Shakespeare's Monologues

A Guide to Analysis and Performance

Teacher Resource Preview

written by
Anna Tabah

Prestwick House

Copyright © 2026 by Prestwick House Inc.
58 Artisan Dr., Smyrna, DE 19977. • 1-800-932-4593. • www.prestwickhouse.com

Reproduction of this publication is limited to one single-teacher, single-classroom license. Photocopying of this copyrighted product is permissible for one teacher for his or her own classroom use only. No part of this publication may be translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, distributed, posted, displayed or shared in any way or by any means (electronic, digital, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise) without prior written permission from Prestwick House, Inc. Reproduction of any part of this publication for multiple school terms, an entire school or for a school system, by for-profit institutions and tutoring centers, or for commercial sale is strictly prohibited.

ISBN: 978-1-62019-392-1
Item No. 500563

Introduction

Teaching one of Shakespeare's plays and asking students to act out a monologue can feel daunting. However, it also offers a powerful opportunity to move students beyond surface comprehension and into the nuanced meaning and figurative language that Shakespeare is famous for. This activity uses guided annotation to support that deeper level of engagement and make it more approachable. It combines close-reading strategies with the experience of performing Shakespeare's work as it was meant to be experienced.

Students at all levels benefit from guided annotation, which provides practice in close-text analysis. These targeted questions help students track character motivation, identify shifts in tone, and unpack figurative language that may initially feel inaccessible. This scaffolding allows students to wrestle with complex text while still developing confidence in their analytical thinking.

Why encourage performing a Shakespearean monologue in front of peers? Performance is known as a mode of interpretation. Shakespeare's works were written to be spoken and embodied. When students prepare to act out a monologue, they must make intentional decisions about pacing, emphasis, emotional delivery, and physical presence. This process encourages risk-taking, originality, and deeper ownership of Shakespeare's language in a way students may not have been asked to do before.

This resource is especially valuable for teachers who may be newer to teaching Shakespeare's works. It offers a clear structure for facilitating rigorous discussion while still leaving room for student insight, debate, and creative performance. Ultimately, it supports the kind of classroom environment in which students learn to read closely, think critically, and bring literature vividly to life.

Customizing This Activity for Your Class

Shakespeare's works were written for the stage. Today, that stage is sometimes the classroom, where students are thrilled to either be the star of the show or sit back and enjoy the performance. However, classes come in all shapes and sizes. These worksheets were designed to foster a sense of confidence in students' understanding of Shakespeare's plays, no matter their comfort level. Here are some ways that we suggest using Shakespeare's Monologues in your classroom:

For a Large Class: Create a Production Company

Not every student will want to act, and that's okay! If you break students into groups of four, you can assign each student a different job to bring the monologue to life. We suggest:

- The Actor – the one who actually acts in front of the class, guided by the rest of the group
- The Director – makes the final decisions about how the actor should present the monologue, including physical stance, tone of voice, and which words to emphasize
- The Set Designer – helps the actor decide how to move, creates props, and chooses the lighting to bring the acting to life
- The Analyst – presents the group's answers to the worksheet and performance decisions to the class via a brief presentation; This role is also called a dramaturge in professional theaters.

For an Outgoing Class: Same Monologue, Different Ways

If you have a lot of students who want to act, break them up into groups and give each group a different monologue. Challenge each student in the group to deliver the same monologue, but with different attitudes. For instance, when acting out Hamlet's monologue, angry, dismayed, sad, amused, confused, sarcastic, defeated, calculating, etc. are all valid choices. For an extra challenge, ask the rest of the class to guess which tone the actor chose.

For a Shy Class: Break It Up

Delivering a whole monologue can be intimidating for some students. Break students up into groups and divide the monologue among them. Students can act out small portions to overcome their fear of the stage, without overwhelming them.

For a Small Class - Present Your Findings

Break students into pairs where one acts out the monologue and the other presents the answers on the worksheet. The pair can create a Powerpoint or a lesson on the monologue to share their analysis. Students can elaborate on acting choices, point out important literary devices, or create discussion questions for the class.

However you choose to incorporate these monologues into your classroom, acting out Shakespeare's works allows students to read his words as they were meant to be read—aloud!

Shakespeare's Language

It's easy to get lost in Shakespeare's peculiar words and sentence structure. There are many aspects to his writing, and it can make staying focused on the main story or central idea difficult. But don't fear—or, be not afeared! The following are some pointers to help you read for understanding and performance.

- Read the text out loud, just as an actor rehearsing would have to do. That will help you understand how one thought is connected to another.

- Read from punctuation mark to punctuation mark for meaning. In addition to helping you read aloud, punctuation marks define units of thought. Try to understand each unit as you read, keeping in mind that periods, colons, semicolons, and question marks signal the end of a thought.

- When reading verse, note the appropriate phrasing and intonation. Do not pause at the end of a line unless there is a mark of punctuation. Shakespearean verse has a rhythm of its own, and once you get used to it, the rhythm becomes very natural to speak in and read. You might find it helpful to read a short pause at a comma and a long pause for a period, colon, semicolon, dash, or question mark.

- In tracking the line of action in a passage, it's useful to identify the main thoughts that are being expressed and paraphrase them.

- As you read longer speeches, keep track of the subject, verb, and object—*who* did *what* to *whom*.

- Archaic, obsolete, and familiar words with unfamiliar definitions may also cause problems. Consult a reliable Shakespeare resource with notes to help you identify and understand these words.

The techniques Shakespeare uses in his works have helped create some of the greatest writing in all literature. It's important to keep in mind that his poetry is meant to be read, but his plays are meant to be *performed*!

Hamlet

ACT I, SCENE II

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
Hamlet reflects on his father's death, his mother's marriage to Claudius, and his evolving views on the world around him.

