



# Shakespeare and Drama (16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> C.)

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## الرموز المستخدمة

فيديو للمشاهدة.



نص للقراءة والدراسة.



ابط خارجي.



أسئلة للتفكير والتقييم الذاتي.



أنشطة ومهام.



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## BACKGROUND

Bassanio asks his friend Antonio for money to woo the heiress Portia. Antonio borrows the money from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender. Because Shylock hates all Christians—and Antonio in particular—he foregoes his usual interest. Instead, he asks for a pound of Antonio's flesh if the money is not repaid in three months. Then Antonio's business goes bad. He loses all his money and is unable to repay Shylock. Now even angrier toward Christians because of his daughter's elopement with one, Shylock wants his pound of flesh. All looks hopeless until Portia shows up at the trial, dressed as a judge. Will she be clever enough to render a fair judgment and thus save poor Antonio's life?

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**THE DUKE OF VENICE, PRINCE OF MOROCCO,**

and **PRINCE OF ARAGON** Suitors to Portia

**ANTONIO** A merchant of Venice

**BASSANIO** Antonio's friend

**GRATIANO, SOLANIO, and SALERIO** Friends of  
Antonio and Bassanio

**LORENZO** In love with Jessica

**SHYLOCK** A Jewish moneylender

**TUBAL** Another Jew, and friend of Shylock

**LANCELOT GOBBO** Servant to Shylock and later Bassanio

**OLD GOBBO** Lancelot's father

**LEONARDO** Servant to Bassanio

**BALTHAZAR and STEPHANO** Servants to Portia

**PORTIA** A wealthy lady of Belmont

**NERISSA** Portia's waiting-maid

**JESSICA** Shylock's daughter

**OFFICERS OF THE COURT OF JUSTICE, a JAILER, SERVANTS,**  
and **ATTENDANTS**

ACT  
1

Scene 1

*A wharf in Venice, Italy, in the sixteenth century.*

**Antonio** is talking to his friends **Salerio** and **Solanio**.

**ANTONIO** (*sighing*): I don't know why  
I'm so sad. This mood wearies me.  
You say it wearies you, too.  
But just how I caught it, found it,  
or came by it,  
I do not know. I feel so sad,  
I hardly even know myself.

**SALERIO**: Your mind is tossing on the ocean.  
(*pointing toward the sea*) It's out there,  
Where your ships with their billowing sails  
Lord it over the common working boats.

**SOLANIO**: Believe me, if I had taken the risks  
That you have, I would be worried, too.  
Anything that put my investments at risk  
Would make me sad.

**SALERIO**: As I blew on my hot soup to cool it,  
I'd catch a chill when I thought  
What harm a strong wind might do at sea.  
As I looked at the sand in an hourglass,  
I'd think of shallow waters and sandbanks

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And see one of my ships stuck in the sand.  
Every time I went to church, the holy  
stones  
Would make me think of dangerous rocks.  
They'd only have to touch my delicate  
ship  
To scatter all her spices into the sea  
And clothe the wild waters with my silks!  
One moment I'd be rich—  
And the next I'd be worth nothing.  
How miserable I would be  
If such a thing happened!  
You can't fool me. I know Antonio must  
Be worrying about his merchandise.

**ANTONIO:** Believe me, that's not it. I'm lucky.  
My investments are not all in one ship  
Or all in one place. Nor is all my money  
At risk at this time. So my merchandise  
Is not what is making me sad.

**SOLANIO** (*teasing*): Why, then, you must  
Be in love!

**ANTONIO** (*protesting*): Not at all!

**SOLANIO:** Not in love, either? Then let us say  
You are sad because you are not merry.  
And, if you wanted to, you could laugh.

(*Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano enter.*)

Here comes Bassanio, your noble kinsman.



Gratiano and Lorenzo are with him.  
(*seeing his chance to leave*) Farewell!  
We'll leave you now with better company.

**SALERIO** (*also seeing his chance*):

I would have stayed to cheer you up  
If worthier friends had not stopped me.

**ANTONIO**: That's good of you, but I take it  
Your own business calls you.

This gives you the chance to leave.

**SALERIO** (*to the newcomers*): Good morning!

**BASSANIO** (*warmly*): Gentlemen both!

When shall we have a laugh together, eh?  
You're almost strangers! Must it be so?

**SALERIO** (*eager to get away*): Yes, yes. We'll get  
together one of these days.

(*Salerio and Solanio exit.*)

**LORENZO**: Bassanio, now that you have  
Found Antonio, we will leave you.  
Remember that we're meeting for dinner.

**BASSANIO**: I'll be there!

**GRATIANO**: You don't look well, Antonio.

You let things get you down.  
Don't worry so much. Believe me,  
You don't seem like yourself lately.

**ANTONIO**: I take the world as it is, Gratiano,  
A stage, where every man must play a part,  
And mine a sad one.

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**GRATIANO:** Let me play the fool, then.

Let mirth and laughter give me wrinkles,  
And let my emotions get heated with wine  
Rather than let my heart cool with sighs.  
Why should a warmblooded man  
Act like a stone-cold statue of his  
grandfather?

I tell you what, Antonio—  
And I speak out of friendship—  
Some men have faces that never change.  
They stay still, hoping to be thought of as  
Wise, serious, and important.

Antonio, I know men whose reputation  
For being wise is based on saying nothing.  
I am very sure that, if they would speak,  
They would prove themselves fools.  
I'll tell you more about this another time.  
But don't go fishing for this fake reputation  
With melancholy as your bait, Lorenzo.

*(to Antonio):* Farewell for now.

I'll end my speech after dinner.

**LORENZO:** Yes, we'll see you at dinnertime.

I must be one of those silent wise men,  
For Gratiano never lets me speak.

**GRATIANO:** Be my friend two more years—  
You'll forget the sound of your own voice!

**ANTONIO** *(to Gratiano):* I guess I'd better start  
talking, then.

**GRATIANO:** If you like. Silence is only good  
In dried ox tongues and young maids!

*(Gratiano and Lorenzo exit.)*

**ANTONIO:** What do you think of that?

**BASSANIO** *(laughing)*: He talks more trash  
Than any man in Venice! Any truth  
Gratiano speaks is like two grains of wheat  
Hidden in two bushels.  
Look all day, and when you find them,  
They are not worth the search!

**ANTONIO:** Well, tell me now,  
What lady takes your fancy?  
You promised to tell me about her today.

**BASSANIO** *(serious now)*: Antonio, you know  
Only too well that I've been spending  
My inheritance by living beyond my means.  
I'm not angry about having to cut back—  
But my main goal is to pay the great debts  
that my extravagant living has cost me.  
I owe the most to you, Antonio, in money  
And in friendship. Because we are friends,  
I dare to speak freely about my plans to  
Get clear of all the debts I owe.

**ANTONIO:** Bassanio, tell me everything.  
If your plan is honorable—as you are—  
Be assured that my purse, my person, and  
All my resources are open to you.

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

**BASSANIO:** In my schooldays,  
If I lost one arrow,  
I shot another in the same way. I watched  
Its flight carefully to see where the first fell.  
By risking both, I often found both.  
I tell this childhood story  
Because my new plan is very similar.  
I owe you much and—blame my youth—  
What I owe is lost.  
But if you would shoot another arrow  
The same way you shot the first,  
I'll either find both or bring the second one  
Back to you again. Then I'll gratefully  
Stand by the first debt I owed you.

**ANTONIO:** You know me well enough.  
By doubting that I'd help you, you hurt me  
More than if you had wasted all I have.  
Just tell me what to do, and I'll do it!

**BASSANIO:** There is a rich heiress  
In Belmont. She is beautiful and virtuous.  
Sometimes I have received silent messages  
From her eyes. Her name is Portia.  
The world is not ignorant of her worth,  
For the four winds blow in famous suitors  
From every coast. Antonio, if only I had  
The money to compete with these suitors,  
I'm convinced I could win her hand.

**ANTONIO:** You know that my wealth is tied up

In cargoes at sea. I do not have the cash,  
Nor do I have anything to sell right now.  
So go to Venice. See what my credit can do.  
Stretch it to the limit to finance your trip  
To Belmont and the fair Portia. Go right  
now  
And ask around, and so will I. See  
where money is to be had.  
Borrow it on my credit or good name.  
Either way, it comes out the same.

*(Bassanio and Antonio exit.)*

## Scene 2

*The hall at Portia's house at Belmont. Portia is talking with her maid, Nerissa.*

**PORTIA:** Honestly, Nerissa, my little body is weary of this great world.

**NERISSA:** You would be better off, dear lady, if you had as much misery as you have good fortune. As I see it, those who have too much are as miserable as those who have too little. Excess gives you white hair and makes you old before your time! Moderation leads to a longer life.

**PORTIA:** Good sentences, and well-said.

**NERISSA:** They'd be better if well-followed.

**PORTIA:** If doing were as easy as knowing what to do, poor men's cottages would be palaces. It is a good preacher who follows his own instructions. I'd rather teach twenty how to act than be one of the twenty to follow my own teaching! The brain might try to control the emotions, but a hot temper leaps over a cold rule. Youth ignores good advice because it's a handicap. But all this reasoning won't help me choose a husband. Oh, dear! (*sighing*) That word "choose"! I may neither choose whom I like, nor refuse whom I dislike. So the will of a living daughter is curbed by the will of a dead father. Isn't it unfair, Nerissa, that I can neither choose nor refuse?

**NERISSA:** Your father was very virtuous, and good men are often inspired on their deathbeds. The lottery he set up is a worthy idea. Given a choice of gold, silver, or lead—with you as the prize for the correct choice—only the right man will choose correctly. How do you feel about the princely suitors who have already come to seek your hand?

**PORTIA:** Please name them. And as you do so, I will describe them for you. Then you

can guess by my descriptions how I feel about each of them.

**NERISSA:** First there is the prince from Naples.

**PORTIA:** Oh, yes, that colt! He does nothing but talk about his horse. He brags that he can shoe the beast himself. I suspect that his mother once had an affair with a blacksmith!

**NERISSA:** Then there is the Count Palatine.

**PORTIA:** He does nothing but frown, as if to say, “If you won’t marry me, choose someone else!” He listens to jokes and never smiles. I’m sure he’ll be the weeping prophet when he grows old, being so full of sadness in his youth. I would rather be married to a skull than to either of these!

**NERISSA:** What do you say about the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon?

**PORTIA:** Honestly, I know it’s a sin to be a mocker—but him! I would be happy if he hated me, for I could never return his love.

**NERISSA:** And the young English baron?

**PORTIA:** You know I never speak to him. He doesn’t understand me, and I don’t understand him. He speaks neither Latin,

French, nor Italian. And you know that my English is not good. He looks manly enough—but who could converse with a dummy? And how oddly he dresses! I think he bought his vest in Italy, his stockings in France, his hat in Germany, and his behavior everywhere!

**NERISSA:** What about the young German?

**PORTIA:** I dislike him in the morning when he is sober, and loathe him in the afternoon when he is drunk. When he is at his best, he is less than a man. When he is at his worst, he is little better than a beast.

**NERISSA:** What if he offers to choose and he chooses the right chest? You would be going against your father's will if you refused to marry him.

**PORTIA:** Therefore, to prevent the worst, I ask you to set a large glass of Rhine wine on the wrong casket. He'd be tempted to choose that one even if the devil were hidden inside it. I would do anything, Nerissa, before I would marry a sponge!

**NERISSA:** Dear lady, you need not worry about having any of these lords. They have told me what they have decided. Unless you can be won by some method other than



your father's device of the caskets, they will return to their homes and trouble you no more.

**PORTIA:** I'll die a virgin unless I'm courted according to my father's will! I'm glad this group of suitors is so reasonable. There's not one of them whose absence I don't find pleasurable.

**NERISSA:** Do you remember, dear lady, a suitor from Venice?

**PORTIA:** Yes, yes! It was Bassanio. At least, I think that was his name.

**NERISSA:** True, madam. Of all the men my foolish eyes have ever looked upon, he was the most deserving of a fair lady.

**PORTIA:** I remember him well. Yes, Bassanio is worthy of your praise.

*(A servant enters.)* Well, what news?

**SERVANT:** The four strangers are looking for you, madam, to say goodbye. A messenger has arrived from a fifth—the Prince of Morocco. He announces that the prince will be here tonight.

**PORTIA:** If I can greet the fifth as eagerly as I can bid the other four farewell, I'll be glad to see him. Come, Nerissa.

*(to the servant):* Go on ahead.

*(sighing)* We no sooner shut the gate on  
one wooer than another knocks at it!

*(They exit.)*

### Scene 3

*A street in Venice, outside Shylock's house. Bassanio and Shylock are discussing a loan.*

**SHYLOCK:** You want 3,000 ducats . . .

**BASSANIO:** Yes, sir. For three months.

Antonio will guarantee it. Will you do it?

**SHYLOCK** *(thinking aloud)*: 3,000 ducats for three  
months. Antonio will guarantee it. . . .

**BASSANIO:** What do you say?

**SHYLOCK:** Antonio is a good man.

**BASSANIO:** Have you heard differently?

**SHYLOCK** *(laughing)*: Oh, no, no, no, no!

When I say “a good man,” you must  
understand that I mean he is good for  
the money. But his wealth is at risk.

He has merchant ships going to  
Tripoli, the Indies, Mexico, and  
England—plus other foreign risks.

But ships are only wood. Sailors are  
only men. There are land rats and water  
rats, land thieves and water thieves.  
Pirates, I mean. And then there are

the dangers of waters, winds, and rocks!  
Even so, the man is sound. You say 3,000  
ducats? I think I can do it.

**BASSANIO:** Be assured that you can.

**SHYLOCK:** I will be assured. What's the latest  
news about Antonio's investments? And  
who is this coming?

*(Antonio enters.)*

**BASSANIO:** It's Antonio.

**SHYLOCK** *(aside)*: He looks like a  
Fawning innkeeper!  
I hate him because he is a Christian.  
But I hate him even more because he  
Humbly lends out money free of charge,  
Bringing down the rate of interest  
Here in Venice. If I can catch him unaware,  
I'll pay off old scores very well.  
He hates us Jews. He speaks against me,  
My deals, and my hard-earned profit,  
Which he calls "usury." May my tribe  
Be cursed if I ever forgive him!

**BASSANIO:** Shylock, are you listening?

**SHYLOCK:** I am figuring out my assets.  
By the near guess of my memory,  
I cannot instantly raise up the full amount  
Of 3,000 ducats. But what of that?  
Tubal, a wealthy fellow-Hebrew,

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Will help me out. But, wait, I forgot—  
When do you plan to pay it back?  
(*bowing to Antonio*) Don't worry, sir,  
We were just speaking about you.

**ANTONIO:** Shylock—although I never  
Lend or borrow money with high  
interest—  
I'll make an exception to help my friend.  
(*to Bassanio*): Does he know how much  
you want?

**SHYLOCK:** Yes, yes—3,000 ducats.

**ANTONIO:** And for three months.

**SHYLOCK:** I had forgotten. Yes, three months.  
You did tell me. Well, then.  
Your guarantee . . . let me see . . .  
But listen. I thought you said  
You never lend or borrow for profit.

**ANTONIO:** I never do.

**SHYLOCK:** When Jacob grazed  
His Uncle Laban's sheep—

**ANTONIO** (*impatiently*): What of him?  
Did he take interest?

**SHYLOCK:** No, he didn't.  
Not what you would call direct interest.  
Here's what he did. He and Laban agreed  
That all the newborn lambs with stripes  
And markings would go to Jacob as wages.

When the ewes and the rams were mating,  
The skillful shepherd peeled some sticks  
And stuck them up in sight of the ewes.

At this point, the ewes conceived.  
And so, at lambing time, they dropped  
Lambs with stripes and other markings.  
Those lambs were Jacob's.  
This was a way to profit, and he was blessed.  
Profit is a blessing if men don't steal for it.

**ANTONIO:** Jacob was involved in speculation.  
*(smiling at Shylock's ignorance)* The sticks  
Had nothing to do with the outcome.  
Did you tell us this to justify profit?  
Or are you claiming that your  
Gold and silver are like ewes and rams?

**SHYLOCK:** I can't tell, I make it breed as fast!

**ANTONIO:** Note this, Bassanio. The devil  
Can quote Scripture for his own purposes.  
An evil man who quotes the Bible  
is like a villain with a smiling face  
Or a good apple rotten at the core.  
Oh, how attractive falsehood can seem!  
Well, Shylock, how about the loan?

**SHYLOCK:** Antonio, many a time you have  
Criticized me for my moneylending.  
I've taken it with a patient shrug,  
For suffering is the badge of our tribe.  
You call me an infidel, a cutthroat dog,

And spit on my Jewish garments.

All for using what is my own!

Well, now it appears you need my help.

You come to me, and you say, "Shylock,  
We'd like some money." You, who spat  
On my beard and kicked me as you would  
Kick a strange dog out of your house!

What should I say to you?

