



## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS AND KEY THEMES

### INTRODUCTION

"Reputation is an idle and false imposition, oft got without merit and lost without deserving."  
– Iago, *Othello*, Act II, scene 3

Othello, the "Moor," is a romantic figure, a hero: noble and powerful. For those qualities and traits, however, he is both admired and hated in equal measure. Iago's hatred and envy toward him will cause Othello's downfall. By deviously orchestrating false statements and misperceptions to breed jealousy and hatred, Iago causes reputations and lives to be lost. But *Othello* is much more than a story built on idle gossip. It offers us a rich opportunity to examine the play and the humanity of the characters through the intersectionality of oppression. By exploring the ways in which racism, misogyny and access to power together impact the characters' experiences of jealousy, desire and manipulation, students are able to look at the resonance of *Othello* in the twenty-first century. In seeing the play and participating in the exercises in this guide, students can ask questions about what happens to a society built on falsehoods, the consequences of marginalization and the complexity of power in their daily lives.

### SYNOPSIS

Iago resents the fact that his general, Othello, has promoted Michael Cassio to the rank of lieutenant. He initiates a plan to disgrace Cassio in order to have him demoted. Iago then suggests to Cassio that his best chance of getting reinstated is to ask Othello's new wife, Desdemona, to intercede for him. At the same time, Iago insinuates into Othello's mind the unjustified suspicion of a romantic liaison between Cassio and Desdemona. Of course, the more earnestly the innocent Desdemona pleads on behalf of Cassio, the more Othello suspects her.

By chance, Iago's wife, Emilia, has come into possession of a distinctively embroidered handkerchief of Desdemona's. Iago plants it in Cassio's lodging. Cassio, assuming some visitor has dropped it, notices the embroidery and gives it to his mistress, Bianca, to copy – a transaction that Iago ensures Othello sees. Othello, now certain of her adultery, smothers Desdemona, who dies protesting her innocence. The horrified Emilia summons the authorities. When Othello tries to justify himself by citing the evidence of the handkerchief, Emilia suddenly understands what Iago has done and denounces him. Iago stabs her and tries to flee, but is recaptured. Stripped of his office and ordered back to Venice to stand trial, Othello instead chooses to be his own executioner, stabbing himself.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

### Grades 7 +

	Creativity	Learning to Learn/ Self-Awareness	Communication	Collaboration	Critical Thinking
<b>GLOBAL COMPETENCIES</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

<b>ELEMENTARY</b>	Grade 7	Grade 8
<b>The Arts</b> *Dance *Drama *Music *Visual Arts *Media Arts and Multimedia Technology	✓	✓
<b>Health and Physical Education</b> *Understanding Healthy Concepts *Making Healthy Choices *Making Connections for Healthy Living	✓	✓
<b>Language</b> *Oral Communication *Reading *Writing *Media Literacy	✓	✓

<b>SECONDARY</b>	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
<b>The Arts</b> *Dance *Drama *Integrated Arts *Media Arts *Music *Visual Arts	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Canadian and World Studies</b> *Civics *History		✓	✓	✓
<b>English</b> *Oral Communication *Reading and Literature Studies *Writing	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Media Studies				
<b>Health and Physical Education</b> *Understanding Healthy Concepts *Making Healthy Choices *Making Connections for Healthy Living	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Social Sciences and Humanities</b> *Introduction to Anthropology, Psychology and Sociology *Gender Studies *Equity Studies *World History			✓	✓

## THEMES AND MOTIFS

- Relationships: Love and Marriage; Gender and Sex; Trust, Jealousy and Fear
- Self-Knowledge: Appearance and Reality; Sight and Blindness; Confidence and Insecurity
- Power: Racism and Discrimination; Identity; Isolation; Lying, Deceit and Manipulation; Masculinity; Violence, Heroism and Honour
- Motifs: Plants, Animals, Hell, Demons and Monsters