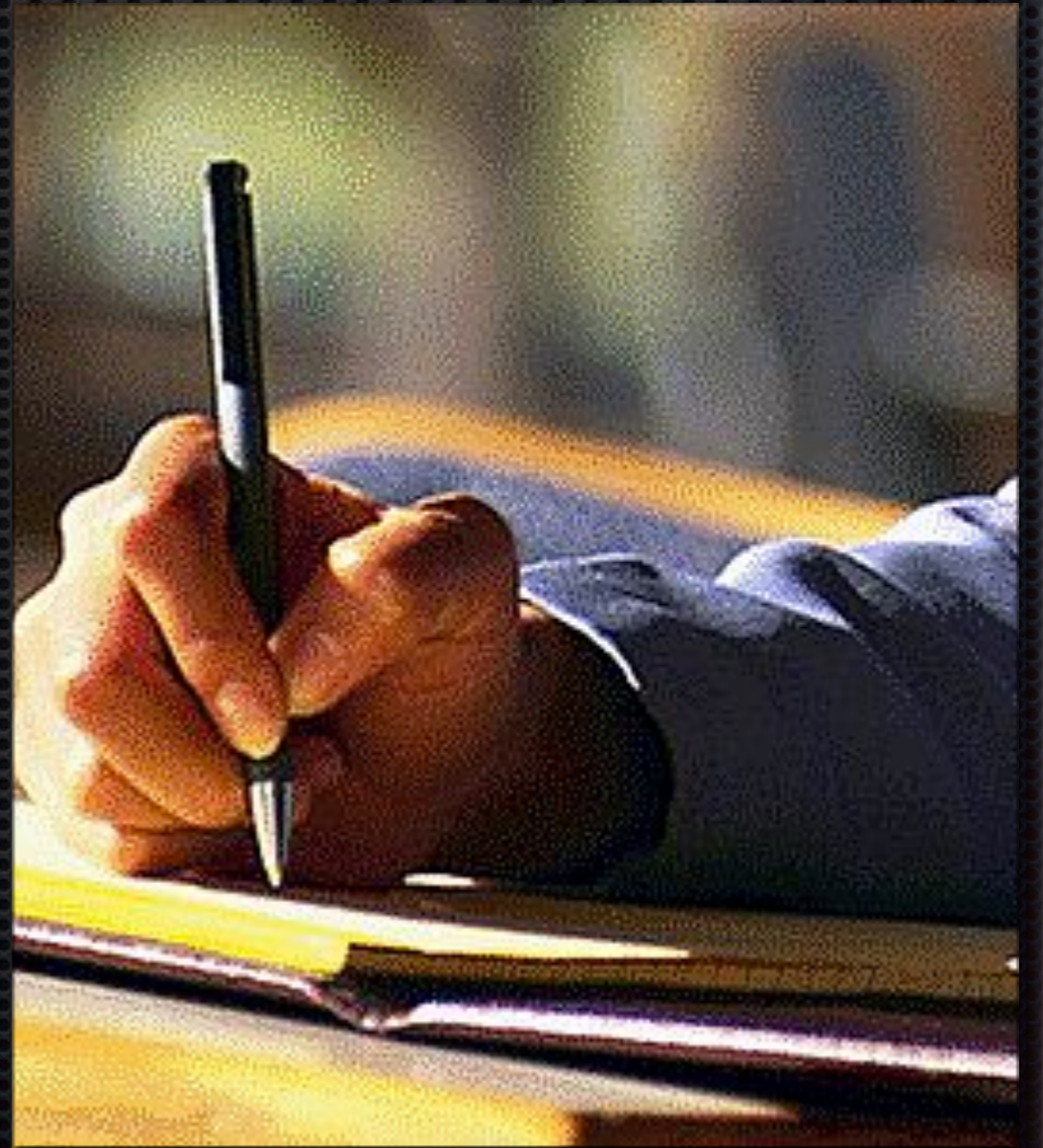


Othello

Approaching the Essay

Length and Timing

- ✦ Aim to write four to six pages. This should include an introduction and a conclusion.
- ✦ The general rule is a mark a minute, take off five minutes at the end. You should aim to spend about 50 minutes on the essay and five minutes or so checking it.



The Question

- ✦ Highlight the key words.
- ✦ Ask yourself how this question is likely to be **coded** by the examiner. There will probably be two codes. What are they? Make sure you focus on these elements in your answer.



