



National Certificate of Educational Achievement  
TAUMATA MĀTAURANGA Ā-MOTU KUA TAEA

## **Exemplar for Internal Assessment Resource**

### **English Level 3**

**Resource title: Let's get critical, critical!**

This exemplar supports assessment against:

**Achievement Standard 91479**

**Develop an informed understanding of literature and/or language using  
critical texts**

Student and grade boundary specific exemplar

The material has been gathered from student material specific to an A or B assessment resource.

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	Grade Boundary: Low Excellence
1.	<p>To achieve this standard at Low Excellence, this student developed an informed and perceptive understanding of literature using critical texts.</p> <p>A clear hypothesis is established: <i>After reading and studying William Shakespeare's classic story of Othello, I have concluded that Iago sabotaged Othello's relationship with Desdemona because he was jealous of him.</i> (1)</p> <p>The student identifies critical views relating to his hypothesis. The student's commentary on Wood's viewpoint shows insight into the way a society's values can undermine relationships. <i>This shows just a small sliver of the sort of abuse and discrimination that Othello and Desdemona faced ... I strongly agree that this affected how quickly mistrust and rumours impacted on Othello and Desdemona's marriage.</i> (2)</p> <p>The student uses specific details and examples throughout the report to show an informed understanding of <i>Othello</i>. <i>It is Othello's anxiety that Desdemona does not belong to him, or that the marital bond has been violated, that is the play's main theme"</i> (1)</p> <p>The student puts his own case forward with reasoned comments for why his own conclusions have more validity than the critics. <i>I find it hard to agree with Wood (and many other well regarded critics) in this instance. I find it incomprehensible that a person would want to tear a happy marriage apart ...this is why he committed these unforgivable acts.</i> (4)</p> <p>Throughout the report, the student summarises the critic's viewpoint while evaluating its validity. The student integrates his own viewpoint into the report.</p> <p>The student's data evaluation chart shows evidence of explanatory note 5 which states that: <i>Using critical texts</i> is a process that involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a hypothesis or theory to frame an investigation</li> <li>• selecting critical texts</li> <li>• selecting information and evaluating its reliability and usefulness in relation to the investigation</li> <li>• synthesising information from primary source(s) and critical texts (eg using readings from different critics to interpret Othello's motivation; using feminist theory to interpret advertising language).</li> </ul> <p>A detailed bibliography was also completed by the student.</p> <p>In summary the student has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• integrated the critics, formed his own views and built an argument around Iago's true motivation</li> <li>• covered a range of critics from different time periods</li> <li>• synthesised information from primary source(s) and critical texts in an informed and perceptive way.</li> </ul> <p>While not particularly original, the hypothesis is well argued and there are enough moments of insight for the student to secure Excellence.</p> <p>To secure Excellence more convincingly, the student could more consistently develop understandings that are sophisticated and insightful and/or original.</p>

### Hypothesis: Iago sabotages Othello's relationship with Desdemona because he is jealous of him.

After reading and studying William Shakespeare's classic story of Othello, I have concluded that Iago sabotaged Othello's relationship with Desdemona because he was jealous of him. While analysing different critics opinions and views on Iago's motives, I found many contrasting ideas and discovered that not all aligned with my initial hypothesis. Critics' opinions varied depending on time period. The three main critics and time periods I studied were A.C Bradley (1904), Leslie Y Rabkin & Jeffrey Brown (1997) and Sam Wood (2009). These three critics all showed different views on Iago's motives and Othello and Desdemona's relationship in turn. (1)

Sam Wood (2009) stated that the relationship between Othello and Desdemona may have been tainted from the very beginning because of the differences in their race and social stature when they married, saying that marriage is a "fiction that can be manipulated" (1). Othello himself states, "Haply, for I am black and have not those soft parts of conversation" (Act III, Scene III) symbolising the perceived lack he felt as a result of his different race. The marriage also was also tainted with dislike from both sides of the families with Desdemona's father Brabantio especially stating when first told of the nuptials: "I pray you, hear her speak: /If she confess that she was half the wooer, /Destruction on my head, if my bad blame/ Light on the man!" (Act III, Scene iii). This shows just a small sliver of the sort of abuse and discrimination that Othello and Desdemona faced when choosing to defy the unwritten laws of society at the time and wed. I believe that the strain from racial differences in this marriage could absolutely have affected its heinous undoing and that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century there was a lot more unwritten laws and expectations on what a person should be or who they should love than there are today. This is a very believable and logical explanation from Wood and I strongly agree that this affected how quickly mistrust and rumours impacted on Othello and Desdemona's marriage. (2)

Further into the main body of the play it is obvious that Othello begins to distrust his wife Desdemona. Wood states, "It is Othello's anxiety that Desdemona does not belong to him, or that the marital bond has been violated, that is the play's main theme" (1). Iago, Othello's jealous companion, does not help the situation with his sly comments and manipulative nature while convincing Othello that Desdemona may not have stayed loyal to him throughout their marriage, saying: She did deceive her father marrying you;/ And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,/ She lov'd them most. (Act III, Scene iii) The argument Wood poses as to why Iago would want to break up the marriage between Othello and Desdemona was that he was a mainly motiveless villain and had no discernible reason for his actions. This is a viewpoint not only held by Wood in the year 2009, but by many notable critics throughout history, showing that, in this instance, era does not really matter when discussing Iago's motives. He says that Iago "revels in his ability manipulate his victims" (1) and that most people who study the play either deliberately avoid or just ignore the question of Iago's motives because it's such a grey area filled with speculation. Another point he makes concerning Iago's nature is that he is full of self hate, and does not have a clear grip on the sense of hierarchy or personality of many of the other characters in the play. Wood states "the suggestion [is] that Iago wants to put Othello and others in a similar position to his own while considering himself better than they" (1). This shows he is falsely believing himself 'above' Othello and considers it right to make him suffer. (3)

Personally, although I agreed with his initial statement regarding the role of races in the play Othello, I find it hard to agree with Wood (and many other well regarded critics) in this instance. I find it incomprehensible that a person would want to tear a happy marriage apart just for their own demise or because they contained a large amount of 'self hate'. Iago had to have had some sort of logical explanation for getting inside Othello's head and convincing him that his 'faithful' wife Desdemona was having an affair with one of Othello's closest companions; the honourable Cassio. I believe he was greatly jealous of Othello, and his marriage to Desdemona, and this is why he committed these unforgivable acts. (4)

### [Due to space restrictions, the content of the following five paragraphs has not been included]

Another view on Iago's reasoning is that he was blatantly a sadist ...

Their report goes on to state that Othello believes Iago easily because it is implied that Othello loves himself more than his wife Desdemona, ...

There is evidence within Rabkin and Brown's report to suggest that even though they believe that Iago is a sadist, there is proof that jealousy and sadism often go hand in hand ...

The most renowned and respected critic I looked at throughout this research was A.C Bradley who wrote a critical analysis of Othello in 1904 stating that indeed Iago was jealous of Othello's life and felt the need to ruin many aspects of it because he wanted a sense of "power and superiority" (1) over Othello. This could be apparent because he had always worked and been under Othello in the social hierarchy.  
...

One of the first things Bradley references when beginning his article is the dramatic irony apparent in one of the lines from Act III, Scene iii ...

Bradley says that many renowned critics speak of Othello and accuse him for not suspecting Iago in the first place, but he believes there is no way that Othello could have ever know Iago's great jealousy claiming Othello "put entire confidence in the honesty of Iago, who had not only been his companion in arms, but, as he believed, had just proved his faithfulness in the matter of the marriage" (1), expanding that Othello has no form of "stupidity" as many other critics may claim and that he saw Iago the same way "everyone else" in Venice at the time did (ibid).

Out of all the motives that I have researched, I agree with A.C Bradley that Iago ruined Othello's marriage and life because he was undoubtedly jealous of him. After being looked over for the role of Othello's lieutenant and overshadowed by his friend Cassio I find it understandable that Iago would want to cause Othello pain and that this reason was the source of his jealousy. Although I believe that he was over the top with his methods and that the scale on which he hurt Othello was exaggerated, after reading Bradley's views and opinions on Iago I am able to feel some form of empathy towards him and find the initial idea of getting 'revenge' reasonable and plausible.

