**Othello Reading Questions (basic)**
The New Folger Library Version

**Act One**
1. What is Iago's complaint in Scene I? In other words, why does Iago hate Othello?
2. Who is Brabantio, and why do Iago and Roderigo awaken him in the middle of the night?
3. Why does Iago leave Roderigo at Brabantio's house rather than wait until Brabantio comes down?
4. What is Roderigo's previous relationship with Brabantio and Desdemona?
5. What is Brabantio's reaction to Othello's marriage to Desdemona?
6. Why does the Duke send for Othello? What danger is Cyprus facing?
7. What accusation does Brabantio make against Othello to the Duke?
8. What explanation does Othello give as cause for Desdemona's affections for him?
9. Brabantio complains to the Duke about Othello's marriage to Desdemona. After listening to both sides of the story, what is the Duke's reply?
10. To whom does Desdemona pledge her duty?
11. What warning does Brabantio give to Othello?
12. What is Roderigo's complaint, and what is Iago's reply to it?
13. According to the soliloquy at the end of play, what additional reason does Iago have for "hat[ing] the Moor"?

**Act Two**
1. Where are we as Act 2 begins? What is the situation at sea? What has happened to the Turkish fleet?
2. Which ship from Venice arrives first? Which ship arrives second? Why is it surprising that it arrives before Othello's?
3. What does the discussion between Desdemona and Emilia tell us about their relationship?
4. Who is Emilia?
5. How does Cassio greet Desdemona and Emilia? Why is Iago so careful to observe the interactions between Cassio and Desdemona?
6. What information does Iago use to spark Roderigo’s interest in his plan to discredit Cassio?
7. What "proof" does Iago use to convince Roderigo that Cassio and Desdemona are lovers? What keeps Roderigo from seeing the truth instead of Iago’s lies?
8. Why does Iago instigate Roderigo to provoke Cassio to a fight?
9. What is the purpose of Iago's plan?
10. What emotion seems to be governing Iago’s thoughts and actions?
11. How does Iago see Desdemona, and how does Cassio see Desdemona?
12. Why does Iago want Cassio to drink more wine? What is the outcome of Cassio’s drinking?
13. What lie does Iago tell Montano about Cassio?
14. Why does Othello strip Cassio of his rank?
15. Why does Iago want Cassio to ask Desdemona for help in restoring Othello's faith in Cassio? What does Iago tell Cassio to do to get back in Othello’s good graces?

**Act Three**
1. Why does Cassio bring musicians? What is Othello’s response to them?
2. What responses do Iago and Othello have to seeing Cassio leave Desdemona?
3. How successfully does Desdemona plead for Cassio? What is Othello's response to Desdemona as she leaves?
4. Why doesn't Iago simply tell Othello right away that Desdemona and Cassio are having an affair?
5. What thing does Emilia find and give to Iago? What does Iago intend to do with it?
6. What is Iago's reply when Othello demanded proof of his wife's disloyalty?
7. What does Othello decide and command at the end of Scene 3?
8. How likely is it that Othello will keep an open mind until he has seen real proof? How much have Iago's suggestions about Desdemona's "nature" worked on Othello?
9. What is Emilia's relationship with Iago? Desdemona?
10. Identify and explain two examples of irony found in Act III, Scene 3.
11. How does Iago use Othello’s racial differences against him?
12. How is the dropping of the handkerchief ironic?
13. What, according to Othello, is the history of the handkerchief (3.4.65-79)? Is Othello telling the truth here? What else might he be doing?
14. What does the argument in 3.4.89-115 show about both Othello and Desdemona?
15. What is Emilia's view of men (3.4.120-.24)? How justified is she?
16. Who is Bianca? What is her relationship to Cassio? What does he ask her to do? What is her emotional response? Sound familiar?
17. Who had the handkerchief at the end of Act 3? Why?

**Act Four**
1. After Iago lied and told Othello that Cassio confessed going to bed with Desdemona, what advice does he give the overwhelmed Othello?
2. What happens to Othello in Scene 1? How does Iago respond?
3. How does Iago trick Othello into thinking Cassio is gloating and bragging about his affair with Desdemona?
4. Why is Bianca angry with Cassio?
5. How does Bianca's return with the handkerchief help Iago?
6. Why does Othello hit Desdemona?
7. Who is Lodovico, and why has he come to Venice?
8. What is Lodovico's reaction to Othello's behavior towards Desdemona? How does Iago later explain Othello's behavior to Lodovico?
9. Why does Othello ask Emilia about Cassio's affair with Desdemona, and what is her reply?
10. How correctly does Othello identify his weakness in Scene 2?
11. To whom does Desdemona turn for help after Othello calls her a strumpet?
12. Why does Iago tell Roderigo to kill Cassio? Why does Roderigo consent to think about it?
13. What is the effect of the “Willow Song” and the interruptions to it?
14. To what does Emilia attribute the fact that women betray their husbands?

**Act Five**
1. How would Iago gain from Roderigo's death? Cassio's?
2. What happens when Roderigo attacks Cassio? Who actually wounds Cassio?
3. What does Othello assume has happened?
4. After Bianca appears, what new part of his plot does Iago begin in Scene 1, starting at line 88?
5. Who will get the blame for the attack on Cassio if Iago has his way?
6. What justification does Othello try to give the murder of Desdemona in Scene 2?
7. How does Othello kill Desdemona? What interruption occurs while he is doing it?
8. Whom does Desdemona blame for her death?
9. How is Desdemona faithful to Othello to the end?
10. What happens when Iago tells his wife not to speak and to go home (orders which good Renaissance wives should follow without question)?
11. What is Emilia’s reaction when Othello tells her that Iago has revealed Desdemona’s affair with Cassio to him?
12. Why does Othello attack Iago?
13. What is Othello’s reaction to having his sword taken away?
14. Why does Othello kill himself?
15. How do Roderigo's pockets conveniently help to clarify much of what has happened?
16. What happens to Othello, Iago and Cassio in the end?