

# Prince Albert High School



## A-Level English Literature



## Transition Work

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

To be completed by: September 2026 Sixth Form Start Date

## **Course Overview:**

# **AQA A-Level English Literature B 7717**

### **Paper 1: Literary Genres (40% of A-Level)**

#### **Aspects of Tragedy**

- *Othello* by William Shakespeare
- *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller
- Keats Poetry Selection

### **Paper 2: Texts and Genres (40% of A-Level)**

#### **Elements of Social and Political Protest Writing**

- *The Handmaids Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* by William Blake

### **NEA/ Coursework (20% of A-Level)**

Study of two texts: one poetry and one prose texts informed by the study of the Critical Anthology.

# **Instructions:**

You are beginning the study of tragedy, one of the most important literary genres.

Before September, you will investigate whether Shakespeare's *Othello* can be considered a tragic hero by studying:

- Arthur Miller's ideas about tragedy
- Act 1 of *Othello*
- Different interpretations of what makes a tragic protagonist

You are not expected to understand everything. The aim is to arrive in September with questions and ideas.

Enquiry Question: "Is *Othello* destroyed by his own flaws or by the society around him?"

# **Wider Reading List:**

## **Reading About Ideas**

### **1. Maya Angelou – I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings**

Themes:

- Identity
- Race
- Belonging
- Self-worth

*You can make interesting connections with *Othello*'s position as an outsider.*

### **2. John Steinbeck – Of Mice and Men (some derogatory and explicit language)**

Useful because:

- George and Lennie are outsiders.
- Society shapes their opportunities.
- Raises questions about belonging and exclusion.

### **3. George Orwell – Shooting an Elephant**

A short essay that explores:

- Public expectation
- Reputation

- Identity
- Performing a social role

Excellent preparation for analysing Othello's public image.

#### **4. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie – The Danger of a Single Story**

Useful for thinking about:

- Stereotypes
- Prejudice
- The construction of identity

You can connect these ideas directly to the way Othello is described before he appears.

Available online as a video and transcript.

### Ambitious Reading (Stretch and Challenge)

#### **5. Aristotle – Poetics (selected extracts)**

Focus on:

- Tragic hero
- Hamartia
- Catharsis

Key question: Is Othello more Aristotelian or Millerian?

#### **6. F.R. Leavis – F. R. Leavis on Othello**

Leavis famously argued that Othello contributes significantly to his own downfall.

Instead ask: Does Leavis blame Othello more than Miller would?

#### **7. A.C. Bradley – A. C. Bradley**

Bradley sees Othello as a noble tragic hero.

You could compare: Bradley's Othello with Miller's tragic hero

### Adaptations (Films and Performances)

#### **National Theatre Othello**

Starring:

- Adrian Lester
- Rory Kinnear

Particularly useful for discussions of race and identity.

# Vocabulary Bank

## Othello in Act 1:

<b>Word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Outsider	Someone who does not fully belong
Otherness	Being perceived as different
Prejudice	Judging someone unfairly before knowing them
Stereotype	A simplified and often unfair belief about a group
Dehumanisation	Presenting someone as less than human
Noble	Honourable and morally admirable
Eloquent	Fluent and persuasive in speech
Respected	Admired by others
Authority	Power or influence
Honour	Respect gained through actions and character
Integrity	Strong moral principles
Manipulation	Controlling others for personal gain

## Miller's Ideas:

<b>Word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Status	A person's social position
Reputation	How a person is viewed by others
Self-worth	The value a person places on themselves
Humiliation	A loss of dignity or respect
Alienation	Feeling isolated from society
Exclusion	Being denied acceptance or belonging
Aspiration	A desire to achieve a higher position
Struggle	A difficult effort to achieve something
Acceptance	Being recognised as belonging
Marginalisation	Being pushed to the edge of society
Discrimination	Unfair treatment based on identity
Social hierarchy	The ranking of people within society

# Part 1: Understanding Tragedy

## 1. What makes a text a tragedy?

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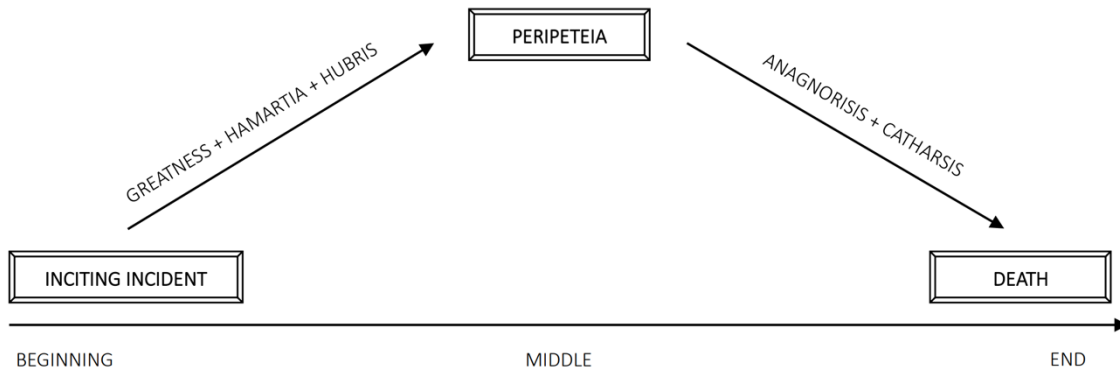
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## 2. Key Vocabulary

Key word	Definition
Hamartia	
Hubris	
Catastrophe	
Inevitability	
Conflict	
Catharsis	
Suffering	
Anagnorisis	
Identity	
Demise	
Morality	
Peripeteia	

**3. The Archetypal Tragic Hero- Label and annotate what you know about the diagram below**



**4. Brain Dump: Write down everything you can remember about Othello, Shakespeare or tragedy from your KS3/4 English studies.**





# Part 3: Analysing *Othello*

1. Complete the table

What others say about Othello	What Othello says about himself

What impression do Iago and Brabantio create?