After summarising three critiques relating to the motives of Iago I have concluded that irrespective of time period, whether it be 1904 or 2009, there can be similarities found between critics views on character revelations. Sam Wood (2009) had views on race related anger felt by Othello that killed his marriage and allowed for Iago to easily intervene within his life. Leslie Y Rabkin and Jeffery Brown (1997) wrote of how Iago was an evil sadist and wanted Othello to suffer, while A.C Bradley said he was jealous of Othello and was angry about always being 'under' Othello in the social hierarchy. Interestingly the article from 1904 had a lot more in common with both the 2009 and 1997 ones than either of them did with each other, which shows that in this instance time period did not have a huge factor on the way Iago's motives are viewed and analysed. Bradley's article aligned the best with my hypothesis so from that I can conclude that I made a logical, plausible statement and that the reasoning behind Iago sabotaging Othello's relationship with Desdemona could very well have been because he was jealous of Othello.

## **Bibliography:**

A.C Bradley (1904), Title: Lecture V: 'Othello',' and 'Lecture VI: 'Othello', 'Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on 'Hamlet', 'Othello', 'King Lear', 'Macbeth'.' Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1904. p175-206.  
Source: [Shakespearean Criticism](#). Ed. Mark W. Scott. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale Research, 1987.

Leslie Y Rabkin & Jeffery Brown (1997), 'Some Monster In His Thoughts: Sadism and Tragedy in Othello' Source: [Shakespearean Criticism](#). Ed. Dana Ramel Barnes. Vol. 35. Detroit: Gale Research, 1997. Publication Details: Literature and Psychology 23.2 (1973): p59-66.

Wood, Sam (2009), Where Iago Lies: Home, Honesty and the Turk in Othello, Manchester Metropolitan University Source: [Early Modern Literary Studies](#). 14.3 (Jan. 2009)

<b>Data evaluation chart [Note the data chart is an extract of the full chart]</b>		
<b>Source</b>	<b>Hypothesis: Iago sabotages Othello's relationship with Desdemona because he is jealous of him.</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Wood, Sam (2009), Where Iago Lies: Home, Honesty and the Turk in Othello	"the question of his motivation has been either ignored or deliberately avoided. Such an approach risks stripping Iago of his humanity, and presents him as an improviser who "revels in his ability to manipulate his victims" for no discernable reason (Greenblatt 233) or a supernatural and diabolical force beyond the realms of humanity. In contrast to these arguments, this essay draws attention to the theme of home and honesty that runs through the play to suggest that Iago is, in fact, profoundly discomforted by his ability to manipulate his victims, and that we are able to find a motivation in this discomfort."	Relevance: High Reliable: Wood padded out his report with many other renowned critics opinions and views, quite reliable. Contradicted/Supported: Contradicted, believed Othello was motiveless. Contradicted other sources too. Contrasted time wise: Was good time gap between 1904 but only 9 years from 1997
Leslie Y Rabkin & Jeffery Brown (1997), 'Some Monster In His Thoughts: Sadism and Tragedy in Othello'	"Just as he may project his self-contempt onto others, the sadist can find relief from his conflicts by projecting his feelings of hopelessness, thus destroying the peace of others and killing their joys. <sup>17</sup> For seeing them as miserable as himself, by bringing others into his own world of suffering and self-contempt, his pain is assuaged. This is why Iago is driven to cause Othello to suffer through making <i>him</i> realize the discrepancies between <i>his</i> own false and true selves."	Relevance: Medium Reliable: Quite good, two different critics placing their opinions into one article, referenced others too. Contradicted/Supported: Both, supported and contradicted in aspects, slightly supported A.C Bradley too. Contrasted time wise: Yes with 1904, not as much with 1997.
A.C Bradley (1904), Title: Lecture V: 'Othello',' and 'Lecture VI: 'Othello',	Bradley argues that Iago is impelled, not by a love of evil for its own sake, but to satisfy his "sense of power and superiority. Othello, we have seen, was trustful, and thorough in his trust. He put entire confidence in the honesty of Iago, who had not only been his companion in arms, but, as he believed, had just proved his faithfulness in the matter of the marriage. This confidence was misplaced, and we happen to know it; but it was no sign of stupidity in Othello. For his opinion of Iago was the opinion of practically everyone who knew him: and that opinion was that Iago was before all things 'honest,' his very faults being those of excess in honesty.	Relevance: High Reliable: High, A.C Bradley is a very well known critic that has a lot of respect and accuracy. Contrasted/Supported: Supported hypothesis fully Contrasting time wise: Yes, 1904 was well before 1997 and 2009.

	Grade Boundary: High Merit
2.	<p>To achieve this standard at High Merit, this student has developed an informed and convincing understanding of literature using critical texts.</p> <p>The student develops a hypothesis or theory to frame an investigation: <i>Desdemona was a loyal and deeply loving wife who did not deserve to die...</i> (1)</p> <p>The opinions of two critics that believe Desdemona mistook pity for love are outlined. The student synthesises the information and notes that these opinions are very similar despite the large time gap providing convincing commentary. <i>However some critics say that Desdemona's love for Othello is only based on pity and this is why their relationship so easily fell apart. Grace Tiffany says that....</i>(2) <i>John Quincy Adams also supports this and says...</i>(3)</p> <p>Student clearly states her viewpoint, providing convincing evidence from the text for her view. <i>I agree with Garner that Desdemona loved Othello because she saw things in him that she did not see in anyone else. She loved him because he was interesting and had many stories that showed Desdemona what kind of man he was ...</i>(4)</p> <p>The student convincingly synthesises the views of the critics in relation to her key question and then comes up with her own judgements. <i>I think Desdemona shows her love through all of these things. To marry Othello who ... However Desdemona completely ignored society's rules for her love of Othello.</i> (5)</p> <p>The student convincingly supports a coherent reading of Desdemona's character. <i>Desdemona did not deserve to die because she deeply loved Othello and did not do any of the things that Iago accused her of. Othello could not see that Iago was lying ....</i>(6)</p> <p>The student develops an informed understanding by presenting views from critics with opposing viewpoints while developing her own argument. <i>John Quincy Adams (1864) contradicts this and believes that she did deserved to die...</i>(7)</p> <p>The student convincingly evaluates the source in relation to the time it is written. <i>John's attitude towards Desdemona and Othello is highly influenced by the time in which he lived...</i> (7)</p> <p>The student makes discerning observations which are beginning to show an insightful understanding of the characters. <i>I agree that she did not deserve to die but I believe that even if Desdemona had told the truth about losing the handkerchief Othello would have still killed her...</i>(8)</p> <p>The student summarises her findings and convincingly concludes with her opinion of Desdemona's character. <i>There are parts of Othello that can support ... shows true devotion to Othello.</i> (9)</p> <p>The student finishes with a sound evaluation of the hypothesis: <i>If I was to research Desdemona again I would look at how she changed from a brave woman defending her love for Othello to submissively taking Othello's anger to better understand why Desdemona's made her decisions and to see if they were only because of her love.</i> (9)</p> <p>Explanatory note 5 states that: Using critical texts is a process that involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a hypothesis or theory to frame an investigation</li> <li>• selecting critical texts</li> <li>• selecting information and evaluating its reliability and usefulness in relation to the investigation</li> <li>• synthesising information from primary source(s) and critical texts (eg using readings from different critics to interpret Othello's motivation; using feminist theory to interpret advertising language).</li> </ul>

	<p>In summary the student has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• integrated materials to come up with her own judgements on Desdemona's feelings for Othello</li><li>• evaluated sources to come up with an informed and convincing understanding of whether Desdemona loved or pitied Othello</li><li>• showed some moments of insight in commentary of some of the critical viewpoints.</li></ul> <p>To meet Excellence the student could further develop the commentary and her own understanding so that it shows more evidence of original thought.</p>
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### Hypothesis: Desdemona loves Othello

Desdemona was a loyal and deeply loving wife who did not deserve to die. Throughout the play Othello Desdemona showed only love towards Othello, even when he became jealous and abused her. She loved him so much that she did not believe that he could be capable of becoming jealous. Although Desdemona was nothing but loyal and caring she died because Othello did not believe her but foolishly believed Iago. What I want to look at is why did Desdemona love Othello? How did she show her love? And did she deserve to die? (1)

#### *Why Desdemona loved Othello*

Desdemona first expressed her love for Othello in front of her father and a council of men by saying, "I saw Othello's visage in his mind/ And to his honour and valiant parts/ Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate" (1.3.252-254). This means that she saw past the fact that he was black and loved him for being valiant and honourable. This suggests a deep love that was based on respect for his personality.

