

SOUTHWEST

SHAKESPEARE

COMPANY

OTHELLO



a teacher guide for studying the play and attending
Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance



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 January 2009

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MEETING AZ STATE STANDARDS

By viewing Southwest Shakespeare Company's production of *Othello*, students can meet several of Arizona State Arts Standards. In addition, the activities included in this teacher's guide, when implemented in the classroom along with other teacher-assigned reading and writing activities, will allow students to meet various Arizona State Standards in Reading and Writing.

WRITING STANDARDS – STRAND 3: WRITING APPLICATIONS

Concept 2: Expository

Expository writing includes non-fiction writing that describes, explains, informs, or summarizes ideas and content (*Concept Map; Friend or Foe?*).

Concept 5: Literary Response

Literary response is the writer's reaction to a literary selection. The response includes the writer's interpretation, analysis, opinion, and/or feelings about the piece of literature and selected elements within it (*Reading Journal; Examining Plot; Shakespeare & Aristotle; Beg, Borrow, Steal*).

READING STANDARDS – STRAND 1: READING PROCESS

Concept 6: Comprehension Strategies

Employ strategies to comprehend text (*Concept Map; Beg, Borrow, Steal*).

READING STANDARDS – STRAND 2: COMPREHENDING LITERARY TEXT

Concept 1: Elements of Literature

Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of literature (*Examining Plot; Shakespeare & Aristotle; Friend or Foe?*).

Concept 2: Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature

Recognize and apply knowledge of the historical and cultural aspects of American, British, and world literature (*Reading Journal; Beg, Borrow, Steal; Nine Men's Morris*).

READING STANDARDS – STRAND 3: COMPREHENDING INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Concept 2: Functional Text

Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the purpose, structures, clarity, and relevancy of functional text (*Nine Men's Morris*).

ARTS STANDARDS – THEATRE

Strand 3: Evaluate

Students describe physical and vocal attributes appropriate to the characters in the play in class and professional performances (*attending and discussing Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance of OTHELLO; Helpful Tips for Seeing and Exploring Shakespeare*).

Students justify the perception of a performance and critique its production elements (*attending and discussing Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance of OTHELLO; Helpful Tips for Seeing and Exploring Shakespeare*).

RECOMMENDED READING

Reference Books

A Companion to Shakespeare edited by David Scott Kastan
The Complete Works of Shakespeare edited by David Bevington
Discovering Shakespeare's Language by Rex Gibson & Janet Field-Pickering
The Friendly Shakespeare by Norrie Epstein
How to Speak Shakespeare by Cal Pritner and Louis Colaianni
Shakespeare A to Z by Charles Boyce
Shakespeare for Kids: His Life and Times by Colleen Agesen and Margie Blumberg
Shakespeare From Page to Stage by Michael Flachmann
Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human by Harold Bloom
Shakespeare: To Teach or not to Teach by Cass Foster and Lynn G. Johnson
Shaking Hands With Shakespeare by Allison Wedell Schumacher
Teaching Shakespeare into the Twenty-First Century edited by Ronald E. Salomone

Picture Books

A Child's Portrait of Shakespeare by Lois Burdett
All the World's A Stage by Rebecca Piatt Davidson
The Bard of Avon: The Story of William Shakespeare by Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema
Tales from Shakespeare by Charles and Mary Lamb
Tales from Shakespeare (comic book) by Marcia Williams
William Shakespeare and the Globe by Aliki

Websites

www.swshakespeare.org - see what's new at Southwest Shakespeare Company

www.folger.edu - access to primary documents and lesson plans for teaching Shakespeare

<http://nfs.sparknotes.com> - this is the "No Fear Shakespeare" website that presents the original text of Shakespeare's plays side-by-side with a modern version

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/educational.htm> - includes links to sites designed for teaching Shakespeare using the Internet; great for finding secondary resources to support the play being taught

www.stratford.co.uk - the official Stratford resource center on Shakespeare

www.teachersfirst.com/shakespr.shtml - on-line quizzes and surveys related to particular plays; also has related sites with information about Elizabethan England

www.william-shakespeare.info/index.htm - a comprehensive site with links to the complete works, including background information, biographical information and pictures, information about Elizabethan theatre, a Shakespeare dictionary, quotes, and a discussion forum



COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR

These comments can be used to help you prepare your students to see Southwest Shakespeare Company's performance of *Othello* and may also answer any questions about changes or modifications made to the stage performance as compared to the written play.

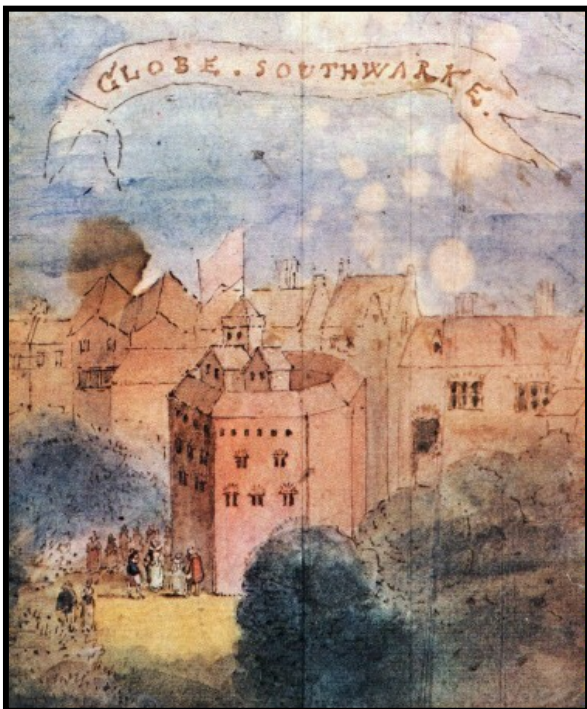
Name of Production:	<i>Othello</i>
Name of Director:	Jared Sakren
In what time period is this production set?	1870's
Is this switched from the original text?	Yes.
Have any characters been cut? Why?	No.
Have any characters been added?	No.
Have any characters been combined into one?	No.
Is there any cross-gender casting?	No.
Have any scenes been cut? Why?	Yes. Extraneous or repeated information, which is not necessary for the audience's appreciation of the story has been removed.
Have any scenes been added?	No.
Are there fight scenes?	Yes.
Stage blood?	Yes.
Weapons?	Yes.
Are there love scenes?	Yes, some appropriate romance.
Sexual innuendo?	Not much.
Final Comments:	The period was changed only to enhance the important issues such as military rank, the military world, and the glories of war.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR SEEING AND EXPLORING SHAKESPEARE

Before seeing the play ...