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How does Shakespeare challenge that impression?

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Why might Shakespeare introduce Othello this way?

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# **Part 5: Adopting a Critical Approach and Understanding Miller**

You are going to read Arthur Miller's (author of *Death of a Salesman*) essay 'The Tragedy of the Common Man'. *Reading materials can be found at the back of the booklet.*

Following your first read, complete the following questions:

1. According to Miller, who can be a tragic hero? Find one quotation that supports your answer.

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2. What does Miller mean by the phrase: "the common man"? Explain in your own words.

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3. Miller argues that tragedy often begins when someone refuses to accept humiliation or loss of status. What does he mean by this?

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4. What does Miller believe people are fighting for in a tragedy? Find evidence from the essay.

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5. Why does Miller disagree with the idea that tragedy only belongs to kings and princes?

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## Part 6: Key Quotations

Quotations	What does Miller mean?	Link this to or give a real-life example.	How might this idea connect to Othello?
<p>"The common man is as apt a subject for tragedy as kings were."</p>			
<p>"The tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life... to secure one thing – his sense of personal dignity."</p>			
<p>"The underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his rightful position in society."</p>			



## Part 8: Applying Ideas

Miller's Idea	Evidence from Othello (key quotations/ moments)
Struggles for status	
Desire for dignity	
Conflict with society	
Threat to identity	







# **Part 10: Extended Response**

## **Essay Question:**

Arthur Miller argued that tragedy is created by an individual's struggle to secure their place in society. Using your reading of Act 1, explore how far this idea applies to Othello.

*Use the planning space below:*

<b>Thesis statement:</b>	
<b>1:</b>	<b>2:</b>
<b>3:</b>	<b>4:</b>
<b>Conclusion:</b>	

## **Success Checklist:**

- ✓ Have I answered the question throughout?
- ✓ Have I used quotations from Act 1?
- ✓ Have I analysed Shakespeare's language and dramatic methods?
- ✓ Have I referred to Miller's ideas?
- ✓ Have I explored Othello's status and position in society?
- ✓ Have I offered my own interpretation?
- ✓ Have I considered another possible interpretation?
- ✓ Have I reached a clear judgement?













# Othello

Act 1 of William Shakespeare's Othello text



[NoSweatShakespeare.com](http://NoSweatShakespeare.com)

*Making Shakespeare easy and accessible*

## ACT I

### SCENE I. Venice. A street.

*Enter RODERIGO and IAGO*

#### RODERIGO

Tush! never tell me; I take it much unkindly That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.

#### IAGO

Sblood, but you will not hear me:  
If ever I did dream of such a matter, Abhor me.

#### RODERIGO

Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate.

#### IAGO

Despise me, if I do not. Three great ones of the city,  
In personal suit to make me his lieutenant, Off-capp'd to him: and, by  
the faith of man, I know my price, I am worth no worse a place:  
But he; as loving his own pride and purposes,  
Evades them, with a bombast circumstance  
Horribly stuff'd with epithets of war;  
And, in conclusion,  
Nonsuits my mediators; for, 'Certes,' says he, I have already chose  
my officer.' And what was he?

Forsooth, a great arithmetician,  
One Michael Cassio, a Florentine,  
A fellow almost damn'd in a fair wife;  
That never set a squadron in the field,  
Nor the division of a battle knows  
More than a spinster; unless the bookish theoretic,  
Wherein the toged consuls can propose  
As masterly as he: mere prattle, without practise, Is all his soldiership.  
But he, sir, had the election:  
And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof  
At Rhodes, at Cyprus and on other grounds  
Christian and heathen, must be be-lee'd and calm'd  
By debtor and creditor: this counter-caster, He, in good time, must his  
lieutenant be,  
And I--God bless the mark!--his Moorship's ancient.

**RODERIGO**

By heaven, I rather would have been his hangman.

**IAGO**

Why, there's no remedy; 'tis the curse of service,  
Preferment goes by letter and affection,  
And not by old gradation, where each second  
Stood heir to the first. Now, sir, be judge yourself, Whether I in any just  
term am affined To love the Moor.

**RODERIGO**

I would not follow him then.

**IAGO**

O, sir, content you;  
I follow him to serve my turn upon him:  
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters  
Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall mark  
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,  
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage, Wears out his time, much like his  
master's ass, For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd:  
Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are  
Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,  
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,  
And, throwing but shows of service on their lords, Do well thrive by them  
and when they have lined their coats  
Do themselves homage: these fellows have some soul;  
And such a one do I profess myself. For, sir, It is as sure as you are  
Roderigo, Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago:  
In following him, I follow but myself;  
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty, But seeming so, for my  
peculiar end:  
For when my outward action doth demonstrate  
The native act and figure of my heart  
In compliment extern, 'tis not long after  
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve For daws to peck at: I am  
not what I am.

