

OH HELLO STUDY T E GUIDE

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BY / DE WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DIRECTED BY / MISE EN SCÈNE DE ALISON DARCY



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CONTENTS

- 3 SYNOPSIS & CHARACTER LIST**
- 4 PRODUCTION CREDITS**
- 5 QUESTION: THE STORY** COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS
- 6 SETTING**
- 7 QUESTIONS OF RACE**
- 8 THE POWER OF LANGUAGE**
- 9 DRAMATURGED!**
- 10 “I AM NOT WHAT I AM”** EXCERPTS ABOUT IDENTITY
- 12 UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE** IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES
- 13 QUESTION: THE MORALITY** DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS
- 14 SET DESIGN**
- 15 SOUND DESIGN**
- 16 THE PLAYWRIGHT**
- 17 THE DIRECTOR & HER COMPANY**
- 18 WORKSHOPS**
- 19 THEATRE ETIQUETTE**
- 20 FEEDBACK FORM**
- 21 CONTACT**

ABOUT THIS STUDY GUIDE

This study guide contains links that will open a page in your internet browser. If you are not viewing this study guide on a computer with internet access, you can note the web addresses, which can be found at the bottom of the page containing the links, and type them into your browser later.

In addition to in-class activities, questions related to the content appear throughout this guide, and are marked by: ?

The Folger Library in Washington DC developed a Youtube playlist of supplementary educational videos on *Othello* in 2011. Select examples are posted throughout this guide, and you may find the whole playlist here:

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLR8P-dSNaJkWISMNLpQE5Gat_2aYcYh67

Any variation from the original text of *Othello* is in favour of the edits made for this production, and are chosen to reflect the play as presented here. See page 9 for information on how texts can differ.

Pages 10 and 11 contain excerpts from the play, which may be useful for some in-class activities.

SYNOPSIS

Iago and Roderigo meet in Venice, having just learned that Desdemona and Othello have eloped. Iago is disgruntled because he feels that he was passed over for a promotion to Lieutenant, which was given instead to Michael Cassio, while Roderigo is wrought with unrequited love for Desdemona. They bring the news to Desdemona's father, Brabantio. Enraged at the perceived thievery of his daughter, Brabantio sets off to court with Roderigo to address the issue. Iago rushes ahead to inform Othello of the imminent confrontation in order to keep up the appearance of loyalty.

Brabantio accuses Othello of witchcraft to the Duke. Othello defends himself, describing their courtship as it happened. When Desdemona is summoned, she corroborates Othello's version that she loves him legitimately based on his valour and bravery. Brabantio cedes, and the conversation turns to war strategy--Othello will relocate to Cyprus to defend it against the Turks.

In Cyprus, Montano and Desdemona are waiting at the base camp for Othello and the troops to return. They learn that storms at sea have aided in the defeat of the Turkish fleet. Cassio returns first, and reports that he lost contact with Othello during the battle. Witness to this moment of intimacy, Iago plots to destroy Othello by exploiting Cassio and Desdemona's friendship.

Othello returns triumphant to base, and the happy party goes home to the castle. Iago shares his plot with Roderigo, advising him to be patient and save money to become a good choice for Desdemona once Othello is gone. He convinces Cassio, who admits that he cannot handle his alcohol very well, to drink wine before taking over the night watch, and an inebriated Cassio brawls with Roderigo. Othello is roused and punishes Cassio by publicly stripping him of rank and reputation. At Iago's suggestion, Cassio visits Desdemona, who is in her room with Emilia, Iago's wife, to ask her to ask her husband to reconsider. She agrees to do so. Cassio crosses paths with Othello and Iago as he leaves Desdemona's room, and Iago plants the seeds of jealousy in Othello.

Eventually, Othello's suspicion grows and he sends Iago in search of proof. Coincidentally, Othello had dropped a handkerchief on Desdemona's floor, which Emilia had returned to her husband and not Othello, as she has been asked to do for some time. Unaware of this, Desdemona searches for it desperately, but Iago gives it to Cassio, who gifts it to his favourite courtesan, Bianca.

Othello overhears Cassio talking about his relationship with Bianca to Iago, and believes Desdemona to be the subject of Cassio's chauvinism. Bianca enters, furious that she was given another woman's handkerchief as a token of love. Othello recognizes it and his suspicions are confirmed. He commands Iago to kill Cassio and intends to murder Desdemona himself that night. When Desdemona enters, Othello is publicly abusive to her.

Later that night, Iago sends Roderigo to attack Cassio. Roderigo is wounded in the altercation, and Iago covertly stabs Cassio in the leg and hides. Two soldiers enter and yell for help, at which point he reveals himself, and, acting the hero, stabs and kills Roderigo. Emilia, meanwhile, has heard struggling from within Desdemona's chamber, where Othello has suffocated Desdemona. Realizing her part in the deception that her husband masterminded, Emilia explains the plot, for which Iago kills her. Othello kills himself in his remorse, Iago is arrested, and Cassio gets promoted to general.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

OTHELLO

A former Moorish slave turned Venetian general as well as a former Muslim turned Christian

DESDEMONA

A Venetian lady and Othello's new wife

IAGO

Othello's ensign, also called a "standard-bearer" or "ancient"

EMILIA

Iago's wife and Desdemona's attendant

RODERIGO

Venetian Gentleman, Iago's friend

MICHAEL CASSIO

Othello's second-in-command, or lieutenant.

