burbage and his son Richard who would originate many of Shakespeare's leading characters including Hamlet.

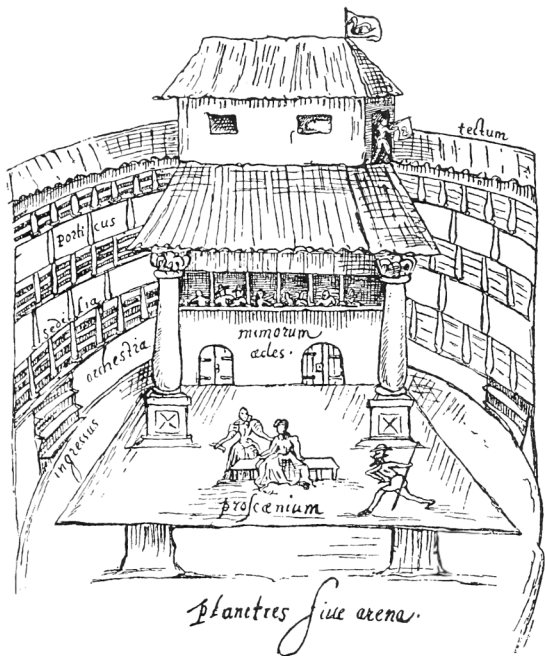
**The Blackfriars:** Eventually owned by Richard Burbage in 1597 and intended to operate as a second space for the King's Men.



**The Curtain:** One of the longest standing theatres, it lasted from about 1577 until the 1660s.

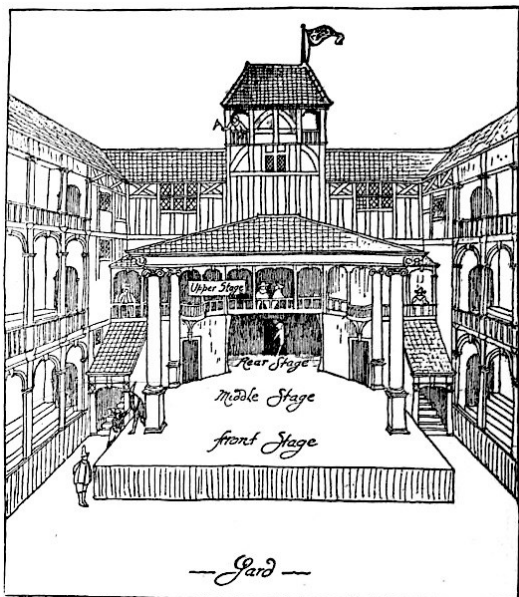
**The Rose:** Probably the first London theatre in which Shakespeare's plays were seen. Opened by Phillip Henslowe who would go on to work frequently with Shakespeare. Later, the theatre fell into ruins and could not compete with the newly built Globe Theatre. The Rose was torn down in 1605.





**The Swan:** Little is known of this theatre which operated between 1595-1632. It is important to history because of a famous sketch of it made by Johannes de Witt and later copied by Aernoudt. This sketch provides us with the most detailed picture of an Elizabethan theatre.

**The Globe:** Home to the Lord Chamberlain's Men (Later the King's Men) the first version of this theatre opened in 1599. Both Shakespeare and Burbage were part owners. It burnt down in 1613 and a new Globe was built in 1614 and lasted until 1644.



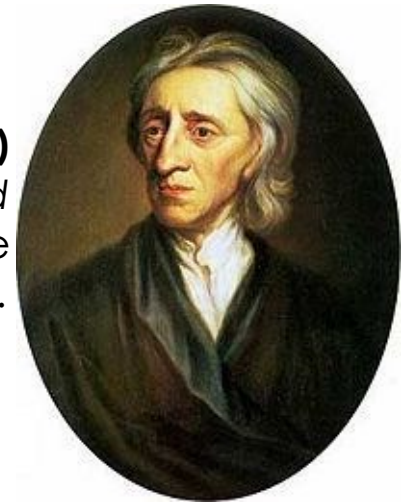
**Fortune Theatre:** Built by Phillip Henslowe in 1600 to compete with the Globe Theatre. The contract for the construction provides detailed information about the characteristics and operation of an Elizabethan theatre.

