between the lines

A lesson written for every student in the room

FREE LESSON SAMPLER

Shakespeare's tragedies: Othello: I am not what I am

How does Shakespeare present Iago as two-faced from the opening scene?

Lesson 3 of 14 from the scheme of learning

Teacher notes, slides and student pages at all three levels

Written for the English national curriculum at Key Stage 3



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What is in this sampler

This is one complete lesson from our Shakespeare's tragedies: Othello scheme for Year 9. It comes exactly as it appears in the full scheme, so you can teach it next week and see how our lessons work.

Teacher notes	Timings with slide numbers, Do Now answers, the exploded quotation, the hinge question and what each answer tells you, the task at three levels, a model paragraph and notes on misconceptions and adapting the lesson (next pages).
Slides	The editable PowerPoint deck for Lesson 3, with teacher notes on every slide (separate file).
Student pages	The lesson's pages from the student booklet: one question, with the Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support side by side (at the end of this document).

How every lesson works

Know	Do Now from memory, vocabulary, then the reading. The five Do Now questions build on what students learned in Lessons 1 and 2 of the full scheme.
Apply	Explode one quotation together; a hinge question checks understanding.
Master	One shared question answered as a What–How–Why paragraph, with Securing, Strengthening and Soaring support; then a model paragraph and an exit ticket.

Three levels of support

Every student answers the same question in every lesson. What changes is the support on the page, so the whole class does the same lesson:

Securing	The most support: a word bank, a choice of quotations, a worked example and sentence starters.
Strengthening	Some support: prompts for What, How and Why, a planner and a checklist.
Soaring	The most challenge: a debatable statement, prompts to think further and an argument planner.

The names describe the support, never the student. The hinge question shows who might start where, and students move between levels from lesson to lesson.

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In the full scheme

- 14 lessons like this one, with editable slides and a teacher handbook (lesson notes, unit map, assessment guide and knowledge bank)
- A student booklet with every lesson and all three levels of support, plus the same lessons as one pack per level
- Six weeks of independent practice homework at three levels
- A checkpoint (Feedback Loop kit) with a whole-class feedback sheet and improvement tasks
- A two-part end-of-unit assessment with a teacher guide, band guidance and annotated models
- A catch-up sheet for every lesson, for students who missed it
- An inclusion guide: pre-teaching, SEND, EAL and pupil premium notes for every lesson

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Lesson 3: I am not what I am

SEQUENCE 1: VENICE AND CYPRUS · 60 MINUTES

How does Shakespeare present Iago as two-faced from the opening scene?

By the end of the lesson, students can

- Explain what Iago says about service, loyalty and his own motives
- Analyse how the paradox "I am not what I am" shows two faces
- Write a What–How–Why paragraph that opens with a clear idea about Iago

Lesson at a glance

Time	Phase	What happens	Slides
0–8	Know	Do Now: five quick questions on Lessons 1 and 2. Students check their answers from the answer slide.	2–3
8–18	Know	Pre-teach "deception", "resentment", "motive" and "hypocrisy". Sum up the start of the scene from the extract introduction. Read the extract aloud while students follow, then ask: who is speaking, and who is he speaking to? Before reading, remind students that the racist abuse which follows this extract is not printed, and that the class will study it later as Iago's weapon.	4–7
18–28	Apply	Explode the quotation together. Think aloud about the paradox and the two uses of the verb "am", then students annotate their copy. Before you reveal any notes, students try the four empty boxes on the first explode slide, on their own or after you model one box.	8–9
28–33	Apply	Hinge question on mini-whiteboards. Use the answers to decide who starts on which level of support.	10–11
33–53	Master	Students write one What–How–Why paragraph that opens with an idea about Iago, using their level of support in the student booklet. Share the model paragraph in the last five minutes.	12–13
53–60	Master	Exit ticket. Collect and sort into three piles to plan the start of the next lesson.	14

