

## Worksheet 1 – Introduction: Part One

### Recall

**Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember about the lecture and the play.**

1. In which two locations is *Othello* set?  
a) Denmark  
b) Austria  
c) Italy  
d) Cyprus
2. According to Professor McRae, how many plays did Shakespeare write?  
a) around 37  
b) around 15  
c) exactly 37  
d) exactly 42
3. What was the title of the source material on which Shakespeare based *Othello*?  
a) *The Canterbury Tales*  
b) *Hecatommithi*  
c) *The Roman Play*  
d) *Metamorphosis*
4. In what two ways does the story of *Othello* differ from this source material?  
a) Iago kills Desdemona  
b) Desdemona survives Othello  
c) Desdemona is beaten to death  
d) Othello goes on to become king

### Analysis

5. In his lecture, Prof. Rae discusses how the stability of the Venetian republic influenced the society represented in *Othello*.

Look at the painting of the Venetian court below:

- a) Collect ten adjectives that describe what you see in the image.
- b) Research the image and what it represents. What kind of society would this be like to live in? How do you think this image might link to *Othello*?

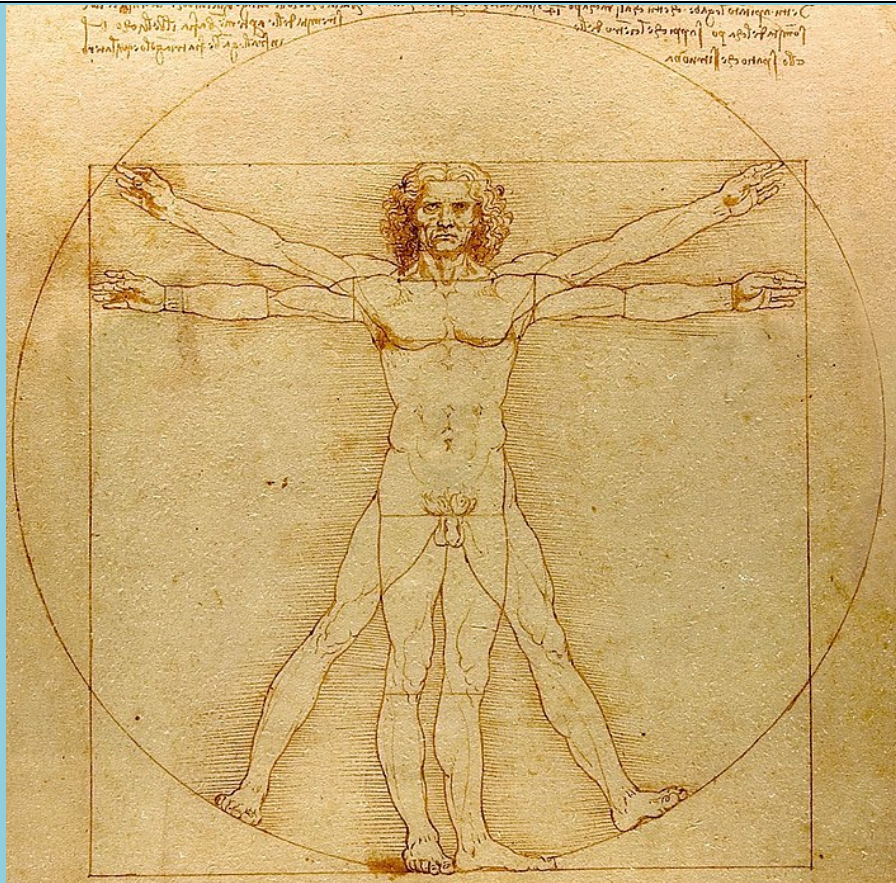


Francesco Guardi, *Audience Granted by the Doge*, 1766 – 1770 (Wikipedia, public domain)

6. Rewatch 5.45 – 6.52 where Prof. McRae explains how Shakespeare's plays ended up being split into five acts:
  - a) Why did editor Nicholas Rowe choose to split the plays into five acts?
  - b) What does Prof. McRae suggest Shakespeare wanted to do with the form of his plays?
  - c) If you were an editor of a new edition of *Othello* how many acts would you divide the play into? Where would you put the breaks and why? *Think about what effect you want the play to have on the audience.*

### Evaluation

7. In his lecture, Prof. Rae suggests that Leonardo DaVinci's *Vitruvian Man* drawing (below) is an 'emblem' of Renaissance tragedy.
  - a) In your own words, explain what Prof. Rae means by this statement.
  - b) Research the history and context of the *Vitruvian Man*, and write down five key facts.
  - c) Annotate the drawing below with connections you can make between it and *Othello*. (*Consider: the relationship between man and the universe; Humanism; the themes of order, power, and control*)



Leonardo DaVinci, *Vitruvian Man*, c. 1490 (Wikipedia, photo: Luc Viatour)

## Glossary

- **Morality** – ideas about the distinction between right and wrong, or good and bad.
- **Venetian Republic** – was a sovereign state (e.g. independent country governed by itself) in Northern Italy lasting from 697 AD to 1797 AD.
- **Canon** – (*in literature*) a list of books agreed to be genuine or of the highest quality
- **Act** – (*of plays*) a section of a play made up of shorter scenes, which is used to divide the narrative into parts.
- **Corollary** – a point that follows on from one that has already been proved true.  
*e.g. Having proven that chocolate rots your teeth, I will go on to make a corollary point about the need for a sugar tax.*

- **Editor** – a person who decides on the final context of a newspaper or book; someone who organises and alters a writer's work before it gets published.
- **Coherent** – forming a unified whole; (*of an idea*) logical and consistent; (*of a person's speech*) clear and ordered.
- **Augustan period** – this term is used to describe writing and art from the early 1700s, when people were interested in ancient Roman and Greek art and philosophy. The term 'Augustan' links to the name Augustus, who was a leader in ancient Rome.
- **Neoplatonic** – the modern name for a school of Greek philosophy, beginning with the work of Plotinus and ending with the closing of the Platonic Academy in 529 C.E. Neoplatonists believed that human perfection and happiness were possible on earth, without waiting for an afterlife, and were achieved through philosophical contemplation.
- **Renaissance humanism** – a revival in the study of classical antiquity, at first in Italy and then spreading across Western Europe from the 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. This also included an increasing interest in the role of human beings as being the center of the universe.
- **Emblem** – something that serves as a symbol for a particular quality or concept
- **Ambiguous** – open to multiple interpretations; not having just one meaning.