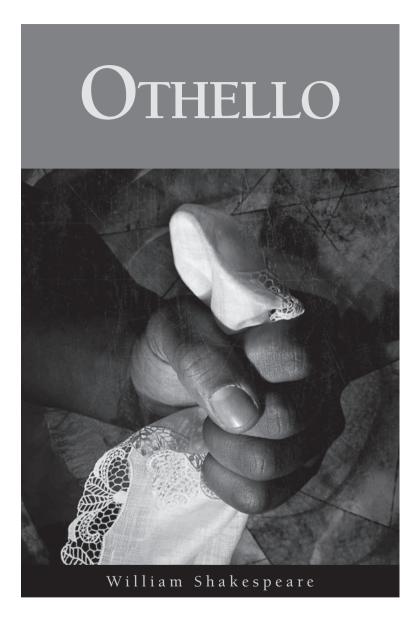
OTHELLO by William Shakespeare

Includes Strategies for Understanding Shakespeare's Language





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STRATEGIES

Strategies for Understanding Shakespeare's Language

1. 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 a reader gets used to it, the rhythm becomes very natural to speak in and read. Beginning readers often find it helpful to read a short pause at a comma and a long pause for a period, colon, semicolon, dash, or question mark.

Here's an example from The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, Scene i:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd, (*short pause*) It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath: (*long pause*) it is twice blest; (*long pause*) It blesseth him that gives, (*short pause*) and him that takes; (*long pause*) 'Tis mightiest in the mighties; (*long pause*) it becomes The throned monarch better than his crown; (*long pause*)

2. 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. Here's an example from *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act I, Scene i:

Luc. Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move, And with her breath she did perfume the air; Sacred, and sweet, was all I saw in her.TRA. Nay, then, 'tis time to stir him from his trance.I pray, awake, sir: if you love the maid, Bend thoughts and wits to achieve her.

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

As you read, look for the themes and elements described below:

Contrasts:

Animals, animal instincts vs. the divine or "higher" nature:

- Iago plays on other characters' emotions by suggesting that Othello is more animal than human. Pay special attention to any mention of animals, beasts, and hunting.
- Desdemona is often called "divine" by Othello and others. Note the contrast between high and low, and between heaven and hell, both within the play and within individual characters. What makes a person's "baser" nature come out? Where does Iago's nature fit in this scheme?
- Racial elements also provide a point of contrast and conflict that the characters are quick to use to exploit when it is convenient for them to use it to denigrate Othello.

Soldiers and civilians:

• Othello admits that he knows little of the "civilized" world; his place is in battle. He considers himself unrefined. Who else brings up the different worlds of war and peace, rude and polite? Do these worlds ever intersect?

Self-knowledge:

Until he begins to suspect Desdemona, Othello is able to remain calm in the midst of chaotic situations (when he is dragged before Brabantio, for instance, or when he comes upon the brawl in Cyprus).

Once he has been infected by doubt, however, he cannot go back to his previous beliefs, no matter how much he would like to. His rage skews his judgment and colors everything he sees--notice how the handkerchief, a cherished token of his courtship and marriage, takes on new symbolism when his faith begins to unravel. How clearly does Othello see his own fall?



DRAMATIS PERSONAE

DUKE OF VENICE. BRABANTIO, [A senator], father to Desdemona GRATIANO [brother to Brabantio]. LODOVICO [kinsman to Brabantio]. OTHELLO, the Moor [in the military service of Venice]. CASSIO, an honourable lieutenant [to Othello]. IAGO, [an ensign to Othello], a villian. RODERIGO, a Venetian gentleman. MONTANO, governor of Cyprus [before Othello].

Clown [servant to Othello]. DESDEMONA, wife to Othello. EMILIA, wife to Iago. BIANCA, a courtezan [mistress to Cassio].

[Other] Senators, Sailors, Gentlemen of Cyprus [Officers, Messengers, Musicians].

[The first act takes place in Venice. The rest of the play takes place in a seaport in Cyprus.]



Отнегго

ACT I

SCENE I [Venice. A Street.]

Enter Roderigo and Iago.

ROD: Tush, never tell me! I take it much unkindly That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this. IAGO: 'Sblood, but you will not hear me. 5 If ever I did dream of such a matter. Abhor me ROD: Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate. IAGO: Despise me, if I do not. Three great ones of the city, In personal suit to make me his lieutenant, Offcapp'd¹ to him; and, by the faith of man, 10 I know my price, I am worth no worse a place. But he, as loving his own pride and purposes, Evades them with a bombast² circumstance³ Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war, And, in conclusion, 15 Nonsuits⁴ my mediators;⁵ for, "Certes," says he, "I have already chose my officer." And what was he? Forsooth, a great arithmetician, One Michael Cassio, a Florentine 20 A fellow almost damn'd in a fair wife⁶ That never set a squadron in the field, Nor the division of a battle knows More than a spinster; unless⁷ the bookish theoric,⁸ Wherein⁹ the toga'd consuls¹⁰ can propose 25 As masterly¹¹ as he; mere prattle¹² without practice, Is all his soldiership. But he, sir, had the election;¹³

¹tipped their hats ²overdone ³roundabout speech ⁴denies ⁵people appealing

on my behalf ⁶[Cassio is unmarried, so the meaning of this line is

⁷except

⁸abstract theory, [as opposed to reality]

mysterious.]

⁹about which

¹⁰bureaucrats

¹¹knowledgeably

¹²chatter

¹³choice

10	Ref 1, Scene 1 witham Shakespeare
¹⁴ military ability	And I,—of whom his eyes had seen the proof ¹⁴
	At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds
¹⁵ [Iago compares	30 Christian and heathen,—must be belee'd and calm'd ¹⁵
himself to a ship	By debitor and creditor. ¹⁶ This countercaster, ¹⁷
on a calm sea.]	He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,
¹⁶ one who makes	And I—God bless the mark!—his Moorship's ancient. ¹⁸
petty calculations	ROD: By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.
¹⁷ coin-counter	35 IAGO: Why, there's no remedy. 'Tis the curse of service,
¹⁸ low-ranking	Preferment goes by letter and affection, ¹⁹
officer	And not by old gradation, ²⁰ where each second
¹⁹ personal favor	Stood heir to the first. ²¹ Now, sir, be judge yourself
- ·	Whether I in any just term am affined ²²
²⁰ i.e., process of promotion	40 To love the Moor.
-	R OD: I would not follow him then.
²¹ was automati- cally promoted	IAGO: O, sir, content you.
	I follow him to serve my turn upon him:
²² bound	We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
	45 Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall mark
²³ kneeling	Many a duteous and kneecrooking ²³ knave,
²⁴ loving	That doting on^{24} his own obsequious bondage
A	Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
²⁵ feed	For naught but provender; ²⁵ and, when he's old, cashier'd. ²⁶
	50 Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are,
²⁶ dismissed	Who, trimm'd in forms and visages ²⁷ of duty,
²⁷ appearances	Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
A13-57	And throwing but shows of service on their lords
	Do well thrive by them; and when they have lined their
	55 coats
²⁸ favor	Do themselves homage. ²⁸ These fellows have some soul,
	And such a one do I profess myself.
	For, sir,
	It is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Maria	60 Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago.
CENT.	In following him, I follow but myself;
EN!	Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
²⁹ personal	But seeming so, for my peculiar ²⁹ end.
	For when my outward action doth demonstrate
127 1100	65 The native act and figure of my heart
³⁰ form	In complement ³⁰ extern, 'tis not long after
	But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve

Z.

	For daws ³¹ to peck at: I am not what I am.	³¹ crows
	R OD: [<i>Aside</i>] What a full fortune does the thicklips owe, ³²	³² own
70	If he can carry't ³³ thus!	³³ pull it off
	IAGO: Call up her father,	pan n ojj
	Rouse him:—make after him, poison his delight,	
	Proclaim him in the streets, incense her kinsmen,	
	And, though he in a fertile climate dwell, ³⁴	³⁴ i.e., though he is
75	Plague him with flies. Though that his joy be joy,	fortunate
	Yet throw such changes of vexation on't	
	As it may lose some color.	
	Rop: Here is her father's house; I'll call aloud.	25
00	IAGO: Do; with like timorous ³⁵ accent and dire yell	³⁵ frightened
80	As when, by night and negligence, the fire	
	Is spied in populous cities.	
	Rop: What, ho, Brabantio! Signior Brabantio, ho!	
	IAGO: Awake! What, ho, Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves!	
07	Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!	
85	Thieves! thieves!	
	Brabantio appears above, at a window.	
	Bradantio appears above, at a window.	
	BRAB: What is the reason of this terrible summons?	
	What is the matter there?	
	R OD: Signior, is all your family within?	
	IAGO: Are your doors lock'd?	
90	BRAB: Why? Wherefore ask you this?	
	IAGO: 'Zounds, sir, you're robb'd! For shame, put on your	
	gown;	
	Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul;	
	Even now, now, very now, an old black ram	
95	Is tupping ³⁶ your white ewe. Arise, arise!	³⁶ mating with
	Awake the snorting ³⁷ citizens with the bell,	³⁷ snoring
	Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.	
	Arise, I say!	
	BRAB: What, have you lost your wits?	
100	Rod: Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?	
	BRAB: Not I. What are you?	
	Rod: My name is Roderigo.	
	BRAB: The worser welcome.	
	I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors:	

VOCABULARY AND GLOSSARY

Act I, Scene I

"Tush" – an expression of contempt "'Sblood" – an oath (originally "God's blood!") suit – appeal "Certes" – "for certain" "Forsooth" – "Indeed" Rhodes – an island southeast of Greece Cyprus – an island south of Turkey knave – rascal, wretched fellow obsequious – full of flattery naught – nothing "'Zounds" – an oath ("God's wounds!") ruffians – hoodlums lascivious – sexually overactive saucy – showing a lack of respect wheeling – freewheeling, rootless

Act I, Scene II

stuff - an essential part
out-tongue - speak louder than
yond - yonder
haste-post-haste - extra-quick
heat - urgency
makes - does

Act I, Scene III

disproportion'd – inconsistent frank – obvious aught – anything preposterously – ridiculously pith – strength dearest – most valuable conjuration – spell withal – with wrought – made a change vouch – swear overt – obvious imminent – about to be breach – space between safe places