

Characters

Protagonist: Othello

Antagonist: Iago

Foils of Othello: Michael Cassio, Iago

Othello: Black Moor who is the greatest army general in Venice. He is intelligent, courageous, and honorable. His marriage to beautiful Desdemona, the daughter of a prominent Venetian, provokes racial slurs against him. But he carries on with nobility and dignity as he leads an army against Turks on Cyprus. His dedication to duty is eclipsed only by his dedication to Desdemona, who follows him to Cyprus. So passionately does he love her that he cannot endure the thought of another man even looking at her. And therein lies his Achilles' heel, jealousy.

Iago: Military officer who schemes against Othello because the Moor did not promote him. He is evil through and through, taking great pleasure in bringing down the great Othello.

Desdemona: Daughter of Brabantio, wife of Othello, and victim of Iago's machinations and Othello's jealousy. She is the noblest and most unselfish character in the play.

Michael Cassio: Othello's lieutenant, who is manipulated by Iago. Cassio is a hinge on which the play turns. On the one hand, it is his promotion that arouses Iago's jealousy. On the other, it is his alleged (but nonexistent) love affair with Desdemona that arouses Othello's jealousy.

Duke of Venice: Ruler who finds in favor of Othello when Desdemona's father attacks Othello's character.

Brabantio: Senator and father of Desdemona. A bigot whose racism is inflamed by Iago, he despises Othello.

First Senator, Second Senator

Gratiano: Brabantio's brother.

Lodovico: Brabantio's kinsman, who bears a message from the duke recalling Othello to Venice.

Roderigo: Venetian gentleman and former suitor of Desdemona. He is manipulated by Iago.

Montano: Othello's predecessor in the government of Cyprus.

Clown: Servant to Othello.

Emilia: Wife of Iago. She is blind to his evil until she discovers that it was he who plotted against Othello and Desdemona.

Bianca: Cassio's mistress.

Minor Characters: Sailor, messenger, herald, officers, gentlemen, musicians, attendants.