However some critics say that Desdemona's love for Othello is only based on pity and this is why their relationship so easily fell apart. Grace Tiffany says that "Othello's and Desdemona's love is based on the pitiableness of stories which are, in a way, performances; Desdemona's pitying response has itself been a sort of performance" (2008, 31). By calling Desdemona's pity a performance she suggests that it was fake and she did not really love Othello all that much. Tiffany supports the idea that her pity was a performance by using a quote by Iago; "And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks, she loved them most" (3.3.207-08). She then goes on to say "the theatricality at the heart of pity enables Iago to stoke Othello's fears of his wife's deceptiveness" (2008, 31) which supports the fact that if Desdemona had been truly in love with Othello then he would have not have believed Iago lies which eventually led to her death. (2)

John Quincy Adams also supports this and says, "She tells Othello she wished Heaven had made her such a man, and informs him how any friend of his may win her by telling her again his story." (1864, 223) which again emphasizes the fact that Desdemona's love for Othello was not because she loved who he was but what he did and anyone could win her over with the same stories. Tiffany and Adams are from completely different time periods' which have very different social backgrounds however they both believe that Desdemona's love is not based on respect or on the richness of Othello's personality. When Adams wrote his critical essay it was not acceptable for black and white, men and woman to get married which may have influenced his opinion. However Tiffany, who wrote in 2008, also had the same opinion that Desdemona only pitied Othello. (3)

Other critics such as S.N. Garner believed that Desdemona was truly in love with Othello. Garner believed she loved Othello because, "she must recognize in Othello a dignity, energy, excitement, and power that all around her lack." (1976, 249) and says that, "marrying a man different from Roderigo, Cassio, and the other "curled darlings" of Italy is to her credit" (1976, 249). Desdemona could have easily chosen to marry a man that made her father happy and who was not an outsider. However her love for Othello was so deep that she married him instead even though it broke her father's heart. I agree with Garner that Desdemona loved Othello because she saw things in him that she did not see in anyone else. She loved him because he was interesting and had many stories that showed Desdemona what kind of man he was "And often did beguile her of her tears, / When I did speak of some distressful stroke, / That my youth suffer'd. My story being done, / She gave me for my pains a world of sighs." (4)

#### *How Desdemona showed her love*

#### [Due to space restrictions, the content of the following three paragraphs are not included]

Desdemona showed how deeply she loved Othello at the very beginning of the play when she went behind her father's back to marry him. ...

Critics like S.N. Garner agree that choosing Othello over her father shows how much she loves Othello. ...

Another way that Desdemona showed her love was when "She becomes "the perfect wife," who "remains perfectly submissive to the end" according to Emily. C Bartels (1996, 417). ...



I think Desdemona shows her love through all of these things. To marry Othello who was an outsider should have been enough to show that she loves him but she then goes the extra mile by protecting him even though he kills her. As Othello was black he was seen as an outsider by society and so it was seen as not right for Desdemona to marry him. However Desdemona completely ignored society's rules for her love of Othello. (5)

*Did Desdemona deserve to die?*

Desdemona did not deserve to die because she deeply loved Othello and did not do any of the things that Iago accused her of. Othello could not see that Iago was lying even when Desdemona told Othello that she is, "Your wife, my lord; your true and loyal wife"(4.2.36). Desdemona's death had nothing to do with what she did but everything to do with Othello's jealousy. (6)

John Quincy Adams (1864) contradicts this and believes that she did deserve to die not because she was unfaithful to Othello but because she married a black man. He says that the "moral lesson of the tragedy of Othello is, that black and white blood cannot be intermingled in marriage without a gross outrage upon the law of Nature; and that, in such violations, Nature will vindicate her laws." (1864, 224). This is a very extreme view towards Desdemona's and Othello's marriage. Adams believes that their marriage is not just going against what society thinks is right but also going against nature and as a result of this they both died. Adams also believes that "even though Desdemona is not false to Othello, she betrays both her gender and her social position by wedding a black man, and in so doing becomes "little less than wanton," thus forfeiting our compassion for her suffering and death."(1864, 226). This is a harsh view on what Desdemona's decision to marry Othello says about her personality. The fact that Adams does not think that Desdemona deserves our sympathy also supports the fact that he thinks that she deserved to die. John's attitude towards Desdemona and Othello is highly influenced by the time in which he lived. If Othello was not black then Adams would have not had a problem with their marriage and not have thought that Desdemona deserved to die. Although he wanted political equality for black Americans it was still inappropriate and unthought-of for black and white people to get married. (7)

Other critics believe that she did not deserve to die but she could have prevented herself from dying. J.A Haraud (1886) says that when Othello asks for the handkerchief, "If at this critical moment Desdemona had confessed the truth, the tragedy would have been prevented and Iago's plot nipped in the bud " (1886, 424) Haraud believes the reason for this is that "Desdemona is not a strong-minded, rationalistic woman; but a tender, loving, and devoted one, brought up in the lap of luxury and swayed by her feelings rather than by her reason." (1886 424). This is supported by the fact that even once Othello kills her she still stays loyal says that she smothered herself. Although these critics' critical essays were only written about 20 years apart they have very different takes on why Desdemona died and if she deserved too. I believe this is because when Adams was writing there were still slaves which may have affected his view of black people but by the time Haraud was writing they had been freed and were gaining better positions in society.

I agree that she did not deserve to die but I believe that even if Desdemona had told the truth about losing the handkerchief Othello would have still killed her. Desdemona's death had nothing to do with her actions but was because Othello was so easily manipulated into being jealous. As Desdemona did nothing Iago said she did she did not deserve to die. (8)

There are many opposing viewpoints on the character Desdemona and each has been influenced by the period of time they lived in and what was happening during that time. There are parts of Othello that can support each of the viewpoints but you need to look at the entire play to judge who Desdemona is. Desdemona is a complex character but from my investigation I have come to believe that she truly loved Othello with all her heart. Her love for Othello meant that she had to sacrifice her father's love which shows true devotion to Othello. If I was to research Desdemona again I would look at how she changed from a brave woman defending her love for Othello to submissively taking Othello's anger to better understand why Desdemona's made her decisions and to see if they were only because of her love.(9)

### **Bibliography [Note the data chart is an extract of the full chart]**

Adams, John Quincy (1864) "Misconceptions of Shakespeare, upon the Stage" in Shakespearean Criticism Vol 4 pgs 223-226

Bartels, Emily. C (1996) "Strategies of submission: Desdemona, the Duchess, and the assertion of desire" in Studies in English Literature Vol 36 Issue 2 p417

Garner, S.N (1976) "Shakespeare's Desdemona " in Shakespearean Criticism Vol. 68 pgs 233-252

Heraud, J.A (1886) "in an extract" in Shakespearean Criticism Vol. 4 pgs 422-424

Shakespeare, William (1993) Othello Longman Literature Shakespeare, Essex

Tiffany, Grace (2008) "The pity of it, Iago!" in Shakespeare Newsletter Vol 58 Issue 1 pg 31

