

Student Essay on Is Shylock a Villain or Victim?

Is Shylock a Villain or Victim? by William Shakespeare

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Essay

Antonio's counterpart, Shylock, is the most noteworthy figure in Shakespeare's comedy, *The Merchant of Venice*. No consensus has been reached on whether Shylock is a tyrannical villain or a tragic victim. Shylock, in my opinion, is a bloodthirsty villain. In the following paragraphs, it will be shown that Shylock is a villain in every sense of the word. Namely, he is vengeful, very materialistic and shrewd.

Firstly, Shylock is extremely vengeful. When Salerio asks Shylock what good would Antonio's flesh do Shylock if Antonio forfeits the bond, he replies, "If it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation," The quote clearly portrays Shylock remembering every single thing that Antonio has done to him. He calculates what Antonio has done to him and tries to revenge the wrongs done to him by murdering Antonio.

Next, Shylock is very materialistic. When Tubal brings news of Jessica to Shylock, Shylock says "Two thousand ducats in that, and other precious, precious jewels! I would my daughter dead at my foot, with the jewels in her ear!" This clearly shows that Shylock would prefer to have his money and jewels than his daughter's return.

Thirdly, Shylock is shrewd. When discussing the forfeiture of the bond, Shylock says "let the forfeiture be nominated for an equal pound of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken in what part of the body pleaseth me." Shylock suggests the forfeiture of the bond playfully, whereas it is actually a cunning plan to murder Antonio with the law on his side.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that Shylock is a tyrannical and bloodthirsty villain instead of a tragic figure, whom many might sympathize with. In the above essay, I have clearly shown that Shylock is a villain. He is vengeful, materialistic and shrewd. These are the characteristics of a stereotypical villain.