

The  
**SHAKESPEARE**  
Theatre of  
New Jersey



# Othello

By William Shakespeare

## **Student-Teacher Study Guide**

compiled and arranged by  
the Education Department of  
The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey



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# CLASSROOM •

## FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

What we hear most from educators is that there is a great deal of anxiety when it comes to Shakespeare; seeing it, reading it and especially teaching it. One of the principal goals of The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's education programs is to demystify Shakespeare, take him "off the shelf" and re-energize his work for students and teachers alike. Toward these goals, this Study Guide provides educators with tools to both allay their own concerns and to expand the theatre-going experience for their students beyond the field trip to The Shakespeare Theatre.

The information included in this guide will help you expand your students' understanding of Shakespeare in performance, as well as help you meet many of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. We encourage you to impart as much of the information included in this Study Guide to your students as is possible. The following are some **suggestions from teachers** on how you can utilize elements of the guide given limited classroom time.

- Many teachers have found that distributing or reading the Short Synopsis and Who's Who pages has greatly increased students' understanding and enjoyment of the production. It provides the students with a general understanding of what they will be seeing and what they can expect. Some teachers have simply taken the last five minutes of a class period to do this with very positive results.
- When more class time is available prior to your visit, we recommend incorporating the background information on William Shakespeare and the play itself. One teacher divided her class into groups and assigned each group research topics based on the divisions found in the study guide. Using a copy of the corresponding study guide page as a launch pad, the students had one week to research the topics. The students then presented their information to the class in three- to five-minute oral reports. Including the questions that evolved from the presentations, the entire project took only one class period. I am told that the reading of Old English and Middle English texts was "quite entertaining and very informative."
- Using the questions found in the "TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION," many teachers will opt to take a class period after the trip to The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey to discuss the play with their students. The questions help keep the comments focused on the production, while incorporating various thematic and social issues that are found in the play.
- One school spent two days working through performance-based activities (a few of which are suggested in the "FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES" section) with a particularly "difficult and rowdy" class. They were astounded with the results. Their students took the opportunity to "ham it up," and discovered a great joy and understanding from performing Shakespeare.

### "What's My Line?" Promoting Active Listening

Teacher-tested, student-approved! Try this exercise with your students:

Before attending the production, give each student one line from the play to listen for. Discuss the meaning of the line and encourage their input in deciphering what Shakespeare meant by the line. How would the student perform the line? Why is the line important to the play? Does it advance the plot, or give the audience particular insight into a character or relationship?

Following the production, discuss the line again. Did the actor present the line in the way your student expected? If not, how was it different?

Again, we hope you will incorporate as many portions of this study guide as you are able into your classroom experience. If you have any suggestions for activities or topics not already found in the Study Guide, please contact our education department. We are always interested in hearing new ways to excite young people (and teachers) about Shakespeare and live theatre.

Happy Teaching,



Brian B. Crowe,  
Director of Education



The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's  
Main Stage

# ACTIVITIES

# Shakespeare: Helpful Tips For Exploring & Seeing His Works

## “Just plunge right in

(to Shakespeare). See a play, read it aloud, rent a video, listen to a tape. It’s up to you. When you look at Shakespeare close up, he’s not as intimidating as when he’s seen from afar.”

Norrie Epstein  
*The Friendly Shakespeare*

Tragedy can have humor, and  
great comedy always has  
elements of the tragic.

18th-century critics complained that Shakespeare’s tragedies weren’t consistently serious enough. According to the classic rules, tragedy should be uniformly somber. Shakespeare’s use of humor in his tragedies prevents us from becoming washed away in a dense fog of emotion. Rather, it forces us out of the “tragic” long enough to appreciate the level to which the play’s passions have taken us.

“Some of the plays have taken on mythic proportions. By myths, I mean we grow up knowing certain things about [Shakespeare’s] characters but we don’t know how we know them.

There are lots of  
**SHAKESPEAREAN MICROCHIPS**  
lodged in our brains.”

Charles Marowitz, director

“It was Olivier’s *Henry V*  
that made me realize that  
**Shakespeare is**  
**about real people**  
and that his language wasn’t simply  
beautiful poetry.”

Robert Brustein, director

Don’t be afraid to  
**LISTEN,**  
**WATCH**  
**AND REACT;**  
laugh, cry, and be moved.  
Shakespeare wrote for  
a live and active audience.  
Both audience and actor  
must be involved to create  
a truly winning performance.

“My advice to anyone seeing Shakespeare:

**Don’t worry so  
much!**

Just make sure your ears are clean and your eyes are sharp. Listen and look and watch. Look at the distance people stand from each other; look at the relationships being developed.

**Stay with it.**

Don’t negate the move that Shakespeare will make toward your gut, toward your soul— because he will touch you there, if you allow yourself to be touched.”

-David Suchet, actor

“There are some parts of the plays you’ll never understand. But excuse me, I thought that’s what great art was supposed to be about.

**DON’T  
FREAK  
OUT  
OVER  
IT!”**

Peter Sellars,  
Director

## *Othello*: A Short Synopsis

Shakespeare's great tragedy begins under the cover of night in the city of Venice, a city-state famous for its military might and as a center of trade. Roderigo, a gentleman who has tried to woo Desdemona, the lovely daughter of Senator Brabantio, has just learned that she has secretly married Othello, a heroic Moorish general in service to the Venetian state. Iago, Othello's ensign, speaks of his hatred for the Moor, and convinces Roderigo to wake Brabantio and inform him of the elopement. The enraged Brabantio sets out in search of his daughter and calls for officers to arrest the Moor.

Feigning friendship and concern, Iago warns Othello of Brabantio's reaction. Cassio, a lieutenant recently promoted by Othello to the position Iago had hoped for, arrives with an urgent message from the Duke: Othello's assistance is needed to thwart a Turkish invasion of the Venetian-controlled isle of Cyprus. In the Senate chamber, Brabantio accuses Othello of seducing his daughter with witchcraft. Othello, in his defense, explains that he won Desdemona's heart by telling her stories of his adventurous life. When Desdemona is summoned to the Senate chamber, she confirms her love for Othello and tells her father that her allegiance is now to her husband.

Seeing no crime done, the Duke attempts to pacify Brabantio, and then turns his attention to the imminent Turkish threat and orders Othello to Cyprus. Othello welcomes the command, and Desdemona requests permission to go with her husband. It is arranged for her to travel with Iago the following day, as her husband must depart immediately. Iago assures the gullible Roderigo that Desdemona's love for the Moor will soon wane, and convinces him to travel to Cyprus with the military fleet. Alone, Iago begins to lay plans to utilize Cassio as an instrument to destroy Othello.

In Cyprus, Othello's arrival is anxiously awaited, following reports of a violent storm at sea. When Othello's ship docks, he informs all that the Turkish fleet has been destroyed. In honor of his marriage and the defeat of the Turks, Othello allows time for his troops to celebrate. During the festivities, Iago gets Cassio drunk. Roderigo, under Iago's direction, begins a quarrel with the drunken lieutenant, which soon escalates into a brawl which culminates in Cassio stabbing Montano, an important Cypriot. Furious about the unrest that ensues, Othello immediately dismisses Cassio from his office as lieutenant. Cassio grieves over the loss of his position and his reputation, but Iago comforts him by suggesting that Desdemona will plead

with Othello to have him reinstated. Alone on stage, Iago outlines his plan of action.

In a private meeting arranged by Iago, Desdemona promises Cassio that she will intercede on his behalf with her husband. As Othello returns with Iago, Cassio quickly takes his leave. Iago comments on Cassio's abrupt departure, stating that Cassio seems to be attempting to avoid Othello. Desdemona pleads enthusiastically for Cassio, and vows to never cease until her husband pardons his friend. Othello is sympathetic to her petition. As Desdemona and Emilia (Iago's wife) depart, Iago plants the seeds of doubt in Othello, insinuating that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair right under Othello's nose. As Desdemona returns to call Othello in to dinner, Othello's doubts of her fidelity are already beginning to take hold. Seeing her husband upset, but not knowing the cause, Desdemona offers him her handkerchief, her treasured first gift from the Moor. As he refuses it, it falls to the ground, and Emilia picks it up and gives it to Iago.

Beset by uncertainty and anxiety, Othello demands some proof that Desdemona is unfaithful. Iago tells the Moor that he has seen Cassio with Desdemona's cherished handkerchief. Othello asks Desdemona for the handkerchief, but not having it, she changes the subject and again pleads for Othello to reconcile with Cassio. Othello leaves in a rage, and Emilia suggests that Othello may be jealous. Desdemona declares that he has absolutely no cause for jealousy. As the two women leave, Bianca, a courtesan in love with Cassio, enters searching for him. He gives her the handkerchief (which has been planted in his room by Iago), and asks Bianca to have its embroidery copied.

Iago promises to provide Othello with additional proof of his wife's affair. As Othello conceals himself and listens, Iago and Cassio talk about a woman. Cunningly, Iago talks to Cassio about Bianca. Othello, however, assumes they are discussing Desdemona, and is now fully convinced of her guilt. He vows to kill Desdemona and Iago vows to kill Cassio. Letters recalling Othello to Venice are brought by Lodovico. When Desdemona speaks to Lodovico about Cassio's recent troubles, Othello becomes furious, strikes his wife, and sends her away.

Meanwhile, Iago convinces the gullible Roderigo that the only hope of gaining Desdemona's love lies in killing Cassio. Late that night, they attack Cassio in the street. There is a quick skirmish, and both Roderigo and Cassio are wounded. The cries arouse

Othello, who assumes that Iago has murdered Cassio as he has promised. Lodovico hastens to see what is the matter, and Iago appears on the scene. Taking control of the situation, Iago kills Roderigo, and then feigns grief over his “friend’s” death.

