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Othello’s Fall

Othello’s fall was caused by his trust in Iago. Othello’s trust followed all the signs of being a tragic flaw. It was originally a good characteristic, but, due to it, Othello suffered great tragedy. Additionally, Othello most likely could not have prevented this outcome, caused by his trust. This trust proved to be Othello’s tragic flaw and lead to his fall.

In order for a flaw to prove tragic, it must first be a good trait. Iago was a high ranking member of the Venetian army. The quote “In personal suite to make me his lieutenant” (I, i, 10) proves this. In this quote, Iago is talking about trying to get Othello to make him his lieutenant. This means that Iago is already an ensign; two ranks below Othello himself. This makes Othello’s trust in him much more logical. If Iago was this highly ranked, then he must have gone to battle with Othello several times. Iago may have even saved Othello’s life. Othello had to trust Iago to promote him even this highly and trust his life to him in battle. Othello did not see a reason not to trust him in every other situation.

The only way Othello could have known not to trust Iago was if he had heard what Iago said about him when he wasn’t around. Iago spoke of Othello in a negative light several times. This was summed up best in the quote “I hate the Moor” (I, iii, 313-314). Iago states that he directly hates Othello in this quote. He uses a nickname for Othello and, in most versions of the play, seems to dislike saying it, as if the word itself was dirty. This turns the word, which could be used as praise, into a slur. This type of speech is only done by those who truly hate what they are talking about. The quote and speech show that Othello is completely wrong to trust Iago. This also plays into the idea that the fall should be outside of the hero’s control. Othello does not hear Iago say this, nor does anyone tell him that Iago has insulted him to them. If someone had spoken up, or Othello had happened to pass by, then the tragedy could be avoided. However, neither of these actions happen so Othello’s trust continues to be misplaced.

Iago knows of Othello’s trust and can therefore use it against him. Iago explains that he knows about Othello trusting him in the quote “The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not, Is of a constant, loving, noble nature” (II, i, 310-311). This showcases Iago’s knowledge and his lack of love for Othello. Iago says that he cannot endure Othello’s presence, again displaying his dislike. He also states that he is loving and noble in his nature, meaning that he cares for those around him and trusts those who earn his trust greatly. It also means that his trust does not waiver without reason. Iago has earned his trust and not given Othello a reason to doubt him. Iago notes that Othello’s nature is constant. This shows that all of the above is unlikely to change, giving Iago more time to work through his plans with less worry of Othello accusing him of treachery.

Iago’s plans are what lead to Othello’s downfall. Iago sees Othello’s trust and how to use it against him. His plans are to “pour this pestilence into his ear, That she repeals him for her body’s lust” (II, iii, 275-276). Iago plans to tell Othello that Desdemona, his wife, is cheating on him. Iago knows that Othello will only be able to use his word against hers. He also knows that Othello trusts him very much. Iago knows that in this situation, Othello will listen to him over his wife, due to that trust, and he will be able to control the situation. If that trust did not exist, then Iago’s plans would be unsuccessful and the best he would be able to do would be making Desdemona lose her handkerchief and maybe causing some suspicion in Othello that he could talk over with his wife.

Othello’s trust in Iago caused his, and Desdemona’s, death. Iago’s rank meant that Othello trusted him and Iago had given him good reason to many times. This was originally a very positive idea. However, Iago knew of and decided to use this trust against Othello. He planted the idea that Desdemona was cheating on him and controlled Othello through it. Othello only believed him due to this trust. Othello’s trust in Iago caused his fall.