

# Edexcel English Literature A-level

## Othello: Themes Jealousy

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## Introduction

Iago states, **'O beware, my lord, of jealousy: / It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock / The meat it feeds on'** (Act 3, Scene 3), portraying the **sinful associations** of jealousy, and its **corruptive nature**. Throughout the play, Shakespeare explores the consequences of **jealous dispositions**. This means that jealousy is central in driving most characters' actions. The **revenge plot** of Iago is driven by both jealousy towards Cassio, who was made lieutenant by Othello, and **sexual jealousy** through the assumption that Othello slept with his wife. Additionally, it is sexual jealousy that causes Othello to kill Desdemona, making their love story a **tragedy**.

While *Othello* is famous for its depiction of jealousy, Shakespeare argues that jealousy **doesn't occur in isolation**. Instead, the jealousy we witness in the play is a **symptom** of the society and **institutions** explored: for example, Othello has a jealous disposition because he is **insecure** about his race and **outsider status**. Equally, Shakespeare illustrates that sexual jealousy is an **inevitable endemic** within patriarchal societies that preach the **ownership** of women's sexuality by men.

## Race, Religion & Jealousy

**Religious ideas** shape the way individuals behave within the play. Othello's **conversion to Christianity** gives him the ability to fit into Venetian society, suggesting that diverting from Christian teachings of good and evil is fatal. This is reinforced by the **constant temptations** and forces of **evil** that the characters have to face and fight - both **physical** through the war with the Turks and **psychological**, which involves their own **inner selves**.

Individuals in Jacobean England were encouraged to be **introspective**, meaning that they must analyse and improve from the inside by appealing to their **own conscience**. For example, Othello exclaims, **'I had rather be a toad / And live upon the vapor of a dungeon / Than keep a corner in the thing I love / For others' uses'** (Act 3, Scene 3). This portrays Othello's inner struggle, as his perception of his wife's faithfulness starts to be **manipulated** by Iago. His **haunted conscience** is common in most of Shakespeare's heroes, as they are tormented about which actions to take, seeing this as progressing and journeying towards **heaven or hell**. This is especially evident before he kills Desdemona, as she notices, **'Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip? / Some bloody passion shakes your very frame'** (Act 5, Scene 2). Therefore, the link between **jealousy and conscience** is important to understand Othello's **descent** into **raging passions**. His character's journey into jealousy is as much a **spiritual journey** as it is an emotional one.

The play begins with **racially-charged language** that contemporary audiences are familiar with. However, as Othello becomes more and more aggressive towards Desdemona - to the horror of the audience, who know she is innocent - Shakespeare offers different **motives** for his **madness**. Shakespeare's depiction of Othello draws on the **stereotype** that African men are **inherently and extremely jealous**. He was probably inspired by Leo Africanus' **A Geographical History of Africa (1600)**, a former Moroccan Muslim who converted to Catholicism. Similarly, the play engages with ideas of **geohumoralism**, which was a racist, **pseudo-scientific** concept that linked **psychology (humors)** to the



**climate or geography.** Geohumoralism was very popular in Renaissance Europe, as it was used to justify **white-supremacist ideals**.

Geohumoralism stated that Africans were not naturally jealous, but if they were **provoked** they would respond violently. In the theory, countries with **warmer climates** produced more **aggressive subjects**, which corresponds to European perceptions of Africans as **exotic creatures**. For example, Desdemona responds to Emilia about Othello's jealousy: **'Who, he? I think the sun where he was born / Drew all such humor's from him' (Act 3, Scene 4)**. Othello himself recognises this, as he says that he is **'one not easily jealous but being wrought, / Perplexed in the extreme' (Act 5, Scene 2)** as well as claiming that his **blackness presupposes him to rage**: **'I am black / And have not those soft parts of conversation' (Act 3, Scene 3)**. Iago takes advantage of Othello's (supposedly racial) **impulsivity**: **'Trifles light as air / Are to the jealous confirmations strong/As proofs of holy writ' (Act 3, Scene 3)**. Therefore, most characters - as well as Othello - see his jealousy linked to his **racial origin**.

