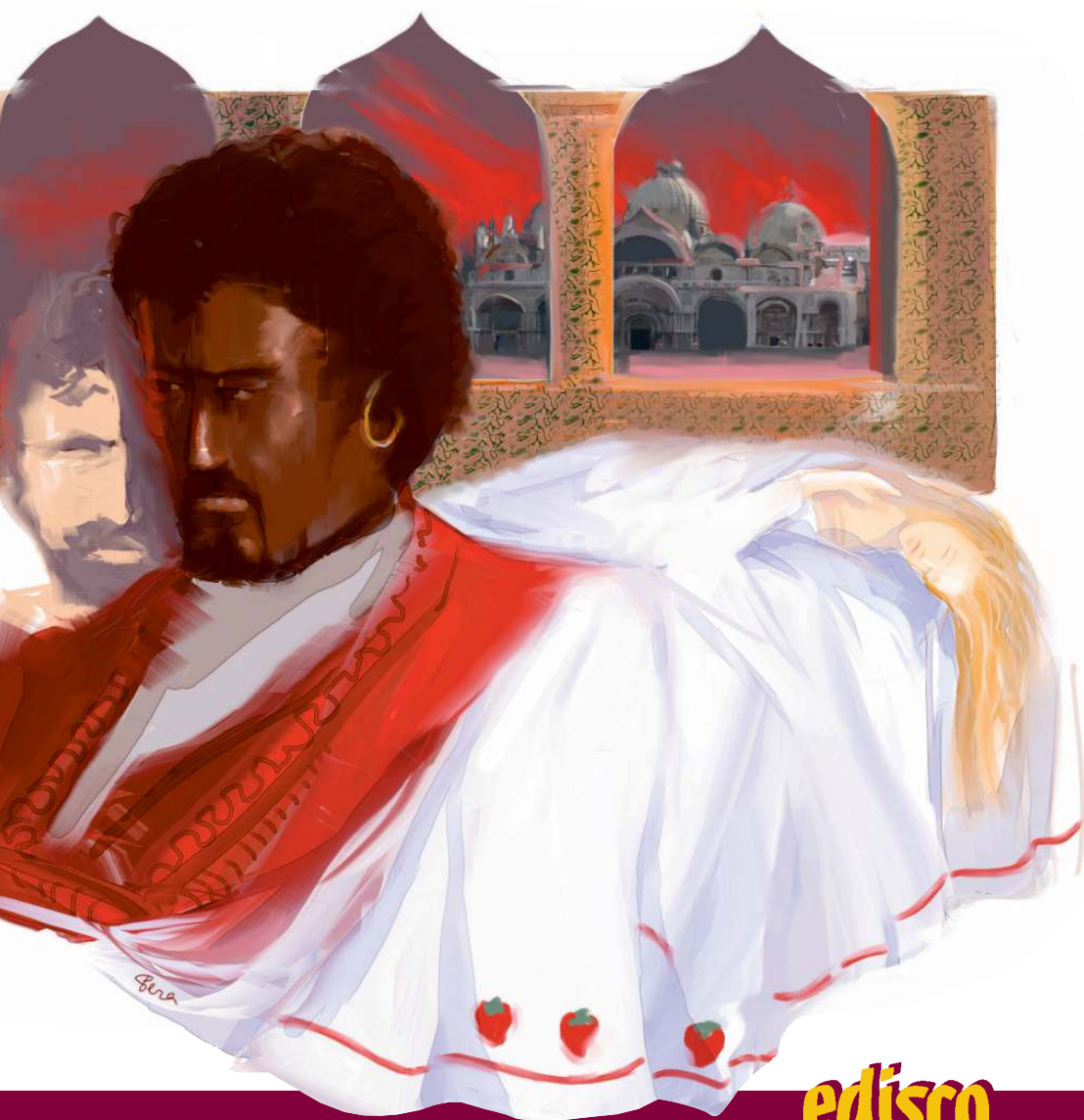


elementary

R A I N B O W S

# Othello

William Shakespeare



edisco

## List of the grammar structures per level

### **BEGINNER • A1 (Breakthrough)**

Nouns, short compound nouns, common adjectives, be, have, can, must, countable/uncountable nouns, articles, will future, imperative, basic prepositions of time and place, adverbs, numbers, some/any/no, personal pronouns, possessive adjectives/pronouns, 's, demonstrative adjectives/pronouns, present progressive, present simple, simple wh-questions, was/were.

