

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act One, Scene One of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Bassanio is asking Antonio to lend him some money so he can try to win the casket task and marry her.

BASSANIO

In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft,
I shot his fellow of the self-same flight
The self-same way with more advised watch,
To find the other forth, and by adventuring both
I oft found both: I urge this childhood proof,
Because what follows is pure innocence.
I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,
That which I owe is lost; but if you please
To shoot another arrow that self way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,
As I will watch the aim, or to find both
Or bring your latter hazard back again
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

ANTONIO

You know me well, and herein spend but time
To wind about my love with circumstance;
And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
In making question of my uttermost
Than if you had made waste of all I have:
Then do but say to me what I should do
That in your knowledge may by me be done,
And I am prest unto it: therefore, speak.

BASSANIO

In Belmont is a lady richly left;
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages:
Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
For the four winds blow in from every coast

Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.
O my Antonio, had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind presages me such thrift,
That I should questionless be fortunate!

ANTONIO

Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
Neither have I money nor commodity
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;
Try what my credit can in Venice do:
That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
Where money is, and I no question make
To have it of my trust or for my sake.

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present the theme of love and friendship?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare presents love and friendship in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents love and friendship in the play as a whole.**

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act One, Scene Three of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play the money lending bond is agreed upon.

SHYLOCK

This kindness will I show.

Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,
If you repay me not on such a day,
In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit
Be nominated for an equal pound
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

ANTONIO

Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

BASSANIO

You shall not seal to such a bond for me:
I'll rather dwell in my necessity.

ANTONIO

Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it:
Within these two months, that's a month before
This bond expires, I do expect return
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

SHYLOCK

O father Abram, what these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others! Pray you, tell me this;
If he should break his day, what should I gain
By the exaction of the forfeiture?
A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I say,
To buy his favour, I extend this friendship:

If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

ANTONIO

Yes Shylock, I will seal unto this bond

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present Shylock and Antonio's bond?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare present the bond in in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents the bond in the play as a whole.**

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act Two, Scene Eight of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Salanio and Salarino are discussing Shylock's reaction to Jessica's elopement.

SALANIO

I never heard a passion so confused,
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
'My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter!
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
Of double ducats, stolen from me by my daughter!
And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,
Stolen by my daughter! Justice! find the girl;
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats.'

SALARINO

Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
Crying, his stones, his daughter, and his ducats.

SALANIO

Let good Antonio look he keep his day,
Or he shall pay for this.

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present Shylock's feelings about money?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare presents Shylock's feelings about money in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents Shylock's feelings about money in the play as a whole.**

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act Three, Scene One of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Shylock is discussing claiming his bond after he has discovered Antonio's ships have crashed and he can no longer pay him the money he owes him.

SHYLOCK

To bait fish withal: if 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 villany you
teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I
will better the instruction.

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present the theme of revenge?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare presents revenge in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents revenge in the play as a whole.**

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act Three, Scene Two of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Bassanio is in Belmont and is about to complete the love casket challenge so he can marry Portia.

BASSANIO

So may the outward shows be least themselves:

The world is still deceived with ornament.

In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt,

But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,

Obscures the show of evil? In religion,

What damned error, but some sober brow

Will bless it and approve it with a text,

Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?

There is no vice so simple but assumes

Some mark of virtue on his outward parts:

How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false

As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins

The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars;

Who, inward search'd, have livers white as milk;

And these assume but valour's excrement

To render them redoubted! Look on beauty,

And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight;

Which therein works a miracle in nature,

Making them lightest that wear most of it:

So are those crisped snaky golden locks

Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,

Upon supposed fairness, often known

To be the dowry of a second head,

The skull that bred them in the sepulchre.

Thus ornament is but the guiled shore

To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf

Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,

The seeming truth which cunning times put on

To entrap the wisest. Therefore, thou gaudy gold,

Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee;

Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge

'Tween man and man: but thou, thou meagre lead,

Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught,
Thy plainness moves me more than eloquence;
And here choose I; joy be the consequence!

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present a warning against dangerous desires?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare presents dangerous desires in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents dangerous desires in the play as a whole.**

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act Three, Scene Three of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Antonio is asking Shylock to show mercy but he is insistent that he wants to take his bond.

ANTONIO

Hear me yet, good Shylock.

SHYLOCK

I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond:

I have sworn an oath that I will have my bond.

Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause;

But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs:

The duke shall grant me justice. I do wonder,

Thou naughty gaoler, that thou art so fond

To come abroad with him at his request.

ANTONIO

I pray thee, hear me speak.

SHYLOCK

I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak:

I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more.

I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool,

To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield

To Christian intercessors. Follow not;

I'll have no speaking: I will have my bond.

Exit

SALARINO

It is the most impenetrable cur

That ever kept with men.

ANTONIO

Let him alone:

I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers.

He seeks my life; his reason well I know:

I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures

Many that have at times made moan to me;

Therefore he hates me.

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present power?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare presents power in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents power in the play as a whole.**

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act Four, Scene One of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Shylock is in court to take his bond from Antonio. The Duke is asking him to show mercy.

DUKE

Make room, and let him stand before our face.
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,
That thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice
To the last hour of act; and then 'tis thought
Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse more strange
Than is thy strange apparent cruelty;
And where thou now exact'st the penalty,
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,
Thou wilt not only loose the forfeiture,
But, touch'd with human gentleness and love,
Forgive a moiety of the principal;
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,
That have of late so huddled on his back,
Enow to press a royal merchant down
And pluck commiseration of his state
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd
To offices of tender courtesy.
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

SHYLOCK

I have possess'd your grace of what I purpose;
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
To have the due and forfeit of my bond:
If you deny it, let the danger light
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.
You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh than to receive
Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that:
But, say, it is my humour: is it answer'd?
What if my house be troubled with a rat
And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats
To have it baned? What, are you answer'd yet?
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: for affection,
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes or loathes. Now, for your answer:
As there is no firm reason to be render'd,
Why he cannot abide a gaping pig;
Why he, a harmless necessary cat;
Why he, a woollen bagpipe; but of force
Must yield to such inevitable shame
As to offend, himself being offended;
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd?

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present hatred?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare presents hatred in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents hatred in the play as a whole.**

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act Four, Scene One of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Shylock is in court to take his bond from Antonio. He is offered more money by Bassanio but refuses it.

BASSANIO

For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

SHYLOCK

What judgment shall I dread, doing
Were in six parts and every part a ducat,
I would not draw them; I would have my bond.

DUKE

How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

SHYLOCK

What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
You have among you many a purchased slave,
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts,
Because you bought them: shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
Why sweat they under burthens? let their beds
Be made as soft as yours and let their palates
Be season'd with such viands? You will answer
'The slaves are ours:' so do I answer you:
The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,
Is dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it.
If you deny me, fie upon your law!
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.
I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it?

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present the law?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare presents the law in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents the law in the play as a whole.**

GCSE English Literature - The Merchant of Venice Exam Question

Read the following extract from Act Four, Scene One of *The Merchant of Venice* and then answer the question that follows.

At this point in the play Shylock is in court and has lost his bond. Antonio is asked to decide his punishment.

PORTIA

Tarry, Jew:

The law hath yet another hold on you.

It is enacted in the laws of Venice,

If it be proved 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.

In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st;

For it appears, by manifest proceeding,

That indirectly and directly too

Thou hast contrived against the very life

Of the defendant; and thou hast incurr'd

The danger formerly by me rehearsed.

Down therefore and beg mercy of the duke.

GRATIANO

Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself:

And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the state,

Thou hast not left the value of a cord;

Therefore thou must be hang'd at the state's charge.

DUKE

That thou shalt see the difference of our spirits,

I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it:

For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's;

The other half comes to the general state,

Which humbleness may drive unto a fine.

PORTIA

Ay, for the state, not for Antonio.

SHYLOCK

Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:

You take my house when you do take the prop

That doth sustain my house; you take my life
When you do take the means whereby I live.

PORTIA

What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

GRATIANO

A halter gratis; nothing else, for God's sake.

ANTONIO

So please my lord the duke and all the court
To quit the fine for one half of his goods,
I am content; so he will let me have
The other half in use, to render it,
Upon his death, unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter:
Two things provided more, that, for this favour,
He presently become a Christian;
The other, that he do record a gift,
Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd,
Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

Starting with this speech, how does Shakespeare present the treatment of Shylock?

Write about:

- **How Shakespeare presents the treatment of Shylock in this speech.**
- **How Shakespeare presents the treatment of Jews and Shylock in the play as a whole.**