

## *Othello*-Inspired Writing

**Title** Case Studies on the Paradox of Human Nature

### **Characters**

**WS** William Shakespeare, *Othello*  
**WG** William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*  
**RB** Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*  
**MD** Mark Dunn, *Ella Minnow Pea*

**Setting** A McDonalds in Fairfield, CT, on January 7th, 2016 @ 17:42

### **Dialogue**

**WS** Now that you haveth called me most four centuries through mine death, and now that I haveth read all of your books (and acquired more of a “modern” English accent), I would like to begin this conversation about thine novels that hath such a dark premonition. Why is it that you hath repeated the same plotline over thrice, a futuristic doomsday storyline both doomed and saved by man’s intellect? What hath thine achieveth with such a strange and preposterous story? Surely no one will believe it!

**RB** Great Shakespeare, are you familiar with the works of George Orwell and his “Big Brother”? When the ideals of communism took the world by storm, and the ideally-equal communist realms became dictatorships, Orwell shook the world with his far-sighted novels, one the real-world *1984* and the other a Aesop-styled allegory, *Animal Farm*. He issued a *warning* with these books; what if that “strange and preposterous story” became something normal?

Take into mind Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, for example. What would *really* happen when you put a few dozen civilized, British schoolboys on a lonely desert isle?

**WS, MD** ...

**WG** According to my calculations, and real-life experiences, they would most likely—

**RB** Case in point. There’s no definite answer, and there’s no way to truly prove the workings of human nature. But what’s the most interesting is that anything can happen with people, even “innocent” little children. And nothing seems too out of place throughout the course of the novel: it’s only when you compare in the same instant the beginning and the end and find that they are drastically different — as is your observation — that any absurdities arise.

The question is whether or not these are truly absurdities — blips in our “normal” operating status — or if this is the natural change we should expect: if this is the mistake, the wrong turn that humans will make in the future and learn from. It’s difficult to tell.

**WS** Mine story of *Othello* is one such tragedy. But I tried to keep it closer to reality, to the world we know. There are men admirable and unworthy; Othello and Iago were such, respectively. But you knowest well the end of the story: Roderigo, Desdemona, Emilia, Othello, and Iago fall like dominoes. The “bad” is always caught. Being so deep in this conflict with so many obvious lies, Emilia easily pinned him down. He had the power only to bring down this tight inner circle; the lords past Cassio were not much affected in their power. Alas, great Othello was struck down, just as the Bradbury’s far-seeing Clarisse, or Golding’s Piggy, or Dunn’s Dr. Manheim. Howbeit, society was never *doomed*. We’d never let that happen!

**WG** I beg to differ. No, society’s almost never doomed, but there’s always the *what if?* I didn’t place a pack of little children onto a deserted island for no reason. Nay, it’s because that’s what *we* are! On this precious haven we call Earth on which we placed by some supernatural means, we humans are a species of curious little children! No matter how much we may think of people with seniority to be “adults,” we are always curious little Beasts with no sense of calm until we meet the ones that took us here: God and his saints — represented by the parental figures of sailors in my book — the *true* “adults” to mankind.

I regret bringing up a biblical representation in a conversation about human nature, but we are truly alone. With no one to watch us from an greater outside perspective as the sailing godsend saw the little kids, we have no true insight on what we’re doing. We truly have the potential to mess up *real bad*. In reality, everything that we’re doing is an experiment: in no way are we the perfect, advanced, scientific beings that we make ourselves out to be. As Ray here was saying, I’m trying to teach a lesson, too!

**MD** I’d like to add that, unlike the global nuclear war in Ray’s book, my situation was no doomsday situation, and neither was Golding’s. This is similar to your *Othello*, Shakespeare. Iago didn’t doom the world, but he did doom the world for Othello and his closest friends — and the world of any human being is amazing. He was a smart man — indeed, a brilliant man, the smartest of the lot. Like the witty but foolish words of Beatty the fireman and the inspiring words of Jack Merridew, Iago had himself an amazing mind.

He plotted everything out before he did it, from the downfall of the lowly, mathematician Cassio to the numerous re-convincings of the brainwashed Roderigo. He was the one to forewarn Othello of jealousy, and subsequently convince him to a point of no return in his angry bitterness towards Cassio, a jealousy formed so suddenly and without evidence. He was the one to turn Othello’s great respect against his high lieutenant and leave without blame. He was the one to devise sufficient evidence for persuasion based on minimal, chancy evidence.

And yet, despite his evils, he was the one to be the most loyal ancient, helping out his “friends” Cassio and Roderigo, his great lord Othello, and fellow high rankings Lodovico and Brabantio. He was the one to re-inspire Roderigo and Cassio at the lowest points of their life to

turn back and join him against that treacherous Othello that — in some contorted way — caused all of this. As he said, [quote here about “If I’m helping these people, how can I be evil?”]