## Femininity & Jealousy

Jacobean ideas of **female infidelity** and its consequences are apparent in this play. However, Othello is reluctant to believe that Desdemona is being **adulterous** at the beginning of Iago's plan. He is dismissive about her being **deceptive**: **'My life upon her faith' (Act 1, Scene 3)**. This suggests that he trusts her completely, yet, at Iago's doing, Othello's **rash decision-making** leads him to become **obsessively jealous** over his wife's sexuality. The thought of Desdemona's unrestrained sexuality threatens him, as it is a **challenge to his honour** as a husband and to his **masculinity**. Someone who could not control the sexual urges of his wife was a laughing stock.

He begins to doubt her **loyalty** to him, as he says that **'her name, that was as fresh / As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black' (Act 3, Scene 3)**. This reflects the fears surrounding **female sexuality, purity and corruption**. As Renaissance women were expected to be **ruled** by their husband, **assertiveness** in any form would be seen as a **transgression** of the **established social order** that legally made them **possessions**. This explains Othello's anger, as he sees Desdemona's infidelity as a question to his **authority** and does not want to seem **passive** to her assumed actions. Therefore, **underlying concepts of femininity** and **sexuality** allow Iago to deceive Othello more easily.

## The Handkerchief

The handkerchief is an important, continuous symbol throughout the play and is a **portrayal** of the progress from Othello's **love** to **jealousy**. It is the first gift that he gives to Desdemona as a **sign of his love**, but this meaning is quickly manipulated by Iago to represent her **unfaithfulness**. This is evident when Othello tells her that the handkerchief possesses **magical qualities**: **'If she lost it / Or made gift of it, my father's eye / Should hold her loathed and his spirits should hunt / After new fancies' (Act 3, Scene 4)**. He explains to her that it was used by his mother to keep his father faithful, as the **design** of the handkerchief - a **white background with red strawberries** - represents **female virginity and marital fidelity**. This attests to the significance of the material as a sign of trust and



loyalty; if it is lost, the spouse will look for love outside of their marriage. Desdemona understands this, as she says to Emilia that if she lost the handkerchief **'it were enough // To put him to ill thinking'** (Act 3, Scene 4).

However, Iago's possession of the handkerchief enables him to position Desdemona as an adulterer. She is unable to produce it when Othello asks for it as evidence of her loyalty. Iago states: **'The Moor already changes with my poison'** (Act 3, Scene 3), showing how his words affect Othello **corrosively**. As a result of his poisonous words, Othello's rage overflows at the end of the play: **'I saw my handkerchief in's hand. / O perjured woman! thou dost stone my heart, / And makest me call what I intend to do / A murder'** (Act 5, Scene 2).

The handkerchief passes through many characters. Othello, Desdemona, Emilia, Iago, Bianca - they all handle it at least once in the play. As the handkerchief represents marriage, the handling of it suggests how everyone is involved in **private relationships**. This is a problem because it causes **misunderstandings** to occur and **doubts** to spread. Therefore, the handkerchief is a prevailing **central object** that documents the conflict of Desdemona and Othello's marriage, and arguably the **fallibility** of the marital institution as a whole.

## The Handkerchief & Narrative Structure

The position in which the handkerchief is introduced, lost, stolen and found is central in the way characters meet their fate. For Desdemona and Emilia it is death, while for Othello it is eternal grief and repentance. Iago, on the other hand, walks free. He controls the plot and his fate the same way he controls the handkerchief. This suggests that the narrative surrounding the handkerchief plays a chief role in **dictating the way the story unfolds** once it is lost, depicting the **downfall** of Othello's mind and marriage.