## PLAYWRIGHTS AND CONTEMPORARIES:



### **Edmund Spenser (London—1552-1599)**

Influential poet and playwright. His poem, *The Fairie Queen*, is one of the greatest epic poems of its age.



### **John Lyly (Kent—1554-1606)**

*Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* and *Euphues and His England*. Credited with developing “polite comedy” in England.



### **Thomas Kyd (London—1558-1594)**

Author of the play, *The Spanish Tragedy*, which set the standard for Elizabethan tragic form.

### **Robert Greene (Norwich—1560-1592)**

A member of a group of writers known as the “University Wits.” He was a critic of Shakespeare and attacked his work in public articles.



**Christopher (“Kit”) Marlowe (Canterbury—1564-1593)**

Said to have been a significant influence on Shakespeare and may even have been regarded as a rival. His life and writings have become almost legendary. His plays *Faustus*, *Tamburlaine the Great*, and *The Jew of Malta* are most famous.

**Ben Jonson (London 1572—1637)**

Regarded as one of the literary masters of his age, Johnson was a contemporary of Shakespeare’s who both praised and criticized him. His plays *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair* are most famous.





## WHY DO WE STUDY SHAKESPEARE?

William Shakespeare is the most popular and most produced playwright in the western world. His plays and poems have outlived the popularity of countless other playwrights. When being introduced to his work, students and young artists are right to ask **why**? Each new generation must come to its own conclusions regarding his continued popularity and significance. The following list contains many commonly agreed upon reasons for this popularity.

### **1. Shakespeare expressed in both concrete and abstract terms the range of the human condition.**

His eloquence and instinct for capturing with words what it means to be human is the strongest reason for his enduring popularity.

### **2. Shakespeare knew what stories appealed to his audience.**

While he borrowed many or most of the plots for his plays from outside sources or even other plays based on the same subject, event, or characters, Shakespeare was original in how he told the stories. He told every kind of story and always with attention toward the human condition as it was altered by the events of the story. This is one reason why they last today; they're about the human experience.

### **3. Complex, compelling characters that could be us.**

Shakespeare's characters are borrowed from history, other plays or stories, or are purely his invention. They have in common recognizable human qualities, rich and difficult contradictions, sublime language, and passionate, volatile actions. We see ourselves in these characters regardless of their eras or social status or circumstance. Scholar Harold Bloom often says that Shakespeare "invented" the human on stage.

#### **4. Language for all time.**

Shakespeare's language is not four hundred years old; it is four hundred years young. At the time he was writing, the English language was just coming out of its childhood and into adolescence. The high contrast between Saxon and Latin based words and phrases created a built-in conflict or tug-of-war that Shakespeare took full advantage of. He was also extremely instinctive and inventive, leaving us with many words and phrases that have moved out of the specific context of the plays they were written for and into common, everyday use.

***What do you like about Shakespeare? What do you dislike about Shakespeare? Remember that all opinions are valid— although they need to be supported. Think about WHY you like or dislike Shakespeare. What would you CHANGE if you could?***



