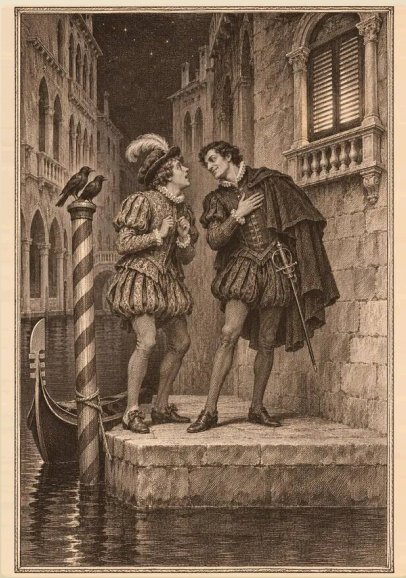
Daily Bard

QUOTATION SHEET

Othello: key quotes and analysis

The 10 Othello quotations worth knowing by heart, each with a plain-English reading, an analysis of its language, space for your notes, and a fill-the-gap test.



How to use this sheet

These are the 10 key quotations from the Othello study guide, set out for revision. Part one gives each quotation with a plain-English reading, a short analysis of what the language is doing, and space for your own notes. Part two prints them again with a word missing from each line, so that you can test yourself.

- [ ] Read the quotation aloud twice. Sound helps memory more than staring does.
- [ ] In the note space, name one method (a device, a word choice, a feature of the verse) and the effect it has.
- [ ] Add one link: to a theme, to another moment in the text, or to a point of context.
- [ ] A day later, cover part one and complete part two from memory.

Part one: the quotations

> But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
> For daws to peck at. I am not what I am.
>
> IAGO · ACT 1, SCENE 1 · 1.1.70-71

Plain English: If my behaviour ever showed my real feelings I would be easy prey. I am not the man I appear to be.

The final sentence is six monosyllables that cancel themselves out, a blasphemous inversion of God's "I am that I am" in Exodus. Iago defines himself as an absence, which prepares us for a villain whose motives never settle. Dramatic irony begins here: the audience knows what no character learns until Act 5.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
> Is tupping your white ewe.
>
> IAGO · ACT 1, SCENE 1 · 1.1.97-98

Plain English: At this very moment an old black ram is mating with your white ewe.

The repeated "now" forces Brabantio to picture the act in the present tense. Animal imagery and the black/white antithesis reduce a marriage to breeding and make race the ground of disgust. It is Iago's method in miniature: he does not argue, he plants an image.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
> And I loved her that she did pity them.
>
> OTHELLO · ACT 1, SCENE 3 · 1.3.193-194

Plain English: She fell in love with me because of what I had lived through, and I loved her for feeling for me.

Balanced, end-stopped lines give Othello the calm authority that wins the Senate. Yet the couplet-like symmetry also exposes a weakness: this love is founded on storytelling. A marriage made by a persuasive tale can be unmade by another one, and Iago is the better storyteller.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> The Moor is of a free and open nature
> That thinks men honest that but seem to be so
>
> IAGO · ACT 1, SCENE 3 · 1.3.442-443

Plain English: Othello is frank and trusting; he assumes that anyone who looks honest is honest.

In soliloquy Iago gives an accurate, even generous, account of his victim, then decides to use that virtue as the weapon. The hinge is "seem", the play's key verb. Closing Act 1 with the plan "engendered", it sends the audience to Cyprus as Iago's unwilling accomplices.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> O, beware, my lord, of jealousy!
> It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock
> The meat it feeds on.
>
> IAGO · ACT 3, SCENE 3 · 3.3.195-197

Plain English: Be careful of jealousy, my lord. It is a monster that torments the very person it consumes.

A warning that works as a suggestion: until now Othello has not used the word. Personification makes jealousy an outside creature, so Othello can feel attacked rather than responsible. The feeding image links to Emilia's later remark that men "eat us hungerly". A full reading is in our essay on this passage.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> Haply, for I am black
> And have not those soft parts of conversation
> That chamberers have
>
> OTHELLO · ACT 3, SCENE 3 · 3.3.304-306

Plain English: Perhaps it is because I am black, and lack the smooth manners of courtiers.

