

Topic:

M.J. Arlidge suggests that "Trust is a fragile thing – hard to earn, easy to lose."

Through a close exploration of Othello's relationships with Desdemona, Iago and Cassio argue to what extent the above is true in the play Othello. Your essay will also need to argue whether or not Othello's approach to trust is responsible for his loss of honour, power and life.

- There are key words in the topic that markers will be looking out for. You need to aim to use each of these at least once.
- You can use synonyms. Such as hard/difficult; easy/quickly
- Remember that there are MULTIPLE stances (you can agree, disagree, agree partially, disagree partially, agree mostly, disagree mostly). Do not think you have to agree with everything that is said in the topic. You will be marked up if you choose a stance that can be convincingly proven. If you ignore aspects of the play, then the stance is flawed.
- When a question asks "to what extent" it is providing you with a hint – be conscious of the complexities of the play. Realise that what may be true for one character is not true for another. Those who created a blanket stance: trust is hard to earn and easy to lose did not do as well as those who differentiated and realised that Othello does not lose his trust in Iago easily – it takes him the whole play to realise!
- Yes, this topic is interesting because it forces you to unpack the prompt AND it adds responsibility plus "loss of honour, power and life. You need to treat each of these and not keep listing them! You are also expected to have a stance on whether or not Othello is responsible. Discussion: Can we REALLY say that Othello is completely responsible or the Iago is completely responsible? A more nuanced approach to establishing stance is required.
- You are also expected to address loss of honour, power and life. This aspect makes it clear that you are expected to deal with the end of the play.
- It is a big issue if your argument only uses the first few acts. You definitely need to use the end of the play in all essays.

In Shakespeare's play Othello, trust is an evident theme throughout the play and can be considered fragile. Through a close analysis of Desdemona, Iago and Cassio, and their relationships with Othello it will be proven, like M.J. Arlidge suggests, that trust is hard to earn yet easy to lose. Othello's trust in these characters also depicts how his trust is responsible for his own demise such as his loss of honour, power and life.

Desdemona, Othello's wife, is a very powerful character throughout the play. She is Othello's pride and joy in the beginning because he loves her so dearly. Othello views Desdemona at a high standard and talks about her often as she is "fair, feeds

Commented [LH1]: I was grateful his name was spelt correctly! Many of you are getting this wrong.

Commented [LH2]: You must underline the title of the play. This is the ONLY thing you need to underline.

Commented [LH3]: Do not list a whole bunch of themes - only focus on the theme that the essay topic asks you to explore. Some of you don't know how to open an essay and so you just list themes. This counts against you.

Commented [LH4]: Intro:
This is a good introduction because it address all the key words that are in the topic and indicates a stance on everything.
The danger of listing the characters as is done in the topic means that now the same stance has to be applied to each character. Can you see how this could have been a better essay with a stance that acknowledged that Othello's approach to trust is different for each character?
This is also a good introduction because it has 3 sentences that are grammatically correct, in the present tense, and is not too long/too short.

Commented [LH5]: Let us look at how we can improve this opening sentence so that the first sentence links out of the intro and into body paragraph 1 better.

well, is free of speech, sings, plays and dances well" which indicates the immense love and trust he feels for her. Othello's trust in her is also portrayed as "she has eyes, yet chose [him]" which shows his trust in her because she loves him, despite being black which indicates the large amount of trust he has in Desdemona.

However, despite the immense love and trust they have for one another, with Othello's trust in Desdemona breaks as he suspects she is committing adultery with Cassio, Othello's lieutenant. This trust is broken through Iago's manipulation of Desdemona and Cassio's friendship. Othello views Desdemona as unfaithful and untrustworthy as she tries to "make his bed a school" to try to convince him to reinstate Cassio as lieutenant. Owing to Desdemona's pleading and how often she speaks of Cassio, she cannot earn Othello's trust back, thus showing that trust is fragile as Othello quickly loses his trust in Desdemona and she cannot earn it back. Othello's lack of trust in Desdemona leads him to become violent and "he is a changed man" which is illustrated when he strikes Desdemona and calls her a "lewd minx". The result of his broken trust is that Othello kills Desdemona despite her pleading as she "gave him no cause". This killing of Desdemona demonstrates his loss of honour. It also shows that Iago has power over Othello so he loses power over himself and others. In the end, he also loses his life, as after he kills Desdemona he kills himself, "killing himself upon a kiss" in an effort to reclaim his honour.

Although Othello thinks Desdemona is the one who is betraying him, it is actually Iago. Othello trusts Iago the most as he views him as an "honest man". This trust Othello has in Iago is manipulated as Iago uses Othello's trust to turn Othello against Desdemona. Iago creates an alleged affair between Desdemona and Cassio. Iago uses Othello's trust to force him to lose his loved ones. Iago does this as he is jealous of Othello and his position as general, and Cassio because he is a Florentine and an outsider who secures the lieutenantcy. Othello is just a "Moor", a description that establishes Othello as an outsider and is used pejoratively in the play. Iago's manipulation of Othello's trust demonstrates how trust can be fragile in this play as Othello puts all his trust in the enemy and breaks his bonds and trust with those around him. Othello's trust in Iago is responsible for Othello's downfall as Iago uses it to tear Othello down and force him to lose himself, his wife, his friends and his power

Commented [LH6]: Notice that a point is made and immediately proven. This is good technique. How else could we prove that Othello loves (and trusts) Desdemona?

Commented [LH7]: "also" is a clever word to use:
- It shows that the student is using love and trust as synonyms.
- It shows that the student has made a point, proven it, and then elaborated and the quote that follows provides proof/evidence of the elaboration.
This is good technique.

