

Merchant of Venice Book Notes

Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Merchant of Venice Book Notes.....	1
Contents.....	2
Author/Context.....	4
Plot Summary.....	6
Major Characters.....	8
Objects/Places.....	11
Quotes.....	12
Topic Tracking: Fortune.....	16
Topic Tracking: Love.....	18
Topic Tracking: Persecution.....	20
Act 1, Scene 1.....	22
Act 1, Scene 2.....	23
Act 1, Scene 3.....	24
Act 2, Scene 1.....	26
Act 2, Scene 2.....	27
Act 2, Scene 3.....	28
Act 2, Scene 4.....	29
Act 2, Scene 5.....	30
Act 2, Scene 6.....	31
Act 2, Scene 7.....	32
Act 2, Scene 8.....	33
Act 2, Scene 9.....	34
Act 3, Scene 1.....	35
Act 3, Scene 2.....	37
Act 3, Scene 3.....	38



Act 3, Scene 4..... 39

Act 3, Scene 5..... 40

Act 4, Scene 1..... 41

Act 4, Scene 2..... 44

Act 5, Scene 1..... 45

Author/Context

William Shakespeare, the world's best-known playwright, was born in Stratford-on-Avon in 1564, a hundred miles from London. No record exists of his birthdate, although he was baptized on April 26th, suggesting that he was born no more than a week earlier. His birthday is celebrated on the 23rd of April, mostly due to the fact that April 23rd is the day of the patron saint of England, St. George. Aged 18 in November 1582, he married the 26-year-old Anne Hathaway, who was, at the time, pregnant with their first child, Susanna, who would be born in May of 1583. Two years later they had twins, Hamnet and Judeth. It is believed that Shakespeare moved to London in 1586, finding work with a troupe of actors known as the 'King's Men'. At the time, it had recently become the fashion to build structures with no use other than playhouse. James Burbage built the first dedicated playhouse, dubbing it the 'Theatre'. It proved so popular that theatres began popping up around London in the ensuing years. By the time Shakespeare arrived, there was a large market for plays and playwrights in London.

After learning the trade performing and altering anonymous plays, Shakespeare separated from the 'King's Men', and began writing plays of his own, both freelancing and on commission for a company known as 'Lord Chamberlain's Men'. He wrote *The Merchant of Venice* somewhere between 1595-6. The exact date is unclear, but scholars agree that it was written after *Romeo and Juliet*, but before *Henry IV: Part II*. The first recorded performance of the play was Sunday February 10th, 1605, at court for King James I. Apparently the performance went so well that the King ordered another performance two days later.

The Merchant of Venice is significant as the first play Shakespeare wrote as a Dramatist first and poet second. The pre-*Venice* plays are notable for their long florid speeches, in which Shakespeare allows himself to wax poetical on every subject, drawing out very beautiful words and phrases. In *Venice* and the plays that followed, he had become a more restrained writer. He continued to indulge in his penchant for long speeches, but now those speeches were strictly in service of the plot. The most famous aspect of the play is the character of Shylock, and his famous speech. It is interesting to note that at the time Shylock was thought of as more of a villain than he is today: "When the play was first acted, there was little sympathy for him, and some surprise that he was let off so lightly." (Harrison, 582). Modern analysts have questioned how Shakespeare actually felt towards Jews. Sadly, the play offers no definitive answers.

Shakespeare wrote *The Merchant of Venice* relatively early in his career, and it is thought of as a fairly minor work - a light comedy, and little more, without the weight and depth of his later tragedies such as *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, or *Othello*. He would write 23 more plays before his death in 1616. With the exception of court documents and his plays, few records exist of his life, so biographies of him are often incomplete.



Bibliography

Harrison, G.B., ed. *Shakespeare, The Complete Works*. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1968.

Holden, Anthony. *William Shakespeare: His Life and Work*. Little, Brown, and Company, London, 1999.

Shakespeare, William. "The Merchant of Venice." *Shakespeare, The Complete Works*. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York, 1968.



Plot Summary

Bassanio is a failed Venice merchant in love with a rich woman named Portia who lives in Belmont. He needs money so that he can travel to Belmont and convince her to marry him. Portia has a problem as well, because her father died without choosing a husband for her, a potential suitor would have to solve a puzzle involving chests. Bassanio's friend Antonio offers to borrow money to pay for the trip. Unfortunately, the loan shark, Shylock, has a grudge against Antonio - Antonio had interfered with his business, and insulted his religion at every opportunity. - Shylock plans to use this opportunity to take revenge on him. He loans Antonio the money on the condition that if he defaults on the loan, Shylock will get a pound of his flesh. Antonio agrees, not taking the consequences seriously.

In Belmont, Portia is unhappy that she can't choose to marry the person she loves, and that all her suitors either refuse to try and solve the puzzle, or are too stupid to figure it out. In Venice, one of Shylock's servants leaves and becomes a servant for Bassanio - just as Shylock's daughter Jessica is planning to elope with Lorenzo, another one of Bassanio's friends. While Shylock has dinner at Bassanio's house, Lorenzo and a few friends help Jessica escape from her house. Lorenzo and Jessica flee the city with some of Shylock's money. While Bassanio leaves for Belmont, Shylock scours the city with the help of the Duke of Venice, desperate to find his money, as well as his daughter. Word gets out that an Italian ship crashed in the English Channel - perhaps it was Antonio's. Portia gets word that a Venetian suitor will soon be arriving - she hopes that it is Bassanio, who she met a year earlier.

It is revealed that it was definitely Antonio's ship that sank in the channel, leaving him without the money to pay Shylock. Shylock is angry about the loss of his daughter and money, but glad that he'll have the chance to take vengeance on Antonio. In Belmont, Bassanio takes the test of the chests, and picks the correct one, winning Portia for his wife - Gratiano, Bassanio's friend, also marries Portia's maid Nerissa.. A letter arrives from Antonio, explaining that he's going to default on the debt. Bassanio announces that he's going to go back to Venice to help. Shylock has Antonio taken into custody in preparation for his trial. Portia and her maid, Nerissa, leave Belmont and go to Venice - hoping to help their husbands, but first Portia sends a letter to her cousin, a doctor in Padua.

The trial of Antonio begins in Venice. The Duke asks Shylock to be forgiving of Antonio, but Shylock refuses. Now rich because of his marriage, Bassanio offers Shylock three times the money Antonio owes but Shylock still refuses. The Duke had asked a doctor to come to Venice and decide the trial. Doctor Bellario, Portia's cousin. Portia and Nerissa arrive, disguised in men's clothing, pretending to be a replacement doctor and his clerk. Portia rules in favor of Shylock, and announces that he can proceed to cut a pound of flesh from Antonio. She warns him about the finer points of the law, though - if Shylock takes anything but an exact pound, it won't be a collection of a debt, it will be an attack on Antonio's life. As a Jew, Shylock can't be a citizen, so if he attacks a citizen, he'll be sentenced to death, and all his money will be taken by the state. Shylock gives



up, and tries to leave, but Portia won't let him - because he's given up on the debt, his plans to attack Antonio are a crime on their own - the punishment is that he has to give half his money to Antonio, and the other half to the state. Antonio convinces the Duke to give Shylock half of his money back, on the condition that Shylock becomes a Christian, and will all of his money to his daughter and son-in-law.

