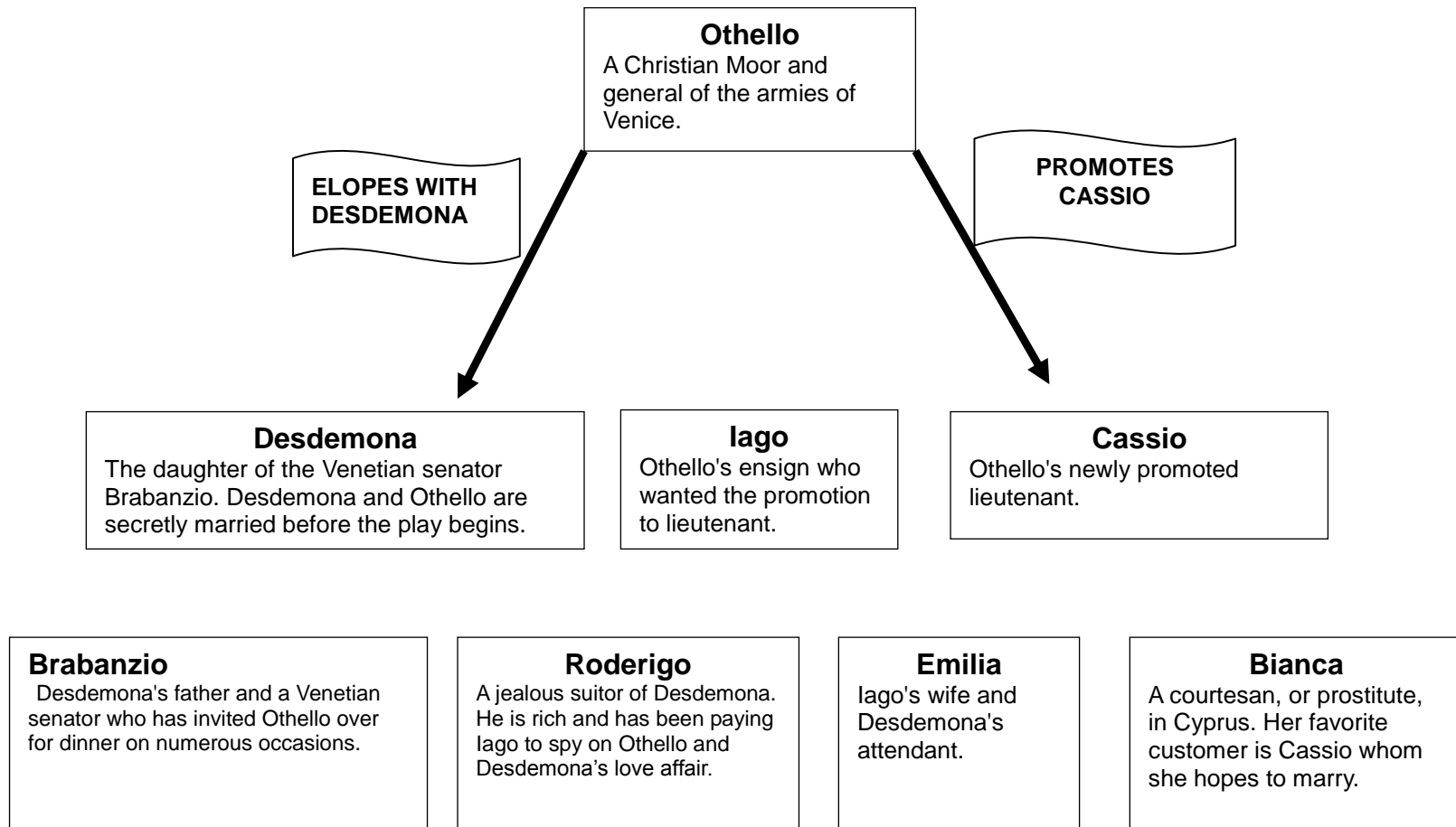


The Tragedy of Othello, The Moor of Venice

Quintessential Othello Question

In this play, Othello is torn by a terrible dilemma—whether he can trust his bride or whether he can trust his ensign. His choice to trust Iago results in tragedy. Is his downfall a result of discrimination against him because he is a Moor, the result of his tragic flaw, the crippling grip of jealousy, or a combination of several factors. How does the answer to this question explain Othello's final choice to trust Iago instead of Desdemona?



Othello Reading #1: Jealousy

Jealousy is defined as the emotion of envy or suspicious possessiveness. Jealousy is an irrational reaction compounded of grief, loss of self-esteem, enmity against the rival and self criticism.

Jealousy is an emotion experienced by one who perceives that another person is giving something that he or she wants (typically attention, love, or affection) to a third party. For example, a child will likely become jealous when her parent gives something special to a sibling but not to her. While the child's jealousy might be subdued if she also received something special from the parent, such is typically not the case for a jealous lover, who wants the beloved to give some kinds of attention exclusively to him.

Source: Roget, P.M. (ed.) (1947). *Roget's thesaurus of words and phrases*.

Some authorities distinguish between jealousy and envy on the ground that jealousy involves the wish to keep what one has, and envy the wish to get what one does not have. (Thus, the child is jealous of her parents' attention to a sibling, but envious of her friend's new bicycle.) This is problematic. For example, a teenager may be jealous of the affection a rock star bestows on his fiancée, even though the teenager neither has nor thinks she has that affection herself. Others suggest that the key difference between envy and jealousy is the involvement of a third party: it is not merely that the jealous person wishes to have the attention for himself, or that the third party who is getting it would not get it, but rather that he wishes the person of whom he is jealous would not give that

attention to a third party.

For this kind of reason, some have suggested that jealousy most centrally concerns one's perception of oneself. The perception that a person whose evaluation matters a great deal to us prefers someone else can make us doubt our own worth.

Synonyms of jealousy include enviousness, invidiousness, possessive, possessory, covetous, demanding, grasping, grudging, green-eyed, mistrustful, suspicious, doubting, and questioning.

Othello Reading #2: Delusional jealousy (From Wikipedia)

Delusional jealousy (also known as **morbid jealousy**, or **Othello syndrome**) is a psychiatric disorder in which a person holds a delusional belief that their spouse or sexual partner is being unfaithful.

The name Othello syndrome comes from the character in Shakespeare's play *Othello*, who murders his wife as a result of a false belief that she has been unfaithful. Recently some workers have asserted that Othello was deceived rather than deluded about Desdemona's alleged infidelity and thus did not have 'the Othello Syndrome'. They assert that the term is a misnomer and thus should be abandoned.^[1]

An affected person typically makes repeated accusations of infidelity based on insignificant or minimal evidence, often citing seemingly normal or everyday events or material to back up their claim. They may also take great pains to test their partner's fidelity and can go to considerable lengths to monitor their behavior and movements. This may be taken to extremes, such as "private-eye" type surveillance outside of the partner's residence or workplace, following them into the bathroom in case their partner has an illicit meeting or even hearing the voice of the perceived lover. Delusional jealousy is more often found in males than females, and it can

occur regardless of an individual's sexual orientation.

Unlike other delusional disorders, delusional jealousy has a strong association with violence and in some cases stalking behavior. At the very least affected individuals tend to be irritable and confrontational.

It can be found in the context of schizophrenia and delusional disorder, such as bipolar disorder, but is also associated with alcoholism and sexual dysfunction and has been reported after neurological illness.