### **ELEMENTARY • A2 (Waystage)**

Structures of preceding level + longer compound nouns, past simple, past progressive, present perfect simple, could, future with going to/present progressive, some/any/no/every+compounds, comparatives, superlatives, quantifiers (a lot, much/many, a little/a few), conditional sentences (type 1), have to, less common prepositions of time and place, may, simple forms of passive, that/who/which (relative pronouns), would you like/shall we?

### **PRE-INTERMEDIATE • B1 (Threshold)**

Structures of preceding levels + defining/non-defining relative clauses, don't have to/needn't, each other/one another, had to, might/could, should, ought to, question tags, common phrasal verbs, past perfect, more complex forms of passive, present perfect simple and progressive, for/since, reported questions/imperatives, conditional sentences (type 2), reflexive pronouns, will (offer), used to.

### **INTERMEDIATE • B2 (Vantage)**

Structures of preceding levels + had better, have+object+past participle, less common phrasal verbs, indirect questions, have/make/let/get+object+infinitive, past perfect simple and progressive, conditional sentences (type 3), be used to, verbs of perception, wish, would rather, be able/likely to, so/neither, gerund and infinitive.

### **POST-INTERMEDIATE • C1 (Effectiveness)**

Structures of preceding levels + idioms, other uncommon phrasal verbs, future progressive, future perfect, past conditional, inversion.



**R A I N B O W S**

William Shakespeare

# Othello

Adaptation, dossiers and activities  
by Jole Pignet and Carla Aira



**edisco**

# Othello

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# The author

## William Shakespeare



**William Shakespeare** was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, on April 23, 1564. He attended<sup>1</sup> the local Grammar School, where he studied Latin and Greek. He did not finish his studies because his family had financial difficulties.

When Shakespeare was 18, he married Anne Hathaway, a woman seven or eight years his senior<sup>2</sup>, then he moved to London. It is difficult to say why he left Stratford and there are many legends about this period of his life. Perhaps he

followed a company of actors and went to London where he had more opportunities for his career.

At the age of 28 (1592), Shakespeare, the Bard<sup>3</sup>, was a popular actor. Then he started writing plays for public and private theatres. He immediately showed his remarkable ability moving from comedies of light<sup>4</sup> and delicate verbal equivocation<sup>5</sup> (such as *Love's Labour's Lost*) and through poetic tragedy (*Romeo and Juliet*), to the production of his great middle period. He was then the leader of a company of actors and the owner<sup>6</sup> of The Globe theatre on Bankside<sup>7</sup> where his great plays (*Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Othello*) were performed<sup>8</sup>.

Shakespeare followed the fashion of the time and also wrote poems and sonnets, dedicated to his lord protector in terms of affection.

He spent the last six years of his life at Stratford, in his new house, New Place, where he died at fifty-two, on 23 April, 1616.

Shakespeare's London was the cultural capital of the world. The age took the name *Elizabethan* from Queen Elizabeth I, who ruled<sup>9</sup> from 1558-1603. Under her rule, England reached<sup>10</sup> new economic, military and cultural power. The English defeat<sup>11</sup> of the Spanish Armada

1. *attend*: frequentare.

2. *senior*: più vecchia.

3. *Bard*: bardo, cantore celtico.

4. *light*: leggero.

5. *equivocation*: equivoco.

6. *owner*: proprietario.

7. *Bankside*: nome di una zona di Londra lungo il Tamigi.

8. *perform*: rappresentare.

9. *rule*: governare.

10. *reach*: raggiungere.

11. *defeat*: sconfitta.

