Rewriting Act IV, Scene 3 into modern English (up to 60 mins)

This learning resource is designed to help students examine themes of love and friendship in Othello through a close analysis of Act IV, Scene 3 by rewriting it into modern English.

These activities ask students of literature to analyse Shakespeare's use of language, structure and form, in order to explore how meanings are created, and will be a useful way in to discussion of soliloquies. Students of drama will be able to apply theatrical skills to this task.

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:

• Examine the relationship between Desdemona and Emilia through a close analysis of Act IV, Scene 3.

- Consider how language and staging contribute to the portrayal of this relationship.
- Rewrite the text in their own words.
- Perform their new versions to the class.

• Take part in a group discussion about the choices they have made in writing these new versions.

You will need

- Access to the film Emilia and Desdemona in the 'On Demand' player.
- Access to the clip 'Act IV, Scene 3' in the 'On Demand' player.
- Copies of the full text of Othello.

Activities

1.

Show the film Emilia and Desdemona using the 'On Demand' player. The film features actors Olivia Vinall and Lyndsey Marshal, who play Desdemona and Emilia, discussing the characters' relationships and how they are portrayed in the National Theatre's production.

2.

Read through Act IV, Scene 3, asking the class to take turns to read each character.

3.

Ask each member of the class to choose three words: one to describe Desdemona, one to describe Emilia and one to describe their relationship in this scene. Collect these together on the board.

4.

Show the clip 'Act IV, Scene 3' using the 'On Demand' player. While they watch, ask the class to make notes about the following questions:

- How would you describe the relationship between these two women as portrayed in this scene?
- What emotions can you see in this scene?
- Why might this scene have been staged outside instead of in a bedroom?
- What purpose do you think this scene serves in the play?

5.

Ask the class to share their responses to these questions, asking them to refer to the text and provide quotations to back up their responses.

6.

Break the class into pairs, and assign them each a short section of the scene between Emilia and Desdemona.

7.

Ask each pair to rewrite their section into modern English. Their new version must keep all the same actions and intentions as the original, but use language they themselves would use.

8.

Invite each pair to perform their new version, and discuss the choices they have made with the rest of the class.