"Does a dog have money? Is it possible  
That a dog could lend 3,000 ducats?" Or  
Should I bow low and say humbly,

"Fair sir, you spat on me last Wednesday.  
You spurned me on such-and-such a day.  
Another time you called me a dog.

For this, I'll lend you this much money"?

**ANTONIO:** I am likely to call you so again,  
And spit on you and kick you, too!  
If you will lend this money, don't lend it  
As if to a friend. What kind of friendship  
Makes money from a friend?

Rather, lend it to your enemy.

If he fails to pay you back, you can  
More decently impose the penalties.

**SHYLOCK:** Why, look how you storm!  
I want to be friends and have your love,  
Forget your shameful treatment,  
And supply the money you want, and  
take not a penny of interest.  
I'm offering a kindness . . .

**BASSANIO:** Kindness indeed!

**SHYLOCK:** This is the kindness I'll show.

Go with me to a lawyer.

Sign an agreement, and—for fun—

If you don't pay me back as agreed,

Let the penalty be a pound of your flesh,

To be cut off and taken from

Whatever part of your body I please.

**BASSANIO (to Antonio):** You shall not sign  
Such a contract for me! I'll manage  
without.

**ANTONIO:** Oh, don't worry, man!

In two months—that's one month early—

I expect a return of nine times the value

Of this contract.

**SHYLOCK:** Oh, Father Abraham!

These Christians! Their own tough  
bargains

Make them distrust everyone. Tell me this,

If he fails to pay, what would I gain by

The contract? A pound of flesh taken

From a man is not as valuable

As the flesh of sheep, beef, or goats.

I offer this friendship only to buy his  
good will.

If he takes it, fine. If not, goodbye.

But don't put me in the wrong for this.

**ANTONIO:** Yes, Shylock. I'll sign the contract.

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**SHYLOCK:** Then meet me at the lawyer's.  
Now let me go inside and put the  
money together.  
I'll join you soon.

*(Shylock enters his house.)*

**BASSANIO:** I don't trust fair terms  
From a villain's mind.

**ANTONIO:** Come, there's no cause for dismay.  
My ships are due a month before the day.

*(They leave together.)*



# ACT 2

## Scene 1

*Portia's house in Belmont. The **Prince of Morocco** enters, along with his **attendants**. **Portia**, **Nerissa**, and their **servants** await the visitors.*

**MOROCCO:** Do not dislike me for my color.  
My dark skin is the uniform of those who  
Live under the burning coppery sun.  
Bring me the handsomest man of the north  
Where the sun is barely hot enough  
To thaw the icicles. Then let both of us  
Cut our skin for your love, to prove  
Whose blood is reddest, his or mine.  
I tell you, lady, this face of mine  
Has scared the bravest of men. But I swear  
That the loveliest women of our climate  
Have loved it, too.  
I would not change my color  
Except to win your thoughts, gentle queen.

**PORTIA:** In terms of choice, I am not led  
By looks alone. Besides, my father's will  
Does not permit me to choose my destiny.  
If my father had not set up these terms,  
You, famed prince, would have stood

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

As good a chance as any I have seen  
So far of gaining my love.

**MOROCCO:** I thank you for that.

Therefore, please lead me to the caskets so  
I can try my fortune. To win your love,  
I would outstare the sternest eyes,  
Pluck the baby cubs from the mother bear,  
And even mock the roaring lion. But alas,  
if two champions roll the dice to decide  
Who is the greater man, luck may give  
The weaker man the higher score. And so,  
Blind fortune might cause me to lose what  
A lesser man may gain, and die with grief.

**PORTIA:** You must take your chance.

You must either not make a choice at all,  
Or swear before you choose, that if you  
Make the wrong choice, never to  
Propose marriage to a woman afterwards.  
Therefore, think carefully.

**MOROCCO:** I agree to the conditions.

I'll take my chances.

**PORTIA:** First you must go to the temple

To swear your oath. After dinner,  
You shall have your chance.

**MOROCCO:** Good luck to me, then!

I'll be either the most blessed or cursed  
among men.

*(All exit.)*

## Scene 2

*The street in front of Shylock's house. Shylock's servant Lancelot Gobbo enters. He bumps into Old Gobbo, his father, who is nearly blind and carrying a basket.*

**OLD GOBBO:** Young master, please help.  
Which is the way to Master Jew's?

**LANCELOT** (*aside*): Oh, heavens! This is my own true father! Being almost blind, he doesn't recognize me. I'll tease him a bit.  
(*to Old Gobbo*): Turn right at the next turning, but left at the next turning of all. At the very next turning, don't turn at all, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house!

**OLD GOBBO:** By all the saints, that will be hard to do. Can you tell me if Lancelot is still living with him or not?

**LANCELOT** (*deciding to reveal himself*): Don't you recognize me, Father?

**OLD GOBBO:** Alas, I'm almost blind. I do not.

**LANCELOT:** Even if you had your sight, you might not know me. It is a wise father that knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son.  
I am Lancelot, your boy that was,  
Your son that is, your child that shall be.

**OLD GOBBO:** I can't believe you are my son!

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

**LANCELOT:** I don't know how to answer that.  
But I am Lancelot, and I am sure  
Margery, your wife, is my mother.

**OLD GOBBO:** Her name is Margery, indeed.  
So if you are Lancelot, I'll swear you  
are my own flesh and blood. Lord,  
how you've changed! How do you  
and your master get along? I have  
brought him a present.

**LANCELOT:** I've made up my mind to run away.  
Give him a present? Give him a *noose!*  
He starves me. My ribs feel like fingers.  
(*He guides Old Gobbo's hand to his ribs.*)  
Father, I am glad you've come.  
Give the present to a certain Master  
Bassanio. He really does provide  
smart uniforms! Either I'll serve him  
or keep running. Look! Here he comes.  
Go to him, Father. If I serve the Jew  
any longer, despise me!

(*Bassanio enters with Leonardo and others.*)

**BASSANIO** (*to a servant*): Yes, but be quick  
about it. I want supper ready by five.  
Deliver these letters. Order new  
uniforms for the servants. Then ask  
Gratiano to come to my house.

(*Servant exits.*)

**LANCELOT:** Go to him, Father!

**OLD GOBBO** (*bowing*): Your worship!

**BASSANIO:** May I help you?

**OLD GOBBO:** Here's my son, a poor boy—

**LANCELOT** (*coming forward*): Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's servant who would like, as my father will tell you—

(*He hides behind his father.*)

**OLD GOBBO:** He wishes, sir, to serve—

**LANCELOT** (*coming forward again*): Well, the short and the long of it is that I serve the Jew, but I wish to serve you instead.

**BASSANIO:** I know you well. The job is yours. Say goodbye to your old master, And go find my house.

**LANCELOT:** Thank you, sir! Come on, Father. I'll soon say farewell to the Jew.

(*Lancelot and his father exit. Gratiano enters, coming up to Bassanio.*)

**GRATIANO:** Bassanio!

**BASSANIO:** Gratiano!

**GRATIANO:** I've a favor to ask.

**BASSANIO:** Granted.

**GRATIANO:** I must go with you to Belmont.

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**BASSANIO:** Well then, do so. But listen—  
Sometimes you are too wild, too rude,  
and too bold.  
These features suit you well enough  
And do not seem like faults to us.  
But among strangers, they seem too much.  
Please try to tone down your behavior.  
Your high spirits might make me  
Misunderstood in Belmont  
And lose me my hopes.

**GRATIANO:** Bassanio, listen to me.  
If I do not dress soberly, talk with respect,  
And swear only now and then, like a man  
aiming to please his grandmother—  
Never trust me again!

**BASSANIO:** Very well, we'll see how you act.

**GRATIANO:** But do not count tonight!  
Don't judge me by what we do tonight.

**BASSANIO:** No, that would be a pity.  
I'd rather you were at your funniest,  
For our friends want to have a merry time.  
But goodbye for now. I have things to do.

**GRATIANO:** And I must join Lorenzo now.  
We will see you at dinner!

*(They go their separate ways.)*

### Scene 3

*Shylock's front door. Jessica and Lancelot come out.*

**JESSICA:** I'm sorry you are leaving my father.  
But goodbye—here's a ducat for you. And,  
Lancelot, please secretly give this letter  
To your new master's guest, Lorenzo.

**LANCELOT:** Goodbye. Let my tears speak for me,  
Even though such foolish tears aren't manly.  
Goodbye, sweet Jessica!

**JESSICA:** Farewell, good Lancelot!

*(Lancelot exits, drying his tears.)*

Alas, what a sin it is for me to be ashamed  
To be my father's child! I am his daughter,  
But I am not like him.  
Oh, Lorenzo, if you keep your promise,  
There will be an end to this strife,  
I'll become a Christian, and your  
loving wife.

*(She goes indoors.)*

### Scene 4

*Another street in Venice. Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salerio, and Solanio enter, discussing preparations for their fancy-dress party.*

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**LORENZO:** So we will leave at suppertime,  
Change our clothes at my lodging,  
And be back within the hour.

**GRATIANO:** But we have not prepared well.

**SALERIO:** We haven't hired torchbearers.

**SOLANIO:** It's stupid unless organized well.  
I don't think we should do it.

**LORENZO:** It's only 4:00. We have two hours  
To get everything ready.

*(Lancelot enters.)*

Friend Lancelot, what's the news?

**LANCELOT** *(producing a letter):* Open this, and  
you'll know.

**GRATIANO:** A love letter, I see!

**LANCELOT:** Excuse me, sir.

*(He starts to leave.)*

**LORENZO:** Where are you going?

**LANCELOT:** Well, sir, to invite my old master,  
the Jew, to dine tonight with my new  
master, the Christian.

**LORENZO:** Hold on. Take this.

*(He gives him a tip.)* Tell dear Jessica  
I will not fail her. Tell her privately.

*(Lancelot leaves.)*

Go, gentlemen. Get ready for tonight.



**SALERIO:** Right. I'll get started on it.

**SOLANIO:** So will I.

**LORENZO:** Meet me and Gratiano  
At Gratiano's place in about an hour.

**SALERIO:** Good idea.

*(Salerio and Solanio leave.)*

**GRATIANO:** Was that letter from fair Jessica?

**LORENZO:** I'd better tell you all. She told me  
The way to take her from her father's  
house,  
What gold and jewels she will bring,  
And how she will dress as a page.  
If ever her father enters heaven,  
It will be because of his gentle daughter.  
May misfortune never cross her path.  
Come with me. Read this as you go along.  
Fair Jessica will be my torchbearer!

*(They walk off briskly.)*

## Scene 5

**Shylock enters with Lancelot.**

**SHYLOCK:** Well, you'll see! Your eyes  
Will judge the difference between  
Old Shylock and Bassanio.  
*(calling out) Jessica!*

(*to Lancelot*): You won't stuff yourself as  
You have with me. (*calling again*) *Jessica!*

(*to Lancelot*): Or sleep and snore,  
And wear out your clothes. (*calling louder*)  
*What, Jessica, I say!*

(*Jessica enters.*)

**JESSICA:** Did you call? What is your wish?

**SHYLOCK:** I'm invited out to dinner, Jessica.  
Here are my keys. But why should I go?  
I'm not invited out of love. They flatter me.  
But still, I'll go in hate, to eat the food of  
The wasteful Christian. Jessica, my girl,  
Look after my house. I don't want to go.  
Something doesn't feel quite right.

**LANCELOT:** I beg you, sir, *go!* My young master  
expects the displeasure of your company.

**SHYLOCK:** As I do his.

**LANCELOT:** And they have planned something.  
I won't say exactly that you'll see a  
masque. But (*winking*) if you *do* see one  
of those dramas, don't be surprised.

**SHYLOCK:** What, will there be a masque?  
Listen, Jessica. Lock my doors. When  
You hear the drum and the vile squealing  
Of the fife player, don't look out  
Into the street to see Christian fools  
In painted masks. Plug my house's ears—

Don't let the sound of shallow foolishness  
Enter my sober home.

I swear I have no wish to dine out  
tonight,

But I will go.

*(to Lancelot):* Go ahead, you. Say I'll come.

**LANCELOT:** I'll go ahead, sir.

*(aside to Jessica):* Miss, look out the window  
because *(reciting)*

*A certain Christian will come by,  
Worth the sight of a Jewess's eye.*

*(He leaves, whistling.)*

**SHYLOCK:** What did that fool Gentile say?

**JESSICA:** He said, "Farewell, miss." No more.

**SHYLOCK:** The fool is kind enough,  
But a huge eater, a snail-slow worker,  
And he sleeps more by day than a wildcat.  
I'll have no lazy ones in my house,  
So I let him go—to someone he can help  
waste borrowed money.

Jessica, go in. I may return immediately.  
Do as I say. Shut the doors behind you.

*(Shylock leaves.)*

**JESSICA:** Farewell. If my luck is not crossed,  
I've a father and you've a daughter lost.

*(Jessica goes inside.)*

## Scene 6

*A street in Venice. Gratiano and Salerio enter, wearing masks.*

**GRATIANO:** This is the balcony under which  
Lorenzo asked us to wait.

**SALERIO:** He's late.

**GRATIANO:** It is strange that he's not here.  
Lovers are usually early.

**SALERIO:** Look! Here he comes now.

*(Lorenzo enters.)*

**LORENZO:** Good friends, forgive my lateness.  
It was business, not myself, that caused it.  
Come. This is where my Jewish father  
lives.

*(He calls out.)* Hello! Anybody home?

*(A window opens, and Jessica appears, dressed as a boy.)*

**JESSICA:** Who's that? Although I think  
I know your voice, say who you are!

**LORENZO:** Lorenzo, and your love!

**JESSICA:** Lorenzo certainly, and my love  
For sure! Here, catch this chest.  
It's worth the trouble.

*(She throws it down.)*

I'm glad it is night. Don't look at me,  
For I am ashamed to show my clothes.  
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see  
Their own foolishness. If they could,  
Cupid himself would blush  
To see me changed into a boy.

**LORENZO:** Come down.

You must be my torchbearer.

**JESSICA:** Must I hold a candle to my shame?

Indeed, it shines out quite enough  
as it is.

Love thrives in modesty,  
And I should be concealed.

**LORENZO:** And so you are, my sweet.

Even in the lovely disguise of a boy.  
But come at once. It's getting late,  
And we are expected at Bassanio's  
party.

*(She closes the window.)*

*(to Gratiano):* By heaven, I love her dearly!  
If I'm any judge, she's wise, and  
If my eyes tell the truth, she's beautiful!  
That she is faithful, she has just proved.  
Therefore her image—wise, beautiful,  
and faithful  
Resides in my constant soul.

*(Jessica comes out of the house.)*

You are here, then. Come on, gentlemen!  
Our friends are waiting for us at the party.

*(They set off for the party.)*

## Scene 7

*The hall of Portia's house in Belmont. Portia enters, with the Prince of Morocco and their servants and attendants.*

**PORTIA** *(to servant)*: Go, open the curtains.

Show the noble prince the three caskets.

*(The curtains are drawn back, revealing three caskets displayed on a table.)*

*(to the prince)*: Now make your choice.

**MOROCCO**: The first, gold, bears the words:

*"Who chooses me*

*Shall gain what many men desire."*

The second, silver, carries this promise:

*"Who chooses me*

*Shall get as much as he deserves."*

The third, of dull lead, bluntly warns:

*"Who chooses me*

*Must give and gamble all he has."*

How shall I know if my choice is right?

**PORTIA**: One of these contains my picture,  
Prince. If you choose that, you will be  
my husband.

**MOROCCO:** May some god guide me!

Let me see. What does this lead casket say?

“ . . . *must give and gamble all he has.* ”

Must give? For what? For lead?

Risk all for lead? This casket looks

Dangerous. I'll not give or risk all for lead.

What about the silver one?

“ . . . *shall get as much as he deserves.* ”

Pause there, Morocco. Weigh your value.

I deserve enough, but “enough”

Might not stretch as far as to the lady.

And yet I should not underestimate myself.

As much as I deserve— Why, that's the lady!

What if I went no further, but chose here?

Let's see once more the saying on the gold.

“ . . . *shall gain what many men desire.* ”

That's the lady—all the world desires her.

One of the three holds her heavenly  
picture.

Is it likely that lead contains her?

I don't think so. Nor do I think she's in  
The silver, which is worth less than gold.

Give me the key. I choose the gold one,  
And take my chance!

**PORTIA** (*handing him the key*): Take it, Prince.

If my picture is inside, then I am yours.

(*He opens the golden casket.*)

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**MOROCCO:** Oh, no! What have we here?

A rotting skull, with a rolled-up  
manuscript stuffed

In its empty eye socket. I'll read it.

*"All that glitters is not gold;*

*Often you have heard that told.*

*Many a man his life has sold,*

*Just my outside to behold.*

*Golden tombs do worms enfold.*

*Had you been as wise as bold,*

*Young in limbs, in wisdom old,*

*Your answer would not be enscrolled—*

*Fare you well. Your suit is cold.*

*Cold indeed, and labor lost.*



*So farewell heat, and welcome frost.”*  
Portia, goodbye! I have too sad a heart  
For a long farewell. Thus losers depart.