**RODERIGO**

What a full fortune does the thicklips owe If he can carry't thus!

**IAGO**

Call up her father,  
Rouse him: make after him, poison his delight,  
Proclaim him in the streets; incense her kinsmen,  
And, though he in a fertile climate dwell,  
Plague him with flies: though that his joy be joy, Yet throw such  
changes of vexation on't, As it may lose some colour.

**RODERIGO**

Here is her father's house; I'll call aloud.

**IAGO**

Do, with like timorous accent and dire yell As when, by night and  
negligence, the fire Is spied in populous cities.

**RODERIGO**

What, ho, Brabantio! Signior Brabantio, ho!

**IAGO**

Awake! what, ho, Brabantio! thieves! thieves! thieves!  
Look to your house, your daughter and your bags!  
Thieves! thieves!

*BRABANTIO appears above, at a window*

**BRABANTIO**

What is the reason of this terrible summons?  
What is the matter there?

**RODERIGO**

Signior, is all your family within?

**IAGO**

Are your doors lock'd?

**BRABANTIO**

Why, wherefore ask you this?

**IAGO**

Zounds, sir, you're robb'd; for shame, put on your gown;  
Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul;  
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram  
Is topping your white ewe. Arise, arise; Awake the snorting citizens  
with the bell, Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you: Arise, I  
say.

**BRABANTIO**

What, have you lost your wits?

**RODERIGO**

Most reverend signior, do you know my voice?

**BRABANTIO**

Not I what are you?

**RODERIGO**

My name is Roderigo.

**BRABANTIO**

The worser welcome:

I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors: In honest plainness thou  
hast heard me say

My daughter is not for thee; and now, in madness,  
Being full of supper and distempering draughts, Upon malicious  
bravery, dost thou come To start my quiet.

**RODERIGO**

Sir, sir, sir,--

**BRABANTIO**

But thou must needs be sure

My spirit and my place have in them power To make this bitter to thee.

**RODERIGO**

Patience, good sir.

**BRABANTIO**

What tell'st thou me of robbing? this is Venice; My house is not a grange.

**RODERIGO**

Most grave Brabantio,

In simple and pure soul I come to you.

**IAGO**

Zounds, sir, you are one of those that will not serve God, if the devil bid you. Because we come to do you service and you think we are ruffians, you'll have your daughter covered with a Barbary horse; you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins and gennets for germans.

**BRABANTIO**

What profane wretch art thou?

**IAGO**

I am one, sir, that comes to tell you your daughter and the Moor are now making the beast with two backs.

**BRABANTIO**

Thou art a villain.

**IAGO**

You are--a senator.

**BRABANTIO**

This thou shalt answer; I know thee, Roderigo.

**RODERIGO**

Sir, I will answer any thing. But, I beseech you,

If't be your pleasure and most wise consent,

As partly I find it is, that your fair daughter,

At this odd-even and dull watch o' the night,

Transported, with no worse nor better guard

But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,

To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor-- If this be known to you and your allowance,

We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs;

But if you know not this, my manners tell me

We have your wrong rebuke. Do not believe

That, from the sense of all civility,

I thus would play and trifle with your reverence:

Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,

I say again, hath made a gross revolt;

Tying her duty, beauty, wit and fortunes In an extravagant and wheeling stranger Of here and every where. Straight satisfy yourself:

If she be in her chamber or your house, Let loose on me the justice of the state For thus deluding you.

**BRABANTIO**

Strike on the tinder, ho!  
Give me a taper! call up all my people!  
This accident is not unlike my dream:  
Belief of it oppresses me already.  
Light, I say! light!

*Exit above*

**IAGO**

Farewell; for I must leave you:  
It seems not meet, nor wholesome to my place,  
To be produced--as, if I stay, I shall-- Against the Moor: for, I do  
know, the state,  
However this may gall him with some cheque,  
Cannot with safety cast him, for he's embark'd  
With such loud reason to the Cyprus wars,  
Which even now stand in act, that, for their souls,  
Another of his fathom they have none, To lead their business:  
in which regard, Though I do hate him as I do hell-pains.  
Yet, for necessity of present life,  
I must show out a flag and sign of love,  
Which is indeed but sign. That you shall surely find him, Lead to the Sagittary  
the raised search; And there will I be with him. So, farewell.

*Exit*

*Enter, below, BRABANTIO, and Servants with torches*

**BRABANTIO**

It is too true an evil: gone she is;  
And what's to come of my despised time  
Is nought but bitterness. Now, Roderigo,  
Where didst thou see her? O unhappy girl!  
With the Moor, say'st thou? Who would be a father! How didst thou know  
'twas she? O she deceives me  
Past thought! What said she to you? Get more tapers:  
Raise all my kindred. Are they married, think you?

**RODERIGO**

Truly, I think they are.

**BRABANTIO**

O heaven! How got she out? O treason of the blood!  
Fathers, from hence trust not your daughters' minds  
By what you see them act. Is there not charms  
By which the property of youth and maidhood May be abused? Have  
you not read, Roderigo, Of some such thing?