After talking to Iago, Othello and Desdemona interact privately in **Act 3 Scene 3**, in which Othello's demeanour completely changes towards her. When she notices that Othello is rubbing his forehead, she notes, **'That's with watching'** (Act 3, Scene 3). This communicates her concern as a wife and lover, pointing to the fact that his career might be over-working him. For the audience, this is an innocent comment out of concern, yet with Iago's poisonous words embedded in his mind, Othello's cold behaviour towards her reflects his rising suspicions.

Furthermore, in the conversation with Iago, concepts such as **observing** and **perceiving** are emphasised; Iago warns Othello to be more aware of his wife's language as well as her actions, making him more sensitive to the things she would say. Additionally, Othello is more likely to **misinterpret** her behaviour as cunning or deceitful, as his conception of her has distorted and changed. For example, the word **'watching'** could be misunderstood as something to do with protection; she may want to protect herself in fear of Othello finding out about her infidelity. Such misinterpretations by Othello **justify** his coldness and increasing violence towards her, solidifying his beliefs of her unfaithfulness to him.

This belief in her **treachery** can be perceived in his **rejection** of her affections and physical love language. When she tries to console him by saying **'Twill away again'** or **'Within this**



**hour / it will be well again' (Act 3, Scene 3)**, Othello's intense concentration on her words betrays his rising **contempt** at her attempts to be loving. Her words may be regarded as dismissive, as she was concerned about the pain in his forehead and now quickly disregards it. On the other hand, this may be genuine care for her partner, as she may attempt to console him.

The audience also starts to question Desdemona's intentions as a result of Iago's words against her. Words and context are **powerful in twisting reality**, and no one is safe from this influence. When she tries to **'bind' (Act 3, Scene 3)** Othello's head with the handkerchief, he may perceive it as an insulting act; the action of hiding part of him with the token that he gave her may be seen as her hiding something from him. Alternatively, it could also be perceived as a sign of her disapproval of him, making her seek pleasures from other men. Consequently, Othello sees this as **soiling the token of his love**, which is also a parental keepsake, and therefore leads him to reject the offer – this initiates the beginning of the downfall of their marriage, as he does not want her to use to handkerchief that **binds her to him**.

This urge to reject and the inability to allow her near him is emphasised by the suggestion that he does not want her to hold it – this is where the handkerchief falls out of Desdemona's hands, implying the **gradual loss** of their love. Othello's change in perception of Desdemona becomes more pronounced. This is because when he speaks to Iago again a little later in the play, Othello is shocked and angry at the fact that Iago was able to give him the evidence of her infidelity – the handkerchief. This is the final piece of concrete evidence that Othello requires in order to **descend into madness**. Iago furthers his aggravations by stating: **'I know not that, but such a handkerchief— / I am sure it was your wife's—did I today / See Cassio wipe his beard with' (Act 3, Scene 3)**. This suggests that along with ocular proof, Othello is faced with visual evidence by his most trusted advisor.

However, it is disturbing that Othello fails to remember that Desdemona had just previously used it to try and relieve the pain in his head. Emilia did not provide any suggestions of where she found the handkerchief and how she got it in the first place. Nevertheless, Iago seems dismissive of such risks, implying his confidence and arrogance in **Othello's dwindling trust** towards Desdemona. He **exploits** this notion of distrust, as Othello switches his loyalties towards Iago instead, seeing him as a true friend. Similarly, Othello fails to question where Iago gets the handkerchief from, blindly believing Iago that Desdemona is actually being unfaithful. His inherent belief of her infidelity makes it easier for him to see her as a villain, making his forgetfulness a **tactic** to put blame on her. By convincing himself that she has actually lost the handkerchief, Othello's jealousy is justified in his own mind.

Consequently, through his own **psychological justifications**, Othello believes that her losing this love token **violated** the terms of their love; in spite of his explanation telling her of its origin, she seems to have dismissed it and thus thrown away their love herself. As such, Othello makes her the **perpetrator**, asserting the fact that she has lost it. As a result, he helps this ocular proof become **legitimate** in believing that his wife has given it to another man, breaking the trust between them and setting her up as a deceitful lover.