HAMLET: O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon[1] 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! ah fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead! Nay, not so much, not two;
So excellent a king, that was, to this,
Hyperion[2] to a satyr;[3] so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem[4] the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on; and yet, within a month—
Let me not think on't! Frailty, thy name is woman—
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she follow'd my poor father's body
Like Niobe,[5] all tears—why she, even she—
O God! a beast that wants[6] discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer—married with mine uncle,
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules.[7] Within a month,
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
Had left the flushing in her galled[8] eyes,
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post
With such dexterity[9] to incestuous sheets!
It is not, nor it cannot come to, good.
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

[1] *law*
[2] *Greek Titan sun god*
[3] *half-human, half-goat*
[4] *allow*
[5] *Queen of Thebes who cried endlessly for her dead children*
[6] *lacks*
[7] *the strongest man in the world*
[8] *swollen*
[9] *quickness*

Student Annotation Questions

1. Hamlet uses many exclamation points during this monologue. What do these exclamations reveal about his feelings?

2. In lines 7–8, Hamlet compares the world to "an unweeded garden / That grows to seed" to describe his outlook. What does this comparison reveal about how Hamlet sees the world?

3. What was the relationship between Hamlet's parents like before his father's death? Highlight the part of the passage that describes this relationship.

4. As described in lines 18–29, what is Hamlet's conflict with his family?

5. In line 26, why does Hamlet consider his mother to have "unrighteous tears"?

Performance Tips:

- While delivering the monologue, make sure to emphasize Hamlet's feelings as you interpreted them.
- Hamlet makes many references to historical and mythical figures. Take the time to understand how they relate to Hamlet's dilemma so you can smoothly incorporate them into your performance.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. Hamlet uses many exclamation points during this monologue. What do these exclamations reveal about his feelings?

   He is feeling exasperated and angry with his family, and saddened by his father's death.

2. In lines 7–8, Hamlet compares the world to "an unweeded garden / That grows to seed" to describe his outlook. What does this comparison reveal about how Hamlet sees the world?

   He feels the world is chaotic, and people with ill intentions are allowed to thrive along with the good.

3. What was the relationship between Hamlet's parents like before his father's death? Highlight the part of the passage that describes this relationship.

   His father was kind to his mother, and his parents were very much in love. Students should have highlighted lines 11–14.

4. As described in lines 18–29, what is Hamlet's conflict with his family?

   Hamlet's mother married his father's brother (his uncle) only two months after his father's death, which angers him.

5. In line 26, why does Hamlet consider his mother to have "unrighteous tears"?

   He feels that his mother's tears for his father's death are insincere due to her decision to move on so quickly with another man.

Performance Tips:

- While delivering the monologue, make sure to emphasize Hamlet's feelings as you interpreted them.
- Hamlet makes many references to historical and mythical figures. Take the time to understand how they relate to Hamlet's dilemma so you can smoothly incorporate them into your performance.

Hamlet

ACT IV, SCENE VII

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
Queen Gertrude enters to share some information with Laertes about his sister, Ophelia.

QUEEN: One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow. Your sister's drown'd, Laertes.
[…]
There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoary[1] leaves in the glassy stream.
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal[2] shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold[3] maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendant[4] boughs her crownet[5] weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious[6] sliver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;
Which time she chaunted snatches of old lauds,[7]
As one incapable[8] of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued[9]
Unto that element; but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay[10]
To muddy death.

[1] *grey*
[2] *freely speaking*
[3] *chaste*
[4] *hanging*
[5] *crowning*
[6] *hateful*
[7] *hymns*
[8] *unaware*
[9] *endowed*
[10] *song*

Student Annotation Questions

1. Highlight the news Queen Gertrude gives to Laertes in lines 1–2. What is the nature of this news? Then, underline words that emphasize the mood this information creates.

2. In lines 3–12, the Queen goes into great detail about where Ophelia was found. Highlight five descriptions of the place that stand out to you. In your own words, where was she found?

3. The Queen describes Ophelia as "mermaid-like" (13) and "a creature native and indued / Unto that element." (16–17) What do these descriptions suggest about Ophelia?

4. Toward the end of the monologue, the Queen talks about Ophelia's clothing. Underline where her clothes are mentioned. Why are they significant to Ophelia's fate?

5. What emotions should the Queen convey as she delivers this news? Why? Put a squiggle under words and/or lines that particularly emphasize this emotion.

Performance Tips:

- Although this monologue is mainly descriptive, Shakespeare packs a lot of intense emotion into these lines, so don't be afraid to showcase those feelings!
- The Queen uses many lines to describe the setting of Ophelia's final resting place. Make sure to emphasize where Ophelia's demise takes place so the action doesn't get lost in the description.
- When the Queen describes Ophelia's clothing, try using hand motions to illustrate her description and paint a stronger picture for the audience.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. Highlight the news Queen Gertrude gives to Laertes in lines 1–2. What is the nature of this news? Then, underline words that emphasize the mood this information creates.

   Students should highlight "Your sister's drown'd, Laertes." The news of Ophelia's death is tragic, as the Queen begins with "One woe doth tread upon another's heel."

2. In lines 3–12, the Queen goes into great detail about where Ophelia was found. Highlight five descriptions of the place that stand out to you. In your own words, where was she found?

   Ophelia was found floating in a flowing stream filled with beautiful foliage and flowers. The imagery is also described in a tragic way that reflects Ophelia's death. Students can choose a variety of options in these lines, as long as they describe the "weeping brook."

3. The Queen describes Ophelia as "mermaid-like" (13) and "a creature native and indued / Unto that element." (16–17) What do these descriptions suggest about Ophelia?

