

Othello by William Shakespeare

Summarization of the Plot, the
Characters, and Major
Themes/Symbols/Motifs



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OTHELLO

W. J. Morgan & Co.
LITH. CLEVELAND, O.



General Summary

What to expect while reading...

William Shakespeare
Othello



by Christopher Marlowe / translated by WC Eglar / from The Norton Folio
edited by W. Shakespeare & B. Burge / illustrated by Bill Shapere / with new text
starting from page 100 / with a new introduction by Billy Childish
and a new afterword by Bill Shapere / London: The Chamberlain Press / 1998 / ISBN 1 85196 000 0

a careless word
a lie

Othello

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chaos is come again



General Summary

- The play is about love, betrayal, manipulation, and murder.
- Iago, one of Shakespeare's GREATEST villains manipulates a general of the Venetian army to believe his new wife is cheating on him.
- He goes mad, and eventually several men die due to Iago's lies and deceit!

Setting for “Othello”

1570-1571



Venice

- Center of commercialism.
- Ruled by law and order
- Italians considered wicked, murderous, loose morals.
- Women beautiful and “loose!!!!”
- Men hot-tempered, jealous.



Characters - Othello - Protagonist

OTHELLO

- Othello is the first great black protagonist in Western literature.
- He is a general in the army of Venice who is described as a **Moor**, a native of North Africa.
- He is a strong, well-respected soldier.
- He is an eloquent and physically powerful figure.



- “The play dramatizes this hero's fall from grace – Othello begins as a noble guy (he's a celebrated and respected war hero, a loving husband, and an eloquent storyteller) but, by the end of the play, Othello has become an irrational, violent, and insanely jealous husband who murders his own wife after Iago convinces him that Desdemona has been unfaithful.”

The play's protagonist and hero. A Christian Moor and general of the armies of Venice, Othello is an eloquent and physically powerful figure, respected by all those around him.

Othello

Othello's wife Desdemona

DESDEMONA

-She is a central character. She is a young Venetian beauty who is adored by her father, **Brabantio**.

-She goes against traditional Venetian custom by marrying an outsider, a black man named **Othello** instead of one of the rich Venetian men she is expected to marry.



The daughter of the Venetian senator Brabantio. Desdemona and Othello are secretly married before the play begins.

Pure, meek, self-possessed and determined. She is equally capable of defending her marriage, jesting bawdily with Iago, and responding with dignity to Othello's incomprehensible jealousy.

Desdemona

The Antagonist

IAGO

- Iago is the antagonist in the play 'Othello' by William Shakespeare. His jealousy and envy causes him to destroy the lives of his boss Othello and his boss's wife, Desdemona.
- Iago is one of the most notorious and mysterious villains of all time.
- He becomes angry and vengeful when he is passed over for promotion. A less experienced soldier, **Cassio**, is promoted to lieutenant instead of Iago.



Othello's ensign (a job also known as an ancient or standard-bearer), and the villain of the play. Iago is twenty-eight years old.

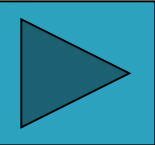
Iago

What does that mean?????

- **Moor** – A Muslim of Mixed Arab and Berber (North African-Sudanese) descent

- **lago** – Venetian

- **Ensign** – Assistant



CASSIO

- Cassio is a soldier in the Venetian army. Also, he is Othello's lieutenant.
- He is a young and inexperienced soldier, whose high position is much resented by Iago.
- Cassio is a weak man who does not anticipate the manipulative nature of others.



Othello's lieutenant. Cassio is a young and inexperienced soldier, whose high position is much resented by Iago. Truly devoted to Othello, Cassio is extremely ashamed after being implicated in a drunken brawl on Cyprus and losing his place as lieutenant. Iago uses Cassio's youth, good looks, and friendship with Desdemona to play on Othello's insecurities about Desdemona's fidelity.

Michael Cassio

Iago's wife and Desdemona's attendant. A cynical, worldly woman, she is deeply attached to her mistress and distrustful of her husband.

Emilia

A jealous suitor of Desdemona. Young, rich, and foolish, Roderigo is convinced that if he gives Iago all of his money, Iago will help him win Desdemona's hand. Repeatedly frustrated as Othello marries Desdemona and then takes her to Cyprus, Roderigo is ultimately desperate enough to agree to help Iago kill Cassio after Iago points out that Cassio is another potential rival for Desdemona.