Othello comes to Desdemona in their bed-chamber, determined to kill her. He accuses her of having committed adultery with Cassio and, although Desdemona pleads her innocence, he smothers her. Emilia brings news of the street fight and the subsequent death of Roderigo. When she sees the murdered Desdemona and hears Othello’s accusation of infidelity, she raises the alarm. This fetches Iago, Lodovico, and Montano into the room. Emilia discovers the ruse and her husband’s role in it. As she denounces Iago, he stabs her and escapes from the scene. When he is brought back the full truth is revealed. Othello, realizing his guilt, asks to be remembered as “one that loved not wisely but too well.” Then he stabs himself and falls on the bed beside his wife, where he dies. The silent Iago is arrested and taken away.



## Who’s Who in *Othello*

**Othello**—A Moorish general in service to Venice, well-praised for his honesty, integrity and outstanding military skills. He secretly weds the fair Desdemona. When his jealousy is piqued by Iago’s deception, it overtakes him and his entire world collapses.

**Iago**—Othello’s “honest” ensign, who sows the seeds of jealousy in his general that lead to the downfall of Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, Roderigo and Emilia.

**Desdemona**—The only daughter of Senator Brabantio, she is noted for her purity and honesty. Secretly wed to Othello, she loves and honors her husband even when he falsely accuses her of adultery.

**Emilia**—Wife to Iago, she unwittingly aids her husband’s jealous plot by giving him Desdemona’s dropped handkerchief. She dies at Iago’s hand as she defends Desdemona’s honor.

**Cassio**—An honourable lieutenant promoted by Othello to the very post which Iago had hoped to gain.

**Roderigo**—A gullible gentleman of Venice, who seeks to marry Desdemona. When his advances are rejected, he is easily manipulated and becomes a pawn in Iago’s plot against Othello.

**The Duke of Venice**—Leader of the Venetian government and one of Othello’s greatest supporters.

**Brabantio**—A Senator of Venice who goes into a rage when he discovers that his only daughter, Desdemona, has secretly married Othello, a Moor.

**Lodovico** —A Venetian Senator and Desdemona’s cousin.

**Montano**—The high-ranking Cypriot.

**Bianca**—A courtesan in love with Cassio.

Desdemona and Othello (Victoria Mack and Lindsay Smiling) in The Shakespeare Theatre production of *Othello*. Photo: Gerry Goodstein © 2011.

## About the Playwright

**William Shakespeare**, widely recognized as the greatest English dramatist, was born on April 23, 1564. He was the third of eight children born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden of Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, England. Shakespeare's father was a prominent local merchant, and Shakespeare's childhood, though little is known about it for certain, appears to have been quite normal. In fact, it seems that the young Shakespeare was allowed considerable leisure time because his writing contains extensive knowledge of hunting and hawking. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer. She was eight years his senior, and the match was considered unconventional.

It is believed that Shakespeare left Stratford-on-Avon and went to London around 1588. By 1592 he was a successful actor and playwright. He wrote approximately 38 plays, two epic poems, and over 150 sonnets. His work was immensely popular, appealing to members of all social spheres including Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. While they were well-liked, Shakespeare's plays were not considered by his educated contemporaries to be exceptional. By 1608, Shakespeare's

involvement with theatre began to dwindle, and he spent more time at his country home in Stratford. He died in 1616.

Most of Shakespeare's plays found their first major publication in 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, when two of his fellow actors put the plays together in the *First Folio*. Other early printings of Shakespeare's plays were called *quartos*, a printer's term referring to the format in which the publication was laid out. These quartos and the *First Folio* texts are the sources of all modern printings of Shakespeare's plays.



### Famous Othellos

EDMUND KEAN (1789-1833) was considered one of the greatest English actors of his day. Most famous for his tragic roles, he played both Iago and Othello frequently. In March of 1833, while performing Othello to his son Charles' Iago, he collapsed on stage. It would be his last appearance on stage.

PAUL ROBESON's performance as Othello in 1943 was considered a novelty at the time, and brought people from all walks of life to the theatre. He was the first black American actor to perform the role, which had traditionally been reserved for white actors in heavy make-up. Robeson described the play as "a tragedy of honor rather than jealousy."



Left: Promotional artwork for Edmund Kean as Othello.  
Right: Paul Robeson and Peggy Ashcroft as Othello and Desdemona.



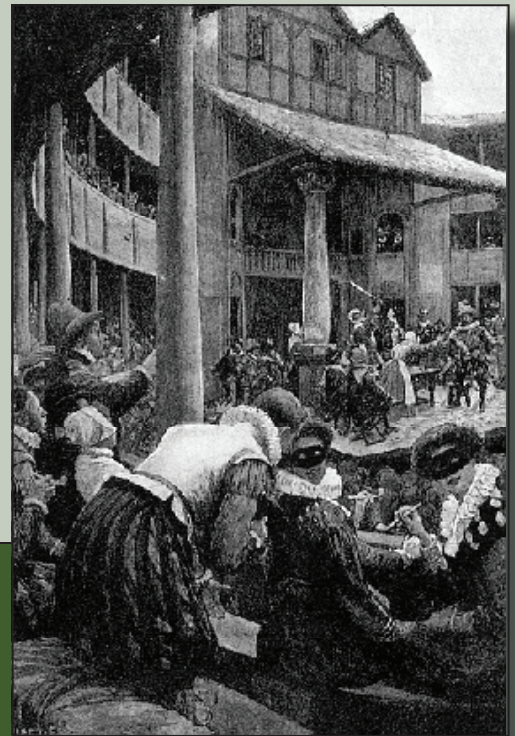
# Shakespeare's London

London, in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, was a bustling urban center filled with a wide variety of people and cultures. Although most life centered around making a living or going to church, the main source of diversion for Londoners was the theatre. It was a form of entertainment accessible to people of all classes. The rich and the poor, the aristocrats and the beggars all met at the theatre. Though often appeasing the church or the monarchy, theatre at this time did experience a freedom that was unknown in previous generations. Evidence of this can be found in the numerous bawdy and pagan references found in Shakespeare's plays. This relative artistic license and freedom of expression made theatre extremely unpopular among certain members of society, and it was later banned entirely by the Puritans. Not until the reign of Charles II (1660-1685) was the theatre restored to the status it held in Shakespeare's day.

The Globe Theatre, the resident playhouse for Shakespeare's company of actors, was easily accessible to Londoners and an active social center. Actors and performers were also regularly brought to court or to private homes to entertain. Despite their social popularity, actors maintained a relatively low status, sometimes no better than a common beggar or rogue. Most performers were forced to earn a living doing trade work. The aristocracy's desire for entertainment, however, did spur the development of numerous new theatre pieces. Often a nobleman would become a patron to an artist or company of actors, providing for their financial needs and sheltering them to some degree from official sanctions.

In return, the company would adopt the name of the patron. Shakespeare's acting company was originally named "Lord Chamberlain's Men" after their patron, Henry Carey, Lord Chamberlain. Later, under the patronage of King James I, they were known as "The King's Men," an unprecedented honor at the time.

Despite the flourishing of the arts at this time, London was sometimes a desolate place. Outbreaks of the Black Plague (the bubonic plague) frequently erupted, killing thousands of citizens. Theatres, shops, and the government were all shut down during these times in hopes of preventing the spread of the disease. Elizabethans were unaware that the disease was being spread by the flea and rat populations, which well outnumbered the human population of London at that time.



## A Man of Many Words

Shakespeare used over **20,000 different words** in his plays and poems. Of these, 8.5% (1,700 words) had never been seen in print before Shakespeare used them.

To give you a sense of just how extraordinary this is, consider that the King James Bible uses only 8,000 different words. Homer is credited with using approximately 9,000 different words in his works. Milton is estimated at using 10,000 different words in his works.

## The Sonnets

You might have thought that Shakespeare wrote the sonnets earlier in his career, as a type of "stepping stone" to his plays. However, Shakespeare actually penned most of his sonnets during the various outbreaks of the plague in London, when the theatres were closed.

## Sources and History of *Othello*

*“It happened that a virtuous lady of wondrous beauty called Desdemona, impelled not by female appetite but by the Moor’s good qualities, fell in love with him, and he, vanquished by the Lady’s beauty and noble mind, likewise was enamoured of her.”*

This was the seed from which *Othello*, the “greatest of domestic dramas,” sprang. The passage comes from Giraldino Cinthio’s short story “Il Moro Di Venezia” (or “Un Capitano Moro”), from an Italian collection of stories, *Gli Hecatommithi* (1565). Shakespeare and many other English dramatists were reading this popular work at the beginning of the seventeenth century. [Selections from this story can be found on p13 of this study guide.] Shakespeare found his plot and the suggestions for his characters in Cinthio’s narrative though he took many liberties in his adaptation. Although Desdemona is the only named character in Cinthio’s work, the parallels between Cinthio’s other characters and Shakespeare’s are quite clear. “The Moor” from the short story became Othello, “The Ensign” became Iago, “The Squadron Leader” became Cassio, and “The Ensign’s Wife” became Shakespeare’s Emilia. In addition, it is believed that Shakespeare also borrowed details from the French novelist Belleforest, and background material from various historical references of the day. Scholars estimate that Shakespeare penned this great tragedy sometime between 1602 and 1604.

Some of Shakespeare’s interest in writing this play is also believed to have come from the presence of a Moorish embassy in London. In August of 1600, the ambassador of the King of Barbary and his retinue arrived in England for a ‘half year’s abode in London’. Their Muslim customs and manners were considered strange in the eyes of the locals, and the ambassadors caused quite a stir in London. The first audiences to see *Othello* performed no doubt would have the image of the Barbarians, as they were called, fresh in their minds.

