

# Othello: (a) The final scene and its conclusion

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## Othello: (a) The final scene and its conclusion

- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore the impact of the final scene of the play.
- ❖ **Opening exercise:** Recap the recent events of the play, and read the final rhyming couplet of Act 5, Sc 1, which acts as a mini cliff-hanger just before the final scene. Brainstorm questions which are still unanswered at the beginning of Act 5, Sc 2. For example:
  - Iago's plots seem to be successful – will he get away with it or will he get his comeuppance?
  - Othello plans to kill Desdemona – will he do this or discover the truth in time?
  - Order and justice are nowhere to be seen, and rightful authorities are being wrongly punished – will order and justice be restored?
    - ✕ *Othello* > Synopses and commentaries
  - How would you describe the mood at this point of the play?
  - What functions does the final scene need to fulfil?
- ❖ **Textual examination:** Allocate cards to students (see **Student worksheet a)i Final scene elements**). Explain that as the final scene is being watched/read, students each have a particular theme or idea to look out for
  - Watch or read Act 5, Scene 2. Pause and annotate when students find examples of their points
  - ✕ *Othello* > Synopses and commentaries > Act 5 > Scene 2
- ❖ Teacher leads class discussion and annotation of the scene:
  - What are the important events of the scene?
  - Which questions have been answered and which problems have been resolved?
  - What themes does Shakespeare present in this scene?
    - To what effect?
  - Is this a moral ending?
    - Is justice restored or not?
  - How satisfying is the final scene for the audience to watch?
    - Is there anything which remains unresolved?
- ❖ **Discussion ideas:** What message do we take from the end of the play?
  - Distribute and read statement cards (see **Student worksheet a)ii Final scene statements**)
  - Students rank and debate the statements
  - Students create their own summary statements about the impact/message of the final scene.
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Experiment with alternative endings. For example:
  - Could Othello be won over by his love for his wife, and decide not to kill her?
  - Could Emilia arrive or speak up sooner?
  - Does Othello have to commit suicide?
  - Should Iago die?
  - Present and discuss these alternative endings, why they do or don't work, according to:
    - The conventions of tragedy
    - The impact and message that Shakespeare's final scene has.
- ❖ **Critical task:** Plan an essay addressing the following:
  - Evaluate the extent to which the final scene is a satisfying conclusion to the emotion and turmoil of the rest of the play.
- ❖ **Extension task:** Research/watch (for example, on Youtube) how different productions/films have staged this final scene.
  - Which version do you find most effective and why?
  - What aspects are emphasised or downplayed?