   They are meant to give her death a tragic sense of beauty and give some peace to Ophelia's brother. It masks the reality of the horrible nature of her death.

4. Toward the end of the monologue, the Queen talks about Ophelia's clothing. Underline where her clothes are mentioned. Why are they significant to Ophelia's fate?

   Students should highlight "Her clothes spread wide / And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up" and "Till that her garments, heavy with their drink, / Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay / To muddy death." The Queen tells Laertes that Ophelia drowned because her clothes that seemed light and airy became heavy with water and quickly weighed her down before anyone could save her.

5. What emotions should the Queen convey as she delivers this news? Why? Put a squiggle under words and/or lines that particularly emphasize this emotion.

   Students can interpret the Queen's delivery in a few ways, but certainly sadness is the predominant emotion. The description is tragically whimsical, an attempt at giving Laertes some comfort as she breaks the news.

Performance Tips:

- Although this monologue is mainly descriptive, Shakespeare packs a lot of intense emotion into these lines, so don't be afraid to showcase those feelings!

- The Queen uses many lines to describe the setting of Ophelia's final resting place. Make sure to emphasize where Ophelia's demise takes place so the action doesn't get lost in the description.

- When the Queen describes Ophelia's clothing, try using hand motions to illustrate her description and paint a stronger picture for the audience.

Romeo and Juliet

ACT II, SCENE II

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
After a brief flirtation at the Capulets' ball, Romeo sits below Juliet's balcony hoping to catch a glimpse of her. Suddenly, she appears before him.

ROMEO: But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.[1]
Be not her maid, since she is envious.
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.
It is my lady; O, it is my love!
O that she knew she were!
She speaks, yet she says nothing. What of that?
Her eye discourses; I will answer it.
I am too bold; 'tis not to me she speaks.
Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,
Having some business, do entreat her eyes
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
As daylight doth a lamp; her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
See how she leans her cheek upon her hand!
O that I were a glove upon that hand,
That I might touch that cheek!

[1] *Juliet (the sun) is more beautiful than the moon.*

Student Annotation Questions

1. When Romeo sees Juliet appear, he immediately compares her to the sun. Highlight this metaphor. How is Juliet like the sun? What does this comparison reveal about his feelings for her?

2. In lines 3–6, Romeo asserts that if Juliet were the sun, the moon would be jealous of her. What does this statement suggest about her?

3. Juliet's eyes quickly become the focus of Romeo's affection. Underline Romeo's lines concerning Juliet's eyes. What qualities does Romeo relate to Juliet's eyes?

4. Romeo often associates Juliet with light. Highlight all light imagery you can find. What qualities are often associated with light that could also apply to Juliet?

5. In lines 22–24, why would Romeo say that he wishes he were a glove on her hand?

Performance Tips:

- Romeo is smitten, so make sure that enthusiasm shines through during your performance!
- Let your eyes stay on "Juliet" off stage. Your gaze can move as though you're noticing different parts of her. This will make the speech feel like Romeo is talking about a person, rather than reciting a poem.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. When Romeo sees Juliet appear, he immediately compares her to the sun. Highlight this metaphor. How is Juliet like the sun? What does this comparison reveal about his feelings for her?

   A sun is bright, warm, shining, and draws attention in the sky. It is also the center of the solar system. Romeo is saying that Juliet draws all of his attention with her bright beauty, outshining anyone else for him. She is now the center of his universe.

2. In lines 3–6, Romeo asserts that if Juliet were the sun, the moon would be jealous of her. What does this statement suggest about her?

   Romeo sees Juliet as exceptionally beautiful and believes her beauty surpasses that of anything else in nature, including the moon.

3. Juliet's eyes quickly become the focus of Romeo's affection. Underline Romeo's lines concerning Juliet's eyes. What qualities does Romeo relate to Juliet's eyes?

   Students should underline line 12 and parts of lines 14–21. Romeo states that there are stars in her eyes, saying that they are even brighter than the stars, once again, more like the sun shining in the sky. The idea of having stars in the eyes could also imply a sense of hope or destiny.

4. Romeo often associates Juliet with light. Highlight all light imagery you can find. What qualities are often associated with light that could also apply to Juliet?

   Light illuminates in the darkness and provides hope and joy in nature. Romeo feels he has been filled with hope from Juliet's bright, shining beauty.

5. In lines 22–24, why would Romeo say that he wishes he were a glove on her hand?

   She is placing her hand on her cheek, and if he were a glove, he would also be able to touch her cheek that he admires so much. He is admiring her from afar, but wishes to be closer to her.

Performance Tips:

- Romeo is smitten, so make sure that enthusiasm shines through during your performance!
- Let your eyes stay on "Juliet" off stage. Your gaze can move as though you're noticing different parts of her. This will make the speech feel like Romeo is talking about a person, rather than reciting a poem.

Romeo and Juliet

ACT III, SCENE II

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
After being parted for a time, Juliet sits in her room waiting for Romeo to visit her. Her nurse is about to arrive, bringing news about Romeo's recent encounter with her cousin, Tybalt.

JULIET: Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus'[1] lodging. Such a wagoner
As Phaeton would whip you to the west
And bring in cloudy night immediately.
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
That runaway eyes may wink, and Romeo
Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,
It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle till strange love, grown bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.
Come, night; come Romeo; come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow upon a raven's back.
Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-brow'd night;
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possess'd it; and though I am sold,
Not yet enjoy'd. So tedious is this day
As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child that hath new robes
And may not wear them. O, here comes my nurse,
And she brings news; and every tongue that speaks
But Romeo's name speaks heavenly eloquence.