The play was performed at court of King James I in 1604. The titular role was played by Richard Burbage, who was also famed for originating the roles of Hamlet, Richard III and King Lear. Subsequent public performances at the Globe Theatre were numerous and attest to the play’s popularity at the time. *Othello* was first printed in the *First Quarto* in 1622. Since that time, Shakespeare’s tragedy of the Venetian Moor has had an active performance history. Iago and Othello are both considered coveted roles by classical actors. During much of the play’s early history, and even recently, Othello was most often played by a white actor in dark make-up. Sir Laurence

Olivier and Orson Wells are two of the most famous caucasian actors to perform the role in “black-face.” In 1833, Ira Aldridge was the first black man to play the role on the London stage. Since then many black actors have played the role, including actor-singer Paul Robeson, whose 1943 production ran for nearly 300 performances, and still holds the record for the most performances of any Shakespeare play ever produced on Broadway.

The issues of racial and cultural sensitivity seems inextricably tied to this play, and, particularly for American audiences, can be very provocative. Trevor Nunn’s 1999 production, featuring Ian McKellan as Iago, for example was set against the backdrop of the post-Civil War south. More recently however, directors and actors have attempted to focus on *Othello* as a piece not about bigotry against blacks or Muslims, but rather as a comment on otherness; Othello is an outsider in Venice, regardless of race. This is most apparent in cross-racial cast productions such as Patrick Stewart’s 2000 performance as a lone white soldier in a world of black and Middle Eastern politicians, generals and diplomats.

It is, however, the play’s universal themes of jealousy, trust, innocence and naiveté, as well as its a broad scope of human emotion that have made *Othello* one of Shakespeare’s most challenging and popular plays. It is performed frequently, and been the source of numerous films (including the 2001 “O” set in a wealthy New York high school), operas and ballets. Verdi’s *Otello* is a staple in the repertory of many opera companies. As each production interprets the play through its own cultural and historical lens, *Othello* continues to captivate audiences and resonate on many personal as well as social levels.



Robert Cuccioli as Iago. Photo: Gerry Goodstein ©2011.

## Director's Thoughts on *Othello*

*"I am not what I am."*

*Othello* was the last of Shakespeare's great tragedies that I had not yet directed, and it was not until a few years ago that I added it to my director's wish list. The others called out to me sooner, perhaps because they spoke of things I was dealing with in my own life. My interest in *Othello* derived more from a frustration of never having seen a production that aroused my emotions in the way the play did when I read it, and I have, over the past few years, spent some time pondering the reasons why. And so, I embarked on this project with a singular goal: to tell the tale in a way that would move you. It's been a tough self-assignment, for though many scholars maintain that it's Shakespeare's "most perfect play," they are claiming that from a dramaturgical point of view. It is in the actual playing of it that its difficulties bubble to the surface like a messy cauldron.

As I joked to my cast on the first day of rehearsal, if one had to distill the play down to one sentence, one could say it's a tale about the downside of trust. And while that is true, it is, as all Shakespeare's plays are, about much, much more. I do want to say what I think it is not. I do not feel it's a play about racism. It is no more about racism than *Romeo and Juliet* is about street gangs. Racism is there, it's inherent in the plot, just as the warring gangs of young men are inherent to the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*. But *Romeo and Juliet* is, at its core, a play about love and hate, and *Othello* is, at its core, is a play about jealousy, trust and betrayal, and those things are explored with agonizing profundity in *Othello*.

*"Men should be what they seem."*

I am mystified as to why, for four centuries, people keep referring to the jealous Moor. It is not Othello who is the jealous creature of this story. It is Iago. He is chronically jealous; it is his constant state of being. He is jealous of many people and many things, and he knows the emotion like the back of his hand. He has, by the time we meet him, embraced his jealousy, and because he is so intimate with the "green-eyed monster," he has learned to make it his brilliant, insinuating weapon of destruction. Othello, on the other hand, is a man of trust - to a mortal fault. His one and only bout of jealousy, induced and provoked by Iago, proves fatal. Indeed all of Iago's "targets" are creatures of great trust, and their Achilles heel proves to be, in almost every case, their innocence or naiveté.

In our first conversation about the play, Bob Cuccioli said to me that he felt like Iago was an "emotional pyromaniac." It is an apt and astute label. Iago constructs pyres from half-truths and careful manipulations, and then ignites emotional conflagrations that he watches from "behind the yellow tape" like a turned-on arsonist. In the final scenes of the play, we watch horrified as his "flames" consume everyone in their path.

The questions the play provokes are vast. Is Iago innately evil or just a very, very bad man who has become that way because of circumstance? What are those circumstances, and are they also his motives? Is Iago amoral or immoral? Is this Iago's play or Othello's? Is it Iago's play but Othello's tragedy? Is the "blindness" that Othello exhibits tenable? Why are all these characters so gullible and easily manipulated by Iago? The answers are as varied and debatable as anything in Shakespeare's most complex works, but as one discusses the profusion of issues and themes in the play — appearance versus reality, society's treatment of outsiders, racial prejudice, the nature of evil, the importance of reputation and honor, and the treatment of women, the nature of jealousy, class/status bigotry, the art of deception, sexual and identity insecurity, etc., etc. — one starts to glean answers. And in the end, out of all of Shakespeare's great epic tragedies, I think this one is the closest to our everyday understanding, and therefore, our hearts. It is, essentially, a domestic tragedy. The character's foibles and strengths are those we all share and understand. Their dilemmas and fears not far from our own. None of us gets through life without having been a victim, at some time or other, of a master manipulator. And those who manipulate, rarely, like Iago, seem to have a single, tangible goal. Yes, they may be bilking us for money or using us for concrete gains, but there often seems to be a secondary "pay-off" for them — one far more mysterious to us, unsettling in its obscurity, and chilling in its visceral nature.

*"I think you think I love you."*

Anyone who has felt jealousy in its most potent form understands this play. It is, according to most, the worst emotion — many a man or woman has shut down emotionally rather than ever risk experiencing it again. But what tales the "green-eyed monster" has inspired! And this is the best of them.

-Bonnie J. Monte

### *On the Issue of Racism:*

“I think this play is racist, and I think it is not. But *Othello’s* example shows me that if I insist on resolving the contradiction, I will forge only lies and distortion. As this exploration of texts has shown, the discourse of racial difference is inescapably embedded in the play just as it was embedded in Shakespeare’s culture and our own. To be totally free of racism, one would have to invent a new language with no loaded words, no color discriminations, and no associations of blackness with evil, whiteness with good. White and black are opposed in the play’s language – in what we hear – and in what we see during performance. When Shakespeare tackled Cinthio’s tale of a Moor and his ancient, he had no choice but to use this discourse. Shakespeare, and we, are necessarily implicated in its tangled web.

The wonder of *Othello* is that Shakespeare was able to exploit the full complexity of that discourse, showing expectations gone topsy-turvy with a white villain opposed to a black man of heroic proportion. Even though the predominant typology of white over black is only temporarily subverted in fits and starts within the play, that subversion is itself an incredible artistic triumph.”

-Virginia Mason Vaughan



Costume renderings of Desdemona by Paul Canada.



Iago and Othello (Robert Cuccioli and Lindsay Smiling) in The Shakespeare Theatre production of *Othello*. Photo: Gerry Goodstein © 2011.

## The Jealous Outsider(s)

On the surface, *Othello* is often seen as merely a play about a jealous outsider who is gulled by a manipulative villain. One loses a great deal that this masterpiece has to offer by cramming it into these simple (and somewhat erroneous) terms. Certainly, one cannot examine *Othello* without considering the issues of race and the cultural outsider. But this is a deeply human and personal tragedy. Unlike Shakespeare's other great dramas in which domestic strife leads to national turmoil, *Othello's* upheavals are wholly domestic, with themes of jealousy, trust, and honest echoing throughout the play.

### THE OUTSIDER:

Othello is an outsider in the world of Shakespeare's play. He is a Moor in a world of Venetians. He is black (or tawny in some productions) in a world of white men and women. He is a soldier in a world of nobles. His cultural ways, curious to the Venetians, also are considered frightening or the cause for suspicion. Othello, though, has a desire to belong. In his newly adopted world, he serves faithfully the government of Venice and falls in love with the fair Desdemona. As a military man, he claims to be unskilled in the art of oration as he pleads to the Duke. His unease in the ways of love and courtship

in this strange land require him to use Cassio as a go-between with Desdemona. The vulnerability born of being an outsider, is an important ingredient that allows Iago's manipulations to destroy him.

Othello is not, however, the only outsider in Shakespeare's tragedy. Desdemona is banished from her father's home after he discovers her marriage to Othello. Cassio is an outsider in the Venetian army. Though promoted to lieutenant, he is a Florentine, and his weak brain for alcohol places him as an outsider in the soldiers' celebrations. Roderigo is an outsider in Cyprus, having followed the Venetian army at the prompting of Iago. Bianca is an outsider in a man's world without any

### Honest Deceptions?

Perceptions can be deceiving, especially when a spin-doctor is the source of all the villainous machinations. Iago is called "honest" fifteen times in the play. It's interesting to note that the word appears a total of 42 times in this play of deception.

contact (until after the attack on Cassio) with either of the other two women in the play. Possibly the most compelling outsider in the play, however, is Iago. Unlike the other characters in the play, Othello's disgruntled ensign casts himself in the role of outsider. As an observer and manipulator, he keeps a calculated distance from others even as he seems to be closest to their hearts. His role as the outsider not only spurs his rage, but is also essential to the successful completion of his plots against Othello, Desdemona, and Cassio.

### THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER:

Most often, academics refer to Othello as the "jealous Moor." Based on all that is said about him in the play, however, this label seems inappropriate. He is *not* a jealous man, but rather a noble, level-headed, honest, loving and respected man whose one bout of jealousy brings about his ultimate destruction. The theme of jealousy, though, touches many people in the play. Bianca is jealous of Cassio's newest love interest (who does not exist). Roderigo is jealous for the love Desdemona shows to Othello, as well as the love he *believes* she shows to Cassio (which does not exist). Emilia seems jealous of the loving and true relationship Desdemona shares with Othello early in the play.

The most jealous character in the play, however, is Iago himself. One may see him as simply the "villainous ensign," but it is his chronic and obsessive envy and jealousy that sparks his villainy. Some of the people Iago suggests (or outright states) that he is jealous of are:

- Othello for his position as general
- Cassio for being promoted by Othello to lieutenant
- Othello for the love Desdemona bears him

He seems obsessed with these jealousies and, in fact, they are the fuel in the engine that drives the play. These jealousies even lead to further false suspicions, including his belief that both Othello and Cassio have slept with his wife.

As one looks more deeply into the play and its characters, one sees a rich and compelling examination of the human psyche, heart and soul—one that rivals Shakespeare's other great tragedies.

### Othello Who?

Despite being the titular character in the play, Othello's name is rarely stated. More often he is referred to as "the Moor," "general," "husband", and several rather offensive titles given him by Iago and Roderigo. Even those closest to him more often refer to him by his standing rather than his given name.

Though he is the sole subject of the events in the first three scenes of the play, his name is not stated until he arrives at court before the Duke, two and half scenes into the play.

## Commentary and Criticism

**SHAKESPEARE'S GREATEST TRAGEDY?** - "Between about 1599 and 1608 Shakespeare wrote a series of tragedies...(which by) universal consent...established him in the front rank of the world's dramatists...While the four or five tragedies that begin with *Hamlet* (including *Julius Caesar*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*) are usually seen as the peak of his achievement, many critics have praised either *Hamlet* or *King Lear* as his greatest tragedy. Why not *Othello*? This, the third of the mature tragedies, contains arguably the best plot, two of Shakespeare's most original characters, the most powerful scene in any of his plays, and poetry second to none. We can fairly call it the most exciting of the tragedies—even the most unbearably exciting—so why not the greatest?"

THE ARDEN OTHELLO

Edited by E.A.J. Honigmann, 1997

**SHAKESPEARE'S VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE** - "The beauties of this play impress themselves so strongly upon the attention of the reader, that they can draw no aid from critical illustration. The fiery openness of Othello, magnanimous, artless and credulous, boundless in his confidence, ardent in his affection, inflexible in his resolution, and obdurate in his revenge; the cool malignity of Iago, silent in his resentment, subtle in his designs, and studious at once in his interest and his vengeance; the soft simplicity of Desdemona, confident of merit, and conscious of innocence, her artless perseverance in her suit, and her slowness to suspect that she can be suspected, are such proofs of Shakespeare's skill in human nature, as, I suppose, it is vain to seek in any modern writer."

GENERAL REMARKS ON OTHELLO

Samuel Johnson, 1765

**OTHELLO AS A "ROMANTIC HERO"** - "Othello is, in one sense of the word, by far the most romantic figure among Shakespeare's heroes. He does not belong to our world, and he seems to enter it from we do not know whence - almost as if from wonderland. There is something mysterious in his descent from men of royal siege; in his wanderings in vast deserts and among marvelous peoples; in his tales of magic handkerchiefs and prophetic sibyls; in the sudden vague glimpses we get of numberless battles and sieges in which he has played the hero and has born a charmed life; even in chance references to his baptism, his being sold to slavery, his sojourn to Aleppo."

SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

A.C. Bradley, 1904

**THE OUTSIDER** - "(Othello) is a man apart. A renegade from his own faith and an outcast from his own people. He is, indeed, the valued servant of the Venetian state, but is not regarded as an equality with its citizens... (He is) a homeless man, who had never experienced the soothing influences of domesticity. In short, (Othello is) a man strong in action but weak in intellectuality, of natural nobility of character, knowing no guile in himself and incapable of seeing it in others; but withal sensitive on the subject of his birth, and inclined to regard himself as an inheritor of the curse of outcast Ishmael."

SHORT STUDIES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLOTS

Ransome

**THE ISSUE OF JEALOUSY** - "Othello does not kill Desdemona in jealousy, but in a conviction forced upon him by the almost superhuman art of Iago - such a conviction as any man would and must have entertained, who had believed Iago's honesty as Othello did. We, the audience, know that Iago is a villain from the beginning; but, in considering the essence of Shakespeare's Othello, we must perseveringly place ourselves in his situation, and under his circumstances. Then we shall immediately feel the fundamental difference between the solemn agony of the noble Moor, and the wretched fishing jealousy of Leontes (from *The Winter's Tale*)."

LECTURES ON SHAKESPEARE

Coleridge

**LOVE AND HONOR** - "The struggle in Othello is not between love and jealousy, but between love and honor, and Iago's machinations are exactly adapted to bring these two latter passions into collision. Indeed it is the Moor's very freedom from a jealous temper, that enables the villain to get the mastery of him. Such a character as his, so open, so generous, so confiding, is just the one to be taken in the strong toils of Iago's cunning."

OTHELLO: THE ALDUS EDITION

Introduction by Henry Norman Hudson, A.M.

## Selections from *Gli Hecatommithi*

*This passage is taken from "Il Moro Di Venezia" found in Gli Hecatommithi by Giovanni Battista Cinthio, translated by Geoffrey Bullough (Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare, Vol. VII, 1973). The original text, published in 1566, is the principal source for Shakespeare's Othello. Note the obvious similarities, and the numerous changes made by Shakespeare when writing his Othello.*

*There was once in Venice a Moor, a very gallant man, who, because he was personally valiant and had given proof in warfare of great prudence and skillful energy, was very dear to the Signoria, who in rewarding virtuous actions ever advanced the interests of the Republic. It happened that a virtuous Lady of wondrous beauty called Disdemona, impelled not by female appetite but by the Moor's good qualities, fell in love with him, and he, vanquished by the Lady's beauty and noble mind, likewise was enamoured of her. So propitious was their mutual love that although the Lady's relatives did all they could to make her take another husband, they were united in marriage and lived together in such concord and tranquillity while they remained in Venice, that never a word passed between them that was not loving.*

*It happened that the Venetian lords made a change in the forces that they used to maintain in Cyprus; and they chose the Moor as Commandant of the soldiers whom they sent there. Although he was pleased by the honour offered him...his happiness was lessened when he considered the length and dangers of the voyage, thinking that Disdemona would be much troubled by it. The Lady, who had no other happiness on earth but the Moor... could hardly wait for the hour when he would set off with his men, and she would accompany him to that honourable post. Shortly afterwards, having donned his armour and made all ready for the journey, he embarked in the galley with his Lady, and with a sea of the utmost tranquillity arrived safely in Cyprus.*

*The Moor had in his company an Ensign of handsome presence but of the most scoundrelly nature in the world. He was in high favour with the Moor, who had no suspicion of his wickedness; for although he had the basest of minds, he so cloaked the vileness hidden in his heart with high sounding and noble words, and by his manner, that he showed himself in the likeness of a Hector or an Achilles. This false man had likewise taken to Cyprus his wife, a fair and honest young woman. Being an Italian she was much loved by the Moor's wife, and spent the greater part of the day with her.*

*In the same company there was also a Corporal who was very dear to the Moor. This man went frequently to the Moor's house and often dined with him and his wife. The Lady, knowing him*

*so well liked by her husband, gave him proofs of the greatest kindness, and this was much appreciated by the Moor.*

*The wicked Ensign, taking no account of the faith he had pledged to his wife, and of the friendship, loyalty and obligations he owed the Moor, fell ardently in love with Disdemona. He sought therefore in various ways, as deviously as he could, to make the Lady aware that he desired her. But she, whose every thought was for the Moor, never gave a thought to the Ensign...And all the things he did to arouse her feelings for him had no more effect than if he had not tried them. Whereupon he imagined that this was because she was in love with the Corporal, and he wondered how he might remove the latter from her sight. Not only did he turn his mind to this, but the love which he had felt for the Lady now changed to the bitterest hate, and he gave himself up to studying how to bring it about that once the Corporal were killed, if he himself could not enjoy the Lady, then the Moor should not have her either. Turning over in his mind diverse schemes, all wicked and treacherous, in the end he decided to accuse her of adultery, and to make her husband believe that the Corporal was the adulterer... Wherefore he set himself to wait until time and place opened a way for him to start his wicked enterprise.*

*Not long afterwards the Moor deprived the Corporal of his rank for having drawn*



Iago raises suspicions in Othello.

Source: Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: Henry Altemus Company, 1901)

his sword and wounded a soldier while on guard-duty. Desdemona was grieved by this and tried many times to reconcile the Moor with him. Whereupon the Moor told the rascally Ensign that his wife importuned him so much for the Corporal that he feared he would be obliged to reinstate him. The evil man saw in this a hint for setting in train the deceits he had planned, and said, "Perhaps Desdemona has good cause to look on him so favourably!" "Why is that?" asked the Moor. "I do not wish," said the Ensign, "to come between man and wife, but if you keep your eyes open you will see for yourself." Nor for all the Moor's inquiries would the Ensign go beyond this: nonetheless his words left such a sharp thorn in the Moor's mind, that he gave himself up to pondering intensely what they could mean. He became quite melancholy, and one day, when his wife was trying to soften his anger towards the Corporal, begging him not to condemn the loyal service and friendship of many years just for one small fault, especially since the Corporal had been reconciled to the man he had struck, the Moor burst out in anger and said to her "there must be a very powerful reason why you take such trouble for this fellow, for he is not your brother, nor even a kinsman, yet you have him so much at heart."

The Lady, all courtesy and modesty, replied: "I should not like you to be angry with me ... Only a very good purpose made me speak to you about this, but rather than have you angry with me I shall never say another word on the subject."