BIANCA

Cassio's lover

BRABANTIO

A Venetian senator, and Desdemona's father

LODOVICO

Brabantio's kinsman and Desdemona's cousin

MONTANO

Othello's Venetian predecessor in the government of Cyprus

PRODUCTION CREDITS

CAST

Othello	Andrew Moodie
Iago	Sean Arbuckle
Desdemona	Amanda Lisman
Brabantio	Maurice Podbrey
Cassio	Danny Brochu
Roderigo	Marcel Jeannin
Loduvico	Daniel Lillford
Montano	Paul Hopkins
Bianca	Gitanjali Jain
Emilia	Julie Tamiko Manning

CREW

Director	Alison Darcy 
Dramaturg / Assistant Director	Joseph Shragge 
Fight Direction	Jean-François Gagnon
Stage Manager	Melanie St-Jacques 
Assistant Stage Manager	Luciana Burcheri
Apprentice Stage Manager	Elyse Quesnel
Apprentice Stage Manager	Crystal Laffoley
Set & Costume Design	Véronique Bertrand
Lighting Design	Nicolas Descôteaux
Sound Design	David Oppenheim 

Please look in your programs for a more complete list of everyone who was involved in creating this production.

 denote founding members of Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre Company. See page 17 for information.

QUESTION: THE STORY

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

I

Why does Iago hate Othello?

Who is Brabantio and why does Iago wake him in the middle of the night?

Why do Brabantio and Roderigo go along with Iago's plan?

Why did Othello and Desdemona fall in love?

Why does Brabantio hate Othello? What changes his mind?

Why does the action move from Venice to Cyprus?

Why is Cassio targeted as a scapegoat for Iago?

II

Why does Iago attack Emilia?

How do Iago's reasons for hating Othello change?

III

How does Desdemona fight for Cassio's position?

Why does Emilia take the handkerchief?

Why does Desdemona lie to Othello about having lost the handkerchief?

For which reasons is Othello convinced of Desdemona's betrayal?

How does Othello's attitude change?

Why is Bianca angry?

IV

How does Iago alter reality to align to his scheme?

What does Othello say to Emilia?

How does Othello confront Desdemona?

How is Iago's dishonesty revealed?

SETTING

Othello is fighting in the OTTOMAN-VENETIAN WAR, which was a war in several phases between the Ottoman Empire (generally, modern Turkey) and the Venetian Republic (generally, modern Venice and the surrounding waterways). The fourth of these wars is also called the War of Cyprus, and it began with the Ottoman invasion of the Venetian-held island of Cyprus. It ended in 1573, 30 years before *Othello* was written.

Cyprus and Crete, another eastern-Mediterranean island, were important Venetian holdings. In addition to being crucial sites for trading, they also had natural resources that contributed greatly to the Venetian economy. Egyptian powers were paid to protect Cyprus, but the formidable Ottoman army, once focused, was able to claim control.

The Venetian Republic went looking for allies, and found the Spanish, though it was a tenuous partnership. The terms of their alliance included a promise by the Venetians to aid the Spanish in North Africa. Additionally, at the urging of Pope Pius V, a "Holy League" was created to oppose Ottoman forces.

Now more equally matched, a fierce and brief battle took place on October 7, 1571. It is known as the Battle of Lepanto, and the now-formidable Christian forces viewed this not only as a battle for control over Maritime trade, but also for the security of the European continent. The combined firepower of the Holy League was more than twice that of the Ottoman Empire. They were soundly defeated. Given that the Holy League was bound by a single religious faith, they took their success as a sign of their righteousness, which included disdain for "the Turk," an evil personification of the entire Ottoman Empire.

The Holy League captured many of The Ottoman Empire's experienced soldiers in the defeat, and subsequently executed them. However, this being their first loss in war for over a century, they exploited a harsh winter to rebuild their forces, and imitated Venetian military strategies. In the intervening year, the Holy League broke apart, with different Christian kingdoms focusing their efforts on more local conflicts, and when the Ottomans returned, the Republic of Venice ceded the island of Cyprus.

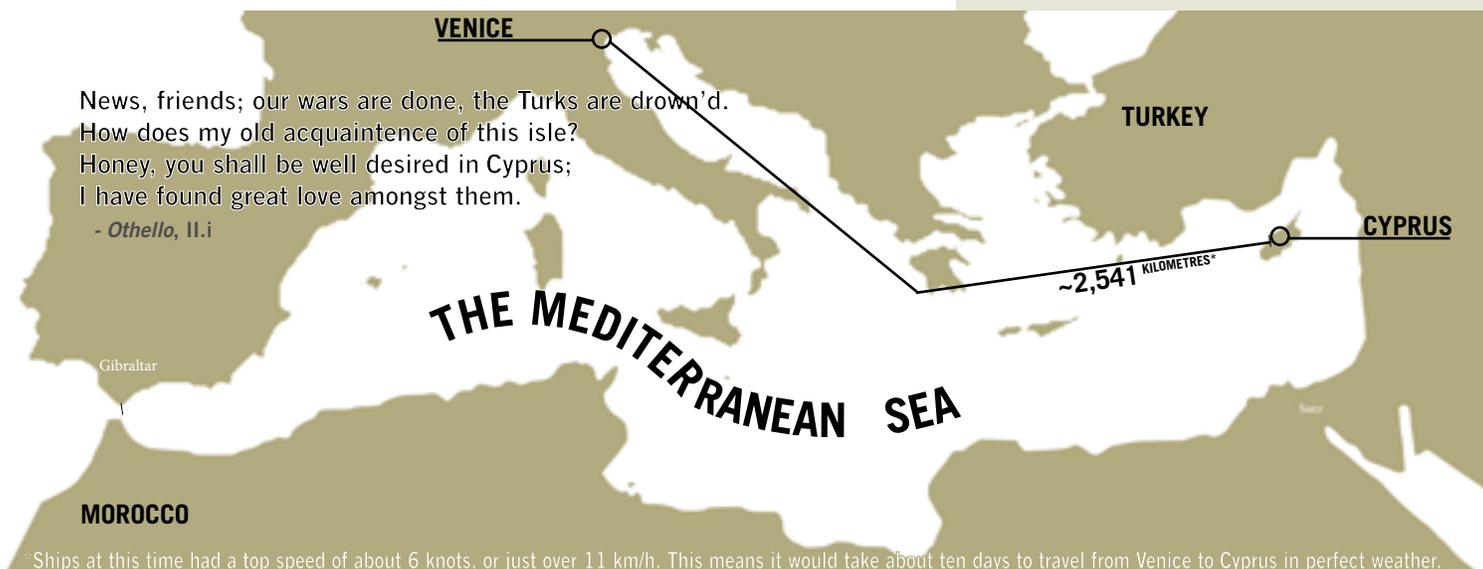
In *Othello*, history is somewhat distorted, with the implication of a stable Venetian victory, in order to support the eponymous character's hero status. If Act II takes place in the months before the Ottoman reclamation of Cyprus, then Othello's role as governor is wrought with peacekeeping and rebuilding, on top of standard governmental functions.

