

Othello characterisation

Main Characters

Othello

Even though Othello is the main character, not all the action revolves around him. The play is still named after Othello because Othello is the tragic hero.

Othello's weaknesses according to Othello are his age (because he's old) and the colour of his skin (black). This shows us he was very insecure about these things, not very self-confident.

To a certain extent he was accepted by society because he was made army general. But he was not FULLY accepted. This is shown by the fact that Othello and Desdemona got married in secret. Because they knew that due to Othello's race, he wasn't accepted fully.

"Nature so could ere" - For Brabantio it was impossible that Desdemona fell in love with Othello, because according to him Desdemona should be afraid to look at him due to his looks.

Iago uses words that imply racism to refer to Othello, especially when informing Brabantio of the elopement.

Othello is also described as a beast. BUT, when Brabantio comes with his search party for Othello, Othello doesn't put up a fight, he comes peacefully. We see the total opposite of a beast - we see a calm, confident and rational man. We also see this Othello when he describes how he fell in love with Desdemona in front of the Duke.

'rude am I in speech' - Othello says this because he was a moor, and used to war. But in reality, Venice treated him in such a way that he keeps innate barbarity buried. He actually speaks very well, just like a Venetian.

Note - Desdemona is the symbol of goodness, hence the fact that his story matches with Desdemona's during Act 1, the fact that he's closer to Desdemona at first shows us he's still "good". Iago is the symbol of evil, and as the play moves along, he starts getting closer to Iago, and as a result his beastly side starts coming out. In fact, at the very end, he becomes an animal and kills his wife.

Some critics believe that it's not all Iago's fault. They believe that at his core, Othello truly is this beast, but he's managed to control it till he became jealous. Jealousy was his weakness. Iago managed to shake him down to his core and brought about his "true colors".

Jealousy is Othello's jealous flaw. Another flaw of his was that he trusted Iago blindly, but this was not entirely his fault. Because people in the army had a set of rules which everyone abided by, hence Iago was one of the very few exceptions.

Othello is the only character that changes completely till the end of the play. He starts off as good, and ends up succumbing to the wrongdoing, evil.