**RODERIGO**

Yes, sir, I have indeed.

**BRABANTIO**

Call up my brother. O, would you had had her! Some one way, some  
another. Do you know Where we may apprehend her and the Moor?

**RODERIGO**

I think I can discover him, if you please, To get good guard and go  
along with me.

**BRABANTIO**

Pray you, lead on. At every house I'll call;

I may command at most. Get weapons, ho! And raise some special officers of night.

On, good Roderigo: I'll deserve your pains. *Exeunt*

## **SCENE II. Another street.**

*Enter OTHELLO, IAGO, and Attendants with torches*

**IAGO**

Though in the trade of war I have slain men,  
Yet do I hold it very stuff o' the conscience  
To do no contrived murder: I lack iniquity Sometimes to do me service:  
nine or ten times I had thought to have yerked him here under the ribs.

**OTHELLO**

Tis better as it is.

**IAGO**

Nay, but he prated,  
And spoke such scurvy and provoking terms  
Against your honour  
That, with the little godliness I have,  
I did full hard forbear him. But, I pray you, sir,  
Are you fast married? Be assured of this,  
That the magnifico is much beloved,  
And hath in his effect a voice potential  
As double as the duke's: he will divorce you;  
Or put upon you what restraint and grievance The law, with all his  
might to enforce it on, Will give him cable.

**OTHELLO**

Let him do his spite:  
My services which I have done the signiory  
Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'Tis yet to know,--  
Which, when I know that boasting is an honour,  
I shall promulgate--I fetch my life and being  
From men of royal siege, and my demerits  
May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune  
As this that I have reach'd: for know, Iago,  
But that I love the gentle Desdemona,  
I would not my unhoused free condition  
Put into circumscription and confine  
For the sea's worth. But, look! what lights come yond?

**IAGO**

Those are the raised father and his friends:  
You were best go in.

**OTHELLO**

Not I I must be found: My parts, my title and my perfect soul  
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?

**IAGO**

By Janus, I think no.

*Enter CASSIO, and certain Officers with torches*

**OTHELLO**

The servants of the duke, and my lieutenant.

The goodness of the night upon you, friends!

What is the news?

**CASSIO**

The duke does greet you, general,

And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance, Even on the instant.

**OTHELLO**

What is the matter, think you?

**CASSIO**

Something from Cyprus as I may divine:

It is a business of some heat: the galleys

Have sent a dozen sequent messengers

This very night at one another's heels,

And many of the consuls, raised and met, Are at the duke's

already: you have been hotly call'd for;

When, being not at your lodging to be found, The senate hath sent about  
three several guests To search you out.

**OTHELLO**

Tis well I am found by you.

I will but spend a word here in the house, And go with you.

*Exit*

**CASSIO**

Ancient, what makes he here?

**IAGO**

Faith, he to-night hath boarded a land carack:

If it prove lawful prize, he's made for ever.

**CASSIO**

I do not understand.

**IAGO**

He's married.

**CASSIO** To who?

*Re-enter OTHELLO*

**IAGO**

Marry, to--Come, captain, will you go?

**OTHELLO**

Have with you.

**CASSIO**

Here comes another troop to seek for you.

**IAGO**

It is Brabantio. General, be advised; He comes to bad intent.

*Enter BRABANTIO, RODERIGO, and Officers with torches and weapons*

**OTHELLO**

Holla! stand there!

**RODERIGO**

Signior, it is the Moor.

**BRABANTIO**

Down with him, thief!

*They draw on both sides*

**IAGO**

You, Roderigo! come, sir, I am for you.

**OTHELLO**

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them. Good signior, you shall more command with years Than with your weapons.

**BRABANTIO**

O thou foul thief, where hast thou stow'd my daughter?  
Damn'd as thou art, thou hast enchanted her;  
For I'll refer me to all things of sense,  
If she in chains of magic were not bound,  
Whether a maid so tender, fair and happy,  
So opposite to marriage that she shunned  
The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,  
Would ever have, to incur a general mock,  
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom  
Of such a thing as thou, to fear, not to delight.  
Judge me the world, if 'tis not gross in sense  
That thou hast practised on her with foul charms,  
Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals That weaken motion:  
I'll have't disputed on; 'Tis probable and palpable to thinking.  
I therefore apprehend and do attach thee For an abuser of the  
world, a practiser Of arts inhibited and out of warrant. Lay  
hold upon him: if he do resist, Subdue him at his peril.

**OTHELLO**

Hold your hands,  
Both you of my inclining, and the rest:  
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it Without a prompter.  
Where will you that I go To answer this your charge?

**BRABANTIO**

To prison, till fit time  
Of law and course of direct session Call thee to answer.

**OTHELLO**

What if I do obey?  
How may the duke be therewith satisfied,  
Whose messengers are here about my side, Upon some present  
business of the state To bring me to him?

**First Officer**

'Tis true, most worthy signior; The duke's in council and your  
noble self, I am sure, is sent for.

**BRABANTIO**

How! the duke in council!  
In this time of the night! Bring him away:  
Mine's not an idle cause: the duke himself,  
Or any of my brothers of the state,  
Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own; For if such actions may  
have passage free, Bond-slaves and pagans shall our statesmen be.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. A council-chamber.**

*The DUKE and Senators sitting at a table; Officers attending*

**DUKE OF VENICE**

There is no composition in these news That gives them credit.

