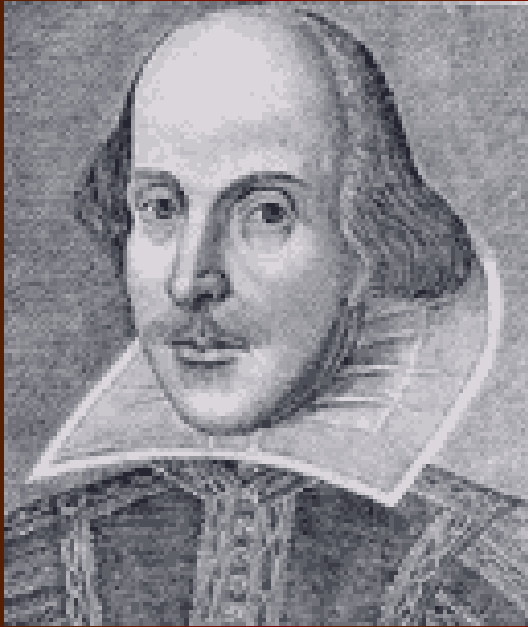


William Shakespeare's



Shakespeare



- ❑ *1563-1616*
- ❑ *Born: Stratford upon Avon, England*
- ❑ *Wrote 37 plays and 154 sonnets*

Merchant of Venice

- ❑ Written around 1597
- ❑ A romantic comedy
- ❑ A melodrama with dramatic elements like romantic courtship, puzzling, testing, eloping, comic confusions, an intense courtroom trial, and a pleasant conclusion
- ❑ Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1590), a major influence on *The Merchant of Venice* wherein Barabas, the main character, is a Jew and a thoroughly evil villain

Characters

- ❑ **Antonio-** *The* merchant of Venice, a Christian
- ❑ **Bassanio-** Antonio's closest friend, Portia's lover/suitor
- ❑ **Portia-** A wealthy heiress of Belmont
- ❑ **Nerissa-** Portia's waiting-maid
- ❑ **Salarino, Salerio, Solanio, Gratiano, Lorenzo-** Friends to Antonio and Bassanio

- ❑ **Shylock-** A rich Jewish moneylender
- ❑ **Jessica-** Shylock's daughter, beloved of Lorenzo
- ❑ **Lancelet Gobbo-** A clown, servant to Shylock
- ❑ **Old Gobbo-** Lancelet's father
- ❑ **Tubal-** another Jew, Shylock's friend

The Duke of Venice

The Prince of Marocco & The Prince of Aragon- suitors of Portia

Plots

- ❑ The lottery of the caskets (lead, silver, and gold) and Winning of Portia in marriage
- ❑ The Bond and the Settlement of Shylock's claim through trial
- ❑ Elopement of Jessica with Lorenzo
- ❑ Final complication of the betrothal rings

Themes

- ❑ Love, Loyalty and Friendship
- ❑ Revenge vs. Mercy
- ❑ Love vs. greed
- ❑ Deceptive Appearances
- ❑ Racism, Anti-Semitism (prevalent in Elizabethan society)
- ❑ Usury (Banking and centrality of money)

Act I: A herald of upcoming events and conflicts

- ❑ Antonio's melancholic disposition
- ❑ The conditions of Portia's father's will
- ❑ Bassanio's requirement of a loan
- ❑ The conditions of the loan Shylock makes to Bassanio
- ❑ Shylock's reasons for hating Antonio

Outline of the Story

- ❑ Antonio stands security to the loan he gets from Shylock for Bassanio who needs it to court Portia.
- ❑ He signs the bond with a catch that if the money is not paid in the given time, he will forfeit one pound of his flesh
- ❑ Bassanio chooses the right casket with Portia's portrait in it and weds Portia
- ❑ Antonio's ships get lost, dashing his hopes of payment of loan money
- ❑ He is brought to the court by Shylock who demands justice (exacting the penalty as Antonio's flesh)
- ❑ Portia, disguised as a doctor of Law, finds a caveat of no bloodshed in the bond and facilitates Antonio's release
- ❑ Shylock is rendered bereft of his religion, money and honour

