Essay Topics:
Write a 3-5 page essay that answers one of the following prompts. Cite using MLA format and follow all formal writing rules.

1. Examine the use of animal imagery in Othello, beginning with Iago’s speeches in the first scene of the play. Start by locating as many references to animals throughout the play as you can. What patterns do you find and why are they important? How does the animal imagery contribute to the fall of Othello in the play?

2. Consider one of the male-female relationships in Othello (Othello and Desdemona; Iago and Emilia; or Cassio and Bianca). Do they love or hate one another, or, is it both? How are the women treated in each relationship? How women treated overall during that time period, based on the descriptions in the play? Explain.

3. A tragedy concerns the fall of a great man due to some flaw in his character. Determine the extent to which Othello is a tragic hero. Clearly, Othello was flawed due to his jealousy, but what other “flaws” might have played a role?

4. Examine the role of Emilia. To some degree she is responsible for Iago’s downfall. Was she right to betray her husband for Desdemona? Does she redeem herself in the end for stealing the handkerchief?

5. Examine the role of women in the play. Are they passive or direct; or obedient or strong? You should choose one (or two) character(s) for your focus.

6. “Othello is a tragedy of incomprehension, not at the level of intrigue but at the deepest level of human dealings. No one in Othello comes to understand himself or anyone else.” (Nick Potter) Agree or disagree. Explain.

7. Prove that Othello and Desdemona’s love was doomed from the start, and that fate, innocence and evil are conspired in the unification of their love.

8. Examine how, Othello, who is so easily duped by Iago and so violently cruel to Desdemona, remains for us a sympathetic character.

9. Iago appears to be an interesting rogue at the beginning of the play, but gains stature as a terrifying villain. Evaluate Iago’s character development in Othello through careful observation and critical analysis. Is there any compassion to him or is he pure evil?

10. Review Iago’s statement of women in Act 2 Scene 1. Discuss Iago’s impression of women by tracing his comments toward or about them in the play. Is this Shakespeare’s view as well? Is Shakespeare misogynist?

11. Brabantio protests the marriage of his daughter, Desdemona, to Othello, claiming Othello used "spells and medicines" to make Desdemona marry him "against all rules of nature." Do you think this is true, or is the real reason for Brabantio's protest just the color of Othello's skin?
12. Does Shakespeare fairly represent race? Is Othello doomed to fail because he is Black/a Moor/Muslim? Is Othello doomed to fail because he is naïve? Is Othello just a victim of bad luck, for running across an evil man like Iago?

13. What political statements about Cyprus and/or Muslims does this play make? Which aspects are still applicable today?

14. Create your own prompt and run it by me.