

Othello

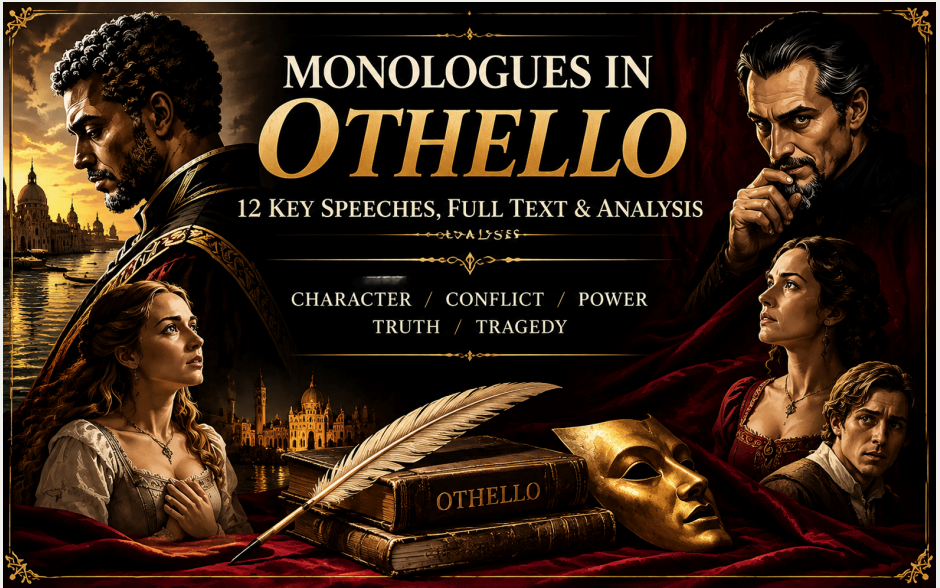


Othello Monologues

12 Key Speeches, Full Text & Analysis

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Othello



MONOLOGUES IN *OTHELLO*

12 KEY SPEECHES, FULL TEXT & ANALYSIS

CHARACTER / CONFLICT / POWER
TRUTH / TRAGEDY

Shakespeare's *Othello* contains several memorable extended speeches that reveal character, motive, conflict, and psychological change. Some function as soliloquies, while others are spoken directly to other characters.

In this *Othello* Monologues PDF, I use monologue broadly to include important extended speeches. Where a passage is more precisely a soliloquy or a speech within dialogue, I identify it clearly. This distinction matters because students often search for the full text of *Othello* monologues without considering the dramatic form of each passage.

I have selected twelve important passages and paired them with their full text and critical analysis. As a teacher, I recommend reading each passage aloud first. Shakespeare's rhythm, pauses, repetitions, and changes in tone often reveal emotions that a summary alone can miss.

Othello



Iago's Monologues and Key Speeches

Iago's extended speeches allow us to watch his deception being built. Some reveal his motives while speaking to other characters; others expose the private plans he keeps hidden from them.

Distinguishing speech within dialogue from soliloquy helps students understand how Shakespeare controls both character revelation and audience knowledge.

Othello

1. “I Am Not What I Am”: Act 1, Scene 1— Iago

Type: Extended speech within dialogue

Listener: Roderigo

O, sir, content you; I follow him to serve my turn upon him:
We cannot all be masters, nor all masters
Cannot be truly follow'd. You shall mark
Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave,
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage,
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd:
Whip me such honest knaves. Others there are
Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves,
And, throwing but shows of service on their lords,
Do well thrive by them and when they have lined their coats
Do themselves homage: these fellows have some soul;
And such a one do I profess myself.
For, sir, it is as sure as you are Roderigo,
Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago:
In following him, I follow but myself;
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,
But seeming so, for my peculiar end:
For when my outward action doth demonstrate
The native act and figure of my heart
In compliment extern, 'tis not long after
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.

Critical Analysis:

Iago openly admits that his loyalty to Othello is a performance. By separating outward obedience from inward intention, he establishes appearance versus reality as a central conflict.

The paradox “I am not what I am” captures his deliberately deceptive identity. Because Roderigo hears this confession while Othello trusts Iago, Shakespeare creates dramatic irony and exposes the gap between reputation and reality.

Editorial Note: This is not a soliloquy because Roderigo is present. Iago speaks directly to him, so it is an extended speech within dialogue. In this guide, it is included under the broader term monologue.