Source	Information related to the Hypothesis:	Evaluation
Tiffany, Grace (2008) "The pity of it, Iago!" in Shakespeare Newsletter Vol 58 Issue 1 pg 31	Othello's and Desdemona's love is based on the pitiableness of stories which are, in a way, performances; Desdemona's pitying response has itself been a sort of performance, as Iago notes: "And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks, she loved them most" (3.3.207-08). Thus the theatricality at the heart of pity enables Iago to stoke Othello's fears of his wife's deceptiveness Othello's stories of his wild adventures, alive with visual detail, have provoked Desdemona's "pity" and love for him,	<u>Reliability</u> Written many published critical essays about Shakespeare and so is a reliable source <u>Usefulness</u> She has a different view on Desdemona and so is useful to my investigation Contradicts my hypothesis by saying Desdemona was not deeply in love with Othello but only pitied him
Garner, S.N (1976) "Shakespeare's Desdemona " in Shakespearean Criticism Vol. 68 pgs 233-252	Desdemona's liveliness, assertiveness, and sensuality are corroborated in her marrying Othello. The crucial fact of her marriage is not that she elopes but that she, a white woman, weds a black man. Though many critics focus on the universality of experience in Othello,12 we cannot forget the play's racial context. Othello's blackness is as important as Shylock's Jewishness, and indeed the play dwells relentlessly upon it.13 Critics speculate about what Othello's marriage to Desdemona means for him but usually fail to consider what it means for her to marry someone so completely an outsider. ... .CONTINUED	<u>Reliability</u> S.N.Garner's Othello criticism has been published into a book and so people must think that his viewpoint is valid <u>Usefulness</u> Has a lot of information about how Desdemona felt which helps me to get a clear idea of Garner's viewpoint Supports my hypothesis by agreeing that Desdemona is deeply in love with Othello
<b>Source 3:18 64</b> Adams, John Quincy (1864) "Misconceptions of Shakespeare, upon the Stage" in Shakespearean Criticism Vol 4 pgs 223-226	His remarks on <i>Othello</i> excerpted below, however, suggest that although Adams sought political equality for black Americans, he was opposed to the concept of interracial marriage. He declares that even though Desdemona is not false to Othello, she betrays both her gender and her social position by wedding a black man, and in so doing becomes "little less than wanton," thus forfeiting our compassion for her suffering and death. Adams concludes that the "great moral lesson" of <i>Othello</i> is that marriage between people of divergent races is an outrage against natural law.] We never can sympathize much with <i>Desdemona</i> or with <i>Lear</i> , because we never can separate them from the estimate that the lady is little less than a wanton, and the old king nothing less than a dotard... CONTINUED.	<u>Reliability</u> Adams was the Sixth president of the United States and was also a Harvard Professor and so is probably a reliable source of what people thought of <u>Othello</u> back then <u>Usefulness</u> Has a very different viewpoint than my other sources which gives me a good range of idea Contradicts my hypothesis by saying that Desdemona deserved to die because she married a black man Viewpoint is very influenced by the time in which he lived. His viewpoint is very centered on the fact that Othello is black.

	Grade Boundary: Low Merit
3.	<p>To achieve this standard at Low Merit, this student has just sufficiently developed an informed and convincing understanding of literature using critical texts.</p> <p>The student develops a hypothesis to frame his investigation: <i>Othello is just the puppet of Iago's cruel plot or whether or not he is equally if not more responsible for Desdemona's murder as Iago is ... Desdemona truly is the innocent victim.</i> (1)</p> <p>The student summarises a number of different critical points of view relating to his hypothesis. The number of critical viewpoints at times interrupts the coherence of the argument. <i>However many critics disagree about whether or not Iago was the main cause of Desdemona's murder and Othello's suicide...</i> (2)</p> <p>Synthesising information from <i>Othello</i> and critical texts, the student expresses his own point of view regarding the hypothesis. <i>I believe it was a combination of both Othello's insecurities and Iago's dark soul that caused Othello's downfall...</i>(3)</p> <p>As the student moves away from their reliance on paraphrasing critics, he begins to show a convincing critical understanding of his hypothesis. <i>Although I understand why Othello believed Iago's carefully, constructed words, I don't agree on how he punished her or with his actions afterwards...</i>(4)</p> <p>The student's data chart (extract included) shows evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing a hypothesis or theory to frame an investigation</li> <li>• selecting critical text(s)</li> <li>• selecting information and evaluating its reliability and usefulness in relation to the investigation.</li> </ul> <p>A detailed bibliography was also completed by the student.</p> <p>In summary the student has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gathered a wide range of critical opinions on the hypothesis</li> <li>• begun to use the critical texts to come to an informed and mostly convincing understanding of how each character played a part in the downfall of Othello and Desdemona</li> <li>• evaluated sources in relation to the hypothesis.</li> </ul> <p>To meet Merit more securely the student could move away from paraphrasing other critics so much in order to further develop the commentary and his own understanding convincingly.</p>

Hypothesis: Othello was the puppet of Iago's cruel plot but he was equally responsible for Desdemona's murder as Iago was. Desdemona was the innocent victim.

### Othello and Desdemona: Innocent Victims or Dictators of their Own Demise

Characters from Shakespeare's *Othello* have been analysed and scrutinised by critics for years since it was first written in 1603. In this particular report I aim to prove, through the study of various critical essays on Othello, whether or not Othello is just the puppet of Iago's cruel plot or whether or not he is equally if not more responsible for Desdemona's murder as Iago is. I also aim to explore whether or not Desdemona truly is the innocent victim. (1)

After my first reading of Shakespeare's *Othello*, I had come to the conclusion that Iago was the main cause of Desdemona's death and Othello's suicide. I believed like a lot of 19th-century critics that "Othello was a noble figure and Iago was the ultimate in evil." (Newton:1991). There is no doubt that Iago's intentions and actions were undeniably evil, his main goal being "to destroy Othello" which he successfully managed to do. He was "determined to reveal that Othello's noble qualities are a sham, by reducing him to being a man eaten up with passion". Iago cleverly convinced Othello that his lieutenant Cassio had become too familiar with his wife Desdemona. To begin with, Othello struggled to believe and defended Iago's allegations against his wife. But very rapidly Iago managed to convince Othello "that appearances can be deceptive" and due to Othello's simple, straight forward and trust worthy nature he failed to come to the logical conclusion that this could also apply to Iago too.

However many critics disagree about whether or not Iago was the main cause of Desdemona's murder and Othello's suicide or whether he was simply the catalyst who brought "forth forces" (Newton: 1991) which already existed within Othello himself, "the essential traitor in the gates". Newton believes both Iago and Othello were "central to the tragedy" and were "jointly responsible for her [Desdemona's] death". However Hugh Macrae Richmond disagrees, and believes "that Iago is the central character in the play *Othello* and that his self awareness is the key dramatic device in the play". Lucille P. Fultz's supports this idea, referring to Iago's "power in discourse" as the "power that ultimately leads to Desdemona's murder and Othello's suicide" due to Iago's "shrewd insight into the desires and fears of others" around him- mainly Othello's. Margaret Randal observes Iago also as a "skilful opportunist who turns situations to his own account" and if it wasn't for his knowledge of his own abilities his "fascination with his own manipulation and control" his deceitful, malicious plot may not have succeeded so well it was his "desire to manipulate and destroy Othello" that ultimately lead to Othello's mental downfall. G.M. Matthews comments on how Othello loses his universal human values of love and loyalty but he loses these values "...once he allows himself to become vulnerable to the irrational, un-human forces, embodied in Iago".

(2)

In [Shakespearean Criticism](#) the author explains that Iago lures Othello into his trap by manipulating the gaps between verbal representation and meaning, this idea is supported also by Fultz she believes "*Othello* offers an expansive view of the ways in which language works against certain speakers and is twisted and perverted in the mouth of a dishonest practitioner". (Fultz: 2004) Iago, through his "consciously selective use of language" manages to "distort reality and manipulate others so that they unwittingly play right into his hands" (ibid) he manifests and feeds on their fears, particularly Othello's.

### **[Due to space restrictions, four of the following paragraphs are not included]**

Desdemona's elopement with Othello, Fultz explains, "provides the grounds on which Iago's vengeance operates" (ibid). ...

G.G Gervinus supports the idea that Othello wouldn't have been so easily manipulated by Iago if it wasn't for "the manner of his union with Desdemona" (Gervinus: 1987) as well as the "earlier circumstances of his life" (ibid) ....

This Gervinus concludes is what left Othello feeling isolated, depreciated and therefore a lot more susceptible to the idea that Desdemona has been unfaithful to him. ...

I believe it was a combination of both Othello's insecurities and Iago's dark soul that caused Othello's downfall. Iago's knowledge of Othello's insecurities about his birth and race helped shape Iago's clever constructed discourse which in turn enabled his evil plot to work so well as he used it to play on Othello's insecurities to unleash the oppressed jealous, possessive and unappreciated monster inside of Othello that he had kept caged and controlled for so long. (3)

Othello “knows himself quite free from the empty motives which urge others to jealousy. In himself he is as incapable of groundless suspicion as of groundless anger” (ibid) and due to the evidence he has been spoon feed by Iago “there is no lack of flammable material.” ...

