

English

Focus Question: How does Shakespeare use Iago's actions and words to communicate ideas about jealousy?

"Human nature is filled with envious thoughts and feeling" William Shakespeare in his play "The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice", writes between the lines. Shakespeare then, using his ability to hide the bigger truth in his writing, writes between the lines portrays the concept of human natured jealousy through the villain Iago's actions and words.

One way that Shakespeare uses Iago's words to communicate jealousy and envy is by placing Cassio in the position Iago believes that he solely thinks he deserves. Shakespeare then makes other characters in the play unable to detect his jealousy and cunningness. For example, Iago, when speaking of the lieutenantcy says, "I know my price, I am worth no worse a place/ Non suits my mediators. For "certes" says he, "I have already chose my officer". (1.1 12-18) By saying "I know my price" Iago is suggesting that he is more worthy of the job and that he believes he has a price better than he was given. And by saying "Non suits my mediators" he means that Othello, who appoints the lieutenantcy, ignores his helpers who try to get Iago appointed.

Shakespeare again portrays the concept of human natured jealousy using Iago's words. Shakespeare makes Iago begin to Plot and against Othello because he, Iago,

didn't get the lieutenantcy. For example after informing Brabantio about Othello and Desdemona eloping, Iago consuls Roderigo, "These Moors are changeable in their wills. Fill thy purse with money. The food that to hi now is as luscious as locusts shall be to him as bitter as coloquintida. She must change for youth. When she is sated with his body she will find the {error} of her choice. / I told thee often, and I retell thee again and again, I hate the Moor. My cause is hearted; thine hath no less reason". Iago tells Roderigo that though it may seem like Desdemona and Othello will stay together forever, Desdemona will see that Othello was the wrong choice (that Roderigo was the clear choice) and Othello will change his mind about Desdemona. He plants these seeds in Roderigo's head in order to have him help Iago in exchange for Desdemona's heart.

Finally Shakespeare uses Iago's words and actions to portray the concept of human natured jealousy by having Iago strategically remove Cassio from his office as lieutenant. For example, Iago provokes Cassio to drink more than his fill and has Roderigo initiate a fight between Montano and Cassio. Iago, after Othello enters angrily demanding to know what happened, explains what happened, "Steps in Cassio and entreats his pause myself the crying fellow did pursue, lest by his clamor-as it so fell out/ And Cassio high in oath, which till tonight I ne'er might say before. When I came back- For this brief- I found them close together at blow and thrust" What Iago means is that before that night Cassio had good judgment and sense enough not to drink on duty but he seemingly attacked Montano. Iago by saying this proceeds to get Cassio removed from the lieutenantcy.

Shakespeare uses his ability to inscribe a bigger picture message in his plays. And in this case inscribes in his plays concepts of human natured jealousy through

his characters. One of these characters is Iago, who's cunningness and slick style portrayed his jealousy towards Cassio and hatred towards Othello well.