

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 3



Key Passage

Iago: I have profess'd me thy friend, and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness. I could never better stead thee than now. Put money in thy purse; follow thou the wars; defeat thy favor with an usurp'd beard. I say put money in thy purse. It cannot be long that Desdemona should continue her love to the Moor—put money in thy purse—nor he his to her.

Writing Prompt

In a one-page paper, analyze the monologue Iago makes in this section. **Use narrative techniques such as dialogue to explain why his small speech is so effective. What does the phrase “put money in thy purse” add to the section? How does Shakespeare use pacing, description, and reflection to move this scene move the plot forward? What type of tone does it set? Does it make you want to find out what happens next?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 4



Key Passage, p. 68

“Later that night, Iago manages to get Cassio to take one drink too many. After Cassio staggers out, Iago remarks to Montano, the ex-governor, that it’s a pity Cassio is often like this” (p. 68).

Writing Prompt

In this section, Cassio experiences peer pressure and ends up drinking too much. **Write a narrative about this situation using well-chosen details and well structured event sequences. What happened to you? Who was involved? Use precise words and phrases explaining what happened. How did you feel when you realized you had been manipulated? Write a concluding statement showing what you learned from this experience.**

Once you have completed a draft, consider sharing your writing online – through a blog or social media. Be willing to receive feedback from your teachers and peers to make the piece as good as possible before posting it online.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 5



Key Passage, p. 71

“Desdemona mentions that she would like Othello and Cassio to be friends again ‘for the love I bear to Cassio.’ Othello hits her. Everybody gasps” (p. 71).

Writing Prompt

Desdemona tries to get Othello and Cassio to be friends again. Othello remembers Iago’s words instead of listening to her. He is jealous and reacts harshly.

How do you think Desdemona is feeling? She thought she was doing the right thing by trying to bring her husband and his friend back together. Instead of him being happy, he strikes her. **Write a narrative drawing evidence from the literature to support your opinion about how she is feeling. Use a combination of reflection and research in your writing.**

Next, think about a time that you thought you were doing the right thing, others thought you were wrong, and everything you said just got you deeper and deeper in trouble. It may have been with friends, your parents, a teacher, or PO.

Write about a time you were in a similar situation as Desdemona. What were you doing that you thought was right? Who was involved? **How do you think your actions or inactions were perceived as being wrong, when you thought they were right? Use well chosen details and well structured event sequences to explain the situation. What could you have done to communicate your actions better to others? How did the situation resolve itself?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 6



Key Passage, p. 9

“Iago: O, sir content you. I follow him to serve my turn upon him
We cannot be truly followed. Your shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave” (p. 9).

Writing Prompt

Based on the key passage, **write one page explaining why Iago and Roderigo seem to resent Othello. Use narrative techniques and well-chosen details to introduce a point of view and smooth progression of events. Provide evidence from the text showing problems, situations, observations and multiple points of view supporting your claim. Make sure the reader is well oriented with the characters; present your argument within a smooth progression of events.**

In addition to the write up, be sure to fill out your Comparison Worksheet.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 7



Key Passage, p. 77-79

"Iago: Sir, He's rash and very sudden in choler, and haply may strike at you. Provoke him that he may, for even out of that will I cause these of Cyprus to mutiny, whose qualification shall come into no true taste again but by the displanting of Cassio. So shall you have a shorter journey to your desires by the means I shall then have to prefer them; and the impediment most profitably removed without the which there were no expectation of our prosperity.

Roderigo: I will do this if you can bring it to any opportunity" (p. 77-79).

Writing Prompt

We could blame everything that is going to happen in the play on Iago, but really the others must share responsibility for their own actions. What advice would you give Roderigo and Cassio if you could, to help them avoid the trouble that is headed their way?

In a one-page paper, **write what you think Iago has in store for Cassio. Use precise words and details explaining why Roderigo might be willing to go along with this plan. What experiences and events lead you to believe this? Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed from this scene.**

As a class, work together to think of ways to share your writing online. Consider publishing this essay on a blog, tumblers or wordpress.

In addition to this assignment, be sure to fill out your Comparison Worksheet.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 8



Key Passage, p. 97

“Othello: I know, Iago,
Thy honesty and thy love doth mince this matter,
Making it light to Cassio. Cassio, I love thee;
But never more be officer of mine” (p. 97).

Writing Prompt

Iago is quite a strategist. By using others, he has managed to move Cassio out of favor and to fill the spot of Lieutenant with himself. He has done this without letting on to anyone (except the reader or the audience) that he is plotting and deceiving.

Pretend you are a reporter for the *Cyprus Daily News*, unknowledgeable of the truth as any other character in the play. **Write a story including details and event sequences about the disturbance last night. Pretend that the only person you interviewed was Montano. Draw evidence from the text to support your analysis. Are there other works in literature that Montano might reference in his interview?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 9



Key Passage, p. 113

Cassio: Why no, the day had broke
Before we parted. I have made bold, Iago,
To send in to your wife; My suit to her
Is that she will to virtuous Desdemona
Procure me some access.

Iago: I'll send her to you presently,
And I'll devise a means to draw the Moor
Out of the way that your converse and business
May be more free.

Cassio: I humbly thank you for it.
I never knew
A Florentine more kind and honest" (p. 113).

Writing Prompt

In one sitting, **write a narrative argument about how Cassio is being further set up. Write the document as if it were to be presented as evidence in court. Use effective details and well-structured event sequences to back up your claim. What reasoning would you give to support your argument? Are there any connections you can draw between U.S. texts and legal reasoning from history lessons?**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 10



Key Passage, p. 141

Iago: Why, how now, general? No more of that!

Othello: Avaunt! Begone! Thou hast set me on the rack I swear 'tis better to be much abused. Than but to know a little" (p. 141).

Writing Prompt

Write a paragraph narrating what Othello means by the idiom, "Thou hast set me on the rack." Use well-chosen detail and structured event sequences from the story, back up your claims.

After completing the first paragraph, write another paragraph showing how Othello has changed throughout the course of the play. How much of the change is due to Iago's influence? Be sure to engage the reader by showing the problem, its significance, and progression of events.

Be sure to fill out your Comparison Worksheet.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 11



Key Passage, p. 157

“Othello: That’s a fault. That handkerchief
 Did an Egyptian to my mother give.
 She was a charmer, and could almost read
 The thoughts of people. She told her while she kept it,
 ‘Twould make her amiable and subdue my father
 Entirely to her love. But if she lost it
 Or made a gift of it, my father’s eye
 Should hold her loathed, and his spirits should hunt
 After new fancies. She dying, gave it me,
 And bid me, when my fate would have me wived,
 To give it her. I did so; and take heed on’t
 Make it a darling like your precious eye.
 To lose’t or give’t away were such perdition
 As nothing else could match” (p. 157).

Writing Prompt

In this scene, the missing handkerchief seeks to verify Othello’s suspicions and to weaken Desdemona’s case for innocence. **In a two-page paper, compare their relationship now to their relationship in ACT I and II. What did their relationship used to be based on? What is it based on now? Be sure to use narrative techniques such as dialogue and description to back up your analysis.**

Show how the plot lines have developed based on events and characters. Demonstrate the sequence of events that have led to mystery, suspense and growth resulting in this scene.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 12



Key Passage, p. 181

“Bianca: Let the devil and his dam haunt you! What did you mean by that same handkerchief you gave me even now? I was a fine fool to take it! I must take out the work? A likely piece of work, that you should find it in your chamber and know not who left it there! This is some minx’s token, and I must take out the work! There, give it your hobbyhorse. Wheresoever you had it, I’ll take out no work on’t” (p. 181).

Writing Prompt

Using precise words and phrases, **write a narrative paragraph that shows how jumping to conclusions can get you into trouble. Use the example of Cassio and at least one more from this scene to make your case. Shape your piece as an argument, one that reflects information presented in the narrative. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed or resolved over the course of the narrative. Include how Cassio’s actions impacted others.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 13



Key Passage, p. 209

"Iago: I grant indeed it hath not appeared, and your suspicion is not without wit and judgment. But, Roderigo, it thou hast that in thee indeed which I have greater reason to believe now than ever – I mean purpose, courage and valor – This night show it. If thou the next night following enjoy Desdemona, take me from this world with treachery and devise engines for my life" (p. 209).

Writing Prompt

Write a paragraph comparing Roderigo and Othello. How are they similar? How are they different? Use literary text from this scene as well as information from other scenes to support your analysis and reflection.

Once completed, work with your teacher to consider examples from other works of American literature that have parallels to *Othello*. Are there pieces of writing that use similar characters or plots?

Be sure to fill out your Comparison Worksheet.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 14



Key Passage, p. 213

“Desdemona: My mother had a maid called Barbary.
She was in love, and he she loved proved mad
And did forsake her. She had a song of willow,
An old thing ‘twas, but it expressed her fortune,
And she died singing it. That song tonight
Will not go from my mind. I have much to do,
But to go hang my head all at one side
And sing it like poor Barbary. Prithee, dispatch” (p. 213).

Writing Prompt

Desdemona has been accused of something she did not do, and no one will listen to her. **Using evidence from the text, write one page explaining the details of her situation. Imagine how she must feel. Then attempt to provide a solution for her troubles. Draw information from the text to support analysis and reflection. What should she do next?**

If possible, work with your teacher to reference additional pieces of American literature that show women in similar roles. Are women less likely to have authority? Is that right?

Be sure to fill out your Comparison Worksheet.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 15



Key Passage, p. 223-225

“Iago: I have rubbed this young quat almost to the sense
 And, He grows angry. Now whether he kills Cassio,
 Or Cassio kill him, or each do kill each other,
 Every way makes my gain. Live Roderigo,
 He calls me to a restitution large
 Of gold and jewels that I bobbed from him
 As gifts to Desdemona.
 It must not be. If Cassio do remain,
 He hath a daily beauty in his life
 That makes me ugly. And besides the Moor
 May unfold me to him. There stand I in much peril
 No, he must die. (Be’t) so. I (hear) him coming” (p. 223-5).

Writing Prompt

In one sitting, **write a page in modern English stating exactly what Iago stands to gain from the murder of these two gentlemen. Use premises, purposes and arguments supported by the text.**

For a second writing task spanning two sittings, **discuss the ending of the play. How might it change if either Roderigo or Cassio were to figure out in time that they were being manipulated. Use the first writing period to write and the second period to revise and polish your piece.**

Be sure to fill out your Comparison Worksheet.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 16



Key Passage, p. 247

"Othello: She was false as water.

Emilia: Tho art rash as fire to say
That she was false. O she was heavenly true!"
(p. 247)

Writing Prompt

A simile is a figure of speech that compares two things using the words "like" or "as." Look at the two similes from today's reading and then **write a piece reflecting on the comparisons. Use well-chosen details and event sequences to show how the comparisons are effective.**

Use descriptions of details and technique in your observations. Then evaluate which, if either, statement holds any truth to it. In a follow up paragraph, further explain the context of the similes. Engage your reader with a point of view, and writing on the significance of this chapter.

Be sure to fill out your Comparison Worksheet.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 17



Key Passage, p. 263

“Othello: Soft you. A word or two before you go.
 I have done the state some service, and they know ‘t.
 No more of that. I pray you in your letters,
 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;
 Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
 Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
 Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away
 Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
 Albeit unused to the melting mood,
 Drops tears as fast as the Arabian Trees
 Their medicinable gum. Set you down this” (p. 263).

Writing Prompt

In this scene, Othello is pleading with those present to see to it that his actions are understood within the context of the events that took place. **Write a paragraph pretending you are Cassio, now general in charge of Cyprus. Use narrative techniques and dialogue to explain to the Governor of Venice precisely and concisely how it came to be that Othello killed both Desdemona and himself. Talk about specific characters and the details that they bring to the scene.** In your explanation use experiences and events to back up statements. Build a coherent whole toward a particular tone and outcome.

Be sure to fill out your Comparison Worksheet.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 18



Key Passage, p. 73

“Othello isn’t quite defeated. He pulls out a dagger and, proclaiming himself one who loved not wisely but too well, kills himself. His body falls onto the bed, across Desdemona and Emilia. Cassio says he suspected Othello would do something like this because he was ‘great of heart.’ The play ends” (p. 73).

Writing Prompt

In the above passage, Othello takes his own life, falling on the bed next to the bodies of Desdemona and Emilia. Could Othello have prevented this tragedy?

In one sitting, **write a paragraph that explains how Othello could have used fortitude to prevent this tragedy. Give details and explain what tools he could have used to moderate his impulses.**

In a second period of two sittings, **prepare the premises, purposes and arguments in your writing as if it were to be presented in court.**

When you are finished with your writing prompt, take the quiz on page 74.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Othello, Day 19



Othello by William Shakespeare Suggestions for Final Essay

Task: Write a response essay that investigates the development of theme and character across acts.

Directions:

1. Review your text comparison worksheet.
2. Choose from the themes you have kept track of: jealousy or racism. Then decide which two characters you can use to best demonstrate the development of the theme over time.
3. Write a clear, concise, precise thesis statement.
4. Write an introduction that includes a brief discussion of the theme and your thesis statement.
5. Complete the body of your essay so that each paragraph demonstrates the further development of your thesis. Each paragraph should include evidence from character's thoughts or actions to justify your thesis. You will want to use the text comparison worksheet to help you explore the development of characters across acts.
6. Write a conclusion that sums up your arguments. It should remind the reader how the characters of the play relate to the theme you have chosen. It should restate your thesis.
7. Spell-check it. Save it. Print it. Trade with a peer.
8. Complete the following statements:
 - a. The thesis of this essay is....
 - b. I would like more explanation as to how _____ relates to the thesis.
 - c. I would like clarification on...
9. Revise. Save. Print. Place in your portfolio.