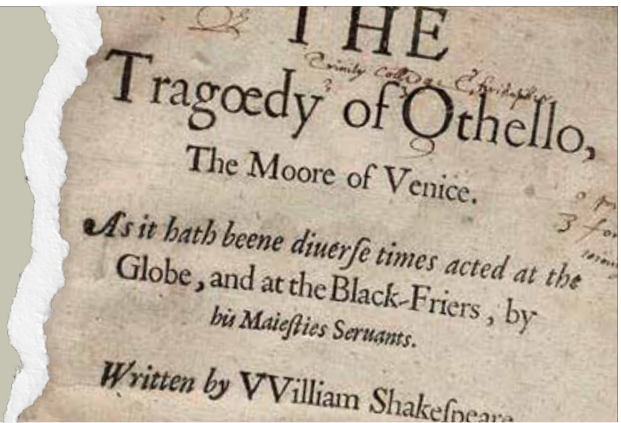


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The Play



Othello is one of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies. Although he used an existing story for the plot of the play, Shakespeare added new characters and dimensions, and used a contemporary military conflict as inspiration for the setting.

The Venetian-Ottoman wars

Shakespeare wrote the play *Othello*, or more precisely *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* sometime between 1602 and 1604. It is part of a series of great tragedies which he wrote in the first decade of the 1600s, along with *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.

The play is set in Venice and Cyprus against the backdrop of the Venetian-Ottoman wars, in particular the fight to control the island of Cyprus, which was seen as an important outpost. The wars were a series of conflicts that had been continuing for over two centuries. The most recent outbreak of fighting, The War of Cyprus, had occurred during Shakespeare's lifetime, between 1570 and 1573. In 1603, Richard Knolles published an account of these wars in his book, *The History of the Turks*, which Shakespeare most likely used as a source of information.

The principal source for the storyline is taken from the Italian author Giovanni Battista Giralaldi, better known as Cinthio (1504-1573). His collection of stories, *De Gli Hecatommithi*, was first printed in Italian in 1565 and translated into French by Gabriel Chappuys in 1583. Scholars are unsure as to whether Shakespeare read the original Italian edition or the French translation. The stories are linked by the common theme of love and marriage. Some speak of infidelity, for example, how a husband deals with his unfaithful wife, or how a forgiving wife wins back her unfaithful husband.

Disdemona and the Moor

One of Cinthio's stories is about a beautiful Venetian woman, called Disdemona, who marries a Moorish captain against her family's wishes. The tale tells of how the Moor is sent to command the Venetian forces in Cyprus, taking his wife with him. There, his ensign (a special footsoldier) falls in love with Disdemona but is rejected by her. He takes his revenge by convincing the captain that his wife has been unfaithful to him. The captain and the ensign kill Disdemona together, but then they turn against each other. Ultimately both men die: the Moor is killed by Disdemona's family, while the ensign goes to prison, where he is tortured and dies.

Shakespeare's *Othello*

As was usual with him, Shakespeare took the story and adapted it, turning it into an intense and powerful tragedy for the stage. He changed the force behind the ensign's desire for revenge, turning the character into the infamous Iago, the epitome of evil manipulation. He compressed the action but extended the scope, adding other characters who help to reveal the complex psychology of the leading roles and, as mentioned before, using a contemporary military conflict as its backdrop.

The play was probably first performed in the Banqueting Hall at Whitehall Palace in London on November 1, 1604. The actors were those of Shakespeare's theatre company, The King's Men, and it is likely that James I was in the audience. The character of Othello, the Moor, was probably played by the famous actor Richard Burbage, wearing blackface make-up for the role. The play was first printed in 1622.

Othello proved to be a popular play, and it was performed subsequently many times over, both at the Globe and at Blackfriars theatres. One important performance was at the wedding of Princess Elizabeth, King James's daughter, to Frederick V of the Palatinate.

1 Complete the questions about the text with the words in the box.

Who What Where When How Why Whose How long

- adid Shakespeare write *Othello*?
- b is the play set?
- c is it set there?
- d had the conflict been continuing?
- e account of the conflict did Shakespeare use as a source?
- f important is *De Gli Hecatommithi* for the plot of *Othello*?
- g wrote it and in language?

2 Ask and answer the questions in Exercise 1 with a partner.

3 Refer to the source story by Cinthio, then answer the following questions.

- a Only one of Cinthio's characters is named. Who?
- b In Cinthio's story, what drives the ensign's desire for revenge?
- c In Cinthio's story, who dies at the end?