Before you see the characters of *Othello* brought to life on stage by the vision of the director, spend some time imagining your own version. Go back to the text of the play and look for clues that suggest what the characters might look like and how they might behave. What movie stars might you cast in the various roles? Where would you set the play? What would the characters wear? It is up to you ... you are only limited by your imagination!

A director will often choose to “dramatize” a play by portraying a **wordless** scene that helps draw the audience into the action and mood. If you were directing *As You Like It* and wanted to dramatize a scene just prior to Act I, Scene 1 being spoken, what would your scene portray?



“Neither the professor nor the actor has a monopoly on Shakespeare.

His genius is that he wrote **texts to be studied** and **scripts to be performed.**”

--Leonora Eyre

After seeing the play ...

Did your views about the play or the characters change after seeing the live production? If so, how? Try to be very specific about moments in the action that affected you.

Which actor best portrayed his/her character? What made the performance so effective?

How was the live production different from the written play? What decisions did the director make about staging? Were these effective decisions? Why or why not?

What did you think of the production values (sets, costumes, lighting, sound)? Did they help you to better understand the plot of the play?

If you would like to share your opinions or ask questions of the director, actors, or crew of play, send your letters to:

Southwest Shakespeare Company
Education Committee
P.O. Box 30595
Mesa, AZ 85275-0595

OTHELLO - AN INTRODUCTION



Othello is an exquisitely painful play to watch, since it deals with the destruction of a good man and his beautiful, loyal wife by one of the more inherently evil characters to ever inhabit the world of theater. Written in 1603-1604, it was first published in a 1621 quarto edition as "The Tragedie of Othello, the Moore of Venice," then subsequently revised in the 1623 First Folio. Shakespeare's principal source was Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, originally published in Italian in 1565.

Based on an actual incident that occurred in Venice in the early sixteenth century, Shakespeare's play is heavily indebted to Cinthio's plot, including the marriage of a valiant Moor to a noble Venetian lady, his voyage to suppress a Turkish invasion in Cyprus, the treacherous insinuations of his ensign, the Moor's jealous rage, and the eventual murder of Desdemona in her bed. To this sparse plot outline Shakespeare adds a distraught father, the gullible foil Roderigo, a devoted and courageous Emilia, and most importantly, enough depth and complexity in Iago to turn him into one of the most fascinating villains ever created by the playwright.

The character of Iago is most changed from Shakespeare's source material, where the one-dimensional ensign truly loves Desdemona and eventually bludgeons her to death with a sock full of sand. While Shakespeare's villain provides several reasons for his hatred of the Moor (frustration over his lack of military promotion, suspicion that his wife has been unfaithful with Othello, and unvarnished racism), Iago is also driven by what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "motiveless malignity," which seems to ally his insidious nature with the Vice character of the medieval morality plays, whose delight in evil for its own sake was a staple ingredient of the genre. As such, Iago has offered students a unique opportunity to investigate the pathology of evil through a psychological examination of his behavior in the script. Ultimately, however, Iago's silence at the end of the play is the final unsettling answer: The most horrifying evil in the world transcends rational analysis.

Several additional important themes arise from this troubling script. For instance, the concept of geographical dichotomy, so prominent in other Shakespearean plays, is of crucial significance here. When Othello and Desdemona move from the urbane, civilized, and somewhat depraved city-state of Venice to Cyprus, they enter a barren military encampment whose claustrophobic confines intensify Iago's unrelenting psychological assault. Prejudice and racism are also key elements in the drama, not only in Iago's hatred of Othello, but in the Moor's naiveté concerning the subtle charms of Venetian ladies. Enlivened by other significant topics as the changing roles of women, the uses of verbal and psychological poison, the lust for revenge, images of foreignness, the tempest at sea and in Othello's mind, the isolation of an island universe, the reversion to brutish behavior, cultural relativism, sexual and racial anxiety, eloquence, and the ironic importance of the handkerchief, *Othello* is a play filled with profound insights into the flawed and intriguing world around us.

--Michael Flachmann,
Shakespeare: From Page to Stage

SHAKESPEARE'S CRITICS



"Symbolically, it is particularly fitting that Desdemona should be smothered. As Othello falls deeper into madness, the play's atmosphere becomes increasingly airless and enclosed. Trapped within Othello's psychic nightmare, Desdemona, lovely and vibrant, can't possibly breathe—let alone thrive. Her last panicked gasp is not simply that of a dying woman, but a choking attempt to break free from the suffocating fantasy in which her husband has imprisoned her."

--Norrie Epstein

"Othello's tragedy is not that he is easily duped, but that his strong faith can be destroyed at such a terrible cost. Othello never forgets how much he is losing ... the fear of being unlovable exists in Othello's mind, but the human instrument of this vicious gospel is Iago."

--David Bevington

"Any consideration of *Othello* must be primarily occupied not with its official hero but with its villain. I cannot think of any other play in which only one character performs the personal actions—all the *deeds* are Iago's—and all the others without

exception only exhibit behavior ... Nor can I think of another play in which the villain is so completely triumphant; everything Iago sets out to do, he accomplishes (among his goals, I include self-destruction)."

--W. H. Auden

"Shakespeare came naturally to comedy and to romance, but violently and ambivalently to tragedy. Othello may have been as painful for Shakespeare as he made it for us."