*(Bowing, he leaves with his attendants.)*

**PORTIA** *(to Nerissa)*: Good riddance!  
*(to servant)*: Close the curtains. Go.  
May all with his vanity leave me so.

*(They exit.)*

## Scene 8

*A street in Venice. Salerio and Solanio enter.*

**SALERIO**: Why, man, I saw Bassanio set sail.  
Gratiano has gone along with him.  
I am sure Lorenzo is not on board.

**SOLANIO**: The villainous Jew with his outcries  
Roused the duke, who went with him  
To search Bassanio's ship.

**SALERIO**: He was too late. The ship was gone.  
But someone said that Lorenzo and Jessica  
Were seen together in a gondola.  
Besides, Antonio told the duke that  
They were not with Bassanio in his ship.

**SOLANIO**: I never heard such an outcry  
As the Jew did utter in the streets.  
“My daughter! My ducats! My daughter!

Fled with a Christian! Justice! The law!  
My ducats, and my daughter! A sealed bag!  
Two bags of golden ducats  
Stolen from me by my daughter!  
And jewels—two precious stones—  
Stolen by my daughter! Find the girl!  
She has the stones and the money!”

**SALERIO** (*laughing*): All the boys in Venice  
Follow him, crying, “His stones!  
His daughter! His money!”

**SOLANIO** (*serious now*): Antonio had better  
Pay his loan on time, or he will pay for this.

**SALERIO**: You’re right.  
I chatted with a Frenchman yesterday,  
Who said that a rich Venetian ship had  
Foundered in the English Channel.  
I thought about Antonio when he told me,  
And wished in silence that it wasn’t his.

**SOLANIO**: You’d better tell Antonio about it.  
But do it gently. It may grieve him.

**SALERIO**: There’s no kinder man on earth!  
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part.  
Bassanio said he’d return quickly.  
Antonio said, “Do not hurry for my sake.  
Stay as long as you must. As for the  
Jew’s contract, don’t let it affect  
Your love plans. Be merry, and focus  
On courtship and such shows of love

That seem proper there.” At this point,  
His eyes filled with tears. Turning his face,  
He put his hand out behind him, and with  
Great affection, he shook Bassanio’s hand.  
And so they parted.

**SOLANIO:** I think he means the world to him.  
Let’s go find him and cheer him up.

**SALERIO:** Let’s do that.

*(They leave.)*

## Scene 9

*Portia’s house at Belmont. The casket room. Nerissa and a servant enter.*

**NERISSA:** Quick! Please draw the curtain!  
The Prince of Aragon has taken his oath,  
And he’s coming to make his choice now.

*(The servant closes the curtains. Portia, the Prince of Aragon, and their attendants enter.)*

**PORTIA:** There are the caskets, noble Prince.  
If you choose the one with my picture in it,  
We shall be married right away.  
But if you fail, you must leave  
immediately.

**ARAGON:** I know the risk. May fortune now  
Grant me my heart’s hope!

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Gold, silver, and base lead.

*“Who chooses me*

*Must give and gamble all he has.”*

*(addressing the lead casket):* You must  
Look fairer before I'd give and gamble all.  
What does the golden chest say?

*“Who chooses me*

*Shall gain what many men desire.”*

I will not choose what many men desire,  
Because I am not like the common masses.  
Well then, to you, silver treasure house!  
Tell me once more what you say.

*“Who chooses me*

*Shall get as much as he deserves.”*

That is my choice. Give me the key for this.

*(He opens the silver casket.)*

What's here? The portrait of a fool,  
Offering me a note. I will read it.

*(looking at the picture)* How unlike you  
Are to Portia! How unlike my hopes and  
My deservings! Did I deserve no more  
Than a clown's head?

*(opening the document and reading)*

*“Some there are that shadows kiss,*

*Some have but a shadow's bliss.*

*There are fools alive, I say,*

*Who are silvered over in this way.*

*It matters not which wife you wed,*

*I will always be your head.*

*So be off, for you are sped.”*

*(to Portia)* A greater fool I shall appear

The longer that I linger here.

With one fool's head I came to woo,

But I go away with two.

Sweet, farewell, my word I'll keep,

To bear with patience my sorrows deep.

*(He leaves with his attendants.)*

**PORTIA** *(relieved)*: Another moth burned

By the candle! Oh, these pompous fools!

Thinking they can so wisely choose,

They're so surprised when they lose.

**NERISSA**: The old words said it straight—

To hang or to marry is a matter of fate.

**PORTIA**: Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

*(She does so. A servant enters.)*

**SERVANT**: Madam, a young Venetian is here.

He has brought gifts of great value.

Until now I have not seen so promising

An ambassador of love.

**PORTIA**: Come, Nerissa, for I long to see this

Messenger of Cupid who seems so gentle.

**NERISSA**: May it be Bassanio, Lord willing!

*(All exit.)*

ACT  
3

Scene 1

*The street in front of Shylock's house in Venice.*

**Solanio** meets **Salerio**, who has just come from the Rialto, the business center.

**SOLANIO:** What's the news on the Rialto?

**SALERIO:** There's a story going around  
That one of Antonio's ships has been  
Wrecked in the English Channel.

**SOLANIO:** What's that? He's lost a ship?

**SALERIO:** I hope it's the end of his losses.

**SOLANIO:** Let me say "Amen" at once,  
In case the devil thwarts my prayer,  
For here he comes in the form of a Jew.

*(Shylock comes out of his house.)*

Well now, Shylock! What's the news?

**SHYLOCK** (*angrily*): You knew—none so well  
as you—of my daughter's flight.

**SALERIO:** Of course! I even knew the tailor  
Who made the wings for her!

**SOLANIO:** Shylock knew the bird was ready  
To fly—and that it is natural  
For young birds to leave their mothers.

**SHYLOCK:** She is damned for it!

**SALERIO:** Oh, yes, if the devil is her judge.

**SHYLOCK:** My own flesh and blood to rebel!

**SOLANIO** (*pretending to misunderstand*): Fancy  
that, old skin and bones.

What, at your age?

**SHYLOCK:** I mean my daughter, who is my  
flesh and blood.

**SALERIO:** Your flesh and hers are  
More different than jet black and ivory.  
Your bloods are more different  
Than red wine and white.  
But tell us now—have you heard whether  
Antonio has had any loss at sea?

**SHYLOCK:** There I made another bad deal.  
A bankrupt. A prodigal. He hardly dares to  
Show his face on the Rialto. A beggar now,  
Who used to come so smugly to town.  
He'd better honor his bond!

**SALERIO:** Well, I'm sure if he can't,  
You won't take his flesh.  
After all, what is it good for?

**SHYLOCK:** To bait fish with! If it will feed  
Nothing else, it will feed my revenge.  
He has disgraced me, hindered me,  
Laughed at my losses, mocked my gains.  
He has scorned my nationality,  
Thwarted my deals, cooled my friends,

Angered my enemies. And why?

I am a Jew. But hasn't a Jew got eyes?  
Doesn't a Jew have hands, organs, limbs,  
Senses, affections, passions?  
Isn't he fed with the same food,  
Hurt by the same weapons,  
Subject to the same diseases,  
Healed by the same means,  
Warmed and cooled by the  
Same winter and summer, as a Christian is?

If you prick us, do we not bleed?

If you tickle us, do we not laugh?

If you poison us, do we not die?

And if you wrong us,

Shall we not seek revenge?

If we are like you in everything else,

We will be like you in that.

If a Jew wrongs a Christian,

What is his natural response? Revenge.

If a Christian wrongs a Jew, what should

His penalty be—by Christian example?

Why, revenge!

The villainy you teach me, I will carry out.

And I'll go one better if I get the chance!

*(A servant stops Solanio and Salerio.)*

**SERVANT:** Sirs, my master Antonio is at home.

He would like to speak to you both.

**SALERIO:** We've been looking for him.



*(Solanio, Salerio, and the servant leave. Tubal comes toward Shylock's house.)*

**SHYLOCK:** Greetings, Tubal. What news  
From Genoa? Did you find my daughter?

**TUBAL:** I heard her spoken of,  
But I could not find her.

**SHYLOCK:** No news of them? All right.  
And I don't know what the search  
Has cost so far. Loss upon loss!  
The thief gone with so much, and  
So much more spent to find the thief,  
yet no satisfaction! No revenge!  
No bad luck anywhere  
Except what falls on my shoulders.  
No sighs but my sighs. No tears but mine!

*(He cries.)*

**TUBAL:** Yes, other men have bad luck, too.  
Antonio, as I heard in Genoa . . .

**SHYLOCK** *(recovering quickly)*: What, what?  
Bad luck? Bad luck, you say?

**TUBAL:** He's lost a ship coming from Tripoli.

**SHYLOCK:** I thank God! Is it true?

**TUBAL:** I spoke to some of the sailors  
Who escaped from the wreck.

**SHYLOCK:** Thank you, Tubal. Good news!  
Ha, ha! You heard this in Genoa?

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**TUBAL** (*changing the subject*): I also heard  
That your daughter spent eighty ducats  
in one night.

**SHYLOCK**: You stick a dagger in me!  
I shall never see my gold again.  
Eighty ducats at a sitting! Eighty ducats!

**TUBAL** (*switching back again*): Several of  
Antonio's creditors came to me in Venice.  
They swear he'll soon be bankrupt.

**SHYLOCK**: I'm glad of it. I'll plague him.  
I'll torture him. I'm glad of it!

**TUBAL** (*getting back to Jessica*): One of them  
Showed me a ring that your daughter  
Had traded with him for a monkey.

**SHYLOCK**: You torture me, Tubal!  
Leah gave me that ring before we married.  
I would not have traded it  
For a wilderness of monkeys.

**TUBAL** (*trying to ease Shylock's pain*): But Antonio  
is certainly ruined.

**SHYLOCK**: Yes, that's true. Go, find a sheriff.  
I'll give Antonio two weeks' notice.  
If he can't pay, I'll have his heart!  
Once he's out of Venice, I can do business  
My own way. Go, Tubal—and meet me  
At our synagogue.

(*They leave, going separate ways.*)

## Scene 2

*The hall of Portia's house at Belmont. The curtains are drawn back, revealing the caskets. **Bassanio** is ready to make his choice.*

**PORTIA:** Wait a little, please. Pause a day  
Or two before you take the gamble. If you  
Choose wrong, I'll lose your company.  
Therefore, wait a while. Something tells me  
that I don't want to lose you.  
You know yourself that hatred does not  
Give such advice. But in case you do not  
Understand me well—for maidens can only  
Think their thoughts, not speak them—  
I'd like to keep you here a month or two  
before you make your choice.  
I could teach you how to choose right,  
But I'm under oath not to. If you don't win,  
I'll never be another's. If you should fail,  
You'll make me wish something sinful—  
That I had broken my oath and advised you.  
Shame on your eyes!  
They've looked at me, dividing me in two.  
Half of me is yours. The other half, too.  
I ought to say "my own," but what is mine  
Is yours, so all of me is yours.  
I talk too much, but it's to slow down time,  
Draw it out, and stretch out its length  
To delay the making of your choice.

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**BASSANIO:** Let me choose.

As I am, I'm living on the rack of torment.

**PORTIA:** On the rack, Bassanio! Confess then  
What treason is mingled with your love!

**BASSANIO:** Only the ugly treason of mistrust,  
Which makes me fear enjoying my love.  
Snow and fire might just as well be  
friends,  
As treason and my love.

**PORTIA:** Yes, but I'm afraid the rack makes  
You say anything, like any tortured man.

**BASSANIO:** Promise me life,  
And I'll confess the truth!

**PORTIA:** Well then, confess and live.

**BASSANIO:** "Confess and love" would be my  
Full confession. Oh, happy torment,  
When my torturer gives me the answers  
To set me free. But let me  
Test my fortune with the caskets.

**PORTIA:** Go then! I am locked in one of them.  
If you really love me, you will find me.

*(to the onlookers):* Nerissa and the rest,  
Stand aside. Let music play as he chooses.  
That way, if he loses, he can leave  
Like a dying swan, fading in music.

*(One servant stays while the others go to the  
musicians' gallery.)*

To extend the comparison, my tears will be  
The stream and watery deathbed for him.  
*(more cheerfully)* He may win.

What of music then? Oh, then, music  
would be like the dawn chorus that  
Creeps into the dreaming bridegroom's ear,  
Calling him to his wedding. There he goes,  
*(to Bassanio)*: Go, love! If you win, I live!

*(Music plays while Bassanio thinks.)*

**BASSANIO:** The world is fooled by ornament.  
In law, any plea, no matter how corrupt,  
Can hide its evil behind a saintly voice.  
In religion, any heresy can be blessed by  
Some learned man who uses the Scriptures  
in support of its grossness.  
How many cowards, with hearts as false  
As stairs made from sand, sport beards  
Like brave Hercules and warlike Mars?  
They only wear those beards to seem tough.  
Look on beauty. You'll see that it's often  
Purchased by the ounce.  
Cosmetics work miracles. Those with the  
Lightest morals use them most heavily.  
Ornament is the rocky shore of a most  
Dangerous sea, the beautiful scarf veiling  
An uncertain beauty. Therefore, gaudy gold,  
I want none of you. Nor of you, silver,  
The stuff of common coins. But you,

Worthless lead, which threatens  
Rather than promises, your paleness  
Moves me more than eloquence.  
I choose you. May joy be the result!

*(The servant hands him the key.)*

**PORTIA** *(aside)*: How fast all other passions  
Disappear—doubt, despair, fear,  
And green-eyed jealousy! Oh, love,  
Be moderate, control your ecstasy,  
Restrain your joy! Don't get too excited—  
I feel your blessing too much. Make it less,  
In case it overwhelms me!

**BASSANIO** *(opening the casket)*: What's this?  
Fair Portia's portrait! *(admiring it)* Divine!  
Do these eyes move? Or do they merely  
Reflect the motion of mine? Here are lips  
Parted with sugar breath! Here in her hair  
the painter has, like a spider,  
Woven a golden net to entrap men's hearts,  
Faster than gnats in cobwebs. But her eyes!  
How could he see to do them? After he  
Painted one, it would have had the power to  
Blind him, denying itself a companion.

But look! Just as my praises undervalue  
The portrait, so does this portrait  
Fall short of the reality. Here's the scroll,  
On which my fortune is summarized:

*(He reads the scroll.)*

*“You who choose not by the view  
Take fair chance, and choose quite true.  
Since this fortune falls to you,  
Be content, seek nothing new.  
If you be well-pleased with this  
And see your fortune as your bliss,  
Turn to where your lady is,  
And claim her with a loving kiss.”*

A kindly scroll! (*He turns to Portia.*)

I come to you with a permit, by your leave,  
(*offering the scroll as a permit for a kiss*)

A kiss to give and to receive.

But only if this is agreeable to you.

I wait to hear your answer true.

**PORTIA:** You see me, Lord Bassanio, as I am.

For myself, I would not seek improvement.

But for you, I wish I were 60 times better,

A thousand times more beautiful,

Ten thousand times richer.

I'm really very little—at best

An uneducated and inexperienced girl.

Happily, not too old to learn.

Happier still, not too stupid to learn.

Happiest of all—I surrender myself to you,

My lord, governor, and king.

(*They kiss, meeting the terms of the scroll.*)

Myself, and what is mine, are now yours.

Until now I was the lord of this fine house,

Master of my servants, queen over myself.  
Now, this house, these servants, and  
myself  
Are yours. I give them with this ring.

*(She puts a ring on Bassanio's finger.)*

If you part with it, lose it, or give it away,  
That will mean the end of your love  
And be my reason to denounce you.

**BASSANIO:** Madam, I don't know what to say!  
Only the blood in my veins speaks to you.  
I am like a crowd of people overwhelmed  
by the fine speech of a beloved prince.  
Every atom of my being is shouting with  
Wild cheers of joy. When this ring  
Parts from this finger, life parts from me.  
Then you could confidently say,  
"This means that Bassanio is dead."

*(Nerissa and Gratiano join them.)*

**NERISSA:** Good joy, my lord and lady!

**GRATIANO:** Lord Bassiano and gentle lady,  
I wish you great joy. And when the time  
Comes for your wedding, I beg you  
That at that time I can be married, too!

**BASSANIO:** Of course—if you can find a wife.

**GRATIANO:** Thanking your lordship,  
You have found me one.

*(He takes Nerissa's hand.)*



My eyes, my lord, are just as swift as yours.  
You saw the mistress—I spotted the maid.  
You loved, I loved.

Your fortune depended on the caskets  
there,  
And so did mine, as it happened.  
I wooed until I sweated, and swore  
Oaths of love until my mouth ran dry.  
At last I got a promise of her hand  
From this fair lady here,  
On condition that you won her mistress.