4 What do these dates and names refer to and why are they important in the history of *Othello*?

- November 1, 1604
- 1622
- Richard Burbage
- Princess Elizabeth

INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Find out more about Cinthio and *De Gli Hecatommithi*. What does the title mean? Do you know of similar books?

The Main Characters

- 1 Look at the characters below and read the texts. Highlight the words which describe **relationships** and **positions**. Then find words to describe the characters' personalities. Make lists in your notebook, as in the example below.

Character

Brabantio

Relationships, Position

Desdemona's father, Venetian senator

Personality

Full of his own importance

- 2 Find the names.

- a Two characters who are definitely not Venetians by birth.
- b Two characters who are suffering from unrequited love.
- c Two characters who already live on the island of Cyprus.
- d Two characters who are obedient but also show they are strong.
- e A character who is not what he seems.
- f A character whose behaviour is contradictory.

The Soldiers



Othello

Othello is a general of the Venetian army and Desdemona's husband. He is described as a 'Moor' which suggests he is from north-west Africa. He is eloquent, powerful and he commands respect. He is honest, but he is insecure, partly because he is no longer a young man, and also because he is an outsider. He is easily influenced and becomes obsessively jealous of his young wife.



Iago

He is a fairly young but experienced soldier serving under Othello. Although he seems to be honest, loyal and supportive, he is in fact manipulative, obsessive and evil. He is both persuasive and convincing as he poisons people's minds in his treacherous games.



Michael Cassio

He is a handsome, erudite young man from Florence. He serves in the Venetian army and Othello has made him his lieutenant, even though he has not much practical experience as a soldier. He is devoted to Othello and would hate to lose his general's favour.



Montano

He is the Governor of Cyprus before Othello replaces him. He welcomes the arrival of the general and his men.

The Venetians



Brabantio

He is a Venetian senator and Desdemona's father. He is full of his own importance and expects obedience from his daughter. Although he enjoys stories about the world beyond Venice, deep down he is full of suspicion and prejudice towards foreigners.



Desdemona

She is a Venetian noblewoman, Brabantio's daughter and Othello's wife. She is faithful and obedient to Othello and very much in love with him. She is sweet but has a strong character – she thinks independently and always behaves with integrity, dignity and honesty, even in the most difficult of circumstances.



Roderigo

Roderigo is a rich, foolish, young Venetian gentleman who allows himself to be guided and influenced by those who are more intelligent than him. He was a suitor for Desdemona's hand and, although she is now married to Othello, he would still like to try to win her.



Emilia

Emilia is Iago's wife but she also serves as Desdemona's attendant. She is very attached to her mistress but she is also obedient to her husband's wishes. Towards the end of the story, she also shows that she is strong and fearless.

Other Characters



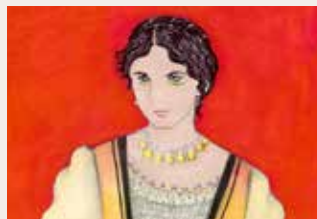
The duke of Venice

He holds absolute authority in Venice and clearly has high regard for Othello. He is conciliatory but resolute in military matters – it is he who sends Othello to Cyprus to solve the crisis with the Turks.



Lodovico and Graziano

They are relatives of Brabantio's. They are sent as messengers to Cyprus.



Bianca

Bianca lives on the Island of Cyprus and is a prostitute. She has fallen in love with one of her regular customers, Michael Cassio.

English in Shakespeare's Time


In Renaissance times, some of the commonly used words were different to the expressions we use today.

RENAISSANCE VOCABULARY

Everyday language

- 1 Match some Renaissance English to the modern equivalent. Start with the more obvious ones then see if you can work out the others. What made you make your choices?

Renaissance expressions	Modern English expressions
aye / yea	often
fare–thee–anon	please
fare–thee–well	nice to see you
fie	over there
good e'en	really
good morrow	here
grammarcy	thank you
hither	no
how now?	bye, see you later
lord–keep–thee	yes
nay	good evening
ne'r	damn
oft	take care
prithce/pray	how are you?
verily	hello
well met	never
yon	bye

- 2  Listen to this short conversation in modern English. Write it in your notebooks then write it here in Shakespearean English. Practise reading it with a partner.