Roderigo



Minor Characters



A courtesan, or prostitute, in Cyprus. Bianca's favorite customer is Cassio, who teases her with promises of marriage.

Bianca

Desdemona's father, a somewhat blustering and self-important Venetian senator. As a friend of Othello, Brabantio feels betrayed when the general marries his daughter in secret.

Brabantio

The official authority in Venice, the duke has great respect for Othello as a public and military servant. His primary role within the play is to reconcile Othello and Brabantio to send Othello to Cyprus.

Duke of Venice

The governor of Cyprus before Othello. We see him first in Act II, as he recounts the status of the war and awaits the Venetian ships.

Montano

One of Brabantio's kinsmen, Lodovico acts as a messenger from Venice to Cyprus. He arrives in Cyprus in Act IV with letters announcing that Othello has been replaced by Cassio as governor.

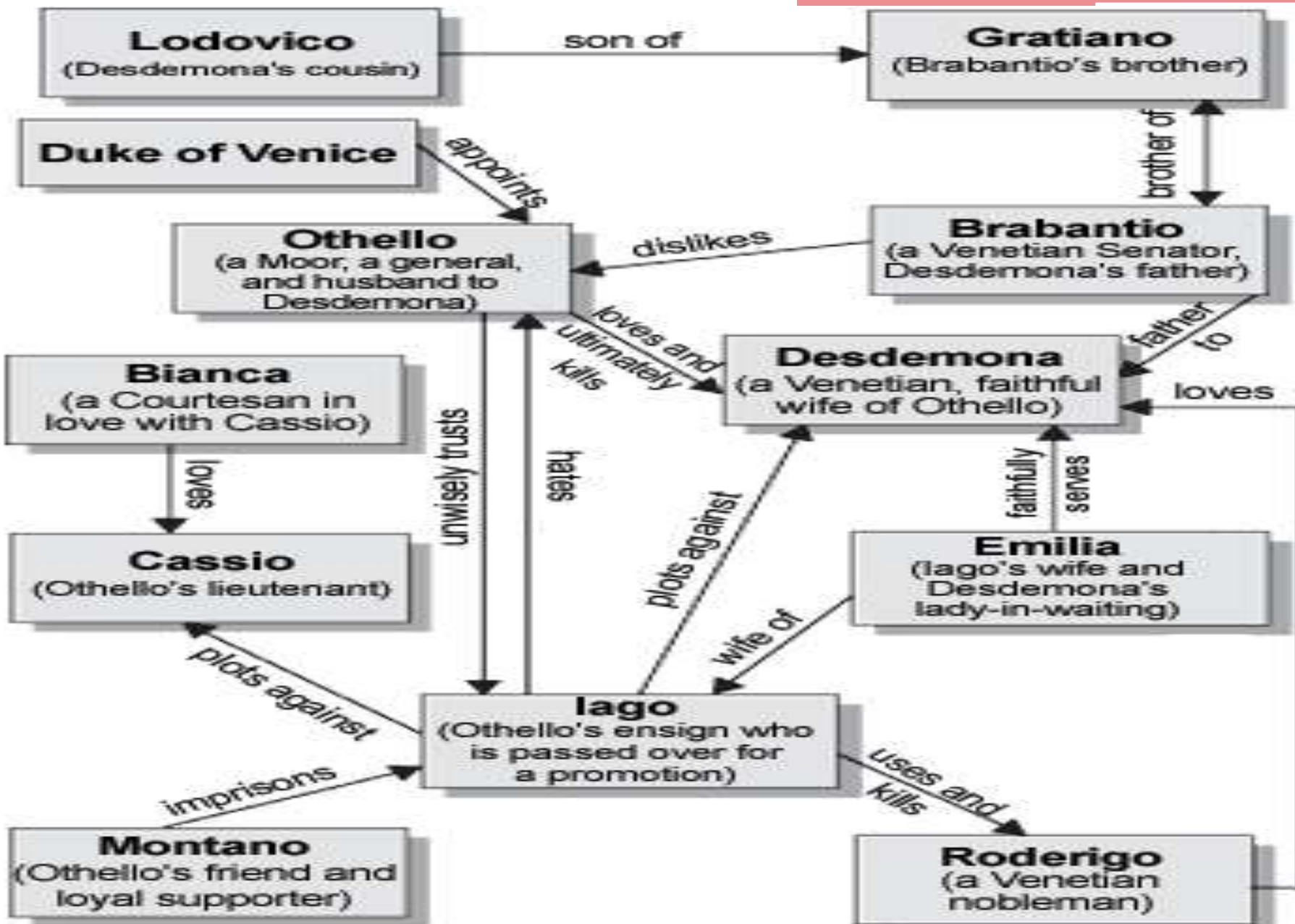
Lodovico

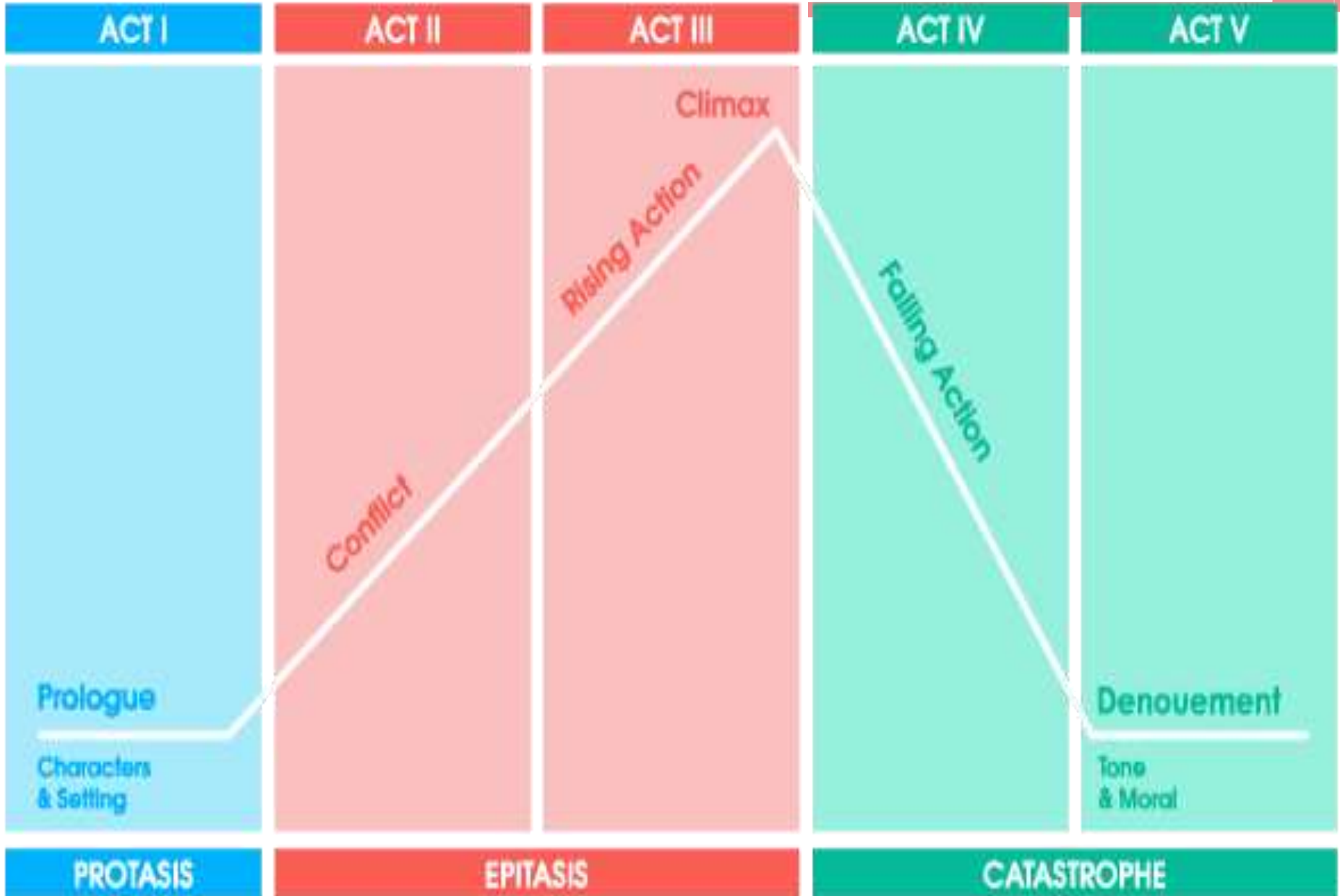
Brabantio's kinsman who accompanies Lodovico to Cyprus. Amidst the chaos of the final scene, Graziano mentions that Desdemona's father has died.