? Does this historical context change the way you think about the character of Othello? How? What clues are we given in the text that help us speculate on his life before the story begins?

MOROCCO, formerly the Maghreb, became a part of the Islamic Empire in the 7TH Century. The indigenous population, called Berbers, staged a multi-regional revolt against the conquering force within the first century, and though the region continued to be Islamic, the flavour of the religion was slightly different than in other parts of the empire. From the 11TH to the 16TH Century, the country was ruled by Berber dynasties, until 1549, when a sequence of Arab dynasties gained control. During the Venetian-Ottoman war, North Africa was under the rule of the Saadi Dynasty.

THE REPUBLIC OF VENICE centred on the city of the same name, and was founded in the 5TH Century as a trading post, largely in order to continue a strategy of defense against invasion from the north. By the 11TH Century, the republic held control of the Adriatic sea, and was therefore under constant threat of invasion from all sides. Venice became known not only for its position in Mediterranean trading, but also for the fine artisan crafts that were produced on the island, such as silks and glasses, and for having a clever and functional governing system, which developed into a combination of monarchy (the Doge), oligarchy (the Senate), and democracy (the Great Council).

CYPRUS in the middle ages was populated by a minority population of Catholics, who lived in coastal cities, and ruled over the native Greeks, who lived in the countryside. The government was largely feudal. Dissatisfied with the ever-growing Italian population, the kingdom allied itself with France during the Western Schism, which began the fall of the monarchy there. In 1489, the queen was forced to sell the island to Venice, at which point it became a great point of contention between the Venetian and Ottoman powers.



QUESTIONS OF RACE

To a North American audience, it is tempting to explain the uncharitable way that characters treat Othello as racism. The definition of “racism”, **“the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races,”** is familiar to Canadians, who will jump directly to histories of the African slave trade, Japanese internment camps, native reservations, or any number of similar examples.

It is important to remember, however, that racism cannot be defined before **race** is; and that is no easy task.

Try this definition, the first of the Oxford English Dictionary’s 1981 printing: **“A group of persons, animals, or plants, connected by common descent or origin.”**

Or this one: **“A tribe, nation, or people, regarded as of common stock.”**

Or: **“One of the great divisions of mankind, having certain physical peculiarities in common.”**

Which is not to be confused with: **“One of the great divisions of living creatures: a. mankind. In early use always *the human race, the race of men, or mankind, etc.*”**

Further, as the human genome is more and more precisely understood and described, there are many scientists who argue that there is no biological entity that warrants the term “race” whatsoever.

Consider, then, that race is a function of racism, and not the other way around and that this human drive to welcome certain people as peers and shun others as strangers is deep-rooted; so the noticing of differences is just that, noticing differences. How those observations are applied to social interactions, and what that means for society as a whole, is the phenomenon we know as racism.

Interpretations of *Othello* that rely on the racism that modern audiences will be familiar with to justify the immoral and inconsiderate actions of its characters must be taken critically. Othello comes from a place with a different religion, customs, and language, that his Venetian peers have never visited. The Venetian nobility, in contrast, have been incestuously rooted in Venice for generations.

The primary “otherness” that would be the target of discrimination in Western Europe at this time was non-Christian. As we learned on the previous page, Othello’s home was a Muslim country, while the Venetian Republic was steadfastly Christian. A fundamental concept in Christianity is the ability to convert to it. The focus of prejudice, then, could simply disappear.

The Inquisition, a radical missionary body, was centred in the Tuscan region in cities like Florence. The island of Venice, in contrast, was remarkably diverse because of its location as a trading city, and therefore more tolerant. Additionally, at the time of this play’s writing, the African slave trade had only just begun, so propaganda arguing the inferiority of African descent was not yet common.

OTHELLO DISCUSSION TOPICS AND FURTHER LEARNING

? At the core of the story of *Othello* is a deep, almost unreasonable animosity towards the Moorish General. If we don’t attribute this to racism, what is it attributable to?

The frequent use of the adjective “black” in the script, and its association with evil, is often cited as evidence that Othello’s African origin is the major point of contention between him and the other characters.

But the term “black” was not an official description of race or ethnicity in the United States until 1850. Before that time, the relevant census categories were “slave,” and then “coloured.” Though Othello’s skin tone is clearly darker than other’s, “black” is an insult, a metaphor, or a description, not necessarily a race.

? How are races classified? What standards are used and how do those standards reflect the culture that establishes them?

? How might those standards affect popular opinion towards that group of people?

For more information on race and genetics, see the NOVA supplement to the program *Mystery of the First Americans*, “Does Race Exist?” at

www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/first/

? What are some fundamental parts of your identity that you could change? Are there circumstances in which you would do so?

Think about current events in which individuals who elect to express an aspect of their identity are discouraged from doing so. What makes the opposition worth the effort? Why are these aspects of identity so significant?

D R A M A T U R G E D !

A dramaturg can take on many roles: they may concern themselves with researching past productions or historical context; they may also be a playwright or a director; or they may edit or adapt a script. Not all productions make formal use of a dramaturg, but dramaturgical practices are almost always employed, because dramaturgy is the *contextualization* of a work of drama. In the case of editing a script, some elements may be cut because they can be shown instead of said, such as the storm in *Othello*-there is no need for a character to say "look, a storm!" because lights, sound, and staging can show the audience a storm instead.

A dramaturg must also be completely familiar with the text, and consider all the possible interpretations of a word or phrase.