Portia and Nerissa trick their husbands out of their wedding rings, demanding them as payment for having gotten Antonio off. Bassanio and Antonio return to Belmont, ready to face the disapproval of their wives. After toying with them for a little while, Portia and Nerissa reveal the trick they'd played on their husbands, and how they saved Antonio's life. Portia also brings a deed explaining that Shylock has willed his money to Jessica and Lorenzo, and a letter that says the rest of Antonio's ships have arrived safely at port, making him once again wealthy. At the end of the play all the characters are married, rich, Christian, or some combination of the three, so they all live happily ever after.



Major Characters

Antonio: A Successful merchant. His love of his friend Bassanio leads him to offer himself as collateral for Bassanio's loan. He's forced to borrow the money from Shylock, a Jewish loan shark he'd persecuted in the past. When one of Antonio's ship's is wrecked in the English Channel, he is left without the money to pay Shylock, and it looks like Shylock will be able to legally kill him, but then Portia intervenes, saving his life in court, and turning the tables on Shylock.

Bassanio: Antonio's best friend, he is deep in debt, and in love with Portia. He borrows money from Shylock against Antonio's name in order to travel to Belmont with all the necessary gifts to prove his worth to her. He wins her hand in marriage, then has to go back to Venice when he discovers that Antonio is at Shylock's mercy. Portia then plays a trick on him, taking her wedding ring back as payment for saving Antonio's life.

Lorenzo: A friend of Antonio and Bassanio. He is in love with Jessica, but is unable to marry her because she is a Jew. With the help of his friends, they elope, stealing some of Shylock's money and running to Padua, then Belmont.

Gratiano: A friend of Antonio and Bassanio, thought of as somewhat of a blowhard. He travels to Belmont with Bassanio, and falls in love with Portia's maid, Nerissa. They marry, and then he is tricked by Nerissa into giving up his ring as well.

Portia: A wealthy woman who lives in Belmont. Of all her suitors, she is most partial towards Bassanio. She is frustrated by her late father's capriciousness, forcing her future husband to be chosen by chance. She favours Bassanio, but is trapped by her father's order. After Bassanio chooses correctly, they are married. When Bassanio returns to Venice to help Antonio, Portia disguises herself as a doctor and goes to Venice, judging the trial in Antonio's favor. She tricks Bassanio out of his wedding ring.

Nerissa: Portia's maid and confidant. She marries Gratiano, then travels with Portia to Venice, disguised as a doctor's clerk. She also tricks her husband out of his wedding ring.

Shylock: The villain of the story, Shylock is a loan shark who despises Antonio. He planned to take advantage of Bassanio's situation by forcing him to default on the loan, allowing him to cut a pound of flesh from Antonio. He is bitter because of the horrible treatment he's received at Antonio's hands, and wants Antonio dead. When Antonio defaults on the loan, Shylock takes him to court, but Portia, disguised as a doctor, uses Venice's laws against Shylock, leaving him robbed of his money and religion.

Jessica: Shylock's daughter. She is in love with Lorenzo. They run off together, taking money from Shylock's house as they go.



Minor Characters

Salarino: Merchant and friend of Antonio

Salanio: Another Merchant friend of Antonio's

Portia's Father: Knowing that he was going to die before choosing a husband for his daughter, he devised a game of chance to determine whether a suitor would win her hand in marriage.

Trains: These are the entourages that follow important people around, made up of advisors, heralds, messengers and servants.

The Duke of Venice: He is the ruler of Venice, who has the final say in settling all disputes within the city. When Shylock wants to bring Antonio to court, the Duke oversees the trial.

Prince of Aragon: Another Suitor of Portia's. He takes part in the test - he believes that he deserves Portia, so he chooses the silver chest - the wrong choice.

Tubal: An associate of Shylock's, also a Jew. Shylock dispatched him to Genoa to track down Lorenzo and Jessica.

Salerio: A Venetian messenger and friend of Gratiano. He brings word from Venice that Antonio has defaulted on his loan to Shylock, and needs Bassanio's help.

Jailer: He is the Jailer that Shylock hired to take Antonio into custody for defaulting on his loan.

Balthasar: Portia's servant. She sends him to Padua with letters for her Cousin, Doctor Bellario.

Doctor Bellario: Portia's Cousin, he provides her with the clothes and identification necessary for Portia and Nerissa to disguise themselves as men.

The Magnificoes: This is the council of noblemen that advise the Duke. They come to watch the court proceedings.

Stephano: A messenger sent by Portia to announce her return from 'The Monastery'.

Prince of Morocco: One of Portia's suitors, he begs her to overlook the color of his skin, and is the first to accept her method of choosing a husband, and choose one of the chests.

Launcelot Gobbo: A servant of Shylock's. He despises his master, yet cannot bring himself to run away. He convinces his father to beg Bassanio to take him on as a servant. After becoming Bassanio's servant, he becomes even more insufferable,



informing on Jessica and Lorenzo's plans to elope, as well as insulting Jessica's plan to marry away from Shylock.

Old Gobbo: He is Launcelot's blind elderly father. He brings a gift to Shylock in thanks for keeping his son as a servant, but Launcelot tells his father to give the gift to Bassanio instead, so that Bassanio might take him on as a servant.



Objects/Places

Venice: A northern Italian port city, famous for its canals.

Belmont: Another Italian city near Venice.

Chests: Three chests, one made of gold, one made of silver, one made of lead. If one of Portia's suitors can pick the chest that her father intended, he will become Portia's husband.

Ducats: Italian money of the 12th century.

Usance: The practice of lending money and charging interest for it. At the time of the play, it was legal to do this, but against the doctrine of the Catholic Church for Christians to lend money at usance. This led to the money-lending profession being dominated by Jews, heightening tensions between the religions.

Ring: The ring Portia gives to Bassanio as a symbol of their love. He swears he will never part with it, and she uses it to test which of his loves is stronger, his love for her, or his love for his friend Antonio.

Deed: This is the document that Shylock signs agreeing that upon his death, all of his money will go to Lorenzo and Jessica. It also states that he has converted to Christianity.



Quotes

Quote 1: "Should I go to church and see the holy edifice of stone, and not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks, which, touching but my gentle vessel's side, would scatter all her spices on the stream," Act 1, Scene 1, lines 29-33

Quote 2: "His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in, two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search." Act 1, Scene 1, lines 115-8

Quote 3: "he, of all the men that my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving of a fair lady." Act 1, Scene 2, lines 129-31

Quote 4: "ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land-rats and water-rats, land-thieves and water-thieves,--I mean pirates,--and then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks." Act 1, Scene 3, lines 22-5

Quote 5: "The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. An evil soul producing holy witness is like a villain with a smiling cheek, a goodly apple rotten at the heart." Act 1, Scene 3, lines 99-102

Quote 6: "an equal pound of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken in what part of your body pleaseth me." Act 1, Scene 3, lines 150-3

Quote 7: "Bring me the fairest creature northward born, where Phoebus' fire scarce thaws the icicles, and let us make incision for your love to prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine" Act 2, Scene 1, lines 4-7

Quote 8: "If Hercules and Lichas play at dice which is the better man, the greater throw may turn by fortune from the weaker hand." Act 2, Scene 1, lines 32-4

