Act I
Act I, scene i:
Summary:
Othello begins in the city of Venice, at night; Roderigo is having a discussion with Iago, who is bitter at being passed up as Othello’s lieutenant. Though Iago had greater practice in battle and in military matters, Cassio, a man of strategy but of little experience, was named lieutenant by Othello. Iago says that he only serves Othello to further himself, and makes shows of his allegiance only for his own gain; he is playing false, and admits that his nature is not at all what it seems. Iago is aware that the daughter of Brabantio, a Venetian nobleman of some stature, has run off with Othello, the black warrior of the Moors. Desdemona is Brabantio's daughter, and Brabantio, and many others, know nothing of this coupling; Iago decides to enlist Roderigo, who lusts after Desdemona, and awaken Brabantio with screams that his daughter is gone.

At first, Brabantio dismisses these cries in the dark; but when he realizes his daughter is not there, he gives the news some credence. Roderigo is the one speaking most to Brabantio, but Iago is there too, hidden, yelling unsavory things about Othello and his intentions toward Desdemona. Brabantio panics, and calls for people to try and find his daughter; Iago leaves, not wanting anyone to find out that he betrayed his own leader, and Brabantio begins to search for his daughter.

Act I, scene ii:
Summary:
Iago has now joined Othello, and has told Othello about Roderigo's betrayal of the news of his marriage to Brabantio's daughter. He tells Othello that Brabantio is upset, and will probably try to tear Desdemona from him. Cassio comes at last, as do Roderigo and Brabantio; Iago threatens Roderigo with violence, again making a false show of his loyalty to Othello. Brabantio is very angry, swearing that Othello must have bewitched his daughter, and that the state will not decide for him in this case. Othello says that the Duke must hear him, and decide in his favor, or else all is far from right in Venice.

Act I, scene iii:
Summary:
Military conflict is challenging the Venetian stronghold of Cyprus; there are reports that Turkish ships are heading toward the island, which means some defense will be necessary. Brabantio and Othello enter the assembled Venetian leaders, who are discussing this military matter, and Brabantio announces his grievance against Othello for marrying his daughter. Othello addresses the company, admitting that he did marry Desdemona, but wooed her with stories, and did her no wrongs. Desdemona comes to speak, and she confirms Othello’s words; Brabantio’s grievance is denied, and Desdemona will indeed stay with Othello. However, Othello is called away to Cyprus, to help with the conflict there; he begs that Desdemona be able to go with him, since they have been married for so little time. Othello and Desdemona
win their appeal, and Desdemona is to stay with Iago, until she can come to Cyprus and meet Othello there.

Roderigo is upset that Desdemona and Othello's union was allowed to stand, since he lusts after Desdemona. But Iago assures him that the match will not last long, and at any time, Desdemona could come rushing to him. Iago wants to break up the couple, using Roderigo as his pawn, out of malice and his wicked ability to do so.

**Act II, scene i:**

**Summary:**

A terrible storm has struck Cyprus, just as the Turks were about to approach. This might mean that the Turkish attack will not happen; but it also bodes badly for Othello's ship. A messenger enters, and confirms that the Turkish fleet was broken apart by the storm, and that Cassio has arrived, though Othello is still at sea. They spot a ship coming forth; but Iago, Desdemona, and Emilia are on it, not Othello. Cassio greets them all, especially praising Desdemona; somehow, Iago and Desdemona enter into an argument about what women are, and Iago shows how little praise he believes women deserve. Othello arrives at last, and is very glad to see his wife arrived, much earlier than expected; he and Desdemona make public signs of their love, and then depart. Iago speaks to Roderigo, convincing him that Desdemona will stray from Othello, as she has already done with Cassio. He convinces Roderigo to attack Cassio that night, as he plans to visit mischief on both Othello and Cassio.

**Act II, scene ii:**

**Summary:**

Othello's herald enters, to proclaim that the Turks are not going to attack, all should be joyful, and Othello is celebrating the happiness of his recent marriage.

**Act II, scene iii:**

**Summary:**

Iago and Cassio are on the watch together; Iago gets Cassio to drink a bit, knowing that he cannot hold his liquor at all. Iago also tries to get Cassio's feelings about Desdemona, and make her seem tempting to him; but his intentions are innocent and friendly, so this approach fails. Cassio leaves for a bit, and Iago says that he intends to get Cassio drunk, that will hopefully cause a quarrel between Cassio and Roderigo, who has been stirred up against Cassio. Iago wants to see Cassio discredited through this, so that he might take Cassio's place. Montano and others come, and Iago entertains them with small talk and song; soon, Cassio is drunk, and Roderigo has approached. Cassio fights offstage with Roderigo, and comes forth, chasing him; Montano tries to hinder Cassio, but Cassio just ends up injuring him. All the noise wakes Othello, who comes down to figure out what has happened. Montano tells what he knows of it all, and Iago fills in the rest, making sure to fictionalize his part in it all too. Cassio is stripped of his rank, and all leave Cassio and Iago alone.