Below, Joseph Shragge, the dramaturg for this production, explains one particular consideration of dramaturgy for *Othello*:



Dramaturgy for this production involved editing the text from a running time of three hours to a running time of two hours. There are several different versions of *Othello*. The first was published six years after Shakespeare's death in 1622 by Thomas Walkley in a cheap Quarto¹ edition. The second was published as part of an anthology of his plays referred to as the Folio², published the following year. The Folio has 160 lines absent from the Quarto and the Quarto has 15 lines not present in the Folio. To make matters even more confusing, another edition called the second Quarto was published in 1630. This edition combines the Folio and the first Quarto. There are discrepancies in wording between all three.

For our current version of *Othello*, we took as a base the Folio, as it is arguably the most complete, then mixed and matched wordings from both the Quarto and Folio. A famous example is the phrase:

"Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe."

This is the Quarto reading, compared to the Folio use of the word "Judean" instead of "Indian," which changes the meaning. In the first version Othello is comparing himself to an Indian who throws away a valuable gem (Desdemona) because he is not aware of its value. In the second version the "Judean" could be referring to King Herod who murders his wife, or to Judas who betrays Jesus. Since Othello is making a comparison to himself, each meaning presents a slightly different character. There is no way to know if the revision in the Folio is due to a printer error or a revision on the part of the author. There are many good arguments for both.

Working together with the director, we made choices based on the version of the play we wanted to put forward. Every version of *Othello* that is edited for performance is different and presents a slightly different interpretation of the text, based on research but also on intuition.

-Joseph Shragge.



CLICK TO WATCH!
Barbara Nowat dramaturged the Folger Library's 2011 production of *Othello* in Washington, DC.



Above: Dramaturge Joseph Shragge never stops reviewing the script, even after rehearsals start.
Photo credit: Andrea Elalouf.

* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NL7fGeLQg-fY&list=PLR8P-dSNajkWISMNLPQE5Gat_2aYcY-h67&index=9

¹ Like a modern-day paperback, called "Quarto" because they were made from a large piece of paper folded in quarters.

² A "Folio," on the other hand, is a more valuable book, made of one large sheet of paper per page.

? Ask students to explicate a passage from *Othello* as below, using translation techniques from page 11 as well as research methods.

Below: A capture of a working script for this production. The line in red is to be cut, and peculiar words and phrases are translated into modern English or explained in the notes on the right-hand side.

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 external, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.

- Comment [J525]: choose to be
- Comment [J526]: I don't act out of
- Comment [J527]: Personal reasons
- Comment [J528]: reveal
- Comment [J529]: instinctive
- Comment [J530]: arguably from the French for face. Could also mean nature, or shape.
- Comment [J531]: Outward show
- Comment [J532]: the badge servants wore to indicate who they served
- Comment [J533]: jackdaws, stupid men who snap-up trifles.

“ I AM NOT WHAT I AM ”

Iago derives his power from his language - namely, that he can decide what people fundamentally are by labeling them. As he calls himself 'honest,' he calls Desdemona 'wicked,' calls Othello 'hateful,' and thus, they transform into those things. On this page, find some expressions of Iago's malicious intentions. Passages are marked with their Act, Scene.

IAGO* Lay thy finger thus, and let thy soul be instructed. Mark me with what violence she first loved the Moor, but for bragging and telling her fantastical lies: and will she love him still for prating? let not thy disrethheart think it. Her eye must be fed; and what delight shall she have to look on the devil? When the blood is made dull with the act of sport, there should be, again to inflame it and to give satiety a fresh appetite, loveliness in favour, sympathy in years, manners and beauties; all which the Moor is defective in: now, for want of these her delicate tenderness will find itself abused, begin to abhor the Moor; very nature will instruct her in it and compel her to some second choice. Now, sir, this granted — who stands so eminent in the degree of this fortune as Cassio does? (theknave is handsome, young, and hath all those requisites in him that folly and green minds look after; and the woman hath found him already.

IAGO That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it; That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit: The Moor (howbeit that I endure him not) Is of a constant, loving, noble nature, And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona A most dear husband. Now, I do love her too; Not out of absolute lust, But partly led to diet my revenge, For that I do suspect the lusty Moor Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards; And nothing can or shall content my soul Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife, Or failing so, yet that I put the Moor At least into a jealousy so strong That judgment cannot cure, I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip, Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb— For I fear Cassio with my night-cap too— Make the Moor thank me, love me and reward me. For making him egregiously an ass And practising upon his peace and quiet Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused: Knavery's plain face is never seen till used.

IAGO
O, sir, content you;
In following him, I follow but myself;
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my particular 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.

IAGO
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.

IAGO
And what's he then that says I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give and honest,
Probal to thinking and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
The inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit: she's framed as fruitful
As the free elements. And then for her
To win the Moor--were't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
His soul is so enfetted to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function. How am I then a villain
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now: for whiles this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear,
That she repeals him for her body's lust;
And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all.

IAGO
I have rubb'd this young quat almost to the sense,
And he grows angry.
Now, whether he kill Cassio,
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,
Every way makes my gain:
If Cassio do remain,
He hath a daily beauty in his life
That makes me ugly; and, besides, the Moor
May unfold me to him; there stand I in much peril:
No, he must die. Be't so: I hear him coming.

“

”

On this page, find quotes that describe the results of Iago's interference; when he has been successful in manipulating characters, it is at the deepest level, and they reflect on their own identities.

III, iii

OTHELLO By the world,
I think my wife be honest and think she is not;
I think that thou art just and think thou art not.
I'll have some proof. Her name, that was as fresh
As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black
As mine own face. If there be cords, or knives,
Poison, or fire, or suffocating streams,
I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!

V, ii

OTHELLO Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-starred wench,
Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet at count,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl,
Even like thy chastity. O cursèd, cursèd slave!