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- (i) “Othello’s foolishness rather than Iago’s cleverness leads to the tragedy of Shakespeare’s Othello.” Discuss this statement supporting your answer with the aid of suitable reference to the text.

Marking Scheme

- ✦ Expect candidates to engage with the balance of responsibility for the tragedy, focusing on Othello's foolishness and Iago's cleverness. Candidates are free to agree and/or disagree, but they must engage with both aspects of the statement, though not necessarily with equal emphasis.
- ✦ "Foolishness" may be interpreted as naivety, innocence, jealousy, etc.
- ✦ Candidates may employ focused narrative to illustrate the points they make.

- ✦ **Code** FT+/- for Othello's foolishness leading/not leading to tragedy.
- ✦ **Code** CT+/- for Iago's cleverness leading/not leading to tragedy.
- ✦ Etc. Possible points
 - ✦ - Iago's superb insight exploits Othello's tragic weakness
 - ✦ - naive Othello trusts "honest" Iago

- ✦ - Iago is an opportunist but Othello is easily duped
- ✦ - Iago's clever soliloquies/asides influence our vision of Othello's tragedy
- ✦ - Othello's foolishness can be seen in the context of Iago's exploitation of others
- ✦ - fate diminishes Othello but elevates Iago

Thesis Statement

- ✦ The thesis statement is the sentence that encapsulates the main point or the central idea of your essay.
- ✦ All of the points you make after this will support and reflect this main idea.



- ✦ Your thesis statement should be clear and specific.
- ✦ Poor thesis: In this essay, I will discuss the relationship between Iago and Othello.
- ✦ Revised and improved thesis: I believe that it is a combination of Iago's cunning and Othello's foolishness which leads to the latter's downfall.

Important

- ✦ Any issue that you raise in your introduction **must** be dealt with in the main body of the essay. Do not mention anything unconnected to the question.

