

Quiz: *Othello*, Act I – Answer Key

1. Where does this play take place?

The setting is 16th century Venice and Cyprus. The island of Cyprus, which is under attack by the Turks, was a colony of Venice at this time.

2. Why does Iago hate Othello?

Othello appointed Cassio as his lieutenant, instead of Iago, despite the fact that Iago bribed three city officials to get the position. Iago despises Cassio as a "theoretician" with no practical experience.

3. Why is Roderigo jealous of Othello?

Othello has just married Desdemona, whom Roderigo loves. In fact, Roderigo has been paying Iago to help him win Desdemona's affection.

4. Who is Brabantio, and what news do Iago and Roderigo bring him?

Brabantio is Desdemona's father and a senator in Venice. Roderigo and Iago awaken him in the middle of the night to inform him that Othello and Desdemona have eloped.

5. What is Desdemona's response to Brabantio when he asks for her obedience as a daughter?

Desdemona says she has a "divided duty" between her husband and her father. However, her first loyalty must be to her husband. She points out to Brabantio that this is the same choice her mother made in choosing him before her father.

6. Summarize Othello's explanation of how he won Desdemona's love.

Othello was often invited to Brabantio's home, where he related the exploits of his career. Desdemona, having heard parts of his accounts, one day asked him to repeat the entire story to her.

He related the events of his life from his boyhood to the present day, including many exciting and romantic events-- "disastrous chances," "hairbreadth escapes," and being "sold to slavery," as well as his travels to strange and foreign lands. While listening to him speak, Desdemona was often reduced to tears while he spoke of "some distressful stroke that my youth suffered."

Ultimately, she fell in love with him because of the hardships he endured, and he with her because of the tenderness she showed him.

Who said it and what is he/she talking about?

7. I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be long that Desdemona should continue her love to the Moor. Put money in thy purse.

Iago is duping Roderigo into giving him more money. He convinces Roderigo that he still has a chance to win Desdemona after she tires of Othello, but it will require more cash. Roderigo foolishly believes Iago's lie and rushes off to sell his land.

8. The Moor is of a free and open nature That thinks men honest that but seem to be so; And will as tenderly be led by th' nose As asses are.

Iago begins to formulate his plan to ruin Othello in a soliloquy at the end of Act I. In this speech, he suspects Othello of having slept with his wife. Although, he's not sure if it's true, he will assume it is. He plans to convince Othello that the handsome Cassio is "too familiar" with Desdemona.

In this quote, Iago notes that Othello's trusting nature will make it easier to deceive him and lead him by the nose, like a donkey.