IV, ii

OTHELLO Come, swear it, damn thyself
Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves
Should fear to seize thee: therefore be double damn'd:
Swear thou art honest.
DESDEMONA Heaven doth truly know it.
OTHELLO Heaven truly knows that thou art false as hell.
DESDEMONA I hope my noble lord esteems me honest.
OTHELLO O, ay; as summer flies are in the shambles,
That quicken even with blowing. O thou weed,
Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst
ne'er been born!

V, i

OTHELLO 'Tis he:--O brave Iago, honest and just,
That hast such noble sense of thy friend's wrong!
Thou teachest me. Minion, your dear lies dead,
And your unblest fate hies: strumpet, I come.
Forth of my heart those charms, thine eyes, are blotted;
Thy bed, lust-stain'd, shall with lust's blood be spotted.

V, ii

EMILIA My husband!
OTHELLO Ay, 'twas he that told me first:
An honest man he is, and hates the slime
That sticks on filthy deeds.
EMILIA My husband!
OTHELLO What needs this iteration, woman? I say thy husband.
EMILIA O mistress, villany hath made mocks with love,
My husband say that she was false!
OTHELLO He, woman;
I say thy husband: dost understand the word?
My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago.
EMILIA If he say so, may his pernicious soul
Rot half a grain a day! he lies to the heart:
She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

IV, i

OTHELLO Ay, you did wish that I would make her turn:
Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on,
And turn again; and she can weep, sir, weep;
And she's obedient, as you say, obedient,
Very obedient. Proceed you in your tears.
Concerning this, sir—O well-painted passion!—
I am commanded home—Get you away.
I'll send for you anon. Sir, I obey the mandate,
And will return to Venice. Hence, avaunt!
Exit DESDEMONA
Cassio shall have my place. And, sir, tonight,
I do entreat that we may sup together:
You are welcome, sir, to Cyprus.—

III, iii

CASSIO Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have
lost
my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of
myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation,
Iago, my reputation!
IAGO As I am an honest man, I thought you had
received
some bodily wound; there is more sense in that than
in reputation. Reputation is an idle and most false
imposition: oft got without merit, and lost without
deserving: you have lost no reputation at all,
unless you repute yourself such a loser. What, man!
there are ways to recover the general again. You
are but now cast in his mood, a punishment more in
policy than in malice, sue
to him again, and he's yours.

CASSIO I will rather sue to be despised than to de-
ceive so
good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and so
indiscreet an officer. Drunk? and speak parrot?
and squabble? swagger? swear? O thou invisible
spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by,
let us call thee devil!
CASSIO Madam, my former suit: I do beseech you
That by your virtuous means I may again
Exist and be a member of his love
Whom I with all the office of my heart
Entirely honour.

III, iii

OTHELLO Think, my lord! By heaven, he echo'st me,
As if there were some monster in thy thought
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:
I heard thee say even now, thou likedst not that,
When Cassio left my wife: what didst not like?
If thou dost love me,
Show me thy thought.

IAGO My lord, you know I love you.
OTHELLO I think thou dost;
And, for I know thou'rt full of love and honesty,
And weigh'st thy words before thou givest them breath,
Therefore these stops[1] of thine fright me the more.
IAGO For Michael Cassio,
I dare be sworn I think that he is honest.
OTHELLO I think so too.
IAGO Men should be what they seem—
Or those that be not, would they might seem none[2].
OTHELLO Certain, men should be what they seem.
IAGO Why, then I think Cassio's an honest man.
OTHELLO Nay, yet there's more in this.
I prithee, speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words.
IAGO Good my lord, pardon me:
Utter my thoughts? Why, say they are vile and false?
OTHELLO Thou dost conspire against thy friend, Iago,
If thou but think'st him wrong'd and makest his ear
A stranger to thy thoughts.

UNDERSTANDING THE LANGUAGE

Iago: *O grace! O heaven forgive me!
Are you a man? have you a soul or sense?
God be wi' you; take mine office. O wretched fool,
That livest to make thine honesty a vice!
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, o world,
To be direct and honest is not safe.
I thank you for this profit; and from hence
I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offence.*

ACT III, scene iii.

THE RHYTHM OF LANGUAGE

There is a rhythm to any language. Shakespeare's writing follows a rhythm called 'iambic pentameter'. This means that a stressed syllable is always paired with an unstressed syllable (iambic) and that there are five of these pairs per line (pentameter). This structure is more evident in paragraphs of text than in quickly-paced dialogue. As today, poetry utilizes the conventions of emphasis to create the most pleasing sound, and as you can see in the excerpt from Robert Frost on the left, Modern English is largely iambic as well.

? **Identify the emphasis in an excerpt from *Othello*.** Begin with strict iambic emphasis (eg, "To **be direct** and **honest is** not **safe**"). Read the passage aloud, exaggerating the emphasis. Next read the passage in a casual voice and identify where the emphasis naturally falls. How is it different from the forced iambic emphasis? Try the same exercise with the Robert Frost stanza and compare the results.

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth ...

-From Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*, 1916.

ENGLISH-TO-ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Not only is *Othello* written in Early Modern English, it is also written in a theatrical style that contemporary writers do not use. Modern scripts generally strive to create natural-feeling dialogue and situations to enhance the audience's feelings of empathy for the characters on stage, whereas Shakespeare's texts are a combination of the familiar situational narrative and a form of public storytelling.

? **Translate a passage from *Othello* into Modern English.** Consider the differences in the function of the text. Try to imply emotions with context and punctuation, rather than describing the emotion. For example, from the excerpt above:

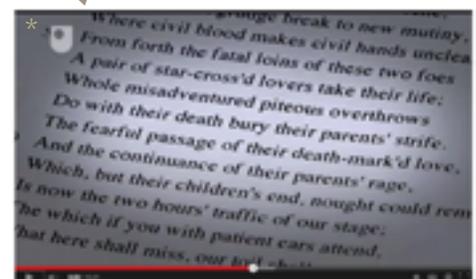
"My poor general. Fire me if you think it will help. I'm so sorry that your honesty has become a burden to you. It's so unfair, and it is teaching me not to get close to anyone because they will only hurt you."