Graziano

Othello's servant. Although the clown appears only in two short scenes, his appearances reflect and distort the action and words of the main plots.

Clown





Act I Summary



ACT I

Scene I

- ❖ Roderigo and Iago have an argument
- ❖ Reason for Iago's hatred is Othello's recent promotion of Michael Cassio to the post of lieutenant
- ❖ Iago is serving Othello only for his own interests
- ❖ They seek revenge by rousing Desdemona's family against the general
- ❖ Roderigo and Iago inform Brabantio of Desdemona's secret marriage to Othello
- ❖ Enraged, Brabantio sets out in search of his daughter

Act I Summary

- The play starts with an argument between Iago and Roderigo
 - Roderigo is rich and is paying Iago to win Desdemona's heart; but he has just learned that she married Othello (whom Iago works for)
 - Iago tells Roderigo that he HATES Othello – he was overlooked for a promotion to lieutenant (Michael Cassio was given the post, despite Iago's service in battle)
 - Iago claims to only PRETEND to serve Othello and then recommends that Roderigo ruins Othello's marriage by turning Desdemona's family against him

Act I Summary

- At this suggestion, they go to Brabantio's house (Desdemona's father, AND a Venetian senator) and cries out that he has been robbed by "thieves"
- Brabantio does not listen and tells Roderigo to stay away from his daughter; Iago becomes vulgar and reveals that Othello and Desdemona are having sex (it's at this information that Brabantio seeks out his daughter)

Act I Summary

- Iago leaves, successful at making trouble, with the intention of finding Othello. Roderigo waits for Brabantio who comes out of his house, furious that his daughter is not home. Roderigo follows Brabantio to find his daughter.
 - Othello, Roderigo, and Brabantio does not know that Iago is causing trouble.

Act I Summary

- Iago finds Othello to warn him that Brabantio will force a divorce between Othello and Desdemona; at this news, Othello finds Venetian court officers at his house
- They bring him news that he is wanted by the Duke of Venice in a matter concerned Cyprus (Island in the Mediterranean Sea controlled by Venice) .

Act I Summary

- Brabantio and Roderigo come in and order Othello to be subdued.
- At this, men fight (half on Brabantio's side, the others fighting on behalf of Othello).
- Brabantio halts and decides to take his case to the Duke himself, as Othello was already headed there anyways.

Act I Summary

- The duke's meeting...
 - It's all about Cyprus and the Turkish army. Another island is being invaded: Rhodes. But it's all a rouse on the part of the Turkish army.

Act I Summary

- The entrance of Brabantio, Othello, Cassio, Iago, Roderigo causes state issues to be put to the side...
 - Othello is accused of using witchcraft to seduce and lure Desdemona
 - The Duke is interested in this claim, and is eager to join Brabantio's side
 - Othello is given a chance to talk: admits to marrying Desdemona, BUT did not use magic; he swears that during his time at Brabantio's house he would reveal his life story and Desdemona was moved to loving him from his story

Act I Summary

- Othello = CLEARED; the Duke says that Othello's story would probably win his own daughter's heart
- Desdemona =
 - Finally enters the play
 - She is asked who she owes the most allegiance, she says it is to her husband Othello (this is problematic, her father expected her to say his name – but she argues that like her mother married, she did so of free will and now must shift her loyalty from father to husband); Brabantio steps aside to allow the court to return to state affairs

Act I Summary

- Othello is told he must go defend Cyprus from the Turkish army; Othello asks for his wife to be properly provided for (her father refuses to help and so the Duke sends her with Othello)
- Everyone leaves BUT Roderigo and Othello...
 - Roderigo feels defeated, never to be with Desdemona
 - Iago tells him that everything will work out in the end

Act I Summary

- After Roderigo leaves... Iago reveals more about his own character
 - He has suspicion that Othello has slept with his wife, Emilia
 - His plan is to take Roderigo's money, convince Othello that Cassio slept with Desdemona, and then use Othello's honest and unsuspecting nature to bring about his sudden death