Man:

Woman:

Man:

Woman:

Man:

- 3 Read some quotations from *Othello* and choose the meaning of the words in bold from the options below.

a I am **hitherto** your daughter: but here's my husband
up to now / in the future / from now

b Sir, he is rash and **very sudden in choler**, and haply may strike at you
quickly ill / easily angered / suddenly happy

c The Moor, **howbeit** that I endure him not, is of a constant, loving, noble nature
even though / because / so

d And passion, having my best judgment **collied**, Assays to lead the way
clouded / improved / guided

- 4 Shakespeare was a great innovator and many of the words which he invented are now part of the English language. Read some modern English sentences and guess which word or phrase Shakespeare invented. Explain what they mean.

a The President was the victim of an assassination attempt.

b In Batman films, the arch-villain is often the Joker.

c When you leave the plane, please remember to take all your belongings with you.

d Tom came in wearing an extremely fashionable sweater and designer jeans.

e I was bedazzled by all the jewellery she was wearing.

f The lecture was almost inaudible because the speaker system was not working.

g Churchill's life was very eventful, especially the period in which he served as Prime Minister.

- 5 Shakespeare was also a great creator of insults. What is he saying in the following expressions?

a "Away, you three-inch fool!"


b "Thou lily-liver'd boy."

c "There's no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune."

d "More of your conversation would infect my brain."

e "I'll beat thee, but I would infect my hands."

f "Thine face is not worth sunburning."

- 6  Go to *Othello* online for a website which generates Shakespearean insults.



I AM NOT WHAT I AM

The opening scene of *Othello* gives us a good insight into the character Iago, through a revealing conversation with Roderigo.

1 Read the summary of the story so far. Then answer the questions.

- a Who is Roderigo and who is he interested in?
- b Who is Iago and what is he hoping for?

THE STORY SO FAR

Iago, a soldier, and Roderigo, a rich man, are Venetians and allies. Roderigo has been trying to woo Desdemona, a beautiful Venetian noblewoman, by paying Iago to help him. However, Iago informs Roderigo that Desdemona has secretly married Othello, Iago's general.

Iago knows that Othello needs a new lieutenant and he has sent three mediators to speak to him on his behalf, hoping for the promotion. He tells Roderigo the result of his request.

2 Before you read, predict.

- a How will Roderigo react to the news about Desdemona?
- b Do you think Othello will promote Iago?



1 Read the text. Use the notes on the right.

I AM NOT WHAT I AM

ACT I SCENE I

IAGO

1 And, in conclusion,
Nonsuits my mediators; for, 'Certes,' says he,
'I have already chose my officer.'
And what was he?

5 Forsooth, a great arithmetician,
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,
A fellow almost damn'd in a fair wife;
That never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows

10 More than a spinster; unless the bookish
theoric,
Wherein the toged consuls can propose
As masterly as he: mere prattle, without
practise,
Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had the
election:

And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof
15 At Rhodes, at Cyprus and on other grounds
Christian and heathen, must be be-lee'd and
calm'd

By debtor and creditor: this counter-caster,
He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,
And I--God bless the mark!--his Moorship's
ancient.

RODERIGO

20 By heaven, I rather would have been his
hangman.

IAGO

Why, there's no remedy; 'tis the curse of
service,
Preferment goes by letter and affection,
And not by old gradation, where each second
Stood heir to the first. Now, sir, be judge
yourself,

25 Whether I in any just term am affined
To love the Moor.

Iago says that, in the end, Othello made his mediators' job worthless, because he had already chosen his new lieutenant – an educated man from Florence called Michael Cassio, with a pretty wife he can't control. Iago says Cassio has never commanded men in battle, and that he knows almost nothing about the practical aspects of being a soldier in the field, he only knows the theory.

Despite this, he got the promotion whereas Iago, who has fought in many battles, remains in the lower ranks.

He insults Cassio saying he is a mere scholar, but that he will become the lieutenant while he, Iago will stay as a junior office.

Roderigo says he'd rather kill Othello than serve him.

Iago says there is nothing he can do because that is how soldiers get promotion – either someone recommends them or someone likes them, and not because they are experienced. He asks Roderigo ironically if he could possibly love the Moor (Othello) given the situation.

RODERIGO

I would not follow him then.