--Harold Bloom

Shakespeare and *Othello* by the Numbers

BORN: April 23, 1564, in Stratford-upon-Avon, England	DIED: April 23, 1616 (on his 52 nd birthday)
PLAYS: 37 (give or take) – 10 tragedies, 10 histories, 13 comedies, and 4 romances; however, it is possible that he may have written a few more!	260: Hours it takes to read the 936,443 words in <i>The Complete Works of William Shakespeare</i> , if you read at the rate of 60 words per minute
27,953: Number of spoken words in the uncut version of <i>Othello</i> *	2: Possible main characters. Some critics claim that the villain, Iago, is as much of a main character as Othello because his actions drive the entire plot of the play.
1 PENNY: Price of the cheapest theatre ticket in Shakespeare's day	90%: Percentage of U.S. high schools that require the study of Shakespeare

SYNOPSIS OF OTHELLO

ACT I

As night falls in Venice, Iago, second lieutenant to the Moorish general Othello, is bitter that Othello has passed him over and chosen the inexperienced Cassio to be his first lieutenant. He explains to Roderigo, a foolish gentleman, that he intends to patiently await the time when revenge on Othello will be possible. They arrive at the house of Senator Brabantio, whose daughter, Desdemona, has secretly wed Othello. Iago awakens the old man and crudely tells him that his daughter has eloped with the Moor, whom the Senator dislikes. Brabantio becomes furious, but Iago departs before being recognized, not wanting to jeopardize his planned deception of Othello. Moments later, Iago pretends to be indignant when he tells Othello of Brabantio's violent reaction to the marriage, but Othello is not concerned. They are met by Cassio, who informs Othello that the Duke of Venice wishes to see him.

En route to the palace, they encounter Brabantio and his men, who demand Desdemona's return. Othello avoids a fight by agreeing to take their dispute before the Duke. At the palace, the Duke and his assembled senators receive news that a Turkish fleet is about to attack the Venetian colony of Cyprus. Othello and Brabantio arrive and the council takes up their dispute. Brabantio accuses Othello of using magic to seduce his daughter. Othello lets his reputation as an honorable warrior serve as his defense. When Desdemona arrives to announce that she loves Othello of her own free will, an outraged Brabantio disowns her. The Duke orders Othello to defend Cyprus. Roderigo secretly confesses to Iago his anguish over losing Desdemona, at which point Iago enlists him in his plot to ruin Othello's marriage. In a soliloquy, Iago states that Othello is rumored to have made love to Iago's wife, Emilia. He decides to trick the Moor into believing that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair.

ACT II

The scene shifts to the island of Cyprus, several days later. A storm has destroyed the Turkish fleet before it could attack the island. While awaiting news of Othello's ship, Desdemona and Iago argue about the nature of womanly virtue. Othello arrives and warmly greets his wife, proclaiming a victory celebration. Iago convinces Roderigo to ruin Cassio by provoking a public fight with him. In a soliloquy, Iago reveals his envy of Cassio and Othello and swears to destroy them both.

As the celebration begins, Othello orders Cassio to keep the watch, then retires for his long-awaited wedding night with Desdemona. Iago tricks Cassio into becoming drunk, and then has Roderigo engage him in a fight. A drunken Cassio beats Roderigo and strikes Montano, the governor of Cyprus. Othello, roused from bed, demands to know who started the riot. Iago cleverly implies that it was Cassio. Othello believes him and strips Cassio of his rank. Iago then secretly advises the ruined Cassio to let Desdemona plead his case to Othello. After Cassio departs, Iago confesses in another soliloquy his plans to have the justice-loving Desdemona take up Cassio's cause and make it seem to Othello that she pleads out of love for Cassio.

ACT III

With Othello off inspecting the island's defenses, Desdemona promises Cassio that she will represent him before her husband. When Othello and Iago see them talking, Iago begins to arouse suspicion in Othello by pointing out Cassio's sudden departure at their approach. Desdemona speaks in favor of Cassio, making Othello even more suspicious. After she leaves, Iago skillfully implies that Desdemona's impassioned pleas for Cassio are inspired more by her love for Cassio than her love of justice. He also points out that Venetian women are not to be trusted, reminding Othello of Desdemona's "deception" of her father when she and Othello eloped. Othello is immediately possessed by the "green-eyed monster" of jealousy. Desdemona returns and finds her husband greatly worried. Thinking he is physically ill, she attempts to comfort him with a precious handkerchief that he had given to her during their courtship. He pushes it away, causing her to drop and abandon it. After they leave, Emilia finds the handkerchief and gives it to Iago, who had asked her to steal it.

Othello confronts Iago and demands "ocular proof" of his wife's unfaithfulness. Iago claims that Desdemona has given Cassio the handkerchief as a love token. Othello swears revenge against both Cassio and Desdemona; he makes Iago his first lieutenant, ordering him to murder Cassio, while promising to kill Desdemona himself.

Othello confronts Desdemona in her chambers and demands to see the handkerchief, which an Egyptian sorceress had given to his mother. Desdemona cannot find it and changes the subject by asking if he has attended to Cassio's case. Othello, enraged, stalks off. Cassio enters and asks Desdemona if Othello has changed his mind. She explains that Othello is strangely upset with her, reasoning that it must be some army matter. Later, Cassio is met by his lover, Bianca, and gives her the handkerchief, which Iago had planted in his room.

ACT IV

Iago vividly describes Desdemona's unfaithfulness to Othello, who becomes so upset that he faints. Iago then arranges a scene where Cassio will speak of his lover Bianca, but it will seem to Othello that Cassio is talking about Desdemona. Othello falls for Iago's ploy and becomes even further enraged when Bianca arrives and returns the handkerchief to Cassio. Lodovico, one of Brabantio's relatives, arrives from Venice with a letter from the Duke. He enters the castle with an unsuspecting Desdemona, and gives Othello the letter, in which the Moor reads that he has been dismissed from his command as military governor of Cyprus and replaced by Cassio. Furious and humiliated, Othello hits Desdemona.

Later that evening, Othello confronts Desdemona with his suspicions about her unfaithfulness. She claims innocence, but he calls her a whore. After he storms off, Desdemona asks Emilia to lay out her wedding sheets in an attempt to recapture the spirit of love in her marriage. Iago enters and promises that Othello's behavior is only a passing mood. Then he secretly tells a cowardly Roderigo that Cassio will be ready for ambush later in the evening. That night, Othello rudely dismisses Desdemona after dinner, promising to meet her later. As Emilia helps her get ready for bed, Desdemona sadly sings the "Willow Song" – a song of tragic love and death taught to her by her childhood maid, Barbary.

ACT V

Outside the castle, Roderigo unsuccessfully attacks Cassio and is seriously wounded. In the confusion, Iago badly cuts Cassio's leg from behind. Othello comes out onto the balcony and, believing Cassio to be dead, hurries off to kill Desdemona. Iago then murders Roderigo so he won't expose their deception of Cassio.