**PORTIA:** Is this true, Nerissa?

**NERISSA:** Madam, it is, if you are pleased.

**BASSANIO:** Do you mean it, Gratiano?

**GRATIANO:** Yes indeed, my lord.

**BASSANIO:** Our wedding feast will be  
Most honored by your marriage.

**GRATIANO (to Nerissa):** We'll bet them  
A thousand ducats that we have a son first.

**NERISSA (blushing):** What, betting on that?

**GRATIANO (teasing):** We'll never win,  
If we don't get started soon!

*(Lorenzo and Jessica enter, followed by Salerio, who is carrying a letter.)*

But who's this? Lorenzo and Jessica?  
What—and my old Venetian friend,  
Salerio?

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**BASSANIO:** Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome.

If one so new in my status here can do so,  
I bid you welcome.

*(to Portia):* With your permission, sweet  
Portia.

**PORTIA:** They are entirely welcome, my lord.

**LORENZO** *(to Bassanio):* I thank your honor.

For my part, I did not plan to see you here.  
But I met Salerio on the way,  
And he begged me to come along.  
He wouldn't take no for an answer.

**SALERIO:** I did, my lord, with good reason.

*(He gives Bassanio the letter.)*

Antonio sends his respects.

**BASSANIO:** Before I open his letter,

Tell me how my good friend is doing.

**SALERIO:** Not sick—unless it's in his mind.

Yet not well either, unless you mean  
mentally.

His letter explains his situation.

*(Bassanio opens the letter.)*

**GRATIANO** *(nodding toward Jessica):* Nerissa,

Cheer up our stranger. Bid her welcome.

*(Nerissa greets Jessica, while Gratiano shakes hands  
with Salerio.)*

Your hand, Salerio. What's new in Venice?

How is Antonio getting along?  
I know he will be happy for us!

**SALERIO:** He'll be happy for you, I'm sure.  
But things are not going so well for him.

*(He takes Gratiano to one side to explain.)*

**PORTIA** *(observing Bassanio as he reads):* There are  
some sad contents in that letter  
That rob the color from Bassanio's cheek.  
Some dear friend dead? What—worse?  
*(She touches his arm.)* With respect,  
Bassanio, I am half yourself. I will freely  
Share half of any trouble this letter brings  
you.

**BASSANIO:** Sweet Portia! Here are some of the  
Saddest words that ever blotted paper!  
Dear lady, when I first told you of my love,  
I freely confessed that all my wealth  
Ran in my veins. I was a gentleman,  
So I told you the truth. And yet, dear lady,  
When I told you I had nothing, you will see  
That I was bragging. I should have told you  
That I had less than nothing. Actually,  
I am indebted to a dear friend, who lent me  
Money borrowed from his worst enemy.  
Here is a letter, lady.  
The paper represents my friend's body,  
And every word in it is a gaping wound,  
Leaking his life's blood. But is it true,

Salerio, that all his investments have failed?

Not one success? From Tripoli, Mexico, England? From Lisbon, Barbary, India? Not one ship escaped the dreadful touch of Shipwrecking rocks?

**SALERIO:** Not one, my lord. Besides, it seems That even if he could pay the loan, The Jew would not take the money. I never knew a creature in human form so sharp and hungry to destroy a man. He appeals to the duke morning and night. He says it is unlawful to deny him justice. The duke, the nobles, and 20 merchants Have argued with him. But he won't listen.

**JESSICA:** When I lived with him, I heard him Swear that he'd rather have Antonio's flesh Than 20 times the amount he owes. I know, my lord, that if law, authority, And power don't stop him, It will go hard with poor Antonio.

**PORTIA:** Is Antonio your dear friend?

**BASSANIO:** My dearest friend.  
The kindest man, the best meaning  
And most tireless of those  
Who do good deeds. He is one with more  
Roman honor in him than any man in Italy.

**PORTIA:** How much does he owe the Jew?

**BASSANIO:** On my behalf, 3,000 ducats.

**PORTIA:** No more? Pay him 6,000! No,  
Two times that. And then three times that!  
No friend of that description  
Shall lose a hair through Bassanio's fault.  
First go with me to church and call me wife.  
Then go to Venice to your friend.

You shall not lie by Portia's side  
With a troubled spirit. Take enough gold  
To pay the petty debt 20 times over.  
When it is paid, bring your true friend here.  
Nerissa and I will live as maids and widows  
Until you come back. Away, now!

You must leave on your wedding day.  
Bid welcome to your friends. Smile!  
Since you are dearly bought,  
I'll love you dearly.  
Let me hear your friend's letter.

**BASSANIO (reading):** *"Dear Bassanio, my ships  
have all been wrecked. My creditors grow  
cruel. My assets are very low. My bond to  
the Jew is forfeit. In paying it, I cannot  
possibly live. But all debts between us will  
be cleared—if, at my death, I could but see  
you. Even so, do as you wish. If your love  
for me does not persuade you to come, don't  
let this letter do so."*

**PORTIA:** Oh, my love! Hurry to him!

**BASSANIO:** Since you have given your consent,  
I'll go. But, until I return, I will  
Neither sleep nor rest!

*(Everyone hurries off.)*

### Scene 3

*Outside Shylock's house. Shylock stands at his door,  
with Antonio, Solanio, and Jailer.*

**SHYLOCK:** Jailer, guard him well!  
Don't talk to me of mercy!  
This is the fool who lent out money  
Free of interest. Jailer, guard him.

**ANTONIO:** Listen a minute, good Shylock—

**SHYLOCK:** I will have my bond! Don't speak  
Against my bond. I've sworn an oath  
That I will have my bond. You called me  
a dog before you had a reason.  
Since I am a dog, beware my fangs!  
The duke will grant me justice. I'm amazed,  
You wicked jailer, that you are so foolish  
As to wander about with him at his request!

**ANTONIO:** Please, hear me speak!

**SHYLOCK:** *I'll have my bond.* Do not speak!  
I'll not be made into a soft and stupid fool,



Shaking my head, sighing, and giving in  
To Christian pleas. Don't follow me.  
Don't speak to me! I will have my bond!

*(He enters his house, slamming the door.)*

**SOLANIO:** He's the most stubborn dog  
Who ever kept company with men.

**ANTONIO:** Leave him alone.  
I'll follow him no more with useless pleas.  
He wants my life. I know his reason well.  
I often paid others' debts to him when  
They asked me for help. So he hates me.

**SOLANIO:** I'm sure the duke will never  
Rule in favor of the terms of this bond.

**ANTONIO:** The duke cannot change the law.  
If we denied the rights of strangers  
Here in Venice, it would go against  
Our ideas of justice. The city trades  
With people of all nations.  
I've lost so much weight  
Because of my griefs and losses  
That tomorrow I can hardly spare a pound  
Of flesh to my bloodthirsty creditor.  
Well, jailer, let's move on. If only  
Bassanio will come to see me pay his debt.  
Then I shall be content!

*(They exit.)*

## Scene 4

*Portia's house in Belmont. Portia, Nerissa, Lorenzo, Jessica, and Portia's servant Balthazar enter.*

**LORENZO:** Madam, you have a truly noble  
Understanding of friendship.  
If you knew the man you are honoring—  
How true a gentleman he is, how dearly  
He loves your husband—I know you  
Would be even prouder of what you did.

**PORTIA:** I've never regretted doing good  
And do not now. Between friends  
Who talk and spend time together,



And who love each other equally,  
There must be a similarity in spirit.  
This makes me think that Antonio,  
    being a close friend of my husband,  
Must be like him. If that is so,  
How cheaply have I rescued a soulmate  
From hellish cruelty. This sounds too much  
Like praising myself, so that's enough!

    To change the subject, Lorenzo,  
I want you to take over the management  
Of my household until my husband returns.  
For myself, I've made a secret vow to live  
Alone in prayer and contemplation,  
Except for Nerissa here,  
Until our husbands return.  
There is a monastery two miles away.  
    We'll live there.

I hope you won't deny my request,  
Which I ask out of love and pressing need.

**LORENZO:** Madam, with my whole heart,  
I shall obey all of your commands.

**PORTIA:** My servants already know my plans.  
They will accept you and Jessica  
In place of Lord Bassanio and myself.  
So farewell until we meet again!

**LORENZO:** Farewell to you, dear lady.

*(Jessica and Lorenzo exit.)*

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**PORTIA:** Now, Balthazar! You've always been  
Honest and true. Let me find you so now.  
*(handing him a letter)* Take this letter,  
And get to Padua as fast as you can.  
Give this to my cousin, Doctor Bellario,  
And he'll give you certain documents  
And clothing. Bring them to the crossing  
Where the public ferry trades with Venice.  
Waste no time in words, but just go!  
I'll be there before you.

**BALTHAZAR:** Madam, I'll go quickly.

*(He leaves.)*

**PORTIA:** Come on, Nerissa. I have work to do  
That you do not know about. We'll see  
Our husbands before they think of us.

**NERISSA:** Will they see us?

**PORTIA:** They will, Nerissa, but they'll think,  
By our clothes, that we are male.  
I will bet you that  
When we're dressed as young men,  
I will be the handsomer of the two.  
I'll wear my dagger more bravely, speak in  
The high-pitched voice of an adolescent,  
Turn my maidenly steps into a manly  
stride,  
And boast of brawls like a bragging youth.  
I'll lie about how many hearts I've broken,

So that people will swear that I left school  
At least twelve months ago.

**NERISSA:** What—are we to turn into men?

**PORTIA:** Dear me! What a silly question!  
But come. I'll tell you my plan when we're  
In my coach, which waits at the park gate.  
Let's hurry. We must cover twenty miles  
today!

*(They rush away.)*

ACT  
4

Scene 1

*A court of law in Venice. Antonio enters between two guards, followed by Bassanio, Gratiano, Solanio, officers, and clerks, and finally, the duke.*

**DUKE:** Well, is Antonio here?

**ANTONIO:** Ready, your honor.

**DUKE:** I am sorry for you. You have come  
To answer a hard-hearted adversary,  
An inhuman wretch incapable of pity,  
Totally empty of even a drop of mercy!

**ANTONIO:** I shall meet his fury  
With patience. I'm ready to suffer his rage  
With a quietness of spirit.

**DUKE:** Go, someone,  
And call the Jew into the court.

**SOLANIO:** He is already at the door.  
He's coming, my lord.

**DUKE:** Make way for him,  
And let him stand before me.

*(The crowd parts and Shylock stands before the duke, bowing low.)*

Shylock, the world thinks—and so do I—

That you plan to keep up this malice only  
Until the last minute. Then it's thought that  
You will show mercy and remorse even  
    stranger than this apparent cruelty.  
And where you now demand the penalty,  
    a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,  
You will finally relent. Touched with  
Human gentleness and love, you will even  
Forgive part of the original debt. Some say  
That you'll have pity because of the losses  
That have recently fallen so heavily on him.  
Such losses would cripple a royal merchant  
And touch the hardest of hearts.

*(He pauses.)*

We all expect a gentle answer, Shylock.

**SHYLOCK:** I have told your grace my plans.  
I have sworn by our holy Sabbath to have  
Full payment for default on my bond.  
If you deny it, let the danger fall upon  
Your city's constitution and freedom.  
    You'll ask me why I choose to have  
A pound of dead flesh rather than to receive  
Three thousand ducats. I'll not answer that!  
But say it is my whim! Is it answered?  
What if my house is troubled with a rat,  
And I am pleased to give 10,000 ducats  
To have it poisoned? Is that answer good?  
I won't give any other reason, apart from  
    the firm hatred that I have for Antonio,

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For pursuing a losing battle with him.  
Are you answered now?

**BASSANIO:** This is no answer, you unfeeling  
man, to make excuses for your cruelty!

**SHYLOCK:** I am not obliged to please you  
With my answers!

**BASSANIO:** Do all men kill the things  
They do not love?

**SHYLOCK:** Wouldn't any man want  
To kill the things he hates?

**BASSANIO:** Not every offense causes hate.

**SHYLOCK:** What—would you let a snake  
Sting you twice?

**ANTONIO** (*to Bassanio*): You think you can  
Reason with the Jew? You may as well  
Go stand upon the beach and tell the tide  
Not to reach its usual height.  
Or you might as well ask the wolf why  
He has made the ewe cry for its lamb.  
You may as well forbid the mountain pines  
To sway or to make a noise when they are  
Buffeted by the winds. Anything that hard  
You might as well try to do, as try to soften  
that hardest thing of all—his heart.  
Therefore, I beg you make no more offers,  
Use no other methods. As soon as possible,  
Let me know the court's decision,

And let the Jew have his will!

**BASSANIO:** I offer double your 3,000 ducats!

**SHYLOCK:** If every one of your 6,000 ducats  
Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,  
I would not take it. I demand my bond!

**DUKE:** How can you hope for mercy,  
When you give none?

**SHYLOCK:** What judgment should I dread,  
Having done no wrong? Many among you  
Have slaves. You use them like your dogs  
And mules—for wretched jobs, because  
You bought them. Shall I say to you,  
“Set them free. Marry them to your heirs.  
Why should they sweat, carrying burdens?  
Let their beds be as soft as yours, and  
Their food as good.” You would answer,  
“The slaves are ours.” I say the same.  
The pound of flesh which I demand of him  
Is dearly bought. It is mine. I will have it.  
If you deny me, I scorn your laws!  
The decrees of Venice have no force.  
I insist on justice. Answer! Shall I have it?

**DUKE:** I have the power to dismiss this court,  
Unless Bellario, a learned doctor of law,  
Whom I have sent for to resolve this case,  
Comes here today.

**SOLANIO:** My lord, a messenger has just come  
From Padua, with letters from the doctor.

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**DUKE:** Bring me the letters.

**BASSANIO:** Cheer up, Antonio! Be brave!  
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones,  
And all, before you shall lose  
One drop of blood for me.

*(Shylock takes out a knife and begins to sharpen it on the soles of his leather shoes.)*

**ANTONIO:** I am the weakest ram in the flock,  
Best suited for death. The weakest fruit  
Drops first to the ground, and so let me.  
You cannot be better used, Bassanio,  
Than to stay alive and write my epitaph.

*(Nerissa enters, dressed as a judge's clerk.)*

**DUKE:** Did you come from Bellario?

**NERISSA:** Yes. He sends his greetings.

*(She presents a letter, which the duke reads.)*

**BASSANIO (to Shylock):** Why do you  
Sharpen your knife so earnestly?

**SHYLOCK:** To cut out my pound of flesh.

**GRATIANO:** You sharpen it not on your  
Shoe's sole but on your immortal soul!  
No metal, not even the executioner's axe,  
Is half as keen as your sharp envy.  
Can no prayers touch you?

**SHYLOCK:** None that you have brains to make.

**GRATIANO:** Damn you, you stubborn dog!



Justice is to blame for letting you live.  
I almost doubt my faith and share the theory  
That the souls of animals can enter men.  
Your spirit comes from a wolf whose soul,  
When he was hanged for killing humans,  
Fled into the womb of your unholy mother  
And settled into you! Your desires  
Are wolfish, bloody, mean, and hungry!

**SHYLOCK:** Until you can remove the seal from  
My bond, you merely damage your lungs  
To speak so loud. I'm here for justice.

**DUKE:** This letter from Bellario commends  
A young and learned doctor of law  
To our court. Where is he?

**NERISSA:** He is waiting nearby to hear  
Your answer. Will you admit him?

**DUKE:** With all my heart. Three or four of you,  
Go and escort him to this place.

*(Attendants leave.)*

Now, the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

*(He reads.)*

*"Your grace, when your letter arrived, I was  
very sick. But when your messenger came,  
a young doctor of law from Rome was  
visiting me. I told him of the lawsuit  
between Shylock and Antonio. We  
consulted many books together. I have*

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*asked him to come to you in my place.  
I beg you, do not underestimate him  
because of his lack of years. I never knew  
so young a body with so old a head.  
I trust you will accept him. His  
performance will speak for itself."*

*(He looks up.)*

You hear what Bellario has written.

*(Portia enters, dressed as a judge, carrying a lawbook.)*

And here, I take it, is the doctor himself.

*(He greets her.)* Give me your hand.

*(They shake.)* You came from old Bellario?

**PORTIA:** I did, my lord.

**DUKE:** You are welcome. Take your place.

*(A court usher guides Portia to a desk near the duke.)*

Are you familiar with the case

Before the court?

**PORTIA:** Yes, I am.

Which is the merchant, and which the Jew?

**DUKE:** Antonio and Shylock, stand up.

**PORTIA:** Is your name Shylock?

**SHYLOCK:** Shylock is my name.

**PORTIA:** Your case is unusual.

But it is sound enough that Venetian laws

Cannot stop you from proceeding.

*(to Antonio):* You stand in some danger

From him, do you not?

