

## Essay 2 – Explication of a Speech from *Othello*

Write a two-to-three-page (500-800 words) explication of ONE of the following speeches from *Othello*:

2.3.316-27 (a soliloquy by Iago)

3.3.178-87 (a speech by Othello)

In this essay you will thoroughly and precisely explore a brief passage of Shakespeare’s dramatic language.

**Explication** To explicate your chosen speech, work through it carefully, line by line, unpacking the effects of each line’s poetic and rhetorical techniques. Then explain how those techniques help convey a possible meaning or key concept that a casual, first-time reader might easily miss. Your thesis will state this discovery explicitly. Note that an explication must analyze *form* as well as *content*: not just the themes and ideas in the speech, but also how Shakespeare crafts and styles the language. To help you develop both your explication and your thesis you will write a set of **Explication Journals**.

Everything you say in your explication must relate directly to the actual words of the text. Don’t get sidetracked; stick with the words. Focus on explicating this particular speech, don’t start talking about Shakespeare, or the culture that produced him, or the moral messages his plays (may or may not) contain, or on anything else but the words in front of you.

Structure of Explication Essay	
<b>Introduction</b> (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Hooks the reader’s interest.</li><li>▶ Introduces the critical question your essay will address.</li><li>▶ Ends with a <b>thesis statement</b> (your answer to the question).</li></ul>
<b>Explication</b> (3-4 paragraphs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Explains the function of several poetic and rhetorical devices within the speech through close, careful, detailed analysis.</li></ul>
<b>Conclusion</b> (1 paragraph)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Briefly summarizes your explication.</li><li>▶ Returns to the “hook” from the opening paragraph.</li></ul>

**Sources** Your essay will have at least TWO sources: one primary source (the text of *Othello* itself) and at least one secondary source. Your secondary source will provide specific information relevant to your explication. You might use a standard reference work like the *Oxford English Dictionary* to help you define the precise historical meaning of a word, or you might look at a more specialized reference work on

Shakespeare’s language (like David and Ben Crystal’s *Shakespeare’s Words*, C.T. Onions’s *A Shakespeare Glossary*, Alexander Schmidt’s *Shakespeare Lexicon*, or a concordance of Shakespeare’s works); the detailed footnotes and glosses in a critical edition of *Othello* (like the Arden, Oxford, or New Cambridge editions) could prove helpful, so might the vast body of critical commentary available on the play. But whatever secondary source you use, make sure it directly illuminates some aspect of your own explication of the speech.

Your essay must have a Works Cited page with full bibliographic information on your sources, and it must employ in-text, parenthetical references. Use proper MLA formatting throughout your essay. (See [drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/](http://drmarkwomack.com/mla-style/)), especially “Document Format,” “Anatomy of a Citation,” and “How to Quote Shakespeare.”).

Schedule for Essay 2 – Explication of a Speech From <i>Othello</i>		
Outline Workshop	March 20	Explication Journal 4 (including your Working Thesis and your Informal Outline).
Peer Review Workshop	March 22	THREE copies of your First Draft.
Revision Workshop	March 27	Return Completed Peer Critiques.
Revision Conferences	March 29	No class. (Optional Revision Conferences in CASA 325.)
Final Revision Due	April 3	Revised Draft, First Draft, all the Peer Critiques you received, and all your Explication Journals (in a two-pocket folder with your name on the front cover).

**Please Note** This essay builds on all the skills you learned from writing your short story analysis. Therefore everything the assignment sheet for that essay said about Thesis, Evidence, Structure, Style, Audience, Drafts, Revision Conferences, Proofreading, and so on applies to this essay too.

2.3.316-27 (758-59):

When devils will the blackest sins put on,  
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,  
As I do now. For whiles this honest fool  
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes,  
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,  
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear:  
That she repeals him for her body's lust,  
And by how much she strives to do him good,  
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.  
So will I turn her virtue into pitch  
And out of her own goodness make the net  
That shall enmesh them all.

3.3.178-87 (766-67):

Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,  
To follow still the changes of the moon  
With fresh suspicions? No, to be once in doubt  
Is once to be resolved. Exchange me for a goat  
When I shall turn the business of my soul  
To such exsufflicate and blown surmises,  
Matching thy inference. 'Tis not to make me jealous  
To say my wife is fair, feeds well, loves company,  
Is free of speech, sings, plays, and dances well.  
Where virtue is, these are more virtuous.