In particular, it may be noted that both Othello and Desdemona work with Iago to **change the meaning** of the handkerchief. This means that they **create the conflict** for themselves – Othello misinterprets its loss as a loss of fidelity and Desdemona's lack of assertiveness in regards to her innocence makes her look guilty. For example, Othello demands the ocular proof from Iago but is already convinced that Desdemona is unfaithful. Her being able to even lose the handkerchief is enough for him to see her as an adulterer, while Desdemona quickly sees the change in his manner towards her by his rejection of her touch. Both lovers are seen to occupy **two different spheres of suspicion**; Desdemona wants to test whether he has actually changed by seeing how he reacts to her losing it. On the other hand, Othello does not consider any other avenue of **reconciliation**, wanting to take murderous action against his wife.

Unlike Othello, Desdemona is sure that her husband is **incapable of feeling jealousy**, reinforcing the idea that she still sees them as **equal partners**. Here, the play becomes more **tense** as the audience is aware of Othello's anger and fearful for Desdemona's fate. Shakespeare achieves this by intricately involving Desdemona, Cassio and Othello into the action, linking them to each other after Othello obtains the ocular proof. The structure of the play here is significant, as it confirms Othello's fears and makes Iago more believable as a result. For example, Desdemona calls for Cassio: **'I will not leave him now till Cassio / Be called to him' (Act 3, Scene 4)**. This is further complicated by Othello's insistence to find out, through indirect statements, whether she has been unfaithful or not. However, Desdemona does not realise the **dark undertone** with which he is addressing her. She dismisses his topic, instead going back to Cassio: **'I cannot speak of this; come, come, your promise [...] I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you' (Act 3, Scene 4)**. This positions her in a dangerous space, which she has unknowingly entered. Shakespeare does this in order to highlight Othello's jealous disposition, using the narrative to portray the increasing intensity of his anger and Desdemona's helplessness towards it.

#### AO5 Tip – Psychology and Jealousy

A psychological perspective reveals many aspects of jealousy that can end in murder for one partner. **Cognitive jealousy** refers to the irrational doubts, worries and thoughts about a partner's infidelity while **emotional jealousy** involves the feelings of distrust a person feels towards their partner. The interaction of both of these aspects leads to the manifestation of **jealous behaviour** – including violent behavioural reactions. The jealous lover may perceive a real or imagined threat towards a rival e.g. Othello's need to have proof of Desdemona's infidelity to prove that she is actually guilty or his hatred for her. Cognitive jealousy is especially evident with Othello's response towards his wife. He behaves in a completely irrational way, which destroys their marriage from within. It is the association between cognitive and behavioural jealousy that leads to his ultimate downfall.

*How do Othello's actions resonate with contemporary ideas of domestic violence today? Does it still hold relevance?*



## Othello's Speech Acts & Their Consequences

Othello's **characterisation** of himself is significant in defining and influencing his jealousy. These can be viewed in comparison to Iago's **speech patterns**, as both have different intentions and motives behind what they say. The distinction can be seen in the marked ways in which they both speak: Iago can be seen to use more **directives** in his monologues. This means that he likes to give instructions in a more authoritative manner. This can be observed in the way he instructs Roderigo from the start or from the way he drives ideas into Othello's head. Such a characteristic is essential in Iago because it makes him even more evil. On the contrary, Othello is shown to use more candid, **assertive** speech. This is when an individual portrays a more forceful personality; specifically, speakers communicate their own beliefs above other people. This is a contrasting trait to Iago, as an assertive speech act suggests a strong sense for **reason, rationality and calmness**. This suggests that Othello, at the start, was much more level headed, which makes his change far more profound. For example, he says: **'Not I. I must be found. My parts, my title, and my perfect soul // Shall manifest me rightly' (Act 1, Scene 2)** when finding out that Brabantio is looking for him in order to confront him about courting Desdemona. Here the audience observes that he is unfazed by her father's threatening demeanour or reputation, being strongly **grounded** upon his belief that he did not commit any wrong.

