



The Temptation Scene

ACT 3, SCENE 3

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Othello



What Version
Have You
Seen?

The examiner will be interested to hear what version of the play you have seen. Ideally, you will have seen it in a theatre, but failing that, a film version is a great standby.

1995 Film Version

- ▶ Director: Oliver Parker
- ▶ Writers: William Shakespeare (play), Oliver Parker (adaptation)
- ▶ Stars: Laurence Fishburne, Kenneth Branagh, Irène Jacob



What makes a scene dramatic?



It moves the plot
along at a fast
pace



There is a wide
range of
emotions



Dramatic irony



Character/s
undergo change



Language and
imagery



Range of Emotion

- ▶ In this scene we move from confidence and happiness to jealousy and rage.
- ▶ It is a long scene and over the course of it, Iago leads Othello to damnation.

Stages of Act 3 Scene 3

Garden: Desdemona talking to Cassio and Emilia

Cassio leaves, Iago comments

Desdemona tries to persuade Othello to reinstate Cassio

Iago ensnares Othello

Othello's soliloquy

Emilia picks up the handkerchief and gives it to Iago

Othello returns: he is a changed man. Iago invents the dream

Othello vows to kill his wife and Iago pledges his allegiance to Othello in a perversion of a marriage ceremony

Opening

The scene opens in the garden with Desdemona assuring Cassio that she will do everything she can to help him win back his place in Othello's affections. Of course, she does not know how her words and deeds may be twisted.

She strikes an unwittingly **ominous note** when she says that she will strive until the 'last article' to make Othello see that he has done wrong in dismissing Cassio. She also says she will die rather than abandon Cassio's cause.

These opening lines are full of **dramatic irony** as we know what Iago intends to do with such goodness: he has already viewed Cassio's kissing of Desdemona's hand as a web by which he might 'ensare as great a fly as Cassio'.

Iago plants the seeds of doubt

- ▶ Iago: Ha, I like not that.
- ▶ Othello: What dost thou say?
- ▶ Iago: Nothing, my lord or if – I know not what.
- ▶ Othello: Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?
- ▶ Iago: Cassio, my lord?- No, sure ,I cannot think it, /That he would steal away so guilty-like, / Seeing you coming.





By pretending to be reluctant to speak, Iago plants the seeds of jealousy and doubt in Othello's mind



