

After reading

Getting a sense of the whole

The 5 minute *Othello*

If you had to squeeze the whole play into just five minutes, how would you do it? What is it absolutely essential to know? What could be left out? Where are the climaxes and key moments? Are there any words and phrases that you just couldn't do without?

- First, talk about ways of doing it. For instance you could do it in one of the following styles:
 - as a series of silent tableaux
 - as a mimed performance of key moments
 - as a rush through the key events, with just a few essential words spoken between characters to convey what's happening. You could try it either using your own words or short quotations from the play.
- Script your performance, practise it, then perform it to the rest of the class.
- Talk about the differences between the performances, focusing particularly on what aspects of the play each group chose to highlight or ignore. Explore what these 'reduced' performances reveal to you about the nature of the play. You might like to think about these aspects in particular:
 - the emotional temperature of the play and how that changes
 - climaxes and low points
 - recurring patterns, in characters' behaviour, in events, in themes or anything else
 - how simple or complex the plot is
 - whether you think there is a main plot and a subplot or not
 - how clearly the play is a tragedy or how much it is mixed with other elements.

A visual map of the play

- Use what you have learnt to try to represent the play visually, on one sheet of A3 paper. Try to show some of the interesting shifts from act to act. For instance you could use coloured pens to show changes of mood or emotional temperature. You could use highlighting or underlining to show when a character is playing a key role, or is in the background (for instance, Roderigo or Emilia or Cassio who flit in and out of the action). You could develop your visual map to include any of the following:
 - key events
 - setting changes
 - characters and their relationships
 - themes
 - changing patterns of imagery
 - changing patterns of language.

Here is a visual map of Desdemona's changing role in the play, by AS student Katherine Harding, as an example.