**WS** Yes, I hath intended Iago to be the clever villain, the one to entrance everyone — but I hath not intended his intelligent moves to be splayed out and analyzed side by side so deeply. Yes, I suppose that is very true.

**RB** It’s also interesting to note that this is all “people-smarts” that is controlling this. Iago is controlling Othello’s emotions: the rational, patient side of Othello is totally overridden by his love for Desdemona. Cassio and Roderigo are struck down too hard to realize the flaws in Iago’s teachings: of course, to “put [all] thy money in thy purse” [need a quote] is a terrible way to steal a girl! Even Emilia, who is as witty as Iago, defies her own *death* by relaying the truth to Othello and turning the blame around. And Jack from *Lord of the Flies* — although generally sidelined at first because of the wonder of Ralph, with his conch and his planning abilities — reflected the true side of the later “savages” with their zealous hunting. They didn’t want to be like Ralph, building shelters and waiting for rescue: they wanted to be like Jack, the fearless hunter who had an exciting life. Why follow rules when you could play all the time?

But that brings up the question: to what extent will this emotional manipulation play out? How long will it take until reason kicks out excessive rash thinking and do what is logical?

The problem with this question is that human nature is extremely subjective. What is “right” versus what is “wrong” is totally up to the mind, and it doesn’t have a direct relationship with with neither logic nor emotion.

**WS** Thou sayest that the most influential persons are those who will become the future corrupt politicians, the ones to easily push around the mind.

**RB** Yes, that is true. And we know that what is rational is often the savior of mankind. Innocent, hardworking people are often the ones to fix the society’s problems, to decide rationally what is right and what is wrong. Othello is a clear example of this: when he is not heavily influenced by Iago’s backstabbing, he is described as a great and gentle lord, as well as a strategic general. Ella was the one to steadily work towards freedom, objecting little and doing her honest best — as opposed to rash Tassie and Nate — and she successfully saved their home. And Montag, using the help of Faber’s logic, was able to think through Beatty’s persuasion and realize what was truly right.

In my story, I used the example of the phoenix to describe the problem. As a species, we innately know that reason — the act of patient problem-solving — is often the solution. Why, then, do we so often disregard this? Give in to our feelings? Ruin ourselves, over and over again? I called this council of writers — explorers of thought to the future and the impossibilities — to solve this problem of humanity. We keep on running towards that pyre, burning ourselves up even though we remember. Then *why*?

**WS** Methinks that this brings us all back to one almighty concept. The idea of *power*. People want power — it's no secret, they hide it not. But Jack, Beatty, the Council, Iago ... what are they toiling for? Why came this evil?

O, that greedy green monster we call jealousy! Villains will stop at nothing to be better than others, to let the world know of their superiority.

But greatness is only relative. And people are ingenious creatures.

You can see Othello at the top. He hath near-supreme power. Or substitute him in for the controversial books that Montag can't read. Or Ralph, who holds the authority Jack lacketh.

But then, simply put, life is a game of cat-and-mouse. The manipulators, the underhanded advisors, they're so close. And this proximity, this closeness to the allure of dominance, this makes them work in such incredible ways to fool and euphemize to the point of a meddled truth.

By this point, Jack would've worked into the minds of the schoolboys and planted images of glorious hunts and marvelous feasts. Beatty is telling Montag of the horrors of books, using first-hand experience. And Iago is digging himself deeper into the ensnaring pit of lies of his own creation. A pit so deep by design so that it pulls in not only him, but those he despised oh-so-much for their power over him.

And sometimes they *do* take over. Iago, in his brief moments of glory, takes down his friend Roderigo, his lieutenant, his General. his wife, his Lady the General's wife — and *he* is the one to help Othello with his own demise.

But it all stops right there.

This then is the act of heroism, the sacrifice of Emilia or Dr. Manheim in their gasping moments to save mankind. This is when the bubble of ignorance of wrongs committed bursts and people realize what is wrong. When Montag, Ralph runs away. When Ella works on. With the same ingenuity empowering and enlightening the "good" side, people progress on.

And voila! Order is restored! Peace is come! Cassio takes the throne of Cyprus, and Ella is given the honor of a statue.

But then, as before, it stops there.

The scene's set, ready as a popular play, the actors getting ready to make a second run. People knowing of past mistakes, but unknowing of the loops and turns they're in for.

**RB** I totally agree with you, wise William. That accursed monster which you have spoken of represents too much of our humanity. Thank you for your time, all of you, and have you peace now.