

The Merchant of Venice: Overview 9.1

Characters	
1. Antonio	A merchant and a good friend of Bassanio. He is both compassionate (preparing to lose his life for his best friend) and also cruel (holding anti-Semitic views).
2. Shylock	A money-lender and Jew who is very angry about his treatment at the hand of the Christians of Venice, particularly Antonio. He lends Antonio money with a bond of a pound of flesh. He can be seen as both a victim and a villain .
3. Bassanio	A Venetian nobleman who often borrows from his friend Antonio . He is in love with Portia and proves worthy of her love in the casket challenge.
4. Portia	A wealthy and intelligent noblewoman from Belmont who must choose a husband with three caskets. She loves Bassanio and often subverts expectations of an Elizabethan woman .
5. Jessica	Shylock's rebellious daughter who falls in love with Christian Lorenzo. She is ashamed to be Shylock's daughter and runs away to marry Lorenzo and convert to Christianity .
6. Nerissa	Portia's lady in waiting and friend. Nerissa marries Gratiano and accompanies Portia to Venice disguised as a male clerk.
7. Gratiano	A Christian friend of Bassanio's who is very critical of Shylock during the trial. He falls in love with and marries Nerissa.

Context	
1. Anti-Semitism	When the play was staged, most of the audience would never have knowingly met a Jewish person and there was a hatred for Jews. Jews had been expelled from the country 300 years before and so many kept their religion a secret .
2. Patriarchy	Legally, women were the possessions of men , so Renaissance fathers and husbands often treated their daughters and wives as objects to be used as they saw fit.
3. Religion	Christianity was the main religion in Elizabethan England.
4. Female subordination	Women expected to be ruled by men .
5. Marriage	Marriage was an arrangement between families . The man was the head of the marriage.
6. Usury	Usury means money-lending , considered a disgraceful trade by Christians at the time.
7. Comedy	Features include a happy ending , mistaken identities and disguise, fate and the fantastical, and separation and reconciliation .
Themes	
1. Justice	Shylock's quest for lawful justice is unsuccessful because of his unwillingness to be merciful.
2. Revenge	Shylock's desire for revenge is his downfall. Desire for vengeance is presented as the opposite of Christian mercy.
3. Gender	Portia has to submit to her father's wishes and presented as an object through the caskets and has to dress as a man to influence the trial.
4. Law and Order	Order of society is challenged when Shylock is in control of Antonio's fate.

The Merchant of Venice: Act One 9.2

Plot of Act One	
1. Act 1 Scene 1	The play opens with Antonio sad; we are unsure as to what the cause of this is. Bassanio arrives to ask Antonio for money in order to travel to Belmont to win a wealthy lady, Portia's, hand in marriage . Antonio has invested his money in ships so is unable to do so but agrees to take out a loan on Bassanio's behalf .
2. Act 1 Scene 2	Portia and Nerissa discuss the suitors arriving in Belmont to win her hand in marriage and her detest for them. Both secretly hope that Bassanio attempts the challenge .
3. Act 1 Scene 3	Antonio and Bassanio visit Shylock, a Jewish money-lender. Antonio signs a bond . He has to repay 3000 ducats in three months, otherwise Shylock can claim a pound of his flesh .

Key Vocabulary	
1. Soliloquy	One character, alone on stage , sharing their inner thoughts or feelings, making an audience complicit.
2. Protagonist	The main character.
3. Antagonist	A character that usually has conflict with the protagonist .
4. Aside	A dramatic device in which a character speaks to the audience but is unheard by the characters on stage .
5. Accusatory	Applying blame .
6. Anti-Semitic	hostile to or prejudiced against Jewish people .
7. Hostility	unfriendliness or opposition.
8. Prejudice	preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.
Symbols and motifs	
1. The pound of flesh	It is symbolic of the relationship between Bassanio and Antonio , showing how their friendship is binding due to Antonio risking his life for his friend . It is also symbolic of Shylock's hatred of the Christians and his determination to get his revenge .

Act One Quotations		
1. Act 1 Scene 1	Bassanio	'In Belmont is lady richly left, and she is fair'
2. Act 1 Scene 1	Antonio	'my purse, my person, my extremest means lie all unlocked to your occasion'
3. Act 1 Scene 2	Portia	'I may neither choose who I would nor refuse who I dislike'
4. Act 1 Scene 3	Shylock	'You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog'
5. Act 1 Scene 3	Shylock	'For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.'

The Merchant of Venice: Act Two 9.3

Plot of Act Two	
1. Act 2 Scene 1	The prince of Morocco arrives to select a casket. She reminds him that he will never be able to marry anyone if he chooses incorrectly.
2. Act 2 Scene 2	Launcelot decides to leave Shylock's service and asks to become Bassanio's servant instead.
3. Act 2 Scene 3	Shylock's daughter Jessica asks Launcelot to deliver a message to Bassanio's friend Lorenzo , whom Jessica hopes to marry someday.
4. Act 2 Scene 4	Lorenzo is planning to sneak Jessica out of Shylock's house by disguising her as Lorenzo's torchbearer.
5. Act 2 Scene 5	Shylock tells Jessica to lock all the doors and not look out any of the windows during the night.
6. Act 2 Scene 6	Jessica, in disguise, tosses down a chest full of gold and jewels, and then climbs down to join the men.
7. Act 2 Scene 7	The prince of Morocco incorrectly chooses the gold casket.
8. Act 2 Scene 8	Solanio and Salarino worry about Antonio because of rumours that his ships have been lost at sea , and he may not be able to repay his debt to Shylock.
9. Act 2 Scene 9	The prince of Arragon attempts to win Portia's hand, but he also chooses the wrong casket (he choose silver).