**First Senator**

Indeed, they are disproportion'd;  
My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

And mine, a hundred and forty. **Second Senator** And  
mine, two hundred:

But though they jump not on a just account,--

As in these cases, where the aim reports,

Tis oft with difference--yet do they all confirm A Turkish fleet, and  
bearing up to Cyprus.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Nay, it is possible enough to judgment:

I do not so secure me in the error, But the main article I do  
approve In fearful sense.

**Sailor**

[Within] What, ho! what, ho! what, ho!

**First Officer**

A messenger from the galleys.

*Enter a Sailor*

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Now, what's the business?

**Sailor**

The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes; So was I bid report  
here to the state By Signior Angelo.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

How say you by this change?

**First Senator**

This cannot be,

By no assay of reason: 'tis a pageant,

To keep us in false gaze. When we consider

The importancy of Cyprus to the Turk,

And let ourselves again but understand,

That as it more concerns the Turk than Rhodes,

So may he with more facile question bear it,

For that it stands not in such warlike brace,

But altogether lacks the abilities

That Rhodes is dress'd in: if we make thought of this,

We must not think the Turk is so unskilful

To leave that latest which concerns him first, Neglecting an attempt  
of ease and gain, To wake and wage a danger profitless.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Nay, in all confidence, he's not for Rhodes. **First Officer** Here is  
more news. *Enter a Messenger*

**Messenger**

The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,

Steering with due course towards the isle of Rhodes, Have there injointed  
them with an after fleet.

**First Senator**

Ay, so I thought. How many, as you guess?

**Messenger**

Of thirty sail: and now they do restem

Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance  
Their purposes toward Cyprus. Signior Montano,  
Your trusty and most valiant servitor, With his free duty  
recommends you thus, And prays you to believe him.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Tis certain, then, for Cyprus.

Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town? **First Senator** He's  
now in Florence.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Write from us to him; post-post-haste dispatch.

**First Senator**

Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

*Enter BRABANTIO, OTHELLO, IAGO, RODERIGO, and Officers*

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you Against the general enemy  
Ottoman.

*To BRABANTIO*

I did not see you; welcome, gentle signior; We lack'd your counsel  
and your help tonight.

**BRABANTIO**

So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me;  
Neither my place nor aught I heard of business  
Hath raised me from my bed, nor doth the general care  
Take hold on me, for my particular grief  
Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature  
That it engulfs and swallows other sorrows  
And it is still itself.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Why, what's the matter?

**BRABANTIO**

My daughter! O, my daughter!

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Dead?

**BRABANTIO**

Ay, to me;

She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted

By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;

For nature so preposterously to err, Being not deficient, blind, or  
lame of sense, Sans witchcraft could not.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Whoe'er he be that in this foul proceeding

Hath thus beguiled your daughter of herself

And you of her, the bloody book of law

You shall yourself read in the bitter letter After your own sense, yea,  
though our proper son Stood in your action.

**BRABANTIO**

Humbly I thank your grace.

Here is the man, this Moor, whom now, it seems, Your special mandate  
for the state-affairs Hath hither brought.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

We are very sorry for't.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

[To OTHELLO] What, in your own part, can you say to this?

**BRABANTIO**

Nothing, but this is so.

**OTHELLO**

Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,  
My very noble and approved good masters, That I have ta'en away this  
old man's daughter, It is most true; true, I have married her:  
The very head and front of my offending Hath this extent, no more. Rude  
am I in my speech, And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace:  
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,  
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used  
Their dearest action in the tented field,  
And little of this great world can I speak,  
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,  
And therefore little shall I grace my cause  
In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,  
I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver  
Of my whole course of love; what drugs, what charms,  
What conjuration and what mighty magic,  
For such proceeding I am charged withal, I won his daughter.

**BRABANTIO**

A maiden never bold;  
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion  
Blush'd at herself; and she, in spite of nature, Of years, of country,  
credit, every thing, To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!  
It is a judgment maim'd and most imperfect  
That will confess perfection so could err  
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven  
To find out practises of cunning hell,  
Why this should be. I therefore vouch again  
That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood, Or with some dram  
conjured to this effect, He wrought upon her.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

To vouch this, is no proof,  
Without more wider and more overt test  
Than these thin habits and poor likelihoods Of modern seeming  
do prefer against him. **First Senator** But, Othello, speak:  
Did you by indirect and forced courses Subdue and poison this young  
maid's affections? Or came it by request and such fair question As soul  
to soul affordeth?

**OTHELLO**

I do beseech you, Send for the lady to the Sagittary, And let her  
speak of me before her father:  
If you do find me foul in her report,  
The trust, the office I do hold of you, Not only take away, but  
let your sentence Even fall upon my life.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Fetch Desdemona hither.

**OTHELLO**

Ancient, conduct them: you best know the place.

*Exeunt IAGO and Attendants*

And, till she come, as truly as to heaven  
I do confess the vices of my blood,  
So justly to your grave ears I'll present How I did thrive in this  
fair lady's love, And she in mine.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Say it, Othello.