IAGO

O, sir, content you;

I follow him to serve my turn upon him:

30 We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
35 For nought but provender, and when he's old,
cashier'd:

Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are
Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
And, throwing but shows of service on their
lords,

40 Do well thrive by them and when they have
lined their coats

Do themselves homage: these fellows have
some soul;

And such a one do I profess myself. For, sir,
It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago:

45 In following him, I follow but myself;
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end:
For when my outward action doth
demonstrate

The native act and figure of my heart

50 In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.

RODERIGO

What a full fortune does the thicklips owe
If he can carry't thus!

IAGO

55 Call up her father,
Rouse him: make after him, poison his delight,
Proclaim him in the streets; incense her
kinsmen,
And, though he in a fertile climate dwell,
Plague him with flies: though that his joy be
joy,

60 Yet throw such changes of vexation on't,
As it may lose some colour.

Roderigo says, in that case, he would not serve under Othello.

Iago tells Roderigo not to worry about him, as he will serve Othello in order to serve himself. He says that not all men can be masters and not all masters should be obeyed. Lots of men devote their lives to their master, for nothing but their food, only to be dismissed when they get old – which is stupid of them. Then there are others who seem to be devoted to their masters, but when they are rich enough, they become their own bosses – these are the clever ones.

Iago says these men have soul, and he is one of them. He says Roderigo can be certain that if he and Othello swapped places, he would not like to be the one serving under him. He explains that he is looking after his own interests and that any display of love or duty is completely false and a means to an end. He states that his inner feelings will never match his outward show, but if they do, it'll be the end for him. He adds that he is not what he seems.

Roderigo is worried that Othello, whom he insults by calling him 'thick-lips', will get away with marrying Desdemona in secret.

Iago suggests that they wake up Desdemona's father and tell him what has happened. They can shout it in the streets and make all her family angry and they can say things about Othello which will ruin his happiness.

Understand and Analyse

UNDERSTAND

1 Explain these quotes from the text.

a I have already chose my officer.

Who says this? Who does he say it to? Who has he chosen? Why does Iago think the person chosen is not the right person for the job?

b I would not follow him then.

Who says this? Who is he referring to? Why would he not serve that person?

c I am not what I am.

Who says this? What does it tell the audience about this character?

d Rouse him: make after him, poison his delight.

Who says this and who is it said to? Who is being referred to? Why do they want to poison his delight?

ANALYSE

2 What can you deduce about Iago's character from this scene? Choose the best descriptions and explain your choices.

a weak

d false

g a good friend

b manipulative

e devoted to his job

h self-serving

c controlling

f envious

i forgiving

3 Iago infers that the army is corrupt. In what ways? Why do you think he says this?

THINK

4 Consider the *dramatic tension* created by the unique position of the audience. What does the audience now know about Iago? If he behaves honestly and as a faithful friend to Othello / Michael Cassio / Desdemona, what will the audience think? Is the audience in a position to warn other characters about Iago's real intentions?

OVER TO YOU

5 What do you think about promotion in the world of work? Who should get promoted? In your country, do men and women get promoted equally? Do foreigners or outsiders have the same possibilities of making a career for themselves? Share your ideas in class.


PRODUCE

6 Imagine that you are in a position to intervene in the play. Write a short note to Othello, warning him about Iago's true character.

Vocabulary Building

“As masterly as he: mere prattle, without practise,
Is all his soldiership. ”

Word-building

- 1  Read the quotation above. Can you work out the meaning of the adjective ‘masterly’? In pairs share ideas and reasons for your choice.

- 2 Look at the highlighted words in the text below and the root word on the right. Find the root words for the other highlighted words.

Forsooth, a great arithmetician ,	a	arithmetic (n) > arithmetician (n)
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine ,	b
A fellow almost damn’d in a fair wife; That never set a squadron in the field, Nor the division of a battle knows	c
More than a spinster; unless the bookish theoretic, Wherein the toged consuls can propose	d
	e
As masterly as he: mere prattle, without practise, Is all his soldiership . But he, sir, had the election :	f
	g

- 3 What are the names of the people who are involved in these areas or work in these places? Build new nouns. Think of four more.

music – <i>musician</i>	library	the cash desk
horseriding	reception	art

- 4 Nouns can also derive from verbs. What nouns can be made from the verbs in the box?

agree understand organise prefer choose injure

- 5 Read the text about the island of Cyprus. Use the words given in capitals at the end of some lines to form a word that fits in the gap in the same line.