The Moor, however, seeing the earnestness with which his wife had again pleaded for the Corporal, guessed that the Ensign's words had been intended to suggest that Desdemona was in love with the Corporal, and he went in deep depression to the scoundrel and urged him to speak more openly. The Ensign, intent on injuring the unfortunate Lady, after pretending not to wish to say anything that might displease the Moor, appeared to be overcome by his entreaties and said, "I must confess that it grieves me greatly to have to tell you something that must be in the highest degree painful to you; but since you wish me to tell you, and the regard that I must have of your honour as my master spurs me on, I shall not fail in my duty to answer your request. You must know therefore that it is hard for your Lady to see the Corporal in disgrace for the simple reason that she takes her pleasure with him whenever he comes to your house. The woman has come to dislike your blackness."



Cassio and Desdemona (Jon Barker and Victoria Mack) in The Shakespeare Theatre's production of *Othello*. Photo: Gerry Goodstein ©2011.

These words struck the Moor's heart to its core; but in order to learn more (although he believed what the Ensign had said to be true, through the suspicion already sown in his mind) he said, with a fierce look: "I do not know what holds me back from cutting out that outrageous tongue of yours which has dared to speak such insults against my Lady." Then the Ensign: "Captain," he said, "I did not expect any other reward for my loving service; but since my duty and my care for your honour have carried me so far, I repeat that the matter stands exactly as you have just heard it, and if your Lady with a false show of love for you, has so blinded your eyes that you have not seen what you ought to have seen, that does not mean that I am not speaking the truth. For this Corporal has told me all, like one whose happiness does not seem complete until he has made someone else acquainted with it." And he added: "If I had not feared your wrath, I should, when he told me, have given him the punishment he deserved by killing him. But since letting you know what concerns you more than anyone else brings me so undeserved a reward, I wish that I had kept silent for by doing so I should not have fallen into your displeasure."

Then the Moor, in the utmost anguish, said, "If you do not make me see with my own eyes what you have told me, be assured, I shall make you realize that it would have been better for you had you been born dumb."

[For some time the Ensign wondered what to do next, because] his knowledge of the Lady's chastity [made it seem impossible that he should ever be able to make the Moor believe him; and



then] his thoughts twisting and turning in all directions, the scoundrel thought of a new piece of mischief.

The Moor's wife often went...to the house of the Ensign's wife, and stayed with her a good part of the day; wherefore seeing that she sometimes carried with her a handkerchief embroidered most delicately in the Moorish fashion, which the Moor had given her and which was treasured by the Lady and her husband too, the Ensign planned to take it from her secretly, and thereby prepare her final ruin. [One day, whilst Disdemona was playing with his child, the Ensign stole the handkerchief; he dropped it in the Corporal's room.]

[The Ensign] spoke to the Corporal one day while the Moor was standing where he could see them as they talked; and chatting of quite other matters than the Lady, he laughed heartily and, displaying great surprise, he moved his head about and gestured with his hands, acting as if he were listening to marvels. As soon as the Moor saw them separate he went to the Ensign to learn what the other had told him; and the Ensign, after making him entreat for a long time, finally declared: "He has hidden nothing from me. He tells me that he has enjoyed your wife every time you have given them the chance by your absence, and on the last occasion she gave him the handkerchief which you gave her as a present when you married her." The Moor thanked the Ensign and it seemed obvious to him that if he found that the Lady no longer had the handkerchief, then all must be as the Ensign claimed.

Wherefore one day after dinner he asked her for this handkerchief. The unhappy woman, who had greatly feared this, grew red in the face at the request "I do not know," she said, "why I cannot find it..."

Leaving her, the Moor began to think how he might kill his wife, and the Corporal too, in such a way that he would not be blamed for it. And since he was obsessed with this, day and night, the Lady inevitably noticed that he was not the same towards her as he was formerly. Many times she said to him, "What is the matter with you? What is troubling you? Whereas you used to be the gayest of men, you are now the most melancholy man alive."

The Moor invented various excuses, but she was not at all satisfied ... Sometimes she would say to the Ensign's wife, "I

do not know what to make of the Moor. He used to be all love towards me, but in the last few days he has become quite another man; and I fear greatly that I shall be a warning to young girls not to marry against their parents' wishes; and Italian ladies will learn by my example not to tie themselves to a man whom Nature, Heaven, and the manner of life separate from us. But because I know that he is very friendly with your husband, and confides in him, I beg you, if you have learned anything from him which you can tell me, that you will not fail to help me." She wept bitterly as she spoke ...

The Corporal [who had recognized the handkerchief and tried, without success, to return it] had a woman at home who worked the most wonderful embroidery on lawn, and seeing the handkerchief and learning that it belonged to the Moor's wife, and that it was to be returned to her, she began to make a similar one before it went back. While she was doing so, the Ensign noticed that she was working near a window where she could be seen by whoever passed by on the street. So he brought the Moor and made him see her, and the latter now regarded it as certain that the most virtuous Lady was indeed an adulteress. He arranged with the Ensign to kill her and the Corporal, and they discussed how it might be done. The Moor begged the Ensign to kill the Corporal, promising to remain eternally grateful to him. The Ensign refused to undertake such a thing, as being too difficult and dangerous, for the Corporal was as skilful as he was courageous; but after much entreaty, and being given a large sum of money, he was persuaded to say that he would tempt Fortune.

Soon after they had resolved on this, the Corporal, issuing one dark night from the house of a courtesan with whom he used to amuse himself, was accosted by the Ensign, sword in hand, who directed a blow at his legs to make him fall down; and he cut the right leg entirely through, so that the wretched man fell. The Ensign was immediately on him to finish him off, but the Corporal, who was valiant and used to blood and death, had drawn his sword, and wounded as he was he set about defending himself, while shouting in a loud voice: "I am being murdered."

At that the Ensign, hearing people come running...began to flee, so as not to be caught there; then, turning back he pretended to have run up on hearing the noise. Mingling with the others, and seeing the leg cut off, he judged that if the Corporal were not



Iago and Desdemona (Robert Cuccioli and Victoria Mack) in The Shakespeare Theatre's production of *Othello*. Photo: Gerry Goodstein ©2011.

already dead, he soon would die of the wound, and although he rejoiced inwardly, he outwardly grieved for the Corporal as if he had been his own brother.

[Hearing of the Corporal's death, Desdemona grieved for him; but the Moor] put the worst possible construction [on her grief. He plotted with the Ensign to murder her, they decided to use neither poison nor the dagger, but to beat her to death with a stocking filled with sand and then pull down the ceiling to give the appearance of an accident. The Ensign hit her on the head, and Desdemona cried to the Moor for help, but he said,] "You

wicked woman, you are having the reward of your infidelity. This is how women are treated who, pretending to love their husbands, put horns on their heads."

The wretched Lady, hearing this and feeling herself near to death (for the Ensign had given her another blow), called on Divine justice to witness her fidelity, since earthly justice failed, and she lay still, slain by the impious Ensign...

Next day Desdemona was buried, amid the universal mourning of the people. But God, the just observer of men's hearts, did not intend such vile wickedness to go without proper punishment. He ordained that the Moor, who had loved the Lady more than his life, on finding himself deprived of her should feel such longing that he went about like one beside himself, searching for her in every part of the house. Realizing now that the Ensign was the cause of his losing his Lady and all joy in life, he held the villain in such abhorrence that he could not bear even to see him; and if he had not been afraid of the inviolable justice of the Venetian lords, he would have slain him openly...

[The Ensign betrayed the plot accusing the Moor of the murder, to the Captain, who told the Venetian authorities; the Moor was arrested, tortured and condemned to exile. Eventually he was murdered by Desdemona's relatives. The Ensign was later arrested, and] tortured so fiercely that his inner organs were ruptured; [then he was sent home,] where he died miserably. It appeared marvellous to everybody that such malignity could have been discovered in a human heart; and the fate of the unhappy Lady was lamented, with some blame for her father... No less was the Moor blamed, who had believed too foolishly.

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# Are You SURE This Is English?

Contrary to popular belief, Shakespeare and his contemporaries did not write in Old English, or even Middle English. **PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE 16TH AND EARLY 17TH CENTURIES WROTE IN MODERN ENGLISH.** Shakespeare spoke (and wrote in) the same language which we speak today. It is possible to be thrown a bit by grammatical “carry-overs” from earlier English [“thee” and “thou” instead of “you”] and the poetic liberties that Shakespeare took, but there is no doubt that the words and syntax used in his plays can be understood today without any “translation.” To help clarify this point, here are some examples of Old, Middle and Modern English.

## What did Shakespeare sound like?

While we may associate Shakespeare with the “refined” British accent of an Ian McKellen or Judi Dench, linguistic scholars suggest that the closest approximation to the London accent of Shakespeare’s day is the accent heard nowadays in the Appalachian region of the United States.

## Old English (500 - 1150 CE)

When Julius Caesar invaded Britain in BCE 55-4, the Celtic (pronounced KEL-tic) tribes lived in the British Isles. Their languages survive today in the forms of Gaelic (Scotland and Ireland), Welsh (Wales) and Manx (Isle of Man). The Romans brought Latin to Britain. However, early English developed primarily from the language of tribes which invaded and settled England from what is now Germany. This language, known as Old English, was also influenced by the Latin spoken by Catholic missionaries from Rome as well as the Scandinavian dialects of Viking raiders and settlers.

### selection from *Beowulf*

author unknown, ca 800 CE

Oft Scyld Scëfing sceaðena prèstum,  
monegum mægðum meodo-setla oftèah,  
egsode eorlas. Syððan ærert wearð  
fèasceaft funden, hè þæs frofre gebàð,  
wèox under wolcnum, weorð-myndum þàh,  
oð-þæt him aeghwylc ymb-sittendra  
ofer hron-ràde hýran scolde,  
gomban gyldan. þæt wæs god cyning!

