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AP English Literature

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14 (EXCEPT)

In Act 1 Scene 3, Iago employs various rhetorical strategies to persuade Roderigo not to commit suicide, revealing that artful persuasion and manipulation are at the heart of his character. Upon learning that Desdemona has married Othello, Roderigo laments that “to live is torment” and proclaims to Iago that the “prescription” for his illness of suffering is “to die.” Iago cannot allow Roderigo, his “fool” and “purse,” to “drown” himself because he plans to utilize him in his machinations to bring about Othello’s ruin, so he skillfully employs pathos to convince his gull to live. In order to appeal to Roderigo’s emotions, Iago emphasizes their bond as friends by highlighting their mutual hatred of Othello and declaring his loyalty. He assures Roderigo that they are allies in their abhorrence of “the Moor” and that they need to be “conjunctive in [their] revenge against him.” He goes on to assure Roderigo that he can trust him and depend upon his continued allegiance when he declares “Thou are sure of me.” Iago convinces his tool that they are confederates who must continue to work together, and thus Roderigo must live. In another way, Iago plays upon Roderigo’s emotions by giving him hope for a future with Desdemona, thus convincing him that he must stay alive. He assures the gullible Roderigo that he “shalt enjoy her,” suggesting the future consummation of their relationship, and furthers his own schemes by encouraging Roderigo to “therefore make money” in order to win Desdemona. In an even more subtle way, Iago emphasizes his fidelity with Roderigo by mirroring his speech patterns and syntax. When Roderigo, in his despair shifts his language to prose, Iago does as well in order to reinforce his connection and loyalty to Roderigo. Of course, as soon as Roderigo leaves, vowing to bring more money to Iago when he follows the whole group to Cyprus, the manipulator reverts immediately to blank verse in his soliloquy, during which he declares that he has successfully “[made his] fool [his] purse.” Iago’s exploitation of Roderigo, as well as Othello, Cassio, and Emilia, continues throughout the play as he is repeatedly called “honest Iago” until Act 5, when each of these characters experiences an epiphany and finally understands his true Machiavellian nature. As Iago literally stabs him in the back, Roderigo realizes he has been duped and declares, “O damn’d Iago! O inhuman dog!”

Comment [CG1]: Response begins with a clear topic sentence that does not repeat the question but instead asserts an idea about a larger element of the play: Iago’s deceitful character.

Comment [CG2]: Writing employs strong college-level verbs “laments” and “proclaims” as well as short well-integrated quotations to establish the context of the scene.

Comment [CG3]: Statement identifies Iago’s primary rhetorical strategy, which is NOT part of the question or answer choices, thus revealing effective use of literary terminology to enhance analysis.

Comment [CG4]: This part of the response addresses answer choices C and D.

Comment [CG5]: This part of the response addresses answer choice A.

Comment [CG6]: This part of the response addresses answer choice B.

Comment [CG7]: The conclusion of the response makes a connection to Iago’s impact on other characters and draws evidence from other acts of the play.