Key Vocabulary	
1. Benevolent	well meaning and kindly.
2. Repressed	Restrained , kept in check.
3. Rebellious	showing a desire to resist authority , control, or convention.
4. Subvert	undermine the power and authority of
5. Conform	comply with rules , standards, or laws.
6. Constrained	compel or force (someone) to follow a particular course of action.
7. Unrequited	One-sided love
Symbols and motifs	
1. The Three Caskets	The caskets symbolise the patriarchal society in which Portia lives in; she cannot choose her own husband and her father controls her even in death. It is also symbolic of Christian teachings, such as the idea that desire should be resisted and appearances are deceiving.

Act Two Quotations

2. Act 2 Scene 3	Jessica	'to be ashamed to be my father's child'
3. Act 2 Scene 3	Jessica	'Our house is hell'
4. Act 2 Scene 8	Shylock	'My daughter, O my ducats, O my daughter!'

The Merchant of Venice: Act Three 9.4

Plot of Act Three		Key Vocabulary	
1. Act 3 Scene 1	Shylock is furious over Jessica's disappearance. Rumours persist that Antonio's fortunes have been ruined by the loss of his ships .	1. Formidable	inspiring fear or respect through being impressively large, powerful, intense, or capable.
2. Act 3 Scene 2	Bassanio selects the correct casket, Nerissa falls in love with Gratiano, and the couples decide to have a double wedding. Antonio will have to pay Shylock his pound of flesh , prompting Bassanio to return to Venice.	2. Influential	having great influence on someone or something.
3. Act 3 Scene 3	Shylock takes Antonio to prison. Antonio knows that it is unlikely that the Duke of Venice will break the terms of the contract even to save Antonio from death.	3. Trusting	showing or tending to have a belief in a person's honesty or sincerity; not suspicious .
4. Act 3 Scene 4	Portia believes in the importance of helping Bassanio rescue Antonio, and she decides that she and Nerissa will go to Venice in disguise to help their new husbands .	4. Dependable	trustworthy and reliable .
5. Act 3 Scene 5	Lorenzo promises Jessica that he will be as good a spouse to her as Portia will be to Bassanio.	5. Oppressed	subject to harsh and authoritarian treatment .
		6. Indignant	feeling or showing anger or annoyance at what is perceived as unfair treatment .
Symbols and motifs			
		1. Leah's ring	The ring belonged to Shylock's wife/Jessica's mother and was an object of great importance. The lost ring allows us to see Shylock in an uncharacteristically vulnerable position and to view him as a human being capable of feeling something more than anger. The ring is a symbol of Shylock's humanity, his ability to love, and his ability to grieve .

Act Three Quotations		
1. Act 3 Scene 1	Shylock	'I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes?'
3. Act 3 Scene 1	Shylock	'It will feed my revenge'
3. Act 3 Scene 2	Portia	'Pay him six thousand and deface the bond'
4. Act 3 Scene 3	Shylock	'I'll have my bond. Speak not against my bond'
5. Act 3 Scene 3	Shylock	'Since I am a dog, beware my fangs'

The Merchant of Venice: Act Four and Five 9.5

Plot of Act Four and Five	
1. Act 4 Scene 1	At Antonio's trial, Portia, disguised as a lawyer, wins the day by telling Shylock that he may take his pound of flesh, but that he has no right to Antonio's blood . Antonio allows Shylock to escape with half his estate if Shylock agrees to convert to Christianity and leave everything to his daughter and Lorenzo in his will.
2. Act 4 Scene 2	Portia and Nerissa plan to return quickly to Belmont so that they can beat the men home, but Gratiano arrives to give Bassanio's ring to Portia . Nerissa decides that she will try to get Gratiano to also give up his ring so that the women can torment their new husbands back in Belmont.
3. Act 5 Scene 1	All the couples meet up in Belmont where Portia and Nerissa torment Bassanio and Gratiano until they finally reveal that they were the lawyer and clerk in Venice . Antonio learns that not all of his ships were lost at sea after all.

Key Vocabulary	
1. Dramatic Irony	Audience knows more than the characters.
2. Mercy	Compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.
3. Justice	Fair behaviour or treatment.
4. Villainous	guilty of wicked or criminal behaviour.
5. Callous	showing or having an insensitive and cruel disregard for others.
6. Critical	disapproving comments or judgements.
7. Vengeful	seeking to harm someone in return for a perceived injury.
8. Dehumanised	deprive of positive human qualities .
9. Witty	showing or characterized by quick and inventive verbal humour .

Symbols and motifs	
1. Disguise	Whilst also used for comedic effect and because women were banned from the stage, it is also symbolic of the idea that male authority is something that can be imitated successfully . By assuming the clothes of the opposite sex, Portia enables herself to assume the power and position denied to her as a woman .
2. The Law	The play relies heavily upon laws and rules . When Portia arrives and manipulates the law, the outcome is the happiest ending of all, at least to an Elizabethan audience. However, it represents how the law can be misused .

Act Four Quotations		
1. Act 4 Scene 1	Duke	'A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch'
2. Act 4 Scene 1	Portia	'The quality of mercy is not strained'
3. Act 4 Scene 1	Shylock	'My deeds upon my head! I crave the law!'
4. Act 4 Scene 1	Portia	'He shall have merely justice and his bond'