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**Cambridge School
Shakespeare**

OTHELLO



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Edited by Jane Coles
Series editors: Richard Andrews and Vicki Wienand
Founding editor: Rex Gibson

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Introduction

This *Othello* is part of the **Cambridge School Shakespeare** series. Like every other play in the series, it has been specially prepared to help all students in schools and colleges.

The **Cambridge School Shakespeare** *Othello* aims to be different. It invites you to lift the words from the page and to bring the play to life in your classroom, hall or drama studio. Through enjoyable and focused activities, you will increase your understanding of the play. Actors have created their different interpretations of the play over the centuries. Similarly, you are invited to make up your own mind about *Othello*, rather than having someone else's interpretation handed down to you.

Cambridge School Shakespeare does not offer you a cut-down or simplified version of the play. This is Shakespeare's language, filled with imaginative possibilities. You will find on every left-hand page: a summary of the action, an explanation of unfamiliar words, and a choice of activities on Shakespeare's stagecraft, characters, themes and language.

Between each act and in the pages at the end of the play, you will find notes, illustrations and activities. These will help to encourage reflection after every act and give you insights into the background and context of the play as a whole.

This edition will be of value to you whether you are studying for an examination, reading for pleasure or thinking of putting on the play to entertain others. You can work on the activities on your own or in groups. Many of the activities suggest a particular group size, but don't be afraid to make up larger or smaller groups to suit your own purposes. Please don't think you have to do every activity: choose those that will help you most.

Although you are invited to treat *Othello* as a play, you don't need special dramatic or theatrical skills to do the activities. By choosing your activities, and by exploring and experimenting, you can make your own interpretations of Shakespeare's language, characters and stories.

Whatever you do, remember that Shakespeare wrote his plays to be acted, watched and enjoyed.

Rex Gibson

Founding editor

This new edition contains more photographs, more diversity and more supporting material than previous editions, whilst remaining true to Rex's original vision. Specifically, it contains more activities and commentary on stagecraft and writing about Shakespeare, to reflect contemporary interest. The glossary has been enlarged too. Finally, this edition aims to reflect the best teaching and learning possible, and to represent not only Shakespeare through the ages, but also the relevance and excitement of Shakespeare today.

Richard Andrews and Vicki Wienand

Series editors

This edition of *Othello* uses the text of the play established by Norman Sanders in **The New Cambridge Shakespeare**.

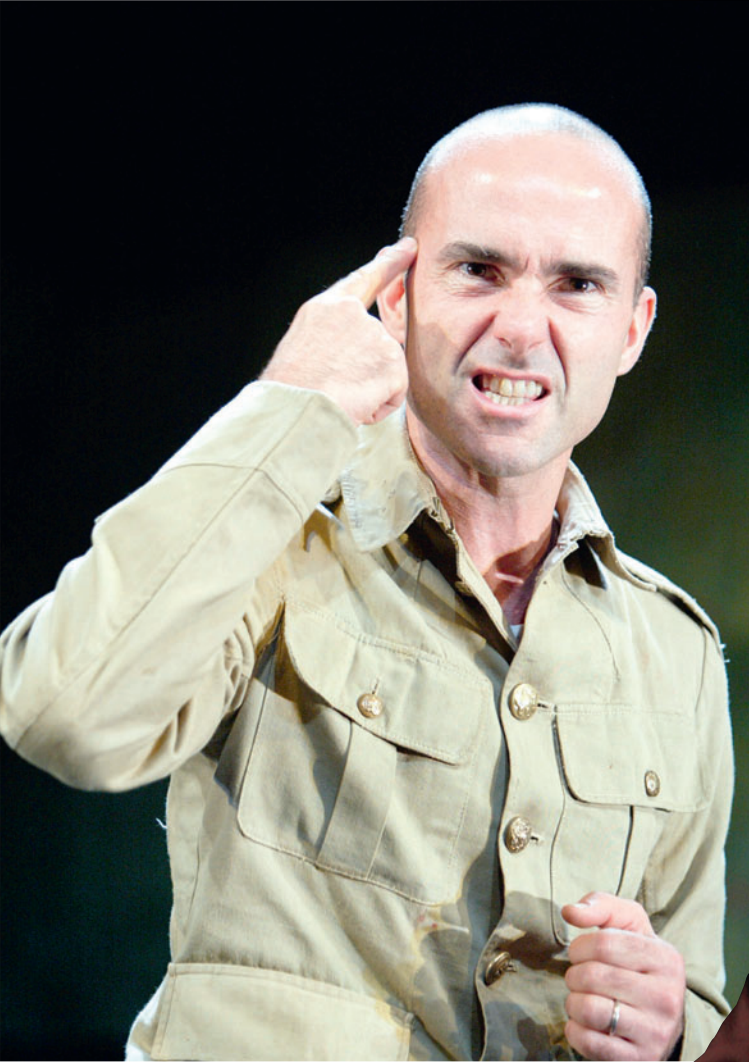
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Othello tells the story of a black army general who has secretly married the white daughter of a leading politician. Will their marriage survive in the face of racism, jealousy and a struggle for power?



