Othello Act III Analysis
Mrs. Maas
10 Scholars English

Directions: For each section, identify and analyze the use of language in your IN.

Othello Act III Scene I:

The Clown and the Musicians
Elizabethan and Jacobean acting companies always employed a comic actor or clown. His main role was to play funny or witty parts, possibly embellishing the script with improvised jokes. Playwrights would create a specific role in order to accommodate the clown, even in tragic plays. One effect was to momentarily relieve tension in the drama.

• Read the script at the beginning of the scene with the clown. What do you think of the humor, which relies heavily on puns and wordplay? For example, the clown plays with the double meaning of the word “Naples” – a joke on the nasal sounds of a Neapolitan accent and “Neapolitan disease”, a venereal disease. He also generates puns around the word “instrument”, where the first reference in line 6 is to a kind of bagpipe, the second reference in line 10 to flatulence. Some people find the jokes rather crude and labored, but others argue the dramatic function of the Clown’s punning is to foreshadow the misunderstandings later in the play. Consider both points of view for your answer.

• If you were directing a production of Othello, what popular stage or television comedian would you cast in the role of the Clown? Explain your choice.

• It was an Elizabethan custom to wake newlyweds with music outside their bedchamber. Would you open the scene with musicians really playing on stage? In a modern production, what music would you choose? Why? Can you think of a particular song or piece of music that might have significant meaning for the characters at this point in the play?

Othello Act III Scene I:

Emilia: Role and Relationships
In the dual role of Desdemona’s companion and Iago’s wife, Emilia becomes an increasingly important character in the play. In this part of the scene, she takes on the dramatic function of enabling Cassio to gain access to Desdemona, thereby becoming an unwitting pawn in Iago’s elaborate plot.

• Read all that Emilia says in Act 3 Scene 3, lines 30-end of scene. Write a paragraph outlining your impression of Emilia. Refer back to her first appearance (Act 2 Scene 1, lines 83-204) and compare how she came across then with your opinion of her now.

• Make notes on how Emilia’s character develops throughout Act 3.

Othello Act III Scene II:

The dramatic function of Scene 2
Scene 2 is very short. What dramatic purpose do you think this scene serves? Look back at the previous scene, and glance at the beginning of the next, then copy and complete the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Scene 1</th>
<th>Scene 2</th>
<th>Scene 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where does it take place?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happens?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the plot moved forward?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What can you deduce about the function of Scene 2? Consider the following in your answer:

• Othello’s roles as a military leader
• Iago’s relationship with Othello
• Desdemona’s whereabouts
• The time scheme
• Cassio’s whereabouts
• Cyprus as a colonial outpost