Turn in the translations and distribute them so that someone other than the writer recites them in front of an audience. Discuss the differences in the students' work.

What decisions or omissions need to be made in order to update this text? What tools does English have to describe subtext, character, or tone? Are these tools different in Early Modern and Modern English?

Some of Shakespeare's speeches rhyme in Early Modern English but not in Modern English, because of differences in pronunciation. Words such as "loin" and "line" would have rhymed when they were spoken on the stage of the Globe Theatre in the 16th Century. There is a movement to reproduce this accent, called "Original Pronunciation," when performing Shakespeare.

CLICK HERE for more examples:



Shakespeare: Original pronunciation

*<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPlpphT7n9s>

SET DESIGN



The Segal Theatre's stage is a unique performance space. It is as wide and as tall as the house (where the audience sits), so it has no wings and no catwalks, which can be useful for hiding set pieces, actors, and other objects off of a stage. It also has no proscenium, or frame, around the stage.

A designer must therefore negotiate practical concerns for the play, the constraints of the space, and artistic preferences when working on a show. Véronique Bertrand worked with the *Othello* production team to add a modern and flexible feeling to the show.



She began with an abstract concept: reflection. She considered that the driving force of the story is characters' perceptions of reality being informed by how reality is reflected off of other people, and how that reality is necessarily distorted. The use of water as a reflective surface refers to the elements of classical antiquity from which the world is constructed: earth, water, wind, and fire. Light shining through baths of water reference this while asserting the importance of water in the island settings, as well as creating a tension in the audience.



The practical needs of the play involve changing the setting from Venice in Act I to Cyprus in Act II, so this stage establishes two sections, one to operate as the sea and the city, another to act as the shore and the sea.

SPOILER: In the final scene, water flows downstage. This is the first time that this zone, which has been standing in for the shore, will be an interior space. This brings together all the considerations of the set: creating a reflective surface, playing with uncertainty and instability, and exploiting the visceral reaction that elemental materials inspire.

Above: Before a design is settled on, the designer creates "maquettes," or scale miniatures of the proposed set so that it can be examined in a variety of lighting situations and arrangements.

Right: A view from above.



SOUND DESIGN

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID OPPENHEIM



Photo: Andrea Elalouf, the Segal Centre's Public Relations maven, interviews David Oppenheim in the lobby of the Segal Centre.

Andrea Elalouf: Can you explain your vision for *Othello's* sound design?

David Oppenheim: We came up with a concept that involves using both recorded vocal music and new design elements. The vocal music is actually from Shakespeare's time, by an Italian composer by the name of Claudio Monteverdi.

All the music I'm using in this show was actually written the same year that *Othello* was written. The first part of the play takes place in Venice, so culturally it's based in the same time and place that *Othello* is from. The music also fits the show very well in terms of the mood. I've taken Monteverdi's music and turned it into something more contemporary, re-contextualizing it into something different.

Othello is very interesting because there are two songs in the show, many of Shakespeare's plays have songs in them. Iago has a drinking song and Desdemona has a beautiful one called "The Willow Song" which comes in to her mind when she gets worried about Othello's state of mind. So it's a very musical piece, and music is, to me, integral to the show itself.

AE: What attracted you about Monteverdi's music?

DO: The music of Monteverdi is very emotionally intense and heightened musically. What was revolutionary about him is that he was using poetry as his lyrics and then composing music for that poetry. He was very unique at the time, and in fact was criticized for focusing a lot on what emotions the lyrics brought up. This was not necessarily how music was thought of at the time.

AE: How do you wrap your head around attacking such a recognizable play?

DO: When I listened to Monteverdi's music, and I think Alison (Darcy) agreed when I played it for her, I felt it was artistically rich music and I felt people would respond to it. The question of what *Othello* means to audiences today or what its relevance is isn't a question I worry about so much. I think when such great works of art are put in front of an audience, people respond. So that was my approach to the sound design : the music moves me so much, I don't necessarily have a perfect justification for why this song needs to be put in this or that part of the play. It's so beautiful, and emotionally there's so much there, I think it's going to work!

David Oppenheim is the Sound Designer for *Othello* and Assistant General Manager of Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre. David has been composing, directing and performing music for theatre for over ten years. His past projects include *Life Is a Dream*, *Medea* (winner of two MECCA awards) and *The Bacchae* (winner of 10 META Awards) at Centaur Theatre, and *The Heretics of Bohemia* and *Faust* at the Segal Centre. His musical inspiration comes from jazz, experimental, and folk music from around the world. He has also performed across Québec with the gypsy-punk band Roma Carnivale, including at the Festival International de Jazz de Montréal.



CLICK TO LISTEN!

Ah Dolente Partita
by Claudio Monteverdi, 1603.

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THE PLAYWRIGHT

William Shakespeare was born in April 1564 in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, on England's Avon River. Shakespeare almost certainly attended the King's New School in Stratford, a grammar school that educated young men in Latin grammar and literature.

When he was eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway. The couple had three children—their older daughter Susanna and the twins Judith and Hamnet. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died in childhood.

At some point, he left for London. By 1592, Shakespeare had achieved some prominence as an actor and a playwright. In 1593 he became a published poet with his long narrative poem *Venus and Adonis*; he followed it with *Lucrece* in 1594.

He was a leading member of the company the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later named the King's Men, for which he would be a principal actor, dramatist, and shareholder for about two decades. In the 1590s he wrote his English history plays, several comedies, and at least two tragedies. Many of Shakespeare's sonnets (published in 1609) were also probably written in the 1590s.

Shakespeare's plays were performed at court and other locations, but they are most associated with his acting company's theaters. In 1599, his company built the Globe. He wrote *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* while the company was at the Globe, as well as comedies like *Twelfth Night* and *Measure for Measure*. From about 1608, his plays were also performed at the company's new indoor Blackfriars theater. Shakespeare wrote very little after 1612.