Cassio laments that he has lost his reputation, which is very dear to him. Iago tries to convince him that a reputation means little; and, if he talks to Desdemona, maybe
he can get her to vouch for him with Othello. This will help Iago get the impression across that Desdemona and Cassio are together, which will make Othello very angry if it works. Iago then gives a soliloquy about knowing that Desdemona will speak for Cassio, and that he will be able to turn that against them both.

**Act III, scene i:**

**Summary:**
The third act begins with a little bit of comic relief; a clown is mincing words with a few musicians, then has a little wordplay with Cassio, who bids the clown to go and see if Desdemona will speak with him. Iago enters, and Cassio tells him that he means to speak to Desdemona, so that she may clear things up with Othello. Emilia comes out, and bids Cassio to come in and speak with Desdemona about his tarnished reputation.

**Act III, scene ii:**

**Summary:**
Othello gives Iago some letters that need to be delivered back to Venice, which Iago is in turn supposed to give to a ship's pilot who is sailing back to Venice.

**Act III, scene iii:**

**Summary:**
Desdemona decides that she wants to advocate for Cassio. She tells Emilia so, and that she believes Cassio is a good person, and has been wronged in this case; she pledges to do everything she can to persuade her husband to take Cassio back. Cassio speaks with her briefly, but leaves just as Othello enters because he does not wish for a confrontation. Iago seizes on this opportunity to play on Othello's insecurities, and make Cassio's exit seem guilty and incriminating. Othello then speaks to Desdemona, and Desdemona expresses her concern for Cassio; she is persistent in his suit, which Othello is not too pleased about. Othello says he will humor her, and the subject is dropped for a while.

Iago then plays on Othello's insecurities about Desdemona, and gets Othello to believe, through insinuation, that there is something going on between Desdemona and Cassio. Othello seizes on this, and then Iago works at building up his suspicions. Soon, Othello begins to doubt his wife, as Iago lets his insinuations gain the force of an accusation against her. Othello begins to voice his insecurities when it comes to Desdemona, and himself as well. Desdemona enters, and they have a brief conversation; Othello admits that he is troubled, though he will not state the cause.

Desdemona drops the handkerchief that Othello gave her on their honeymoon; Emilia knew that her husband had wanted it for something, so she doesn't feel too guilty about taking it. Emilia gives it to Iago, who decides to use the handkerchief for his own devices. Othello re-enters, and tells Iago that he now doubts his wife; Othello demands "ocular proof" of Desdemona's dishonesty, so Iago sets about making stories up about Cassio talking in his sleep, and says that Cassio has the handkerchief that Othello gave to Desdemona. Iago knows how important this handkerchief is to Othello; it was his first gift to Desdemona, and was given to him
by his mother. Othello is incensed to hear that Desdemona would give away something so valuable, and is persuaded by Iago's insinuations and claims to believe that Desdemona is guilty. Othello then swears to have Cassio dead, and to be revenged upon Desdemona for the non-existent affair.

### Act III, scene iv:

**Summary:**

Desdemona asks the clown where Cassio is; the clown goes off to fetch him. Desdemona is looking everywhere for the handkerchief, very sorry to have lost it; she knows that her losing it will upset Othello greatly, although she claims he is not so jealous that he will think ill of the loss. Othello enters, and asks for Desdemona's handkerchief; she admits that she does not have it, and then Othello tells her of its significance and alleged magical powers. Desdemona does not like Othello's tone; he seems obsessed with this object, and Desdemona is so frightened by him that she wishes she had nothing to do with it. She interrupts Othello's inquiry by bringing up Cassio's attempt to get back into Othello's favor; Othello becomes angry, and storms out. Desdemona and Emilia both note that Othello is much changed; he is unkind and seems jealous, and they are suspicious of the change in him.

Cassio then enters, with Iago; he laments that his suit is not successful, and that Othello does not seem likely to take him back. Desdemona is sorry for this, since she knows that Cassio is a man of worth; she tells Cassio and Iago that Othello has been acting strange, and is upset, and Iago goes to look for him, feigning concern. Emilia thinks that Othello's change has something to do with Desdemona, or Othello's jealous nature; they still cannot fathom what has happened, and exit, leaving Cassio.

Bianca comes in, and Cassio asks her to copy the handkerchief that he found in his room; it is Desdemona's handkerchief, though Cassio has no idea. He claims he does not love her, and gets angry at her for allegedly suspecting that the handkerchief is a gift of another woman. But, Bianca is not disturbed, and leaves with the handkerchief.

