

Objective

By the end of this lesson, the student will have a foundational understanding of the themes, characters, and historical context of Shakespeare's Othello, preparing them for a more in-depth reading of the play.

Materials and Prep

- Notebook and pen for taking notes
- Access to a dictionary or thesaurus (optional)
- Printed summary of Othello (if available) or an online summary
- Access to a timeline of the Renaissance period

Before the lesson, familiarize yourself with the basic plot of Othello and the key themes such as jealousy, betrayal, and racism. Understanding the historical context of the Renaissance will also enhance the learning experience.

Activities

- **Character Mapping:**

Create a character map for Othello, Desdemona, Iago, and Cassio. Write down their relationships, motivations, and key traits. This visual representation will help in understanding the dynamics of the play.

- **Theme Exploration:**

Choose one major theme from Othello (like jealousy or betrayal) and write a short paragraph explaining how it is relevant today. This will connect the play to modern life and enhance critical thinking.

- **Historical Context Discussion:**

Research the Renaissance period and discuss how the values and beliefs of that time influenced Shakespeare's writing. This can include topics like race, gender roles, and societal norms.

- **Quote Analysis:**

Find and analyze a famous quote from Othello. Discuss its meaning, who says it, and why it is significant. This will help in understanding the language and depth of Shakespeare's work.

Talking Points

- "Othello is a tragedy that explores deep human emotions—what do you think jealousy feels like?"
- "Shakespeare wrote Othello during the Renaissance. How do you think the values of that time influenced his characters?"
- "The character of Iago is often considered one of Shakespeare's greatest villains. What makes someone a villain in your opinion?"
- "Othello's race is a significant theme in the play. Why do you think Shakespeare chose a Black protagonist?"
- "Desdemona is a strong female character. How does her role challenge the gender norms of her time?"

- “The concept of 'the other' is prominent in Othello. How do you think it applies to today's society?”
- “Jealousy is a central theme in Othello. Can you think of a time when jealousy affected a relationship?”
- “What do you think is the impact of betrayal on friendship? How does this play out in Othello?”
- “The play deals with issues of trust. How important is trust in your relationships?”
- “Shakespeare often uses dramatic irony. Can you think of a moment in Othello where the audience knows something the characters do not?”
- “How does the setting of Venice contribute to the story of Othello?”
- “Othello's downfall is a result of manipulation. Have you ever seen someone being manipulated? How did it affect them?”
- “How do you think the themes of Othello are still relevant in today's world?”
- “Discuss how Shakespeare's language can be challenging. What strategies can we use to understand it better?”
- “What are your expectations for the characters in Othello based on what you've learned?”