Sometime between 1610 and 1613, Shakespeare seems to have returned to live in Stratford-upon-Avon, where he owned property and a large house, and where his wife and daughters lived. He died in Stratford on April 23, 1616, and was buried on April 25. Seven years after his death, in 1623, his collected plays were published in the work now known as the First Folio.



Left: The Shakespeare Memorial Bust at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford, is one of only two representations believed to be based on the actual appearance of William Shakespeare.

The years in which Shakespeare wrote were among the most exciting in English history. The discovery, translation, and printing of Greek and Roman classics made ideas available that interacted complexly with Christian beliefs. New worlds—both North and South America—were explored, occupied by people who lived very differently than Renaissance Europeans and Englishmen. With Galileo's telescope, produced in 1609, the universe seemed to shift and expand.

London, too, rapidly expanded and changed while Shakespeare lived there, becoming an exciting metropolis that attracted thousands of new citizens a year. Shakespeare's plays include the voices of London, but also those of Stratford-upon-Avon, in references to the Forest of Arden, sheep herding, small-town gossip, village fairs and markets. Part of the richness of Shakespeare's work is the influence of the worlds in which he lived: metropolitan London and small-town and rural England; the theatre, craftsmen, and shepherds.

Paraphrased from the Folger Shakespeare Library online; www.folger.edu/content/discover-shakespeare/shakespeares-life/

But, of course, none of this is 100% certain. Read a recent article from the Globe and Mail here: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/did-shakespeare-write-shakespeare-yes-no---and-who-cares/article4183147/>

FOR A SUPPLEMENT CONCERNING NORTH AMERICA DURING SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE, VISIT <http://www.shakespeareinamericanlife.org/features/faqs/faq1.cfm>

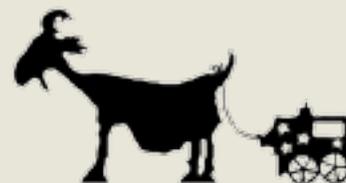
THE DIRECTOR & HER COMPANY

ALISON DARCY

Alison is a National Theatre School of Canada graduate and the Co-Founder and Co-Artistic Director of Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre. As well as directing, producing, teaching theatre, Alison has been acting professionally since childhood. Some of her directorial works include *Faust* and *The Heretics of Bohemia* (Segal Centre/Scapegoat), *Hyena Subpoena* (Catkidd/Scapegoat), *Medea* and *Life is a Dream* (Centaur Theatre/Scapegoat), *Things are bad-Ijumpile Lendaba* (South Africa's Mopo Productions/Scapegoat), *Last Call* (Scapegoat/NCTF/Uno festival), *Real Estate* (Centaur Theatre), *Bash: Latterday plays* (Muttertung), *The Unknown Citizen* (Project Porte Parole), and *Burning Cage* (Woman Alone).

Her acting credits include roles in *Age of Arousal* (Centaur), *A Doll House* (Segal Centre), *Bye Bye Baby* (Imago/Centaur), *Brahm and the Angel* (Geordie Productions), *Speak Easy* (Sabooze), *Bash: Latterday plays* (Muttertung), *Small Returns* (Infini theatre/November), *girls!girls!girls!* (Theatro Commanici/FTA), *Taking Sides* (Centaur), and various film and television productions. She has worked closely with Clyde Henry Productions, the Festival Transamériques, Blue Metropolis, and South Africa's Mopo Productions.

She is a multiple MECCA award-winner, as well as recipient of awards from Montreal, Vancouver, and Seattle Fringe Festivals.



SCAPEGOAT CARNIVALE THEATRE

Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre is a Montreal-based independent theatre company dedicated to producing original and challenging theatre for the Canadian audience. Their aesthetic interest is in the carnivalesque, the roughly-hewn, the handmade, and the highly theatrical. Whether producing new works or adaptations from the classical repertoire, they strive for theatre to be an unruly, visceral expression of shared experience. They also aim to reflect the diverse talents and particular aesthetic of the Montreal artistic community, creating shows that involve large casts and incorporate artists from various performance traditions.

Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre was founded in 2006 by playwright Joseph Shragge, actor/director Alison Darcy and actor/stage manager Melanie St. Jacques. In 2007, the three were joined by actor Andreas Apergis and composer/musical director David Oppenheim.

The company's inaugural production in 2006 was *Last Call*, written by and starring Montreal-based writer/actor Holly O'Brien, and directed by Alison Darcy. O'Brien won a MECCA award for Best Actress for the production.

In June 2007, the company produced *The Works* by Joseph Shragge at the Montreal Fringe Festival. The production was chosen as runner-up for the Centaur Theatre's Best Production award.

In the fall of 2008, Scapegoat Carnivale produced Pedro Calderon de la Barca's Spanish baroque classic *Life Is a Dream* as a part of the Centaur Theatre Company's Brave New Looks initiative. The show was nominated for three MECCA awards.

The company's next project was an original translation of Euripides' *Medea* by Joseph Shragge and Andreas Apergis, directed by Apergis and Alison Darcy. *Medea* premiered at the Centaur Theatre Company's Brave New Looks in fall 2010, breaking attendance records and receiving high praise from critics. *Medea* won two MECCA awards: Best Actress (France Rolland), and Best Production.

In 2011, Scapegoat Carnivale co-produced Montreal-based writer and spoken word artist Catherine Kidd's new play, *Hyena Subpoena*, directed by Alison Darcy, at Les Espaces Jean Brillant.

In Fall 2012, the company premiered a new adaptation of Euripides' *Bacchae* at the Centaur Theatre, directed by Andreas Apergis, based on a new translation by Joseph Shragge and Apergis.

Scapegoat Carnivale was the resident company at the Segal Centre for Performing Arts for the 2011-12 and 2012-13 seasons, where they premiered *The Heretics of Bohemia*, a new play by Joseph Shragge, directed by Alison Darcy, and staged a workshop production of a new adaptation of Goethe's *Faust* in May 2013.

WORKSHOPS

LED BY JESSE STONG, the Segal Centre's 2013-2014 Teacher-in-Residence!