Othello comes upon Desdemona asleep in her room. He is uncertain whether to kill her or not, but decides that she must die, "else she'll betray more men." Desdemona wakes and Othello demands that she confess her sins, but she maintains her innocence. Although she pleads with Othello to let her live just for the night, Othello decides he must kill her and smothers her. Emilia bursts in and discovers an almost-dead Desdemona, who refuses to blame Othello. When the Moor confesses to the crime, using Iago's evidence as justification, Emilia begins to realize the extent of Iago's lies and villainy to Othello.

Iago, Montano, and Gratiano (Brabantio's brother) respond to Emilia's cries for help. Othello explains to the Venetians that he had to kill the adulterous Desdemona for the sake of justice. Emilia, however, reveals Iago's lies to a stunned Othello, who then tries to kill Iago. In the confusion, Iago kills Emilia and flees. Emilia is laid beside her mistress, dying with the "Willow Song" on her lips. Lodovico, Cassio, and Montano return with the captive Iago. Othello wounds him superficially, and Iago swears to never confess the motives for his trickery. Othello, in his final speech, announces that he "loved not too wisely, but too well." Recalling his years of service to Venice, Othello stabs himself and falls to his death beside Desdemona on her bloodstained bridal sheets.

CONCEPT MAP

BEFORE/DURING READING: Circle one of the concepts in the middle box and complete the graphic organizer. Add information to your concept map if your opinions develop or change while you read *Othello*.

<p>DEFINE IT</p>	<p>GIVE EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE IT</p>
<p>REVENGE TRUST LOVE JEALOUSY</p>	
<p>CONSEQUENCES (GOOD/BAD) ASSOCIATED WITH IT</p>	<p>OTHER CONNECTIONS YOU CAN MAKE TO IT</p>

AFTER READING: What role did this concept play in *Othello*? Which character exemplified this concept? Cite specific examples from the play to support your opinion.

READING JOURNAL



While reading the play *Othello*, keep a journal of your impressions and thoughts of the various characters. What you write down will help you contribute to class discussions. Try to form your own questions from your observations.

When you finish an assigned reading, select the character you will use for your journal entry. It does not need to be the same character for each entry. Write the character's name at the top of the page. If the character has said a particular line(s) about an issue you want to comment on, write the line(s) under the character's name. Do not simply summarize the actions of the character you have selected. Try to make judgments about the character based on his/her words and/or actions.

Here are some suggestions to help you start your reading journal entries:

- The motivations of _____ are clear/unclear in this scene.
- I am impressed by the actions of _____.
- The character _____ was important in this scene because ...
- The relationship between _____ and _____ is interesting because ...
- The above quote interests me because ...
- I agree/disagree with the opinions/actions of _____ because ...
- The word _____ best describes _____ because ...
- To me, the character I most identify with is _____ because ...
- _____ reminds me of someone I know.
- I was confused by _____ because ...
- The emotion of _____ seemed to be an important part of _____'s life.
- The conflict between _____ and _____ makes the play interesting to me.

Remember, these are only suggestions. You choose WHO and WHAT you want to write about after each assigned reading!

FRIEND OR FOE?

The difference between appearance and reality is a frequently addressed topic in Shakespeare's plays, and it is explored through Othello and Iago's "friendship." Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? Or have you ever been disloyal to a friend? Hopefully no one has had such a "friend" as Iago, but perhaps you can think of a time when you were betrayed or were the betrayer. Keep your own experiences in mind as you explore these questions.

Question	Answer/Example from <i>Othello</i>
What does the play say about friendship and loyalty? Who remains loyal? How is friendship shown?	
What types of betrayal occur in the play? What is the penalty for betrayal?	
What definitions of honor do you find in the play? Why is honor so important? Are there modern equivalents of honor? What equivalents are there among you and your friends?	
Peer pressure occurs when Cassio gives in to drinking because Iago persuades him it is the right thing to do. What other forms of peer pressure do you find in the play? How does Shakespeare's portrayal compare with situations where you or your friends feel pressured by peers?	

EXAMINING PLOT

To understand something about the way a play works, it helps to examine its overall structure. Have the class work in five groups (one group per act of the play) and look closely at the structure of your assigned act. Use the following questions to help guide your group through this process:

- What is the major event that occurs in this act?
- What information is provided in this act?
- What new information do we learn about each of the characters in this act? How do we learn this? From whom?
- What do the character's soliloquies/monologues/speeches tell us about him/her?
- What does the manner in which they speak and to whom tell us?
- What seems to be the focus and major function of the act?

To share your findings with the class, use chart paper to write, draw pictures, cut out pictures from magazines, etc. to create a visual representation of what each act contributes to the structure of the play and to the audience's interpretation.

Place the visual representations up in the classroom in the order of their occurrence in the play. This is a great way to review the plot before going to see a performance or a helpful reminder when discussing the play after you have seen it!

SHAKESPEARE & ARISTOTLE

During the fifth century, a Greek philosopher named Aristotle developed a set of guidelines for writing tragedies. In the chart below, the first column describes Aristotle's guidelines and the second column asks you to give examples of how Shakespeare met the guidelines. If you were Aristotle, how well do you think Shakespeare followed your guidelines when he wrote *Othello*?

Aristotle's Guidelines	Shakespeare's <i>Othello</i>
A tragic hero is usually a person of high status or importance who has enjoyed prosperity and a good reputation.	How does the character of Othello meet this requirement?
The tragic hero usually has some flaw, a character trait that causes the person to commit an error in judgment.	What is Othello's character flaw?
The events that lead to the hero's downfall must be connected, one growing out of the other. These events bring about the play's catastrophe, which is usually the death of the hero.	Iago carefully sets up Othello's downfall. What specific steps did Iago take to destroy Othello?
It is essential that the tragic hero realize what has happened to him or her. Once this awareness occurs, the play moves quickly to its catastrophe.	When does Othello realize his error? What is the result of this realization?
The hero's downfall often destroys not only the hero, but also those around him or her.	Who else is a victim of Othello's fall?
Those watching a tragedy experience fear and pity and are then purged of these emotions and feel a sense of relief, which is called catharsis.	What emotions do the play <i>Othello</i> evoke?

Can you think of any modern plays, movies, or television shows that follow Aristotle's guidelines for tragedy?

BEG, BORROW, STEAL

Shakespeare was a big fan of “borrowing” (today we might call it stealing) ideas, plots, characters, and anything else from other stories or plays to use in his own scripts. However, although he used ideas from other writers, the language he used to craft his plays was purely his own.

