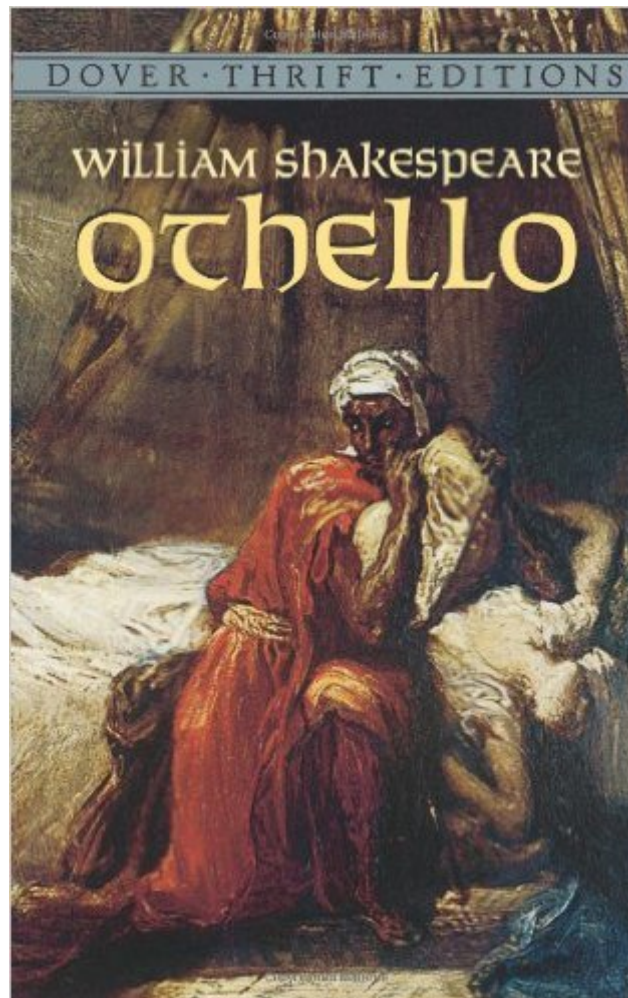


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Othello (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

One of the greatest of Shakespeare's tragedies, Othello tells the story of a Moorish general in command of the armed forces of Venice who earns the enmity of his ensign Iago by passing him over for a promotion. Partly for revenge and partly out of pure evil, Iago plots to convince Othello that Desdemona, his wife, has been unfaithful to him. Iago succeeds in his evil aims only too well, for the enraged Othello murders Desdemona. When Othello later learns of her innocence, he takes his own life. Bleak and unsparing, this play offers a stunning portrait of an arch-villain and an astute psychological study of the nature of evil.

Book Information

Series: Dover Thrift Editions

Paperback: 112 pages

Publisher: Dover Publications; 1 edition (June 7, 1996)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0486290972

ISBN-13: 978-0486290973

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.3 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (340 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

As a play, "Othello" encompasses many things but more than anything else it is a study of pure evil. Although Othello is an accomplished professional soldier and a hero of sorts, he is also a minority and an outcast in many ways. As a Black man and a Moor (which means he's a Moslem), Othello has at least two qualities, which make him stand out in the Elizabethan world. He is also married to a Caucasian woman named Desdemona, which creates an undercurrent of hostility as evidenced by the derogatory remark "the ram hath topped the ewe". Othello's problems begin when he promotes one of his soldiers, Michael Cassio as his lieutenant. This arouses the jealousy and hatred of one of his other soldiers, Iago who hatches a plot to destroy Othello and Michael Cassio. When Cassio injures an opponent in a fight he is rebuked, punished, and subsequently ignored by

Othello who must discipline him and teach him a lesson. Iago convinces Desdemona to intervene on Cassio's behalf and then begins to convince Othello that Desdemona is in love with Cassio. This is actually one of the most difficult Shakespeare plays to watch because the audience sees the plot begin to unfold and is tormented by Othello's gradual descent into Iago's trap. As with other Shakespeare plays, the critical components of this one are revealed by language. When Othello is eventually convinced of Cassio's treachery, he condemns him and promotes Iago in his place. When Othello tells Iago that he has made him his lieutenant, Iago responds with the chilling line, "I am thine forever". To Othello this is a simple affirmation of loyalty, but to the audience, this phrase contains a double meaning.

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