

Othello – Act 3 Scene 3 – ‘Temptation scene’



LO: To analyse the significance of this scene in the development of the tragedy

Opening: Irony

TASK:

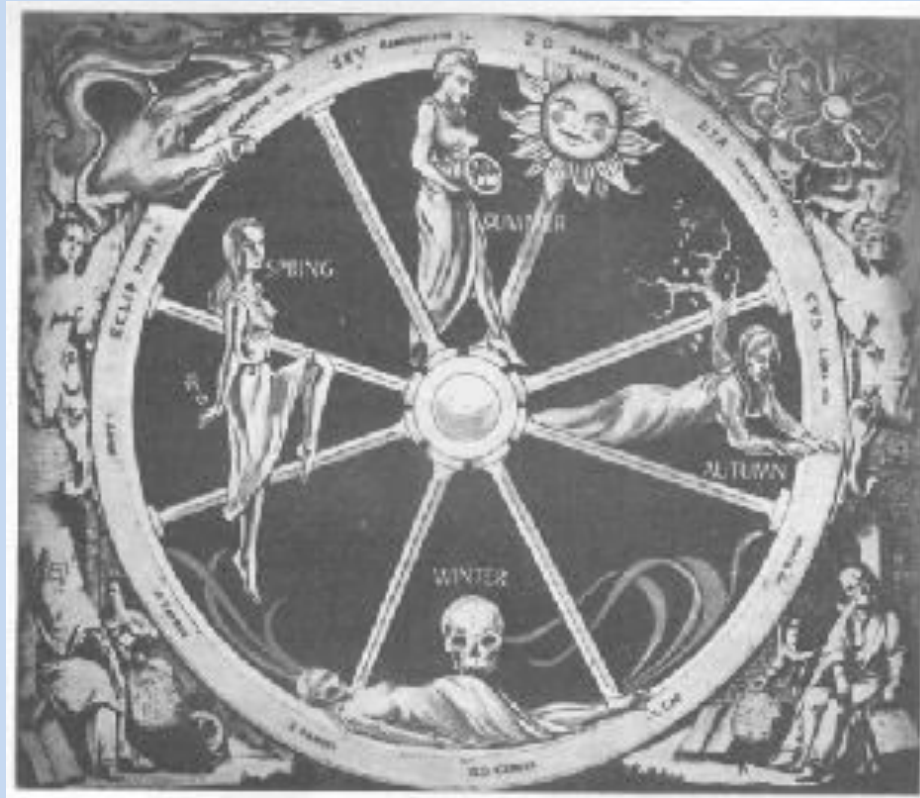
Identify the (dramatic) irony in the words of Emilia and particularly Desdemona in the opening moments of the scene!

Why does this key scene in the tragedy open with such a device?



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Fate's influence?



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First half of scene:
Contrast of Desdemona's and Iago's attempts
to persuade Othello

In what ways is Desdemona's pleading presented as honest and caring?



If I have any grace or power over you, his present reconciliation take

'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves, or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm

- *Shall I deny you? No.*
- *Whate'er you be, I am obedient*

How does Othello's reaction hint at the tragedy to come and at their beginning isolation?

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First half of scene:
Contrast of Desdemona's and Iago's attempts
to persuade Othello

**Iago's persuasion of Othello is cunning and scheming –
which techniques does the tragic villain use to plant the
seed of jealousy in Othello's mind?**



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Clash of private and public

- **Structure: Desdemona's beginning fall is proportionate to Iago's rise in Othello's trust**
 - D's interference with O's professional decision to dismiss Cassio begins to turn her into an enemy
 - As soon as O begins to feel at odds with D, I uses language of love and intimacy to take her place
 - *My lord, you know I love you*
 - *I humbly do beseech you of your pardon for too much loving you*

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Close analysis

Comment on Othello's choice of language and imagery in this line to Iago:

I am bound to you forever

In what ways is this significant to the ensuing tragedy and the role Othello will take in it?

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Othello's soliloquy – an emotional climax

This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,
Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,
Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings,
I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind,
To pray at fortune. Haply for I am black,
And have not those soft parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declined
Into the vale of years, - yet that's not much -
She's gone, I am abused, and my relief
Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses. Yet 'tis the plague of great ones;
Prerogativ'd are they less than the base;
'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death:
Even then this forked plague is fated to us
When we do quicken. Look where she comes.
If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself!
I'll not believe't.

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The handkerchief – a key symbol in the tragedy



How does its symbolic meaning shift in this scene?

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Iago's brief soliloquy – how does this remind us of his role as a tragic villain who takes control of the play?

I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,
And let him find it. Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ: this may do something.
The Moor already changes with my poison:
Dangerous conceits are, in their natures, poisons.
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
But with a little act upon the blood.
Burn like the mines of sulphur. I did say so:
Look, where he comes!

Re-enter OTHELLO

Not poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou owedst yesterday.

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Othello re-enters

Last words before he left the stage:

If she be false, ...I'll not believe it

How has his attitude changed when he re-enters?

Give evidence from the text for your ideas!

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Second half of scene – three key aspects to Othello's character

Othello becomes increasingly irrational and confused

Iago's influence over Othello is mirrored in Othello's language that takes on features of Iago's language

Othello becomes obsessed with the desire to obtain *ocular proof*

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End of scene: Parody of a Jacobean marriage ceremony

Find evidence in the text how this vow of revenge is turned into a parody of a marriage ceremony.

Can you link this moment to your contextual knowledge of drama in Shakespeare's time?

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