**Act One - Scene One**

1. How does the way Shakespeare begins the play immediately involve the audience?
2. From Roderigo’s first speech it appears that he paid Iago for something. Can you tell what it was?
3. Who are Roderigo and Iago? What kind of people are they? What does each seem to want from the other? Who is in control?
4. What imagery does Iago use to describe Othello and Desdemona’s elopement, and what conflict does the imagery develop?
5. How does Iago characterize his own soldier-ship and service against that of Cassio?
6. According to Iago, what two kinds of followers are there?
7. Who is Brabantio? How does he react to the news of his daughter’s elopement? Of what sort of fears and prejudices is Iago playing?
8. What sort of person do you think the Moor is? Why is neither Othello nor Desdemona mentioned by name in the scene? What kind of person do you expect the man they discuss to be? Count the number of times the word “Moor” is used in 1.1. Can you draw any conclusions? \*\*
9. Iago speaks about appearance and reality. He says, “I am not what I appear I am.” State what preceded that line and explain it.

**Act One - Scene Two**

1. Why is Othello not concerned about Brabantio’s wrath?
2. Cassio brings a message. What is it?
3. Who accuses Othello of witchcraft? Why?
4. Brabantio wishes to arrest Othello and hold him in jail until he can be brought to court. What forces him to change his plans? What is his new plan?

**Act One - Scene Three**

1. As at the beginning of scenes 1 and 2, the audience is right in the middle of the action. About what are the Duke and Senator’s concerned?
2. How do the Senators and the Duke describe Othello?
3. How does the Senate react to the charges brought by Brabantio against Othello?
4. According to Othello, how did he and Desdemona fall in love?
5. What kind of impression does Desdemona create in the third scene?
6. How does Iago continue to manipulate Roderigo at the end of the act?
7. What sorts of ironies surround Iago in the first act of the play?
8. How is Othello’s status as ”tragic hero” established in the first act?
9. At the end of the scene, we see into Iago’s thoughts in the soliloquy. What do we learn about his motives?
10. Do you have any new ideas as to why Iago hates Othello so much? \*\*
11. Explain how Act One suggests the importance of each of the following: love, jealousy, honour, and trust.

**Act Two - Scene One**

1. What happens to the threat of a Turkish invasion of Cyprus?
2. What nonliteral purpose does the storm play in the story?
3. Why does Shakespeare move the action from Venice to Cyprus?
4. How does Montano react to the news that Othello is about to take his place as governor of Cyprus?
5. Although they all seem to be enjoying themselves on the dock with Iago’s cynical comments on women, we see that Iago’s fierce mood has not abated.
   1. What does he observe, and what does he conclude?
   2. What judgments does Iago pass on women?
   3. What is the purpose of his statements?

**Act Two - Scene Two**

1. What announcement is made by the Herald?
2. How do you imagine the celebration? To what “sport and revels” would your “addiction” probably lead you? \*\*

**Act Two - Scene Three**

1. What is Othello’s opinion of Iago?
2. How does Iago manipulate Cassio after the lieutenant’s humiliating dismissal?
3. After the fight between Roderigo and Cassio, and after not getting a straight answer from anyone, Othello says, “My blood begins my safer guides to rule,/And passion, having my best judgment collied,/Assays to lead the way.” (219-221) What is his point and then what does he threaten?
4. How is this a departure from Othello’s earlier temperament, and what makes it ominous?
5. Once again, Iago’s soliloquy gives us a glimpse of his plans. He concludes, “So will I turn her virtue into pitch;/And out of her own goodness make the net/ That shall enmesh them all.” (380 – 382) What is he saying, and how does he plan to accomplish this? What “masks” does he use to deceive and manipulate people?
6. Would all have gone differently if Cassio had refused any more drink? Why didn’t he just say “No” to Iago? \*\*
7. In Roderigo’s speech, do you find him to be pitiable, comical, or something else? \*\*
8. In this act Othello’s strengths are developed even further. With specific references, identify those strengths. What may be some possible weaknesses that are suggested? What changes does he show from Act One?
9. How does Shakespeare develop the theme of illusion and reality in Act II?

**Act Three - Scene One**

1. What is the purpose of the brief scene with the clown and the musicians?
2. What does Emilia agree to do for Cassio?
3. What is Emilia’s opinion of Cassio? \*\*
4. At this point, how could Cassio upset Iago’s devious plan?