### IN MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

*Often Scyld the Scefing from squadroned foes,  
from many a tribe, the mead-bench tore,  
awing the earls. Since first he lay  
friendless, a foundling, fate repaid him:  
for he waxed under welkin, in wealth he throve,  
till before him the folk, both far and near,  
who lived by the whale-path, heard his mandate,  
gave him gift: a good king he!*

## Middle English (1150 - 1450 CE)

The conquest of England by the Norman army in 1066 brought great changes to English life and the English language. The Old French spoken by the Normans became for many years the language of the Royal Court and of English literature. Over time, the spoken English still used by the lower classes borrowed about 10,000 words from French, as well as certain grammatical structures. By the time English reappeared as a written, literary language in the 14th century, it only distantly resembled Old English. This German-French hybrid language is known as Middle English.

### selection from *The Canterbury Tales*

by Geoffrey Chaucer, ca 1390 CE

But natheless / while I haue tyme and space  
Er that I ferther / in this tale pace  
Me thynketh it acordant to resoun  
To telle yow / al the condiciun  
Of eeche of hem / so as it seemed to me  
And whiche they weere / and of what degree  
And eek in what array / that they were inne  
And at a knyght thanne wol I first bigynne.

### IN MODERN ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

*But nonetheless, while I have time and space  
Before I continue in this story  
I think it appropriate to speak of,  
To tell you, the condition  
Of each of them, as it seemed to me.  
And who was who, and of what degree,  
And in what fashion each was dressed.  
And with a knight then I will begin.*

## Modern English (1450 - present day)

With the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, the English language began to develop and mutate at an unprecedented rate. Books, previously a precious and expensive commodity, were now widely available to anyone with basic literacy. Works in Latin, Italian, Spanish, French and Portuguese were being translated by the hundreds, and the translators found it necessary to borrow and invent thousands of new words. English trade and exploration fueled even more cultural and linguistic exchange. The early Modern English of Shakespeare and his contemporaries has been referred to as “English in its adolescence”: daring, experimental, innovative and irreverent.

### selection from *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, ca 1595 CE

*Well, you have made a simple choice; you know not how to choose a man: Romeo! No, not he; though his face be better than any man's, yet his leg excels all men's; and for a hand, and a foot, and a body, though they be not to be talked on, yet they are past compare...*

## Shakespeare's Common Tongue

**alack** — expression of dismay or shock  
**anon** — soon, right away  
**aught** — nothing  
**avaunt** — go away  
**ere** — before  
**hath** — has  
**hence** — away (from here)  
**henceforth** — from now on  
**hither** — here  
**lest** — or else  
**naught** — nothing  
**oft** — often  
**perchance** — by chance, perhaps, maybe  
**sirrah** — [pronounced SEER-uh] “hey, you” as to someone of lower status  
**thee** — you  
**thence** — away, over there  
**thine** — yours  
**thither** — there  
**thou** — you  
**thy** — your  
**whence** — where  
**wherefore** — why [literally: “where is the ‘for’ or ‘reason?’ ”]  
**whither** — where

### ... and the “thys” have it

Often Shakespeare will alternate his usage of “thou” for “you”, or “thy” for “your”, or “thine” for “yours”. Though the words are synonymous, there is a great deal of information that can be obtained by looking closely at these choices.

The different uses of these pronouns have to do with status, relationship, degrees of intimacy and shifting attitudes. “You” is used in formal situations and conveys respect from the speaker. It is used when addressing royalty and parents. “Thou,” used in more informal settings, also can suggest contempt or aggression from the speaker. The use of “thou” places the speaker above the status of the person to whom s/he is speaking. Children are addressed using “thou,” thee” or “thy.” In a conversation between two people of equal status, the use of “you” suggests that everything is going along smoothly, whereas “thou” would suggest that there is some kind of upset or unrest in the relationship.

## Terms and Phrases Found in *OTHELLO*

**ACT I: scene i-**  
**‘swounds** — “God’s wounds”; an exclamation  
**tupping** — a derogatory colloquial reference to sexual intercourse  
**“making the beast with two backs”** — a derogatory colloquial reference to sexual intercourse  
**ancient** — standard bearer or ensign; not “old” in this context  
**kindred** — family  
**Moor** — a person with dark skin coloring, presumably of African or Middle Eastern decent; Othello  
**pray** — please  
**“deserve your pains”** — repay you for your trouble

**ACT I: scene iii-**  
**galleys** — ships  
**mountebanks** — quacks, crazy doctors, witch doctors  
**foul proceeding** — bad situation  
**beguiled** — tricked  
**mandate** — a command from an authority figure  
**vouch** — promise  
**wrought** — changed or shaped  
**overt** — public (not secret)  
**Sagitary** — the inn in which Desdemona and Othello have been staying

**ensign** — an officer ranking under lieutenant  
**vices** — faults, failings  
**bade** — past tense of bid; asked to  
**spake** — spoke  
**fortitude** — the physical or structural strength  
**“be content to slubber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous expedition”** — you must accept that the happiness of your marriage will be interrupted by your upcoming journey into battle  
**“Th’affair cries haste”** — the issue needs to be dealt with quickly  
**I prithee** — I beg of you  
**incontinently** — immediately  
**engendered** — conceived; “the idea has been formed”

**ACT II: scene i-**  
**descry** — to catch sight of from a distance  
**shot of courtesy** — a cannon shot, in friendly salute to arriving guests; a common naval salute  
**paragons description** — is even better than people can describe  
**contention** — competition  
**citadel** — a fortress commanding a city  
**chides** — scolds  
**“disembark my coffers”** — unload my belongings from the ship  
**“List me”** — listen to me

**lechery** — *extreme and inappropriate desire for sexual activity*  
**choler** — *hot tempered state-of-mind, angry*  
**displanting** — *removing*  
**by and by** — *in a little while*

**ACT II: scene iii-**

**wanton** — *unchaste; a willful, headstrong creature*  
**gallants** — *followers, men of pleasure*  
**“very poor and unhappy brains for drinking”** — *liquor goes right to my head; not much of a drinker*  
**cannikin** — *a small drinking can*  
**sixpence** — *an English silver coin*  
**mince** — *cut into small pieces*  
**sweeting** — *a term of endearment*  
**bestial** — *animal like, uncivilized*  
**speak parrot** — *babble senselessly*  
**hydra** — *a mythological dragon with five heads*  
**“subdue in any honest suit”** — *win or convince if the cause seems noble*  
**enmesh** — *to trap or snare, as in net or web*

**ACT III: scene iii-**

**languishes** — *becomes dispirited; appeals for sympathy*  
**errs in ignorance** — *mistakes not with intent, but by accident*  
**discern’st** — *distinguish*  
**Not a jot** — *not a bit*  
**haply** — *perhaps because*  
**chamberers** — *noble lords and ladies who spend most of their time indoors entertained by witty and sophisticated conversation*  
**remembrance** — *a keepsake*  
**wayward** — *self-willed; wrong-headed; perverse*  
**filch** — *to steal*  
**import** — *very important reason*  
**acknown** — *acknowledged*  
**on the rack** — *angered, emotionally tortured*  
**ocular** — *visual*  
**gape** — *stare*  
**lewd minx** — *worthless, unchaste woman; a whore*

**ACT III: scene iv**

**crusadoes** — *Portuguese coins, bearing figure of the cross; also a crusader*  
**castigation** — *corrective discipline*  
**heraldry** — *practice of granting notice*  
**chuck** — *a term of endearment*  
**rheum** — *a head cold; sinus pressure and drainage that offends*  
**amiable** — *lovable*  
**advocation** — *pleadings for a cause*  
**conception** — *mere fancy*  
**uttermost** — *extreme*  
**credulous** — *inclined to believe, especially on slight evidence*  
**reproach** — *disgrace*  
**epilepsy** — *known in Shakespeare’s day as “The Falling Sickness”*

**lethargy** — *morbid drowsiness*  
**encave** — *conceal*  
**construe** — *interpret*  
**caitiff** — *wretch*  
**hobby-horse** — *a loose woman, prostitute*  
**iniquity** — *wickedness*  
**cuckold** — *a man whose wife is unfaithful*  
**breach** — *disagreement, quarrel*  
**“by my troth”** — *“by my word”; a mild exclamation*  
**censure** — *opinion, criticism*

**ACT IV: scene ii**

**durst** — *dare*  
**procreants** — *procreators; people engaging in sexual intercourse*  
**halter** — *the hangman’s noose*  
**abode** — *location where one resides or stays*

**ACT IV: scene iii**

**incontinent** — *at once; wanting in self-restraint (chiefly reference to sexual appetite)*  
**forsake** — *renounce or turn away from*  
**“pour our treasures into foreign laps”** — *to cheat on; specifically “give (sexual) love meant for a spouse to another”*  
**scant** — *skimp, to cut short in amount*  
**galls** — *resentment*

**ACT V: scene i**

**miscarry** — *to be unsuccessful*  
**gait** — *manner of moving on feet*

**ACT V: scene ii**

**monumental alabaster** — *a white stone (such as marble or granite) often used for funeral monuments*  
**Promethean** — *two myths of Prometheus: 1) he stole fire from the Gods and gave it to human-kind; and 2) he is the creator of human-kind*  
**forfend** — *forbid*  
**perjury** — *lying under oath*  
**banish** — *send or drive away*  
**iterance** — *repetition*  
**pernicious** — *destructive, evil*  
**disprove** — *prove to be false*  
**apt** — *likely*  
**odious** — *hateful*  
**ensnared** — *captured*  
**malice** — *desire to cause injury or distress to another*  
**malignant** — *tending to produce death, deterioration or destruction*  
**traduced** — *to lower the reputation of; to slander*  
**smote** — *killed by striking as with a sword*  
**marred** — *detracted from wholeness or perfection*  
**Spartan dog** — *a kind of bloodhound; envy was sometimes represented as a snarling dog*

## What Did He Say?

This is an opportunity to test your comprehension of Shakespeare's language. Below you will find passages from *Othello*. Answer the questions for each passage as specifically as possible.