**OTHELLO**

Her father loved me; oft invited me;  
Still question'd me the story of my life,  
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes, That I have passed.  
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,  
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;  
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,  
Of moving accidents by flood and field  
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,  
Of being taken by the insolent foe  
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence And portance in my  
travels' history:  
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,  
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven  
It was my hint to speak,--such was the process;  
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,  
The Anthropophagi and men whose heads Do grow beneath their  
shoulders. This to hear Would Desdemona seriously incline:  
But still the house-affairs would draw her thence:  
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,  
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear  
Devour up my discourse: which I observing,  
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means  
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart  
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,  
Whereof by parcels she had something heard,  
But not intentively: I did consent,  
And often did beguile her of her tears,  
When I did speak of some distressful stroke  
That my youth suffer'd. My story being done, She gave me for my pains a  
world of sighs: She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange, Twas  
pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:  
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd  
That heaven had made her such a man: she thank'd me, And bade me, if I had  
a friend that loved her, I should but teach him how to tell my story.  
And that would woo her. Upon this hint I spake: She loved me for the  
dangers I had pass'd, And I loved her that she did pity them.  
This only is the witchcraft I have used:  
Here comes the lady; let her witness it.  
*Enter DESDEMONA, IAGO, and Attendants* **DUKE OF VENICE**  
I think this tale would win my daughter too.  
Good Brabantio,  
Take up this mangled matter at the best: Men do their broken  
weapons rather use Than their bare hands.

**BRABANTIO**

I pray you, hear her speak:

If she confess that she was half the wooer, Destruction on my head, if my bad blame Light on the man! Come hither, gentle mistress: Do you perceive in all this noble company Where most you owe obedience?

**DESDEMONA**

My noble father,

I do perceive here a divided duty:

To you I am bound for life and education;

My life and education both do learn me

How to respect you; you are the lord of duty;

I am hitherto your daughter: but here's my husband,

And so much duty as my mother show'd

To you, preferring you before her father, So much I challenge that I may profess Due to the Moor my lord.

**BRABANTIO**

God be wi' you! I have done.

Please it your grace, on to the state-affairs:

I had rather to adopt a child than get it.

Come hither, Moor:

I here do give thee that with all my heart

Which, but thou hast already, with all my heart I would keep from thee. For your sake, jewel, I am glad at soul I have no other child:

For thy escape would teach me tyranny, To hang clogs on them. I have done, my lord.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Let me speak like yourself, and lay a sentence, Which, as a grise or step, may help these lovers Into your favour.

When remedies are past, the griefs are ended By seeing the worst, which late on hopes depended. To mourn a mischief that is past and gone Is the next way to draw new mischief on. What cannot be preserved when fortune takes Patience her injury a mockery makes.

The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief; He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.

**BRABANTIO**

So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile; We lose it not, so long as we can smile.

He bears the sentence well that nothing bears

But the free comfort which from thence he hears, But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow That, to pay grief, must of poor patience borrow. These sentences, to sugar, or to gall, Being strong on both sides, are equivocal: But words are words; I never yet did hear

That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear.

I humbly beseech you, proceed to the affairs of state.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

The Turk with a most mighty preparation makes for Cyprus. Othello, the fortitude of the place is best known to you; and though we have there a substitute of most allowed sufficiency, yet opinion, a sovereign mistress of effects, throws a more safer voice on you: you must therefore be content to slubber the gloss of your new fortunes with this more stubborn and boisterous expedition.

**OTHELLO**

The tyrant custom, most grave senators,  
Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war  
My thrice-driven bed of down: I do agnise  
A natural and prompt alacrity I find in hardness, and do undertake  
These present wars against the Ottomites. Most humbly therefore  
bending to your state, I crave fit disposition for my wife.  
Due reference of place and exhibition, With such  
accommodation and besort As levels with her breeding.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

If you please, Be't at her father's.

**BRABANTIO**

I'll not have it so.

**OTHELLO**

Nor I.

**DESDEMONA**

Nor I; I would not there reside,  
To put my father in impatient thoughts  
By being in his eye. Most gracious duke,  
To my unfolding lend your prosperous ear; And let me find a  
charter in your voice, To assist my simpleness.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

What would You, Desdemona?

**DESDEMONA**

That I did love the Moor to live with him,  
My downright violence and storm of fortunes May trumpet to the  
world: my heart's subdued Even to the very quality of my lord:  
I saw Othello's visage in his mind, And to his honour and his  
valiant parts Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.  
So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,  
A moth of peace, and he go to the war,  
The rites for which I love him are bereft me,  
And I a heavy interim shall support  
By his dear absence. Let me go with him.

**OTHELLO**

Let her have your voices.  
Vouch with me, heaven, I therefore beg it not,  
To please the palate of my appetite,  
Nor to comply with heat--the young affects In me defunct--and  
proper satisfaction.  
But to be free and bounteous to her mind:  
And heaven defend your good souls, that you think  
I will your serious and great business scant  
For she is with me: no, when light-wing'd toys  
Of feather'd Cupid seal with wanton dullness  
My speculative and officed instruments,  
That my disports corrupt and taint my business,  
Let housewives make a skillet of my helm, And all indign and  
base adversities Make head against my estimation!

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Be it as you shall privately determine, Either for her stay or going: the affair cries haste, And speed must answer it. **First Senator** You must away to-night.