As was the case of many of his other plays, the basic story of *Othello* was not Shakespeare’s own creation but was taken from Giraldi Cinthio’s *Hecatommithi*, which was originally published in Italian in 1565. Below is an 1855 translation by J.E. Taylor.

As you read Shakespeare’s primary source, start thinking about what he used and what he changed from the original story. Using a Venn diagram, a t-chart, or any other comparative graphic organizer, jot down notes about what is similar and what is different. Then ask yourself: Which version do you like better? Why did Shakespeare make the changes he did make? Did he improve upon the original story?

“The Venetian Moor” from *Hecatommithi* by Giraldi Cinthio

There once lived in Venice a Moor, who was very valiant and of a handsome person; and having given proofs in war of great skill and prudence, he was highly esteemed by the Duke of the Republic, who in rewarding deeds of valor advanced the interests of the state.

It happened that a virtuous lady of marvelous beauty, named Disdemona, fell in love with the Moor, moved thereto by his valor; and he, vanquished by the beauty and the noble character of Disdemona, returned her love; and their affection was so mutual that, although the parents of the lady strove all they could to induce her to take another husband, she consented to marry the Moor; and they lived in such harmony and peace in Venice that no word ever passed between them that was not affectionate and kind.

Now it happened at this time that the Duke of Venice made a change in the troops whom they used to maintain in Cyprus, and they appointed the Moor commander of the soldiers whom they dispatched thither. Joyful as was the Moor at the honor proffered him, such dignity being only conferred on men of noble rank and well-trying faith, and who had

displayed bravery in arms— yet his pleasure was lessened when he reflected on the length and dangers of the voyage, fearing that Disdemona would be pained at his absence. But Disdemona, who had no other happiness in the world than the Moor, and who rejoiced to witness the testimony of his valor her husband received from so powerful and noble a republic, was all impatient that he should embark with his troops, and longed to accompany him to so honorable a post. And all the more it vexed her to see the Moor so troubled; and not knowing what could be the reason, one day, when they were at dinner, she said to him, “How is it, O Moor, that when so honorable a post has been conferred on you by the Duke, you are thus melancholy?”

The Moor answered Disdemona, “My pleasure at the honor I have received is disturbed by the love I bear you; for I see that of necessity one of two things must happen—either that I take you to encounter the perils of the sea, or, to save you from this danger, I must leave you here in Venice. The first could not be otherwise than serious to me, for all the toil you would have to bear and every danger that might befall you would cause me extreme anxiety

and pain, yet were I to leave you behind me, I should be hateful to myself, since in parting from you I should part from my own life."

Disdemona, on hearing this, replied: "My husband, what thoughts are these that wander through your mind? Why let such things disturb you? I will accompany you withersoever you go, were it to pass through fire, as not to cross the water in a safe and well-provided ship; if needed there are toils and perils to encounter, I will share them with you. And in truth I should think you loved me littler were you to leave me here in Venice, denying me to bear you company, or could believe that I would rather stay in safety here than share the dangers that await you. Prepare then for the voyage with all the readiness which the dignity of the post you hold deserves."

The Moor, in the fullness of his joy, threw his arms around his wife's neck, and with an affectionate and tender kiss exclaimed, "God keep you long in such love, dear wife!" Then speedily donning his armor, and having prepared everything for his expedition, he embarked on board the galley with his wife and all his troops, and, setting sail, they pursued their voyage, and with a perfectly tranquil sea arrived safely at Cyprus.

Now amongst the soldiery there was an Ensign, a man of handsome figure, but of the most depraved nature in the world. This man was in great favor with the Moor, who had not the slightest idea of his wickedness; for, despite the malice lurking in his heart, he cloaked with proud and valorous speech and with a specious presence the villainy of his soul with such art that he was to all outward show another Hector or Achilles. This man had likewise taken with him his wife to Cyprus, a young, and fair, and virtuous lady; and being of Italian birth she was much loved by Disdemona, who spent the greater part of every day with her.

In the same Company there was a certain Captain of a troop, to whom the Moor was affectionate. And Disdemona, for this cause, knowing how much her husband valued him, showed him proofs of the greatest kindness,

which was all very grateful to the Moor. Now the wicked Ensign, regardless of the faith that he had pledged his wife, no less than of friendship, fidelity and obligation which he owed the Moor, fell passionately in love with Disdemona, and bent all his thoughts to achieve his conquest; yet he dared not to declare his passion openly, fearing that, should the Moor perceive it, he would at once kill him. He therefore sought in various ways, and with secret guile, to betray his passion to the lady; but she, whose every wish was centered in the Moor, had no thought for this Ensign more than any other man, and all the means he tried to gain her love had no more effect than if he had not tried them. But the Ensign imagined that the cause of his ill success was that Disdemona loved the Captain of the troop; and the love which he had borne the lady now changed into the bitterest hate, and, having failed in his purposes, he devoted all his thoughts to plot the death of the Captain of the troop and to divert the affection of the Moor from Disdemona. After revolving in his mind various schemes, all alike wicked, he at length resolved to accuse her of unfaithfulness to her husband, and to represent the Captain as her paramour. But knowing the singular love the Moor bore to Disdemona, and the friendship he had for the Captain, he was well aware that, unless he practiced an artful fraud upon the Moor, it were impossible to make him give ear to either accusation; and wherefore he resolved to wait until time and circumstance should open a path for him to engage in his foul project.

Not long afterwards it happened that the Captain, having drawn his sword upon a soldier of the guard and struck him, the Moor deprived him of his rank; whereat Disdemona was deeply grieved, and endeavored again and again to reconcile her husband to the man. This the Moor told to the wicked Ensign, and how his wife importuned him so much about the Captain that he feared he should be forced at last to receive the Captain back to service. Upon this hint, the Ensign resolved to act and began to work his web of intrigue. "Perchance," said he, "the lady Disdemona may have good reason to look kindly upon him."

"And wherefore?" said the Moor.

"Nay, I would not step 'twixt man and wife," replied the Ensign, "but let your eyes be witness to themselves."

In vain the Moor went on to question the officer— he would proceed no further; nevertheless, the Ensign's words left a sharp, stinging thorn in the Moor's heart, who could think of nothing else, trying to guess their meaning and lost in melancholy. And one day, when his wife had been endeavoring to pacify his anger toward the Captain and praying him not to be unmindful of ancient services and friendship for one small fault, especially since peace had been made between the Captain and the soldier he had struck, the Moor was angered, and exclaimed, "Great cause have you, Disdemona, to care so anxiously about this man! Is he a brother, or your kinsman, that he should be so near your heart?"