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2. “I Hate the Moor”: Act 1, Scene 3 — Iago

Type: Soliloquy

Situation: Iago speaks alone after Roderigo exits

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse:
For I mine own gain'd knowledge should profane,
If I would time expend with such a snipe.
But for my sport and profit. I hate the Moor:
And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets
He has done my office: I know not if't be true;
But I, for mere suspicion in that kind,
Will do as if for surety.
He holds me well;
The better shall my purpose work on him.
Cassio's a proper man: let me see now:
To get his place and to plume up my will
In double knavery—How, how? Let's see:—
After some time, to abuse Othello's ear
That he is too familiar with his wife.
He hath a person and a smooth dispose
To be suspected, framed to make women false.
The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.
I have't. It is engender'd. Hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

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Critical Analysis:

This soliloquy turns Iago's resentment into a deliberate plan. His suspicion that Othello has slept with Emilia is unproven, yet he chooses to treat suspicion as certainty.

That habit is central to his character: he creates his own justification before creating his revenge.

He also recognises Othello's "free and open nature" as a weakness. The final image of a "monstrous birth" presents his scheme as something he consciously brings into existence.

Why this is genuinely a soliloquy:

Roderigo has left before Iago begins this passage. Iago is therefore no longer explaining himself to another character; he is revealing his private thoughts and plans to the audience. That makes "I hate the Moor" one of the clearest examples of Iago's soliloquies.

Othello

3. “That Cassio Loves Her”: Act 2, Scene 1— Iago

Type: Soliloquy

Situation: Iago speaks alone

That Cassio loves her, I do well believe 't;
That she loves him, 'tis apt and of great credit:
The Moor, howbeit that I endure him not,
Is of a constant, loving, noble nature,
And I dare think he'll prove to Desdemona
A most dear husband. Now, I do love her too,
Not out of absolute lust (though peradventure
I stand accountant for as great a sin)
But partly led to diet my revenge
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor
Hath leaped into my seat—the thought whereof
Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards,
And nothing can or shall content my soul
Till I am evened with him, wife for wife,
Or, failing so, yet that I put the Moor
At least into a jealousy so strong
That judgment cannot cure. Which thing to do,
If this poor trash of Venice, whom I trace
For his quick hunting, stand the putting on,
I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,
Abuse him to the Moor in the rank garb
(For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too),
Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me
For making him egregiously an ass
And practicing upon his peace and quiet
Even to madness. 'Tis here, but yet confused:
Knavery's plain face is never seen till used.

Othello

Critical Analysis:

Here, Iago's resentment becomes a calculated psychological strategy. He imagines sexual betrayal without evidence and plans to make Othello jealous until "judgment cannot cure" him.

His aim is not simply to remove Cassio or punish Othello but to destroy Othello's "peace and quiet" and push him toward madness.

The speech also shows how Iago turns possibilities into apparent facts, building his entire scheme on suspicion rather than evidence.

4. "Divinity of Hell": Act 2, Scene 3 — Iago

Type: Soliloquy

And what's he then that says I play the villain?
When this advice is free I give and honest,
Probal to thinking and indeed the course
To win the Moor again? For 'tis most easy
The inclining Desdemona to subdue
In any honest suit: she's framed as fruitful
As the free elements. And then for her
To win the Moor—were't to renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
His soul is so enfetter'd to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list,
Even as her appetite shall play the god
With his weak function. How am I then a villain
To counsel Cassio to this parallel course,
Directly to his good? Divinity of hell!
When devils will the blackest sins put on,
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows,
As I do now: for whiles this honest fool
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear,
That she repeals him for her body's lust;
And by how much she strives to do him good,
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,
And out of her own goodness make the net
That shall enmesh them all.

Othello

Critical Analysis:

This soliloquy reveals Iago's most disturbing method: making evil appear good. He takes Desdemona's innocent attempt to help Cassio and plans to turn it into evidence of sexual desire.

The phrase "Divinity of hell!" captures his perverse moral logic. His final metaphor, "turn her virtue into pitch," shows how he intends to make Desdemona's goodness itself trap her. The "net" confirms that his deception is deliberate, calculated, and designed to destroy them all.

Editorial note:

The passage is correctly placed in Act 2, Scene 3. Roderigo enters immediately after Iago's soliloquy, marking the end of this private revelation and the return to dialogue.

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Othello's Monologues and Key Speeches

Othello's speeches trace his movement from confident storyteller to jealous husband and finally tragic hero. Together, they show how language, once his strength, becomes the means through which his identity and judgment slowly unravel.

5. "Her Father Loved Me": Act 1, Scene 3 — Othello

Type: Extended public speech before the Venetian Senate

Her father loved me; oft invited me;
Still question'd me the story of my life,
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,
That I have passed.
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bade me tell it;
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field,
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly
breach,
Of being taken by the insolent foe
And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
And portance in my travels' history:
Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch
heaven
It was my hint to speak,—such was the process;
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders.
This to hear
Would Desdemona seriously incline:
But still the house-affairs would draw her thence:
Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear
Devour up my discourse: which I observing,
Took once a pliant hour, and found good means
To draw from her a prayer of earnest heart
That I would all my pilgrimage dilate,

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Whereof by parcels she had something heard,
But not intently: I did consent,
And often did beguile her of her tears,
When I did speak of some distressful stroke
That my youth suffer'd.
My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs:
She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing
strange,
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd
That heaven had made her such a man: she thank'd
me,
And bade me, if I had a friend that loved her,
I should but teach him how to tell my story.
And that would woo her.
Upon this hint I spake:
She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,
And I loved her that she did pity them.
This only is the witchcraft I have used:
Here comes the lady; let her witness it.

Critical Analysis:

Othello presents storytelling as the foundation of his love for Desdemona. His tales of danger create admiration and pity. The irony is sharp: he wins her through storytelling, then loses her by believing Iago's false story.

Language first strengthens his identity, but later becomes the weapon that destroys his trust and judgment, and shapes how he understands himself and others.

6. “Was This Fair Paper?”: Act 4, Scene 2 — Othello

Type: Extended speech within dialogue

Had it pleased heaven
To try me with affliction; had they rain'd
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head,
Steep'd me in poverty to the very lips,
Given to captivity me and my utmost hopes,
I should have found in some place of my soul
A drop of patience: but, alas, to make me
A fixed figure for the time of scorn
To point his slow unmoving finger at!
Yet could I bear that too; well, very well:
But there, where I have garner'd up my heart,
Where either I must live, or bear no life;
The fountain from the which my current runs,
Or else dries up; to be discarded thence!
Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in! Turn thy complexion there,
Patience, thou young and rose-lipp'd cherubin,—
Ay, there, look grim as hell!
O, ay; as summer flies are in the shambles,
That quicken even with blowing. O thou weed,
Who art so lovely fair and smell'st so sweet
That the sense aches at thee, would thou hadst
ne'er been born!
Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,
Made to write “whore” upon? What committed!
Committed! O thou public commoner!
I should make very forges of my cheeks,
That would to cinders burn up modesty,
Did I but speak thy deeds. What committed!
Heaven stops the nose at it and the moon winks,
The bawdy wind that kisses all it meets
Is hush'd within the hollow mine of earth,
And will not hear it. What committed!
Impudent strumpet!

Othello

Critical Analysis:

Jealousy has transformed Othello's view of Desdemona. The "fair paper" and "goodly book" images suggest something pure that he now imagines defaced by sexual corruption.

Yet the corruption exists in his interpretation, not in Desdemona. Iago's invented story has entered Othello's imagination and become his perceived reality. It marks a decisive stage in his psychological collapse and moral blindness, replacing evidence with assumption alone.

7. "Behold, I Have a Weapon": Act 5, Scene 2 — Othello

Type: Extended speech within dialogue

Behold, I have a weapon;
A better never did itself sustain
Upon a soldier's thigh: I have seen the day,
That, with this little arm and this good sword,
I have made my way through more impediments
Than twenty times your stop: but, O vain boast!
Who can control his fate? 'tis not so now.
Be not afraid, though you do see me weapon'd;
Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.
Do you go back dismay'd? 'tis a lost fear;
Man but a rush against Othello's breast,
And he retires. Where should Othello go?
Now, how dost thou look now? O ill-starr'd wench!
Pale as thy smock! when we shall meet at compt,
This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
And fiends will snatch at it. Cold, cold, my girl!
Even like thy chastity. O cursed slave!
Whip me, ye devils,
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!
O Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!
Oh! Oh! Oh!

Othello

Critical Analysis:

Othello's speech brings his former identity as a soldier into conflict with his present guilt. His sword once overcame physical enemies, but now cannot control fate or undo violence.

"Journey's end" suggests the completion of his tragic path. His confidence collapses into remorse, self-condemnation, and despair as he confronts what he has done, with shame.

8. *"Speak of Me as I Am": Act 5, Scene 2 — Othello*

Type: Final major speech within dialogue

Soft you; a word or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know't.
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
Speak of me as I am. Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice. Then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand,
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinal gum. Set you down this;
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by th' throat the circumcised dog
And smote him, thus.

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Critical Analysis:

Othello's final major speech tries to control how his life will be remembered. "Speak of me as I am" asks for neither excuses nor malicious judgment. His admission that he "loved not wisely but too well" recognises his tragic error without fully absolving him.

The reference to the Turk reconnects his final act with his former soldier identity and shows his attempt to frame his death within the story of his life.

9. "I Had Rather Be a Toad": Act 3, Scene 3 — Othello

Type: Excerpt from a soliloquy

Broad category: Monologue

I had rather be a toad,
And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
Than keep a corner in the thing I love
For others' uses.

Critical Analysis:

These four lines come from Othello's private speech after Iago leaves. The **"toad"** and **"dungeon"** images express humiliation and confinement, while **"the thing I love"** reveals jealousy turning Desdemona into an object of possession.

Editorial Note:

This passage can be included under the broad term monologue, but these four lines are not the complete monologue. They are a key excerpt from Othello's longer soliloquy in Act 3, Scene 3.

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Other Important Monologues and Key Speeches

These speeches widen the play's perspective beyond Iago and Othello. Roderigo reveals social prejudice, Desdemona expresses innocent devotion, and Emilia challenges gender inequality and moves toward moral resistance.

10. "Your Daughter Hath Made a Gross Revolt": Act 1, Scene 1- Roderigo

Type: Extended speech within dialogue

Sir, I will answer any thing. But, I beseech you,
If't be your pleasure and most wise consent,
As partly I find it is, that your fair daughter,
At this odd-even and dull watch o' the night,
Transported, with no worse nor better guard
But with a knave of common hire, a gondolier,
To the gross clasps of a lascivious Moor—
If this be known to you and your allowance,
We then have done you bold and saucy wrongs;
But if you know not this, my manners tell me
We have your wrong rebuke.
Do not believe
That, from the sense of all civility,
I thus would play and trifle with your reverence:
Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,
I say again, hath made a gross revolt;
Tying her duty, beauty, wit and fortunes
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger
Of here and every where. Straight satisfy yourself:
If she be in her chamber or your house,
Let loose on me the justice of the state
For thus deluding you.

Critical Analysis:

Roderigo deliberately inflames Brabantio's fears rather than reporting Desdemona's marriage neutrally. His language combines racial prejudice, sexual insinuation, and appeals to family honour, making her marriage sound like rebellion.

The phrase "**gross revolt**" presents Desdemona as a disobedient daughter rather than an independent woman. Shakespeare therefore shows how loaded language can shape perception before Iago's manipulation begins.

11. “O Good Iago”: Act 4, Scene 2 — Desdemona

Type: Extended speech within dialogue

O good Iago,
What shall I do to win my lord again?
Good friend, go to him; for, by this light of heaven,
I know not how I lost him.
Here I kneel:
If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,
Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,
Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense,
Delighted them in any other form;
Or that I do not yet, and ever did,
And ever will—though he do shake me off
To beggarly divorcement—love him dearly,
Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much;
And his unkindness may defeat my life,
But never taint my love. I cannot say “whore:”
It does abhor me now I speak the word;
To do the act that might the addition earn
Not the world's mass of vanity could make me.

Critical Analysis:

Desdemona's speech reveals her innocence, confusion, and unwavering devotion to Othello. Her question, “What shall I do to win my lord again?”, shows that she cannot understand his sudden rejection.

Unlike Othello, who now speaks through suspicion, Desdemona continues to speak through love and loyalty. Her trust in Iago creates painful dramatic irony, because the audience knows he has helped destroy her marriage and reputation.

12. “*Their Wives Have Sense Like Them*”: Act 4, Scene 3 - Emilia

Type: Extended speech within dialogue

But I do think it is their husbands' faults
If wives do fall: say that they slack their duties,
And pour our treasures into foreign laps,
Or else break out in peevish jealousies,
Throwing restraint upon us; or say they strike us,
Or scant our former having in despite;
Why, we have galls, and though we have some grace,
Yet have we some revenge. Let husbands know
Their wives have sense like them: they see and smell
And have their palates both for sweet and sour,
As husbands have. What is it that they do
When they change us for others? Is it sport?
I think it is: and doth affection breed it?
I think it doth: is't frailty that thus errs?
It is so too: and have not we affections,
Desires for sport, and frailty, as men have?
Then let them use us well: else let them know,
The ills we do, their ills instruct us so.

Critical Analysis:

Emilia challenges the double standard between men and women, arguing that wives possess the same emotions, desires, and weaknesses as husbands. Her assertion that “their wives have sense like them” gives women emotional and physical agency.

The speech also anticipates her later resistance to Iago. What begins as a criticism of unequal marriage develops into a courageous defence of truth, justice, and Desdemona in the final scene.

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Quick Study Guide

Speech	Speaker	Act/Scene	Form	Main Function
"I am not what I am"	Iago	1.1	Extended speech within dialogue	Reveals deception
"I hate the Moor"	Iago	1.3	Soliloquy	Reveals hatred and revenge
"That Cassio loves her"	Iago	2.1	Soliloquy	Develops the jealousy plan
"Divinity of hell!"	Iago	2.3	Soliloquy	Reveals Iago's deceptive strategy
"Her father loved me"	Othello	1.3	Public speech before the Senate	Establishes identity and love
"I had rather be a toad"	Othello	3.3	Excerpt from a soliloquy	Reveals possessive jealousy
"Was this fair paper"	Othello	4.2	Extended speech within dialogue	Shows psychological collapse
"Behold, I have a weapon"	Othello	5.2	Extended speech within dialogue	Expresses despair and guilt

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Quick Study Guide

Speech	Speaker	Act/Scene	Form	Main Function
"Speak of me as I am"	Othello	5.2	Final major speech within dialogue	Expresses remorse and shapes his legacy
"Your daughter hath made a gross revolt"	Roderigo	1.1	Extended speech within dialogue	Creates alarm and prejudice
"O good Iago"	Desdemona	4.2	Extended speech within dialogue	Reveals innocence and devotion
"Their wives have sense like them"	Emilia	4.3	Extended speech within dialogue	Challenges gender inequality

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Monologues or Soliloquies? How Should You Describe These Speeches?

Students often treat monologue and soliloquy as synonyms, but there is a useful distinction.

A monologue is an extended speech by one character. A soliloquy is a more specific dramatic form in which a character reveals private thoughts, usually while alone or unheard by other characters.

Thus, Iago's "I am not what I am" is spoken directly to Roderigo, while "I hate the Moor" functions as a soliloquy after Roderigo leaves.

For this guide, I use monologues in *Othello* broadly because that is the term students commonly search for when looking for important extended speeches. What matters is identifying each passage's speaker, audience, situation, and dramatic purpose accurately.

How to Use These Othello Monologues for Study or Performance

Whether you are analysing an *Othello* monologue for an assignment or preparing one for performance, do more than memorise its famous lines. Ask three simple questions.

1. What is the character trying to achieve?

Every important speech has a dramatic purpose. Iago wants to manipulate. Othello tries to defend, persuade, or make sense of his situation. Desdemona seeks understanding. Emilia challenges injustice.

2. Who is listening?

The listener changes the meaning of a speech. Othello's address before the Senate is public and defensive, while Iago's private soliloquies reveal thoughts he would never openly share with Othello.

3. What changes during the speech?

A strong speech usually contains movement. Look for a shift in thought, emotion, intention, or attitude. Othello may move from confidence to despair. Iago may turn suspicion into a plan. Emilia may move from discussion to resistance.

Final Takeaway:

The central lesson of these speeches is that Shakespeare makes language part of the action.

Iago uses words to create suspicion. Othello first uses language to establish his identity and later to express his psychological collapse. Roderigo uses inflammatory language to provoke Brabantio.

Desdemona uses language to defend her love and innocence. Emilia uses it to question injustice and defend women's humanity. Read together, these twelve passages trace a central pattern in the tragedy:

a story is told → suspicion is created → suspicion becomes belief → belief drives action → the truth arrives too late.

That is why the monologues and extended speeches in Othello are so useful for study: They do not merely tell us what the characters think. They show us how language changes what the characters believe, feel, and ultimately do.