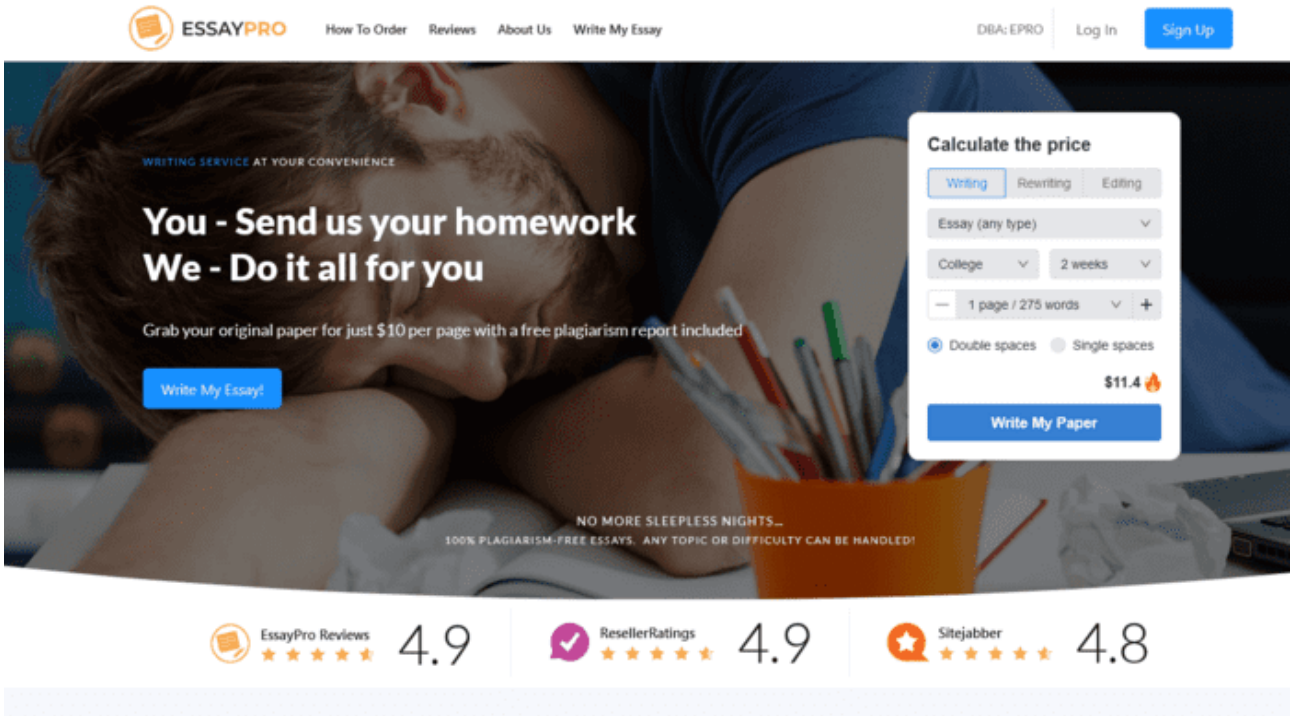


Shakespeare's Othello - Pitied Desdemona



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Othello and Pitied Desdemona

William Shakespeare's tragic drama Othello sees the destruction of two very beautiful people because of a sinister intervention by a third. The most beautiful of all is the lovely and irreproachable Desdemona. Let us in this essay consider her character.

In her book, [Everybody's Shakespeare: Reflections Chiefly on the Tragedies](#), Maynard Mack comments on the heroine's final song:

Desdemona, preparing for bed on the night that will be her last, remembers her mother's maid "called Barbary":

She was in love, and he she loved proved mad

And did forsake her. She had a song of "[Willow](#);"

An old thing 'twas; but it expressed her fortune,

And she died singing it. That song to-night

Will not go from my mind. (4.3.25)

Here time present, in which Desdemona speaks and sings, and time future, in which we know she (like Barbary) is to die from an absolute fidelity to her intuition of what love is and means, recede even as we watch into a lost time past, when Desdemona had a mother and all love's agonies and [complexities](#) could be comprehended in a song. (132)

In Act 1 Scene1, Iago persuades the rejected suitor of Desdemona, Roderigo, to accompany him to the home of Brabantio, Desdemona's father, in the middle of the night. Once there the two awaken him with loud shouts about his daughter's elopement with Othello. In response to Iago's vulgar descriptions of Desdemona's involvement with the general, Brabantio arises from bed and, with Roderigo's help, gathers a search party to go and find Desdemona and bring her home.

Once that Brabantio has located Othello, the father presses charges publicly in order to have Desdemona returned:

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