

# One Page – Othello - Emilia Essay

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'Emilia is the most admirable character in the play *Othello*.' Discuss. *Note: You do not need to say Emilia is perfect, just more admirable than the other characters.*

## Overview

- Realistic, flawed and likeable
- Desdemona too perfect to be relatable
- Emilia rises above her status and her flaws to achieve a sort of greatness

## Points and quotes

1. May seem cynical but is experienced, pragmatic, intelligent, perceptive, and shrewd. Sees Othello's jealousy and warns Desdemona.  
**Emilia to Desdemona:** [Men] are not ever jealous for the cause, / But jealous for they're jealous.'  
Realises a 'busy and insinuating rogue' has been poisoning Othello's mind.
2. Kind and helpful: sympathy for Cassio. Allows him to talk to Desdemona.  
**Emilia to Cassio:** 'all will sure be well.'
3. Loyal, brave, and loving: defends Desdemona.  
**Emilia to Othello:** 'if she not be honest, chaste and true, / there's no man happy.'
4. Handkerchief episode shows her in a bad light, but she does not understand its significance. Misguided loyalty to Iago.  
**Emilia (about the handkerchief):** 'What he will do with it, / Heaven knows, not I. I nothing but to please his fantasy.'  
**Emilia to Desdemona:** 'who would not make her husband a cuckold to make him a monarch?'
5. Spirited and courageous: confronts the armed and dangerous Othello after the murder. Redeems herself at the end of the play.  
**Emilia to Othello:** 'Thou art rash as fire / To say she was false. O, she was heavenly true!' 'Do thy worst.'
6. Defies conventions because she feels duty bound to tell the truth.  
**Emilia, on refusing to go home when ordered by Iago:** 'Tis proper I obey him – but not now.' 'I will speak as liberal as the north, / Let heaven, and men, and devils, let them all, / All cry shame against me, yet I'll speak.'
7. Emilia's passion denunciation of Iago and Othello mirrors the horror and indignation of the audience.  
**Critic A.C. Bradley** says Emilia 'sets one's teeth on edge' for much of the play but 'at the end one is ready to worship her.'