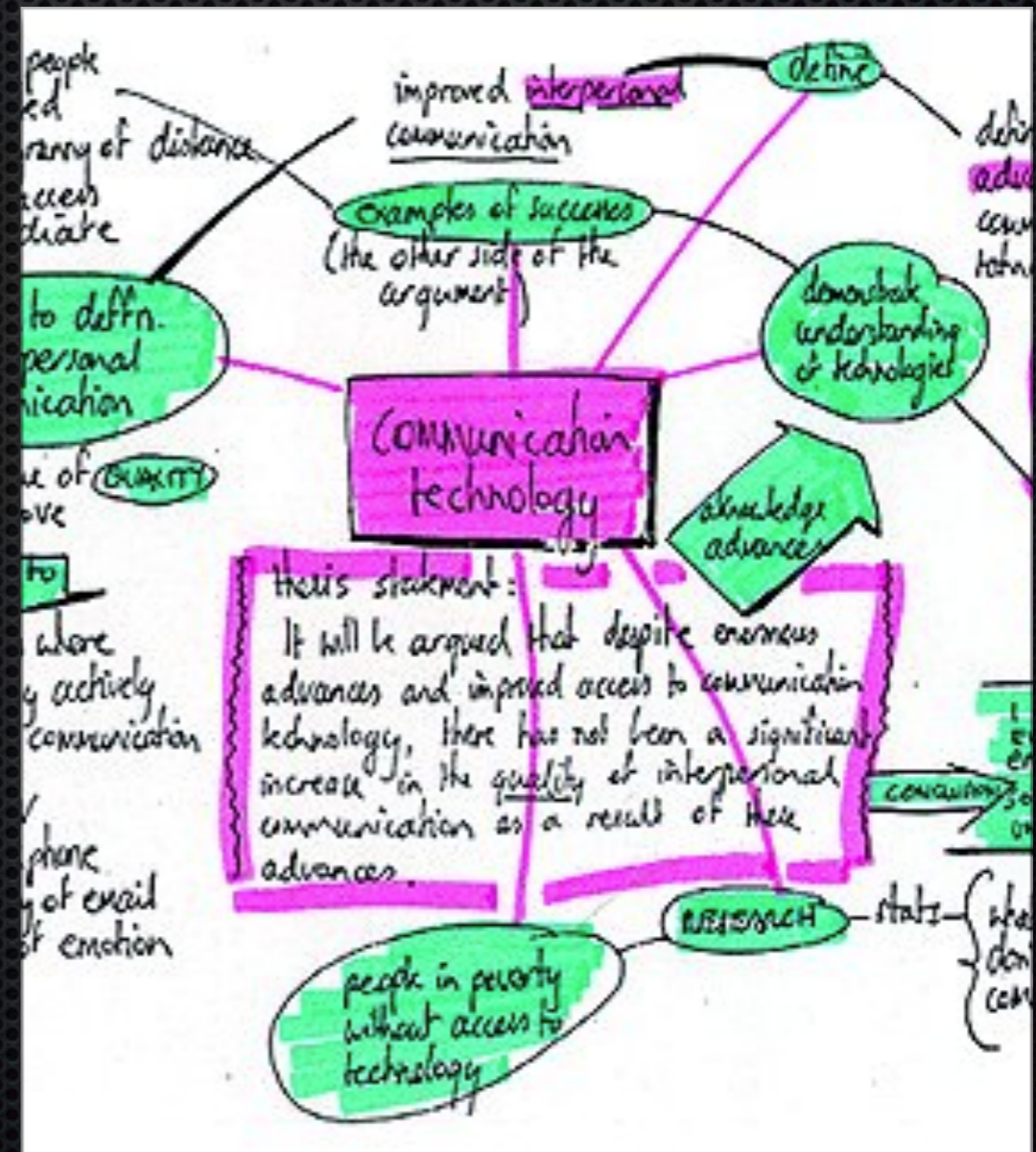


Sequencing

- ✦ If possible, move through the play in a **logical order**. This is easiest in questions about character.
- ✦ Think about the way a character/relationship **changes or develops** as the play progresses. Most character/relationship questions will focus on change or the role of a certain character in the play.

Planning

- ✦ Write a brief plan for your essay. It need only make sense to you.
- ✦ Ask for extra paper right at the start of the exam and use that for your planning. That way, you don't have to flip back and forth.



Check and check again

- ✦ Before you begin writing your answer, check that each point you intend to make answers the question and helps to develop your argument.
- ✦ Now look at the order in which the points are arranged. Could they be better organised? If so, draw arrows and number each point accordingly.

Start writing

- ✦ If you tend to lose focus, begin each paragraph with your topic sentence. This is the sentence which encapsulates the point of the paragraph and which will be developed / supported with suitable quotation and reference as the paragraph progresses.

Parts of a Paragraph

Topic Sentence: This sentence tells the reader the main idea, or what the paragraph will be about.

Supporting Sentence One: This sentence gives specific details relating to the main idea.

Supporting Sentence Two: This sentence gives another specific detail relating to the main idea.

Supporting Sentence Three: This sentence gives more specific details relating to the main idea.

Concluding Sentence: This sentence refers to the topic sentence and sums up the main idea of the paragraph.

Focus on the question

- ✦ Keep referring back to the question. Use synonyms to avoid your writing becoming repetitive. For example, if you were asked why you found a certain character **fascinating**, you might want to vary the language by saying he or she was engrossing, captivating, absorbing, interesting, enchanting, beguiling, bewitching, enthralling, enrapturing, entrancing, spellbinding, transfixing, riveting, mesmerising, hypnotising, engaging, compelling or thrilling!

Quotation

- ✦ Make sure that every quotation you use is relevant. Don't cram one into your answer just because you have learned it off and are keen to use it.
- ✦ Short, accurate quotations woven into the fabric of the sentence will gain you more marks than long, stand-alone quotations.



Pitfall

Do not quote in a separate colour. The examiner can recognise quotations without your pointing them out. Highlighting your quotations this way draws attention to errors and omissions.



Conclusion

- ✦ Avoid a word-for-word repetition of the first paragraph.
- ✦ Don't tell the examiner what you have proven. He or she will be the judge of that.
- ✦ You might like to end with a quotation from or about the play. Make sure to link it to the points you have made.



Important

- ✦ Never raise a new point in your conclusion, even if you think of a good one and wish you had included it in your essay.



In conclusion, then, I find Emilia the most admirable character in 'Othello' because although she is not perfect she strives to do the right thing as she sees it and pays the ultimate price for her choices. She is a moral heroine who undergoes a change for the better as the play proceeds. The critic A.C. Bradley describes her a woman who 'sets one's teeth on edge' for much of the play but goes on to say 'at the end one is ready to worship her' and I concur with this assessment.