



# Othello Irony

**Dramatic irony** is when an audience understands something that another character on stage does not.

**Verbal irony** is when a person says one thing but means something very different.

**Situational irony** is a scenario in which actions produce the opposite result of what was expected.

Examples of dramatic, verbal, and situational irony abound throughout *Othello*. Shakespeare uses irony to reveal truths to the audience that remain unknown to most of the characters, keep the audience engaged with the story, and intensify the feelings of suspense and impending doom that permeate the play.

Below are examples of dramatic, verbal, and situational irony from *Othello*.

1. Read each example of irony and write a few sentences explaining the effect each has on the play and/or audience.
2. Find two more examples each of dramatic, verbal, and situational irony in the play.

## Dramatic Irony

IAGO:

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. (No Fear: 1.3.383–389)

Effect:

Right from the start, we know what Iago plans to do, although no one else in the play but Iago knows.

Now every time he takes another step toward his goal, we notice. Our anxiety builds with his every move.

It is painful to see innocent characters fall for his lies and tricks.

Additional example 1 and effect:

Additional example 2 and effect:

## Verbal Irony

IAGO:

Oh, beware, my lord, of jealousy!  
It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock  
The meat it feeds on. (3.3.169–171)

Effect:

*Iago pretends to be a good friend and warns Othello of the dangers of jealousy, but we know that Iago is, in fact, working very hard to make Othello become so jealous that he does something horrific and destroys himself.*

Additional example 1 and effect:

Additional example 2 and effect:

## Situational Irony

LODOVICO:

(to OTHELLO) You must forsake this room and go with us.  
Your power and your command is taken off  
And Cassio rules in Cyprus. (No Fear: 5.2.346–348)

Effect:

*Throughout the entire play, Iago has been scheming to destroy Othello and get Cassio demoted, yet in the end, Cassio gets the ultimate promotion.*

Additional example 1 and effect:

Additional example 2 and effect:

CCSS: RL.11-12.6 Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).