Cyprus is an island in the Mediterranean Sea renowned for its (a)	NATURE
beauty. The island is (b) but also has good farmland in the valleys,	MOUNTAIN
and (c) beaches. Its capital city is Nicosia and because of its position	BEAUTY
between east and west it has a (d) cosmopolitan atmosphere. Today	SURPRISE
Cyprus is a (e) tourist destination for visitors, (f) from Europe.	FAVOUR
Cyprus became (g) from Great Britain in 1960 but then divided	PARTICULAR
into a Greek Cypriot area in the south and a Turkish Cypriot area in the	DEPEND
(h) part of the island.	NORTH

- 6  Go to *Othello* online to do the vocabulary worksheet.

CULTURE

Shakespeare's Italy: Florence



One of the key characters in the play *Othello*, Michael Cassio, is from Florence. Iago refers to him insultingly as 'a great arithmetician', a person of 'mere prattle, without practice'. Find out more about Shakespeare's interest in Italy and the reputation of Florence and the Florentines in Shakespeare's time.

1 Read the paragraphs quickly and choose a title from below for each one. There are 2 extra titles.

- Florence in the 1400s and 1500s
- Venetian princes
- Shakespeare and Italy
- Machiavellian politics
- Shakespeare and art
- The outsiders

a

Italian cities and towns feature widely in William Shakespeare's works. We know that he was an admirer of Italian literature, particularly of the works of Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch, but he also seemed to know a lot about Italy and its history. Some scholars believe that he must have spent some time there as he was so well-informed. However, it is also true that many of Shakespeare's contemporaries were fascinated by Italy and many educated Italians lived or passed through London in that period. Shakespeare knew that the country was very diverse from north to south and east to west, and he chose settings for his plays which corresponded to certain qualities. *Othello* is just one play which references Italy; others include *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*.

b

Othello is set briefly in Venice and then, for the most part, in Cyprus. However, Venice and Venetian dominion remain central to the story. It is for this reason that men like Othello, a Moor, and Michael Cassio, a Florentine, are considered outsiders. Indeed, although Iago and Michael Cassio both come from the area now known as Italy, at that time Italy did not yet exist as a nation. It was a geographical area made up of different and separate city states, republics and kingdoms.

c

In Shakespeare's time, Florence had a reputation throughout Europe as the birthplace of the Renaissance and as a centre of culture, learning, and invention. The city had been a hub of humanist

scholarship and artistic production since the 15th century and became extremely wealthy thanks to its merchants and bankers. With wealth came free time and an increased interest in leisure activities such as the appreciation of art and music and the desire to push back the limits of human understanding. The wealthy families who held political power in the city, especially the Medici family, were important patrons, supporting the work of artists like Michelangelo Buonarroti, Sandro Botticelli and polymaths like Leonardo da Vinci. Patronage continued into the 16th century, and in 1563 the first art academy was founded in Florence. In Shakespeare's lifetime, Ferdinando I, who was in power from 1587 to 1609, strengthened the power of the city and its position in Europe.

d

Florence was renowned for its rich Renaissance culture as well as for its ruthless politics. The Medici family gradually changed from republican leaders to autocrats, to grand dukes and hereditary monarchs. Florence was also home to the diplomat and author Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli (1469-1527). Machiavelli is generally acknowledged as the father of modern political science and is best known for his book, *The Prince*. The central theme of the book is that the aim of a prince, or ruler, can justify whatever means he uses to achieve it. It has had a profound influence on political leaders since it was first published until the present day. Shakespeare was probably inspired by Machiavelli in his creation of manipulative and cunning Iago in *Othello*. Read more about Iago, the Machiavellian villain, on pages 126-127.

2 Read the paragraphs again more carefully and say if the following statements are true (T) or false (F).

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------|
| a | Shakespeare wrote about Italy a lot in his works. | T / F |
| b | Shakespeare definitely went to Italy to learn about its history. | T / F |
| c | Shakespeare thought that all Italian places and people were the same. | T / F |
| d | Othello and Michael Cassio are seen as foreigners, and different from Venetians. | T / F |
| e | People living in Elizabethan England considered Florence to be the place where the Renaissance had started. | T / F |
| f | The Medici family tried to stop the work of artists because they did not contribute to the city's wealth. | T / F |
| g | <i>The Prince</i> says that rulers need to be ruthless if they want to stay in power. | T / F |
| h | Machiavelli was influenced by some of Shakespeare's characters. | T / F |

THINK

3 Link text and context. How has the information about Florence contributed to your understanding of Iago's attitude to Michael Cassio?