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▲ Othello has no idea that his trusted ensign (standard-bearer), Iago, is plotting against him. Iago says he is angry that Othello has promoted his younger colleague Cassio to the rank of lieutenant instead of him, but we never know exactly why Iago hates Othello so much.

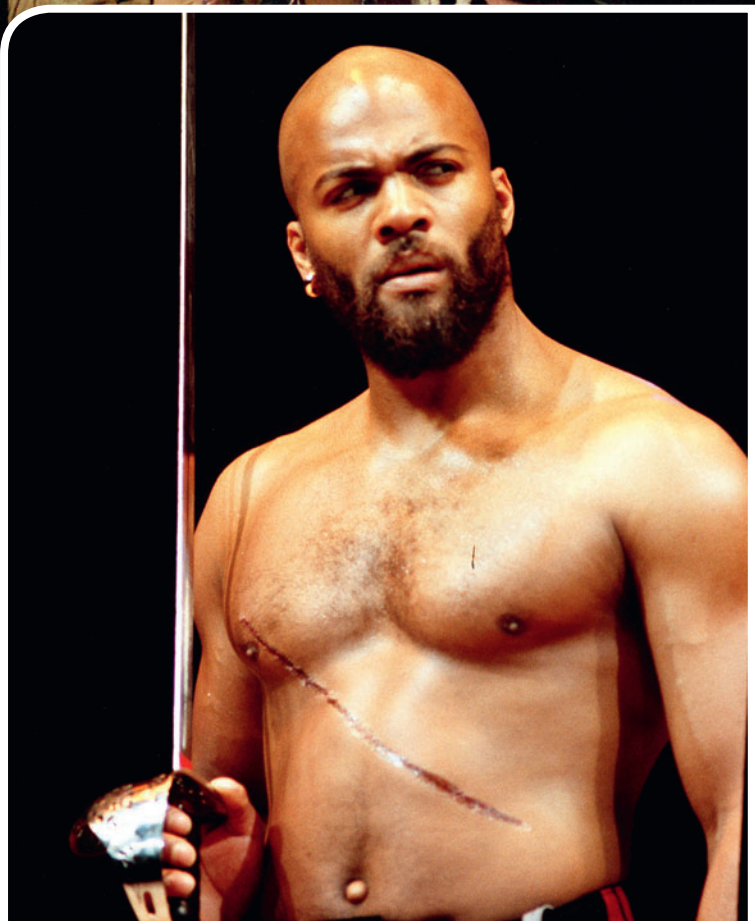
► Iago enlists the help of a local gentleman, Roderigo, to stir up trouble for Othello and Desdemona. They tell Desdemona's father about the secret marriage, and spread racist lies.

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▲ Meanwhile, a Turkish fleet threatens the island of Cyprus, and Othello is sent to command the Venetian forces.

► Othello is hailed as a 'noble and valiant general!' A terrible storm scatters and destroys the Turkish invasion fleet, and Othello lands safely in Cyprus.



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Othello is reunited with Desdemona, and he takes up official duties as commander of the occupying forces in Cyprus.



Othello is unaware that Iago is watching their every move. He plans to destroy Othello by suggesting that Desdemona is having an affair with the handsome Cassio.



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Iago tricks Cassio into getting drunk at a barracks party. After Cassio is involved in a drunken brawl, Othello dismisses him from office and promotes Iago in his place.



Meanwhile, Iago tells his wife Emilia to steal Desdemona's handkerchief – an antique love token given to her as a wedding gift by Othello. Iago later places it in Cassio's lodgings, as supposed evidence of Desdemona's adultery.



▲ Iago continues to whisper poisonous lies, rousing Othello's jealousy and convincing him that Desdemona is unfaithful.

◀ All the while, Iago pretends to be Desdemona's friend and confidant, maintaining his 'honest Iago' façade.

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► Eventually, Iago's lies and tricks move Othello to a jealous rage: 'jealousy: / It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock / The meat it feeds on'.

▼ Othello attacks Desdemona, refusing to listen to reason.





▲ Only after he has killed Desdemona does Othello discover the truth about her innocence. Grief-stricken and full of remorse, Othello kills himself. Iago is arrested.