This is especially significant because the play is intrinsically related with **reality/appearances**, which are linked to the idea of jealousy. Othello develops a distorted way of perceiving reality, as opposed to the truth which he used to pursue at the start. For example, his change into a distrustful lover is further emphasised by his belief in his inner sense of self. This means that he was very **sure of himself** when wooing Desdemona, using this confidence to counter her father. His self-assuredness is highlighted by the fact that he calls his soul **'perfect' (Act 1, Scene 2)**. This suggests that he understands himself as someone who is worthy of her love. Consequently, this illuminates that he is completely confident that others will perceive him favourably. This means that even before meeting



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Desdemona, he has a **stable** outlook on himself, not being influenced by **stereotypes** surrounding his race or character. It is this disposition that makes him more **respectable** in Venetian society.

This is further reinforced when he is confronted by Brabantio and responds, **'That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter, / It is most true; true I have married her / The very head and front of my offending / Hath this extent, no more' (Act 1, Scene 3)**. He is honest and does not try to hide behind a façade, which makes him a very **sympathetic** character.

However, as the play goes on, Othello's speech acts become more and more **violent** towards Desdemona, revealing his insecurities and jealousy. For example, he exclaims, **'Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul**



**// But I do love thee! // And when I love thee not, // Chaos is come again' (Act 3, Scene 3).** This suggests the **changing nature** of his love, as he **questions** his own **idealisations** of her. It reveals a great extent of love for her – it is almost **excessive**. The **religious imagery** that is portrayed within this quotation suggests that he is ready to be damned for eternity in order to keep her as his only. The idea of excessive love and jealousy **parallel** each other, positioning Othello's madness surrounding his wife's sexuality as the result of loving her too much.

This is further emphasised by the way he characterises his soul in relation to her – he uses the noun '**chaos**', implying discontent. This is a **contrasting** image, as he says at the beginning of the play: **'Twere now to be most happy; for I fear / My soul hath her content so absolute / That not another comfort like to this / Succeeds in unknown fate' (Act 2, Scene 1).** This change in character, from a "**content**" soul to a discontent one, conveys that he is unable to let her out of his sight, as he is both condemning her and unable to live without her because he loves her too much. This is both a shock to her and himself, as the love he holds for her revealed a new side to him that he was unaware of. Therefore, his jealousy leads him to become **consumed** by her and his **changing, unhinged emotional state**.

The change in his speech acts is demonstrated when he loses his sense of **rationality**. This is due to the doubt and jealousy he is feeling, implying how he is unable to **counter** negative emotions related to his wife. Shakespeare reveals how **male reputation and ownership** in marriage becomes a dangerous, destructive force – both for the individual and their love-interest. Overall, jealousy is depicted through Othello's language, suggesting that words have detrimental consequences in changing Othello's entire persona.

## Desdemona's Voice

The rising jealousy of Othello inadvertently affects Desdemona's character; her lack of **dialogue** as the play progresses depicts this change. At the start, her voice was quite **assertive** because she followed through with her own decisions. However, her speech becomes distorted to the audience and Othello, once it is influenced by Iago. For example, this is evident when she defends another man; she insists on helping Cassio as she is a helpful woman, but this is used against her. Similarly, this **incites jealousy** in Othello, as any behaviour directed towards men is perceived as treacherous.

Ironically, she also **reifies** certain characteristics of other male characters. **Frank Kermode**, for example, says: **'Desdemona aids the process, twice commending Iago's honesty, a conviction of which in the other characters is now essential to his design'**. This conviction has fatal consequences for her, as she seems to confirm her own infidelity by avowing Iago's truthfulness.

