# National Theatre

# Othello – Learning Resources

### Writing a final soliloquy for lago (up to 60 mins)

This resource provides opportunities for students to develop their writing based on analysis of Shakespeare's use of language, structure and form. They will also explore different interpretations of character. Drama and Theatre students in particular will be able to apply theatrical skills and analyse their work and that of others.

This learning resource asks students to write a final soliloquy for lago at the end of *Othello*. It addresses themes of speaking and silence through an analysis of the play's climax in Act V, Scene 2, and investigates how lago expresses his thoughts and motivations to the audience.

### Who is it for?

This resource is designed for A-Level students of English Literature and Drama who are studying Othello.

### Learning outcomes

#### Learners will:

- Explore the themes of speaking and silence in Othello through analysis of an extract from Act V, Scene 2.
- Take part in a group discussion of these themes
- Write creatively to produce a new speech for lago at the play's end.
- Perform and explain these speeches to the rest of the class.

### You will need

- Access to the film lago and Othello in the 'On Demand' player
- Access to the clip 'lago's plot unravels' in the 'On Demand' player.
- Access to the clip 'lago's first soliloquy' in the 'On Demand' player.
- Copies of the full text of Othello.

## Activities

1.

**Show the film** *lago and Othello* using the 'On Demand' player. The film features the company of the 2013 National Theatre production discussing the relationship between the two characters.

2.

**Show the clip 'lago's plot unravels,'** using the 'On Demand' player. The extract focuses on the exposure of lago's deceptions in Act V, Scene 2. Ask the class to make notes on the importance of speaking and keeping silent in this scene. Who speaks? Who is challenged when they try to speak? Who says nothing?

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### 3.

Lead a discussion about the importance of speaking and silence in this scene, using some of the following questions as prompts:

- Who speaks the most in this scene, and who speaks the least?
- What is the central conflict in this scene what drives the action?
- What kind of language is used to describe speaking and staying silent?
- How might Desdemona's death be significant to the theme of speaking/silence?
- Why does lago say so little?

#### 4.

**Show the clip 'lago's first soliloquy'** using the 'On Demand' player. The clip shows lago's first soliloquy at the end of Act I, when he comes up with his plot. Ask the class to make notes on the motives behind lago's actions at the start of his plan – what is he trying to achieve? What will make him content?

#### 5.

The audience hear very little from lago at the end of the play, even though they hear soliloquies from him several times throughout. **Ask the class to respond to this by writing an end soliloquy for lago.** It can take place during or after Act V Scene 2. It should express how lago feels now that his plot has been found out: did he achieve what he said he would in his first soliloquy? Or has his mind been changed? It's not necessary to write in verse but students should be encouraged to draw on the language and tone of lago's previous speeches when writing their own.

#### 6.

Ask a number of students to perform a selection of their speeches to the rest of the class. If you like, you can mix the speeches up anonymously and have them read by other members of the class.

### 7.

**Discuss the choices made in each of these speeches.** Are there any common themes among them?