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VIRTUAL LEARNING LESSON PLAN
ENGLISH

Helen Murray



EXPLORING THEMES OF
DECEIT AND JEALOUSY IN

OTHELLO

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

LESSON PLAN LENGTH: 60 MINUTES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify themes and examples from the play
- Make connections between the play and students' own contexts
- Understand characters and their motivations
- Understand how language devices and persuasive techniques create meaning in the text
- Analyse text structures and language features of a dramatic text
- Use narrative techniques to develop experiences, events, and/or characters
- Create original writing based on evidence drawn from a literary text.

To teach this lesson, you will need the following resources found in your toolkit:

- [In Rehearsal: *Othello* Act 3, Scene 3](#)
- [On *Othello*: An Interview with Paul McEwan](#)
- [*Othello* practical workshop guide by Sarah Stanton](#)
- Handout 1: Iago quotes
- Handout 2: Jealousy script excerpts
- Handout 3: Act 3, Scene 3 excerpt

Plus:

- For the entire lesson – a video conference link for your chosen platform
- For Exercise 2 – a prepared Google Doc, a list of students' names in pairs and **Handout 1** to email to the group
- For Exercise 4 – a prepared Google Sheet featuring a selection of recent newspaper headlines
- For Exercise 5 – an email sharing **Handout 2**
- For Exercise 6 – a prepared Google Doc and access to a word cloud generator
- For Exercise 7 – an email sharing **Handout 3**

For further resources to help you teach *Othello*, including a [full-length production](#), and [practical guide](#), visit www.digitaltheatreplus.com.

EXERCISE 1

DECEIT – WOULD I LIE TO YOU?

- Hold a video conference on your chosen platform. Assign consecutive numbers to each student in the group.
- Going in numerical order, ask each student to introduce themselves and share a 'fact' about their lives. They can choose whether it is true or not.
- All the other students in the call should guess whether each 'fact' is true or false. If they think it's true, they should put their hands to their ears as if listening. If they think it's false, they should cover their mouths. Then the student who made the statement should say whether it was true or false.
- Ask students to pay attention to how many people they managed to deceive.

Discussion:

- What makes a convincing lie?
- What behavioural cues might give a lie away?
- How does it feel to be lied to?



ESTIMATED TIME:
5 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to listen to and construct spoken texts to persuade and to analyse character.

EXERCISE 2

DECEIT – IAGO APPEARANCE AND REALITY



ESTIMATED TIME:
15 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to use comprehension strategies to analyse the text, then present their interpretation in a creative written work.

- Before the lesson begins, send an email to the entire class. In it, share **Handout 1** and a link to a shared Google Doc called 'Iago's diary'. Additionally, tell students which pairs they will be working in in a later activity.
- In your group video call, read the synopsis below aloud:
Iago, a soldier, is mad because his General, Othello, promoted Michael Cassio to the rank of lieutenant instead of him. Iago lies to Othello and tricks him into believing that his wife, Desdemona, has been unfaithful with Michael Cassio. Consumed with jealousy, Othello murders Desdemona, and then kills himself.

Discussion:

- What are some adjectives you might use to describe Iago?

Activity:

- Ask students to meet in a separate video call or chat.
- In each pair, have students choose who will be person A and person B.
- A and B alternate reading out the Iago quotes on **Handout 1**: A reads what other people say about Iago, while B reads what Iago says about himself.
- Ask students to choose one or two adjectives which were shared and to also choose one or two lines which describe Iago.
- Using the words and quotes they have chosen, tell students they have five minutes to compose a short diary entry as Iago where he discusses his choice to manipulate Othello and what has prompted him to make that choice.

Ask students to share their diary entries with the class via the shared Google Doc. Ask everyone to look at each other's entries and call on several pairs of students to answer:

- What aspect(s) of Iago they chose to focus on.
- Which line(s) they chose and why.

This task is adapted from the [Practical Workshop Guide for Othello](#) by Sarah Stanton.

EXERCISE 3

DECEIT – EVIDENCE

Activity:

- Give students a few minutes to discuss what ‘evidence’ Othello accepts as proof of Desdemona’s infidelity.
- After a few minutes, come back together and, working in numerical order again, ask students to share their evidence.

Discussion:

- Why did Othello accept this evidence?
- What makes us accept evidence as true?
- When is evidence deemed ‘not important’ in changing someone’s opinion? Students might discuss contemporary examples, such as climate change denial, and sexual harassment cases.



ESTIMATED TIME:

5 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to analyse the text and how the language and language devices persuade a character to take specific action.

EXERCISE 4

DECEPTION – THE POWER OF WORDS

Activity:

- Prepare a Google Sheet with a selection of 5-10 newspaper headlines as column headings. Populate the first column with a list of your students' names.
- Ask students to choose one or two of the headlines and to then rewrite them in a misleading way.
- Invite the class to read the new headlines they have all created.

Discussion:

- How can you use language to deceive but maintain an air of trust and integrity?
- Can you think of any contemporary examples of words being used to manipulate and deceive a listener?



ESTIMATED TIME:
5 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to analyse and explain choices, and then apply them in their own way to alter/manipulate meaning.

EXERCISE 5

JEALOUSY – INSIDE THE MIND



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to analyse and explain visual language, and apply in their own dramatic way to augment meaning.

- Email **Handout 2** to the class.
- Have students watch a section from [In Rehearsal: Othello Act 3, Scene 3 \(0:16:05-0:17:30\)](#).
- Ask them to identify one comment that resonates with them from the video.
- Divide the class into small groups of 3-4 students and ask them to work together to complete the next activity before reconvening on the class video call at an agreed time.
- Allocate each group a script excerpt mentioning 'jealousy' from **Handout 2**.
- Have the groups discuss different ways they could present the line on stage. Encourage them to be imaginative and abstract.

Discussion:

- How does Shakespeare use language to show jealousy?
- Unpack the 'green-eyed monster' metaphor, and discuss its persistence.
- What are other ways to depict jealousy in stories? Can you think of any other stories where jealousy has played a key part in the narrative?

EXERCISE 6

JEALOUSY – WHAT IS IT MADE OF?

Activity:

- Share a Google Doc with the class and identify a free online word cloud generator.
- Watch a section from [In Rehearsal: Othello Act 3, Scene 3 \(0:25:13-0:26:34\)](#).

Discussion:

- What is jealousy? What other emotions/beliefs/values underpin it?

Activity:

- Ask students to write down three words or phrases from this discussion in the shared Google Doc. Add all the words to your chosen word cloud generator and share it with the group.

Discussion:

- What connections can you identify between the word cloud, the text, and what the cast and creative team said in the video?
- Reflect on when you've felt jealous. How does this feeling manifest in your body and behaviour?



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to analyse and evaluate themes in the text, and create personal responses to the ideas.

EXERCISE 7

JEALOUSY – JEALOUS MEN

- Watch a section from [On Othello: An Interview with Paul McEwan \(0:02.48-0:05.10\)](#).
- Debate the topic: jealousy is the ultimate form of procrastination. To chair the discussion, ask anybody who would like to speak to put their hands on their heads and wait until you say their name.
- Is there an overall consensus?
- Give students time to read through **Handout 3** (an excerpt from Act 3, Scene 3) and closely analyse the excerpt individually:
 - Make a note of interruptions to iambic pentameter with an *
 - Underline assonance
 - Circle 'O's and 'Ah's
 - Highlight the last word in each sentence and see if you can identify an overall theme/atmosphere/intention.
- If a student is unable to download and print the text, they can mark it in an online program such as Google Docs or Microsoft Word. All noted markings can be done in these programs, though you can make whatever adjustments are necessary to work for you.



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is for students to explore the literary features of the text and language used to achieve a specific end.

Discussion:

- How does Shakespeare use persuasive language in the excerpt found in **Handout 3**?
- Discuss McEwan's comments on Iago from the video. Is Iago Machiavellian?

Homework:

Linking back to the **deceit** theme from earlier, ask students to use the persuasive and poetic techniques in Iago's Act 3, Scene 3 text to write their own piece of 'fake news'. It might help to imagine a specific audience so you can "open the fertile ground of suspicion" as Iago did with Othello.

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