IAGO

O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;  
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock  
The meat it feeds on; that cuckold lives in bliss  
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;  
But, O, what damned minutes tells he o'er  
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves!

1. To whom is Iago speaking?
2. What is the purpose of this speech? Why is it ironic?
3. What is the "meat" that jealousy both mocks and feeds on?
4. What is a cuckold? Why does the cuckold live in bliss if he knows his fate? Why is he not miserable?
5. Iago suggests that there is something worse for a man than being a cuckold. What is it?

OTHELLO

I think my wife be honest and think she is not;  
I think that thou art just and think thou art not.  
I'll have some proof. Her name, that was as fresh  
As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black  
As mine own face. If there be cords, or knives,  
Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,  
I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!

1. To whom is Othello speaking?
2. In what part in the play does this speech come?
3. Whose name was once "as fresh as Dian's visage?" Who is Dian, and why is her visage ("face" or "mask") considered so fair and pure? Why is the name now begrimed?
4. Othello is torn in this speech. What has caused his distress?
5. The images become very violent in the end. Why?

EMILIA

But I do think it is their husbands' faults  
If wives do fall: say that they slack their duties,  
And pour our treasures into foreign laps,  
Or else break out in peevish jealousies,  
Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,  
Or scant our former having in despite;  
Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,  
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know  
Their wives have sense like them: they see and smell  
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,  
As husbands have.

1. To whom is Emilia speaking?
2. In what part of the play does this speech come? What is the purpose of this speech?
3. What "treasures" do husbands "pour in foreign laps?"
4. In a play in which jealousy inspires such violence, why do you think Emilia refers to as "peevish?"
5. Based on the text of this speech, one can suggest that Emilia has a personal connection with the subject. What do you think this speech may imply about her relationship with her own husband, Iago?

## Who Said That?

Match the spoken line to the character who speaks it. Two characters speak none of the quotes listed below.

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| A. "And what's he then that says I play the villain?"   | OTHELLO            |
| B. "I think this tale would win my daughter too."   | DESDEMONA          |
| C. "Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:<br>She has deceived her father, and may thee." | IAGO               |
| D. "Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost<br>my reputation!"                       | EMILIA             |
| E. "O Cassio, whence came this?<br>This is some token from a newer friend."                     | CASSIO             |
| F. "I will incontinently drown myself."   | RODERIGO           |
| G. "Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,<br>Be sure of it; give me the ocular proof."   | BRABANTIO          |
| H. "I cannot say 'whore':<br>It does abhor me now I speak the word."                            | THE DUKE OF VENICE |
| I. "Who would not make her husband a cuckold to<br>make him a monarch?"                         | LODOVICO           |
|   | MONTANO            |
|   | BIANCA             |

## Topics for Discussion

### About the Play

1. Why do you think it is possible for Iago to so quickly affect Othello's passionate love for Desdemona, and change it to jealousy and rage? Does this seem like a realistic shift in Othello's character? Consider what it is about Othello and the world in which he lives, that might make him quick to believe that Desdemona has been unfaithful. Support your argument.
2. Some critics consider Othello to be the greatest lover in all literature. Why do you think they make this statement? Support this belief with references from the play. Do you agree with this statement? Why? Why not? Use references from the play to support your argument.
3. Iago gives us several (sometimes conflicting) reasons to justify his actions. Name the reasons he gives. Do you think any of his reasons are justified? Does he have just cause for doing what he does? Do you believe that he is telling us (the audience) the truth? If he is lying to the other characters on stage, does that mean he may also be lying to us? Why do you think Iago does what he does in the play? Support your argument.
4. Many academics and artists consider Shakespeare ahead of his time because of the deeply psychological approach he used when penning his characters. None of the characters in this play are two-dimensional stereotypes. An innocent character is discovered lying. An evil character shows us reason for pity. Consider the principal characters in the play (Othello, Iago, Desdemona, Cassio, Emilia, and Roderigo). In what way does Shakespeare show different aspects of each of these characters, and avoid making them mere stereotypes? Use specific examples from the text to support your statements.
5. What role does each character play in this tragedy's bloody conclusion? Is anyone wholly innocent of responsibility? What could each of the principal characters have done to prevent at least some of the bloodshed? Support your argument.
6. Do you think that Shakespeare intended this play to have a moral, or to teach a lesson? If so, what do you think this moral is? Support your argument. Compare Shakespeare's play and Cinthio's story (found on page 13 of this study guide). How have the modifications made by Shakespeare altered the story? Did Cinthio seem to have a clear moral in mind? If so, what is it? Support your argument.

7. There are many different language themes in the play: the use of irony, the use of sarcasm, the use of prose vs. verse, and many different through lines of imagery. One of these imagistic through lines has to do with animal images. Track one of the language themes throughout the play and discuss why and how Shakespeare utilized it in his writing.

### About the Production

1. Many critics have debated whether Shakespeare intended Othello to be played as a black or as an olive-skinned Moor of North Africa. What decision has the director made in casting this particular production? How do you think an audience's interpretation of *Othello* would vary based on the race of the actor playing the title role? Would the audience's interpretation be altered? Support your belief.
2. Describe as concisely as possible the world of this production. Where has the artistic team set the play? Are the actors wearing classic Elizabethan clothing? Has it been set in a blasted-out urban wasteland? Would you consider the world dark and jagged or sophisticated and bright? Be specific. Include details about the costumes and scenic elements, including colors, textures, and shapes. How do the sound and music choices help clarify the location and time in which this production has been set? Are these choices different than what you expected before you saw the play? How so? Do you like the decisions made? Why do you think the artistic team decided to set the play in this world? What does this say about their interpretation of the play? Did you like the choice? Support your argument?
3. If you have already read the play, did seeing it performed alter your interpretation of the story? Was anything clarified in performance that you found confusing when reading the play? Did the actors interpret the characters in the same manner as you did? Were any characters greatly different than you expected them to be performed? How so? Be specific.

## “Test Your Understanding” Quiz

- Shakespeare’s plays are most often written in –
  - rhyming couplets.
  - old English.
  - blank verse.
  - prose.
- By what means does Brabantio believe Othello has “taken” his daughter Desdemona?
  - lies & deceit
  - witchcraft & potions
  - telling stories of his life
  - love poems & gifts
- Who reveals to Brabantio that his daughter and the Moor have been secretly married?
  - Cassio
  - Montano & Lodovico
  - Iago & Roderigo
  - Emilia
- Roderigo is in love with whom?
  - Bianca
  - Emilia
  - Katherina
  - Desdemona
- \_\_\_\_\_ tells \_\_\_\_\_ that she thinks “it is their husbands’ faults if wives do fail” in the “willow song” scene.
  - Emilia/Desdemona
  - Desdemona/Othello
  - Emilia/Iago
  - Bianca/Cassio
- This play takes place in a city and on an island. Name them.
  - Naples and Caliban
  - Venice and Cyprus
  - Rome and Crete
  - Athens and Oberonia
- Which two of the reasons listed below does Iago give for hating the Moor?
  - He believes Othello has slept with his wife.
  - Othello beats him repeatedly for the slightest of infractions.
  - He was not promoted to lieutenant.
  - He gives no reason to explain his actions.
- Who kills Cassio in the play?
  - Roderigo
  - Cassio
  - Iago
  - no one
- Cassio names “our great captain’s captain.” Iago speaks of a character who is “now the general.” Of whom are they speaking?
  - Montano, Governor of Cyprus
  - Othello, the Venetian general
  - Brabantio, Othello’s father-in-law
  - Desdemona, Othello’s wife
- Why is Othello sent by the Duke and Senators of Venice to Cyprus?
  - As punishment for marrying Desdemona against her father’s will
  - To defend the island from a threatened attack by Turkish fleets
  - To act as an interpreter for a visiting Senator in Cyprus
  - As a vacation in recognition of his great victories in battle
- Iago’s punishment at the end of the play is –
  - public execution.
  - to live out the rest of his life as a slave.
  - left to be determined by Cassio, newly named governor of Cyprus.
  - left to the judgment of the Duke of Venice.
- Which of these characters is still alive at the end of the play?
  - Iago
  - Desdemona
  - Emilia
  - Roderigo
- What treasured item does Desdemona lose in the course of the play which is later used against her?
  - her wedding ring
  - a love poem from Othello
  - her handkerchief
  - a jeweled necklace
- Who wishes to be remembered as “one who loved not wisely, but too well?”
  - Othello
  - Emilia
  - Roderigo
  - Desdemona



## Follow-up Activities

1. **“Critics’ Corner”** Write a review of this production of *Othello*. Be sure to include specific information and your own reactions to both the acting and the design elements (lights, set, costumes and sound). Explain what you liked and disliked, and support your opinions. Then submit your review to The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey’s Education Department, or see if it can be published in your school newspaper.
2. **“Alert the media!”** This play would certainly pack a news ticker: the secret elopement of a foreigner and a beloved daughter of a senator, the threat of a naval invasion, a drunken brawl which leads to the demotion of a key military figure, and the subsequent deaths of Othello, Desdemona, Emilia, and Roderigo. Assign these and other big events of the play to members of the class and create appropriate television or newspaper coverage. How do you think the people of Venice and Cyprus felt about these events?
3. **“I learn by this letter...”** Write a letter or diary entry from the point of view of one of the characters, discussing an event or situation in the play. For example: a letter from Othello detailing his love to Desdemona; a letter from Lodovico to the Senators of Venice explaining the unbelievable events surrounding Othello’s demise; a selection from Emilia’s diary addressing the events taking place since their arrival in Cyprus; or Iago’s final confession from prison, etc. Be sure to incorporate text from the play as much as possible.
4. **“15-minute Shakespeare”** Divide into five groups, and have each group take one act of the play. Your task is to create a three-minute version of your act, using only Shakespeare’s words. Choose carefully the lines from your act that carry the most important information and advance the story. When each group is done, you will have a 15-minute version of *Othello* which you can perform for one another. Afterwards, discuss both the process of adaptation and how your “abridgement” compared to the much more modest cuts which director Bonnie J. Monte made for this production.
5. **“A Director Prepares”** *Othello* has long captured the imaginations of directors and designers for stage and screen. Individually or in small groups, come up with your own scenic or costume designs for the play. Find a line or image expressed in the play as your “launch pad.” You can use drawings and collage as well as writing to explain and justify your design to the class.
6. **“Speak the Speech...”** In small groups, work to present a short passage of the text (any one of Iago’s soliloquies, for example) to the class. Each group should come up with its own unique presentation: different rhythms, echoing or underscoring key words or phrases, simple props, movement, etc. After each group has presented its interpretation of the text, discuss what was successful about each one. From this, you can develop a rubric for what makes a good performance.