**ANTONIO:** Yes, so he says.

**PORTIA:** Do you admit to the bond?

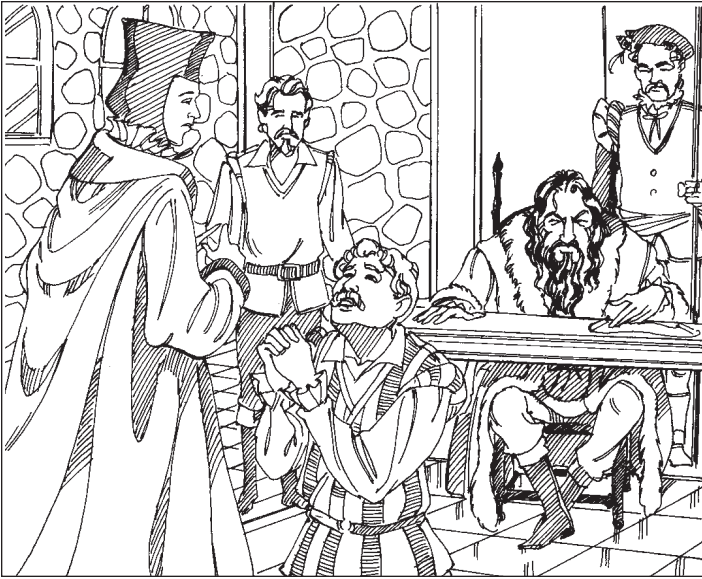
**ANTONIO:** I do.

**PORTIA:** Then the Jew must be merciful.

**SHYLOCK:** And what forces me to be? Tell me!

**PORTIA:** The quality of mercy is not strained.  
It drops like a gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed.  
It blesses him that gives, and him that takes.  
It is mightiest in the mightiest. It is more  
becoming to the king than his crown.  
His scepter shows his earthly power,  
The symbol of his awe and majesty,  
The reason kings are held in fear and dread.  
But mercy is above this sceptered rule.  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings.  
It is a quality of God himself.  
Earthly power is nearest to God's  
When mercy balances justice. So, Jew—  
Though you claim justice, consider this:  
None of us could expect salvation if justice  
Alone won out. We pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer teaches us all to do  
The deeds of mercy. I have said all this  
to soften the justice of your pleas.  
If you insist on it, this strict court of Venice

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Has no choice but to pronounce sentence  
Against the merchant there.

**SHYLOCK:** I'll answer for my own sins!  
I want the law to enforce my bond!

**PORTIA:** Is he not able to pay the money?

**BASSANIO:** Yes, I offer it to him now in court.  
It is twice the sum. If that is not enough,  
I will pay ten times the amount,  
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart!  
If this is not enough, malice hides the truth.

*(He kneels before Portia as if in prayer.)*

I beg you: Twist the law your way.  
To do a great right, do a little wrong, and

Stop this cruel devil from having his will!

**PORTIA:** That cannot be. No power in Venice  
Can change a standing law. It would create  
A precedent, and cause many errors  
By the same example. It cannot be.

**SHYLOCK:** Oh, wise young judge, I honor you!  
*(He kisses the hem of her robe.)*

**PORTIA:** Allow me to read the bond.

**SHYLOCK** *(handing it over):* Here it is,  
Most reverend doctor. Here it is!

**PORTIA** *(accepting the document without reading it):*  
Shylock, three times  
Your money has been offered to you.

**SHYLOCK:** My oath! My oath!  
I have vowed an oath to heaven!  
Shall my soul be guilty of perjury?  
No—not even for all of Venice!

**PORTIA** *(reading the bond):* Why, this bond  
Is forfeit. By this, the Jew may lawfully  
Claim a pound of flesh, to be cut off by him  
Nearest to the merchant's heart.

*(to Shylock):* Be merciful. Take three times  
The money. Tell me to tear up the bond.

**SHYLOCK:** When it is paid according to the  
Agreement. You appear to be a good judge.  
You know the law. In the name of  
The law, I demand judgment.

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**ANTONIO:** I strongly beg the court  
To give the judgment.

**PORTIA (to Antonio):** Well, then, here it is:  
You must prepare your breast for his knife.

**SHYLOCK:** Noble judge! Excellent young man!

**PORTIA:** The purpose of the law is to support  
The penalty, which (*indicating the bond*)  
Here seems due, according to the bond.

**SHYLOCK:** That's very true. Oh, wise judge!

**PORTIA (to Antonio):** So, lay bare your breast.

**SHYLOCK:** Yes, his chest. So says the bond,  
"Nearest his heart." The very words.

**PORTIA:** That's so. Are there scales here,  
To weigh the flesh?

**SHYLOCK:** I have them ready.

*(He opens his cloak to show them.)*

**PORTIA:** Order a doctor to stand by, Shylock,  
To stop his wounds  
So he won't bleed to death.

**SHYLOCK:** Does it say that in the bond?

*(He takes up the document and reads it.)*

**PORTIA:** It is not spelled out, but what of that?  
You'd do that much out of charity.

**SHYLOCK:** I can't find it. It's not in the bond.

*(He hands back the document.)*

**PORTIA:** Merchant, have you anything to say?

**ANTONIO:** Very little. I am well-prepared.

Give me your hand, Bassanio. Farewell.

Don't grieve about this.

In my case, Fortune is kinder than usual.

Often she lets the wretched man outlive

His wealth, to endure with sunken eyes

And wrinkled brow an old age of poverty.

She has spared me that lingering misery.

Remember me to your honorable wife.

Tell her how Antonio came to die,

And say how I loved you.

Speak well of me in death.

When the tale is told, ask her to judge

Whether or not Bassanio was loved.

Only regret that you lose your friend

Who has no regret about paying your

debt.

If the Jew cuts deep enough,

I'll pay it instantly, with all my heart!

**BASSANIO:** Antonio, I am married to a wife

Who is as dear to me as life itself.

But life itself, my wife, and all the world

Are not more precious to me than your life.

I would lose all—yes, sacrifice them all—

To save you!

**PORTIA:** Your wife would not thank you for

That, if she heard you make such an offer.

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**GRATIANO:** I have a wife whom I swear I love.  
I wish she were in heaven, so she could  
Beg some power to change this Jew!

**NERISSA:** It's well you say it behind her back.  
That wish would make an unhappy house.

**SHYLOCK** (*aside*): These Christian husbands!  
I have a daughter. I'd rather she married  
Anyone else besides a Christian!  
(*aloud*) We're wasting time. I beg you,  
Proceed to sentence.

**PORTIA:** A pound of that merchant's flesh  
Is yours. The court awards it,  
And the law permits it.

**SHYLOCK:** Most rightful judge!

**PORTIA:** You must cut it from his breast.  
The law allows it, and the court awards it.

**SHYLOCK:** Most learned judge! A sentence!  
(*He moves with knife drawn toward Antonio.*)

Come, prepare!

**PORTIA:** Wait a little. There's something else.  
This bond gives you not one drop of  
blood.  
The exact words are "a pound of flesh."  
So you may take your bond and your  
pound of flesh.  
But, if in cutting it, you shed one drop of  
Christian blood, your lands and goods,



Under the laws of Venice, will be  
Confiscated to the state of Venice.

**SHYLOCK** (*appalled*): Is that the law?

**PORTIA** (*opening the lawbook*): You can see  
For yourself. You pressed for justice.  
Be assured you shall have even more  
Justice than you want.

**GRATIANO**: Oh, learned judge!

**SHYLOCK**: I take the offer then. Pay  
Three times the bond, and let him go.

**BASSANIO**: Here's the money.

**PORTIA** (*raising her hand*): Gently now!  
The Jew shall have justice.  
He shall have nothing but the penalty.

**GRATIANO**: Oh, upright, learned judge!

**PORTIA**: Therefore, prepare to cut the flesh.  
Shed no blood. And cut neither less  
Nor more than exactly one pound of flesh.  
If you take more or less than one pound,  
Even if by one twentieth of an ounce—  
If the scale turns by so little as a hair—  
Then you shall die, and all your goods  
Will be confiscated.  
Why do you pause? Take your forfeit.

**SHYLOCK** (*thwarted*): Give me my money,  
And let me go.

**BASSANIO**: I have it ready for you. Here it is.

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**PORTIA:** He has refused it in open court.

He shall have strict justice and his bond.

**SHYLOCK:** Not even my money back?

**PORTIA:** You shall have nothing but the forfeit,

And that to be taken at your peril, Jew.

**SHYLOCK:** I'll stand for no more of this!

*(He turns to leave.)*

**PORTIA:** Wait a moment, Jew.

The law has yet another hold on you.

*(She consults the lawbook again.)*

It is a law of Venice that if it is proved  
Against an alien that he directly  
Or indirectly seeks the life of any citizen,  
The person against whom he plots  
Can seize one half of his goods.  
The other half goes to the state treasury.  
The life of the offender lies only at the  
Mercy of the duke.

*(She closes the book.)*

It appears from your actions that indirectly,  
And directly too, you have plotted against  
The very life of the defendant. You are  
Indeed in danger of the death penalty.  
Down on your knees, therefore,  
And beg for the duke's mercy.

**DUKE:** To show the difference in our spirits,

I pardon your life before you ask for it.  
Half your wealth goes to Antonio.  
The other half goes to the state.  
Your contrition could turn this to a fine.

**PORTIA:** Yes, the state's half. Not Antonio's.

**SHYLOCK:** No, take my life as well!

Don't pardon that. You take my house,  
When you remove my source of income.  
You take my life when you take away  
The means by which I earn a living.

**PORTIA:** What mercy can you offer, Antonio?

**ANTONIO:** I would be pleased if the court  
Were willing to give up the state's half,  
And let me have the other half to use  
During his lifetime. After that, I'll give it  
To the gentleman who recently eloped with  
His daughter. Two more conditions.

One: In exchange for this favor,  
He shall become a Christian immediately.  
Two: That he makes a will here in court,  
Leaving all he possesses at his death  
To his son-in-law Lorenzo and his  
daughter.

**DUKE:** Very well. He shall do this—or I will  
take back

The pardon that I have just pronounced!

**PORTIA:** Do you agree, Jew?

**SHYLOCK:** I agree.

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**PORTIA** (*to Nerissa*): Clerk, draw up a will.

**SHYLOCK**: Please, give me permission to go.  
I am not well. Send the will after me,  
And I will sign it.

**DUKE**: You may leave, but see you do it!

(*Shylock exits, a broken man.*)

Antonio, reward this young man.  
I think you are greatly indebted to him.

(*The duke and his attendants leave.*)

**BASSANIO** (*to Portia*): My good sir,  
My friend and I have been spared  
Grave penalties because of your wisdom.  
We gladly give you the 3,000 ducats  
That were due to the Jew.

**ANTONIO**: And, in love and gratitude,  
We stand indebted to you  
Far more than that, forevermore.

**PORTIA** (*refusing the money*): He is well-paid  
Who is well-satisfied. And in saving you,  
I am satisfied. Therefore, I count myself  
Well-paid. (*bowing*) Pray, remember me  
When we meet again.

(*She starts to leave.*)

**BASSANIO** (*stopping her*): Dear sir, I must  
Ask you again to take some souvenir of us  
As a gesture, not as a fee.

Grant me two things, I beg you.  
Pardon my persistence, and don't say no.

**PORTIA:** You press me hard, so I'll give in.  
Give me your gloves. I'll wear them  
For your sake.

*(Bassanio removes them.)*

And, in token of your love,  
I'll take this ring from you.

*(Bassanio withdraws his hand sharply.)*

Don't draw back your hand.  
Surely you shall not deny me this?

**BASSANIO:** But this ring, good sir—  
Alas, it is a trifle.  
I would not shame myself to give it to you.

**PORTIA:** I will have nothing else but this ring.  
I've taken a fancy to it.

**BASSANIO:** This ring is more important to me  
Than its value. I will give you  
The most valuable ring in Venice,  
And I'll find it by advertising for it.  
With respect, you must pardon me for this.

**PORTIA:** I see, sir, you are generous in offers.  
First you taught me how to beg, and now  
You teach me how a beggar  
Should be answered.

**BASSANIO:** Good sir, this ring was given to me  
By my wife. When she put it on my hand,

She made me vow that I should  
Neither sell it, nor give it away, nor lose it.

**PORTIA:** That's an excuse many men use to  
Keep their gifts. If your wife knew  
How well I deserve this ring, she would  
Not stay angry with you for giving  
It to me. Well, peace be with you!

*(She leaves, followed by Nerissa.)*

**ANTONIO** *(distressed)*: Lord Bassanio,  
Let him have the ring.  
Weigh his worthiness and my love  
Against your wife's commandment!

**BASSANIO** *(giving in)*: Go, Gratiano.  
Run and catch him. Give him the ring.  
Go quickly!

*(Gratiano hurries off.)*

*(to Antonio)*: Come. Let's go and rest.  
Early in the morning we'll go to Belmont.

*(They leave together.)*

## Scene 2

*A street outside the law courts in Venice. Portia and Nerissa enter.*

**PORTIA** *(giving a paper to Nerissa)*: Ask the way to  
the Jew's house.

Give him this, and have him sign it.  
We'll leave tonight and be home a day  
Before our husbands get there.  
Lorenzo will be glad to get this will.

*(Gratiano enters, breathless from running.)*

**GRATIANO:** Finally, I've caught up with you.  
My Lord Bassanio has sent you this ring.

**PORTIA:** I accept his ring most thankfully.  
Please tell him so. One more thing!  
Please show my clerk old Shylock's house.

**GRATIANO:** I'll do that.

**NERISSA** *(to Portia):* Sir, a word with you.  
*(She takes Portia aside.)* I'll see if  
I can get my husband's ring—the one  
he swore to keep forever!

**PORTIA:** You can, I'm sure. No doubt they'll  
Swear they gave the rings away to men!  
But we'll stand up to them—  
And outswear them, too. Now hurry!  
You know where I'll be waiting.

*(Portia leaves.)*

**NERISSA** *(to Gratiano):* Come, good sir.  
Will you show me to his house?

*(They leave in the direction of Shylock's house.)*

ACT  
5

Scene 1

*Lorenzo and Jessica are in the garden of Portia's house in Belmont. It is a moonlit summer night.*

*Stephano, Portia's servant, comes running up, followed by Lancelot, Bassanio's servant.*

**STEPHANO:** Hello! Where's Master Lorenzo?

**LORENZO:** Stop yelling, man! Here I am.

**STEPHANO:** A messenger has come with  
News. My mistress will be here by  
morning.

**LANCELOT:** And my master is also on his way.

*(Lancelot leaves.)*

**LORENZO:** Dearest, let's go in and prepare  
For their arrival. And yet—why?  
Why should we go in?

*(to Stephano):* My friend Stephano, please  
tell those  
In the house that your mistress is nearby,  
And then bring the musicians out.

*(Stephano goes indoors.)*

How sweetly the moonlight sleeps here!  
We will sit, and let the sounds of music



Fall gently on our ears. Look, Jessica,  
See how the night sky is dotted  
With tiles of bright gold. Even the smallest  
Star sings in his movements  
Like an angel sings in a choir.  
Such harmony is also in immortal souls.  
But while we are in our mortal bodies,  
We cannot hear it.

*(Musicians come out and disappear among the trees.  
Lorenzo calls out to them.)*

Begin, then. With soft chords,  
Reach your mistress's ear,  
And draw her home with music.  
*(to Jessica):* Listen to the music!

*(Music plays. Portia and Nerissa enter.)*

**PORTIA** *(looking toward the house):* That light  
We see is burning in my hallway.  
How far that little candle throws its beams!  
So shines a good deed in a wicked world.

**NERISSA:** When the moon shone,  
We didn't see the candle.

**PORTIA:** That's because greater powers  
Dim the lesser. A stand-in looks as regal  
As a king until the real king comes by.  
Then his importance lessens, like an  
Inland brook does when it reaches the sea.  
*(She listens.)* Music! Listen!

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**NERISSA:** They are your own musicians,  
Coming from your house.

**PORTIA:** How important the setting is!  
I think it sounds much sweeter than by day.

**NERISSA:** The silence improves it, madam.

**PORTIA:** The crow sings as sweetly as the lark  
When no one is listening. If a nightingale  
Sang by day, when every barnyard fowl  
Is cackling, would it be thought  
no better a musician than the wren?  
How many things sound better  
In the right season and at the right time!  
Quiet now! The moon rests behind a  
cloud,  
And does not want to be awakened.

*(The music stops as the light fades.)*

**LORENZO:** Oh! That is the voice—  
Or I am much mistaken—of Portia!

**PORTIA:** You know me as the blind man  
Knows the cuckoo—by the bad voice.

**LORENZO:** Dear lady, welcome home!

**PORTIA:** We've been praying for the welfare  
Of our husbands. Have they returned yet?

**LORENZO:** No, madam, not yet.

But a messenger said they are on their way.

**PORTIA:** Go in, Nerissa. Tell my servants

Not to mention that we were gone.  
Nor must you, Lorenzo. Jessica, nor you!

*(A trumpet sounds, announcing Bassanio.)*

**LORENZO:** Your husband is nearby. *(winking)*  
We are not telltales, madam. Fear not.

*(The cloud passes by. The scene is moonlit again.)*

**PORTIA:** This night seems more like daylight  
When it is sick. It looks a little paler—  
Like a day when the sun is hidden.