Jesse Stong is trained as a Playwright/Director (National Theatre School of Canada, 2013) as well as a Social Worker (Ryerson University, 2004) with over ten years of experience creating and delivering dynamic Writing and Performance workshops for youth/adults from all walks of life.

Currently his play about online bullying and suicide, *Shared Account*, is touring Quebec and East Coast High Schools with Geordie Theatre.

As well as being passionate for his Teacher-in-Residence position at Segal Centre, Jesse is also currently Project Manager at ELAN (English Language Arts Network) for the Quebec Youth Resource Centre.

RESERVE TODAY!

Information on reserving can be found on the last page of this guide.

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E

& THE IMPORTANCE OF SHAKESPEARE

Workshops are customizable by age and group size, and can be delivered in three styles:

- Performance-Oriented;
- Writing-Oriented;
- Or a Mix of Writing and Performance Activities.

AN INNOVATIVE AND INTERACTIVE SHAKESPEARIAN EXPERIENCE

This workshop is designed not only to explore the controversial and still-relevant themes of the classic tragedy *Othello* by William Shakespeare, but also to engage participants to understand and enjoy Shakespearian theatre.

By the end of this workshop, passionate participants of all ages will be saying
"BRING ON THE BARD!"

A combination of discussions, games, activities, and mixed-media presentations help participants gain a better understanding of the **true meaning** behind Shakespeare's complicated vocabulary.

Participants will **discuss and discover** the true meanings and themes of the play *Othello* and will be offered hands-on experience creating their own modern adaptations.

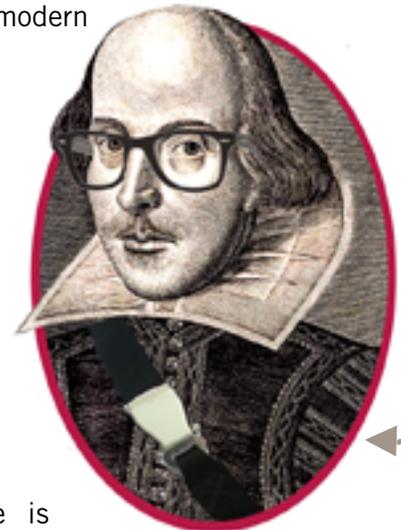
The **themes** from the play that will be discussed and explored through creation activities are:

- > Jealousy, love, betrayal and madness
- > Racial discrimination, or the concept of "others"
- > Human experiences of war

While also gaining a better understanding of:

- > Shakespearean vocabulary
- > The Elizabethan Period
- > The Globe Theatre
- > The life and career of William Shakespeare

This workshop challenges conceptions that Shakespearian Theatre is irrelevant and overly complicated. Participants gain access to ways of **finding a new and modern relevance to the work** and learn to **engage with and enjoy** the entertainment of one of the greatest playwrights of all time.



MODERN
SHAKESPEARE

These dynamic workshops encourage participants...

- ... to engage with the ERA and the ARTIST.
- ... to learn about a FAMOUS THEATRE PIECE and better understand the STYLE AND FORM.
- ... to gain experience as EMERGING CREATORS and PERFORMERS.
- ... to share a POWERFUL and PERSONAL group-art experience.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Please take a moment to prepare your students or group for their visit to the Segal Centre. Explain to them what is meant by good theatre etiquette and why a few simple courtesies will enhance the enjoyment of the play for all audience members.

1. *OTHELLO* will be performed in the main theatre of the Segal Centre. Performances at the Segal are for both groups and the general public. It is important that everyone be quiet (no talking or rustling of materials) during the performance, so that others do not lose their immersion in the “world of the play”. Please do not unwrap candy, play with zippers, or play with your programme.
2. Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you and please do not climb over seats.
3. If you plan to take notes on the play for the purpose of writing a review, please do not try to write them during the performance. Seeing you do this can be distracting for the actors. Please wait until intermission or after the performance is finished to write your reflections.
4. Use of phones or cameras is strictly prohibited inside the theatre. Absolutely no photos or video may be taken without the express consent of management. Composing or reading text messages is forbidden.
5. Use of cell phones, iPods, tablets, or other self-illuminating electronics is strictly prohibited in the theatre. The light from these devices is visible from the stage and in the audience. It is extremely distracting to the artists on stage and inconsiderate to your fellow audience members.
6. Your seat is only guaranteed until the moment the theatre doors close. Late entry is very disruptive; if a patron is tardy we ask that they please follow the instructions of our front-of-house staff.
7. ENJOY THE SHOW!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK

1. How would you rate your experience?
Extremely positive 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely stressful
2. How much do you feel your group benefited from the experience?
Very much 1 2 3 4 5 Very Little
3. Would you recommend the experience to other group leaders?
Wholeheartedly 1 2 3 4 5 Never
4. Will you consider bringing a group to the theatre again?
Wholeheartedly 1 2 3 4 5 Never
5. What did you enjoy most about coming to see the play?

6. What aspect of coming to the theatre did you find problematic?

We welcome all additional comments.

Reply to:
Lucie Lederhendler,
Educational Programs Manager
Segal Centre for Performing Arts
llederhendler@segalcentre.org
groups@segalcentre.org
Tel: 514.739.2301 ext. 8360
Fax: 514.739.9340



This study guide was compiled by Lucie Lederhendler for the Segal Centre for Performing Arts, with contributions from Jess Fildes, Andrea Elalouf, and George Allister. Special thanks to Scapegoat Carnivale Theatre Company and the Folger Library.

To reserve a workshop or tickets, or for citations, materials, or other information, please contact

Lucie Lederhendler
 Educational Programs Manager
 Segal Centre for Performing Arts
 5170, chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine
 Montréal QC H3W 1M7

llederhendler@segalcentre.org
 groups@segalcentre.org
 Telephone : 514.739.2301 #8360
 Fax : 514.739.9340
 Box Office : 514.739.7944

www.segalcentre.org