The lady, with all gentleness and humility, replied, "Be not angered, my dear lord; I have no other cause to bid me speak than sorrow that I see you lose so dear a friend as, by your own words, this Captain has been to you; nor has he done so grave a fault that you should bear him so much enmity. Nay, but you Moors are of so hot a nature that every little trifle moves you to anger and revenge."

Still more enraged at these words, the Moor replied, "I could bring proofs—by heaven it mocks belief! But for the wrongs I have endured revenge must satisfy my wrath."

Disdemona, in astonishment and fright, seeing her husband's anger kindled against her, so contrary to his wont, said humbly and with timidity, "None save a good intent has led me thus to speak with you, my lord; but to give cause no longer for offense, I'll never speak a word more on the subject."

The Moor, observing the earnestness with which his wife again pleaded for the Captain, began to guess the meaning of the Ensign's words; and in deep melancholy he went to seek the villain and induce him to speak more openly of what he knew. Then the Ensign, who

was bent upon injuring the unhappy lady, after feigning at first great reluctance to say aught that might displease the Moor, at length pretended to yield to his entreaties and said, "I can't deny it pains me to the soul to be thus forced to say what needs must be more hard to hear than any other grief; but since you will it so, and that the regard I owe your honor compels me to confess the truth, I will no longer refuse to satisfy your questions and my duty. Know, then, that for no other reason is your lady vexed to see the Captain in disfavor than the pleasure that she has in his company whenever he comes to your house, and all the more since she has taken an aversion to your blackness."

These words went straight to the Moor's heart; but in order to hear more (now that he believed true all that the Ensign had told him) he replied, with a fierce glance, "By heavens, I scarce can hold this hand from plucking out that tongue of thine, so bold, which dares to speak such slander of my wife!"

"Captain," replied the Ensign, "I looked for such reward for these my faithful offices—none else; but since my duty, and the jealous care I bear your honor, have carried me thus far, I do repeat, so stands the truth, as you have heard it from these lips; and if the lady Disdemona hath, with a false show of love for you, blinded your eyes to what you should have seen, this is no argument but that I speak the truth. Nay, this same Captain told it me himself, like one whose happiness is incomplete until he can declare it to another; and, but that I feared your anger, I should have given him, when he told it me, his merited reward, and slain him. But since informing you of what concerns you more than any other man brings me so undeserved a recompense, would I had held my peace, since silence might have spared me your displeasure."

Then the Moor, burning with indignation and anguish, said, "Make thou these eyes self-witness of what thou tell'st or on thy life I'll make thee wish thou had been born without a tongue."

"An easy task it would have been," replied the villain, "when he was used to visit at your house; but now that you have banished him, not for just cause, but for mere frivolous pretext, it will be hard to prove the truth. Still, I do not forgo the hope to make you witness of that which you will not credit my lips."

Thus they parted. The wretched Moor, struck to the heart as by a barbed dart, returned to his home and awaited the day when the Ensign should disclose to him the truth which was to make him miserable to the end of his days. But the evil-minded Ensign was, on his part, not less troubled by the chastity which he knew the lady Desdemona observed inviolate; and it seemed to him impossible to discover a means of making the Moor believe what he had falsely told him; and, turning the matter over in his thoughts in various ways, the villain resolved on a new deed of guilt.

Desdemona often used to go, as I have already said, to visit the Ensign's wife and remained with her a good part of the day. Now, the Ensign observed that she carried about with her a handkerchief, which he knew the Moor had given her, finely embroidered in the Moorish fashion, and which was precious to Desdemona, nor less so to the Moor. Then he conceived the plan of taking this kerchief from her secretly, and thus laying the snare for her final ruin. The Ensign had a little daughter, a child three years of age, who was much loved by Desdemona, who took her and pressed her to her bosom; whilst at the same instant this traitor, who had extreme dexterity of hand, drew the kerchief from her sash so cunningly that she did not notice him, and overjoyed he took his leave of her.

Desdemona, ignorant of what had happened, returned home, and busy with other thoughts, forgot the handkerchief. But a few days afterwards, looking for it and not finding it, she was in alarm, lest the Moor should ask her for it, as he oft was wont to do. Meanwhile, the wicked Ensign seizing a fit opportunity, went to the Captain of the troop, and with crafty malice left the handkerchief at the head of his bed without his discovering the trick until the following morning, when, on his getting out of

bed, the handkerchief fell upon the floor, and he set his foot upon it. And not being able to imagine how it had come to his house, knowing that it belonged to Desdemona, he resolved to give it to her; and waiting until the Moor had gone from home, he went to the back door and knocked. It seemed as if fate conspired with the Ensign to work the death of the unhappy Desdemona. Just at that time the Moor returned home, and hearing a knocking at the back door, he went to the window, and in a rage exclaimed, "Who knocks there?" The Captain, hearing the Moor's voice, and fearing lest he should come downstairs and attack him, took to flight without answering a word. The Moor went down, and opening the door hastened into the street and looked about, but in vain. Then, returning into the house in great anger, he demanded of his wife who it was that had knocked at the door. Desdemona replied, as was true, that she did not know; but the Moor said, "It seemed to me the Captain."

"I know not," answered Desdemona, "whether it was he or another person."

The Moor restrained his fury, great as it was, wishing to do nothing before consulting the Ensign, to whom he hastened instantly, and told him all that had passed, praying him to gather from the Captain all he could respecting the affair. The Ensign, overjoyed at the occurrence, promised the Moor to do as he requested, and one day he took occasion to speak with the Captain when the Moor was so placed that he could see and hear them as they conversed. And whilst talking to him of every other subject than of Desdemona, he kept laughing all the time aloud, and feigning astonishment, he made various movements with his head and hands, as if listening to some tale of marvel. As soon as the Moor saw the Captain depart, he went up to the Ensign to hear what he had said to him. And the Ensign, after long entreaty, at length said, "He has hidden nothing from me and has told me that he has been used to visit your wife whenever you went from home, and that on the last occasion she gave him this handkerchief which you presented to her when you married her."

