

Year 8 Term 1: The Flawed Self

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A 'flaw' is defined as an 'imperfection'. We all have flaws. And that's because nobody is perfect, despite what some films might suggest!

This term, you will be exploring how writers present us with characters whose flaws often result in tragedy.

The main text that you will read is *Othello*, written by arguably the greatest writer in the English language: William Shakespeare. Shakespeare had the extraordinary ability to create characters who weren't just interesting – they taught us something about ourselves. Othello is one such character and his flaws make him the ultimate tragic hero.

Shakespearean context

Othello was written about 1603, which was during the **Renaissance** (means 'rebirth' in French) period: this period had a renewed interest in the culture and ideas of ancient Greece & Rome.

The texts from this period tended to focus on **timeless, universal human emotions & desires** (which is why we can still relate to the themes!) rather than everything being about God.

Shakespeare wrote all three different genres of plays: comedies, histories and tragedies. However, he often used a mixture (**hybrid**) within his plays, e.g. most tragedies contained **bawdy** (rude) **humour** to appeal to the audience of the day / release tension in the play.

His **plays often started with something exciting** like a fight or a group of witches together on the moor; Shakespeare's audiences were hooked from the start!

His plays are also often **quick-paced and exciting** due to his starting scenes '**in medias res**', which is Latin for 'in the middle of things'. Look out for it!

What exactly is a tragedy?

Tragedy is a branch of drama that tells the **sad/terrible events** encountered or caused by a heroic individual (the **tragic hero**).

The tragic hero isn't all good or all bad but they are **noble**.

The tragic hero is in some part **responsible** for the change of fortune (**peripeteia**) due to their character flaw (**hamartia**) or stubborn pride (**hubris**).

The hero recognises that things have gone wrong (**anagnorisis**) but it's too late!

The **denouement** (the ending) is **catastrophic**: lots of people usually die.

The hero's death has an emotional response, e.g. pity, shock. This is referred to as the **catharsis** and results in the audience learning something about the world/themselves.

Conventions of a play

Act – separates play's major sections (there are usually 3 or 5)

Scene – a 'chapter' in an act

Dialogue – what the characters say to each other

Monologue – a long speech by one actor

Aside – dialogue that is said confidentially (secretly) to the audience when other characters are on stage.

Stage directions – instructions to the actors and director. In brackets and/or italics.

Othello themes

- **Prejudice (race & misogyny)**
- **Appearance vs reality**
- **Love**
- **Jealousy**
- **Gender**

Othello Characters

Othello: The play's protagonist and hero. A Christian Moor and general of the armies of Venice, Othello is an eloquent and physically powerful figure, respected by all those around him. In spite of his elevated status, he is easy prey to insecurities because of his age, his life as a soldier, and his race.

Desdemona: The wife of Othello. Desdemona and Othello are secretly married before the play begins. While in many ways stereotypically pure and meek, Desdemona is also determined and self-possessed. She is equally capable of defending her marriage.

Iago - Othello's ensign (a low-ranked officer), and the villain of the play. While his obvious reason for desiring Othello's downfall is that he has been passed over for promotion to lieutenant, Iago's motivations are never very clearly expressed – it seems that he is obsessed with manipulation and destruction.

Michael Cassio - Othello's lieutenant. He is a young and inexperienced soldier, whose high position is much resented by Iago. Truly devoted to Othello, Cassio is ashamed after being involved in a drunken brawl and losing his place as lieutenant. Iago uses Cassio's youth, good looks, and friendship with Desdemona to play on Othello's insecurities about his wife's fidelity.

Y7 grammar recap

Noun types:

- **Concrete** – A noun we can see, hear, touch, smell or taste
- **Abstract** – A noun which we cannot experience with any of the 5 senses e.g. happiness, tension
- **Proper** – A noun which is the name or title of something and is capitalised
- **Collective** – A singular word used to group together a plural e.g. a group, a herd, a class

Subject: Does the action in a sentence or clause

Verb types:

- **Dynamic** – A verb that we can see/hear being completed – a deliberate action
- **Stative** – A verb that we cannot see being completed e.g. I am, I believe
- **Imperative** – A commanding verb e.g. Do this work, sit down, let's go
- **Modal** – A verb expressing possibility or probability e.g. will, should, could, can, must

Past tense: used to describe things that happened in the past

Present tense: used to describe things that are happening now

Main clause – A clause which makes sense on its own as a sentence

Subordinate clause – A clause which does not make sense on its own as a sentence – it needs a main clause to make it make sense – it starts with a subordinating conjunction

Coordinating conjunction – A conjunction which joins 2 main clauses FANBOYS – for, and, nor, but, or, yet and so

Subordinating conjunction – A conjunction which joins a subordinate clause to a main one – e.g. while, as, because, since, if

Simple sentence – A sentence with only one main clause

Compound sentence – A sentence with more than one main clause, joined by a coordinating conjunction

Complex sentence – A sentence with at least one main clause and at least one subordinate clause

Y8 grammar

Adjective types:

- **Descriptive** – An adjective which describes factual characteristics e.g. big, green
- **Evaluative** – An adjective expressing an opinion, can be disagreed with e.g. great, boring, amazing
- **Emotive** – An adjective which makes the reader feel a strong emotion e.g. shocking, starving, dangerous
- **Comparative** – An adjective ending in –er or with 'more' in front of it. e.g. bigger, faster, more exciting
- **Superlative** – An adjective ending in –est or with 'most' in front of it. e.g. biggest, fastest, most exciting

Reminder!

ALWAYS check what the word is doing in the sentence as many words have different functions! e.g.

1. I will **park** the car. (park = **verb**)
2. I will go to the **park**. (park = **noun**)