Quote 9: "I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs." Act 2, Scene 2, lines 112-4

Quote 10: "Mistress, look out at window, for all this. There will come a Christian by will be worth a Jewess' eye." Act 2, Scene 5, lines 40-3

Quote 11: "Farewell, and if my fortune be not crost, I have a father, you a daughter, lost." Act 2, Scene 5, lines 56-7

Quote 12: "For she is wise, if I can judge of her. And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true. And true she is, as she hath proved herself, and therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true, shall she be placed in my constant soul." Act 2, Scene 6, lines 53-7

Quote 13: "The first, of gold, who this inscription bears, 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.' The second, silver, which this promise carries, 'Who chooseth



me shall get as much as he deserves.' This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt, 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.'" Act 2, Scene 7, lines 4-9

Quote 14: "A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go. Let all of his complexion choose me so." Act 2, Scene 7, lines 78-9

Quote 15: "The ancient saying is no heresy, hanging and wiving goes by destiny." Act 2, Scene 9, lines 82-3

Quote 16: "To bait fish withal It will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies. And what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with 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 revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction." Act 3, Scene 1, lines 55-76

Quote 17: "You that choose not by the view, chance as fair, and choose as true! Since this fortune falls to you, be content and seek no new. If you be well pleased with this, and hold your fortune for your bliss, turn you where your lady is and claim her with a loving kiss." Act 3, Scene 2, lines 132-9

Quote 18: "Portia: Well see our husbands before they think of us. Nerissa: Shall they see us? Portia: They shall, Nerissa, but in such a habit that they shall think we are accomplished with what we lack." Act 3, Scene 4, lines 57-62

Quote 19: "This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs." Act 3, Scene 5, lines 25-6

Quote 20: "And then 'tis thought thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange than is thy strange apparent cruelty," Act 4, Scene 1, lines 20-2



Quote 21: "Some men there are love not a gaping pig, some that are mad if they behold a cat, and others when the bagpipe sings i' the nose cannot contain their urine." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 47-50

Quote 22: "Bassanio: Every offense is not a hate at first.
Shylock: What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?
Antonio: I pray you, think you question with the Jew.
You may as well go stand on the beach
and bid the main flood bate his usual height,
you may as well use question with the wolf
why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb,
you may as well forbid the mountain pines
to wag their high tops and to make no noise
when they are fretten with the gusts of heaven,
you may as well do anything most hard
as seek to soften that - than which what's harder? -
his Jewish heart. Therefore, I do beseech you
make no more offers, use no further means,
but with all brief and plain conveniency
let me have judgement and the Jew his will." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 68-83

Quote 23: "Shylock: Ay, 'his breast': So says the bond - doth it not, noble judge?-
'Nearest his heart.' Those are the very words.
Portia: It is so. Are there balance here to weigh the flesh?
Shylock: I have them ready.
Portia: Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,
to stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.
Shylock: Is it so nominated in the bond?
Portia: It is not so expressed; but what of that?
'twere good you do so much for charity.
Shylock: I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 253-262

Quote 24: "I have a wife who, I protest, I love. I would she were in heaven so she could entreat some power to change this currish Jew. Nerissa: 'Tis well that you offer it behind her back. The wish would make else an unquiet house." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 290-4

Quote 25: "If it be proven against an alien that by direct or indirect attempts he seek the life of any citizen, the party 'gainst the which he doth contrive shall seize one half his goods. The other half comes to the privy coffer of the state. And the offender's life lies in the mercy of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 349-356

Quote 26: "My mind was never yet more mercenary." Act 4, Scene 1, line 418

Quote 27: "Why, I were best to cut my left hand off and swear I lost the ring defending it." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 176-7



Quote 28: "I once did lend my body for his wealth, which, but for him that had your husband's ring, had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again, my soul upon the forfeit, that your lord will never more break his faith advisedly." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 249-253

Quote 29: "Let it be so. The first inter'gatory that my Nerissa shall be sworn on is whether till the next night she had rather stay, or go to bed now, being two hours to day. But were the day come, I should wish it dark, that I were crouching with the Doctor's clerk. Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing so sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 300-7



Topic Tracking: Fortune

Act 1, Scene 2

Fortune 1: Portia is angry because she has no choice in who her husband will be. Because of her father's decision, she has to rely on luck to deliver a husband to her.

Act 1, Scene 3

Fortune 2: Shylock cautions Bassanio before lending him money, reminding him that all of Antonio's money is tied up in shipping - a very dangerous trade, one counting more on luck than anything else.

Act 2, Scene 1

Fortune 3: The Moroccan Prince curses luck and fortune, complaining that it is no way to choose a husband - Luck has nothing to do with someone's worth, and should therefore never be used to determine something so important.

Fortune 4: After the Moroccan Prince chooses badly, Portia is relieved - she doesn't want to be married to someone who isn't white, and she's terrified at the prospect of being forced to because of nothing more than bad luck.

Act 2, Scene 9

Fortune 5: Again, Portia curses luck for forcing her to have no power over her own life. Nerissa assures her that it's only natural - when it comes to matters of love, it's fate that takes the driver's seat. In Portia's case it's just a little more obvious than in most.

Act 3, Scene 1

Fortune 6: Shylock's prediction has come true, and luck did turn against Antonio, his ship crashing against rocks. Antonio's fortune has turned against him at the worst possible time.

Act 3 Scene 2

Fortune 7: Love is trumped by luck, here. Despite the love that Portia and Bassanio have for one another, they have no control over whether they will become husband and wife. They have to depend on fortune to bring them together, nothing else. It does, allowing them to begin their lives together as husband and wife.

Act 4, Scene 1

Fortune 8: Despite all of his planning, fortune turned against Shylock, ironically delivering onto him the exact fate that he had hoped to inflict Antonio with. All fortune

turned against Shylock, stripping him of his wealth, and possibly his life, only returning them to him if he was willing to give up his religion.



Topic Tracking: Love

Act 1, Scene 1

Love 1: Antonio's love for his friend is so strong that he offers to go into debt to help him. This is significant because it will mean borrowing money from Shylock at Usance, something that Antonio is morally and ethically against. He is willing to set aside his beliefs in order to aid his friend.

Love 2: Although Bassanio is already deep into debt because of his failed business dealings, he is so completely devoted to Portia that he sinks himself even further into debt in order to take the chance that she might marry him. He's even willing to put his best friend in danger by letting Antonio go to Shlyock for money.

Act 1, Scene 2

Love 3: Portia fears that if she ever does find a man to love, the chest test will prevent her from marrying him. Even worse, she fears the prospect of being forced to marry a man that she doesn't love simply because he succeeded in deciphering the mystery of the chests.

Act 2, Scene 3

Love 4: Jessica and Lorenzo love one another, but because they are from two different religions, they cannot marry each other. Their love leads Jessica to flee her father, taking with her money to pay for their marriage and the beginning of a life together.

Act 2, Scene 8

Love 5: Antonio's love for his friend is so strong that, despite his probable ruin, he's happy to see Bassanio go, knowing that he's on his way to be with the woman he loves. Antonio finds vicarious happiness through his friend's strong emotions.