### Teachers:

Do you have activities or exercises to suggest for this play? We are always looking for new ideas to inspire students (and teachers). Send your suggestions to [info@ShakespeareNJ.org](mailto:info@ShakespeareNJ.org) and we will share them with other teachers, and maybe even include them in future study guides.



Iago and Roderigo (Robert Cuccioli and Matt Bradford Sullivan) in The Shakespeare Theatre's production of *Othello*. Photo: Gerry Goodstein ©2011.

### “How do you remember all those lines?” or “Words, Words, Words!”

Hamlet is the largest role in Shakespeare’s canon, and one of the most prized among actors. As a reference, here is a list of major Shakespearean characters and the number of lines (and words) they speak in the Folio editions of the plays.

Hamlet (HAMLET)	1,507 (11,563)
Richard (RICHARD III)	1,145 (8,826)
<b>IAGO (OTHELLO)</b>	<b>1,094 (8,434)</b>
Henry (HENRY V)	1,036 (8,338)
<b>OTHELLO (OTHELLO)</b>	<b>879 (6,237)</b>

Duke (MEASURE)	858 (6,536)
Lear (KING LEAR)	753 (5,592)
Macbeth (MACBETH)	705 (5,291)
Prospero (TEMPEST)	643 (4,700)
Romeo (R&J)	616 (4,677)

Rosalind (AYLI)	721 (5,698)
Cleopatra (A&C)	670 (4,686)
Juliet (R&J)	541 (4,271)

<b>DESDEMONA (OTHELLO)</b>	<b>388 ( 2,752)</b>
Beatrice (MUCH ADO)	298 (2,359)
Katherina (SHREW)	219 (1,759)

Source: A COMPLETE AND SYSTEMATIC CONCORDANCE TO THE WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE; Marvin Spevack

#### “Test Your Understanding” Quiz

##### Answer Guide

- |        |       |       |
|--------|-------|-------|
| 1. C   | 2. B  | 3. C  |
| 4. D   | 5. A  | 6. B  |
| 7. A&C | 8. D  | 9. D  |
| 10. B  | 11. C | 12. A |
| 13. C  | 14. A |       |

#### Who Said That? Answer Guide

- |                       |              |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| A. Iago               | F. Roderigo  |
| B. The Duke of Venice | G. Othello   |
| C. Brabantio          | H. Desdemona |
| D. Cassio             | I. Emilia    |
| E. Bianca             |              |

# Meeting the Core Curriculum Content Standards

In 1996, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted Core Curriculum Content Standards that set out to clearly define what every New Jersey student should know and be able to do at the end of his/her schooling. The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is committed to supporting teachers by ensuring that our educational programs are relevant to standards-based teaching and learning.

Viewing a performance at The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey and participating in the post-performance discussion can serve as a powerful springboard for discussion, writing, and other outlets for higher-order thinking. On this page you will find suggestions for ways to align your study of our production to each standard.

## LANGUAGE ARTS LITERACY STANDARDS

As a theatre dedicated to the classics, we are continually engaged in exploring some of the world's greatest literature, and the relationship between the written text and performance. Our philosophy and practice follow the four underlying assumptions of the Language Arts Literacy CCCS: that "language is an *active process* for constructing meaning," that "language develops in a *social context*," that language ability increases as learners "engage in texts that are *rich in ideas and increasingly complex in language*," and that learners achieve mastery not by practicing isolated skills but by "*using and exploring language* in its many dimensions." In the practice of theatre, we merge all areas of the language arts, as the standards suggest, "in an integrated act of rehearsal, reflection, and learning." Below, you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to each of these standards.

STANDARD 3.1: All students will apply the knowledge of sounds, letters and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers, and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension. *Read a scene from the play as a class and use context clues to interpret new words and expand vocabulary (3.1.C/F); demonstrate understanding by performing a scene from the play (3.1.G); compare and contrast literary elements in the play with another text being studied (3.1.H).*

STANDARD 3.2: All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes. *Write a new ending for the play in blank verse or in modern prose (3.2.D), write a critique of the play which will be workshopped and published in a classroom setting (3.2.A/B/D).*

STANDARD 3.3: All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes. *Participate in a post-show discussion (3.3.A/B), memorize and perform a monologue or scene from the play (3.3.D).*

STANDARD 3.4: All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations. *Select one speech or line from the play and compare how it was performed in the stage and film version (3.4.A/B).*

STANDARD 3.5: All students will access, view, evaluate and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic texts and resources. *Discuss how the play expresses cultural values of the playwright's time (3.5.A); compare and contrast the printed text with its staged version (3.5.B).*

## VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS STANDARDS

According to both No Child Left Behind and the New Jersey CCCS, the arts (including theatre) are a core subject and "experience with and knowledge of the arts is a vital part of a complete education." In the area of performing arts, performances, workshops and study guide exercises developed by The Shakespeare Theatre address all five state standards.

Below, you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to each of these standards.

STANDARD 1.1: All students will use aesthetic knowledge in the creation of and in response to dance, music, theatre and visual art. *Discuss the use of metaphor in both the text and the design of the production; discuss how the play expresses cultural values of its period and/or of today.*

STANDARD 1.2: All students will utilize those skills, media, methods, and technologies appropriate to each art form in the creation, performance, and presentation of dance, music, theatre and visual art. *Perform a monologue or scene from the play; participate in a classroom workshop that develops the physical and technical skills required to create and present theatre.*

STANDARD 1.3: All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of dance, music, theatre and visual art. *Participate in a post-show discussion of elements such as physicality and creating motivated action; discuss the relationship between play text and production design.*

STANDARD 1.4: All students will develop, apply and reflect upon knowledge of the process of critique. *Write a review of the production using domain-appropriate terminology; develop a class rubric for effective theatrical presentations; compare and contrast the play with work by other artists.*

STANDARD 1.5: All students will understand and analyze the role, development, and continuing influence of the arts in relation to world cultures, history, and society. *Discuss the representation of social issues (class, political leadership, etc.) in the play; research how the historical period affected the writer's work; compare the play to work from other historical periods.*

# About The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey

The acclaimed Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of the leading Shakespeare theatres in the nation. Serving approximately 100,000 adults and young people annually, it is New Jersey's only professional theatre company dedicated to Shakespeare's canon and other classic masterworks. With its distinguished productions and education programs, the company strives to illuminate the universal and lasting relevance of the classics for contemporary audiences. The longest-running Shakespeare theatre on the East Coast and the seventh largest in the nation, The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey marks its 49th season in 2011.



The company's 2011 Main Stage season features six productions presented in its 308-seat F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre and runs June through December. In the summer, an Outdoor Stage production is also presented at the Greek Theatre, an open-air amphitheatre nestled in a hillside on the campus of the College of Saint Elizabeth in nearby Morristown.

In addition to being a celebrated producer of classic plays and operating *Shakespeare LIVE!* (one of the largest educational Shakespeare touring programs in the New York/New Jersey region), The Shakespeare Theatre is also deeply committed to nurturing new talent for the American stage. By providing an outstanding training ground for students of the theatre, and cultivating audiences for the future by providing extensive outreach opportunities for students across New Jersey and beyond, The Shakespeare Theatre is a leader in arts education. For additional information, visit our web site at [www.ShakespeareNJ.org](http://www.ShakespeareNJ.org).

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is one of 20 professional theatres in the state of New Jersey. The company's dedication to the classics and commitment to excellence sets critical standards for the field. Nationwide, the Theatre has emerged as one of the most exciting "new" theatres under the leadership of Artistic Director, Bonnie J. Monte since 1990. It is one of only a handful of Shakespeare Theatres on the east coast, and in recent years has drawn larger and larger audiences and unprecedented critical acclaim. The opening of the intimate, 308-seat F.M. Kirby Shakespeare Theatre in 1998, provided the Theatre with a state-of-the-art venue with excellent sightlines, and increased access for patrons and artists with disabilities.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey is a member of ArtPride, The Shakespeare Theatre Association, Theatre Communications Group, and is a founding member of the New Jersey Theatre Alliance.

The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey's programs are made possible, in part, by funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as funds from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional major support is received from The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the F.M. Kirby Foundation, The Edward T. Cone Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, and Drew University, as well as contributions from numerous corporations, foundations, government agencies and individuals.  
The Shakespeare Theatre is an independent, professional theatre company located on the Drew University campus.



NEW JERSEY  
STATE  
COUNCIL  
ON THE  
ARTS



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS

