



## OTHELLO BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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**Abstract:** In this article you can get a complete and brief overview of William Shakespeare's "Othello". This article is easy and understandable to read.

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### INTRODUCTION

Early Elizabethan Europe is portrayed in a dramatic yet realistic way in William Shakespeare's well-known play "Othello." Racist stigma, class inequality, and misogyny were pervasive obstacles in Elizabethan communities. Because of the color of their skin, people of African descent were perceived as criminals and thugs; women were characterized by rigid, inaccurate gender stereotypes; and socioeconomic class created divisions that rendered people helpless. Shakespeare creates a society in the play that aims to faithfully imitate the attitudes and customs that dominated Elizabethan society. But he also challenges these societal beliefs through the deeds of the portrayed characters.

### METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH MATERIALS

Shakespeare was a poet and playwright who was regarded as being "ahead of his time" because he consistently questioned the damaging ideas and opinions that the majority of people held. Shakespeare criticizes the ingrained prejudices in society in his play by depicting African ethnic minority and women. In a society riven by racism, chauvinism, and inequality, he examines the ideas of social justice and feminism. Shakespeare's play addresses significant contemporary societal issues as well as historical issues that are still relevant today. Because women were seen as men's subordinates, misogyny and the denigration of women were widespread during the Elizabethan period. Men, on the other hand, maintained high social prestige and were seen as strong, powerful leaders. On the other hand, women were seen as helpless and feeble damsels. Even to a certain degree, women were detested and mistreated, as demonstrated by the portrayal of Iago, Othello's companion whose



resentment and envy poison his psyche. "[Women] are pictures out of door, bells in your parlors, wild-cats in your kitchens, saints in your injuries, devils being offended, players in your housewifery, and housewives in your beds," Iago tells his wife Emilia in Act 2 Scene 1. This demonstrates Iago's stereotyped and discriminatory attitude of women, which sees them as nothing more than irritable, inept objects whose sole purpose is to appease their husbands. Women were denied their own level of autonomy and freedom since they were expected to blindly follow their husbands' and fathers' instructions. Desdemona's father Brabantio too displays this same view of women as man's property. Iago and his accomplice Roderigo try to wake Brabantio in the middle of the night and inform him that Desdemona has left the house in the play's opening scene. In the darkness of night, Iago exclaims, "What, ho, Brabantio! Burglars! Burglars! Pay attention to your residence, your child, and your luggage! One of the best examples of objectification is the declaration made by criminals that they are "stealing" Brabantio's daughter, as if she were a property that could be taken rather than a person with free will. This feeling is echoed in Brabantio's reply, when he exclaims, "Oh, god, how got she out? Alas for blood treason! Dads, stop putting your faith in your daughters' intelligence based solely on their behavior. In depriving Desdemona of the freedom and autonomy she so richly deserves, he makes clear in this sentence that he wants complete control over her behavior. During the Elizabethan period, women were viewed and treated in a way that was deeply rooted in society. For example, men would lock their daughters in their homes, preventing them from ever leaving, and women would be dehumanized and treated more like objects than like free-thinking, autonomous individuals. A culture like this is the epitome of patriarchy. Shakespeare's Othello masterfully captures this pervasive social stigma against women. But he also looks at feminist ideas about gender equality and female empowerment. Act 4 Scene 3 features Emilia, Iago's wife, who talks about these ideas with Desdemona on how wives are mistreated by their husbands. Emilia was verbally humiliated and treated with contempt. "Let husbands know their wives have sense like them," she says. Like spouses, they have senses of smell, sight, and taste for both sweet and sour foods. In discussing the oppression of women in society, this remark compares and contrasts the sexes and asserts that women have the same feelings, wants, and intelligence as men. Shakespeare examines the world through the eyes of women, a downtrodden group living in a patriarchal society that is entirely controlled by men, by adding this exchange of dialogue. In addition to humanizing the female characters, this sequence demonstrates to the viewer that women are sentient creatures with feelings who