**OTHELLO**

With all my heart.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

At nine i' the morning here we'll meet again.

Othello, leave some officer behind,

And he shall our commission bring to you; With such things else of quality and respect As doth import you.

**OTHELLO**

So please your grace, my ancient; A man he is of honest and trust:

To his conveyance I assign my wife, With what else needful your good grace shall think To be sent after me.

**DUKE OF VENICE**

Let it be so.

Good night to every one.

*To BRABANTIO*

And, noble signior,

If virtue no delighted beauty lack, Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

**First Senator**

Adieu, brave Moor, use Desdemona well.

**BRABANTIO**

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:

She has deceived her father, and may thee.

*Exeunt DUKE OF VENICE, Senators, Officers, & c* **OTHELLO**

My life upon her faith! Honest Iago,

My Desdemona must I leave to thee:

I prithee, let thy wife attend on her:

And bring them after in the best advantage.

Come, Desdemona: I have but an hour Of love, of worldly matters and direction, To spend with thee: we must obey the time.

*Exeunt OTHELLO and DESDEMONA*

**RODERIGO**

Iago,-- **IAGO**

What say'st thou, noble heart?

**RODERIGO**

What will I do, thinkest thou?

**IAGO**

Why, go to bed, and sleep.

**RODERIGO**

I will incontinently drown myself.

**IAGO**

If thou dost, I shall never love thee after. Why, thou silly gentleman!

**RODERIGO**

It is silliness to live when to live is torment; and then have we a prescription to die when death is our physician.

**IAGO**

O villainous! I have looked upon the world for four times seven years; and since I could distinguish betwixt a benefit and an injury, I never found man that knew how to love himself. Ere I would say, I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon.

**RODERIGO**

What should I do? I confess it is my shame to be so fond; but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

**IAGO**

Virtue! a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners: so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions: but we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts, whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion.

**RODERIGO**

It cannot be.

**IAGO**

It is merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will. Come, be a man. Drown thyself! drown cats and blind puppies. I have professed me thy friend and I confess me knit to thy deserving with cables of perdurable toughness; I could never better stead thee than now. Put money in thy purse; follow thou the wars; defeat thy favour with an usurped beard; I say, put money in thy purse. It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love to the Moor,-- put money in thy purse,--nor he his to her: it was a violent commencement, and thou shalt see an answerable sequestration:--put but money in thy purse. These Moors are changeable in their wills: fill thy purse with money:--the food that to him now is as luscious as locusts, shall be to him shortly as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth: when she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice: she must have change, she must: therefore put money in thy purse. If thou wilt needs damn thyself, do it a more delicate way than drowning. Make all the money thou canst: if sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a supersubtle Venetian not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her; therefore make money. A pox of drowning thyself! it is clean out of the way: seek thou rather to be hanged in compassing thy joy than to be drowned and go without her.

**RODERIGO**

Wilt thou be fast to my hopes, if I depend on the issue?

**IAGO**

Thou art sure of me:--go, make money:--I have told thee often, and I re-tell thee again and again, I hate the Moor: my cause is hearted; thine hath no less reason. Let us be conjunctive in our revenge against him: if thou canst cuckold him, thou dost thyself a pleasure, me a sport. There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered. Traverse! go, provide thy money. We will have more of this to-morrow. Adieu.

**RODERIGO**

Where shall we meet i' the morning?

**IAGO**

At my lodging.

**RODERIGO**

I'll be with thee betimes.

**IAGO**

Go to; farewell. Do you hear, Roderigo?

**RODERIGO**

What say you?

**IAGO**

No more of drowning, do you hear?

**RODERIGO**

I am changed: I'll go sell all my land.

*Exit*

**IAGO**

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse: For I mine own gain'd  
knowledge should profane, If I would time expend with such a snipe.

But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor:

And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets

He has done my office: I know not if't be true;

But I, for mere suspicion in that kind, Will do as if for surety. He

holds me well; The better shall my purpose work on him. Cassio's  
a proper man: let me see now:

To get his place and to plume up my will

In double knavery--How, how? Let's see:-- After some time, to  
abuse Othello's ear That he is too familiar with his wife.

He hath a person and a smooth dispose To be suspected, framed to  
make women false.

The Moor is of a free and open nature,

That thinks men honest that but seem to be so, And will as tenderly  
be led by the nose As asses are.

I have't. It is engender'd. Hell and night

Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light. *Exit*

# Tragedy and the Common Man

By ARTHUR MILLER

In this age few tragedies are written. It has often been held that the lack is due to a paucity of heroes among us, or else that modern man has had the blood drawn out of his organs of belief by the skepticism of science, and the heroic attack on life cannot feed on an attitude of reserve and circumspection. For one reason or another, we are often held to be below tragedy-or tragedy above us. The inevitable conclusion is, of course, that the tragic mode is archaic, fit only for the very highly placed, the kings or the kingly, and where this admission is not made in so many words it is most often implied.

I believe that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were. On the face of it this ought to be obvious in the light of modern psychiatry, which bases its analysis upon classic formulations, such as Oedipus and Orestes complexes, for instances, which were enacted by royal beings, but which apply to everyone in similar emotional situations.