Other critics have noted that her insistence on helping Cassio becomes annoying not only to Othello but to the audience too. Such a defence is seen as offensive by Othello. The annoying nature of her constant defence of Cassio is noted by critics such as **Edward A. Snow**, who suggests, **'Even when her suit on Cassio's behalf starts to wear on our nerves as well as Othello's, the focus is not so much on a fault in her character as on**





the pathological reverberations that even a woman's trivial indiscretions have in the minds of men'. This reflects Jacobean conventions surrounding female voices in general – they are not taken seriously but rather as something **'trivial'**. Desdemona's pursuit of Cassio may be seen as inappropriate and thus justifies Othello's aggressiveness towards her. Furthermore, as she begins to be dismissed by her husband due to his jealousy, she fails to fight back and assumes an **expected submissive position**.

## Jealousy & Redemption

Shakespeare's **protagonists**, including Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello **suffer** at the end of the play. These characters, while portrayed to be **heroic as well as noble**, go through disastrous changes that affect those around them. These could be the **manifestations of their fatal flaws** showing themselves through their behaviour. In particular, Othello's **noble disposition** and naivety in trusting people quickly results in the **exploitation of his loyalties** alongside his beliefs of **male authority**. For Hamlet, his inability to act quickly costs him his own life and the prolonged evilness of his uncle. Macbeth's ambition leads to his own demise, losing himself, his morals and family in the quest towards greater power. Othello, on the other hand, **fails to contain his jealousy** and therefore gives in to his **chaotic temper**.

Shakespeare's use of a **fatal flaw** is important in these heroes: their **morality and sense of responsibility** is **destroyed** by their own decisions and personality. This leads the audience to question whether they can achieve **redemption** for their actions. Othello's redemption (and false sense of redemption for his wife) can be observed in the last act of the play.

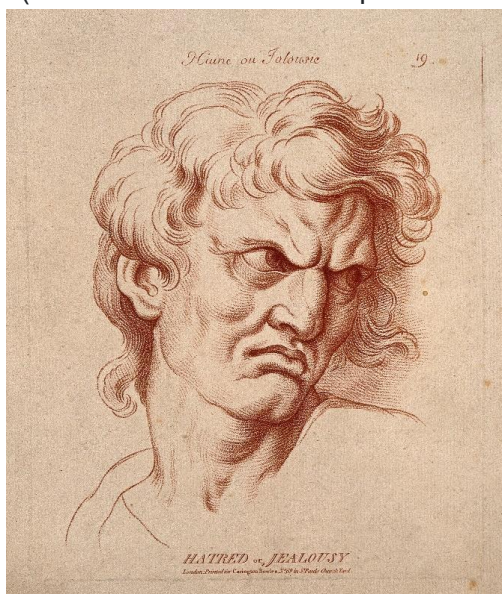


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Othello's first sense of redemption was achieved when he was rescued from the hands of slavery. This is a significant detail about his life, because it establishes him as an individual who was saved by others in order to serve in the military and aid others in return. His **conversion to Christianity** is a conventional sign of this redemption; he upholds these values through his actions, words and morals. In being freed and accommodating to Christian values, he was quickly positioned higher up in the **social hierarchy**, depicting his gratitude which made others perceive him as noble and **worthy**.

Redemption was therefore a key factor in Othello's **reputation** within Venice. His peers believe he has 'redeemed' himself for being a Moor (something that shouldn't need to be forgiven or justified), and so **tolerate** his presence. Shakespeare sets this up in order to highlight that regardless of his race, he was able to achieve redemption and therefore **integrate** himself into Venetian society without **transgressing** any boundaries. However, the subsequent character transgressions that he undergoes **undermine** the redemption he achieved at the start of his militant life.