Act 2, Scene 9

Love 6: Nerissa hopes that the god of love will bless Portia and bring Bassanio to her, since there is no other man who deserves her, and she can't choose him. She thinks that only the devine intervention of Cupid could possibly bring Bassanio to Portia, and ensure that he chose the correct chest, that only with the help of a god could love overcome blind luck.

Act 3, Scene 2

Love 7: Bassanio and Portia are clearly in love with one another - they want to marry, but find themselves bound by the arbitrary rule set by her father. Portia doesn't want to say goodbye to Bassanio forever, so he asks him to delay choosing a chest - if this is going to be the last time she ever sees Bassanio, she wants it to last as long as



possible. Bassanio, on the other hand, can't bear delaying his choice any longer. He can't bear to live another moment not knowing if he's going to be able to marry Portia and spend the rest of his life with her.

Act 4, Scene 1

Love 8: Trying to convince Shylock to let Antonio just pay off the debt, Bassanio exclaims that he loves his friend over everything else, including his own life. He goes so far as to offer his own life in exchange for Bassanio's.

Love 9: In order to give her husband a chance to prove his love, Portia tests him by demanding his wedding ring. Bassanio at first balks at the idea, having pledged that his wife is more important to him than anything else. Gratiano convinces him to part with the ring, though, assuring Bassanio that his wife will understand.

Act 5, Scene 1

Love 10: Portia and Nerissa forgive their husbands for giving up their wedding rings, and return them. Bassanio and Gratiano pledge that no matter what happens, they won't ever again make anything more important than their wives.



Topic Tracking: Persecution

Topic Tracking: Persecution

Act 1, Scene 3

Persecution 1: Shylock believes that his offer of money has been repaid with persecution based on his religion - he thinks that the offer of dinner was an invitation to eat pork, something he cannot do. He wonders why they have taken this opportunity to mock and insult him, when he'd done nothing to provoke them.

Persecution 2: Shylock suggests that he needs no reason to hate Antonio beyond the fact that Antonio is a Christian, and therefore worthy of nothing more than his contempt.

Act 2 Scene 1

Persecution 3: The Prince of Morocco knows full well that the color of his skin would be an issue with anyone in Portia's position, but begs her to take other things into consideration. He explains that there are other ways to judge him beyond the colour of his skin, and that in any of those respects, he is more than worthy. Portia says she has accepted the puzzle of the chests, and beyond that she has no interest in the color of his skin.

Persecution 4: After the Prince has failed, Portia exclaims her relief that she won't have to marry a dark-skinned man, and hopes that if any other dark people try to win her hand, they'll fail just as the Prince had.

Act 2 Scene 3

Persecution 5: Despite their love, Lorenzo and Jessica cannot be married so long as she is a Jew. This forces them to elope, fleeing from her father, knowing full well that he would never give her permission to marry a Christian, let alone convert to do so.

Act 3, Scene 1

Persecution 6: Shylock believes that his excessive persecution of Antonio is justified because of the way Antonio had persecuted him. He refuses to justify his actions because Antonio had no justification for persecuting him. He states that he was persecuted solely for being a Jew, and since the Christian response is to take revenge when wronged, that is exactly what he plans to do.

Act 3, Scene 5

Persecution 7: Launcelot, always feeling superior to those around him, tries to put Jessica down now that she's no longer his employer. He insists that she will always be a Jew, no matter who she marries and what she does.



Act 4, Scene 1

Persecution 8: Shylock is proven correct about his persecution when his very religion is used to defeat him in court. Because he is a Jew, he cannot be a citizen of Venice, and because he is not a citizen, any action he takes against Antonio will be illegal and dealt with harshly.

Persecution 9: In his final humiliation, Shylock is forced to choose between his religion and his wealth. If he remains a Jew, he will be destitute, only if he gives up his faith will he be allowed to keep his money - even then only half of it.



Act 1, Scene 1

The play opens in a Venice street. Antonio, Salarino and Salanio enter. Antonio is sad, and wonders aloud what is causing this sadness. His friends suggest that he's too worried about his finances. He has a lot of money invested in goods being shipped from overseas, and they explain that it's natural for him to be distracted and upset. Salarino describes his feelings whenever he is shipping goods: "Should I go to church and see the holy edifice of stone, and not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks, which, touching but my gentle vessel's side, would scatter all her spices on the stream," Act 1, Scene 1, lines 29-33. Antonio assures them that he isn't worried about money - he has spread his investments and savings around, not putting all his eggs in one basket. Salarino then suggests that if it isn't money that Antonio is upset about, then he must be in love. Antonio dismisses this idea out of hand, leaving his friends confused about his seemingly unprovoked depression.

Bassanio, Lorenzo and Gratiano enter. Salanio and Salarino excuse themselves, explaining that they have business to attend to. Lorenzo and Gratiano explain that they're leaving, and remind Bassanio to meet them later at dinner-time. Gratiano notices how sad Antonio seems, and offers to play the fool in an attempt to cheer him up. He makes a short, puzzling Soliloquy concerning the nature of wisdom and the people thought to have it, then leaves with Lorenzo. Antonio is confused by Gratiano's speech. Bassanio explains that Gratiano is the biggest blowhard in all of Venice: "His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in, two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search." Act 1, Scene 1, lines 115-8

Antonio asks about the identity of the woman Bassanio is in love with. Bassanio admits to Antonio that he's trapped under a crippling debt - much of it to Antonio. Antonio assures Bassanio that he'll do anything he can to help. Bassanio explains that he's fallen in love with Portia, a rich woman living in Belmont. He's afraid that he won't be able to win her hand though, she is so beautiful that she has wealthy and accomplished suitors chasing after her from all across Europe. Antonio offers to help, but explains that since all of his ships are still at sea, he has no money to give Bassanio. He does, however, offer his credit to Bassanio, so that Bassanio can borrow money against Antonio's good name so that he may go to Belmont as a wealthy man.

Topic Tracking: Love 1

Topic Tracking: Love 2



Act 1, Scene 2

The scene opens in a room in Portia's Belmont house. Portia and her maid, Nerissa enter. Portia is distraught about her lot in life, but Nerissa reminds her that despite her problems, she is still incredibly fortunate. Portia curses her luck that she's such an intelligent and capable woman, but finds herself without any control of her fate. A major plot point is revealed here - Portia's Father, has died, leaving Portia wealthy, but without a chosen husband. Before dying, though, he devised a game of chance to determine if a suitor was worthy of becoming her husband. The suitor would be offered the choice of three chests, and whoever chooses the correct chest would become her husband.

Topic Tracking: Fortune 1

Portia and Nerissa discuss her potential suitors, describing them in the least flattering terms possible. A Neapolitan Prince is dismissed as being uncouth and obsessed with his horse. Count Palatine is completely humorless. The French Lord, Monsieur Le Bon is a total buffoon. The English Baron Falconbridge is at a disadvantage, since he speaks only English, while Portia does not. The Scottish suitor is cheap and a mooch, while the German suitor is an obnoxious drunk. Portia is happy to hear that all of her suitors have decided to leave, refusing to take part in the chest-selecting game.

Nerissa reminds Portia of Bassanio, who she met back when her father was alive. Both of the women were rather impressed by him, as Nerissa says "he, of all the men that my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving of a fair lady" Act 1, Scene 2, lines 129-31. A servant enters and announces that her current suitors wish to see her so they can say farewell. The servant also delivers the message that a new suitor, the Prince of Morocco will be arriving that very night. Portia isn't thrilled to hear about the approach of yet another suitor. Portia, Nerissa, and the Servant leave so that Portia might see the suitors off.