Although I understand why Othello believed Iago's carefully, constructed words, I don't agree on how he punished her or with his actions afterwards. I agree with Elliot, when he claims that “Othello was cheering himself up” in his final speech from his point of view it was the honourable thing to do. I believe he dishonoured Desdemona, she was ready to take the blame herself, in order to save him from facing the consequences of his actions, but in trying to take the blame of himself, by arguing he did it out of honour not hatred, it seems like he is trying to gain pity from his audience, by trying to prove he was the victim rather than accepting he had done wrong. Although he had fallen victim to the prejudices held against him by the Venetian people, Desdemona had been the exception. She had married him, despite dishonouring her father in the process- she had forgiven him, though he murdered her unjustly. She had committed nothing, but the sin of ignorance, her sheltered life and child like innocence meant she didn't understand how her actions could be misinterpreted and used against her. (4)

But, in conclusion it is very difficult, if not impossible, to pin the blame entirely on one person for the outcome of the play, there were multiple people, circumstances and situations that affected it. Desdemona's naivety, Iago's manipulative and clever discourse, Cassio's character, the simple, straightforward and trustworthy if not ignorant nature of Othello, as well as his relationship with Venetian society. Along with the fact, that Othello and Desdemona had eloped in spite of Desdemona's father's deep disapproval. Because in his eyes he was a foreign Barbarian, and not deserving of his daughter, despite how faithfully, Othello served his home, like it was his own. All these factors happened “in succession, each one more active and of greater weight than the other” (Gervinus: 1987:) Othello was certainly the puppet of Iago's well conceived plot, but his actions because of Iago's manipulation, though understandable, were not completely justified and he is not completely free from blame, nor is the seemingly innocent Desdemona who fell victim to her naivety.

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**Data Chart: [Note the data chart is an extract of the full chart]**

Source	Hypothesis: Othello was the puppet ...	Evaluation
<a href="#">Shakespearean Criticism</a> . Ed. Lynn M. Zott . Vol. 68. Detroit: Gale, 2003. From <i>Literature Resource Center</i> .	Other critics focus on Othello's character and on his relationship with Iago. Arthur M. Eastman (1972), for example, identifies a marked similarity between Othello and Iago in that they both approach the world as ironists. Eastman explains that as ironists, they assert their authority by addressing situations from a position of concealed power. It is this affinity between Othello and Iago, Eastman contends, that allows Iago to manipulate Othello successfully. Derek Cohen (see Further Reading) centers his ...CONTINUED	Supports the idea that Othello, was the puppet of Iago's cruel plot- This source, uses a lot of evidence to support his ideas from various other sources to support his ideas suggesting that the information they give is reasonably reliable CONTINUED
<a href="#">Shakespearean Criticism</a> . Ed. Michelle Lee. Vol. 99. Detroit: Gale, 2006. From <i>Literature Resource Center</i> .	The critic singles out Anthony Cochrane's venomous, spellbinding Iago for special praise in Richmond's engaging presentation. By contrast, Frank L. Rizzo (see Further Reading) remarks that uneven acting--particularly Firdous Bamji's sometimes emotionally absent Moor--in Coonrod's staging muted the overall tragic scope of the play. Nevertheless, the critic admires David Patrick Kelly's Iago who was "so matter of fact, so chillingly low-key that you could understand how none of his victims might see the demi-devil coming." CONTINUED	Supports the idea that Iago's deceitful plot & his "murderous malice" towards Othello successfully caused the possessive and Jealous monster within Othello to rare it's ugly head (which lead to Desdemona's murder and Othello's suicide) CONTINUED  This author also derives a lot of her evidence from other critics, a lot of which studied at university suggesting that the information she has given is quite reliable
Unpinned or Undone?: Desdemona's Critics and the Problem of Sexual Innocence, W. D. Adamson,	Surveys of <b>Othello</b> criticism have for years noted that most of the opinion about Desdemona's moral significance is lamentably polarized: at one extreme are her idolaters, the readers who see her as a desexualized spirit, "ardent with the courage and idealism of a saint" (A. C. Bradley); and at the opposite one, her attackers, including those who disparage her as "little less than a wanton" (President John Quincy Adams) or even as an outright strumpet. <sup>1</sup>	This article, differs from all the other sources as it dominantly focuses on Desdemona, and her part in the play/plot. In the notes of this critical essay, it appears that Adamson has done quite an extensive amount of research to support and create her argument, this suggests that this source is quite reliable and has looked at various points of views to come to an accurate conclusion. CONTINUED

	Grade Boundary: High Achieved
4.	<p>To achieve this standard, this student has developed an informed understanding of literature using critical texts.</p> <p>The student develops a hypothesis or theory to frame an investigation: <i>In William Shakespeare's play 'Othello', critics are divided ... ideas of self-delusion and flawed character.</i> (1)</p> <p>The student coherently summarises the two critical perspectives of Othello's character related to her hypothesis. <i>The first insight ... Desdemona.</i> (2)</p> <p>Student's point of view is established. <i>I believe that Othello was the villain and that this can be seen in his self deluded attempt to justify his killing of Desdemona.</i> (3)</p> <p>The student evaluates the critical viewpoints while building her case that Othello is a villain. <i>... surely we must question what is the point in having this delusion in the first place if Shakespeare wants us to see the real man? Even Eliot himself admits that Othello "...takes in the spectator." which clearly supports the idea that Othello is the villain and not the hero because we are not usually 'taken in' by the hero</i> (3).</p> <p>Supporting evidence from the play is used to develop an informed understanding of Othello's character. <i>"...When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak/ Of one that loved not wisely but too well.</i> (3)</p> <p>The student introduces a contrasting critical perspective. <i>However Bradley agrees with Eliot in showing a completely opposing view to Andrews, that holds Othello as a noble and heroic figure to the very end, who had committed no murder.</i> (4)</p> <p>The student evaluates the critical viewpoint in relation to her own point of view and her hypothesis. <i>Andrews' arguments make more sense as we can clearly see Othello trying to deceive himself up rather than 'manning up' to what he has done.</i> (4)</p> <p>Some points need further development of this point in order to ensure they contribute to the student's hypothesis eg: <i>Eliot adds to the discussion by showing the way Shakespeare grasps ... that on the stage such a clever deceptive device would be impossible to effectively show.</i> (5)</p> <p>At times, critical viewpoints are largely paraphrased rather than used to further the student's understanding. <i>Bradley shows Othello as a noble, romantic hero. ...these feelings give way to others, it is to righteous indignation...</i> (6)</p> <p>At the end, the student returns to her hypothesis. <i>I believe the evidence clearly supports the idea that Othello is indeed the villain, because of his irrevocable self-delusion and flawed character.</i> (7)</p> <p>The student's data chart (extract included) shows evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selecting critical text(s)</li> <li>• selecting information and evaluating its reliability and usefulness in relation to the investigation.</li> </ul> <p>In summary the student has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• created a clear hypothesis and returned to it throughout the report</li> <li>• used the reading from secondary sources to lead to the development of an informed understanding of Othello.</li> </ul> <p>The discussion of Othello's final speech and its implications is convincing. To secure Merit the other points need further explanation, commentary, and details and/or examples in order to secure Merit. The student could also continue developing a</p>

	<p>coherent reading, critique, and interpretation which includes judgements, commentary, and details and/or examples for all points, so that the whole report becomes discerning.</p> <p>The student could also improve her understanding of what the critics are saying. Sometimes the critics are saying the same thing and the student sees them as something different.</p>
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## Iago is not the Villain in the play, Othello is.