More simply, when the question of tragedy in art is not at issue, we never hesitate to attribute to the well-placed and the exalted the very same mental processes as the lowly. And finally, if the exaltation of tragic action were truly a property of the high-bred character alone, it is inconceivable that the mass of mankind should cherish tragedy above all other forms, let alone be capable of understanding it.

As a general rule, to which there may be exceptions unknown to me, I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing-his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his "rightful" position in his society.

Sometimes he is one who has been displaced from it, sometimes one who seeks to attain it for the first time, but the fateful wound from which the inevitable events spiral is the wound of indignity and its dominant force is indignation. Tragedy, then, is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly.

In the sense of having been initiated by the hero himself, the tale always reveals what has been called his "tragic flaw," a failing that is not peculiar to grand or elevated characters. Nor is it necessarily a weakness. The flaw, or crack in the characters, is really nothing-and need be nothing, but his inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status. Only the passive, only those who accept their lot without active retaliation, are "flawless." Most of us are in that category.

But there are among us today, as there always have been, those who act against the scheme of things that degrades them, and in the process of action everything we have accepted out of fear of insensitivity or ignorance is shaken before us and examined, and from this total onslaught by an individual against the seemingly stable cosmos surrounding us-from this total examination of the "unchangeable" environment-comes the terror and the fear that is classically associated with tragedy. More important, from this total questioning of what has previously been unquestioned, we learn. And such a process is not beyond the common man. In revolutions around the world, these past thirty years, he has demonstrated again and again this inner dynamic of all tragedy.

Insistence upon the rank of the tragic hero, or the so-called nobility of his character, is really but a clinging to the outward forms of tragedy. If rank or nobility of character was indispensable, then it would follow that the problems of those with rank were the particular problems of tragedy. But surely

the right of one monarch to capture the domain from another no longer raises our passions, nor are our concepts of justice what they were to the mind of an Elizabethan king.

The quality in such plays that does shake us, however, derives from the underlying fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world. Among us today this fear is strong, and perhaps stronger, than it ever was. In fact, it is the common man who knows this fear best.

Now, if it is true that tragedy is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly, his destruction in the attempt posits a wrong or an evil in his environment. And this is precisely the morality of tragedy and its lesson. The discovery of the moral law, which is what the enlightenment of tragedy consists of, is not the discovery of some abstract or metaphysical quantity.

The tragic right is a condition of life, a condition in which the human personality is able to flower and realize itself. The wrong is the condition which suppresses man, perverts the flowing out of his love and creative instinct. Tragedy enlightens-and it must, in that it points the heroic finger at the enemy of man's freedom. The thrust for freedom is the quality in tragedy which exalts. The revolutionary questioning of the stable environment is what terrifies. In no way is the common man debarred from such thoughts or such actions.

Seen in this light, our lack of tragedy may be partially accounted for by the turn which modern literature has taken toward the purely psychiatric view of life, or the purely sociological. If all our miseries, our indignities, are born and bred within our minds, then all action, let alone the heroic action, is obviously impossible.

And if society alone is responsible for the cramping of our lives, then the protagonist must needs be so pure and faultless as to force us to deny his validity as a character. From neither of these views can tragedy derive, simply because neither represents a balanced concept of life. Above all else, tragedy requires the finest appreciation by the writer of cause and effect.

No tragedy can therefore come about when its author fears to question absolutely everything, when he regards any institution, habit or custom as being either everlasting, immutable or inevitable. In the tragic view the need of man to wholly realize himself is the only fixed star, and whatever it is that hedges his nature and lowers it is ripe for attack and examination. Which is not to say that tragedy must preach revolution.

The Greeks could probe the very heavenly origin of their ways and return to confirm the rightness of laws. And Job could face God in anger, demanding his right and end in submission. But for a moment everything is in suspension, nothing is accepted, and in this sketching and tearing apart of the cosmos, in the very action of so doing, the character gains "size," the tragic stature which is spuriously attached to the royal or the high born in our minds. The commonest of men may take on that stature to the extent of his willingness to throw all he has into the contest, the battle to secure his rightful place in the world.

There is a misconception of tragedy with which I have been struck in review after review, and in many conversations with writers and readers alike. It is the idea that tragedy is of necessity allied to pessimism. Even the dictionary says nothing more about the word than that it means a story with a sad or unhappy ending. This impression is so firmly fixed that I almost hesitate to claim that in truth tragedy implies more optimism in its author than does comedy, and that its final result ought to be the reinforcement of the onlooker's brightest opinions of the human animal.

For, if it is true to say that in essence the tragic hero is intent upon claiming his whole due as a personality, and if this struggle must be total and without reservation, then it automatically demonstrates the indestructible will of man to achieve his humanity.

The possibility of victory must be there in tragedy. Where pathos rules, where pathos is finally derived, a character has fought a battle he could not possibly have won. The pathetic is achieved when the protagonist is, by virtue of his witlessness, his insensitivity, or the very air he gives off, incapable of grappling with a much superior force.

Pathos truly is the mode for the pessimist. But tragedy requires a nicer balance between what is possible and what is impossible. And it is curious, although edifying, that the plays we revere, century after century, are the tragedies. In them, and in them alone, lies the belief-optimistic, if you will, in the perfectibility of man.

It is time, I think, that we who are without kings, took up this bright thread of our history and followed it to the only place it can possibly lead in our time-the heart and spirit of the average man.