The Moor thanked the Ensign. It seemed now clear to him that should he find Disdemona not to have the handkerchief it was all true that the Ensign had told to him. One day, therefore, after dinner, in conversation with his wife on various subjects, he asked her for the kerchief. The unhappy lady, who had been in great fear of this, grew red as fire at this demand; and to hide the scarlet of her cheeks, which was closely noted by the Moor, she ran to a chest and pretended to seek the handkerchief, and after hunting for it a long time, she said, "I know not how it is—I cannot find it; can you, perchance, have taken it?"

"If I had taken it," said the Moor, "why should I ask it of you? But you will look better another time."

On leaving the room, the Moor fell to meditating how he should put his wife to death, and likewise the Captain of the troop, so that their deaths should not be laid to his charge. And as he ruminated over this day and night, he could not prevent his wife's observing that he was not the same towards her as he had been wont; and she said to him again and again, "What is the matter? What troubles you? How comes it that you, who were the most light-hearted man in the world, are now so melancholy?"

The Moor feigned various reasons in reply to his wife's questioning, but she was not satisfied, and, although conscious that she had given the Moor no cause, by act or deed, to be so troubled, yet she feared that he might have grown wearied of her; and she would say the Ensign's wife, "I know not what to say of the Moor; he used to be all love towards me; but within these few days he has become another man; and much I fear that I shall prove a warning to young girls not to marry against the wishes of their parents, and that the Italian ladies may learn from me not to wed a man who nature and habitude of life estrange from us. But as I know the Moor is on such terms of friendship with your husband, and communicates to him all of his affairs, I pray you, if you have heard from him aught that you may tell me of, fail not to befriend me." And as she said this, she wept bitterly.

The Ensign's wife, who knew the whole truth (her husband wishing to make use of her to compass the death of Disdemona), but could never consent to such a project, dared not, from fear of her husband, disclose a single circumstance: all she said was, "Beware lest you give any cause of suspicion to your husband, and show to him by every means your fidelity and love."

"Indeed I do so," replied Disdemona, "but it is all of no avail."

Meanwhile the Moor sought in every way to convince himself of what he fain would have found untrue, and he prayed the Ensign to contrive that he might see the handkerchief in the Captain's possession. Though this was difficult for the villain, he promised nevertheless to use every means to produce the proof. Now the Captain had a woman at home who did wonderful embroidery work on fine linen, and when she saw the handkerchief, which belonged to the Moor's wife, she resolved before it was returned to her, to work one like it. As she was engaged in this task, the Ensign observed her standing at a window, where she could be seen by all the passer-bys in the street, and he pointed her out to the Moor, who was now perfectly convinced of his wife's guilt. Then he arranged with the Ensign to slay Disdemona and the Captain of the troop, treating them as it seemed they both deserved. And the Moor prayed the Ensign that he would kill the Captain, promising eternal gratitude to him. But the Ensign at first refused to undertake so dangerous a task, the Captain being a man of equal skill and courage; until at length, after much entreating and being richly paid, the Moor prevailed on him to promise to attempt the deed.

Having formed this resolution, the Ensign, going out one dark night, sword in hand, met the Captain on his way to visit a courtesan, and struck him a blow on his right thigh, which cut off his leg and felled him to the earth. Then the Ensign was on the point of putting an end to his life, when the Captain, who was a courageous man and used to the sight of blood and death, drew his sword and, wounded as he was, kept on his defense, exclaiming with a

loud voice, "I'm murdered!" Thereupon the Ensign, hearing the people come running up, with some of the soldiers who were lodged thereabouts, took to his heels to escape being caught; then turning about again, he joined the crowd, pretending to have been attracted by the noise. And when he saw the Captain's leg cut off, he judged that if not already dead, the blow must, at all events, end his life; and whilst in his heart he was rejoiced at this, yet he feigned to compassionate the Captain as he had been his brother.

The next morning the tidings of this affair spread through the whole city, and reached the ears of Desdemona; whereat she, who was kindhearted and little dreamed that any ill would betide her, evinced the greatest grief at the calamity. This served but to confirm the Moor's suspicions, and he went to seek the Ensign, and said to him, "Do you know that my wife is in such grief at the Captain's accident that she is well nigh gone mad?"

"And what could you expect, seeing he is her very soul?" replied the Ensign.

"Ay, soul forsooth!" exclaimed the Moor; "I'll draw the soul from out her body; call me no man if that I fail to shut the world upon this wretch."

Then they consulted of one means and another—poison and daggers—to kill poor Desdemona, but could resolve on nothing. At length the Ensign said, "A plan comes to my mind, which will give you satisfaction and raise cause for no suspicion. It is this: the house in which you live is very old, and the ceiling of your chamber has many cracks; I purpose we take a stocking, filled with sand, and beat Desdemona with it till she dies; thus will her body bear no signs of violence. When she is dead we can pull down a portion of the ceiling, and thus make it seem as if a rafter falling on her head had killed the lady. Suspicion cannot rest on you, since all men will impute her death to accident."

This cruel counsel pleased the Moor, and he only waited for a fitting time to execute the plot. One night, when he and Desdemona had

retired to bed, the Ensign, whom the Moor had concealed in a closet which opened into the chamber, raised a noise in the closet, according to a concerted plan; whereat the Moor said to his wife, "Did you not hear that noise?"

"Indeed I heard it," she replied.

"Rise," said the Moor, "and see what 'tis."

The unhappy Desdemona rose from the bed, and the instant she approached the closet, out rushed the Ensign, and being strong and stout of nerve, he beat her cruelly with the bag of sand across her back; upon which Desdemona fell to the ground, scarce able to draw her breath; but with the little voice she had left, she called upon the Moor for aid. But the Moor, leaping from bed, exclaimed, "Thou wickedest of women, thus has thy falseness found its just reward, the recompense to wives who, counterfeiting love, place horns upon their husbands' brows."

The wretched lady, hearing those words, and feeling that she was near her end (for the Ensign had given her another blow), appealed to the justice of Heaven, since justice here had failed her, in proof of her fidelity and truth; and as she was thus calling Heaven to witness, the wicked Ensign inflicted a third blow, under which she sank lifeless to the floor.

Then the Ensign and the Moor, laying Desdemona on the bed and wounding her head, pulled down part of the ceiling of the chamber, as they had arranged; whereupon the Moor began to call aloud for help, exclaiming that the house was falling. Hearing this uproar, the neighbors all came running up, and there found Desdemona lying dead beneath a rafter—a sight which, from the good life of that poor lady, did fill all hearts with sorrow.

