

## OTHELLO *Work-sheet 1*

The function of these questions and of those on the other Acts is to get you involved in the actual text; so do take the trouble to do a good job of this, as it is a good investment for your matric final. Do not be intimidated by the text, after all Shakespeare's plays were entertainment for the peasants and ignorant of his own time; and so ....

### ACT 1 SCENE 1

1. Why is Roderigo angry with Iago?
2. Why does Roderigo bear a grudge against Othello?
3. Why, apparently, does Iago bear a grudge against Othello?
4. Who is Cassio, and why does Iago not think much of Cassio's military abilities?
5. Why does Iago refer to Othello, not by name, but by words which reflect his race?
6. Why does Iago still serve under Othello if he bears him a grudge?
7. Why do Iago and Roderigo decide to go and disturb Brabantio? What can they hope to achieve by annoying him?
8. When do these events take place, and what does this symbolize?
9. How does Brabantio react to the news, and why does he react in this manner? Is it understandable? Why is Brabantio susceptible to Iago's accusations?
10. What effect is created by our meeting Iago first (i.e. before we meet Othello himself)?
11. What kind of person does Iago reveal himself to be? What is his view of life? How, do you think, this can prepare us for what may happen later?

### ACT 1 SCENE 2

1. Iago does not talk with Othello and Roderigo simultaneously: why not, and what does this show us about him?
2. What does Iago pretend to do/be in lines 6 to 16?
3. Why does Othello not worry about Iago's news? See lines 16 to 27 for your answer. What is Othello's background?
4. Why does the Duke of Venice want Othello? What does this suggest?

5. Look at Brabantio's speech (lines 62 to 81): what line of reasoning does he follow? Is he emotional?
6. This scene could have led to confusion and fighting: why does this not happen?
7. Characters reveal a great deal about themselves when they speak. What do Iago, Othello and the Duke reveal about themselves in their speech?
8. What can we learn from Brabantio's speech [ll. 61— 81 and 93 — 99] about himself, Othello's position, Venetian society — and ourselves?

### ACT 1 SCENE 3

1. Why does the news of the war keep changing so much? What effect is Shakespeare trying to create? ( This effect must be quite important: after all, it takes up 46 lines!)
2. How, according to Brabantio, did Othello win his daughter?
3. Do you think that the Senators are fair to **both** Othello and Brabantio? Why do you think so?
4. How does Othello's story of his life appear to you (lines 128 to 170)?
5. How do the Senators react to it? What does this show us — especially in relation to the impression created by Iago in Act 1 Scene 1?
6. Look at Desdemona's reply to her father (lines 180 ff.): sum up these lines briefly.
7. When Othello goes off to Cyprus, what happens to Desdemona?( See lines 240 to 256.)
8. Look at lines 289 to 292: what do they show us about the relationship between Othello and Iago?
9. From line 280 the mood changes, and becomes more ominous. Three utterances contribute to this: identify them and explain their grimness.
10. At the end of the scene we come back to Iago and Roderigo: why do you think Shakespeare did this? (see also Question 10 relating to Act 1 Scene 1).