Othello's gradual loss of his redeeming quality leads him to **regress** back into a more **primitive** state of mind. Compared to the sense of nobility that accompanied his speech, he becomes consumed by jealousy which reveals a **simplicity** in the way he thinks about his own beliefs. Believing in Iago's words and his own morals, he dismisses any objections from his wife. This primitive nature can be seen when he does not go into deep reflections about the evidence presented to him, rather choosing to **defame** his wife's fidelity to confirm his own assumptions. As such, his ideas are always **absolute**. This means that if he believes something is wrong, there is no room for other thoughts. This makes it easier for him to be controlled by Iago, who abuses this simple-mindedness. As a result, the feelings he does feel are all-absorbing for him; at the end, although consumed by jealousy, he is then also easily consumed by **guilt**.

His loss of his redemptive trait can be observed in the violence of his language towards Desdemona: **'...Let her rot, and perish, and be damned to-night; / for she shall not live: no, my heart is turned to / stone; I strike it, and it hurts my hand' (Act 4, Scene 1)**. This depicts how his morals have changed, being unable to talk about her in an affectionate manner and keeping her at a distance as opposed to having her close to him.

**Act 5** represents the pivotal climax of the play's action. This is because it is the act in which Iago's plan is exposed, Emilia defends Desdemona's innocence and Othello realises, in a terrible turn of events, that he had killed his innocent wife. His lack of trust in her, compared to his trust in Iago, results in him tainting their love and marriage. This revelation that it is him that caused the breakdown of his relationship is both terrifying and unbearable. He understands that it was his weakness and failure to use his calm manner in order to make a level-headed decision that killed his wife. To **atone** for the sin of murdering his wife, Othello chooses to redeem himself by shunning his jealous feelings and recognising her innocence: **'...You must speak of one that loved not wisely, but too well, of one not easily jealous, but being wrought....one whose hand...threw a pearl away rich than all his tribe' (Act 5, Scene 2)**.

Overall, jealousy is Othello's fatal flaw that leads to hasty decisions and an ill temper. The idea of tragedy is particularly interesting when conceptualising jealousy, as Shakespeare **restores the lost values when the characters die**. Othello commits suicide as a sort of punishment for being distrustful. Although this is another major sin, the audience may perceive this as a **virtuous** act to **compensate** for his temper and jealousy. *Othello's* tragedy lies in the fact that the real evil plan is revealed too late and therefore death can only re-establish those morals.

## Overview

Jealousy in the play is one of the main factors that **drives** the main characters. Iago's jealousy drives the main plot of revenge; he is jealous of not being appointed lieutenant as well as assuming that Othello **cuckolded** him. The language Iago employs is also laced with malice, making it clear from the start what his evil intentions are. Furthermore, the play utilises the idea of jealousy throughout. It is Othello's jealousy that becomes a **barrier** to his redemption. We have explored how redemption and jealousy are closely linked in Shakespeare's play: Othello's initial societal redemption was overwritten by his inability to



contain his jealous disposition. Although this jealousy can be seen as something that emerges due to the unfolding events in the play, there are some theories that attribute jealousy as an inherent characteristic in those from exotic countries. For example, Geohumoralism argues that those from warmer climates are more prone to be aggressive or jealous if provoked. Such widespread beliefs at the time may have **inspired** the way Iago manipulates Othello. The use of his racial difference justifies his descent into jealousy, as his insecurities surface by believing that his wife was unfaithful. The handkerchief fuels this jealousy because it is the **symbol** of a love betrayed.

Another factor that we explored was the **influence of patriarchal structures** that **informed** the way Othello's jealousy emerged. **Female infidelity** was especially **condemned** because of the **social limitations** that were placed on women - transgressing beyond their **passive** position as housewives was considered criminal. Contemporary audiences, however, perceive such possessiveness and control as **abusive**. As social regulations on female and masculine behaviours have transformed, individuals have greater freedom in the way they act. This can be attributed to the rise of feminism, which changed the outlook on women and the opportunities that they are given.

Overall, jealousy manifests itself strongly within the play and leads to many tragic deaths.

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