Topic Tracking: Love 3



Act 1, Scene 3

The scene opens in a public space in Venice. Bassanio and Shylock. They are making a deal - Bassanio wants to borrow three thousand Ducats for three months. Shylock considers the request carefully, repeating every term of the deal. Bassanio offers Antonio's guarantee for the money. Shylock agrees that Antonio is a good man, but points out that all of his money is tied up in shipping ventures, by their nature, are very unpredictable: "ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land-rats and water-rats, land-thieves and water-thieves,--I mean pirates,--and then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks." Act 1, Scene 3, lines 22-5. Despite his misgivings, Shylock agrees that Antonio's bond is good enough to guarantee the debt, but wants to speak with Antonio. Bassanio agrees and invites Shylock to dinner. Shylock is deeply offended, he feels that his religious beliefs have been slighted by the offer of a meal which would include pork.

Topic Tracking: Persecution 1

Topic Tracking: Fortune 2

Just then Antonio enters. Shylock turns to the audience and speaks to them directly, revealing his motive for hating Antonio. Not only does he hate him for being a Christian, but Antonio makes it a practice of lending out money without charging interest, as well as speaking out against those that do charge interest. Shylock intends to use this opportunity to ruin Antonio. Antonio states that he is normally opposed to lending or borrowing money at usance, but he's willing to make an exception to help Bassanio in his time of need. Shylock questions the supposed immorality of charging interest. He suggests that it's no different than a farmer who owns sheep, and by their breeding, increases his stock of sheep, as happened to Jacob in the Old Testament. Antonio counters, saying that the birth of sheep comes from god's will, and can't be compared with charging interest. He says to Bassanio, "The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. An evil soul producing holy witness is like a villain with a smiling cheek, a goodly apple rotten at the heart." Act 1, Scene 3, lines 99-102

Topic Tracking: Persecution 2

Shylock agrees to the terms of the loan, then goes on to remind Antonio of all the insults that have been made against him. Antonio has insulted his religion, called him a cut-throat and a dog, and spit on him. He wonders aloud, why should he lend money to someone who hates him so? Antonio replies that it should be easier to lend to someone he hates - that way, Shylock won't mind exacting a punishment for a defaulted loan. Shylock exclaims that he doesn't want to be Antonio's enemy, and offers to forget about all the insults and charge no interest on the loan. All he asks is that they go to a notary and sign the deal, with the condition that if Antonio defaults on the loan, he won't have to pay any monetary penalty, instead, Shylock will be given "an equal pound of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken in what part of your body pleaseth me." Act 1, Scene 3, lines 150-3 Antonio doesn't take this seriously, and considers the offer an act of friendship. Bassanio warns Antonio not to make the deal, but Antonio assures him that



he will have nine thousand ducats a month before the term of the loan runs out. After agreeing to meet at the notary later, Shylock leaves. The scene ends with Antonio pleased to see the change in Shylock's behavior, while Bassanio remains skeptical about Shylock's motives.



Act 2, Scene 1

This begins back in Portia's Belmont home. A flourish of cornets announce the arrival of the Prince of Morocco, who enters with his train. Portia and Nerissa enter, followed by Portia's train. The Prince of Morocco speaks to Portia, asking her not to judge him based on his appearance, assuring her that it has nothing to do with his value as a potential husband: "Bring me the fairest creature northward born, where Phoebus' fire scarce thaws the icicles, and let us make incision for your love to prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine." Act 2, Scene 1, lines 4-7

Topic Tracking: Fortune 3

Topic Tracking: Persecution 3

Portia assures the Prince that she is not so shallow to judge him based on the color of his skin, and even if she did, it wouldn't matter, since she has no choice in whom she will marry. The Prince again makes a point of just how worthy a husband he would be, and curses luck that would allow a less worthy man to be victorious: "If Hercules and Lichas play at dice which is the better man, the greater throw may turn by fortune from the weaker hand." Act 2, Scene 1, lines 32-4 Portia reminds him that if he chooses wrong, he must never again come to her with marriage in mind. The Prince agrees, and asks to be brought to the chests that he might take his chance. Portia tells him it can wait until after dinner. They all exit under another flourish of cornets.

Topic Tracking: Persecution 4

Topic Tracking: Fortune 4



Act 2, Scene 2

This scene opens in a Venice street. Launcelot Gobbo enters, on the horns of a dilemma. He is considering fleeing from his master, Shylock, but he can't make a decision. He considers the angel and devil on his shoulders. The devil tells him to run away from his duties, the angel, his conscience, demands that he stays and fulfill his obligations. Launcelot is confused, though, since he believes that his master is a kind of devil, so either way, he'll find himself doing the Devil's bidding. Finally he decides that because he prefers the advice the devil is giving him, he'll listen to it and run.

Old Gobbo enters, carrying a basket. He's gone blind, and can't find his way to Shylock's house. Launcelot gives him some bad directions. Gobbo asks about his son, Launcelot, who is in the employ of the Jew. Launcelot, who can't quite believe that his father doesn't recognize him, toys with his father, pretending that this 'Launcelot' is dead. Launcelot decides to stop pretending, but has trouble convincing his father that he's actually who he claims to be. Finally he accomplishes it by describing his mother. Gobbo announces that he's on his way to deliver a gift to Shylock, and asks if his son is well, working for him. Launcelot tells him that it's unbearable: "I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs." Act 2, Scene 2, lines 112-4. He asks his father to, instead, give the gift to Bassanio, and ask that he be placed in Bassanio's service.

Bassanio, Leonardo, and Followers enter. Old Gobbo offers Bassanio the gift, and then begs him for a favor, that Launcelot might become his servant. Bassanio warns Launcelot that he isn't as wealthy as Shylock, Launcelot replies that money is less important to him than the grace of god. Bassanio agrees to take Launcelot on as a servant, then sends off another servant to prepare quarters for him. Launcelot thanks Bassanio profusely, then leaves with Old Gobbo.

Gratiano enters and Leonardo leaves. Gratiano asks if he can accompany Bassanio to Belmont. Bassanio isn't too sure if he should let Gratiano come. Bassanio explains to Gratiano that, while his friends appreciate him for the boisterous, loud-mouthed person that he is, he might offend someone in Belmont, ruining Bassanio's chances. Gratiano vehemently assures Bassanio that if need be, he can be the most polite, demure person in the world, starting tonight. Bassanio assures him that he doesn't have to start right away, after all, what would dinner with friends be without a boisterous Gratiano? They exit.



Act 2, Scene 3

The scene opens in Venice, a room in Shylock's house. Jessica, Shylock's daughter, is talking to Launcelot. She is unhappy that he's leaving. Shylock's house isn't a good place to live, and Launcelot made it interesting, at least. She asks Launcelot to secretly deliver a letter to Lorenzo. Launcelot assures her that she's the most wonderful Jew he's ever met.. Launcelot leaves, and Jessica delivers a short speech to the audience. She is in love with Lorenzo, and ashamed of herself, because the fact that she is a Jew keeps her from being allowed to marry Lorenzo. But if he's willing, she'll convert to Christianity so that they can wed.