### Act IV, scene i:

**Summary:**

Othello is trying, even after swearing that Desdemona was unfaithful, not to condemn her too harshly. He is talking with Iago about the handkerchief still, and its significance in being found; but, soon, Iago whips Othello into an even greater fury through mere insinuation, and Othello takes the bait. Othello falls into a trance of rage, and Iago decides to hammer home his false ideas about his wife. Iago calls Cassio in, while Othello hides; Iago speaks to Cassio of Bianca, but Othello, in his disturbed state, believes that Cassio is talking of Desdemona, which is the last "proof" he needs before declaring his wife guilty. Bianca comes in, and gives the handkerchief back to Cassio, since she swears she will have nothing to do with it.

Othello is incensed by Cassio, still believing that he was speaking of Desdemona, rather than Bianca. Now, Othello is resolved to kill Desdemona himself, and charges Iago with murdering Cassio. Ludovico, a noble Venetian whom Desdemona knows, has recently landed; Desdemona and Othello welcome him there. But, when Desdemona mentions Cassio, Othello becomes very angry and slaps her in front of
everyone; she rushes off, very upset. Ludovico especially is shocked at this change in Othello, and has no idea how such a noble man could act so cruelly.

**Act IV, scene ii:**

**Summary:**

Othello questions Emilia about Desdemona's guilt, or the chance she has had an affair with Cassio. Emilia admits to having seen nothing, though Othello does not believe her. Emilia swears that she has seen and heard all that has gone on between Cassio and Desdemona, and that Desdemona is pure and true. Othello believes that Emilia is in on all this too; he accuses Desdemona, and her insistence that she is innocent only infuriates him further. Othello leaves, and Desdemona and Emilia try to figure out what has happened to Othello, and what they can do; Desdemona feels especially helpless, and Emilia is very angry. Emilia thinks that someone has manipulated Othello into accusing Desdemona, and has poisoned his mind; however, Iago is there to dispel this opinion, so that Emilia does not inquire further into her theory. Upon leaving the women, Iago comes across Roderigo; he is not pleased with how Iago has handled things, and knows that although Iago is promising him Desdemona's favor, he has done nothing to indicate that he has worked to achieve this. Iago quiets him by making him believe that if he kills Cassio, then he will win Desdemona; Roderigo decides to go along with it, but Iago is coming dangerously close to being revealed.

**Act IV, scene iii:**

**Summary:**

Othello tells Desdemona to go to bed, and dismiss Emilia; Emilia regrets Desdemona's marriage, although Desdemona cannot say that she does not love Othello. Desdemona knows that she will die soon; she sings a song of sadness and resignation, and decides to give herself to her fate. Desdemona asks Emilia whether she would commit adultery to win her husband the world. Emilia, the more practical one, thinks that it is not too big a price for a small act; Desdemona is too good, and too devout, to say that she would do so.

**Act V, scene i:**

**Summary:**

Iago has Roderigo poised and ready to pounce on Cassio, and kill him; if either of them is killed, it is to Iago's benefit, although he would like to have both of them disposed of, so that his devices might not be discovered. Roderigo and Cassio fight, and both are injured; Othello hears the scuffle, is pleased, and then leaves to finish off Desdemona. Iago enters, pretending that he knows nothing of the scuffle; Gratiano and Ludovico also stumble upon the scene, having no idea what has happened. Roderigo is still alive, so Iago feigns a quarrel, and finishes him off. Bianca comes by, and sees Cassio wounded; Iago makes some remark to implicate her; Cassio is carried away, and Roderigo is already dead. Emilia also comes in, and pins more blame on Bianca; she has done nothing, but Iago has some quick work to do if he is to exonerate himself in this mess.
Act V, scene ii:

Summary:

Othello enters Desdemona's room while she is asleep; and though she is beautiful, and appears innocent, he still is determined to kill her. He justifies this with images, metaphors, and ideas of her rebirth after death, and though his rage is softened, he is still much mistaken about her. Desdemona awakens, and he tells her to repent of any sins before she dies; she believes there is nothing she can do to stop him from killing her, and continues to assert her innocence. Othello tells her that he found her handkerchief with Cassio, though Desdemona insists it must not be true; she pleads with Othello not to kill her right then, but he begins to smother her. Emilia knocks, curious about what is going on; Othello lets her in, but tries to conceal Desdemona, who he thinks is already dead. Emilia brings the news of Roderigo's death, and Cassio's wounding.

Emilia soon finds out that Desdemona is nearly dead, by Othello's hand; Desdemona speaks her last words, and then Emilia pounces on Othello for committing this horrible crime. Othello is not convinced of his folly until Iago confesses his part, and Cassio speaks of the use of the handkerchief; then, Othello is overcome with grief. Iago stabs Emilia for telling all about his plots, and then Emilia dies; the Venetian nobles reveal that Brabantio, Desdemona's father, is dead, and so cannot be grieved by this tragedy now. Othello stabs Iago when he is brought back in; Othello then tells all present to remember him how he is, and kills himself. Cassio becomes temporary leader of the troops at Cyprus, and Lodovico and Gratiano are supposed to carry the news of the tragedy back to Venice. Iago is taken into custody, and his crimes will be judged back in Venice.