

**Worksheet 6 – Act 1, Scene 3: Othello on trial**

**Review: Lecture 5**

- ✓ What do we learn about Othello's family background in Act 1, Scene 2?

**Recall: Lecture 6**

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

1. What does Brabantio accuse Othello of using to seduce his daughter?
2. How does the Duke of Venice react when he hears Othello's stories of his military service?
3. What verdict does the Duke of Venice give? What reasons does he give for this?

**Analysis**

4. Read the section below from Othello's speech, where he explains how Desdemona fell in love with him because of the stories he told of his military experience. Answer the questions below:
  - a) How does Shakespeare use persuasive language in this speech to show the power of Othello's words? (*Persuasive language might include techniques such as: repetition, alliteration, anaphora, anecdote, emotive words*)
  - b) What impression does this speech give of Othello's personality?
  - c) What do we learn about the relationship between Desdemona and Othello from this speech?

[...] I spake of most disastrous chances, Of moving accidents by flood and field	480
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach, Of being taken by the insolent foe And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence And portance in my travels' history: Whereinof antres vast and deserts idle,	485
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven It was my hint to speak,—such was the process; And of the Cannibals that each other eat, The Anthropophagi and men whose heads Do grow beneath their shoulders. This to hear	490
Would Desdemona seriously incline: But still the house-affairs would draw her thence: Which ever as she could with haste dispatch, She'd come again, and with a greedy ear Devour up my discourse: which I observing,	495
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart That I would all my pilgrimage dilate, Whereof by parcels she had something heard, But not intentively: I did consent,	500
And often did beguile her of her tears,	

When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
That my youth suffer'd. My story being done,  
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:  
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange, 505  
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:  
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd  
That heaven had made her such a man: she thank'd me,  
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,  
I should but teach him how to tell my story. 510  
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake:  
She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,  
And I loved her that she did pity them.

### Evaluation

5. In his lecture, Prof. Rae mentions three key contrasts that are evident in this scene:

- the political vs the personal
- action vs words
- love vs death

For each of these themes make a mind map of events and quotations from Act 1 of *Othello*.

6. In his lecture, Prof. McRae discusses the relevance of the play's setting in Venice and Cyprus.

a) Conduct your own research into the historical context of Venice, Turkey, and Cyprus in the 1600.

*Some initial websites that might help are:*

- <https://www.bl.uk/shakespeare/articles/strangers-in-the-city-the-cosmopolitan-nature-of-16th-century-venice>
- <https://www.phillyshakespeare.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/War-Between-Turks-and-Venice.pdf>
- <https://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/othello/context/historical/othello-and-the-war-of-cyprus/>

b) Use your research to answer the following question: *How significant is it that Shakespeare chose to set Othello in both Venice and Cyprus?*

### Glossary

- **Bulwark** - a defensive wall.
- **Heathen** – a person who does not belong to a widely held religion (such as Christianity), as regarded by those who do.  
*e.g. In the 1600s Christians regarded Muslims as heathens.*