Topic Tracking: Persecution 5

Topic Tracking: Love 4

Act 2, Scene 4

The scene is a Venice street. Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salarino, and Salanio enter. They're plotting a scheme that involves dressing in masks after dinner. Salanio says that he has reservations. Launcelot enters, with the letter from Jessica. Lorenzo recognizes the handwriting as hers. Launcelot begins to leave, so that he can return home and invite Shylock to dinner at Bassanio's house. Lorenzo asks him to tell Jessica that he won't fail her. Launcelot leaves. Salarino and Salanio agree to meet them later for their 'entertainment', then leave. Lorenzo reveals to Gratiano that he and Jessica have planned to take her from her father's house. Excited about the plan, they exit together.



Act 2, Scene 5

The scene begins outside of Shylock's Venice house. Shylock and Launcelot enter, Shylock assuring Launcelot that his life will be much harder as Bassanio's servant. He calls Jessica in. He tells her that he's going to Bassanio's for dinner. He gives her his keys, and tells her to be wary - someone is out to get him. He knows, because he dreamt of moneybags. Launcelot warns Shylock that Bassanio and the rest have plotted against him, and to beware of people wearing masks. Shylock instructs Jessica to lock the house up tight while he's gone, then sends Launcelot to tell Bassanio that he will be attending dinner. Before leaving, Launcelot hints to Jessica about Lorenzo's plan: "Mistress, look out at window, for all this. There will come a Christian by will be worth a Jewess' eye." Act 2, Scene 5, lines 40-3 He then exits. Shylock wants to know what Launcelot said to her, but Jessica covers for him. Shylock then complains about what a terrible servant Launcelot had been, then exits. Jessica then talks after her father: "Farewell, and if my fortune be not crost, I have a father, you a daughter, lost." Act 2, Scene 5, lines 56-7



Act 2, Scene 6

This scene takes place at the same location, later that night. Gratiano and Salarino enter, wearing the masks they'd spoken of earlier. They wonder why Lorenzo hasn't arrived yet. Lorenzo arrives, apologizing to them for his lateness. Jessica enters above them, dressed in a boy's clothing. Lorenzo announces himself to her, and pledges his love to her. Jessica throws down a casket full of money, then goes back inside. Gratiano tells Lorenzo that Jessica is so wonderful that she is practically a Gentile. Lorenzo exclaims his love for her again: 'For she is wise, if I can judge of her. And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true. And true she is, as she hath proved herself, and therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true, shall she be placed in my constant soul' Act 2, Scene 6, lines 53-7. Lorenzo, Jessica, and Salarino exit. Antonio arrives, and wonders where Gratiano has been. He is supposed to be leaving with Bassanio for Belmont. Gratiano leaves with Antonio for the boat.



Act 2, Scene 7

This scene opens at Belmont in Portia's house. Again, cornets play to announce the entrance of Portia, the Prince of Morocco and their Trains. Portia presents the Prince with the Chests. He examines the chests, trying to decide which would be the best to choose. He reads the inscriptions: "The first, of gold, who this inscription bears, 'Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.' The second, silver, which this promise carries, 'Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.' This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt, 'Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.'" Act 2, Scene 7, lines 4-9

The Prince tries to decide which chest is the correct one. He first dismisses the lead casket, sure that it isn't worth risking hazard to gain lead. He then considers exactly what it is that he deserves. Given his feats, birthright, and fortunes, he concludes that he does, in fact, deserve Portia. He then wonders what it is that 'all men desire'. Of course, the answer is Portia - leaving him confused. He tries to judge which is correct based on the quality of the metals used in the chests. He decides that gold is the only one valuable enough to contain a picture of Portia. He opens the gold chest, and finds a skull with a scroll stuck into its eye socket. The scroll tells him he has chosen poorly.

The Prince exits with his train. Portia then make a telling comment to her train: "A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go. Let all of his complexion choose me so." Act 2, Scene 7, lines 78-9



Act 2, Scene 8

The scene begins on a Venice street. Salarino and Salanio enter, talking about recent scandals. They mention that the Duke of Venice and Shylock have been scouring the city, searching for Lorenzo and Jessica. Although they suspect that Shylock is more concerned with the money stolen from him than the loss of his daughter. They worry that Shylock's foul mood could lead to trouble for Antonio, if he can't pay the money back in time. Salarino says a Frenchman told him that a wealthy Italian merchant ship sank in the English channel - perhaps it was Antonio's? They mention that Antonio has just sent Bassanio away, tears of joy in his eyes. He'd made sure Bassanio didn't worry about the looming debt so that he could focus on wooing the woman he loves. The two men leave to find Antonio, so that they might cheer him up in the face of uncertainty.

Topic Tracking: Love 5



Act 2, Scene 9

The scene begins in Portia's Belmont home. Nerissa enters with a Servitor, and announces that they must prepare, the Prince of Aragon will be arriving to take the test. After a cornet flourish, the Prince, Portia, and their trains enter. Portia reminds the Prince of the rules of the chests, that if he were to pick incorrectly, he must leave and never speak of it again, abandoning his pursuit of Portia.

The Prince agrees to the terms, and then considers which chest he should select.. He dismisses the lead chest out of hand, and decides that the 'many men' who desire what's in the gold chest might well be fools. He thinks that the idea of being given what you deserve is the noblest idea. He believes that no one should pretend to be something that they aren't, and that all should be raised or lowered to the position in life that they truly deserve. He picks the Silver chest, opens it, and finds another skull with a scroll in the eye. The scroll tells him that he's made the wrong decision. He leaves with his train, agreeing to never return.

Portia laments how foolish all of her suitors are, trying to over think the puzzle. Nerissa agrees: "The ancient saying is no heresy, hanging and wiving goes by destiny." Act 2, Scene 9, lines 82-3. A servant enters, to announce that another messenger has arrived, in advance of his Venetian master. The servant is excessively happy about the messenger, making Portia suspicious. Nerissa hopes that the suitor will turn out to be Bassanio.

Topic Tracking: Love 6

Topic Tracking: Fortune 5



Act 3, Scene 1

The scene opens on a Venice street. Salanio and Salarino enter, discussing Antonio's misfortune - Salarino's source says that it was Antonio's ship that sunk in the English Channel. They wish the best of luck to him, knowing that Shylock won't be understanding.

Topic Tracking: Fortune 6

Shylock enters, angry about his daughter's flight, angry with Salanio and Salarino because he correctly suspects that they knew something about it. They argue briefly about Jessica, with Shylock unable to bare the betrayal of his daughter, and Salarino arguing that Shylock shouldn't have been surprised, given how different they are. Avoiding the argument, Salarino changes the subject and asks Shylock if he's heard about Antonio's misfortune. Shylock responds that he has, and he relishes Antonio's reversal of fortune, he crows with delight to have the once-smug Antonio slinking about, avoiding him.