[1] *another name for Apollo, god of the sun; Phaeton, Apollo's son, once drove the sun across the sky.*

Student Annotation Questions

1. In lines 1–4, Juliet alludes to the Greek myth of Phoebus (Apollo) and his son Phaeton, who recklessly drove his father's chariot that carries the sun. What does this reference reveal about her feelings concerning the arrival of night?

2. In lines 10–13 and line 20, Juliet calls upon the night several times. Highlight the references to night. What does she compare the night to each time she calls upon it, and what is the significance of these comparisons?

3. In lines 21–25, what kind of imagery is used to describe Romeo? Underline this imagery. What is the significance of describing him that way?

4. In lines 28–31, Juliet compares herself to a child. Draw a box around this section. What does this comparison suggest about her attitude?

5. If you were playing Juliet, what emotions would you convey while calling for the night and Romeo?

Performance Tips:

- Keep in mind that Juliet is a young teenager, so her attitude toward Romeo and their romance reflects her age.
- Juliet speaks directly to the night in a tender way, so make sure to talk to the night as if it were a person.
- Focus on how Juliet is feeling to see Romeo again. Bringing that feeling into your voice will really emphasize her emotions toward seeing him.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. In lines 1–4, Juliet alludes to the Greek myth of Phoebus (Apollo) and his son Phaeton, who recklessly drove his father's chariot that carries the sun. What does this reference reveal about her feelings concerning the arrival of night?

   Juliet understands that her meeting with Romeo is reckless and dangerous. Despite her excitement to see Romeo, she has a growing sense of dread that something terrible may have happened.

2. In lines 10–13 and line 20, Juliet calls upon the night several times. Highlight the references to night. What does she compare the night to each time she calls upon it, and what is the significance of these comparisons?

   In lines 10–13, Juliet compares the night to a protective and respectable married woman, who can teach her and comfort her when she and Romeo consummate their marriage and she loses her virginity.

   In line 20, she refers to the night as "gentle" and loving, like a sympathetic friend who understands her love for Romeo and their dangerous plight of being young and married while their families feud.

3. In lines 21–25, what kind of imagery is used to describe Romeo? Underline this imagery. What is the significance of describing him that way?

   Students should underline "Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die, / Take him and cut him out in little stars, / And he will make the face of heaven so fine / That all the world will be in love with night." Juliet is saying that even pieces of Romeo are brighter than the stars in the sky. She wishes she could share her love of him with the world to appreciate instead of hiding their love.

4. In lines 28–31, Juliet compares herself to a child. Draw a box around this section. What does this comparison suggest about her attitude?

   Students should draw a box around the lines "To an impatient child that hath new robes / And may not wear them." Juliet feels like a child who wants to show off her new clothes, but must wait until the festival starts. Juliet must be patient and wait for Romeo to arrive, but she wants him there now. It emphasizes a sense of her immaturity in their relationship.

5. If you were playing Juliet, what emotions would you convey while calling for the night and Romeo?

   Answers may vary.

Performance Tips:

- Keep in mind that Juliet is a young teenager, so her attitude toward Romeo and their romance reflects her age.
- Juliet speaks directly to the night in a tender way, so make sure to talk to the night as if it were a person.
- Focus on how Juliet is feeling to see Romeo again. Bringing that feeling into your voice will really emphasize her emotions toward seeing him.

Julius Caesar

ACT I, SCENE II

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
Concerned about Caesar's increasing popularity, Cassius talks with Brutus about the balance of power in Rome.

CASSIUS: Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus,[1] and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves.
Men at some time are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.
Brutus, and Caesar: what should be in that Caesar?
Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,
Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Caesar.
Now, in the names of all the gods at once,
Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed
That he is grown so great? Age, thou art shamed!
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!
When went there by an age since the great flood
But it was famed with more than with one man?
When could they say till now that talk'd of Rome
That her wide walls encompass'd but one man?
Now is it Rome indeed, and room enough,
When there is in it but one only man.
O, you and I have heard our fathers say
There was a Brutus[2] once that would have brook'd
The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome
As easily as a king.[3]

[1] *One of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Colossus was an enormous statue of Apollo said to have stood with a leg on each side of the harbor at Rhodes.*

[2] *Lucius Junius Brutus, legendary figure who expelled the last king of Rome and established the Republic.*

[3] *sooner allowed the devil to rule as allowed a king to rule*

Student Annotation Questions

1. Cassius compares Caesar to the Colossus of Rhodes, a giant statue of Apollo that towered over a harbor. Highlight where Cassius makes this comparison. What does this comparison suggest about Caesar's rise to power?

2. Cassius claims that "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings." (6–7) What do the stars represent, and how does this imagery support Cassius's assertion?

3. In lines 8–13, Cassius compares Brutus's and Caesar's names. Underline Cassius's comparisons between the two names. What is Cassius asserting about Brutus's name?

4. In line 17, Cassius cries out "Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!" Why is Cassius concerned about Caesar?

5. Brutus had an ancestor who overthrew the last king of Rome in favor of a Republic. Highlight where Cassius brings this up. Why would this reference convince Brutus to address Caesar's rise to power?

Performance Tips:

- Cassius has some concerns about Caesar's rise to power, but he also has some ulterior motives. Make sure to capture that sly cunning in your performance.
- There are several references to historical figures or monuments in Cassius's monologue. Take the time to understand how they would convince Brutus to join his cause.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. Cassius compares Caesar to the Colossus of Rhodes, a giant statue of Apollo that towered over a harbor. Highlight where Cassius makes this comparison. What does this comparison suggest about Caesar's rise to power?

   Cassius feels that Caesar is acting like he is larger and more important than the others in the senate. His rise in power overshadows the Republic of Rome.

2. Cassius claims that "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, / But in ourselves, that we are underlings." (6–7) What do the stars represent, and how does this imagery support Cassius's assertion?

