

Looking at Othello Act Four scene one

1. Act four scene one has often been described as a 'play within a play' with Iago as director. Taking this idea, make notes on this inner play. Who is the audience? What does the play consist of? Who are the actors? What stage directions might Iago give? How does he organise exits and entrances, body language, props?
2. By the end of this scene Othello's deterioration is complete. This is never more evident than in his loss of control over his speech. Find examples of the following, maybe setting it out as a table for others to follow:
Raving rant, frequency of questions and exclamations (look at punctuation for clues here), obsessive repetition, lapses of syntax, visual images, polarisation of public and private, animal references, lapses into prose.
3. The role of fate,. What other 'happy accidents' fall into Iago's hands here?
4. What more do we learn from this scene of Cassio's attitudes towards women?
5. What reasons can you think of for why Iago suggests Desdemona is strangled in her bed?
6. Critics have been puzzled by Othello's greeting to Desdemona in line 238, "I am glad to see you mad." Your notes offer no explanation here. Imagine you have been commissioned by Heinemann to supply the missing note. What would you write?
7. What in terms of plot and theme does the arrival of the Venetians represent?
8. How else does Othello resemble Iago in this scene?
9. What is the significance of Othello striking Desdemona?