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## *Othello*

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pre-Reading****Research I**

**Objective:** Researching the author

**Activity**

William Shakespeare, probably the greatest playwright ever to write in English, lived a fairly private life despite his notoriety. Research the life of Shakespeare and write a short biography. The biography should be at least four paragraphs in length.

Include the creation of *Othello* in your research. Find any significant facts about Shakespeare's inspiration for *Othello* and include them.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Act I

### Characterization

**Objective:** Recognizing character traits

#### Activity

Reading a play like *Othello* may be entertaining, but drama is really designed to be watched. Viewers at a play can see for themselves how the characters look and behave. This is why the text of *Othello*, like most plays, lacks the physical descriptions common to standard literature.

When reading drama, one must pay close attention to the script in order to construct the best mental picture of the characters. Without descriptions, readers must obtain many of the clues indirectly, for example, by interpreting the actions of characters, or by noting one character's observations of another character.

Use the **Character Chart** to reveal your assessment of characters in the first Act. In the appropriate spaces, briefly describe each character and determine whether—at this point in the play—you think he or she is a major character. When you finish the chart, review the characters that you designated as major characters. Select the two most similar characters and write one paragraph comparing them. Next, select the two least similar characters and write another paragraph, this time contrasting them.

The first character has been completed for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act III****Emotions**

**Objective:** Finding quotes that portray emotions

**Activity**

Iago's dirty work inspires a cascade of emotions throughout *Othello*. The **Emotion Chart** on the next page contains a list of emotions depicted in the text. The general location of each emotion is provided for you. Using the locations, find the source of each emotion. Identify the corresponding characters and quote them on the chart.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act IV****Theme****Objective:** Identifying themes in drama**Activity**

If Shakespeare is new to you, then you might be surprised that a seventeenth century play includes the seemingly modern issues of interracial marriage and the social acceptance of minorities. Interestingly, *Othello* is only one of Shakespeare's plays that addresses these issues. In *The Tempest*, we see the savage Caliban at odds with European characters. *The Merchant of Venice* features Shylock, a Jewish merchant in an intolerant country. In *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron—a Moor—proves to be one of Shakespeare's most ruthless characters.

For this exercise, focus on the theme of social acceptance of outsiders or minorities. The **Theme Chart** divides the theme into smaller, related issues. Using the chart, explain at least one instance of each of the sub themes. Some of the examples will require a quote for support, while others will require only your explanation.

One example has been completed for you.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Acts I – V

Motif

Objective: Identifying motifs

## Activity

*Othello* contains several motifs. One example is the recurring reference to plants:

“Our / bodies are gardens; to the which our wills are gardeners”

“Though other things grow fair against the sun, / Yet fruits that blossom first will first be ripe”

“As if he pluck'd up kisses by the roots, / That grew upon my lips”

The **Motif Chart** supplies you with *Othello* motifs and the scenes in which they occur. Use the reference to find the occurrence of each motif, and then quote the text in which it occurs. Remember, motifs are recurring, so each motif will have more than one reference. The first motif has been started for you.