   Cassius believes that Caesar's rise to power wasn't left up to fate, but because the senators have allowed Caesar to take control.

3. In lines 8–13, Cassius compares Brutus's and Caesar's names. Underline Cassius's comparisons between the two names. What is Cassius asserting about Brutus's name?

   Cassius asserts that when compared in written or spoken form, Brutus's and Caesar's names, their identities, are equally matched. Caesar is no better than Brutus, so they do not have to let Caesar be in control.

4. In line 17, Cassius cries out "Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!" Why is Cassius concerned about Caesar?

   Caesar's power has grown so great that even the nobles of Rome will not stand against him; he will become almost unstoppable if no one steps up to curb his power.

5. Brutus had an ancestor who overthrew the last king of Rome in favor of a Republic. Highlight where Cassius brings this up. Why would this reference convince Brutus to address Caesar's rise to power?

   In this monologue, Cassius also discusses Brutus's loyalty to Rome and the importance of his name in the public opinion. Brutus's ancestor set the precedent for overthrowing tyrants in Rome, and Cassius is emphasizing Brutus's own potential legacy on Rome's history. (24–27)

Performance Tips:

- Cassius has some concerns about Caesar's rise to power, but he also has some ulterior motives. Make sure to capture that sly cunning in your performance.

- There are several references to historical figures or monuments in Cassius's monologue. Take the time to understand how they would convince Brutus to join his cause.

Julius Caesar

ACT II, SCENE I

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
Brutus faces a difficult moral dilemma: whether or not to participate in the murder of Julius Caesar. He carefully weighs his reasons for and against, not taking this decision lightly.

BRUTUS: It must be by his death, and, for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general.[1] He would be crowned:
How that might change his nature, there's the question.
It is the bright day that brings forth the adder[2]
And that craves[3] wary[4] walking. Crown him? that;
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him
That at his will he may do danger with.
The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
Remorse from power, and, to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections sway'd
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof[5]
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may;
Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
Will bear no color for the thing he is,[6]
Fashion it thus, that what he is, augmented,[7]
Would run to these and these extremities;
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which, hatch'd would as his kind grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

[1] *general good*

[2] *poisonous snake*
[3] *calls for*
[4] *careful*

[5] *generally accepted fact*

[6] *[because there is no reason to criticize him yet]*
[7] *his nature, if power is added to it*

Student Annotation Questions

1. Make a squiggly line under Brutus's reasons for and against murdering Caesar. In your own words, why is Brutus conflicted about murdering Caesar?

2. In regard to Caesar's rise to power, Brutus states, "The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins / Remorse from power." (9–10) According to this line, why does Brutus feel Caesar poses a threat to the Republic of Rome?

3. In lines 13–18, Brutus asserts that "lowliness is young ambition's ladder," and then he extends the comparison. What is Brutus saying about Caesar's rise to power in these lines?

4. Brutus uses snake imagery twice in this monologue. Underline the lines that use snake imagery. What does comparing Caesar to a snake suggest about him in each instance?

5. If you are acting as Brutus, what attitude would you use to approach this monologue? Confident? Wary? Saddened? Excited? Why would you make that choice? Highlight any phrases that support your acting decision.

Performance Tips:

- Brutus is feeling conflicted between duty to friend and duty to country. Make sure to emphasize Brutus's careful weighing of the situation.
- Pay attention to coordinating conjunctions, or words that link ideas and phrases together. This will help you separate Brutus's statements into clear pros and cons while making his decisions.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. Make a squiggly line under Brutus's reasons for and against murdering Caesar. In your own words, why is Brutus conflicted about murdering Caesar?

   Markings will vary. Students should discuss how Brutus has no personal reasons to murder Caesar but feels that his power has grown too great, so he must be removed for the greater good of Rome. Brutus does not feel that Caesar currently poses a threat, but he feels that Caesar's approach to power has the potential to be dangerous to the Republic.

2. In regard to Caesar's rise to power, Brutus states, "The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins / Remorse from power." (9–10) According to this line, why does Brutus feel Caesar poses a threat to the Republic of Rome?

   Brutus feels that Caesar thinks too highly of himself. He asserts that when any leader becomes so powerful that he stops feeling remorse, or empathy, for others, that is when his power will be abused and become more dangerous for Rome.

3. In lines 13–18, Brutus asserts that "lowliness is young ambition's ladder," and then he extends the comparison. What is Brutus saying about Caesar's rise to power in these lines?

   "Lowliness," or humility, is how Caesar gains the trust and admiration of the people. But Brutus believes that once Caesar has climbed the ladder of ambition, he will only look down on the people and lose his humility altogether.

4. Brutus uses snake imagery twice in this monologue. Underline the lines that use snake imagery. What does comparing Caesar to a snake suggest about him in each instance?

   Students should underline "It is the bright day that brings forth the adder / And that craves wary walking. Crown him? that; / And then, I grant, we put a sting in him / That at his will he may do danger with." (5–9)

   Snakes are generally associated with sneaky, dangerous behavior, characterizing Caesar as sneakily rising to dictatorship when Rome has a Republic. Brutus believes that crowning Caesar and giving him a spotlight will make him more dangerous than ever. Students should also underline "And therefore think him as a serpent's egg / Which, hatched would, as his kind, grow mischievous, / And kill him in the shell." (23–25) Brutus believes that while Caesar isn't dangerous yet, his potential is like a snake in its egg waiting to hatch, so they should murder him before he can become a true threat.

5. If you are acting as Brutus, what attitude would you use to approach this monologue? Confident? Wary? Saddened? Excited? Why would you make that choice? Highlight any phrases that support your acting decision.

   Answers will vary.