INDEPENDENT LEARNING

4 Find out more about one of these topics and report your findings in class.


- the city of Florence
- the Medici family
- Michelangelo
- Leonardo da Vinci
- Machiavelli
- Botticelli

From Reading to Performing



Playing an arch-villain

Iago is often defined as an arch-villain by critics, the worst villain of all villains, the ultimate 'baddy'.

- 1  Which of the following could you use to describe an arch-villain? Give examples from film or literature.

unscrupulous evil dangerous vengeful empathetic
sly sensitive clever antagonistic witty

CHARACTERISATION

When an actor is developing a character they must consider a number of different aspects which define the character's unique personality and which will make her/him immediately recognisable and memorable for the audience.

Body language

How does the character move as s/he enters and exits the scene? How does s/he walk, stand or sit? What is her/his posture like?

Voice


How does the character speak? Does s/he have an accent? What pitch (how high or low the voice sounds) and tone does s/he use? Does s/he speak loudly or quietly (volume), quickly or slowly (pace)?

Facial expressions


How does the character use her/his face to convey emotions? Does s/he maintain eye contact or avoid it?

Mannerisms

Does the character have any physical habits or ticks? What does this trait tell the audience about the character?

- 3  Listen to the extract, concentrating on Iago's parts. Think about how you would characterise him on stage. Fill in the table with your ideas then compare with a partner.

	IAGO
Body language	
Voice	
Facial expression	
Mannerisms	

- 4  Now practise and perform the speech, using your notes above to help develop Iago's character.

ON STAGE!


When you are playing an archetypal character, such as an arch-villain, it is easy to **overact**, creating a caricature rather than a fully developed personality.

- 5 **Overacting, however, can also have advantages. Read the text below and decide if the points are pros or cons.**

- It can be necessary in a comic role where flamboyance is important.
- It makes the contrast between the character and the others on stage too sharp.
- It can make the character seem improbable and unbelievable.
- It can help an actor reach the entire audience, even those sitting a long way from the stage.
- It can make an evil character seem larger than life.



INDEPENDENT LEARNING

- 6  Think of some famous villains from films and books, such as Draco Malfoy from the *Harry Potter* series, and talk about what kind of evil they do and what makes them villainous.

Test Yourself

I AM NOT WHAT I AM

1 Find words or expressions in the extract that mean the following.

- a battleground
- b bowing; kneeling
- c servant
- d innate; inborn
- e own; have; possess

2 Iago says that Cassio “knows almost nothing about the practical aspect of being a soldier in the field, he only knows the theory”. What does he compare Cassio with?

3 Turn the following statements into indirect reported speech, using the past simple of the verbs in brackets.

- a Iago: “Cassio got the promotion whereas I, who have fought in many battles, remain in the lower ranks.” (complain)
- b Iago: “Lots of men devote their lives to their master, for nothing but their food, only to be dismissed when they get old – which is stupid of them.” (say)
- c Iago: “I am looking after my own interests and any display of love or duty is completely false and a means to an end.” (explain)
- d Iago: “Let’s wake up her father and tell him what happened!” (suggest)
- e Iago: “I will wear my heart upon my sleeve.” (announce)

▶ / 17 marks

VOCABULARY BUILDING

4 Complete the sentences with nouns made from the verbs in the box in Exercise 4 on page 21.

- a The expressions ‘all right’ and ‘ok’ are both used to indicate
- b I do enjoy reading love stories, but I have a for thrillers.
- c I am not satisfied, but I suppose I have little but to agree.
- d In order to prevent any serious when exercising, make sure your workout programme is suitable for you.
- e It takes patience and to put up with his arrogant attitude.
- f Lack of is one of the most common factors undermining the productivity of any business activity.

5 Complete the sentences with adjectives made from some of the nouns in capital letters in Exercise 5 on page 21.

- a Children are financially on their parents.
- b Considering how far away he lives, it is that he arrived at all.
- c Reading was once my pastime.
- d My favourite poems tend to be about the world and rural life.
- e The part of the country is suffering severe flooding.