On the following day Desdemona was buried, followed to the grave by the universal grief of the people. But Heaven, the just rewarder of all hearts, willed not that so wicked a deed should go unpunished. Ere long the Moor, whom Desdemona had loved more than her own life, began to feel such sorrow at her loss

that he went wandering about as one bereft of reason, searching in every part of the spouse. And reflecting in his thoughts that the Ensign had been the cause that he had lost, with Desdemona, all joy in life, he conceived so deep a hatred to that wicked man he could not bear to set eyes on him, and had it not been for his fear of the inviolable justice of the Duke of Venice, he would have slain him openly. But being unable to do this with safety, he deprived him of his rank, and would not allow him to remain in his Company; whereat such an enmity arose between the two that no greater or more deadly can be imagined.

The Ensign, that wickedest of all bad men, now turned his thought to injuring the Moor; and seeking out the Captain, whose wound was by this time healed, and who went about with a wooden leg in place of the one that had been cut off, he said to him, "'Tis time you should be avenged for your lost limb; and if you will come with me to Venice, I'll tell you who the malefactor is, whom I dare not mention to you here for many reasons; and I will bring you proofs."

The Captain of the troop, whose anger returned fiercely but without knowing why, thanked the Ensign and went with him to Venice. On arriving there the Ensign told him it was the Moor who had cut off his leg, on account of the suspicion he had formed of Desdemona's conduct with him; and for that reason he had slain her, and then spread the report that the ceiling had fallen and killed her. Upon hearing which, the Captain accused the Moor to the Duke, both of having cut off his leg and killed his wife, and called the Ensign to witness the truth of what he said. The Ensign declared both charges to be true, for that the

Moor had disclosed to him the whole plot, and had tried to persuade him to perpetrate both crimes; and that, having afterwards killed his wife out of jealousy he had conceived, he had narrated to him the manner in which he had perpetrated her death.

The Duke of Venice, when he heard of the cruelty inflicted by a barbarian upon a lady of their city, commanded the Moor should be arrested in Cyprus, and be brought to Venice, where, with many tortures, they sought to draw from him the truth. But the Moor, bearing with unyielding courage all the torment, denied the whole charge so resolutely that no confession could be drawn from him. But, although by his constancy and firmness he escaped death, he was, after being confined for several days in prison, condemned to perpetual banishment, in which he was eventually slain by the kinsfolk of Desdemona, as he merited.

The Ensign returned to his own country, and, following up his wonted villainy, he accused one of his companions of having sought to persuade him to kill an enemy of his, who was a man of noble rank; whereupon this person was arrested and put to the torture; but the Ensign was likewise tortured to make him prove the truth of his accusations; and he was tortured so that his body ruptured, upon which he was removed from prison and taken home, where he died a miserable death.

Thus did Heaven avenge the innocence of Desdemona; and all these events were narrated by the Ensign's wife, who was privy to the whole, after his death, as I have told them here.

NINE MEN'S MORRIS

Nine Men's Morris is an abstract strategy board game for two players that emerged from the Roman Empire and has been played all over the world. It was highly popular with the Elizabethans, who played it as described below. During pageants, they used children as counters while playing it on a field!

Think of Nine Men's Morris as an action-packed tic-tac-toe, with many twists and turns ... just like Iago's evil schemes in *Othello*!

Materials:

Pencil

Ruler

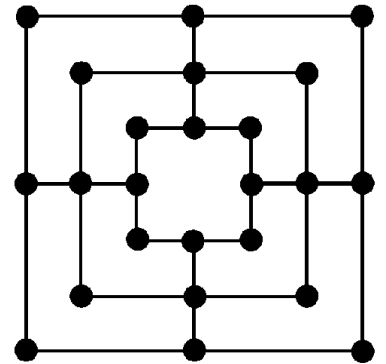
Piece of poster board, 12 by 12 inches square

Markers or crayons

9 counters for each of the 2 players (of two different colors/kinds such as coins, candy, etc.)

Directions:

1. Using the pencil and ruler, draw three squares (one inside the other) on the poster board. The outermost square should be 9 ½ inches square. The middle square should be 6 ½ inches square. The innermost square should be 3 ½ inches square. Leave 1 ¼ inches between each square.
2. Draw 4 lines connecting the midpoints of the sides, as shown in the diagram.
3. Draw circles at each of the corners and midpoints of the squares. Each square has 8 points, for a total of 24 points for the whole board.
4. Go over the pencil lines and circles with markers or crayons. You may also decorate your game board if you wish!



Game Directions:

1. Two players choose their nine counters—pennies vs. dimes, for example.
2. The two players take turns placing one counter at a time on an empty point on the game board. When all 18 counters have been placed, the players take turns moving one counter at a time along a line to the next empty point. Jumping over a counter is NOT allowed!
3. Each player tries to make a row of three along any straight line with his/her counters. A row of three is called a "mill." There are 16 ways to make a mill: You can make a mill along each of the four lines of each square, which equals 12 mills. And the circles you drew on the four lines connecting all three squares brings the total to 16.
4. A player who makes a mill removes any one of the other player's counters from the board with one exception: You may only remove a counter from the other player's existing mill if no other counter of that kind is on the board.
5. The mills you make are not stationary. They do not remaining their fixed positions of three in a row for the rest of the game. Rather, each counter remains in play until your opponent removes it after having formed a mill. On your next turn, you can move one of the counters from your previous mill to get into position to form another mill.
6. Counters that have been removed from the board are out of the game.
7. The losing player is the one who has only two counters left on the board or who is blocked from moving.

adapted from Shakespeare for Kids: His Life and Times by Colleen Aagesen and Marcie Blumberg, 1999

EDUCATOR COMMENTS

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Please feel free to use the back of this form to include any additional comments.

Name of Play: _____ Performance Date: _____

Did the confirmation packet provide you with the information you needed? Why/why not? _____

Did you find the Teacher Guide helpful? What did you particularly like/dislike? _____

Did you enjoy the performance? Why/why not? _____

Could you understand it? _____

Could you hear it? _____

What did you think of it visually? _____

Would you recommend Southwest Shakespeare to other educators? Why/why not? _____

Your name and school (optional) _____

E-mail address (optional) _____