Performance Tips:

- Brutus is feeling conflicted between duty to friend and duty to country. Make sure to emphasize Brutus's careful weighing of the situation.

- Pay attention to coordinating conjunctions, or words that link ideas and phrases together. This will help you separate Brutus's statements into clear pros and cons while making his decisions.

Macbeth

ACT I, SCENE VII

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
Macbeth is faced with a moral dilemma, considering whether he should fulfill the witches' prophesy and murder King Duncan.

MACBETH: If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up[1] the consequence, and catch,
With his[2] surcease,[3] success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal[4] of time,
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases
We still have judgment[5] here, that[6] we but teach
Bloody instructions, which being taught return
To plague the inventor. This even-handed[7] justice
Commends the ingredients[8] of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
Who should against his murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties[9] so meek, hath been
So clear[10] in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking-off,[11]
And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
Striding[12] the blast,[13] or heaven's cherubin[14] horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,[15]
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on the other—

[1] *catch (as with a net)*
[2] *its*
[3] *completion*
[4] *a sandbar surrounded by water*
[5] *punishment to endure*
[6] *because*
[7] *impartial*
[8] *contents*
[9] *royal powers*
[10] *blameless; benevolent*
[11] *murder*
[12] *Riding*
[13] *storm*
[14] *(cherubim) angelic creatures*
[15] *winds*

Student Annotation Questions

1. List all of the reasons why Macbeth does not want to murder Duncan.

2. What emotion do you think Macbeth is expressing in this scene? Why do you think so? Highlight evidence from the monologue to support your explanation.

3. What is Macbeth saying about Duncan in lines 16–25? Underline imagery that supports your interpretation.

4. In lines 25–28, Macbeth compares his ambition to a horse, with words like "prick the sides," "vaulting," "spur," and "o'erleaps." In the context of this monologue, what do these words suggest about his ambition?

5. If you were acting this scene out, what tone of voice would you use? Why? Highlight any words that emphasize that tone.

Performance Tips:

- To guide your emotions during this monologue, consider Macbeth's motivation for killing Duncan as well as why he is hesitating.
- Focus on the reasons why Macbeth hesitates murdering Duncan. This will help you figure out which lines flow together to get his points across for a smoother delivery.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. List all of the reasons why Macbeth does not want to murder Duncan.

   Duncan is a guest at Macbeth's home. Duncan is his king, who promoted Macbeth with honors and trusted him. Macbeth also feels that Duncan is a good king who does not deserve death.

2. What emotion do you think Macbeth is expressing in this scene? Why do you think so? Highlight evidence from the monologue to support your explanation.

   Students can interpret Macbeth's speech in a few ways – regretful, disgusted, or fearful. Some students will think Macbeth is too scared of the consequences of the murder to follow through with it. Some will feel that he is disgusted with himself due to Duncan's innocent nature. Lines 15–25 hold plenty of excellent evidence to support any of these emotions Macbeth could be feeling.

3. What is Macbeth saying about Duncan in lines 16–25? Underline imagery that supports your interpretation.

   He believes Duncan to be good and innocent, and that his death would make the angels in heaven weep. Macbeth worries that he will be cursed by the heavens if he murders Duncan. Students should underline lines such as "his virtues / Will plead like angels trumpet-tongued against / The deep damnation of his taking-off," "And pity, like a naked new-born babe," and "heaven's cherubin horsed / Upon the sightless couriers of the air, / Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye, / That tears shall drown the wind."

4. In lines 25–28, Macbeth compares his ambition to a horse, with words like "prick the sides," "vaulting," "spur," and "o'erleaps." In the context of this monologue, what do these words suggest about his ambition?

   Macbeth feels that his ambition is not enough to "spur" him or encourage him to follow through with his plans. His reasons to not murder Duncan outweigh his ambition to become the king himself.

5. If you were acting this scene out, what tone of voice would you use? Why? Highlight any words that emphasize that tone.

   Answers will vary.

Performance Tips:

- To guide your emotions during this monologue, consider Macbeth's motivation for killing Duncan as well as why he is hesitating.
- Focus on the reasons why Macbeth hesitates murdering Duncan. This will help you figure out which lines flow together to get his points across for a smoother delivery.

Macbeth

ACT I, SCENE VII

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
Macbeth wants to back out of his plan to murder King Duncan and steal his crown, but Lady Macbeth wants him to go through with it.

LADY MACBETH: Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since?
And wakes it now, to look so green[1] and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valor
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would"
Like the poor cat i' the adage?[2]
[…]
What beast was't then
That made you break[3] this enterprise to me?
When you durst[4] do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor[5] time nor place
Did then adhere,[6] and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.

[1] *sickly*
[2] *the cat that wanted fish but refused to get its feet wet*
[3] *reveal*
[4] *dared*
[5] *Neither*
[6] *fit*

Student Annotation Questions

1. In lines 1–4, Lady Macbeth compares Macbeth's hopes to a drunk person who acted brave but has since awoken with regret. What do her words imply about how she sees Macbeth?

2. In lines 5–9, what does Lady Macbeth think Macbeth is afraid of?

3. Lady Macbeth asks Macbeth, "What beast was't then / That made you break this enterprise to me?" (12–13) What does Lady Macbeth suggest about her husband's broken promise?

4. Lady Macbeth relies on gender roles of the time to convince Macbeth to follow through on the murder. Underline where this occurs. What does Lady Macbeth feel that he should do to be "more the man" (16)?

5. Shakespeare uses violent, disturbing imagery in lines 19–24 to illustrate Lady Macbeth's desperation. Why could this imagery convince Macbeth to follow through on their murderous plan? Highlight evidence to support your interpretation.