In William Shakespeare's play 'Othello', critics are divided about whether Othello is actually the villain or the hero. Bradley, Eliot, Coghill and Andrews provide differing critical views in regard to this issue and their commentary provides us with some additional insight into this issue within this play. This essay will consider this question through the ideas of self-delusion and flawed character. (1)

The first insight into whether Othello is the villain or hero can be viewed through the lens of his self-delusion. Othello's soliloquy, before he dies, "*Soft you; a word or two before you go ...Of one that loved not wisely but too well ...And smote him, thus.*" (5.2.338-356) can be seen as either a noble redemption (Bradley/Eliot pg1) or as the self deluded attempt of a coward to justify his killing of Desdemona (Leavis/Andrews pg1). (2)

I believe that Othello was the villain and that this can be seen in his self deluded attempt to justify his killing of Desdemona as supported by Leavis and Andrews. Although Eliot argues that Shakespeare uses Othello's character to show the "*...terrible exposure of human weakness*" surely we must question what is the point in having this delusion in the first place if Shakespeare wants us to see the real man? Even Eliot himself admits that Othello "*...takes in the spectator.*" (Eliot/Bradley pg1) which clearly supports the idea that Othello is the villain and not the hero because we are not usually 'taken in' by the hero. Another example is Shakespeare's use of the word extenuate, he is saying that Othello sees his guilt as less serious and not needing to be excused, not the words of a hero. "*...When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, Nor set down aught in malice: then must you speak/ Of one that loved not wisely but too well;...*" (5.2.341-344) (3)

However Bradley agrees with Eliot in showing a completely opposing view to Andrews, that holds Othello as a noble and heroic figure to the very end, who had committed no murder. "*But before the end there is again a change. The supposed death of Cassio (v I) satiates the thirst for vengeance. The Othello who enters the bed-chamber with the words, It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul, is not the man of the Fourth Act. The deed he is bound to do is no murder, but a sacrifice. He is to save Desdemona from herself, not in hate but in honour; in honour, and also in love. His anger has passed; a boundless sorrow has taken its place.*" (Bradley/Eliot pg1.) Andrews' arguments make more sense as we can clearly see Othello trying to deceive himself up rather than 'manning up' to what he has done. "*What Othello seems to be doing in making this speech is cheering himself up. He is endeavouring to escape reality, he has ceased to think about Desdemona, and is thinking about himself ... Othello succeeds in turning himself into a pathetic figure, by adopting an aesthetic rather than a moral attitude, dramatizing himself against his environment. He takes in the spectator, but the human motive is primarily to take in himself.*" (Leavis pg1) (4)

Eliot adds to the discussion by showing the way Shakespeare grasps and uses characters imagined or unrealistic conception of themselves in his plays however, Coghill argues that used in this way Shakespeare would be a "*remarkably clumsy dramatis*" and that on the stage such a clever deceptive device would be impossible to effectively show. (5)

Another insight into whether Othello is the villain or hero can be viewed through the lens of his flawed character. I believe that Othello was the villain and that this can be seen in his flawed character as supported by Leavis and Andrews. Othello's famous line, "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them." (1.2.59) has been argued to be seen as both noble and egotistical

Bradley shows Othello as a noble, romantic hero. "*...these feelings give way to others, it is to righteous indignation they give way, not to rage; and, terribly painful as this scene is, there is almost nothing here to diminish the admiration and love which heighten pity.*" (Bradley/Eliot pg1). Whereas Leavis contradicts Bradley's view and points out rather overwhelmingly and convincingly that Othello is flawed "*Othello's self-idealization, his promptness to jealousy and his blindness are shown in their essential relation. The self-idealization is shown as blindness and the nobility as here no longer something real, but the disguise of an obtuse and brutal egotism. Self-pride becomes stupidity, ferocious stupidity, an insane and self-deceiving passion.*" (Leavis pg1.) When Othello realizes his mistake he doesn't learn and grow from it. (6)

William Shakespeare's play 'Othello', has divided critics on the issue of whether Othello is actually the villain or the hero. While Bradley, Eliot, Leavis, Professor Coghill and Andrews provide differing critical

perspectives in regard to this issue, I believe the evidence clearly supports the idea that Othello is indeed the villain, because of his irrevocable self-delusion and flawed character. (7)

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Data evaluation chart [Note the data chart is an extract of the full chart]		
Source	Hypothesis: Iago is not the villain in the play, Othello is.	Evaluation
<b>Source 1:</b> <b>[copy url]</b> <a href="http://year13english.pbworks.com/f/Honest+Othello.doc">http://year13english.pbworks.com/f/Honest+Othello.doc</a>	Michael C. Andrews <i>Studies in English Literature 1500-1900</i> 13, no. 2 (spring 1973): 273-84. The fact that Othello gives two different versions of the history of the fatal handkerchief has, predictably, not passed unnoticed. In his first and more elaborate account (III.iv.53ff.), Othello tells Desdemona that the handkerchief is a love-controlling talisman his mother received from an Egyptian "charmer": ... <b>[Rest of information omitted]</b>	<b>Reliable:</b> Yes, English literature essay. <b>Useful?</b> Yes gives viewpoint similar to own, with evidence and discussion. <b>How the viewpoint supported or contradicted your hypothesis and / or other sources?</b> The viewpoint supported my hypothesis by talking about Othello's relationship with Desdemona and his weakness at the end of his life. This contradicts A.C. Bradley who admires and supports Othello's actions deeming him "Noble". <b>How the viewpoint contrasted with the other in terms of TIME</b> This was written in 1973 which was thriving with social freedom( peace movements / hippy years) as opposed to 1904's strict social constricts
<b>Source 2:</b> <a href="http://web.singnet.com.sg/~yisheng/notes/shakespeare/othello_b.htm">http://web.singnet.com.sg/~yisheng/notes/shakespeare/othello_b.htm</a>	A. C. Bradley. From <i>Shakespearean Tragedy</i> (1904), by A. C. Bradley. ... Othello is, in one sense of the word, by far the most romantic figure among Shakespeare's heroes; and he is so partly from the strange life of war and adventure which he has lived from childhood. He does not belong to our world, and he seems to enter it we know not whence -- almost as if from wonderland. There is something mysterious in his descent from men of royal siege; ... <b>[Rest of information omitted]</b>	<b>Relevance=</b> analysis of Othello's character in favour of Othello being noble and good. <b>Reliable?</b> Yes, well known critic of Othello <b>Useful?</b> Yes, gives contrary viewpoint to my own and to the other source that I can use to compare. <b>How the viewpoint supported or contradicted your hypothesis and / or other sources?</b> Bradley views Othello as a noble, romantic character which contradicts my other source and my hypothesis that state him as a villain. <b>How the viewpoint contrasted with the other in terms of TIME.</b> This was written in 1904 which was a time that had very strict social confines as opposed to the more freelance lifestyle of 1973.

	Grade Boundary: Low Achieved
5.	<p>To achieve this standard, this student has just sufficiently developed an informed understanding of literature critical texts.</p> <p>The student develops a hypothesis or theory to frame an investigation: <i>This warning leads us to see that Iago was a deliberately evil man who wanted to see Othello suffer.</i> (1)</p> <p>A critical viewpoint on Iago's evil nature is identified and put into context. <i>Samuel Taylor Coleridge said that Iago was "A being next to Devil... only not quite Devil... &amp; this Shakespeare has attempted... executed... without disgust, without Scandal.</i> (2)</p> <p>The critical viewpoint is evaluated in terms of its time period. <i>When the concept of The Devil was much more real and people believed that Satan was a real figure...</i> (2)</p> <p>A contrasting critical viewpoint is identified and West's main argument is paraphrased in the rest of the paragraph. <i>Fred West argues that Iago ...Such a limited view of Iago is an injustice to the complexity of his character...</i> (3)</p> <p>The student own viewpoint regarding West's conclusion that Iago is a psychopath is outlined, making the point that Iago does not seem to have a history of psychopathic behaviour. <i>As the play progresses we see that he is also capable of impassive cruelty...</i> (3)</p> <p>Details and examples from the text are identified which support West's viewpoint. <i>In Act 1, Scene 3, Iago manipulates...</i> (4)</p> <p>The student evaluates West's viewpoint. <i>This behaviour is consistent with the psychopathic personality that West describes.</i> (4)</p> <p>After a third critical viewpoint is outlined (Bradley) (5), the three critical perspectives are compared. <i>These three different critics of Iago all agree that Iago is an evil character, a real villain, and that Shakespeare was a master of clever and subtle characterization.</i> (6)</p> <p>The student upholds his hypothesis and reaches an informed understanding of why Iago was an evil man. <i>So in this way he was undoubtedly a deliberately evil man. Coleridge, Bradley and West all had some insights into Iago, but West's argument that Iago fitted the profile of a psychopath and so acted that way makes the most sense to me.</i> (6)</p> <p>The student's data chart (extract included) shows evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selecting critical text(s)</li> <li>• selecting information and evaluating its reliability and usefulness in relation to the investigation.</li> </ul> <p>In summary the student has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identified and coherently synthesised three different critical points of view and related them clearly to their hypothesis</li> <li>• evaluated some of the critical material to form an understanding of their own point of view.</li> <li>• Revisited their conclusion at the end of the report to come to an informed understanding in relation to their hypothesis.</li> </ul> <p>To meet Achievement more securely the student needs to put forward more of his own point of view regarding the critical viewpoints. He needs to show more of his own understanding of the hypothesis rather than relying heavily on quoting and paraphrasing the critical viewpoints.</p>

	<p>The student has expressed a viewpoint, but it would be more successful if he argued the hypothesis more strongly throughout the report.</p> <p>Structurally it would make more sense if it was dealt with chronologically.</p>
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**Hypothesis:** Iago was a deliberately evil man who wanted Othello to suffer.