▶ / 11 marks

CULTURE

6 Make questions about the underlined information.

- a Othello is set briefly in Venice and then, for the most part, in Cyprus.
- b Some scholars believe that Shakespeare must have spent some time in Italy.
- c At that time, Italy was made up of different and separate city states, Republics and Kingdoms.
- d Florence had a reputation throughout Europe as the birthplace of the Renaissance.
- e Ferdinando I strengthened the power of the city and its position in Europe.
- f Florence was renowned for its rich Renaissance culture, as well as for its ruthless politics.
- g Shakespeare was probably inspired by Machiavelli in his creation of Iago.

7 Complete the following sentences with ONE word.

- a A number of Shakespeare's were set in Italy.
- b Many of Shakespeare's contemporaries were very interested in
- c It has been suggested that Shakespeare travelled to Italy some time the mid-1580s and the early 1590s.
- d Most probably, he not read Italian, but he was able to use Italian sources for many of his plays.
- e In Shakespeare's time, Italy was a land of city states, each with own rules and qualities.

▶ / 12 marks

▶ TOTAL / 40 marks

Exam Practice

F

B2 FIRST ENGLISH TEST: READING AND USE OF ENGLISH PART 1

TIP: This section of the exam tests your knowledge and understanding of similar words.

- Read the title and think what the text may be about. This will help you to activate vocabulary and ideas.
- Read the text quickly ignoring the gaps and the options. This will help you get the main idea of the text.
- Read the text once more. This time stop at each option, looking carefully before and after the gap.
- Now look at the options. If you aren't sure of the answer, cross out any answers that you think are wrong.
- With the remaining options try to make similar sentences in order to help you make a decision.

Read the text below and decide which option (A, B, C, or D) best fits each gap.

IAGO, THE MACHIAVELLIAN VILLAIN

The character of Iago in *Othello* is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating ever created by Shakespeare. More than (1) other character with similar personality traits (Richard II and Richard III both come to mind), Iago can be described as 'Machiavellian', as he really seems to be (2) on the character of the Prince, in Niccolò Machiavelli's famous work of the same name.

Although *The Prince* is made up, for the most part, of the philosopher's observations on how people in power (should) operate, the main character of his book has become a well-defined type of negative person, so much (3) that the term 'Machiavellian' has come to embody a general concept. The term is usually applied to any person in authority, such as the ruler of a country, a politician or a company leader, with an extremely pragmatic and overtly cynical approach to life. Being Machiavellian means being ready to do anything to achieve one's goals, especially (4) success at the expense of other people, because 'the ends justify the means'.

This is what Iago effectively does (5) the play *Othello*. Just like Macchiavelli's Prince, he is willing to resort to any evil action in order

to achieve what he wants, even if it means lying and cheating. Actually, Iago goes **(6)** beyond that. A tricky, manipulative, and demonic individual, this unscrupulous villain brings the most horrible events into being and destroys other people's lives **(7)** his own purposes. Iago aims to satisfy his personal ambition **(8)** pretending to act in the best interests of those around him. He plays the role of the well-meaning honest man, and is believed to be so by all those around him. But lurking in the dark, he **(9)** to corrupt, taint, transform and debase anything and anybody he comes into contact with, through his poisonous use of language. Initially, and paradoxically, he does this through silence and omission, never openly mentioning Desdemona's infidelity. Rather, he says just enough so that Othello can fill **(10)** the gaps in Iago's speech and come to his own completely distorted conclusion.

It must be pointed out, **(11)** , that Machiavelli's character was not a villain *tout court*, and it is somewhat simplistic to remember him solely for his most cynical aspects. His reflections have stimulated a very **(12)** debate on the responsibility of state leaders and governors, an issue which is as relevant today as it was when Macchiavelli first published his book.

- | | | | | |
|----|--------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| 1 | A many | B any | C most | D every |
| 2 | A modelled | B taken | C formed | D copied |
| 3 | A as | B now | C for | D so |
| 4 | A winning | B gaining | C making | D getting |
| 5 | A throughout | B through | C thoroughly | D though |
| 6 | A much | B far | C further | D farther |
| 7 | A with | B at | C for | D on |
| 8 | A through | B while | C only | D in |
| 9 | A succeeds | B wins | C manages | D convinces |
| 10 | A in | B on | C out | D up |
| 11 | A finally | B really | C however | D anyway |
| 12 | A active | B hard | C acute | D lively |

Exam Practice

F B2 FIRST ENGLISH TEST: READING AND USE OF ENGLISH PART 2

Read the text below and write the word which best fits each gap. Use only ONE word to fill each gap.