Salarino asks Shylock why he's so excited, what will he have to gain by a pound of Antonio's flesh? Shylock responds:

"To bait fish withal It will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies. And what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with 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 revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction." Act 3, Scene 1, lines 55-76

Topic Tracking: Persecution 6



A servant enters, and tells Salarino and Salanio that Antonio wishes to speak with them. The three of them exit. Tubal enters, reporting that there is still no sign of Jessica. Shylock exclaims that he would rather have her dead and his money back, then know she was alive somewhere with it. Tubal gives Shylock some good news as well - the rumors are true - Antonio's ship has crashed, he's heard it from one of the sailors who survived the wreck. The sailor also confirmed Jessica's presence in Genoa. Shylock asks Tubal to hire him an officer to arrest Antonio. Finally Shylock reveals his plan - once Antonio defaults on the loan, Shylock will demand that the pound of flesh he is entitled to be taken out of Antonio's heart. They agree to meet at Synagogue later, then exit.



Act 3, Scene 2

The scene begins in Portia's Belmont home. Bassanio, Gratiano, Portia, Nerissa, and numerous attendants enter. Portia asks Bassanio not to choose a chest just yet - she enjoys his company, and if he chooses the wrong chest, he'll have to leave her immediately and never return. Bassanio insists on choosing, because he can't bear the tension any longer.

Topic Tracking: Love 7

Topic Tracking: Fortune 7

Portia speaks to herself as he chooses, more anxious than she's ever been. Bassanio examines the chests closely, and comes to the conclusion that the more gaudy chests serve only to distract potential suitors from the goal of the exercise. He picks the lead chest. Portia is elated. He finds a beautiful picture of Portia along with a scroll, which reads: "You that choose not by the view, chance as fair, and choose as true! Since this fortune falls to you, be content and seek no new. If you be well pleased with this, and hold your fortune for your bliss, turn you where your lady is and claim her with a loving kiss." Act 3, Scene 2, lines 132-9.

Topic Tracking: Love 7

Portia exclaims her joy, and offers a ring to Bassanio to symbolize their love. Bassanio tells her that he'll never take it off. Gratiano announces that, coincidentally, he and Nerissa have also fallen in love. Everyone congratulates one another, then Lorenzo, Jessica, and a messenger, Salerio enter. They bring news of Antonio from Venice. All of his ships have failed to return, leaving him without the money to repay Shylock. Jessica tells them that Shylock cares nothing about the debt, that he would rather kill Antonio than have the money back. Portia suggests that they just use some of her fortune to pay Shylock off. Bassanio reads Antonio's letter. Antonio, sure that he is about to die, forgives Bassanio's debt. Portia tells Bassanio to rush to Venice and help his friend. He assures her that he'll be back as soon as he can.



Act 3, Scene 3

The scene opens on a Venice street. Shylock, Salarino, Antonio and a Jailer. Shylock orders the Jailer to take Antonio into custody. Antonio begs Shylock to let him speak. Shylock rails against him, angry for every insult, sure that the Duke will give him justice. Antonio begs to be listened to. Shylock not only refuses to listen, but assures Antonio that after the debt has been collected, he'll never have to listen to Antonio again. He leaves, announcing that he will let nothing dissuade him and no one intervene.

Salarino is disgusted with Shylock's behavior. Antonio admits that he knows full well why Shylock is so angry - on many occasions, he'd given money to people in debt just before Shylock could foreclose on them. Even worse, Antonio can't count on the Duke to intercede on his behalf. The Duke's first duty is to maintaining law and order in the city. Antonio hopes Bassanio makes it back in time to see him suffer for Bassanio's sake.



Act 3, Scene 4

The scene begins in Portia's Belmont home. Portia, Nerissa, Lorenzo, Jessica and Balthasar enter. Lorenzo thanks Portia again for sending Bassanio off to help Antonio, even though she doesn't know him. Portia thinks that Antonio must be a good man, if he is the best friend of her husband then he must be a good man. She then asks Lorenzo and Jessica to look after her house until she returns - she and Nerissa have decided to hide themselves away in a nearby monastery until their husbands return. Jessica and Lorenzo leave.

Portia instructs Balthasar to bring a letter to her Cousin in Padua, Doctor Bellario. She wants Balthasar to bring back clothes and papers, and meet her on the Ferry to Venice where she will be waiting for him. Balthasar leaves. Portia announces to Nerissa that they're not really going to a monastery at all: "Portia: Well see our husbands before they think of us. Nerissa: Shall they see us? Portia: They shall, Nerissa, but in such a habit that they shall think we are accomplished with what we lack." Act 3, Scene 4, lines 57-62. Portia explains that they'll disguise themselves as men, and sneak into Venice unrecognized.



Act 3, Scene 5

The scene begins in a garden in Portia's Belmont home. Launcelot and Jessica enter. Launcelot tells Jessica that she is doomed, because her father's sins will be wrought upon her. She insists that she's no longer cursed - her marriage has made her a Christian. Launcelot is skeptical of the massive push towards conversion: "This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs." Act 3, Scene 5, lines 25-6

Topic Tracking: Persecution 7

Lorenzo enters, feigning jealousy at finding at seeing Launcelot with his wife. Jessica explains that she's taken a dislike to Launcelot because of his persecution of her. Lorenzo asks Launcelot to go and make sure that dinner is being prepared. Launcelot verbally spars with Lorenzo, angering him. Launcelot finally leaves. Lorenzo is furious with Launcelot and his insubordinate trickery. He awkwardly changes the subject and asks her what she thinks of Portia. Jessica believes that Bassanio couldn't have found himself a better wife. They leave for dinner.



Act 4, Scene 1

The scene begins in a Venice court of justice. The Duke, Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano, Salerio, The Magnificoes, and others enter. The Duke begins the proceedings, and offers Antonio his sympathies - Shylock is out for blood. Antonio thanks the Duke for doing what he could to help. Shylock enters. The Duke suggests that Shylock might at this last moment, offer some kind of forgiveness to Antonio, considering his recent failures in business: "And then 'tis thought thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange than is thy strange apparent cruelty." Act 4 Scene 1, lines 20-2

Shylock wholly refuses to consider clemency. He threatens the Duke, reminding him that if he were to interfere, it could jeopardize the rule of law in Venice. He then goes on a tirade, refusing to justify his actions against Antonio: "Some men there are love not a gaping pig, some that are mad if they behold a cat, and others when the bagpipe sings i' the nose cannot contain their urine." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 47-50

Shylock explains that the only important thing is that Antonio owes him, and that he doesn't like Antonio. The why is unimportant. Bassanio argues with Shylock, demanding a reason for his cruelty, then Antonio jumps in, declaring Bassanio's efforts futile, and accepting his fate:

"Bassanio: Every offense is not a hate at first.

Shylock: What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

Antonio: I pray you, think you question with the Jew.

You may as well go stand on the beach

and bid the main flood bate his usual height,

you may as well use question with the wolf

why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb,

you may as well forbid the mountain pines

to wag their high tops and to make no noise

when they are fretten with the gusts of heaven,

you may as well do anything most hard

as seek to soften that - than which what's harder? -

his Jewish heart. Therefore, I do beseech you

make no more offers, use no further means,

but with all brief and plain conveniency

let me have judgement and the Jew his will." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 68-83

Bassanio offers Shylock six thousand ducats. Shylock says that the amount is meaningless. If he were offered thirty-six thousand ducats he wouldn't take it. Shylock reminds the court that they have no right to question his actions - they all have slaves, and they're allowed to do whatever they want with their property. Since the pound of Antonio's flesh is Shylock's property, and he can do whatever he wants with it. He demands a ruling from the duke. The duke responds that there won't be any ruling until he's heard from Doctor Bellario, who he's asked to help him decide the case. Bassanio



offers to give his life in stead of Antonio's. Antonio refuses to let him, believing that his life has little value compared to Bassanio's.