Performance Tips:

- When acting out these lines, make sure to capture Lady Macbeth's unhinged nature to really sell the performance!
- Find words that are particularly harsh and emphasize those in your performance to really capture Lady Macbeth's disgust and anger.
- Lady Macbeth asks many successive questions to stress her disappointment with Macbeth. Decide if you want to ask them slowly or rapidly: both are valid and give different versions of Lady Macbeth.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. In lines 1–4, Lady Macbeth compares Macbeth's hopes to a drunk person who acted brave but has since awoken with regret. What do her words imply about how she sees Macbeth?

   Lady Macbeth feels that Macbeth's ambition to murder Duncan and become the king wasn't genuine. She believes Macbeth doesn't have the determination to follow through on his original plan.

2. In lines 5–9, what does Lady Macbeth think Macbeth is afraid of?

   She is disgusted that he doesn't want to take the risk and face life-threatening consequences that would be required to follow his ambitions.

3. Lady Macbeth asks Macbeth, "What beast was't then / That made you break this enterprise to me?" (12–13) What does Lady Macbeth suggest about her husband's broken promise?

   She implies that something very scary must have convinced him to break his promise to her if he were the man she believed him to be.

4. Lady Macbeth relies on gender roles of the time to convince Macbeth to follow through on the murder. Underline where this occurs. What does Lady Macbeth feel that he should do to be "more the man" (16)?

   Students should underline "Nor time nor place / Did then adhere, and yet you would make both: / They have made themselves, and that their fitness now / Does unmake you." She believes that if Macbeth would follow through on his promise despite the timing or consequences, he would be a more worthy man for her.

5. Shakespeare uses violent, disturbing imagery in lines 19–24 to illustrate Lady Macbeth's desperation. Why could this imagery convince Macbeth to follow through on their murderous plan? Highlight evidence to support your interpretation.

   Lady Macbeth's exaggerated declaration that she would murder her own child if Macbeth asked her to do it, is supposed to shock Macbeth. She wants to emphasize that she would do anything for Macbeth, even something morally horrific, so he should be willing to do the same for her.

Performance Tips:

- When acting out these lines, make sure to capture Lady Macbeth's unhinged nature to really sell the performance!
- Find words that are particularly harsh and emphasize those in your performance to really capture Lady Macbeth's disgust and anger.
- Lady Macbeth asks many successive questions to stress her disappointment with Macbeth. Decide if you want to ask them slowly or rapidly: both are valid and give different versions of Lady Macbeth.

Othello

ACT III, SCENE III

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
Desdemona pleads with her husband, Othello, to reinstate his disgraced lieutenant, Michael Cassio. Upset that Othello has refused to meet the lieutenant for dinner, she proposes another time for them to meet and patch up their working relationship. She is unaware that the villainous Iago has already been in Othello's ear, accusing her of unfaithfulness with this same lieutenant.

DESDEMONA: Why then tomorrow night; or Tuesday morn;
On Tuesday noon, or night, on Wednesday morn;
I prithee, name the time, but let it not
Exceed three days. In faith, he's penitent;
And yet his trespass,[1] in our common reason—
Save that, they say, the wars must make examples
Out of their best—is not almost[2] a fault
To incur a private check. When shall he come?
Tell me, Othello. I wonder in my soul,
What you would ask me, that I should deny,
Or stand so mammering[3] on. What? Michael Cassio,
That came awooing with you, and so many a time
When I have spoke of you dispraisingly
Hath ta'en your part—to have so much to do
To bring him in! Trust me, I could do much—
[…]
Why, this is not a boon;
'Tis as I should entreat you wear your gloves,
Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm,
Or sue to you to do a peculiar profit
To your own person. Nay, when I have a suit—
Wherein I mean to touch your love indeed,
It shall be full of poise and difficult weight,
And fearful to be granted.

[1] *mistake*
[2] *hardly*
[3] *delaying*

Student Annotation Questions

1. Othello declines dinner with Cassio, so Desdemona opens her monologue proposing other times to set up the dinner. What do you notice about the structure of these opening lines? How should they be acted out when playing Desdemona?

2. In lines 6–8, Desdemona states, "Save that, they say, the wars must make examples / Out of their best—is not almost a fault / To incur a private check." What does Desdemona think of Cassio's mistakes?

3. Underline where Desdemona talks about her and Othello's history with Cassio. In your own words, how was Cassio involved in their relationship?

4. Desdemona claims that if Othello listens to her, it is the same as if she "should entreat you wear your gloves, / Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm." (17–18) What does Desdemona suggest about her advice?

5. Toward the end of her monologue, Desdemona mentions the future of her and Othello's relationship. Highlight these lines. Given what we know about Iago's treachery, what prediction is Desdemona unknowingly making here?

Performance Tips:

- Desdemona is pleading with her husband on behalf of their friend, Cassio, but she does not realize the weight behind her request. When delivering this monologue, keep suspicion out of your voice that anything with Othello might be amiss.

- Make the audience feel Desdemona's affection for Cassio. She loves him only as a friend, but keeping that feeling in your voice will add to the audience's understanding of Othello's suspicions.

- Use physical movement to emphasize her confidence. Desdemona believes she has a strong case, so don't perform this completely still. Gesture as you offer possibilities, move slightly toward Othello, or use your hands to emphasize your reasoning.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. Othello declines dinner with Cassio, so Desdemona opens her monologue proposing other times to set up the dinner. What do you notice about the structure of these opening lines? How should they be acted out when playing Desdemona?

   Desdemona gives a copious amount of alterative times to have Othello and Cassio meet and talk. They are listed quickly, separated by an "or" or "on," which keeps the list flowing rather than stilted. Students will have a variety of answers for how they would act this out; however, the main takeaway should be that Desdemona is speaking these lines excitedly, pleadingly, or hurriedly.

