

# Othello: Act III, Scene III

## Analyzing Shakespeare's Characters Through Dialogue



In *The Tragedy of Othello*, Shakespeare creates a tragic hero who is destroyed by fatal flaws in his own character. Driving Othello's tragedy is his pride and personal insecurity, qualities that make him vulnerable to jealousy and suspicion. A valiant and respected general in service to the duke of Venice, Othello is led to believe that his wife, Desdemona, has betrayed him by carrying on an adulterous affair with Michael Cassio, one of his lieutenants. Sick with jealousy and rage, Othello eventually smothers Desdemona with a pillow as she begs for her life, and he subsequently kills himself when he learns that she had been innocent. The villain orchestrating the drama is Iago, Othello's ensign, who seeks revenge for Othello's promoting Cassio over him. Iago's secret and malignant intentions are established immediately in act I, and the plot unfolds as he carries them out. In act III, scene III, Iago manipulates Othello to ingratiate himself, condemn Cassio, and destroy Othello's peace and happiness by convincing him that Desdemona is unfaithful. Also appearing in the scene are Desdemona; Iago's wife, Emilia; and Cassio.

Through dialogue in a drama, playwrights reveal a character's motivations, personality traits, and relationships with other characters. Diction (word choice) plays an essential role in writing dialogue because it creates mood in the scene while developing characters and establishing events in the plot and subtexts in the play. Because Shakespeare's theaters lacked elaborate sets and lighting and his scripts have sparse stage directions, dialogue is one of the few tools we can employ in understanding his characters. The following worksheet will help students analyze passages of dialogue and determine how they inform scenes in the play.

### Skills

- Character analysis
- Drawing inferences from text
- Interpreting diction for connotative meaning

### Learning Objectives

By using this worksheet, students will:

- Analyze passages of dialogue to identify the speaker's character traits, conflicts, and motivations
- Examine the diction in passages of dialogue to interpret the connotations of key words and explain how they create mood in the scene
- Determine from passages of dialogue characteristics of the speaker's relationship with another character in the play

## Examining and Analyzing Examples of Dialogue

Examine the examples of dialogue in act III, scene III of *Othello* that are indicated in the Passage column below. Identify some key words in the dialogue and their connotations, and the mood created by the key words in the dialogue. Identify what the dialogue reveals about the selected character's traits, conflicts, and/or motivations and what the dialogue suggests about the selected character's relationship with another character or characters. Record your answers to complete the chart.

Passage	What are some keywords in the dialogue and their connotations?	What mood is created by the keywords in the dialogue?	What does the dialogue reveal about the selected character's conflicts, motivations, and/or traits?	What does the dialogue suggest about the selected character's relationship with the other character or characters?
1. Desdemona				
2. Othello				
3. Iago				

## Examining and Analyzing Examples of Dialogue

Passage	What are some keywords in the dialogue and their connotations?	What mood is created by the keywords in the dialogue?	What does the dialogue reveal about the selected character's conflicts, motivations, and/or traits?	What does the dialogue suggest about the selected character's relationship with the other character or characters?
8. Iago				
9. Othello				
10. Othello				
<p>NOTES</p>				

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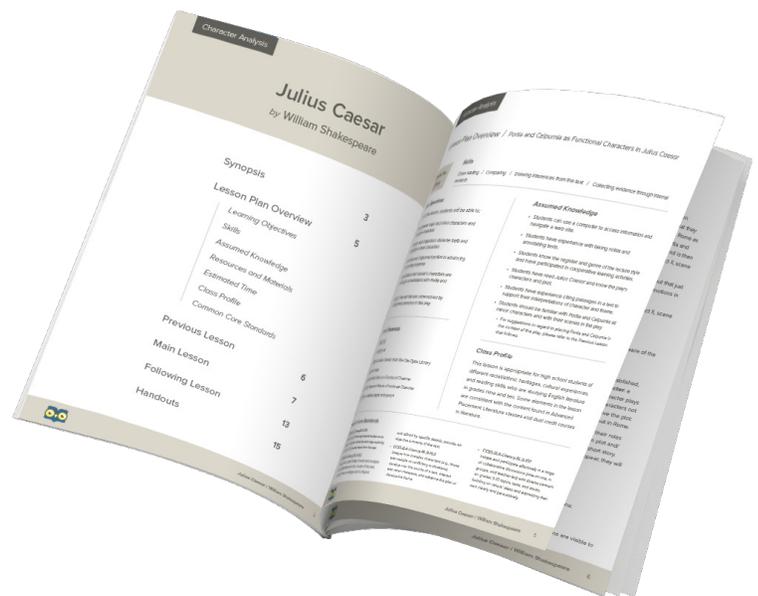
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