Nerissa enters, disguised as a clerk, and presents a letter to the Duke from Doctor Bellario. Bassanio notices Shylock fondling a knife in earnest, and wonders why. Shylock is overly excited - he can't wait for his opportunity to cut the heart from out of Antonio. Gratiano implores some sympathy from Shylock, and then insults him when begging won't work. Shylock waves off the insults. The Duke hands the letter to the clerk, who reads it aloud. The letter says that Doctor Bellario is very ill, and that he's sent a roman doctor named Balthasar to handle the case. Portia enters, dressed as Balthasar.

Portia makes a speech acknowledging that Shylock's bond is valid, and that he has a right to cut a pound of flesh from Antonio. She then suggests that he offer mercy, and accept the money he's been offered. Shylock refuses the money and demands what is legally his. They prepare to perform the surgery on Antonio. Portia asks his Shylock has taken the necessary precautions. Shylock hasn't bothered:

"Shylock: Ay, 'his breast': So says the bond - doth it not, noble judge?-

'Nearest his heart.' Those are the very words.

Portia: It is so. Are there balance here to weigh the flesh?

Shylock: I have them ready.

*Portia: Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,
to stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.*

Shylock: Is it so nominated in the bond?

Portia: It is not so expressed; but what of that?

'twere good you do so much for charity.

Shylock: I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 253-262

Antonio assures everyone that he's prepared himself, and is ready to pay his debt. He asks Bassanio to speak well of him, and to know that he always had a friend who loved him. Bassanio replies that Antonio is the most important thing in the world to him, and that he'd sacrifice everything, even his wife, if it would save him. This doesn't please Portia in the least. Gratiano then chimes in: "I have a wife who, I protest, I love. I would she were in heaven so she could entreat some power to change this currish Jew. Nerissa: 'Tis well that you offer it behind her back. The wish would make else an unquiet house.'" Act 4, Scene 1, lines 290-4

Topic Tracking: Love 8

Shylock is fed up with wasting time. He demands that the sentence be carried out immediately. Portia agrees. Shylock prepares to cut into Antonio's flesh. Portia pauses to educate Shylock on the finer points of the law - which says that if he were to spill even a drop of Christian blood, all of his lands and goods would be seized by the government of Venice, in fact, if he takes anything from Antonio but an exact pound of flesh, as it said in the contract - any more or any less, it wouldn't be the collection of a contract, I would be an attack on Antonio - for which the punishment is death, as well as



forfeiting his property. Shylock knows that he's been beaten, and asks for his money back. Bassanio offers it, but Portia stops him. Shylock has already refused money in open court - he'll have the pound of flesh or nothing at all. Shylock gives up, and tries to leave. Portia then reminds him of yet another law: "If it be proven against an alien that by direct or indirect attempts he seek the life of any citizen, the party 'gainst the which he doth contrive shall seize one half his goods. The other half comes to the privy coffer of the state. And the offender's life lies in the mercy of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice." Act 4, Scene 1, lines 349-356

Topic Tracking: Persecution 8

Topic Tracking: Fortune 8

Portia tells Shylock he'll have to beg the Duke for his life. The Duke volunteers the pardon without being asked - proving himself a very different man than Shylock. Shylock feels that he might as well be dead - without money, what kind of life could he have? Antonio suggests that the court give Shylock half of his money back on two conditions, first, that the money be willed to his Daughter and Son-in-law upon his death, and that he convert to Christianity. The Duke agrees, and tells Shylock that if he doesn't take the deal, his pardon will be rescinded. Shylock agrees to the deal and leaves. The Duke thanks Portia for her service, then exits with his entire train.

Topic Tracking: Persecution 9

Antonio and Bassanio profusely thank Portia, and offer to pay her, still unaware of her true identity. She tells them that no payment is necessary, she is satisfied with her victory, and stresses that her motives were selfish: "My mind was never yet more mercenary" Act 4, Scene 1, line 418. All she asks in payment are two mementos. Antonio's gloves, and Bassanio's ring. Bassanio balks at the prospect, explaining that he promised his wife he'd never take the ring off - he offers her anything else, but she refuses. Portia tells him that his wife will surely understand, then leaves, feigning insult. Antonio convinces Bassanio to give Portia the ring, and Bassanio sends Gratiano chasing after her to deliver it.

Topic Tracking: Love 8

Act 4, Scene 2

The scene opens in a Venice street. Portia and Nerissa enter, still disguised. They search for Shylock's house so that they can have him sign the deed. Gratiano enters, and gives the ring to Portia. Nerissa tells Portia that she plans to try and talk Gratiano out of his ring as well. They all leave for Shylock's house.



Act 5, Scene 1

The scene begins in Belmont on the street leading to Portia's house. Lorenzo and Jessica enter, taking a walk. As they enjoy the night they playfully discuss Greek mythology and tease one another. Stephano enters and announces that Portia and Nerissa will be arriving before dawn. Launcelot enters, and proceeds to annoy everyone again before announcing that Bassanio will also be back before morning. Launcelot leaves, and Lorenzo sends Stephano into the house to play some music for Portia's arrival.

Portia and Nerissa arrive, drawn by the sound of the music. Lorenzo welcomes them home. Portia asks Lorenzo and Jessica not to mention that she and Nerissa were ever away. Lorenzo agrees to keep the secret. Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano and a train enters. Everyone greets one another, then Gratiano begins apologizing to Nerissa for giving away her ring. He tries to explain that he couldn't refuse the Clerk after all the Clerk had done for Antonio. Portia chides him, saying that she wouldn't forgive if she were in Nerissa's shoes. Bassanio makes an aside to the audience: "Why, I were best to cut my left hand off and swear I lost the ring defending it." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 176-7

Gratiano confesses that Bassanio too gave away his ring, but assure Portia that the Doctor more than deserved it. Bassanio assures Portia that if she knew the circumstances, she wouldn't take offense. Portia reminds Bassanio just how important the ring was, and tells him she'd die if she discovered he'd given it to another woman. Bassanio and Gratiano beg for their wives forgiveness, even Antonio tries to mend the problem: "I once did lend my body for his wealth, which, but for him that had your husband's ring, had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again, my soul upon the forfeit, that your lord will never more break his faith advisedly." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 249-253

Portia and Nerissa give their husbands back the rings. This confuses Bassanio and Gratiano, leading them to believe that their wives had cheated on them with the Doctor and the Clerk. Having had enough of the joke, Portia and Nerissa finally reveal their scheme. Portia also has a letter for Antonio, revealing that his other three ships made it to port - he's wealthy again, even without Shylock's money. Nerissa gives Shylock's deed is given to Jessica and Lorenzo, which pleases them. Portia offers to tell them the rest of the story, answering any questions they may have. Gratiano has the first question, and the last line of the play: "Let it be so. The first inter'gatory that my Nerissa shall be sworn on is whether till the next night she had rather stay, or go to bed now, being two hours to day. But were the day come, I should wish it dark, that I were crouching with the Doctor's clerk. Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing so sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring." Act 5, Scene 1, lines 300-7

Topic Tracking: Love 10