2. In lines 6–8, Desdemona states, "Save that, they say, the wars must make examples / Out of their best—is not almost a fault / To incur a private check." What does Desdemona think of Cassio's mistakes?

   Desdemona is saying that war is a serious situation, and she understands that even the very best soldiers must be made an example of when they make a mistake, but that in the grand scheme of war, Cassio's mistakes are negligible. She feels Othello should forgive him.

3. Underline where Desdemona talks about her and Othello's history with Cassio. In your own words, how was Cassio involved in their relationship?

   Students should underline lines 11–15. Cassio was with Othello when Othello was trying to court Desdemona, encouraging their relationship. Desdemona is trying to point out how loyal Cassio has been to Othello.

4. Desdemona claims that if Othello listens to her, it is the same as if she "should entreat you wear your gloves, / Or feed on nourishing dishes, or keep you warm." (17–18) What does Desdemona suggest about her advice?

   Much like how keeping warm or eating well is good advice for staying healthy, this comparison suggests that her advice is good for Othello, both in his relationship with Cassio and for his own soul.

5. Toward the end of her monologue, Desdemona mentions the future of her and Othello's relationship. Highlight these lines. Given what we know about Iago's treachery, what prediction is Desdemona unknowingly making here?

   Students should highlight lines 20–23. Desdemona mentions that a time may come when their love will really be tested beyond the simple request she is making. However, given Iago's treacherous accusations, their love and trust will be tested in a much more serious way toward the end of the play. This is a great line to give students an example of dramatic irony and foreshadowing.

Performance Tips:

- Desdemona is pleading with her husband on behalf of their friend, Cassio, but she does not realize the weight behind her request. When delivering this monologue, keep suspicion out of your voice that anything with Othello might be amiss.

- Make the audience feel Desdemona's affection for Cassio. She loves him only as a friend, but keeping that feeling in your voice will add to the audience's understanding of Othello's suspicions.

- Use physical movement to emphasize her confidence. Desdemona believes she has a strong case, so don't perform this completely still. Gesture as you offer possibilities, move slightly toward Othello, or use your hands to emphasize your reasoning.

Othello

ACT V, SCENE II

Read the monologue as though you are preparing to act it out. Answer the guided annotation questions about attitude, motivations, and figurative language. Deliver the monologue in front of the class using your analysis to guide you.

Summary:
As the play reaches its end, Othello speaks to a sleeping Desdemona, his wife, after being told and convinced that she has been unfaithful to him. He considers how he should proceed.

OTHELLO: It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul.
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood,
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then put out the light.
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore,
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat[1]
That can thy light relume.[2] When I have pluck'd the rose,
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It must needs wither; I'll smell it on the tree. *[Kisses her.]*
O, balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword! One more, one more;
Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
And love thee after. One more, and this the last:
So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears; this sorrow's heavenly,
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

[1] *essence of life [Prometheus was a mythical figure who stole fire from the gods and gave it to man.]*
[2] *relight*

Student Annotation Questions

1. Based on this monologue, what is Othello's plan for Desdemona, and how does he feel about it? Highlight evidence that supports your analysis.

2. Othello refers to Desdemona's skin as "smooth as monumental alabaster," (5) which references a tomb carving. What does this comparison reveal about Othello's attitude toward Desdemona?

3. In lines 7–13, Othello is literally putting out a candle but focuses on the significance of its extinguishing and relighting. Highlight references to light in these lines. What else does the light refer to?

4. Othello states, "When I have pluck'd the rose, / I cannot give it vital growth again, / It must needs wither." (13–15) How does the rose reflect Desdemona?

5. Why does Othello feel his weeping holds "cruel tears" (22)?

Performance Tips:

- Othello's emotions are complicated. Make sure when reading this monologue that you capture his mixed emotions.
- Highlight where Othello takes action. In this monologue, he puts out the candle and kisses Desdemona. Act out Othello's actions to bring more life to his lines.

Teacher Annotation Questions

1. Based on this monologue, what is Othello's plan for Desdemona, and how does he feel about it? Highlight evidence that supports your analysis.

   Othello plans to murder Desdemona because he believes she was unfaithful to him and will continue to be. He regrets what he feels he must do and mourns her but is determined to carry out what he thinks is justice.

2. Othello refers to Desdemona's skin as "smooth as monumental alabaster," (5) which references a tomb carving. What does this comparison reveal about Othello's attitude toward Desdemona?

   He is mourning her reverently as though she is already dead, as though he is at her funeral.

3. In lines 7–13, Othello is literally putting out a candle but focuses on the significance of its extinguishing and relighting. Highlight references to light in these lines. What else does the light refer to?

   He is literally putting out a candle just before murdering his wife, so is contemplating how he will extinguish Desdemona's life and reignite a sense of justice. Students should highlight lines like, "flaming minister," and "Promethean heat/ That can thy light relume."

4. Othello states, "When I have pluck'd the rose, / I cannot give it vital growth again, / It must needs wither." (13–15) How does the rose reflect Desdemona?

   Comparing Desdemona to a rose acknowledges her beauty and the tragedy of her death. He knows that once he "plucks," or murders her, there is no taking it back.

5. Why does Othello feel his weeping holds "cruel tears" (22)?

   His tears are cruel for both himself and Desdemona. He cries for the cruelty he feels he must inflict on Desdemona, but also for how cruel fate has been to their love.

Performance Tips:

- Othello's emotions are complicated. Make sure when reading this monologue that you capture his mixed emotions.

- Highlight where Othello takes action. In this monologue, he puts out the candle and kisses Desdemona. Act out Othello's actions to bring more life to his lines.