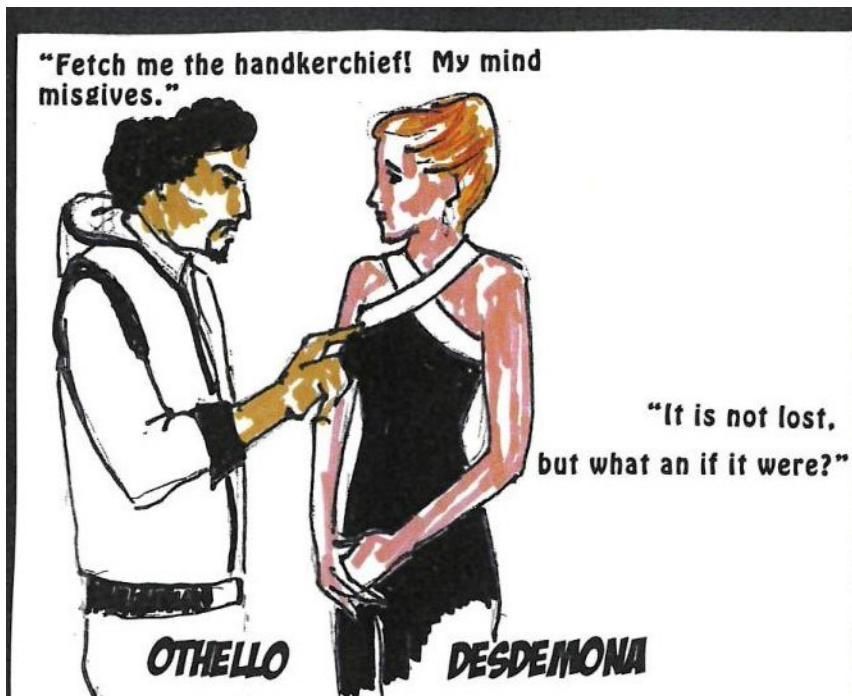


# THE BONUSES

# OTHELLO PRODUCTION CONCEPT AND LOOK BOOK

Written by: Directors, Anne Tromsness and Maegan Azar

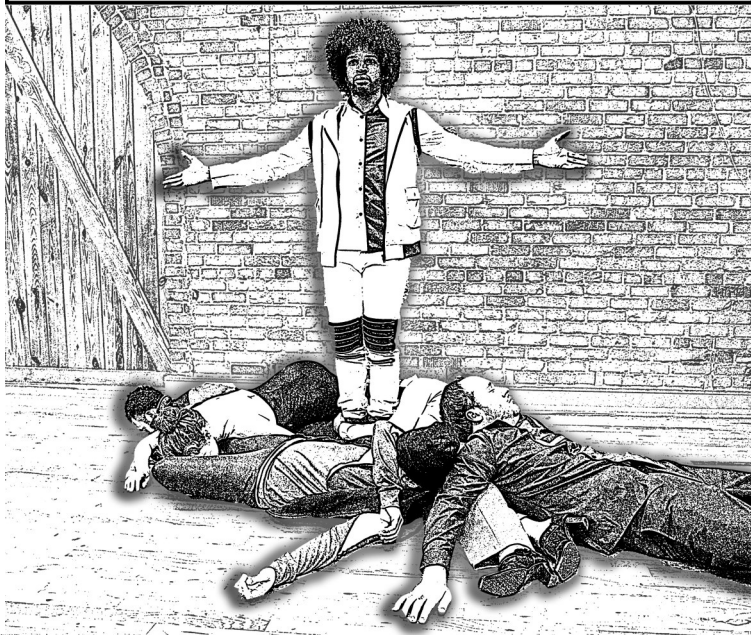
What happens when evil and manipulation are loosed upon a world where inequity and jealousy already reign? When suspicion, xenophobia, and distrust flourish, how can love survive? How can we decipher the truth when lies and deceit become commonplace, and a person's word is no longer their bond? Set in a stark, not-so-distant-future, The Warehouse Theatre's touring production of William Shakespeare's *Othello* asks these timeless questions. Producing *Othello* in the Southeast, at a time when prejudice, suspicion, implicit bias, and "othering" are such prominent spectres in the culture at large is an awesome responsibility.



Costume renderings by Costume Designer  
Margaret Rose Caterisano



**FOR I HAVE SERVED HIM, AND THE MAN COMMANDS LIKE A FULL SOLDIER.**



**REPUTATION, REPUTATION, REPUTATION. I HAVE LOST MY REPUTATION.**



***TIS A PAGEANT TO KEEP US IN FALSE GAZE.***

We believe that this story will resonate with students most effectively with a sparse, contemporary aesthetic - allowing a familiar visual landscape to help acclimate them to the initial unfamiliarity of the complex language. The juxtaposition of the complexities and beauty of Shakespeare's language and characters with a 21st century production design, will allow the play its maximum impact for a young audience.

## EXPLORE AND ACTIVATE THE TEXT:

### EXPLORE the Imagery:

**Objective:** Students will break apart Shakespeare's text for main action, common images, and comprehension.

### Directions:

1. Have students examine the following speech. This can be done individually, in small groups, or as a class.
2. Go through and list the verbs and nouns in two columns, and the adjectives in another.
3. Read the speech with just the nouns and the verbs. Do you get the main idea of the speech if you do this? (This can also be a great tool for uncovering the main action or core of a speech)
4. When looking at your lists, what patterns of related images emerge? Do these images connect with a theme in the play?