Commented [LH8]: Square brackets are used correctly here but are not necessary. Try to avoid using square brackets.

Commented [LH9]: The signposting back to the topic could better. The student needs to show that Othello takes time to build trust with D over many suppers at Brabantio's house.

Commented [LH10]: Needs to say that the trust breaks relatively easily ...

Commented [LH11]: Uses the apostrophe correctly! Yay!

Commented [LH12]: Knows how to spell - yay!

Commented [LH13]: This is good because it implicitly reveals that Othello is not solely responsible - it introduces the idea that the responsibility for things going wrong is shared...

Commented [LH14]: I know it feels wrong, but you cannot use "due" in this instance.

Commented [LH15]: Pay attention to style and awkward repetition.
How can we fix this?

Commented [LH16]: Notice some great quotes that are fluidly integrated. 🍌

Commented [LH17]: Successful signposting that clearly responds to key aspects in the topic.

Commented [LH18]: Has used the first sentence to link out of the preceding paragraph and into the new paragraph - good.
Let's consider alternatives.

Commented [LH19]: Grapples with key issues in the question. Good.
What other material could we use when analysing Othello's relationship with Iago?
Can you see how we need to consider the idea of easily given trust and that Othello finds it difficult to stop trusting Iago?

as Othello gives Iago the power.

Iago is not the only one Othello trusts deeply. Othello trusts Cassio greatly in the beginning of the play as he makes Cassio his lieutenant. Iago's jealousy is the cause of him trying to break Othello's trust in Cassio as Iago wanted the lieutenant position as he "knows my price". Iago breaks Othello's trust in Cassio by orchestrating the drunken brawl as Iago knows Cassio has "unhappy brains for drinking" and becomes "rash and very sudden in choler" when he is drunk. Othello then loses his trust in Cassio over this mistake which demonstrates how easily trust can be broken. Cassio struggles to earn Othello's trust back due to this incident and the alleged affair he has with Desdemona. This lack of trust in Cassio is responsible for Othello's downfall as Othello allows Iago to convince him that Cassio needs to be killed because of the affair. Othello commands Iago to kill Cassio and agrees to smother Desdemona, thus showing how Othello loses his honour by trying to harm Cassio and kill Desdemona. He loses his power over himself and his life, because in the end he commits suicide owing to the guilt of having killed Desdemona.

In conclusion, it is evident that throughout Othello, trust is important but it is easily broken, thus demonstrating how fragile it is. Through the relationships Othello has with the characters it is evident his trust is the cause of his downfall and demise.

809 words

It helps to look at the rubric.

Things that markers look out for:

- Is stance on EACH aspect in the question provided in the intro?
- The stance remains the same throughout the essay and doesn't change. Having one stance in the intro and a different in the body is a problem.
- A lot of store is placed in introduction and in the conclusion.
- Spelling is not listed in the rubric but if you spell character names incorrectly and if you spell key words (lieutenant/lieutenancy, marriage, elope, affect, effect, conscience, deceitful, adultery, believe, jealousy, loose, lose, betrayal, opinion... what other words crop up?? Add to the list
- You must use the apostrophe correctly.
- Aim to have an argument sandwich – you need to make a point at the beginning and end with a signpost. Then in the middle, have evidence and elaboration.
- Sophistication in style is less about fancy words and more about clearly expressed ideas in grammatically correct sentences. It does help if you have

Commented [LH20]: Makes use of a linking sentence. How could we strengthen this?

This student shows does not rely on linking words like: however, moreover etc. - these can be useful but should not be overused ...

Commented [LH21]: Be careful. Multiple reasons are supplied by Iago for his behaviour.

Are any of them credible?

What are you going to do about addressing Iago's motivation for behaving the way he does?

Commented [LH22]: I'm not entirely convinced by this argument.

The play shows that Othello only demotes Cassio because Montano, an important man, is injured in the brawl and as a strategic soldier, Othello needs to lead effectively and respond. In conversation later, he indicates that he plans to reinstate Cassio after an appropriate amount of time has elapsed, but when Desdemona persistently pleads on Cassio's behalf and Iago manipulates Othello into seeing these pleas in a negative light he does lose trust. Can you see the need for more careful use of detail from the play?

Commented [LH23]: Good signposting back to the topic and stance.

Commented [LH24]: Try to avoid using this. It is something that markers use to mark an essay down.

Commented [LH25]: Notice that this echoes what was expressed in the intro, which is good - same stance throughout. But this idea isn't explored much in the body of the essay.

Good use of formal English.

Commented [LH26]: This is a long essay and shows that the student has great writing speed. The benefit is that there is good use of detail in the essay. It did not feel long when marking it.

some beautiful words and know how to use them. You will be marked down for using idioms and informal English.

- Quotes:

Must be integrated and cannot be one word. "honest" is NOT a quote!

The context should be provided.

Incorrectly attributing a quote is a problem – suggesting that Roderigo describes Othello as a "black ram tugging your white ewe" to Brabantio is WRONG! It is Iago who says this.

- Present tense is required.
- Watch paragraph length – they are blitzing on long paragraphs at marking – these cannot be nearly a page. Sometimes they are even longer than a page!
- You cannot start sentences with "And" for dramatic effect. This happens in creative writing.
- Careful – does Othello go to the Duke because of his marriage to Desdemona? No. The Duke calls him as there is an emergency and he wants to send Othello to Cyprus to fight the Turks.
- I know it feels uncomfortable but you need to use "owing" and not "due". You can only use due if it is preceded by "is" or "are".
- Watch style. "They decide to have a party and let loose." You know better than this.

What else can you think of that we need to discuss?
Any questions?