**Act Three - Scene Two**

1. What task does Othello assign Iago?
2. What will Othello be busy doing?
3. Scene two is very brief. Why do you think Shakespeare included it? What is its function? \*\*

**Act Three - Scene Three**

1. Is Emilia part of Iago’s plot, or does she truly believe that Iago is saddened by what happened to Cassio?
2. For what two reasons does Desdemona agree to plead Cassio’s case?
3. Analyze how Iago works on Othello’s suspicions in scene 3.
4. Why didn’t Iago simply tell Othello right away that Desdemona and Cassio were having an affair?
5. Why might Othello be inclined to believe, or at least not dismiss, Iago’s comments about the women of Venice?
6. Iago has managed to plant jealousy and now all the dialogues have unintended double meanings. What is the dramatic irony of Othello’s statement, “Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul/ But I do love thee; and when I love thee not/ Chaos is come again.”? (100- 102)
7. How does the handkerchief become an important plot device in Act III?
8. What did Othello decide and command at the end of scene 3?
9. What is Emilia’s relationship with Iago? With Desdemona?
10. Are you surprised that Iago turns Othello against Desdemona so quickly? In your opinion, what would be the best way for Othello to handle his doubts about Desdemona? \*\*

**Act Three - Scene Four**

1. How is the theme of jealousy developed in Act III?
2. Why does Desdemona not wish to admit to Othello that she lost the handkerchief he had given her?
3. What hope does Desdemona cling to in scene 4?
4. Do you think Othello is telling the truth about the handkerchief’s curse? \*\*
5. State the two reasons Bianca is upset with Cassio.

**Act Four - Scene One**

1. How is Iago able to poison Othello even further? What suggestions does Iago make? Why does he mock Othello’s manhood?
2. What does the confrontation between Bianca and Cassio reveal about Cassio’s character?
3. What news does Lodovico bring from Venice and how does he become part of Iago’s scheming?

**Act Four - Scene Two**

1. How does Othello’s physical brutality turn into a psychological one? What seem to be his main concerns about Desdemona’s “infidelity?”
2. How does Desdemona react to Othello’s accusations? What is ironic about her pleas to Iago for help? What is the significance of her “Comfort forswear me” speech? (187- 193)
3. How might you respond if a loved one made false accusations against you? \*\*
4. Has your attitude toward Othello changed? In what ways, if any, can he be considered a tragic hero? \*\*
5. Why do you suppose Emilia hasn’t told either Desdemona or Othello the truth about the handkerchief? \*\*

**Act Four - Scene Three**

1. Explain the contrasts between Emilia’s view of marriage and Desdemona’s. What arguments does Emilia make about the nature of revenge and infidelity?
2. Do you think Desdemona suspects that Othello plans to kill her? Should she put up more resistance to his accusations than she has?

**Act Five - Scene One**

1. What reasons does Iago give to justify his desires for Cassio and/or Roderigo to die?
2. Why does Othello ignore the cries for help? How does his attitude contrast with his character at the beginning of the play?
3. Explain how Iago takes advantage of his opportunities to appear helpful and honest, to shift the blame to others, and to get rid of potential danger for himself later?

**Act Five - Scene Two**

1. From his soliloquy that opens this scene, what would you say is Othello’s mood?
2. When Othello comes to kill Desdemona, he refers to her in exalted Petrarchan imagery describing her skin as white as “snow”/ And smooth as monumental alabaster” (4-5). What is the significance of his constant references to putting out the light? Why does he want her to pray and why does he refuse to kill her “unprepared spirit”? (31) How does he rationalize killing Desdemona? Give your opinion about whether this act is in any way justifiable or understandable.
3. Why does Desdemona blame herself even for her own death?
4. Explain how Othello finally learns the truth of what has happened between Desdemona and Cassio.
5. Why does Emilia defy Iago’s attempts to silence her? What is the significance of Iago killing her?
6. Explain Othello’s speech (310 – 332). How does he attempt to regain his nobility? Why is he unable to kill Iago? (337)
7. Lodovico produces a couple of letters found in Roderigo’s pocket. What do they reveal?
8. How does Iago remain evil until the end? What images does Othello insist represent him best?
9. What philosophical viewpoint prevails at the end of the play?
10. Comment on whether you feel that evil triumphs in this play or whether any of the characters find redemption. \*\*