Do Now answers

1	What does Brabantio accuse Othello of?	**Using witchcraft or drugs to win his daughter**
2	Where does the Senate decide to send Othello?	**To Cyprus, that same night**
3	Which fleet is sailing for Cyprus?	**A Turkish (Ottoman) fleet**
4	Who usually led Venice's land armies?	**Hired commanders from outside the city**
5	If someone is two-faced, what do they do?	**They pretend to be one thing while really being another**

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Vocabulary

deception	making someone believe something that is not true
resentment	bitter anger about being treated unfairly
motive	the reason a person has for doing something
hypocrisy	pretending to be loyal or good while acting for yourself

Reading

Act 1 Scene 1: Iago and Roderigo

It is night in a Venice street. Iago is Othello's ancient, his standard-bearer, and he is angry that Othello chose Cassio as his lieutenant. Iago has also taken money from Roderigo, who listens. After this speech, Iago and Roderigo wake Brabantio, Desdemona's father, and shout racist abuse about Othello. That abuse is not printed here. It is taught as Iago's weapon.

> 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.

William Shakespeare, Othello (1604), Act 1 Scene 1

Word help **Preferment**: promotion · **affined**: bound by duty · **cashier'd**: dismissed · **visages**: faces · **peculiar end**: private purpose · **daws**: jackdaws, birds that peck at anything

Explode the quotation

Method

A paradox: a sentence that cancels itself. Iago says he is one thing and also not that thing.

Zoom in

The short negative adverb "not" splits the verb "am" in two. There is no single Iago for other people to rely on.

"I am not what I am."

Effect

The audience learns in the first scene that Iago's outward show is a lie. Everyone else in the play will call him honest.

Purpose

Shakespeare gives the audience a secret to hold from the start. Every later kind word to Iago sounds false.

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Hinge question

Iago says he will "wear my heart upon my sleeve / For daws to peck at" only when his outward actions show his real heart. What does he mean?

A. He is too honest to hide his feelings from anyone.

B. He loves Othello so much that he cannot hide it.

C. He will never show his real feelings, because fools would take advantage. **(the right answer)**

What the answers tell you

A takes the idiom as it is used today, for someone who shows feelings openly: ask what Iago says must happen first. B accepts the loyal face Iago wants Roderigo and Othello to see: ask which words in the extract say the opposite. Students who chose A or B may start on Securing.

Why the answer is right

Iago says he would only show his real heart when his actions showed it, so he never will, because fools (daws) would take advantage.

Master task

How does Shakespeare present Iago as two-faced from the opening scene?

Securing the most support

Quotations to choose from

"I follow him to serve my turn upon him:"

"Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago:"

"In following him, I follow but myself;"

Starters

Shakespeare presents Iago as a man who serves Othello only to serve himself. When Iago says "____", the ____ (adjective) ____ (word class) "____" suggests This matters because the audience ____

Strengthening some support

Prompts

What: Make a clear point about the kind of man Iago is, in one sentence that answers the question.

How: Choose a short quotation. Name the method, such as contrast or paradox, and zoom in on one word. How does the speech build towards "I am not what I am"?

Why: What does the audience know that other characters do not? Where else does Iago speak to the audience alone? Think of "The Moor is of a free and open nature," in Act 1 Scene 3.

Soaring the most challenge

The debate

"Iago hates Othello because Cassio was promoted over him."

Write two paragraphs. Weigh the reason Iago gives here against what the extract shows about how he thinks. In the second, begin with "Alternatively" and test a different reading.

Model paragraph

What	Shakespeare presents Iago as a man with two faces: a loyal officer in public and a self-seeker in private.
How	Iago tells Roderigo that some servants are "trimm'd in forms and visages of duty" while they "Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves". The plural noun "visages" means faces, so duty becomes a mask that can be put on. The contrast between those outward "visages" and the inward "hearts" splits the man in two. Iago then claims this as his own method, and his closing riddle "I am not what I am" cancels the self that he shows to everyone else.
Why	By letting Iago confess in the first scene, Shakespeare gives the audience knowledge that no other character has. Every later show of trust in Iago will sound hollow, because the danger comes from the gap between what the audience knows and what Othello can see.

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