

Shakespeare Class      Assign # 2 for Merchant of Venice

**Directions: Print out the questions and answer them on the paper. Phrases and quotations are adequate. Bring the completed sheet to class with you on the FIRST CLASS to use in a graded discussion. Try to use quotations from the text when possible.**

Act 1

1. What important background is established in the first scene?
2. Does Shakespeare intend the audience to view Bassanio as a spendthrift and a “gold digger”?
3. Why, in scene 2, is Portia in such a melancholy mood?
4. Why does Shakespeare use the word *choose* so often in the second scene?
5. How is Portia characterized in scene 2?
6. In scene 2, why do Nerissa and Portia review the suitors who have initially come to court Portia?
7. Briefly summarize each suitor, and state Portia’s objections to each.
8. How do Shylock’s first words in scene 3 help to characterize him?
9. What is the point of Shylock’s comments about Antonio’s ships?
10. Why does Shylock refuse to eat with Antonio? Give specific reasons
11. What is the purpose of Shylock’s “aside” as Antonio approaches in scene 3?

12. What is ironic about Shylock's reference in scene 3 to feeding his grudge toward Antonio, and then greeting Antonio by saying that he was the last man in their mouths?
13. How does Shylock defend his practice of charging interest on loans?
14. Apart from the issue of usury, why does Shylock bear such a hatred for Antonio?
15. How does Antonio react to Shylock's expressions of resentment?
16. Can the audience believe Shylock when he says he would offer the hand of friendship to Antonio? (a simple "yes" or "no" will not suffice) Tell why or why not.
17. Why does Antonio agree to the terms of the "merry-bond" – that is, to forfeit one pound of flesh if the merchant fails to repay the borrowed money on time?
18. What does Bassanio's reluctance to allow Antonio to agree to Shylock's bond reveal about Bassanio?
19. As far as plot development is concerned, what is the importance of Antonio's agreeing to Shylock's bond?

## Act 2

1. How does the scene between Portia and the Prince of Morocco further what you know about Portia's character?

2. Why does Shakespeare split the episode of the Prince of Morocco's choice into episodes?
3. What is the function of Lancelet Gobbo in scene 2?
4. What new element of plot is added to the play in scene 3?
5. What is Lancelet's function in the Jessica/Lorenzo subplot?
6. Why is Shylock reluctant to sup with Bassanio?
7. What is ironic about Shylock's leaving his keys with his daughter? In his speech to her, what pronoun is used most often? What is Shakespeare trying to say in using that pronoun?
8. What does Shylock's attitude about music reveal about him?
9. Why is Shylock glad to see Lancelet leave Shylock's employ and go to work for Bassanio?
10. What are the pros and cons of Jessica's actions toward her father?
11. Jessica leaves dressed as a page (male). How is her attire a foreshadowing of later "switches" in the play? In what ways does mistaken identity add to a comedy?

12. In 2.7.53, when Gratiano says, “Now, by my hood, a gentle and no Jew,” what language device is Shakespeare using?
13. Trace the logic used by the Prince of Morocco when he makes his choice of casket.
13. What style of poem is used in the scroll inside the casket?
14. In scene 8, what worries Shylock most?
15. What is foreshadowed in Salarino’s speech in 2.8.28-34?
16. In addition to Bassanio, others also hold the Merchant of Venice (Antonio) in high regard. What specific lines tell the audience of Salarino’s admiration for Antonio?
17. Trace the logic used by the Prince of Arragon when he makes his choice of casket.
18. Is this scroll of poetry harsher than the first? What did Portia’s father wish to convey?
19. What point of suspense ends the second act?