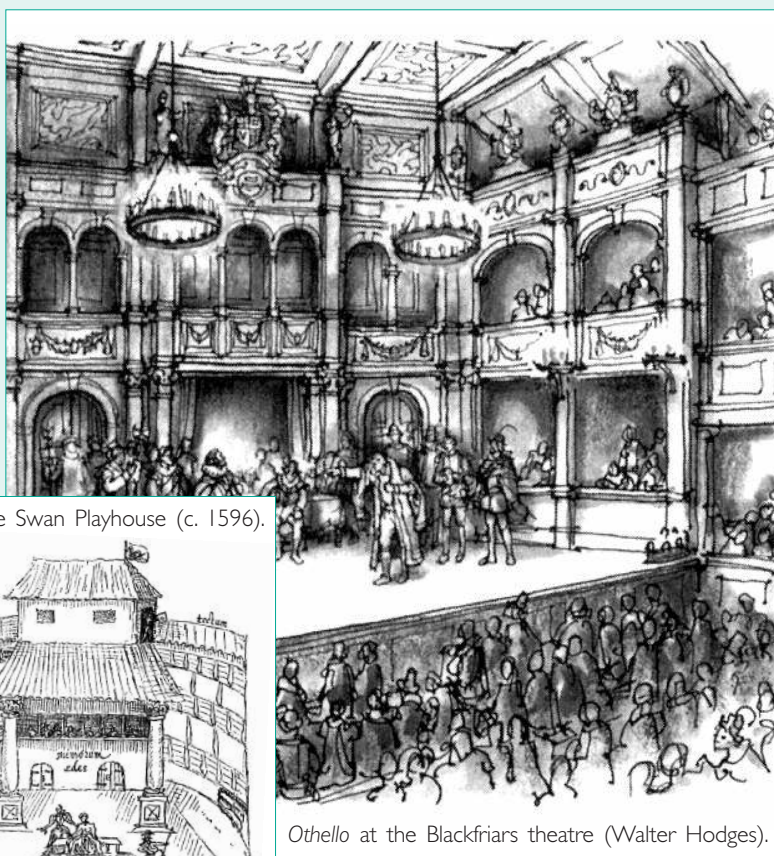
in 1588 assured England's political control of the seas. England's power and prosperity attracted merchants from every country in the world, and writers, poets, and artists were encouraged under the queen's intelligent protection.

In Elizabethan London there were many theatres – the Rose, the Swan, the Red Bull, the Blackfriars, the Globe – usually situated outside the city walls, and controlled by «companies»: or groups of producers, actors, and writers who stayed together from play to play.

Shakespeare himself was a good actor at first: he played small parts in some of his own<sup>12</sup> plays such as the Ghost in *Hamlet*.

The acting companies were usually sponsored by a rich merchant or nobleman. All his life Shakespeare stayed with one company, the *Lord Chamberlain's Men*, which became the *King's Men* in 1603, when Elizabeth died and James I took the throne.

12. *his own*: suo proprio.



The Swan Playhouse (c. 1596).



*Othello* at the Blackfriars theatre (Walter Hodges).



## CHARACTERS

**Othello:** a Moor, General in the Venetian army

**Desdemona:** a Venetian noblewoman and Othello's wife

**Iago:** Othello's ensign and the villain of the story

**Cassio:** a Florentine mathematician and Othello's lieutenant

### **Minor Characters:**

**Brabantio:** an honourable Venetian Senator and Desdemona's father

**Roderigo:** a rich Venetian gentleman in love with Desdemona

**Emilia:** Iago's wife and Desdemona's lady-in-waiting

**Bianca:** Cassio's mistress in Cyprus

**Lodovico:** Venetian ambassador and Brabantio's relative

**The Duke of Venice:** highest political authority in the Republic

**Senators of Venice, Gentlemen, Officers and Soldiers, Servants**

**Setting:** Venice and Cyprus

**Action:** one night in Venice and two days in Cyprus with the interruption for the voyage (approximately two weeks)





## BEFORE READING

1 What do you mean when you say that a man is 'an Othello'? Tick (✓). He is:

- |                                      |                                   |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> violent     | <input type="checkbox"/> innocent | <input type="checkbox"/> jealous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> indifferent | <input type="checkbox"/> curious  | <input type="checkbox"/> honest  |

