REVISION WORKSHEET

1. Give six examples of animal images. Explain their significance in context and in the play as a whole. Repeat for black/ fair.

2. Cite six references to devils and/or hell. What is the significance of each? Who speaks them? What is their cumulative significance?

3. Cite six references to speaking and listening in the play. Discuss their significance, both separately and cumulatively.

4. Collect a variety of quotations which reflect the military background of the play. Account for the importance of the military context to the whole play.

5. What images/ words are associated with a) Othello, b) Desdemona, c) Iago? Give three examples of each across the spread of the play and comment briefly on their significance.

6. Select and examine three different examples of the kind of language and imagery that Othello uses at three different points in the play.


8. How important a theme is jealousy in Othello? Answer briefly, but give examples from the text to support your opinion.

9. Pick out four extracts which show the changing nature of the relationship between Othello and Desdemona. Comment on the content and style of each.

10. Give characteristics of each of the following (numbers in brackets), with textual support for your views:
   a. Othello (4)
   b. Iago (4)
   c. Desdemona (4)
   d. Cassio (4)
   e. Roderigo (4)
   f. Bianca (4)
   g. Emilia (4)
   h. Brabantio (3)
   i. The Senators: the Duke, Lodovico, Gratiano (1 each)

11. Find five different views about women, and comment briefly on each, discussing style, content and speaker.
12. Give six examples from across the whole of the play of people referring to Othello by anything other than his name. Discuss the significance of each in terms of race, gender, social position, and any other matters which are relevant.

13. Give five examples of Iago's use of coarse and/or vulgar language and comment briefly on each.

14. Cite three examples from the play which reveal a sense of characters' histories or background.

15. Give five examples, by quoting, of information that Iago shares exclusively with the audience and comment on the significance of each.

16. Through quotation and comment discuss five examples of different kinds of power exerted in the play.

17. How does chaos appear in the play? Select and comment on five examples.

18. What kinds of physical contact (both intimate and violent) are indicated in the play? Give examples and comment on each.

19. How do contrasts in language bring out the different social and dramatic roles people play? Give six examples and comment briefly on the language in each.

20. Explore a range of critical attitudes to the play: summarise the views in the "critics' forum" at the back of the Cambridge edition. (Remember, though, that it's the New Penguin you need to have with you in the exam.) Also conduct your own research into critical positions on the play.

21. Whilst thinking about criticism, also review your notes on literary theory, considering for example the implications of readings such as Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield’s (See notes on Political Shakespeare), compared to (for example) Coleridge and Samuel Johnson’s views in the 18th century. You should also refer to your notes on non-fictional representations of blackness in Renaissance texts including quotations from John Leo (also known as Leo Africanus) and Abraham Ortelius.

22. A very useful book you might refer to is Gary Taylor’s Reinventing Shakespeare, which examines how the West has re-presented Shakespeare on the stage according to the dominant cultural values of the day (see in particular the chapter on 19th Century Bowdlerisation). Read also the relevant chapter from Robert Eaglestone’s book Doing English, ‘Doing Shakespeare’.


24. Bear in mind that in doing these last four points, you are preparing for the most heavily weighted assessment objectives for this paper! There is 10% on 5ii: 'the significance of cultural, historical and other contextual influences on literary texts and study' (and 5% each on 1, 2ii, 3 and 4).
ESSAY TITLES AND INVESTIGATIVE QUESTIONS

Try planning some responses to as many of the following questions as you can to help with your revision:

1. Discuss the role played by chaos in the play, thinking through different kinds of chaos, for example:
   - action that ends in confusion and disarray
   - relationships that disintegrate
   - ways in which language expresses chaos

2. What comments does the play have to make about the institution of marriage? Illustrate your answer with quotation.

3. With close reference to the text, discuss to what extent you think the outcome of the play depends on the forward plotting of Iago, and to what extent on his ability to exploit circumstances.

4. How has Shakespeare contrasted different kinds of power in Othello?

5. Discuss the ways in which Shakespeare uses the public war to comment on the private battle.

6. What does the play have to say about the social position of women? (Think for instance, about how Desdemona reacts when Othello starts accusing her. Is she weak and ineffectual, or does her reaction have something more to do with limited options: if so, then what?) Be as precise, thorough and detailed as you can in your response.

7. The opening of Act 2 is dominated by a storm. In the original Cinthio story, on which Shakespeare based his version, they sail to Cyprus on “a sea of utmost tranquility”. Write about Shakespeare’s dramatic use of the storm, carefully considering all that has gone on in Act 2.

8. In both Acts 1 and 2 a crucial judgement is made and ‘justice’ publicly dispensed. Locate each judgement and its participants. Identify motive, evidence, and consequences of ruling. What key similarities and/or differences are there? Why do you think Shakespeare has chosen to structure the first two acts so that they mirror each other in this way?

9. Coleridge spoke of Iago’s “motiveless malignity”. Referring closely to the evidence in the play to support your views, what do you consider to be the motives for his behaviour?

10. Who, where, or what in Othello do you associate with the following? Explain how as part of your answer.
    - Order
    - Civilisation
    - Passion
    - Barbarism
    - Trust
    - Corruption
    - Honesty
    - Jealousy
    - Revenge
    - Hatred
    - Love
    - Fear
    - Racism
    - Reason
    - Justice
    - Leadership
    - Disorder
    - Innocence
    - Betrayal

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Think through varieties of some of these concepts (a thesaurus would be useful here). For example,

**Order** could be:
- a. Regularity
- b. Arrangement
- c. Command
- d. Rank

**Barbarism** could be:
- a. Evil-doing
- b. Uncivilised
- c. Vulgar
- d. Discourteous

Again, where and how do these appear in the play? If you think through some ideas here, you will be building a very strong conceptual framework on which you can build strong arguments. For example: The first and last here are perhaps truest of Iago, but the word barbarism in the play is used to describe Othello and is used by Othello.

11. Why is the “romance” of Othello’s elopement with Desdemona bracketed by the Iago-Roderigo plotting?

12. Notice the following themes and their uses within the play: witchcraft, knowledge of self and others, rhetorical power, loquaciousness. How do they relate to Othello, Iago, Desdemona, and Emilia?

13. At its heart, this is a play about the relationships between two couples. How would you characterize each pair’s bond with each other and with the members of the other pair?

14. When Desdemona offers to go along to Cyprus, Othello swears he will not become uxorious. Does he? Is his relationship with Iago in any way comparable to uxoriousness?

15. How clever is Iago? How motivated? Why is he after Othello? Why attack him through Desdemona?

16. Chattiness is generally thought of in this era as a flaw in a woman. How does Emilia’s volubility measure up to this standard? Why does she give her husband the misplaced handkerchief? What does that hanky represent—red spots and all?

17. How innocent is Othello? Cassio?

18. Why does Bianca appear in this play? Where does she appear?