

## Worksheet 7 – Act 1, Scene 2: Iago's plot

### Review: Lecture 6

- ✓ Why was Cyprus an important location for Venice to control in the 1600s? How does this relate to *Othello*?

### Recall: Lecture 7

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

- How old is Iago?
  - 33
  - 28
  - 42
  - 18
- What reason does Iago give at this point in this scene for hating Othello?
  - He was promoted above Iago
  - He is rude to Iago in public
  - He thinks Othello has stolen money
  - He thinks Othello has slept with his wife

### Analysis

- Iago describes love as 'merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will'.
  - In your own words, explain what this phrase means.
  - What does this description of love tell us about Iago?
- Reread the speech by Iago from Act 1, Scene 3 and answer the questions below:
  - What information does the audience learn about Iago from this speech?
  - What is the effect of having Iago share his thoughts and plans with the audience through his soliloquies?
  - What sorts of descriptive language does Iago use in his soliloquy? How does it contribute to the picture of Iago that Shakespeare is drawing?

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse.  
For I mine own gained knowledge should profane  
If I would time expend with such a snipe  
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor,  
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets  
He's done my office. I know not if 't be true,  
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,  
Will do as if for surety. He holds me well.  
The better shall my purpose work on him.  
Cassio's a proper man. Let me see now:  
To get his place and to plume up my will  
In double knavery. How? How? Let's see.  
After some time, to abuse Othello's ear  
That he is too familiar with his wife.  
He hath a person and a smooth dispose  
To be suspected, framed to make women false.  
The Moor is of a free and open nature  
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,  
And will as tenderly be led by th' nose  
As asses are.  
I have 't. It is engendered! Hell and night

*That's how I always do it, getting money from fools. I'd be wasting my skills dealing with an idiot like that if I couldn't get something useful out of him. I hate the Moor, and there's a widespread rumor that he's slept with my wife. I'm not sure it's true, but just the suspicion is enough for me. He thinks highly of me. That'll help. Cassio's a handsome man. Let's see, how can I get his position and use him to hurt Othello at the same time? How? How? Let's see. After a while I'll start telling Othello that Cassio is too intimate with Desdemona. Cassio is a smooth talker and a good-looking guy, the sort of man that people would expect to be a seducer. The Moor is open and straightforward. He thinks any man who seems honest is honest. People like that are easy to manipulate. So it's all decided. I've worked it out. With a little help from the devil, I'll bring this monstrous plan to success.*

## Evaluation

5. In his lecture, Prof. McRae describes the importance of Iago's 'self-awareness'.

Another critic, Prof. Stephen Greenblatt has focused on the importance increasing self-awareness in 1500s, a process he calls '**Renaissance self-fashioning**'. Greenblatt describes Renaissance self-fashioning as '**an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process**'. Instead of identity being seen as fixed, it is regarded as something that can be changed and modified to suit an individual's own needs.

**Make a mind map in response to the question: *To what extent can Iago be said to be an example of 'Renaissance self-fashioning'?***

### Consider:

- How does Iago manipulate the way he comes across to others to suit his needs?
- How does Iago use language skillfully to control other people?
- In what ways does Iago describe his own identity to the audience?

## Glossary

- **Paean** – a song of praise or triumph.
- **Renaissance humanism** – a revival in the study of classical antiquity, at first in Italy and then spreading across Western Europe from the 14th to 16th centuries. This also included an increasing interest in the role of human beings as being the center of the universe, as opposed to a god or deity.
- **Cynical** – believing that people are motivated purely by self-interest; distrustful of human sincerity or integrity.
- **Credulous** – being too ready to believe things.
- **Engender** – to cause or give rise to (a feeling or opinion).