If there is one thing critics agree on, it is that Shakespeare crafted the character of Iago so skillfully that centuries later, critics still debate what Shakespeare intended this character to portray, and who he is. From Act 1, Scene 1 of Shakespeare's *Othello*, the character, Iago tells us "I am not what I am". This warning leads us to see that Iago was a deliberately evil man who wanted to see Othello suffer. (1)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge said that Iago was "A being next to Devil... only *not* quite Devil... & this Shakespeare has attempted... executed... without disgust, without Scandal!"<sup>1</sup> This viewpoint is classic of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the concept of The Devil was much more real and people believed that Satan was a real figure, instead of an idea. Coleridge is marvelling at the fact Shakespeare could create such an evil figure, like the Devil, but still human. (2)

While Coleridge viewed Iago as a motiveless, malignant, devil-like creature, 20<sup>th</sup> century critic Fred West argues that Iago has all of the psychological traits of a psychopath. West wrote "It is not sufficient to simply drape Iago in allegorical trappings and proclaim him Mister Evil or a Machiavel or a Vice. Such a limited view of Iago is an injustice to the complexity of his character..."<sup>2</sup> West's critical analysis of Iago is psychological in essence, while still connecting to literary criticism. The rise of psychology as an academic profession in the twentieth century has provided literary critics with another way of approaching literary criticism. Iago certainly carries psychopathic traits: he is impulsive, boastful, vain and manipulative; and West draws parallels all the way through his article between clinical diagnosis of psychopaths and quotes from the play, and from Iago, that back it up. As the play progresses we see that he is also capable of impassive cruelty. However before Iago ruins Othello's life, there is no evidence of this happening before. (3)

West argues that as a soldier, Iago was rewarded for such behaviour; in peacetime though there was not the same outlet for these aspects of his character.<sup>3</sup> Using what he thinks of as his superior intellect he then manipulates other people's lives for his own 'sport', and justifies it through what he sees as Othello's slight in promoting Cassio above him. Iago, says West, seeks power and intellectual superiority over others and is willing to do anything to achieve it. In Act 1, Scene 3, Iago manipulates Roderigo into giving him money, which he sees as a form of power, and at the same time striking at Othello through Roderigo's feelings for Desdemona: *Let us be conjunctive against him. If thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport.* Iago professes his hate for Othello to Roderigo, to make Roderigo feel he can trust him, and anticipates pleasure in seeing Othello hurt and humiliated. This behaviour is consistent with the psychopathic personality that West describes. (4)

A.C. Bradley also thinks that Shakespeare's portrayal of Iago as an evil man is exceptionally good: 'Evil has nowhere else been portrayed with such mastery as in the character of Iago.'<sup>4</sup> Bradley thinks that previous images of Iago are wrong in two ways: that Iago was an 'ordinary villain' who acted only out of revenge; or that, like Coleridge's 'motiveless malignity', he was an evil being 'who hates good simply because it is good, and loves evil purely for itself'. He argues that this kind of being was not the human being that Shakespeare meant Iago to be. To Bradley Iago is not a violent man 'but a thoroughly bad, cold man, who is at last tempted to let loose the forces within him, and is at once destroyed.' He thinks that the important question about Iago is 'Why?' and comes to the conclusion that his vanity, love of power, ego and ability to plot combine to bring out the evil in him. He is a monster for doing monstrous things, but he is a *human* monster.<sup>5</sup> Bradley concludes that because Iago's evil is intelligible, able to be somehow understood, it is human in comparison with Coleridge's devilish Iago. (5)

These three different critics of Iago all agree that Iago is an evil character, a real villain, and that Shakespeare was a master of clever and subtle characterization. From their different perspectives of time and viewpoint they come to different conclusions about what kind of evil he embodied, and what drove him to act the way he did. Iago plotted to achieve his goal of making Othello suffer, so much that

<sup>1</sup> <http://shakespeare-navigators.com/othello/motiveless.html>

<sup>2</sup> Fred West, 'Iago the Psychopath', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, v.43, n.2, (May, 1978) pp.27-35, p.27. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3198785>

<sup>3</sup> Fred West, 'Iago the Psychopath', *South Atlantic Bulletin*, v.43, n.2, (May, 1978) pp.27-35, p.31. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3198785>

<sup>4</sup> <http://filebox.vt.edu/users/drad/courses/4166Docs/BradleyOthello1.htm>, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> <http://filebox.vt.edu/users/drad/courses/4166Docs/BradleyOthello1.htm>, p.13.

<sup>6</sup> [http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&inPS=true&prodId=LitRC&userGroupName=per\\_k12&tabId=T001&searchId=R6&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&contentSet=GALILEO%7CH1420007265&docId=GALEIH1420007265&docType=GALE&role=LitRC](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&inPS=true&prodId=LitRC&userGroupName=per_k12&tabId=T001&searchId=R6&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&contentSet=GALILEO%7CH1420007265&docId=GALEIH1420007265&docType=GALE&role=LitRC), *Shakespeare for Students*, 1992, no page numbers shown.

Othello killed himself when he realised that Iago was evil and that Desdemona had always been true to him. So in this way he was undoubtedly a deliberately evil man. Coleridge, Bradley and West all had some insights into Iago, but West's argument that Iago fitted the profile of a psychopath and so acted that way makes the most sense to me. (6)

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<http://filebox.vt.edu/users/drad/courses/4166Docs/BradleyOthelloII.htm>

<http://shakespeare-navigators.com/othello/motiveless.html>

[http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&inPS=true&prodId=LitRC&userGroupName=per\\_k12&tabID=T001&searchId=R6&resultListType=RESULT\\_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&contentSet=GALE%7CH1420007265&&docId=GALE|H1420007265&docType=GALE&role=LitRC](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/retrieve.do?sgHitCountType=None&sort=RELEVANCE&inPS=true&prodId=LitRC&userGroupName=per_k12&tabID=T001&searchId=R6&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&contentSegment=&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&contentSet=GALE%7CH1420007265&&docId=GALE|H1420007265&docType=GALE&role=LitRC) *Shakespeare for Students*, 1992, no page numbers shown.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3198785>