The words 'steal' and 'guilty-like' paint Cassio in an unfavourable light



Iago's words create an association between Cassio and wrongdoing

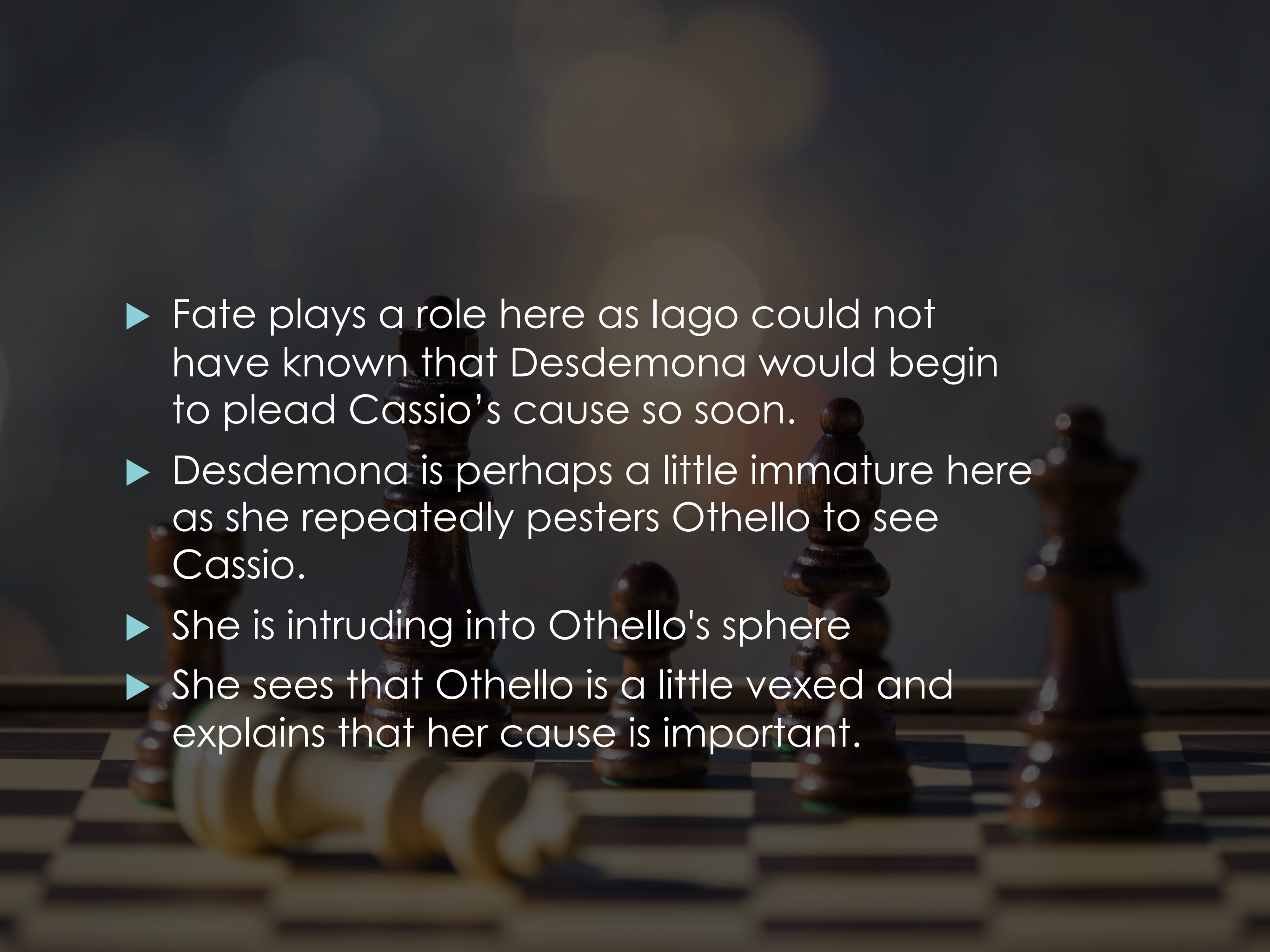


Othello believes he is uncovering the truth

Desdemona

- ▶ She refers to Cassio as a 'suitor': an unfortunate word choice under the circumstances.
- ▶ We fear for her as we know how Iago will twist her words.



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- ▶ Fate plays a role here as Iago could not have known that Desdemona would begin to plead Cassio's cause so soon.
 - ▶ Desdemona is perhaps a little immature here as she repeatedly pesters Othello to see Cassio.
 - ▶ She is intruding into Othello's sphere
 - ▶ She sees that Othello is a little vexed and explains that her cause is important.

Othello's love for his wife

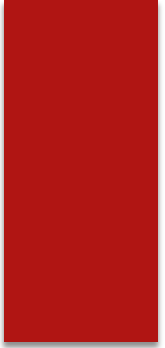
Othello says that if a time comes when he does not love Desdemona, 'Chaos is come again'. There is a note of danger and prophecy in his words.

He makes a serious mistake, however, in dismissing her and listening instead to Iago.



Iago ensnares Othello

- ▶ Note how little Iago says when Desdemona leaves, yet how loaded his words are.
- ▶ His question about Cassio and Desdemona seems innocent but it sets Othello wondering. Why should Iago ask such a thing out of the blue?
- ▶ The simple word 'Indeed!' shows Iago's brilliance. He prods Othello's memory and at the same time puts a sinister slant on Desdemona and Cassio's acquaintance - all without saying anything concrete.



By repeating Othello's questions back to him and not giving a straight answer, Iago alarms Othello.

Believing that Iago is holding something back, Othello demands to know more.

The audience cannot help but be fascinated by Iago's evil genius. He is a master manipulator and a superb actor.



Iago's continued evasion leads Othello to demand the 'worst of thoughts / The worst of words'

Iago mentions the word jealousy, once again planting an idea in Othello's mind.

'it is my nature's plague / To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy / Shapes faults that are not'.

He sanctimoniously warns Othello against 'the green-eyed monster which doth mock / The meat it feeds on'.

Remember, at this stage Othello still doesn't know why he should be jealous!

‘For she had eyes, and chose me...’

- ▶ Iago pretends to be reassured by Othello’s claim that he trusts his wife.
- ▶ He now voices his suspicions.