*(Bassanio, Antonio, Gratiano, and their followers arrive. Gratiano and Nerissa stand aside and talk separately.)*

**PORTIA:** Welcome home, my lord.

**BASSANIO:** Thank you, madam.  
Welcome my friend, too. Here is the man—  
This is Antonio—to whom I owe so much.

**PORTIA:** You should feel deeply honored.  
I hear he nearly paid a great debt for you.

**ANTONIO:** No more than I was glad to pay.

**PORTIA:** You are very welcome to our home.

**GRATIANO** *(to Nerissa, as they have been arguing about the ring):* By the moon above,  
I swear you are wrong! Honestly,  
I gave it to the judge's clerk.  
May he lose his manhood for all I care,  
Since you take it so much to heart, my love!

**PORTIA** (*overhearing*): A quarrel already?  
What's the matter?

**GRATIANO**: It's about a hoop of gold,  
A paltry ring she gave me. It had words  
Engraved on it: "Love me. Leave me not."

**NERISSA**: Why talk about the words on it  
Or the value of it? You swore to  
Wear it until the hour of your death! You  
Said it would lie with you in your grave.  
For the sake of your passionate oaths,  
You should have kept it.  
Gave it to a judge's clerk! How well I know  
That the clerk will never have a beard!

**GRATIANO**: He will, if he lives to be a man.

**NERISSA**: Yes, if a woman lives to be a man!

**GRATIANO**: On my honor! I gave it to a youth,  
A kind of boy. A little, well-scrubbed boy,  
No taller than you. He begged it as a fee.  
I could not for all my heart deny it to him.

**PORTIA**: You were to blame. I must be frank.  
To part so lightly with your wife's first gift!  
I gave my love a ring, and made him swear  
Never to part with it, and here he stands—  
I'll vouch that he would not leave it,  
Or pull it from his finger, for all the wealth  
In the world. Now truly, Gratiano,  
You've caused your wife some grief,  
And if it were me, I'd be angry about it.



**BASSANIO** (*aside*): I'd better cut my left hand  
Off and swear I lost the ring defending it.

**GRATIANO**: Lord Bassanio gave his ring to the  
Judge who begged it from him. He  
Indeed deserved it, too. Then his clerk,  
Who took so much trouble with the papers,  
Begged for mine. Neither clerk nor  
Judge would take anything but the rings.

**PORTIA**: Which ring did you give, my lord?  
Not the one you got from me, I hope.

**BASSANIO**: If I could add a lie to a fault,  
I would deny it. But you can see my finger  
Does not have the ring on it. It is gone.

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**PORTIA** (*turning away*): And your false heart  
Is just as empty of the truth! By heaven,  
I will not sleep with you until I see the ring.

**NERISSA** (*to Gratiano*): Nor will I sleep with  
you, Gratiano, until I see my ring again.

**BASSANIO**: Sweet Portia! If you knew  
To whom, for whom, and why I gave it,  
You wouldn't be so angry!

**PORTIA**: If you had known the ring's meaning,  
Or half the worthiness of she who gave it,  
Or your own duty to keep it,  
You would never have parted with it!  
No man would be so unreasonable as to  
Insist on an item of such sentimental value.  
Nerissa has the right idea. Upon my life,  
Some woman has that ring!

**BASSANIO**: On my honor, madam, no woman  
Has it. I gave it to a judge who refused  
3,000 ducats from me and begged  
For the ring. At first, I denied him—  
Even though he had saved the very life of  
My dear friend! Sweet lady, what can I say?  
I was forced to send it after him.  
Filled with shame, I owed him a courtesy.  
My honor would not be smeared  
By such ingratitude. Pardon me, good lady.  
By all these stars, if you had been there,  
I think you would have begged me to

Give the ring to the worthy judge.

**PORTIA:** Let that judge never come near me!  
But since he has the jewel that I loved  
And that you swore to keep for me,  
I will be as generous as you.  
I'll not deny him anything I have—  
Not my body nor my husband's bed.  
I shall know him, I am sure of it.  
If I'm left alone, by my honor—  
Which is mine to give—I'll have that  
Judge for a bedfellow!

**NERISSA:** And I'll have his clerk! Therefore,  
Be careful not to leave me alone!

**GRATIANO:** Well, go on then. But don't let me  
Catch him, for if I do, I'll—

**ANTONIO** (*interrupting*): How sad that I am the  
Unhappy subject of these quarrels.

**PORTIA:** Please, sir, don't you worry.  
You are welcome anyway.

**BASSANIO:** Portia, forgive me this wrong,  
Which was forced on me. With our friends  
As witnesses, I swear to you that  
I will never break another oath!

**ANTONIO:** I once loaned my body to obtain  
His happiness. But if not for the man  
Who has your ring, I'd have lost my life.  
Now I'll dare to be the guarantor again,

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With my soul as forfeit,  
I swear that your husband  
Will never again break faith with you.

**PORTIA:** Then you shall be his guarantor.  
*(taking off the ring)* Give him this,  
And tell him to keep it better than the  
other.

**ANTONIO:** Here, Lord Bassanio,  
Swear to keep this ring.

**BASSANIO:** By heaven, it is the same one  
I gave to the judge.

**PORTIA:** I got it from him.  
Forgive me, Bassanio. In return  
For this ring, the judge slept with me.

**NERISSA** *(also showing a ring):* And  
Forgive me, gentle Gratiano.  
That boy, the judge's clerk, lay with me  
Last night on payment of this ring.

**GRATIANO:** What—are our wives unfaithful  
Before we have deserved it?

**PORTIA:** Don't speak so grossly.  
*(She decides to explain.)* Here is a letter.  
It's from Bellario in Padua.  
In it you will learn that  
Portia was the judge and Nerissa her clerk.  
Lorenzo can say that I left soon after you,  
And just now returned. I have not yet



Entered my house. Antonio, welcome!  
I have better news in store for you  
Than you expect. (*She produces another  
letter.*)

Read this. It says that three of your  
Ships unexpectedly reached safe harbor.  
How I stumbled on this letter is a secret.

**ANTONIO:** What? I'm speechless!

**BASSANIO** (*to Portia*): Were you the judge,  
And I didn't know you?

**GRATIANO** (*to Nerissa*): Were you the clerk  
Who fancied an affair behind my back?

**NERISSA:** Yes, but the clerk never means to  
Do it—unless he lives to be a man!

**BASSANIO** (*to Portia*): Sweet judge,  
You shall sleep with me! And when  
I am away, then sleep with my wife.

**ANTONIO** (*after reading his letter*):  
Sweet lady, you have given me life  
And a future. For now I know for certain  
That my ships have safely come to port.

**PORTIA:** Well, now, Lorenzo,  
My clerk has good news for you, too.

**NERISSA:** And I'll give it to him without a fee.

(*She hands over the will she has prepared.*)

Here I give to you and Jessica a special  
Deed of gift from the rich Jew.

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Upon his death, you will have all he owns.

**LORENZO:** Fair ladies, you drop manna—  
Food from heaven—before starving  
people!

**PORTIA:** It is almost morning.  
I'm sure you haven't got the whole story.  
Let us go in. You can ask questions there,  
And we will answer all things honestly.

**GRATIANO:** Let's do that. The first question  
That my Nerissa must answer is this:  
Would she rather wait until tomorrow  
night  
Or go to bed now, when there are  
Only two more hours until daylight?  
If it were day, I would wish it dark,  
So I'd be sleeping with the judge's clerk.  
While I live, nothing will worry me more  
Than the safekeeping of Nerissa's ring!

*(They all enter the house, arm in arm.)*

# ***The Merchant of Venice*—Comedy or Tragedy?**

## **Lecture 18**

**W**hen Shakespeare's first edition of collected works was brought out in 1623 by his friends, *The Merchant of Venice* was grouped with all of the other comedies, sandwiched between *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*. In fact, *The Merchant of Venice* seems to be a comedy in its structure, but in its actual content, it has elements that just don't fit easily into the traditional sense of comedy. In this lecture, you will learn that the tools of comedy can help you analyze and understand *The Merchant of Venice*.

### **Applying the Tools of Comedy to Tragedy**

- Many of the same tools that are used to analyze comedy are fit for the analysis of *The Merchant of Venice*. The most fundamental tool for understanding comedy is the block to young love, which gives us a working definition of comedy: If the block to love is overcome, then it's a comedy; if not, then it's tragedy.
- In *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio and Portia love each other, but their love is blocked by her dead father's will, which says she can only marry the man who solves the riddle of the caskets. Bassanio answers the riddle and thereby wins her love. Also in this play, another young couple, Lorenzo and Jessica, love each other, but her angry father, Shylock, won't let his daughter marry a Christian, so they steal away at night and are able to be together by the end of the play.
- On the surface, *The Merchant of Venice* appears to be a comedy, but just as in *Twelfth Night*, there are some who are excluded from the happy ending—which comes at a terrible price for some.
- Another fine tool for analyzing comedy is the friends to lovers tool. Is there a shift from sisterly/brotherly bonds to a heterosexual marriage resolution? This really fits with *The Merchant of Venice*:

Portia is very close to her waiting woman, Nerissa, and each chooses marriage to a man at the end, thereby sundering their sisterly bonds for a male husband—though neither laments this exchange.

- Similarly, Bassanio, who weds Portia, is very close friends with Antonio, the merchant of the title, at the start of the play. In fact, Antonio is the one who furnishes Bassanio with the money so that Bassanio can successfully woo Portia—and he borrows the money from Shylock, the money lender, which sets in motion the whole pound-of-flesh plot. By the play’s end, when Bassanio has wedded Portia, Antonio is left solitary and alone, very much like his namesake, the Antonio of *Twelfth Night*.
- In *The Merchant of Venice* especially, the sense of loss and exclusion for Antonio is acute, even more so because he offers his very life for his friend. Indeed, the relationship between Antonio and Bassanio is often portrayed as more than mere friendship: Antonio seems to view Bassanio as a son, friend, boon companion—and perhaps as a lover. One of this play’s great mysteries is Antonio’s sadness, which he announces in the play’s opening lines.

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad.

It wearies me, you say it wearies you,

But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,

What stuff ’tis made of, whereof it is born,

I am to learn.

- Many have speculated over the centuries that Antonio is sad precisely because his best friend and companion, Bassanio, is about to leave him in order to woo Portia. Whether we construe Antonio’s relationship to Bassanio as close friendship or as a romantic relationship, clearly the friends to lovers shift is central to the play.

- The green world, a place of escape from the harsh world of human law and justice, is absolutely present in *The Merchant of Venice*. The city of Venice is completely dominated by law—this is where the money exchanges take place, where Shylock accuses and arrests Antonio, and where the trial scene occurs. It is almost by definition a place ruled by law and not mercy or love.
- Contrast this with Portia’s home of Belmont: It’s a place of beauty, repose, music, and nature. Law does not operate here, and when it tries, it is overcome—as when the law of her father’s will is overcome by Bassanio. Most importantly, this is the place where love flourishes and regeneration is possible. The green world dynamic is fully in play, again confirming the play’s status as a comedy. However, we’ll see that certain characters are excluded from this regenerative green world; Antonio will be there by the play’s end, but there is no love plot available for him.
- The cross-dressing dynamic, central to the great comedies but almost nowhere to be seen in the tragedies, occurs in *The Merchant of Venice*. In fact, this play is one of the most famous examples of the cross-dressing dynamic in all of Shakespeare’s work.
- When Portia dresses as a judge and Nerissa as her clerk to go to the court to save Antonio’s life, they assume not just the clothing and appearance of men, but they actually take on the public roles reserved only for men—the roles of law and masculine authority—and they do it so well that they outsmart all of the male legal authorities in the play.
- This is cross-dressing at its most radical, showing a woman’s superiority in reasoning and argumentation—the very spheres in which man was supposed to be preeminent, according to the ideas of Shakespeare’s day. It also makes for superb humor, especially at the end of the play when they reveal their disguises to their husbands who were completely fooled by the costumes. This is clearly comedy.

- However, Jessica, Shylock's daughter, also dresses in boy's clothes when she leaves her father's house to run away with Lorenzo, and there is evidence in the play, and certainly in the dramatic tradition, that this is not a redemptive action but, rather, a falling off for her into the corruption and materialism of what Shylock scornfully calls "the Christian husbands." Even here, we have a resistance to the comic structure, a questioning of its purview.
- There is one element in comedy that we have seen, especially in *Twelfth Night*, that is certainly present, even dominant, in *The Merchant of Venice*: the figure of sacrifice, or the scapegoat, and along with that, the punishment of the opponent of mirth. Those occur here, all focused on the figure of Shylock. This, of course, is the dark side of comedy: the need to have someone to laugh at, mock, and cast our own sins upon so that we can walk away free and clear. Shakespeare takes the darkest element of comedy and explores it to its fullest in this play.
- *The Merchant of Venice* is a play that is definitely structured exactly like a comedy—every tool for understanding Shakespearean comedy works for this play—and at the same time, there is an unsettling quality at work in this play, a darkness pushing against the comic light, a refusal to portray the elements of comedy without some reservation or problem lurking just beneath the surface.
- In this, the play resembles *Twelfth Night* far more than it does *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and it anticipates Shakespeare's so-called problem plays, such as *Measure for Measure*. In many ways, *The Merchant of Venice* looks more like Shakespeare's later work than his earlier work, even though chronologically it is closer to the early work. The reason for this is the rich and complex figure of Shylock: In this character, Shakespeare seems to have hit upon a figure who exceeds his own play and makes that play his own in ways that Shakespeare himself might not have been fully aware.

## The Crisis of Identity

- One of the fundamental tools for all of Shakespeare's plays is the crisis of identity. It's a tool that we've touched on in our analyses of tragedy, though not quite in a direct way, and we've used a version of it in comedy, but we'll refine it. The key question we need to ask with this tool is: How does the question of identity work in the play? This is basically the "Who am I?" question that we see in many of the plays.
- In *The Merchant of Venice*, the tool is best understood as the crisis of identity. Naturally, we go to the play's opening lines to see this theme first sounded. Antonio enters with two friends, and though he speaks to them, we sense that he is really addressing himself.

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:

It wearies me; you say it wearies you;

But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,

What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,

I am to learn;

And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,

That I have much ado to know myself.

- The sadness of Antonio is one of the great questions of this play, but Shakespeare actually gives us the answer very soon: When his friend Bassanio enters and tells Antonio his plan to woo and wed Portia, we realize what Antonio knows at the start of the play—that his friend is leaving him to marry a woman, and the forced, permanent separation deeply distresses Antonio.
- Critics interpret this in a range of ways: At one extreme is the view that Antonio and Bassanio have been lovers, and Antonio is losing

his beloved to someone else. At the other extreme is the view that they are close friends, and Antonio is saddened at the end of that friendship of youth and boyhood. Male friendship has a very high value in Shakespeare's plays, and it's one of the central elements to this comedy.

- The far greater challenge is the last one Antonio sounds: “I have much ado to know myself.” This is the challenge of identity—the need to discover who one is and what one values—and it's a key element in this play. By tracing this in each of the major characters, we learn much about Shakespeare's key concerns in the play.
- How does Antonio's friend, Bassanio, participate in this challenge of identity? By using this tool, what can we learn about him? For Bassanio, his challenge is not so much “Who am I?” but “How do I become the person I want to be?” Bassanio is engaged in a great effort to transform himself, and this sort of transformation of self is at the very heart of comedy; tragedy deals with characters who are unable to transform—who, like Macbeth, cannot escape their fate.
- We meet Portia, the heroine of the play, in the second scene, and her first words—“By my troth Nerissa, my little body is aware of this great world”—sounds a lot like Antonio. In fact, the two of them double, or mirror, each other in many ways, including in their mutual affection for Bassanio. Portia's problem is also a challenge of identity: She knows who she is, but she is not her own to control; her father's will forbids her to choose her own husband. For Portia, it means that she cannot bestow her love where she would choose; choice, the most fundamental part of identity, is denied her.
- Thus, both Bassanio and Portia are in search of themselves, though in different ways. Their fates come to a climax in the great casket scene, in many ways the pivotal scene of the play, which occurs in the middle of the third act—the literal pivot of the play.



- Each of the tools for understanding comedy confirms this play as a comedy, but each one also has a dark side to it—a mood or tone that resists the comic impulse. The darkness of the play always clusters about the figure of Shylock, who seems to exceed his own play. He’s not unlike Falstaff and Hamlet, each of whom seems to become more than their creator could have had in mind as they take over their respective plays with their astonishing intellect and command of language. Shylock is not as mighty



**British actress Laura Keene (1826–1873) played Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*.**

a figure as those two characters, but there is nonetheless a sense that he stands for more than Shakespeare might have had in mind—he seems to exceed the sort of character he was meant to be.

