

### Reading Act 3 Scenes 1-3 – Guiding questions

#### Act 3 Scene 1

- In the first part, Cassio instructs some musicians to play music outside of Othello and Desdemona's bedchamber. It was an Elizabethan custom to wake newlyweds with music outside their bedroom. A clown is also involved in the conversation. Can you identify one pun or joke from this exchange? (Hint: Read the text on the left side of the page to help you):
- As a director, would you include or cut this comic moment from the play? Why?
- What does Iago's phrase "You have not been abed then" suggest about when this scene takes place?
- What does Cassio tell Iago he has done to recover from his loss of reputation?
- Iago: *And I'll devise a mean to draw the Moor / Out of the way, that your converse and business / May be more free.* Why does this line reveal Iago's deception and scheming? Give two meanings:
  - What does he want Cassio to believe:
  - Why does he actually make the suggestion above:
- Cassio says of Iago 'I never knew/ A Florentine more kind and honest'. Why is this an example of **dramatic irony**?
- What is suggested by the fact that Emilia enters the scene after her husband Iago?

## Act 3 Scene 2

Key points:

- Iago carries out the distraction of O to orchestrate the interview of C and D
- O's language – reminder of his role as a military leader
  - BUT – this is the last time war is mentioned in the play – from now on his role as husband will take over and destroy the reputation of the skilled military general
  - AND: O has been determined not to let war and love interfere – but ironically he leaves his wife here to attend to his duties only for Iago to push his manipulation of their relationship to the next level

### Act 3 Scene 3 – KEY SCENE IN THE PLAY

- What is Cassio worried about in his initial conversation with Desdemona?
- Desdemona says '*I'll intermingle everything he does/ With Cassio's suit. Therefore be merry, Cassio, /For thy solicitor shall rather die than give thy cause away.*' What is she promising she will do for Cassio and why does she refer to herself as a '*solicitor*'?

Why, for the audience, is her statement also **dramatic irony**?

- Why does Cassio leave before Othello joins them?
- '*Ha! I like not that.*' What do you think Iago is suggesting/implying to Othello?
- Othello asks if it is Cassio who is departing from Desdemona in the distance and Iago replies: '*No, sure, I cannot think it,/That he would steal away so guilty-like, seeing you coming.*' Consider Iago's use of the words 'steal away' and 'guilty-like'. How does this reinforce Iago's **connotation** given to Othello when he previously said 'Ha! I like not that'?
- What specifically is Desdemona asking Othello to do about Cassio?
- How does Othello react?
- '*Whatever you be, I am obedient*' are Desdemona's words before she exits. What is she suggesting about herself?
- Read lines 90-165. What is Iago trying to do at this point?

- Identify three techniques Iago employs in these lines to achieve his desired effect:

Then look at this extract:

**IAGO**

O, beware, my lord, of jealousy;  
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock  
The meat it feeds on; that cuckold lives in bliss  
Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger;  
But, O, what damned minutes tells he o'er  
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves!

1. What is 'the green-eyed monster'?
2. What is Iago warning Othello of?
3. Iago refers to a '*cuckold*', which is name for a husband whose wife is cheating on him. Why does Iago deliberately use this word to Othello?
4. Consider Iago's use of (i) oxymora combined with (ii) alliteration e.g. dotes-doubts, suspects-strongly loves. How does this remind us that Iago is witty and clever?

- When Othello claims that he is not a jealous character and is assured of Desdemona's love and faithfulness ("*For she had eyes and chose me*"), what does Iago do in return?
- Iago also reminds Othello of Desdemona's 'deception' of her father – find the quote:
- Read lines 230-239. What is Iago's main argument about Desdemona here?
- After Iago's exit, Othello speaks a soliloquy. What do his thoughts reveal about Othello at this point?

- In the next little episode between Othello, Desdemona and Emilia, an important prop and symbol in the play is introduced – what is it?
- Who takes possession of this prop and why does this cause dreadful anticipation in the audience?
- When Othello returns to speak with Iago, how does he feel? Offer one example from the text:
- What does Othello demand from Iago to convince him of Desdemona's deceit?
- *I think my wife be honest, and think she is not; / I think that thou art just, and think thou art not* – what does this line spoken by Othello to Iago suggest about Othello's state of mind?
- Which two stories about Cassio does Iago make up in the next part of the scene to incite Othello's jealousy further? Summarise each in one sentence:
  - Story 1:
  - Story 2:
- *"Now do I see 'tis true"* – what does Othello refer to when he mentions *"it"*? Why is his statement ironic for the audience?
- How does the scene end?