He plays on cultural prejudice against women:

'In Venice they do let God see the pranks / They dare not show their husbands'.

Unfaithful women, Iago claims, are a well-known part of Venetian society.

Othello is an outsider in Venice so bows to superior knowledge.

He does not argue, but merely says 'Dost thou say so?'


Iago has hooked Othello

Cunningly, Iago reminds Othello that Desdemona deceived her father by marrying him and that appearances can be deceptive. After all, did she not seem to 'shake and fear' Othello's looks when she 'loved them most'?





Othello now says little but agrees with Iago once again: 'And so she did'.



He claims to be bound to Iago forever, so grateful is he for this knowledge. This is a key point: Othello has tied his fortunes to Iago rather than to his wife.




Iago repeatedly tells Othello that he, Othello, is upset or 'moved' by what he has heard. Once again, he is manipulating Othello's thoughts.

‘And yet, how nature
erring from itself -‘

- ▶ This is a crucial line. Othello openly doubts Desdemona’s love.
- ▶ Iago seizes on this with alacrity and completes the thought, reminding Othello that it is strange that Desdemona did not marry one of her own kind.






Othello is truly 'bound' to Iago. We see the change in him immediately. He asks Iago to get Emilia to spy on Desdemona. This is a far cry from the open and straightforward general we saw in Act 1. As Othello begins to depend more and more on Iago, so his behaviour, and even language, comes to mirror that of his ensign.

Othello's soliloquy

- ▶ Here we see Othello's words echoing Iago's: 'Haply, for I am black, / And have not those soft parts of conversation / That chamberers have'
- ▶ This corresponds to Iago's 'clime', 'complexion' and degree.

The Handkerchief

It is worth noting that Othello seems to attach little importance to the handkerchief at this stage, telling Desdemona to 'Let it alone' when she drops it.

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- ▶ Emilia explains the significance of the handkerchief: 'he conjured her she should ever keep it'.
 - ▶ Nevertheless, she decides to give it to Iago, while wondering aloud what he intends to do with it.
 - ▶ When Emilia has gone, Iago reveals that he intends to plant the handkerchief in Cassio's lodgings.
 - ▶ The handkerchief becomes a symbol of fidelity and love. With it, Desdemona is chaste and true. Without it, Othello's worst suspicions appear to be confirmed.

Othello returns - a changed man

- ▶ He is distraught and believes Desdemona to be false
- ▶ All he wants now is proof.
- ▶ Iago invents Cassio's dream

Othello's words about chaos are coming true. Life has no meaning for him now and his 'occupation' is gone.

He believes he has been emasculated by Desdemona's infidelity.

He refers to her as a 'whore': his language has deteriorated to the level of Iago's.

Othello uses black and white imagery to express his sorrow and anger at Desdemona's betrayal: 'My name, that was as fresh as Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black as mine own face.'

Iago has succeeded in making Othello hate himself and his wife.

Iago's foul
language
and
Othello's
brutal
language

'How satisfied, my lord? /
Would you, the supervisor,
grossly gape on? / Behold
her tuppèd?'

'Were they as prime as
goats, as hot as monkeys,
/ As salt as wolves in their
pride'

Iago's aim here is to move Othello from suspicion to action. By inventing the sexual story and by using animalistic, crude language Iago drives Othello into a passionate rage.

Othello's eloquence has vanished and now we see how violent he can be. The man who loved his wife so dearly now vows to 'tear her all to pieces'. He calls on 'black vengeance' and the powers of hell.

The beautiful, flowing language of his earlier speeches is replaced with short exclamations: 'O, monstrous! Monstrous!' and 'O, blood, blood, blood!'

Othello describes Desdemona as a 'lewd minx', and a 'fair devil'.

Othello's love has been replaced with 'tyrannous hate' and he is determined to find 'some swift means of death' for his wife.

The Climax

- ▶ Othello is fixed on his course and the tragic ending of the play is inevitable.
- ▶ Othello and Iago act out a perverse version of a marriage ceremony with Iago playing the role of the bride.



Iago has replaced Desdemona as the most important person in Othello's life.

The two men kneel and make a pledge to take bloody vengeance on Cassio and Desdemona.

Iago's final words mock the language of love: 'I am your own forever'.