## Tools

**block to young love:** The block to young love appears repeatedly in Shakespeare’s work. Pay close attention to how this block comes about and what causes this block. Is it a father figure or a figure of law? Is the block external, coming from society, or internal, coming from within the lovers themselves? How does the response to this block determine the play’s ultimate mode—that is, either comedy or tragedy? (This block occurs especially in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*.)

**friends to lovers:** Notice how the close relationships between women and men tend to give way as the play progresses to different-sex, or heterosexual, relations between men and women as the play concludes. What is lost in this movement from friendship to romantic love, and what is gained? (This dynamic especially occurs in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *The Winter's Tale*.)

**green world:** In many of the plays, especially the comedies, characters flee civilization for a world of nature, often called a “green world.” Pay close attention to these green worlds and how Shakespeare uses them: How are they described? What goes on in them? Do characters transform in them? How do these green worlds relate to the civilized world to which the characters must return? (This especially occurs in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.)

**cross-dressing dynamic:** Often in Shakespeare's comedies, women will cross-dress as men. Watch carefully for these moments and try to see their motivations for doing this. What do they gain by cross-dressing? What does this enable them to do? How do they act and feel when dressed as a man, and how are they different after they return to dressing as a woman? Why would Shakespeare continually use this dynamic?

**opponent of mirth:** Shakespeare's plays always criticize the killjoy, the figure of repression, the opponent of mirth. Observe how the opponent of mirth is punished in the play. Why is this a necessary device? What does this tell you about what Shakespeare might have valued?

**crisis of identity:** Watch for the moments when characters seek to find or define their true selves. Pay attention to how Shakespeare puts the search for identity at the very center of so many of his characters and plays.

### Suggested Reading

Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*.

Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*.

## Questions to Consider

1. Read carefully through the first scene of this play and the exchange between Antonio and Bassanio. Based on their words to one another, what do you think their relationship is really like? How would you have this scene, and their relationship, performed on the stage?
2. This play is filled with the language of business and commerce. How do words such as “venture,” “risk,” “lottery,” and “bond” alter their meaning as the play goes along? Why would Shakespeare use such terms so conspicuously in the play?

# The Arc of Character in *The Merchant of Venice*

## Lecture 19

**A**t the heart of *The Merchant of Venice* is a Jewish character, Shylock, who is terribly oppressed by the majority Christian community. He is portrayed with a touch of sympathy in places, but he's mainly characterized by an almost pathological desire for justice and vengeance. By the play's end, he has been so thoroughly humiliated and punished that it's frankly difficult to imagine an era in which an audience would find this a humorous or satisfying depiction of a Jewish person. In this lecture, you will use the understanding history tool, the arc of character tool, and the drama of ideas tool to help you grasp this complex play.

### The Portrayal of Jews

- *The Merchant of Venice* provokes questions of Shakespeare's own time and culture, so it's a good play in which to bring out the understanding history tool, which will allow us to focus on gaining a basic understanding of the history that lies beneath the plays.
- Scholars speculate that Shakespeare probably never encountered a true practicing Jew in his life. England expelled its small Jewish population in 1290 and declared it death for them to return. By the time of Queen Elizabeth, no openly practicing Jews were known of in London, so Jews were basically the stuff of ancient history or legend, which conceived them as desecrators of Christian sacraments and covetous money lenders who would eagerly ruin Christian merchants. Given the absence of actual Jews, Shakespeare's portrayal of Shylock had to be based on secondhand information, including the portrayal of Jews in English literature.
- In 1594, Queen Elizabeth's personal doctor, the Portuguese-born Roderigo Lopez, was arrested and charged with plotting to poison the queen. Though this seems to have been a groundless accusation that had more to do with internal court politics than any actual plot, Lopez was found guilty and was brutally executed before a

huge London crowd. What is particularly compelling about the Lopez incident is that he had once been a Jew, even though he then professed to be a practicing Christian.

- The exact date of Shakespeare’s writing of *The Merchant of Venice* has occasioned much debate with some arguing for as early as 1594—that is, right on the heels of the Lopez event; others argue for as late as 1596 or so, largely because the play seems to be so much more like Shakespeare’s mature works that commence about this time. In the character of Shylock in particular, Shakespeare seems to move beyond his earlier work and into the more accomplished work of his middle years. It’s in the character of Shylock that Shakespeare goes far beyond any easy Jewish stereotypes.

### **Shylock’s Character**

- With *Henry IV, Part 2*, we took up the tool of the arc of character development to talk about how Prince Hal has an upward arc while Falstaff has a downward arc. When we apply this tool to Shylock, we find a few remarkable things: Shylock does not change. We cannot say that he grows from one position to another in the play; what he is at the start is what he is at the close. However, he does have a rise and fall in terms of power, which is very important for understanding his character.
- We’re going to sharpen this tool a bit for this play: To understand Shylock, and characters like him, we need to look at the defining parts of their character—the things about them that will not change—as well as their relationship to power as the play proceeds. These versions of the arc of development tool work with Shylock and with several other important Shakespearean characters.
- Shylock’s first words are: “Three thousand ducats, well.” His first words are the counting of money. He is speaking with Bassanio, who wants to arrange the loan, in Antonio’s name, for the money to furnish his wooing of Portia. Antonio can’t produce the actual cash because all of his money is tied up in his ships, which are off on the seas, so they turn to Shylock to lend them the money.

A determining part of Shylock's character is to think of morality in terms of money.

- Shylock has a deep grudge against Antonio. Shylock's hatred for Antonio is based on the mere fact that Antonio is a Christian and that he loans his money to people for free, thereby hurting Shylock's business. This fits with the idea that Shylock measures character in terms of wealth. This is all consistent with the stereotypes of Jewishness, and at this point, we might think Shakespeare has not progressed beyond any shallow rendering of Jewish character. However, as Shylock and Antonio argue, Shylock reveals how cruel and vindictive Antonio has been in his treatment of Shylock, and Antonio begins to come across as the more negative figure.
- Shylock says that he will overlook all the cruelty and agree to the loan if Antonio agrees that if he does not repay on the agreed date, he will forfeit to Shylock a pound of his flesh, "to be cut off and taken / In what part of your body pleaseth me." Antonio merrily agrees, despite Bassanio's objections, because Antonio is certain that his ships will come in with "thrice three times the value of this bond." Antonio trusts in his commercial ventures, not realizing what a risk this is. Shylock trusts in what is certain to him, the money actually in his hand. Each runs his own sort of risk.
- Of course, Antonio's ships all founder, and his bond becomes forfeit. Shylock is unmerciful and demands the payment according to the bond; he will have his bond, he says, he will have his pound of flesh. He insists upon this because of his ongoing desire for vengeance, which is nearly a pathology with Shylock; his commitment to justice, which he thinks Antonio has outraged in his cruel treatment of Shylock; and, especially, his pain and sense of betrayal over his daughter Jessica, who has eloped with one of Bassanio's friends, Lorenzo, taking a lot of Shylock's jewels and wealth with her.
- In Shakespeare's day, Shylock was almost certainly not so troubling a character; rather, he would fit pretty snugly into the traditional

role of “comic villain”: He is an isolate; he wants to block the young love of his daughter and Lorenzo; he is miserly, wanting to hold onto his money; he is the butt of jokes and builds up enormous resentment because of this; and he is based on obvious stereotypes, not complex reality.

- Shylock doesn't manipulate—in fact, his whole ethic is based on clear, understood contractual obligation—and he doesn't want to attain power. Rather, he wants to stay separate from the Christian society he hates. Even in his efforts to kill Antonio, it's never entirely clear what he really wants. In fact, Shylock wants his bond, his justice; he wants to get what he deserves. This is all the



**This is a scene from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* that features Bassanio and Shylock.**

stuff of a comic villain, an almost stock character in Elizabethan drama—and one that Shakespeare's audience would know how to laugh at and enjoy.

- What happens, however, is that the character Shakespeare ultimately writes exceeds this stock, two-dimensional characterization. We see this most powerfully in his most famous speech, which occurs

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in Act III, scene i—the pivot of the play. After his daughter’s flight, and after news has arrived that Antonio’s ships are not faring well, Shylock meets two of Antonio’s friends in the street who mock him further.

- This is the point where something in Shakespeare cuts loose from the stock, stereotypical character, and he gives us a Shylock with whom we can sympathize and who in performance can far exceed what seems to have been his original role. Somehow, this character grew out of its stereotypes. Out of whatever sympathies, conscious or unconscious, Shakespeare created a character who refused the stereotypes of his time. This is a hallmark of Shakespeare’s art.

### **Portia as the Real Hero**

- This play does not truly belong to Shylock—even though in recent years it’s become the plum role in the play—and the play is not Antonio’s either, even though he’s the merchant of the title. The real hero in this play is Portia, and without her, this play would be profoundly diminished. In fact, it’s Portia who keeps it from becoming a true problem play such as *Measure for Measure*, and it’s the absence of a Portia-like figure from the three problem plays that in fact makes them problems in the first place.
- The drama of ideas tool can be used to attend to the larger arguments being carried on between characters. Shylock has spoken for justice, for the extreme letter of the law, and in the trial scene, he rejects all arguments for mitigation of the bond, insisting on exactly what is his due.
- It is to counter this argument for law and punishment that Portia will make her own argument, really a series of arguments. She is costumed as a young doctor of law, sent by a famous judge who cannot make the journey himself, and her first words in this disguise are important: She enters the courtroom and asks, “Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?” The difference between Antonio and Shylock is obvious to everyone on the stage, but this



suggests Portia's objectivity; in the eyes of true justice, the Jew and the Christian are equal—there is no discernible difference.

- In Shakespearean terms, she will judge not on the basis of appearance, but on the basis of internal reality. She examines the bond and instantly declares it forfeit, an apparent victory for Shylock. However, she then says, "Then must the Jew be merciful," to which Shylock replies, "On what compulsion must I?" At this moment, Portia delivers the play's most famous speech—and truly one of the most famous in all of Shakespeare—a plea for mercy that speaks eloquently against this entire play's thirst for vengeance, justice, and blood.

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;

And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.

- This speech is her response to Shylock's argument for law, but more than that, these words are delivered to Antonio, Bassanio, the Duke, and ultimately the readers and playgoers. "In the course of justice," she concludes, "none of us / Should see salvation." This is speaking to the very heart of this play. Justice does not lead us to salvation and God's presence—rather, justice alone would lead us to damnation, by our own accusation.
- Everyone in this play engages in vengeance, bloodlust, and wrongdoing, it seems. Everyone in this play shows hatred and paranoia toward another. In short, the entire society in *The Merchant of Venice* has a kind of sickness to it. Portia's eloquent plea for mercy engages those characters' ideas, too: If blessing is going to come in this play, it will come through those who show mercy, and if the characters in this play are really going to approach godliness and salvation, it will occur not through their acts of justice, but through their acts of mercy.
- Mercy and charity are the directions of life and love, and also of comedy; justice and law are the directions ultimately of death, and also of tragedy. Are these virtues specifically Christian? It's tempting to see Shakespeare hinting that they are not—however bold a move that would have been for his time and place. The

Christians in this play act just as unmercifully as the Jews do, and the lack of charity on both sides of the religious coin is pretty much equal.

## Tools

**understanding history:** Often in a Shakespeare play, especially the history plays, it helps to have a basic understanding of the actual history that he is imaginatively re-creating. Using a wide range of easily available resources, how can you develop a modest understanding of this historical background? How does this help you understand the plays? Ask yourself: What is a history play? Shakespeare draws upon actual historical events for a large number of his plays, but he does not slavishly record history. How does Shakespeare use history in his dramas? Where does he depart from history and for what reasons? Does the play treat a wide variety of historical characters, a broad sweep of historical canvas, or does it focus on a single figure, what might be considered the “hero” of the play? How is history a meditation for Shakespeare in these plays?

**arc of character:** Pay attention not only to a character’s rise and fall—that is, his or her internal changes—but also to the ways a character’s external role changes—that is, how his or her status in relation to the social structure can alter throughout a play.

**drama of ideas:** Watch carefully for Shakespeare’s investigation of the relation of God to politics, to history, and to kingship. This issue dominates the history plays and also appears in the tragedies.

## Suggested Reading

Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*.

Gurr, *Will in the World*.

Marx, *Shakespeare and the Bible*.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

(1564–1616)

William Shakespeare is widely regarded as the finest poet and playwright who ever lived. Yet he was the son of illiterate parents and never attended college!

Much of this remarkable man's life is shrouded in mystery. He had been dead almost a hundred years before anyone wrote a short account of his life. But we do know that his mother, Mary Arden, was the daughter of a prosperous farmer. His father, John Shakespeare, was a successful glovemaking who also traded in wool, hides, and grain. They lived in an English market town called Stratford-on-Avon, where William was born in 1564. Their house still stands.

Until the age of 13 or 14, Shakespeare probably attended the Stratford grammar school where he read the great Latin classics of Cicero, Virgil, and Seneca. Some stories say that he had to leave school early because of his father's financial difficulties. But there is no official record of his life until 1582, when he married Anne Hathaway at the age of 18. By 1585, he and Anne had three children. No one knows for

sure what happened to him during the next seven years, although one account says that he was a schoolmaster. In 1592, however, records reveal that he was working in London as both an actor and a playwright. By that year, he had published two popular poems and written at least three plays.

Records from various sources show that Shakespeare became wealthy. In 1597, he bought one of the grandest houses in Stratford. (It had 10 fireplaces!) The next year he bought 10 percent of the stock in the handsome Globe Theater and a fine house in London. His artistic life was very busy and productive. His theatrical company, known as the King's Men, presented a variety of plays, week after week. It is thought that he rehearsed in the mornings, acted in the afternoons, and wrote at night.

After 1612, he spent most of his time in Stratford with his family. He died there, at the age of 52, on April 23, 1616. The tomb of the great literary genius still stands at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford.



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**FACTS ABOUT THE TIMES****In 1564, when Shakespeare was born . . .**

About 100,000 people lived in London; the horsedrawn coach was introduced in England; the great Italian sculptor and painter, Michelangelo, died; an outbreak of plague killed more than 20,000 Londoners.

**In 1616, when Shakespeare died . . .**

Sir Walter Raleigh began his search for El Dorado; tobacco was becoming a popular crop in Virginia; Pocahontas died; the Catholic church forbade Galileo from conducting any further scientific investigations.

**FACTS ABOUT THE CHARACTERS**

**The Duke of Venice** is the local ruler.

**The Prince of Morocco** and **the Prince of Aragon** are suitors to Portia.

**Antonio** (an TOH nee oh) is a merchant of Venice.

**Bassanio** (buh SAH nee oh) is Antonio's friend.

**Gratiano** (grah tzee AH noh), **Solanio** (soh LAH nee oh), and **Salerio** (sah LAIR ee oh) are friends of Antonio and Bassanio.

**Lorenzo** (lor EN zoh) is in love with Jessica.

**Shylock** (SHY lock) is a Jewish moneylender.

**Tubal** (TOO ball) is another moneylender and a friend of Shylock.

**Lancelot Gobbo** (LAN suh lot GOB oh), a clown, is a servant first to Shylock and later to Bassanio.

**Old Gobbo** is Lancelot's father.

**Leonardo** (lee uh NAHR doh) is a servant to Bassanio.

**Balthazar** (BAL thuh zahr) and **Stephano** (STEHF uh noh) are servants to Portia.

**Portia** (POR shuh) is a wealthy young heiress of Belmont.

**Nerissa** (nuh RIHS uh) is Portia's maid-in-waiting.

**Jessica** (JES uh kuh) is Shylock's daughter, in love with Lorenzo.



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**SUMMARIES BY ACT**

**ACT 1:** Antonio talks to his friends Salerio and Solanio about the sadness he feels. His friends try to cheer him up. Bassanio approaches, along with two other friends. When the others leave, Bassanio asks Antonio for a loan so he can go to Belmont to court a rich heiress. Antonio says that his money is tied up, but he will borrow money for Bassanio. Meanwhile, in Belmont, Portia and her maid, Nerissa, are talking about the system set up by Portia's father. Anyone who wants to marry Portia must choose one of three caskets—gold, silver, or lead. The right choice will win Portia as the prize. Portia doesn't like any of the men who have come to court her. Back in Venice, Shylock agrees to lend Antonio the money needed by Bassanio. Antonio

must sign a contract that calls for a pound of his flesh if he can't repay the loan in time. Antonio isn't worried about it, however, because he's expecting his ships to come in a month before the loan is due.

**ACT 2:** At Portia's house, the Prince of Morocco is preparing to make his choice. Back in Venice, young Lancelot wants to leave his employment as a servant to Shylock. He makes arrangements to work for Bassanio instead. Gratiano asks Bassanio if he can accompany him to Belmont, and Bassanio says yes. Bassanio makes arrangements for a party that night. Lorenzo sends a message to Jessica, Shylock's daughter, regarding their planned elopement that night. Shylock, invited to Bassanio's party, tells Jessica to keep the doors locked while he's out.