Left alone for a moment, Othello searches himself for the reason and reaches first for race, then manners, then age. The tentative "Haply" shows a mind that minutes earlier was certain. This is the point at which Venetian prejudice becomes self-doubt, and it is essential evidence for any essay on Othello as outsider.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> They are not ever jealous for the cause,
> But jealous for they're jealous. It is a monster
> Begot upon itself, born on itself.
>
> EMILIA · ACT 3, SCENE 4 · 3.4.181-183

Plain English: Jealous people are not jealous for a reason. They are jealous because they are jealous; it breeds itself.

Emilia echoes her husband's "monster" without knowing it, and her circular syntax ("jealous for they're jealous") enacts the closed loop she describes. She diagnoses the play exactly and still fails to connect it with the handkerchief she stole.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> Let husbands know
> Their wives have sense like them.
>
> EMILIA · ACT 4, SCENE 3 · 4.3.104-105

Plain English: Husbands should understand that their wives have feelings and appetites just as they do.

Plain diction and an imperative verb give Emilia the voice of common sense against the idealising and degrading language men use about women. Placed in the intimate willow scene, just before the murder, it offers a perspective the male characters never hear.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> Put out the light, and then put out the light.
>
> OTHELLO · ACT 5, SCENE 2 · 5.2.7

Plain English: First I will put out this candle, and then I will put out her life.

Ten monosyllables in perfectly regular iambic pentameter: the control is chilling. The repeated phrase shifts from literal to metaphorical, and Othello goes on to admit that a candle can be relit but a life cannot. He speaks as a priest performing a sacrifice, which shows how completely he has dressed murder as justice.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

> Then must you speak
> Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
> Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
> Perplexed in the extreme
>
> OTHELLO · ACT 5, SCENE 2 · 5.2.403-406

Plain English: Describe me as a man who loved unwisely but too much; not jealous by nature, but, once worked upon, utterly confused.

Anaphora ("Of one") and antithesis rebuild the grand style of Act 1 as Othello dictates his own epitaph. Whether this is honest self-knowledge or a final self-deception is the central critical debate about the play. Note the passive "being wrought": even now he presents himself as acted upon.

Your notes:

Links to: _____

Part two: test yourself

Fill each gap from memory, then check against part one. Mark the ones you missed and come back to them tomorrow.

> But I will wear my heart upon my _____
> For daws to peck at. I am not what I am.
>
> IAGO · ACT 1, SCENE 1

> Even now, now, very now, an old _____ ram
> Is _____ your white ewe.
>
> IAGO · ACT 1, SCENE 1

> She loved me for the _____ I had passed,
> And I _____ her that she did pity them.
>
> OTHELLO · ACT 1, SCENE 3

> The Moor is of a free and open _____
> That _____ men honest that but seem to be so
>
> IAGO · ACT 1, SCENE 3

> O, beware, my lord, of _____!
> It is the green-eyed _____ which doth mock
> The meat it _____ on.
>
> IAGO · ACT 3, SCENE 3

> _____, for I am black
> And have not those soft parts of _____
> That _____ have
>
> OTHELLO · ACT 3, SCENE 3

> They are not ever _____ for the cause,
> But _____ for they're jealous. It is a monster
> Begot upon _____, born on itself.
>
> EMILIA · ACT 3, SCENE 4

> Let _____ know
> _____ wives have sense like them.
>
> EMILIA · ACT 4, SCENE 3

> Put out the _____, and then put out the light.
>
> OTHELLO · ACT 5, SCENE 2

> Then must you _____
> Of one that loved not _____, but too well;
> Of one not easily _____, but being wrought,
> _____ in the extreme
>
> OTHELLO · ACT 5, SCENE 2

Next steps

For more quotations, sorted by theme and analysed: **jealousy**, **race and otherness**, **reputation**, **deception**. Turn three of these quotations into full paragraphs with the **essay planner**, and check your method against the **close reading toolkit**. For a small daily dose of the language, **Daily Bard** shows one passage each morning with a plain-English reading on the back of the leaf.



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