### Text: Othello (Act 5, scene 2)

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul, –  
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars! –  
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;  
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow,  
And smooth as monumental alabaster.  
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.  
Put out the light, and then put out the light:  
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,  
I can again thy former light restore,  
Should I repent me: but once put out thy light,  
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,  
I know not where is that Promethean heat  
That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose,  
I cannot give it vital growth again.  
It must needs wither: I'll smell it on the tree.  
Ah balmy breath, that dost almost persuade  
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more.  
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,  
And love thee after. One more, and this the last:  
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,  
But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly;  
It strikes where it doth love.

## **ACTIVATE with Power Words:**

**Objective:** Students will speak Shakespeare's language individually and as an ensemble; Students will physically and vocally interpret the language.

### **Directions:**

1. Ask students to choose one line from the provided list. Everyone say their line on the count of three, in unison.
2. Now, choose a POWER WORD in your line that captures the meaning of the line—a verb or noun that is juicy. Avoid prepositions and pronouns. Say that word in unison on the count of three.
3. Now, choose a gesture that communicates that power word. Perform that gesture without the word on the count of three. Imagine that the gesture was performed at an energy level of 2 or 3 (on a scale of 1-10). Now, do the gesture again at a 10!
4. Now, say the word and perform the gesture together.
5. Repeat this process with a second power word.
6. Students have 3 minutes to rehearse their lines, memorize them, and include both gestures in their performance.
7. Get back in the circle and ask for a student volunteer. Have them stand in the middle while everyone else closes their eyes. Have the student perform their line, emphasizing the power words. Ask the other students if they could tell which the power words were, just from the sound. Then, have the student repeat the line, with the power words, while the other students watch. If time allows, have each student share their line with the power words and gestures.
8. Ask students "what does the gesture do to the word?" Remember that you don't ultimately need to gesture in performance, but using gesture helps you explore the richness and meaning of the power words in rehearsal.



## Lines of Text:

- O, beware, my lord, of jealousy
- It is the green-ey'd monster, which doth mock the meat it feeds on.
- Men in rage strike those that wish them best.
- I would not put a thief in my mouth to steal my brains.
- He that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him,.
- I will wear my heart upon my sleeve for daws to peck at:
- I am not what I am.
- How poor are they that have not patience!
- What wound did ever heal but by degrees?
- Our bodies are our gardens to the which our wills are gardeners.
- Rude am I in my speech, And little blessed with the soft phrase of peace.
- I kissed thee ere I killed thee.
- No way but this, killing myself, to die upon a kiss.
- when I love thee not, Chaos is come again.
- It is silliness to live when to live is torment.
- Then have we a prescription to die when death is our physician.
- I will speak as liberal as the north.
- And his unkindness may defeat my life, But never taint my love.
- Thou weigh'st thy words before thou givest them breath.
- Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate.
- What cannot be saved when fate takes, patience her injury a mockery makes.
- So will I turn her virtue into pitch.
- And out of her own goodness make the net that shall enmesh them all.
- And what's he then that says I play the villain?
- Trifles light as air are to the jealous confirmations strong as proofs of holy writ.

## THE THREE DS: DISCLOSURE, DISCOVERY, DECISION

The Three Ds will help students make choices and breathe life into your text. Shakespeare's characters work out their monologues with the audience by:

1. **Disclosing** a thought    2. **Discovering** a thought    3. **Deciding** a thought

- Go line by line and decide which of the three Ds the character is using. Then, read the speech aloud.
- Try mixing it up by choosing a different or unexpected D. See what changing one of the three Ds does for the speech.
- Discuss how actor choices affect your understanding of the speech.

### **Iago (Act 2, scene 3)**

And what's he, then, that says I play the villain,  
When this advice is free I give and honest,  
Probal to thinking, and indeed the course  
To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy  
Th' inclining Desdemona to subdue  
In any honest suit. She's framed as fruitful  
As the free elements. And then for her  
To win the Moor—were 't to renounce his baptism,  
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin—  
His soul is so en fettered to her love  
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,  
Even as her appetite shall play the god  
With his weak function. How am I then a villain  
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course  
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!  
When devils will the blackest sins put on,  
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,  
As I do now. For whiles this honest fool  
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortune,  
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,  
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear:  
That she repeals him for her body's lust;  
And by how much she strives to do him good,  
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.  
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,  
And out of her own goodness make the net  
That shall enmesh them all.

## **APPEARANCE VS. REALITY, PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE**

Some people appear one way to the world, when in fact, they are different in reality. As actors, we often call this concept public vs. private: *How do you act in public vs. how do you act in private?* This could also mean: *What do you put forth in public vs. what you reveal in private.*

Iago serves as a prime example of this concept at work in *Othello*. He portrays one face to the public world, then privately reveals another to the audience. There are a few ways for this to be done in Shakespeare, the most popular being:

**An Aside:** A short comment or speech that a character delivers directly to the audience or to himself. There is an established convention that other characters on the stage cannot hear an aside, but the audience is still free to take in the information. Asides offer character commentary on the events of the play and reveal private opinions and reactions of the character.

**A Soliloquy:** A popular literary device used to reveal the innermost thoughts of a character. In a soliloquy, the character is talking to himself without acknowledging the presence of another person (like the audience). The word comes from the Latin “solo” meaning “to himself” and “loquor” meaning “I speak.” Oftentimes, soliloquys are used to expose plot lines or inner feelings of a character that are essential to the story.

### **ACTIVITY:**

**RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT IT:** Find an example of both an aside and a soliloquy in *Othello*.

**GO FURTHER:** Find a place where you would insert an aside or soliloquy to clarify the plot or intentions of a character in *Othello*. Then, perform the scene for the class with the inserted aside or soliloquy. Did it help student understanding?

## **THE ART OF LYING IN SHAKESPEARE**

“With Shakespeare work (and all classical work) you have absolutely no subtext. You tell the audience what’s going on with your little asides, and they follow you. When you have something to reveal to the audience, you reveal it through a monologue or soliloquy. The audience never needs to guess what is going on in your head...Shakespeare gives you everything you need, right there on the page.”

—Madd Harrold, *The Actor’s Guide to Performing Shakespeare*

If subtext doesn’t exist as Madd Harold asserts, then it will also follow that characters do not lie in Shakespeare— except to each other— and when they do, they immediately tell the audience that they were lying and why.

Consider Iago, perhaps the most duplicitous of all Shakespeare’s villains. He uses the expectation of honesty against Othello, and he tells the audience that this is his plan from the beginning: “The Moor is of free and open nature that thinks men honest that but seem to be so, and will as tenderly be led by th’ nose as asses are. I have ‘t! It is engendered! Hell an night must bring this monstrous birth to the world’s light.” (Act 1, scene 3)

From then on, Iago will lie and manipulate characters as they call him “honest,” but the audience is in on the deception. He continues to address the audience throughout the play, revealing his true plan.

### **ACTIVITY:**

**RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT IT:** Find *at least three* instances of Iago’s direct address to the audience where he explains his actions or develops his plan.

## **AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE AND EXPERIENCING THEATRE:**

In today's world of digital media, film, and television, it is important to remember that watching a play is a different experience that requires different habits and attitudes.

### **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LIVE ENTERTAINMENT AND PRE-RECORDED, ELECTRONIC, OR OTHER MEDIA (BETWEEN THEATRE AND FILM):**

Both audience and performer are present. They are aware of each other and share a connection. Because performers feed off of the audience one performance to the next can be very different based on the connection between performers and audience. A theatre performance develops right here and now and is dependent on audience attention and focus. Distractions do not go unnoticed by the performers

Films and other recorded media can be re-viewed if something is missed; they can be interrupted yet still viewed from start to finish. Live theatre is different. If the viewers misses something, they can't "rewind."

### **ENTERING THE THEATRE AND BECOMING AN AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

From the moment the audience member enters, the performance elements are being presented to her through various theatrical elements.

Find a seat, remove your coat or jacket before you sit, sit properly in your seat, and be aware and courteous of patrons on either side and in front or behind you. Keep your feet off the seat or seat back in front of you.

Take in the set/scenery, listen to the music, and read the prepared material in the program.

Converse with your friends or neighbors but at a level that allows everyone else to do so as well. Conversation should stop when the

lights, sound, curtain or actors change in a way that makes you aware things are about to start. You can also talk during intermission!

### **ATTENTION AND FOCUS:**

Live entertainment/theatre requires a different level and type of attention or focus from other forms of media.

From entering the theatre to the final curtain, clues and elements relating to the performance, the story, and the themes are being presented and should not be missed due to distraction or inattentiveness.

Plays tend to accelerate as the story unfolds. Your attention needs to stay with the performers and increase as the story unfolds in order to really get the most out of the experience.

Avoid outside distractions by turning off cell phones, refraining from conversing with friends or texting during the performance, and waiting to use the restrooms for intermission or after the show. Any of these actions may cause you to miss key elements of the story and inhibit your enjoyment of the play. Not to mention, it will be distracting to other audience members and the performers as well.

### **START TO FINISH:**

Plays may begin with a recorded or live speech before the show. This is the formal beginning of the performance and is often indicated by a lowering in level of the “house” lights (the lights over the audience) and a change in lights on the show curtain or set. At this point, you should be quiet and attentive.

The play will usually begin when the house lights dim completely and lights come up to full on the set or the curtain rises to reveal the set and/or characters.

Plays are traditionally divided into acts which are separated by scenes. There may or may not be intermissions (breaks in the story for

you to visit the lobby and/or restrooms) between acts. These may last ten to fifteen minutes. The number of intermissions will be indicated in your program and/or during the pre-show speech. There is no intermission in a WHT touring show.

It is acceptable and encouraged to applaud at the end of an act. Normally applause between scenes is discouraged. You should always applaud at the end of the play and while the performers take their bows (This is called the curtain call).

It is acceptable to laugh or react to moments that are funny or engaging during the performance. While talking during a show is generally discouraged, this depends on the type of play. For example: in a children's show, the performers may want the audience to interact and converse with them.

### **EXPECT TO WORK HARDER AND EXPERIENCE MORE:**

The live theatre makes you work a little harder and asks more questions than you may be used to, but that's because the theatre's origins and traditions are rooted in societal rituals that brought communities together in order to discuss important social issues. Plays were not intended to be purely entertaining – though many modern plays are. A performance doesn't end with the curtain coming down or the lights fading to black; discussions and reflection after the performance are part of the live theatre experience.

### **ALL THIS WORK – WHAT'S IT REALLY FOR?**

Shakespeare and other live theatre is not performed and produced to make the audience feel alienated. Theatre is about connection; it's about humanity, and about what we recognize in our own lives as well. You may find yourself laughing, crying, nodding your head in agreement, or turning away in disgust. All those on stage and those who have contributed to the play are seeking connection with you. They love the story they are telling, find it compelling and useful in some way, and hope to relay that to you. All work aside – let yourself experience it!

## FURTHER EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

### SOURCE/REFERENCE TEXTS:

**The Actor's Guide to Performing Shakespeare.** Madd Harold. Lone Eagle Publishing Company, 2002.

**All the Words on Stage.** Louis Scheeder and Shane Ann Younts. Smith and Kraus, 2002.

**Othello.** William Shakespeare, Ed. Daniel Vitkus. New York: Barnes and Nobel Shakespeare, 2007.

**Shakespeare After All.** Marjorie Garber. Anchor Books, 2004

**The Shakespeare Miscellany.** David Crystal and Ben Crystal. Penguin Books, London, England, 2005.

**Speak the Speech: Shakespeare's Monologues Illuminated.** Rhona Silverbush and Sami Plotkin. Faber and Faber, 2002.

### WEBSITES AND ARTICLES:

**Shakespeare's Words**, [www.shakespeareswords.com](http://www.shakespeareswords.com) – this is the official David and Ben Crystal website, with the complete works with glossary, themes and motifs, allusions, and much, much more.

**Folger Shakespeare Library**, [www.folger.edu](http://www.folger.edu) – Replete with lesson plans, a teachers' blog, and information about Folger programming and collections.

**British Library**, <http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespearehtml> - Extensive information on the background, production and publication history, and quartos of Shakespeare's plays

**Controversial Subjects in the Classroom:** [www.tolerance.org/article/controversial-subjects-classroom](http://www.tolerance.org/article/controversial-subjects-classroom)