Later, Lorenzo meets her under her balcony. She leaves her father's house dressed as a boy, stealing a chest full of her father's money and jewelry. Meanwhile, in Belmont, the Prince of Morocco makes his choice—the gold casket—but he is wrong. He must leave immediately, much to Portia's relief. In Venice, everyone is talking about the elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo. Shylock has been crying in the streets, asking for help to reclaim his daughter, his ducats, and his jewels. Meanwhile, in Belmont, the Prince of Aragon chooses the silver chest, finds he is wrong, and leaves in tears. Just then, Bassanio appears at Portia's door, bearing gifts and ready to start his courtship.

**ACT 3:** News in Venice tells of the loss of several of Antonio's ships. Shylock is determined to have revenge for all his past humiliations by enforcing Antonio's contract. Back in Belmont, Bassanio makes his choice—the lead casket—and finds out that he is right. Portia is joyful, as Bassanio is the only one of the suitors she liked. Gratiano announces that Nerissa had agreed to marry him if Bassanio made the right choice. A letter arrives from Antonio, telling of his plight and that Shylock wants the pound of flesh. Portia and Bassanio get married immediately, along with Gratiano and Nerissa. That same day, Bassanio leaves for Venice to assist Antonio. Back in Venice, Antonio tries to reason with Shylock, but Shylock is determined to have his bond. Meanwhile, Portia makes arrangements with Lorenzo to manage her household while she and Nerissa are gone. She tells him that she and Nerissa are going to a monastery to pray until their husbands return—but in truth she has other plans.

**ACT 4:** In Venice, Shylock is insisting on his legal right to enforce the contract. The duke suggests that Shylock should show mercy, but Shylock refuses. Portia and Nerissa, dressed as a doctor of law and a law clerk, arrive with a fake letter of introduction. The duke allows Portia to resolve the case. Portia urges Shylock to show mercy, giving him several chances to accept three times the money owed. Shylock refuses each time. She finally says he can have his pound of flesh—but he cannot shed one drop of blood nor take  $\frac{1}{20}$  of an ounce more than a pound. Shylock says he'll take the money instead, but she says he had his chance to accept it. Now, he must either take the forfeit at his own peril, or take nothing. Furthermore, the law provides penalties for anyone who seeks the life of any citizen of Venice. Such a person will lose all his goods, half to the intended victim and half to the state treasury. Also, his life lies at the mercy of the duke. The duke spares Shylock's life but gives half his wealth to Antonio. The state says Shylock can keep half his wealth but he must leave it to his daughter and son-in-law at his death. He also must become a Christian immediately. Shylock agrees to these terms. As payment for her services, Portia asks for Bassanio's ring, the one she'd told him never to part with. At Antonio's urging, Bassanio gives her the ring.

**ACT 5:** Back in Belmont, Lorenzo and Jessica are waiting in Portia's garden when everyone returns. For a while, the women tease the men about the rings. The men insist that they had no choice but to give up the rings. When the truth is revealed, everyone has a good laugh, pledges undying love, and enters the house, arm in arm.



**aside** lines spoken by an actor that the other characters on stage supposedly cannot hear; an aside usually shares the character's inner thoughts with the audience

**Although she appeared to be calm, the heroine's aside revealed her inner terror.**

**backstage** the part of the theater where actors prepare to go onstage, where scenery is kept, etc.

**Before entering, the villain impatiently waited backstage.**

**cast** the entire company of actors performing in a play

**The entire cast must attend tonight's dress rehearsal.**

**character** a fictional person or creature in a story or play

**Mighty Mouse is one of my favorite cartoon characters.**

**climax** the outcome of the main conflict of a play or novel

**The outlaw's capture made an exciting climax to the story.**

**comedy** a funny play, film, or TV show that has a happy ending

**My friends and I always enjoy a Jim Carrey comedy.**

**conflict** the struggle between characters, forces, or ideas at the center of a story

***Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* illustrates the conflict between good and evil.**

**dialogue** words spoken by the characters in a novel or play

**Amusing dialogue is an important element of most comedies.**

**drama** a story, usually not a comedy, especially written to be performed by actors in a play or movie

**The TV drama about spies was very suspenseful.**

**event** something that happens; a specific occurrence

**The most exciting event in the story was the surprise ending.**

**figurative language** colorful wording not meant to be taken literally, but to form a colorful, sharp picture in the mind

**A "screaming" headline may be set in large type, but it makes no sound at all.**

**introduction** a short reading that presents and explains a novel or play

**The introduction to *Frankenstein* is in the form of a letter.**

**motive** the internal or external force that makes a character do something

**What was that character's motive for telling a lie?**

**passage** a section of a written work, ranging from one line to several paragraphs

**His favorite passage from the book described the fisherman's childhood.**

**playwright** the author of a play

**William Shakespeare is the world's most famous playwright.**

**plot** the chain of events in a story or play that leads to its final outcome

**The plot of that mystery story is filled with action.**

**point of view** the mental position from which a character sees the events of the story unfold

**The father's point of view about elopement was quite different from the daughter's.**

**prologue** an introduction to a play that comes before the first act

**The playwright described the main characters in the prologue to the play.**

**quotation** a passage quoted; the exact words spoken by a character; the words set off by quotation marks

**A popular quotation from *Julius Caesar* begins, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, . . ."**

**role** the part that an actor performs in a play

**Who would you like to see play the role of Romeo?**

**sequence** the time-order in which story events take place

**Sometimes actors rehearse their scenes out of sequence.**

**setting** where and when the story events take place

**This play's setting is New York in the 1940s.**

**soliloquy** a speech in a play in which a character tells his or her thoughts to the audience, as if talking to himself or herself

**One famous soliloquy is Hamlet's speech that begins, "To be, or not to be . . ."**

**symbol** a person or thing that stands for, or represents, something else

**In Hawthorne's famous novel, the scarlet letter is a symbol for adultery.**

**theme** the central meaning of a play or novel; the main idea

**Ambition and revenge are common themes in Shakespeare's plays.**

**tragedy** a serious play with a sad ending

***Macbeth*, the shortest of Shakespeare's plays, is a tragedy.**





**RECALLING DETAILS**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Write **T** or **F** to show whether each statement is *true* or *false*.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ All of Antonio’s investments are in one ship.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Bassanio has always lived within his means.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Bassanio wants to borrow money from Antonio.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The only suitor that interests Portia is Bassanio.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Shylock agrees to lend 3,000 ducats to Antonio.

**B.** Find the error or errors in each sentence. Then rewrite the sentences correctly on the writing lines.

1. Antonio and Bassanio live in Belmont.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Bassanio has been spending all his earnings by living beyond his means.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Portia’s suitors must choose one of three caskets—gold, silver, or copper.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Shylock wants to double the interest if Antonio can’t repay the money in time.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**C.** Circle the word or phrase that correctly completes each sentence.

1. Shylock ( hates / admires ) Antonio for several reasons.
2. As a good friend, Antonio is very ( angry with / generous to ) Bassanio.
3. Bassanio thinks that Antonio ( should / should not ) sign the contract with Shylock.
4. Antonio expects his ships to return in ( two / three ) months.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle a letter to answer each question.

1. What does Lancelot think of his employer, Shylock?
  - a. Shylock is a very generous man.
  - b. Shylock often mistreats him by starving him.
  - c. Shylock deserves much better treatment from others.
2. What does Jessica plan to do with Lorenzo?
  - a. to convert him to Judaism and marry him
  - b. to become a Christian and marry him
  - c. to break up with him soon
3. What does Jessica plan to take from her father's house?
  - a. gold and jewels
  - b. her bedroom furniture
  - c. only her own clothing
4. Which casket does the Prince of Morocco choose?
  - a. gold
  - b. silver
  - c. lead
5. What news had Salerio heard from a Frenchman?
  - a. Lorenzo and Jessica had gotten married in Belmont.
  - b. Bassanio had been welcomed warmly by Portia.
  - c. A rich Venetian ship had foundered in the English Channel.
6. What does the Prince of Aragon find when he chooses the silver casket?
  - a. a skull with a rolled-up manuscript stuffed in its empty eye socket
  - b. the portrait of a fool offering him a note
  - c. a mirror, a rose, and a candle
7. After the Prince of Aragon leaves, what message does a servant deliver to Portia?
  - a. A young Venetian with valuable gifts has arrived.
  - b. The Prince of Morocco has returned.
  - c. The Prince of Aragon was crying as he departed.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A.** Find and circle the hidden vocabulary words from Act 2. Words may go up, down, across, backward, or diagonally. Check off each word as you find it.

- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| ___ ICICLES | ___ TEMPLE   |
| ___ PROVIDE | ___ BEHAVIOR |
| ___ FATE    | ___ EXACTLY  |
| ___ INVITE  | ___ MODESTY  |
| ___ GAMBLE  | ___ FAREWELL |
| ___ CURTAIN | ___ LATENESS |

F	A	R	E	W	E	L	L	M	A	M	R
G	R	E	S	K	U	D	Q	O	J	T	X
F	P	R	O	V	I	D	E	D	S	E	F
G	T	V	C	E	T	T	W	E	Y	M	Y
E	E	W	T	H	I	I	Q	S	L	P	L
S	D	A	C	V	I	D	K	T	T	L	V
E	F	X	N	B	Y	J	K	Y	C	E	U
L	F	I	L	N	C	U	R	T	A	I	N
C	G	H	Z	P	H	B	P	L	X	Z	M
I	M	I	R	O	I	V	A	H	E	B	D
C	N	A	O	E	L	B	M	A	G	N	A
I	C	J	L	A	T	E	N	E	S	S	B

**B.** Now complete each sentence with one or more of the hidden words.

- The friends said \_\_\_\_\_ after a service at the \_\_\_\_\_.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ for that window must be \_\_\_\_\_ 72 inches long.
- Last winter, beautiful \_\_\_\_\_ formed on the eaves of the cottage.
- The parents plan to \_\_\_\_\_ good examples, so their children will develop good habits of \_\_\_\_\_.
- I would like to \_\_\_\_\_ you to a party on Saturday.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ of the hour prevented me from calling you.
- Ann's extreme \_\_\_\_\_ guided her choices in clothing.
- When you \_\_\_\_\_ excessively, you throw your financial \_\_\_\_\_ to the wind.



**CHARACTER STUDY**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Who's who?** First, unscramble the names of some of the characters in Act 2. Then answer each question with one of the unscrambled names.

<b>COROMOC</b> _____	<b>RIAPOT</b> _____
<b>COLENTAL</b> _____	<b>SIJACES</b> _____
<b>KYLSOHC</b> _____	<b>NOAGAR</b> _____

1. Whose father is almost blind? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who is relieved when a suitor chooses the wrong casket? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Who wears a disguise to attend a party? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Who is angry when some gold and jewels are stolen from him? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Who says he would not risk everything for lead? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Who hopes to get "as much as he deserves"? \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Who said what?** Write the character's name next to the line that he or she spoke.

1. \_\_\_\_\_: "My young master expects the displeasure of your company."
2. \_\_\_\_\_: "Don't let the sound of shallow foolishness / Enter my sober home."
3. \_\_\_\_\_: "But love is blind, and lovers cannot see / Their own foolishness."
4. \_\_\_\_\_: "All that glitters is not gold."
5. \_\_\_\_\_: "I will not choose what many men desire, / Because I am not like the common masses."
6. \_\_\_\_\_: "Another moth burned / By the candle! Oh, these pompous fools!"



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

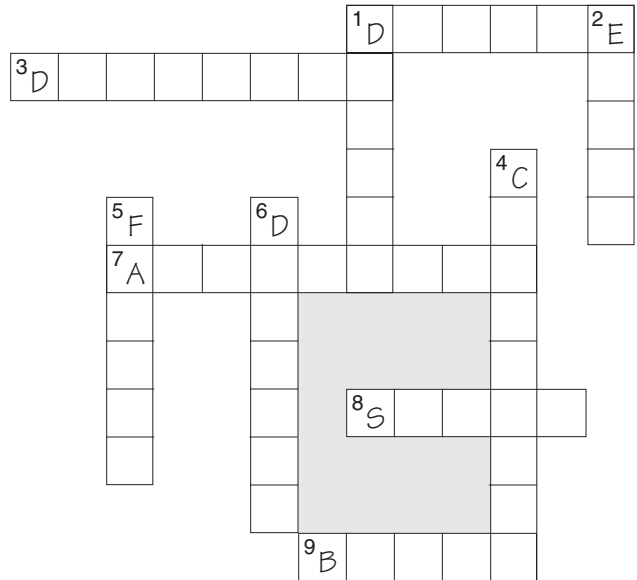
**A.** Complete the crossword puzzle with words from Act 2. The **boldface** clue words are *synonyms* (words with similar meanings) of the answer words.

**ACROSS**

1. shall gain what many men **want**
3. the lovely **costume** of a boy
7. with / Great **fondness**
8. **vow** before you choose
9. being almost **sightless**

**DOWN**

1. Thus losers **leave**.
2. its **hollow** eye socket
4. I should be **hidden**
5. seem like **errors** to us
6. to choose my **fate**



**B.** Find the *antonym* (word that means the opposite) in the box for the **boldface** word in each phrase from Act 2. Write the antonym on the line.

<b>active</b>	<b>advantage</b>	<b>humble</b>	<b>joy</b>	<b>overfeeds</b>
<b>proud</b>	<b>publicly</b>	<b>roughly</b>	<b>rare</b>	<b>similarity</b>

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. die with <b>grief</b><br/>_____</li> <li>2. He <b>starves</b> me.<br/>_____</li> <li>3. to be <b>ashamed</b><br/>_____</li> <li>4. Tell her <b>privately</b>.<br/>_____</li> <li>5. May <b>misfortune</b> never cross<br/>_____</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. judge the <b>difference</b> between<br/>_____</li> <li>7. I'll have no <b>lazy</b> ones<br/>_____</li> <li>8. Do it <b>gently</b>.<br/>_____</li> <li>9. I am not like <b>common</b> masses<br/>_____</li> <li>10. Oh, these <b>pompous</b> fools!<br/>_____</li> </ol> |
|--|---|



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle a letter to show how each sentence should be completed.

1. A suitor who chose the wrong casket could never propose marriage to a woman afterwards. This condition suggests that \_\_\_\_.
  - a. anyone who would make the wrong choice is unworthy to marry anyone
  - b. Portia's father did not want her suitors to make the choice lightly
  - c. Portia and her father have a very cruel streak in their personalities
2. Lancelot wants to work for Bassanio instead of Shylock. This suggests that Lancelot \_\_\_\_.
  - a. is really lazy and wants to work for an easier employer
  - b. knows that Shylock is getting ready to fire him
  - c. knows that Bassanio will treat him better than Shylock does
3. Jessica dresses as a page for the party at Gratiano's place. This suggests that \_\_\_\_.
  - a. everyone will be in costume
  - b. she doesn't want to be recognized
  - c. she is trying to start a new trend
4. When Shylock finds out that Jessica is gone, he rouses the duke. This suggests that the duke \_\_\_\_.
  - a. gets involved in law enforcement
  - b. is a good friend to Shylock
  - c. owes Shylock money
5. Antonio tells Bassanio not to hurry home for Antonio's sake, but to focus on courtship. This suggests that Antonio \_\_\_\_.
  - a. is trying to get rid of Bassanio
  - b. is generously thinking of his friend's welfare
  - c. doesn't want Bassanio to know he can't pay off the loan
6. The Prince of Aragon chooses the silver casket, hoping to get "as much as he deserves." This suggests that he \_\_\_\_.
  - a. has a low opinion of himself
  - b. has a low opinion of Portia
  - c. has a high opinion of himself



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Circle a letter to answer each question.

1. What has happened to several of Antonio's merchant ships?
  - a. They have been unable to sail because of the lack of wind.
  - b. They have been wrecked at sea.
  - c. They have been robbed by pirates.
2. Why is Shylock so angry about the fact that Jessica traded a ring for a monkey?
  - a. His wife had given him the ring before they were married.
  - b. He had given his daughter the ring for her sixteenth birthday.
  - c. He had been saving the ring for Jessica's wedding.
3. Why doesn't Portia tell Bassanio which casket to choose?
  - a. She doesn't want to give him an unfair advantage.
  - b. She is curious about which casket he will choose on his own.
  - c. She is under oath not to do that.
4. What is Portia's reaction when Bassanio chooses the lead casket?
  - a. She is overjoyed.
  - b. She is disappointed.
  - c. She is surprised.
5. When it becomes clear that Antonio cannot pay the debt, what does he want Bassanio to do for him?
  - a. get a loan from someone else to pay it
  - b. be present at Antonio's death
  - c. take revenge on Shylock on his behalf
6. Regarding the bond, why does Antonio think the duke will rule in Shylock's favor?
  - a. because he knows that the duke is afraid of Shylock
  - b. because he is convinced that Shylock paid the duke for this decision
  - c. because the duke cannot change the law, and the contract must be honored
7. Where does Portia tell Lorenzo that she and Nerissa are going?
  - a. to a nearby monastery
  - b. to Padua
  - c. to Belmont