Data Chart: [Note the data chart is an extract of the full chart]		
Source	Hypothesis: Iago was a deliberately evil man who wanted Othello to suffer.	Evaluation
<b>Source 1:</b> <a href="http://filebox.vt.edu/users/drad/courses/4166Docs/BradleyOthelloII.htm">http://filebox.vt.edu/users/drad/courses/4166Docs/BradleyOthelloII.htm</a>	<p>Evil has nowhere else been portrayed with such mastery as in the character of Iago. Richard III., for example, beside being less subtly conceived, is a far greater figure and a less repellent. His physical deformity, separating him from other men, seems to offer some excuse for his egoism.</p> <p>Coleridge, the author of that misleading phrase "motiveless malignity," has some fine remarks on Iago; and .....CONTINUED</p>	<p>This source is useful as it is direct criticism from A.C. Bradley about Iago and how he is evil. The source also talks about other criticisms and compares them to Bradley's own views.</p> <p>The source supports my hypothesis, the views of Bradley are that Iago is evil, but because this source was written early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is a less modern view of how the evil is depicted.</p>
<b>Source 2:</b> <a href="http://shakespeare-navigators.com/othello/motiveless.html">http://shakespeare-navigators.com/othello/motiveless.html</a>	<p>The triumph! again, <i>put money</i> after the effect has been fully produced.--The last Speech, the motive-hunting of motiveless Malignity--how awful! In itself fiendish--while yet he was allowed to bear the divine image, too fiendish for his own steady View.--A being next to Devil--only <i>not</i> quite Devil--&amp; this Shakespeare has attempted--executed--without disgust, without Scandal!</p> <p>Coleridge asserts that Iago's motives (in our sense) were his "keen sense of his intellectual superiority" and his "love of exerting power." And so Iago's malignity is "motiveless" because his motives (in Coleridge's sense) -- being passed over for promotion, his suspicion that Othello is having an affair with his wife, and the suspicion that Cassio is also having an affair with Emilia -- are merely rationalizations.</p>	<p>Although this source is short, it is helpful and reliable because it quotes the critic Coleridge on his famous "motiveless malignity" criticism of Iago. This source is the only one I could find which put Coleridge in his own words.</p> <p>The viewpoint of Coleridge supports my hypothesis in that Iago is evil.</p> <p>Coleridge's criticism was written in 1819, a time when people truly believed in real life devils, and that Iago was one simply because he appeared to have no motive.</p> <p>Coleridge is also commenting on Shakespeare's skill as a writer, to be able to conjure up such a beautifully crafted devil character.</p>
<b>Source 3:</b> <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/3198785">http://www.jstor.org/stable/3198785</a>	<p>IT IS NOT SUFFICIENT to simply drape Iago in allegorical trappings and proclaim him Mister Evil or a Machiavel or a Vice.</p> <p>Such a limited view of Iago is an injustice to the complexity of his character, since Shakespeare's studies in personality are acclaimed by psychologists for their accuracy and profundity. Although the influence of the miracle plays and the later morality plays with their type-characters still lingered in some Elizabethan drama, the ... CONTINUED</p>	<p>Useful source, long with a lot of interesting information and critical opinions from different critics.</p> <p>Reliable source as I got it from a Massey University database.</p> <p>Viewpoint supports my hypothesis that Iago is evil, the evil argued in this source is that Iago is a psychopath, and so enjoys manipulating Othello and others.</p>



	Grade Boundary: High Not Achieved
6.	<p>To achieve this standard, this student has not yet sufficiently developed an informed understanding of literature using critical text(s).</p> <p>Evidence of the student using critical texts is established in the introduction. The student has selected (Wood, Bent) critical texts.</p> <p>The student has developed a hypothesis (Iago's jealousy causes the destruction of others and, in doing so, undermines the respect others have towards him) to frame an investigation. (1)</p> <p>The student identifies a critical point of view regarding Iago's manipulation of Othello. The student then states a point of view "<i>I too believe...</i>" and supports this with evidence from the text. To secure achieved, the student needs to move beyond agreeing with the text to interpreting or developing her own point of view. (2)</p> <p>A critic's view is again highlighted ("<i>... S wood proposes that...</i>") and the student begins to develop her own informed understanding of Iago's character, "<i>My views are that Iago is...</i>" (3)</p> <p>Another critic's point of view is identified. The student agrees with the critic's viewpoint and paraphrases what the critic has said. <i>I believe that Bent is correct and agree with this ...</i> (4)</p> <p>The student's data chart (extract included) shows evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selecting critical text(s)</li> <li>• selecting information and evaluating its reliability and usefulness in relation to the investigation.</li> </ul> <p>In summary the student has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified several critical viewpoints which are related to her hypothesis.</li> <li>• Begun to show her own informed understanding of the hypothesis in relation to the critics.</li> <li>• Used evidence from the primary text to support her understanding of the hypothesis.</li> </ul> <p>To meet Achievement, the student needs to develop her own informed understanding further rather than agreeing with or paraphrasing the critical texts alone. The student begins to show this in the second body paragraph.</p> <p>It would also be useful for the student to return to their original hypothesis more specifically in their conclusion, evaluating its validity.</p>



Iago's jealousy of Othello made him go to great lengths to get what he wanted by not only destroying Othello's life but Desdemona's as well. In doing so Iago's respect that he gained from others was slowly deteriorating. Throughout this essay I will state Iago's overall jealousy of Othello; how and why Iago destroyed Othello's life; and how Iago destroyed Desdemona's life. I will state the views of the following critics; Sam Wood and Geoffrey Bent. I will also state the views of myself on how Iago destroyed both Othello and Desdemona's life. (1)

Iago's jealousy of Othello made him go so far as to destroy both Othello and Desdemona's life. Iago "is fully aware of himself as an improviser and revels in his ability to manipulate his victims". While S. Wood states that "the point I wish to underscore here is that what Greenblatt finds fascinating about Iago is precisely what he calls insupportable in the case of Othello. This would suggest that Iago, in Greenblatt's reading, does not share with Othello a horror of seeing himself as a vacuity whose only possible content and therefore identity can be a fiction. Indeed, for Greenblatt, unlike Othello, Iago knows that an identity that has been fashioned as a story can be unfashioned, refashioned, inscribed anew in a different narrative." I believe that Wood's view of Greenblatt's scenario as a secondary source is a good insight to the types of people that Iago and Othello are. I believe this because Greenblatt seems to know and have a clear understanding of Iago and Othello's relationship. My view on this is within agreement of S. Wood because I too believe that Iago is jealous of Othello to the point where he is consumed by it. "I hate the Moor: And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets He has done my office: I know not if't be true; But I, for mere suspicion in that kind, Will do as if for surety. (1.3.12)." (2)

Through Iago's cunning and deceitful moves, he not only destroyed Othello's love life, but his personal and everyday life also. While S. Wood proposes that "Iago wants to put Othello and others in a similar position to his own while considering himself better than they." My views are that Iago is a jealous and big headed man, who has a huge ego and wants everything his way. He will go to great lengths to get it his way and intimidate others into thinking he is better than them. Iago was so jealous of Othello and his life that he wanted Othello to suffer. Iago went so far as to make Othello "A man, who in spirit of jealous rage destroys what he loves best in the entire world." This shows that jealousy can take over the mind and manipulates others to manipulate. (3)

Iago unintentionally destroyed Desdemona's life because he was too busy trying to manipulate Othello into doing what he wanted. While G. Bent says that "Recently wed, Othello's seemingly happy relationship with his wife Desdemona disintegrates due to the deceitful machinations of Iago, who convinces his commander that Desdemona has been having a sexual affair with his lieutenant Cassio." I believe that Bent is correct and agree with this as Othello had a happy relationship with Desdemona until Iago planted evil thoughts into Othello's mind. Iago uses Desdemona's good nature against her to make Othello think she has been disloyal. (4)

To conclude, Iago's jealousy of Othello made him go to great lengths to get what he wanted by not only destroying Othello's life but Desdemona's as well. The main points I have proclaimed are Iago's overall jealousy of Othello; how and why Iago destroyed Othello's life; and how Iago destroyed Desdemona's life. I have had these views throughout my essay and shown critics; Sam Wood and Geoffrey Bent point of views and my own.

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Data evaluation chart [Note the data chart is an extract of the full chart]		
Source	Hypothesis: Iago's jealousy of Othello made him go to great lengths to get what he wanted, by destroying not only Othello's life, but Desdemona's as well.	Evaluation
<b>Source 1:</b> <a href="http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1420066989&amp;v=2.1&amp;u=per_k12&amp;it=r&amp;p=LitRC&amp;sw=w">http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CH1420066989&amp;v=2.1&amp;u=per_k12&amp;it=r&amp;p=LitRC&amp;sw=w</a>	Recently wed, Othello's seemingly happy relationship with his wife Desdemona disintegrates due to the deceitful machinations of Iago, who convinces his commander that Desdemona has been having a sexual affair with his lieutenant Cassio. ... <b>[Rest of information omitted]</b>	This is relevant and helps me show how Iago worked to manipulate their lives, by undermining and playing each other. That was a pretty great length to go.
<b>Source 2:</b> <a href="http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA212261030&amp;v=2.1&amp;u=per_k12&amp;it=r&amp;p=LitRC&amp;sw=w">http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA212261030&amp;v=2.1&amp;u=per_k12&amp;it=r&amp;p=LitRC&amp;sw=w</a>	Iago is fully aware of himself as an improviser and revels in his ability to manipulate his victims. Such an approach risks stripping Iago of his humanity, and presents him as an improviser who "revels in his ability to ... <b>[Rest of information omitted]</b>	This is all relevant and helpful. It shows how evil Iago can be and will help me show his jealousy and manipulation. He knows his ability to manipulate.