Warmer – Stereotypes (10 mins)

Work in small groups to discuss:

1. What comes to mind when you think of a 'typical' British person? Think about their physical characteristics, personality, job, hobbies, where they live etc.

Now read the following definition:

> Stereotype (noun)
>
> A set of inaccurate, simplistic generalisations about a group that allows others to categorise them or treat them accordingly.
>
> *Collins English Dictionary*

2. Do you think your 'typical' British person represents a stereotype? Are people from different countries or cultures always represented in this way?

Task 1 – Introducing *Othello*

Work in pairs to discuss:

1. *Look at this still from a film of Othello (1995), starring Laurence Fishburne and Kenneth Branagh.* What is happening in this scene? What is the relationship between the characters?

2. The play's full title is 'The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice'. What information does the title tell us about the play? Can you guess what it will be about?

Watch the short plot summary: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bp6LqSgukOU

3. Were your predictions were correct?

Task 2 – A secret marriage

Act 1, Scene 1. Venice, the middle of the night. Brabantio, Desdemona's father, is woken by Iago, who shouts up at his window with the shocking news that his daughter has secretly married Othello.	Glossary gown — *coat* ram — *male sheep* tupping — *having sex with* snorting — *snoring* the devil will make a grandsire of you — *you'll have black grandchildren*

Read what Iago shouts up to Brabantio.

IAGO:

90   Sir, you're robbed! For shame, put on your gown*.

91   Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul.

92   Even now, now, very now, an old black ram*

93   Is tupping* your white ewe. Arise, arise,

94   Awake the snorting* citizens with the bell

95   Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you*.

96   Arise, I say!

Work in pairs to discuss the questions:
1. How would you feel if you were Brabantio?
2. Who is Iago talking about when he refers to:
   - the 'old black ram'
   - the 'white ewe'
   - the 'devil'?
3. What does Iago want Brabantio to do?

Now discuss the questions with a different partner:
4. How do you feel about the language Iago uses?
5. How do you feel about Othello, based on what Iago has said?

Task 3 – Is the marriage legitimate?

Act 1, Scenes 2-3.

Before the Duke

Shocked by Iago's news, Brabantio gathers a group of men with swords and torches, and goes to find Othello. Brabantio tries to arrest Othello, who is on his way to see the Duke about a military matter. Even though it is the middle of the night, they put the case before the Duke, who will decide whether or not the marriage is legitimate. Brabantio accuses Othello of stealing his daughter. Othello defends himself, describing how he and Desdemona fell in love. Desdemona speaks out about how she feels about Othello.

Your teacher will give you a character and an extract from one of their speeches. Read the extract and discuss the questions in small groups.

Your teacher will put you in a group with two other characters. You will each play the role of your character. Take turns to explain your opinion and to persuade the other characters.

Task 4 – Putting Brabantio on trial (40 mins)

The Duke, who has heard all three characters speak, is won over by Othello's account. He says that such tales of bravery would win his daughter too. He encourages Brabantio to make peace with Othello and Desdemona. Brabantio does, grudgingly, accept the marriage.

Although Brabantio does eventually accept the marriage of Desdemona and Othello, he has just accused Othello of using witchcraft to make Desdemona fall in love with him. He doesn't understand how his daughter could fall in love with a black man, given the choice of the Venetian men she is surrounded by, so suspects Othello of foul play.

In today's society, Brabantio's views would be considered highly racist.

You are going to take part in a trial. Imagine that Brabantio has been put on trial for racist behaviour.

Your teacher will put you into groups and will explain what you need to do.

Task 5 – Discussion (10 mins)

Work in small groups to discuss the following questions:

1. In what ways do you think society's view of different cultural, racial, religious or social groups has changed since Shakespeare's time? What has remained the same?
2. Do you think that any of these groups are 'stereotyped' more than others?
3. Can you think of solutions to the problem of racism or racial stereotyping in our society?

Homework / Extension – Write a letter to your Home Secretary

Think about the questions in **Task 5 – Discussion**.

Make notes on the following points:

- *Describe what has or hasn't changed in attitudes towards race since Shakespeare's time.*
- *Outline three key race-related issues that are prevalent in society today.*
- *Suggest how these issues should be tackled.*

Now write a formal letter to your Home Secretary on the topic of racism in today's society. Use persuasive language to give your opinion and to suggest solutions to the problems. Use the structure and language in the box below to help you.

Writing a persuasive formal letter

Structure and layout

You are writing a formal letter, so use the appropriate layout.

- Introduce your topic and set the context.
- Outline your three key issues.
- Put forward your solutions to these issues.
- Conclude by expressing your confidence that your Home Secretary will listen and act on your suggestions.

Language and style

Y*ou are writing to your Home Secretary, so the tone must be formal. You are also writing to persuade. Remind yourself of the language used by the characters in* **Task 3 – Is the marriage legitimate?** *and that you used to argue the case in* **Task 4 – Putting Brabantio on trial** *to give you ideas.*

Think about including the following techniques:

- Emotive language, exaggeration and hyperbole
- Positive opening statement and clear conclusion
- Personal pronouns (to give a personal tone)
- Evidence and justification

Useful phrases

I'm writing to make you aware of…

I'm sure you recognise that…

I have no doubt that you will agree when I say that…