In the context of the current European migration crisis, with streams of refugees risking their (1) to take either the land or sea route into Europe, a centuries-old document is arousing a (2) deal of interest among literary experts and is proving itself to be not only incalculably precious, but also astonishingly relevant today.

The document, a manuscript entitled 'The Booke of Sir Thomas More', describes the life of the Catholic author, lawyer, statesman, and Lord Chancellor of England during the reign of Henry VIII, (3) was executed for refusing to recognise the King as Supreme Head of the Church of England. It is a play written around 1600, (4) a time when the increasing number of French Protestants, called Huguenots, seeking asylum in London was creating xenophobic feelings among the local population. Riots were (5) place in the city, with the rioters demanding that foreigners be expelled or even worse, executed. The play was not staged because of (6) it might incite further unrest.

The main author of the text has been identified (7) Anthony Munday, a minor playwright of the time, but the text seems to include a variety of additions and contributions by other dramatists, who were commissioned to revise or rework the script. Spelling, vocabulary, images, and ideas featured in three particular pages of the manuscript (8) been recognised as Shakespeare's. If this were true, it would also be the only existing example of (9) handwriting in a manuscript. The 147 lines written by Shakespeare describe an insurrection scene, in which he imagines Sir Thomas More making a moving imploration for a humane treatment of immigrants and refugees. In the scene, More, as sheriff of London, is addressing anti-immigration demonstrators in London, asking them to give up (10) 'mountainous inhumanity', and empathise with the refugees and immigrants, accepting and welcoming the 'wretched strangers', as they are called in the text. He asks them to imagine what it (11) be like if they themselves (12) the strangers, or were banished to a foreign land and forced to seek asylum.

The British Library has put extracts from the document online – yet another testimony of Shakespeare's enduring cultural legacy.

e Go to *Othello* online to find out more about Shakespeare's defence of immigrants in *The Booke of Sir Thomas More*, and listen to veteran Shakespearean actor, Sir Ian McKellen deliver a stirring rendition of the speech.

F B2 FIRST ENGLISH TEST: SPEAKING PART 2

Look at the photographs of two different productions of Othello. Answer the following questions.

- How are the sets different?
- Who are the characters?
- What atmosphere does the director want to convey in each one?
- Which one do you prefer and why?

A**B**

Shakespeare Wordbank

Character The characters are the people in a story, play or poem.

Context The situation (social, historical, biographical and geographical) in which a text is written.

Dialogue The words that the characters say to each other. Other types of speech include *monologue* (when only one character speaks) or *soliloquy* (when a character speaks alone and reflects on his/her feelings).

Drama A literary genre which begins as a written text but which is meant for performance. A single piece of drama is known as *play*.

Figures of speech Phrases and expressions that use words in a figurative way. The most common figures of speech include *metaphor* (when something with similar characteristics is used to describe the original), *simile* (when something with similar characteristics is compared to the original, using 'as' or 'like').

Form How a poem or piece of writing appears on the page.

Genre A type of literature. For example, drama is a literary genre.

Performance When a script is acted out on stage, on screen or on the radio.

Play A piece of drama. The author of a play is called *playwright* or *dramatist*. Plays can be divided into acts, and acts can be subdivided into scenes. A scene usually covers a single event in a single setting.

Poem Piece of writing with the words arranged in separate lines, often using rhyme, and chosen for the ideas they suggest and sounds they create.

Rhyme Same sounds usually at the end of lines (rhyme-time). Rhymes can create patterns and these patterns are often indicated by using the letters of the alphabet (A, B, C, etc.) to mark rhyming words. The pattern generated is called the 'rhyme scheme'.

Sonnet A type of poem of which the earliest examples were Italian. Petrarch established the form with his *Canzoniere* (1366-1374) influencing poets worldwide.

Stage directions In a play, they are the instructions and information given by the playwright which accompany the dialogue. They are usually in italics to distinguish them from the dialogue. They can give information about the characters, their physical appearance and their feelings and behaviour as well as their actions, movements, facial expressions and gestures.

Story(line) In drama, the storyline is the main events given in chronological order.

Theme The central idea of a work, usually expressed in abstract terms, such as 'evil', 'love', etc.

Tragedy Tragedy is a type of drama that focuses on human suffering and its consequences. In tragedies the initial situation is characterized by fortune and harmony but it is undone by misfortunes and eventual disaster.