

Worksheet 8 – Act 2, Scene 1: Welcome to Cyprus

Review: Lecture 7

✓ In Act 1, Scene 3 what does Iago say he thinks his wife, Emilia, has done?

Recall: Lecture 8

Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. How does Iago describe his wife to Cassio?
2. How does Desdemona describe her feelings when she is waiting for Othello to arrive in Cyprus?
3. What happens in the scene between Desdemona and Cassio that makes Iago decide to trick Othello?

Analysis

4. What does Iago's conversation with Desdemona and Emilia tell us about his character? What does he feel about:
 - a) his wife? (103-11)
 - b) women in general? (112-115)
 - c) Desdemona? (128-33)
5. Make a table of the contrasts that Shakespeare makes between Cassio and Iago's attitudes to women in this scene. *The first has been done for you.*

Iago	Cassio
(To Desdemona) 'I am nothing, if not critical' – Iago implies he cannot say anything positive about Desdemona	(Of Desdemona) 'a maid/ That paragons description' – Cassio says that Desdemona is so perfect she cannot be described
...	...

Evaluation

6. Research attitudes to women in both 16th century London and Venice. Make notes on the following topics:
 - a) Attitudes to clandestine marriages
 - b) Ideas around the behaviour of wives
 - c) The role of courtesans in Venice
7. To what extent do you think the misogyny in Act 3, Scene 1 is simply a product of the time period *Othello* was written in? Is Shakespeare making a conscious point with Iago's misogyny?

Glossary

- **Errant** – straying from the expected course or standards; seeking adventure.
- **Paragon** – a person who is the perfect example of a particular quality
e.g. a paragon of beauty
- **Shrew** – a small animal akin to a mouse; a bad-tempered and assertive woman.
- **Slanderer** – someone who spreads lies to damage another person's reputation.
- **Misogynistic** – showing a hatred of women.
- **Liberal** – giving generously.