Shylock, a Jewish moneylender in Venice: Angered by his mistreatment at the hands of Venice's Christians, particularly Antonio, Shylock schemes to eke out his revenge by ruthlessly demanding as payment a pound of Antonio's flesh. Although seen by the rest of the play's characters as an inhuman monster, Shylock at times diverges from stereotype and reveals himself to be quite human. These contradictions, and his eloquent expressions of hatred, have earned Shylock a place as one of Shakespeare's most memorable characters.

Antonio, The "merchant" of the title, Antonio accepts a contract with Shylock that is the center of the play's action. The merchant whose love for his friend Bassanio prompts him to sign Shylock's contract and almost lose his life, Antonio is something of a mercurial figure, often inexplicably melancholy and, as Shylock points out, possessed of an incorrigible dislike of Jews. Nonetheless, Antonio is beloved of his friends and proves merciful to Shylock, albeit with conditions.

Portia, a quick witted, wealthy and beautiful heiress from Belmont. Bound by a clause in her father's will that forces her to marry whichever suitor chooses correctly among three caskets, Portia is nonetheless able to marry her true love, Bassanio. Far and away the cleverest of the play's characters, it is Portia, in the disguise of a young law clerk, who saves Antonio from Shylock's knife.

Bassanio, a gentleman of Venice and a kinsman and dear friend of Antonio: Bassanio's love for the wealthy Portia leads him to borrow money from Shylock with Antonio as his guarantor. An ineffectual businessman, Bassanio proves himself a worthy suitor, correctly identifying the casket that contains Portia's portrait.

Jessica, Shylock's daughter: Although she is Shylock's daughter, Jessica hates life in her father's house and elopes with the young Christian gentleman, Lorenzo. The fate of her soul is often in doubt: the play's characters wonder if her marriage can overcome the fact that she was born a Jew, and we wonder if her sale of a ring given to her father by her mother is excessively callous.

Gratiano, a friend of Bassanio: A coarse and garrulous young man, Gratiano is Shylock's most vocal and insulting critic during the trial. While Bassanio courts Portia, Gratiano falls in love with and eventually weds Portia's lady-in-waiting, Nerissa.

Lancelot Gobbo, Bassanio's servant: A comical, clownish figure that is especially adept at making puns, Lancelot leaves Shylock's service in order to work for Bassanio.

The prince of Morocco, a Moorish prince who seeks Portia's hand in marriage: The prince of Morocco asks Portia to ignore his dark countenance and seeks to win her by picking one of the three caskets. Certain that the caskets reflect Portia's beauty and stature, the prince of Morocco picks the gold chest, which proves to be incorrect.

The prince of Arragon, an arrogant Spanish nobleman who seeks Portia's hand in marriage: Like the prince of Morocco, the prince of Aragon chooses unwisely. He picks the silver casket, which gives him a message calling him an idiot instead granting him Portia's hand.

Points to Ponder

- Does the play expose Christian hypocrisy?
- How does Shakespeare treat the theme of love and friendship?
- Who is your favorite character and why?
- At the end of the play, Shylock is broken and humiliated.
 - He is forced to convert to Christianity, give half of his possessions to Antonio and pay a fine.
 - He loses everything that's important to him: his daughter, his money and his religion.
- Is the sentence against Shylock fair?
- Does the outcome of the trial confirm the philosophy expressed by Portia in her famous speech--that true justice must be measured with mercy? Does Shylock receive mercy?
- Does the audience rejoice in Shylock's defeat, or do we pity his downfall?
- Can the play be taken to be a plea to remove injustice and racial discrimination?

Literary Terms

Soliloquy

Allusion

Entendre(pun)

Foreshadowing

Internal Rhyme

Irony-Dramatic, Structural, Verbal

Malapropism

Metaphor

Comic Relief

Aside

Double

Pun