should be treated fairly rather as cold, heartless stones. In this play, Desdemona demonstrates bravery and strength as well. She resists her father's authority and decides to wed Othello, her real love, despite strong criticism. To her father, Desdemona says, "You are the lord of duty." I am your daughter, here. Here is my spouse, though. And just as my mother treated you with such responsibility, putting you ahead of her father, so much I challenge that I may profess to be obliged to the Moor, my lord," defying his authority and coming to her own autonomous conclusion. The image of Desdemona and Emilia confronts the underlying biases and ideas of society because such courage and strength were uncommon among women in Elizabethan times, when they were subjected to systemic patriarchal oppression. Shakespeare strives to analyze and critique the mechanisms of a regressive and unjust society, and his examination of these ideas of gender equality demonstrates his progressive thought. The people who lived in Shakespeare's day likewise harbored disgusting and discriminatory beliefs about people who were not European in origin. Because of the color of their skin, people of African heritage were seen as inferior to Caucasians and as beasts. Similar to Elizabethan ladies, those with dark skin were dehumanized and subjected to social inequality. Othello, an African-American man living in a mostly European culture, is one victim of this kind of discrimination. Iago exhibits racist feeling when he tries to get retribution after learning that he was not chosen to be Othello's lieutenant. Iago wakes Brabantio in the middle of the night once more in the play's opening scene, telling him that "an old black ram is tupping your white ewe." Desdemona, Brabantio's daughter, is the white ewe in this instance, while the black ram is none other than Othello, the black man. He makes use of the negative symbolism of the black ram, which is something that is characterized as deviant or disreputable. This infuriates Brabantio because he fears that Othello, the repulsive black ram, would take his pristine, lovely "ewe." This is just one more instance of how women and people of African descent are being dehumanized. Iago uses the phrase "sheep were the property of farmers" to rob Othello and Desdemona of their humanity.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the modern period, the phrase "sheep" is also frequently used to characterize those who follow popular opinion and lack independent thought, further dehumanizing and disparaging both Othello and Desdemona. Desdemona has been lost to the "gross clasps of the lascivious Moor," according to Iago. In saying this, Iago dehumanizes Othello by painting him as a rough, lusty, and malevolent figure who is robbing Desdemona of her innocence and purity. Even more, Brabantio



claims that Desdemona would be terrified of Othello and other African men because "[Desdemona], in spite of nature, of years, of country, credit, every thing, to fall in love with what she feared to look on!" This specific quote from Brabantio also demonstrates the stigma that existed throughout the Elizabethan period regarding interracial marriage. The play's opening scene effectively captures the stereotype held by society about African Americans: that they are evil thugs and truants who don't reflect humanity. The dialog between Iago and Brabantio supports this systematic abuse and deception of Black people in Elizabethan times. Shakespeare uses the thoughts and deeds of several characters in the play to illustrate how pervasive racism was in Elizabethan culture. Through the play's storyline, he also opposes and confronts these feelings, challenging the social norms of the day and stimulating thought. The play's most notable example of Othello's resistance to such racially discriminatory societal prejudice is his position in Venetian society. The Duke of Venice promoted Othello to the honorable and prestigious position of general of the city's armed forces. Subsequent to receiving word that the Turks were deploying a fleet to Cyprus, the Duke declares, "Valiant Othello, we must immediately deploy you against the Ottoman enemy." The foundation of the Venetian army was honor, bravery, and prestige. One would have to be well-respected for their contributions to society and the military in order to be chosen general. Shakespeare's opposition against racial stigma and discrimination is best illustrated by the character of Othello, an African man. Othello is a representation of a brave, honorable, and well-respected black guy. Black people were typically portrayed in Elizabethan times as nasty criminals and thugs. Black people were even thought of as subhuman during this period. Shakespeare's play, however, features an African man as the protagonist, portraying him as a brave, perceptive, and moral person. He subverts popular assumptions about racial minorities in society by portraying the black man in this way. Shakespeare goes so far as to claim, via The Duke's remarks, that personality is not reflected in hue. "And, noble signior, If virtue no delighted beauty lack, your son-in-law is far more fair than black," the Duke says to Brabantio in Act 1 Scene 3. This employs the same symbolism that Iago previously employed, associating the color white, or in this instance, "fair," with purity and beauty and the color black with malevolence. Through his remarks, The Duke is implying that Othello's heart and spirit are genuinely pure and lovely, despite the dark hue of his skin. Shakespeare's play also addressed gender discrimination. The greatest two instances of social sexism in Othello are the objectification of women and the denial of their autonomy and free will. Othello's society has deeply



prejudiced and misogynistic views toward women. Shakespeare's discussion here is also not entirely eliminated. Due to wage discrimination and other issues, women in the modern day confront a considerable pay disparity in the workplace, earning around 0.77 cents for every dollar. Because men dominate the majority of well-paying jobs and positions, women have less opportunities in society. Even the most basic rights, like education, are denied to women outside of the West. The radicalism of the Taliban denied women the opportunity to go to school in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Women have just recently been granted the freedom to drive in the ultraconservative state of Saudi Arabia. Women in many African countries cannot even afford to go to school. There is still some misogynistic feeling in the larger culture. Women are still objectified today, and domestic violence is increasing in urban areas.

### CONCLUSION

Shakespeare's viewpoint on these societal issues is still pertinent in today's world of injustice and inequality. Shakespeare addresses problems facing contemporary society in Othello in addition to criticizing the backward ideas of Elizabethan society. Shakespeare was renowned for being ahead of his time, talking about issues like racism and gender equality before these concepts were even recognized in society. He challenges the beliefs of the general public and makes observations on the status of the world in the modern day while also criticizing the underlying cultural pressures and internal biases of the Elizabethan era through this play. Shakespeare was a genuinely progressive intellectual.

### USED AND RECOMMENDED LITERATURE

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