2 Do you know anything about the story of Othello? Tick (✓).

a. *Where is the story set?*

- |                                 |                                 |                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rome   | <input type="checkbox"/> Naples | <input type="checkbox"/> Cyprus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Venice | <input type="checkbox"/> Milan  |                                 |

b. *Who is Othello?*

- |                                    |                                     |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a general | <input type="checkbox"/> a merchant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a sailor  | <input type="checkbox"/> a robber   |

c. *When is the story set?*

- |                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> in Roman times                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> in the Middle Ages              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> in the 16 <sup>th</sup> century |

3 Match each adjective in the first column to its opposite.

- |          |                          |          |
|----------|--------------------------|----------|
| a. full  | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. young |
| b. far   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. dirty |
| c. angry | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. near  |
| d. old   | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. empty |
| e. clean | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. calm  |



Othello and Desdemona  
in Venice (T, Chassériau, 1850).

# Othello

## Resentful Hearts

(Act I, Scenes I, II)

It was night and a full moon was shining<sup>1</sup> over the *calli*<sup>2</sup> and the canals in Venice. Not far from Brabantio's house two men were arguing<sup>3</sup>.

"I don't like it!" Roderigo was protesting. "I gave you money to win<sup>4</sup> Desdemona's love for me, and you... you didn't tell me...! You said you hated<sup>5</sup> him!"

"By Christ! You don't listen to me!" replied Iago. "I hate him, he did me wrong<sup>6</sup>. I have the experience and ability to become lieutenant<sup>7</sup>, not that Michael Cassio, that damned Florentine mathematician! Yet Othello gave him the post... and I... I am still his ensign<sup>8</sup>!" he said bitterly.

He was very angry: his dark eyes flashed dangerously<sup>9</sup>, his lips were pressed, a vein pulsated in his temple.

"Why then do you continue to serve the Moor, if you hate him so?" asked Roderigo.

Iago laughed, "Oh, dear sir, we cannot all be masters<sup>10</sup>, and not all masters can be truly followed. I don't want to serve my master loyally and be kicked out<sup>11</sup> when I am old and useless!"

Then he continued,

*"In following him I follow but<sup>12</sup> myself,  
Heaven<sup>13</sup> is my judge<sup>14</sup>, not I for love and duty,  
But seeming<sup>15</sup> so, for my peculiar end.  
... I am not what I am."*

1. *shine*: brillare.

2. *calli*: tipiche strade di Venezia.

3. *argue*: discutere.

4. *win*: (qui) conquistare.

5. *hate*: odiare.

6. *wrong*: torto.

7. *lieutenant*: /1ef'tenənt/, luogotenente.

8. *ensign*: alfiere, sottotenente.

9. *dangerously*: pericolosamente.

10. *master*: padrone.

11. *kick out*: mandare via a calci.

12. *but*: soltanto.

13. *Heaven*: cielo.

14. *judge*: giudice.

15. *seem*: far finta.





# Othello

*A tragedy of jealousy, but not only. Venice has entrusted Othello, a professional soldier, with its security. But Othello is a Moor and, as a consequence, external to Venetian society. After marrying Desdemona, the Moor is convinced by Iago's machinations to kill his wife because of her presumed unfaithfulness.*

*A tragedy of great passion in which the personality of the wicked character prevails: Iago, in fact, is one of the most complex and ambiguous figures of the Shakespearean gallery of characters.*

**beginner**

• **A1** (Breakthrough)

✓ **elementary**

• **A2** (Waystage) .....

**pre-intermediate**

• **B1** (Threshold)

**intermediate**

• **B2** (Vantage)

**post-intermediate**

• **C1** (Effectiveness)

Levels of accredited examination boards:

Cambridge ESOL: Flyers / KET

Trinity: Grade 3, 4

City & Guilds (Pitman): Elementary

ESB: Foundation 3

Edexcel: Basic

Grammar structures: specified inside: