1. **Assess the role jealousy plays in the tragic events of Shakespeare's *Othello*.**

Step 1-

Analyse the question.

Theme question- answer by exploring the characters.

Technique question- answer by looking at the use of Shakespeare’s Techniques.

Break the question apart- key phrases- ‘the role jealousy plays’ ‘tragic events’.

What are the tragic events in Othello- The death of Desdemona, Suicide of Othello, Iago killing Roderigo

The role jealousy played in these tragic events

Step 2-

Planning-

Theme question-

The tragic death of Roderigo is caused by his jealousy.

* Irony- Roderigo is killed by the person who he thinks is helping him. (Iago- as a means of protecting his lies)

Desdemona’s tragic death is a result of Iago’s jealousy of Othello.

* Symbolism- Willow Tree
* Foreshadowing- “bedsheets”

Suicide, the most tragic and senseless of deaths occurs as a result of jealousy.

* Metaphor- Green eyed monster, Haggard (bird on a string)
* Prose and Verse- Iago speaks in Prose to describe his hate for Othello
* Motif- Janus- the duplicity of Iago

The Essay

1. ***Assess the role jealousy plays in the tragic events of Shakespeare's Othello.***

One of playwright William Shakespeare’s tragedies, ‘Othello’ was written in the early 1600’s. At that time, under the rule of Queen Elizabeth I, England was a monocultural society. It was a society composed of White, Anglo Saxon Christians, so a story telling of a “noble” black man, most probably Islamic, from North Africa would have intrigued and interested theatre goers at the time. By using a “Moor” as the protagonist, it allowed Shakespeare to explore his usual range of human emotions in a completely different context. Jealousy is a “green eyed monster” that can consume us all. William Shakespeare, in his tragedy ‘Othello’ explores how jealousy can lead to tragic events. This is demonstrated through the tragic death of Roderigo, the murder of Desdemona and the suicide of the ‘noble Moor’, Othello himself.

Jealousy is a sin that ultimately, leads to the demise of Roderigo. The marriage of Othello and Desdemona leads to Roderigo’s envious state. He covets Desdemona, and as such is open to manipulation from Iago, the antagonist of the play. Iago skillfully uses Roderigo’s jealousy of Othello in order to bring about Othello’s downfall. Iago tells Roderigo of Desdemona’s love for Othello, and then, after taking money from Roderigo “but for my sport and profit, I hate the Moor” he devises an insidious scheme to bring down the Moor. Iago gets Roderigo to attack Cassio, which then leads to Iago killing Roderigo. Shakespeare uses irony to point out the dangers of jealousy, and how it can lead to one’s own demise. In the end, Roderigo is killed by the person he thinks is going to help him win his love. The irony is not lost on Shakespeare’s audience, and the lesson that jealousy leads to demise is echoed in the protagonist, Othello.

Suicide, the most tragic and senseless of deaths occurs as a result of jealousy. Othello is a Moor, a black North Africa soldier employed by the gentlemen of Venice to lead their army against the “infidel turks.” Othello is a noble soldier, “rude in speech” who himself feels that he is not the equal of the other Venetian gentlemen. It comes to the surprise of many to discover that Desdemona, the daughter of Brabantio, a fine gentleman of Venice, has fallen for the ‘Moor’ and they have married. Shakespeare highlights the mistrust of those from another race through the racist and aggressive language of Iago and Roderigo, who are both jealous of Othello for the high position he occupies in Venetian society. “Thick lips… Barbary horse, black ram… lascivious Moor.” Shakespeare uses these racist comments by supposed gentlemen delivered in prose, rather than verse, to highlight the view and suspicion held in Elizabethan society that foreigners, especially those dark in skin colour were different, dangerous and not equal.

It is against this backdrop of mistrust that Othello’s jealousy leads to him murdering his wife, then committing suicide. Iago hates Othello, he uses Othello’s fatal flaw, trust and ultimately jealousy, to bring about his downfall. Iago leads Othello to believe that his wife is cheating on him with Cassio. Othello naively believes this, believing him to be a “cuckold” and through the use of a pun, feels the pain in his head where his horns should have been. Othello is not wise in the ways of love, and his jealousy of his wife’s supposed extra marital affairs leads him to kill her. His jealousy becomes a “a green eyed monster” that consumes him as he kills his wife, and ultimately as an act of guilt, he takes his own life. Shakespeare uses the motif of “Janus” the two headed god to highlight the duplicit nature of Iago and how he manipulated Othello’s trust to create jealousy, which is ultimately his downfall.

Desdemona’s tragic death is a result of Iago’s jealousy. Desdemona is the victim in this play. Iago is jealous of Othello because of Othello’s love for Desdemona and because Othello selected Cassio for a promotion rather than him. He seeks revenge against Othello. Shakespeare uses a technique known as dramatic irony, whereby the audience know what is going to happen but the characters on stage do not. Shakespeare does this by using foreshadowing and soliloquies. Iago tells the audience his plan. He tells the audience, furthering the motif of Janus and showing his true deceitful nature, of his plan to have Othello believe that Desdemona is cheating on him, and that he can manipulate Othello’s naïve nature to have him kill Desdemona. This creates tension in the play as the audience hope that Emilia can discover the truth and save Desdemona before she needs to be buried in her wedding night bed-sheets. “If I do die..Prithee shroud in one of those sheets.” Unfortunately, jealousy is too powerful, and Othello slays his wife, a victim of manipulation and envy.

William Shakespeare’s tragedy, ‘Othello’ explores how jealousy in its many forms can lead to tragic consequences. The ‘green eyed monster’ is an emotion that affects all humans and Shakespeare demonstrates, that jealousy when combined with manipulation and lies can result in murder, suicide and acts of betrayal. Shakespeare demonstrated this not only through the use of the characters of Othello, Roderigo and Desdemona, but also through literary techniques such as dramatic irony and foreshadowing to highlight to his audience the need to not allow the ‘green eyed monster’ to control our thoughts and actions. For as he demonstrates in this play, jealousy left unchecked results in tragic events.