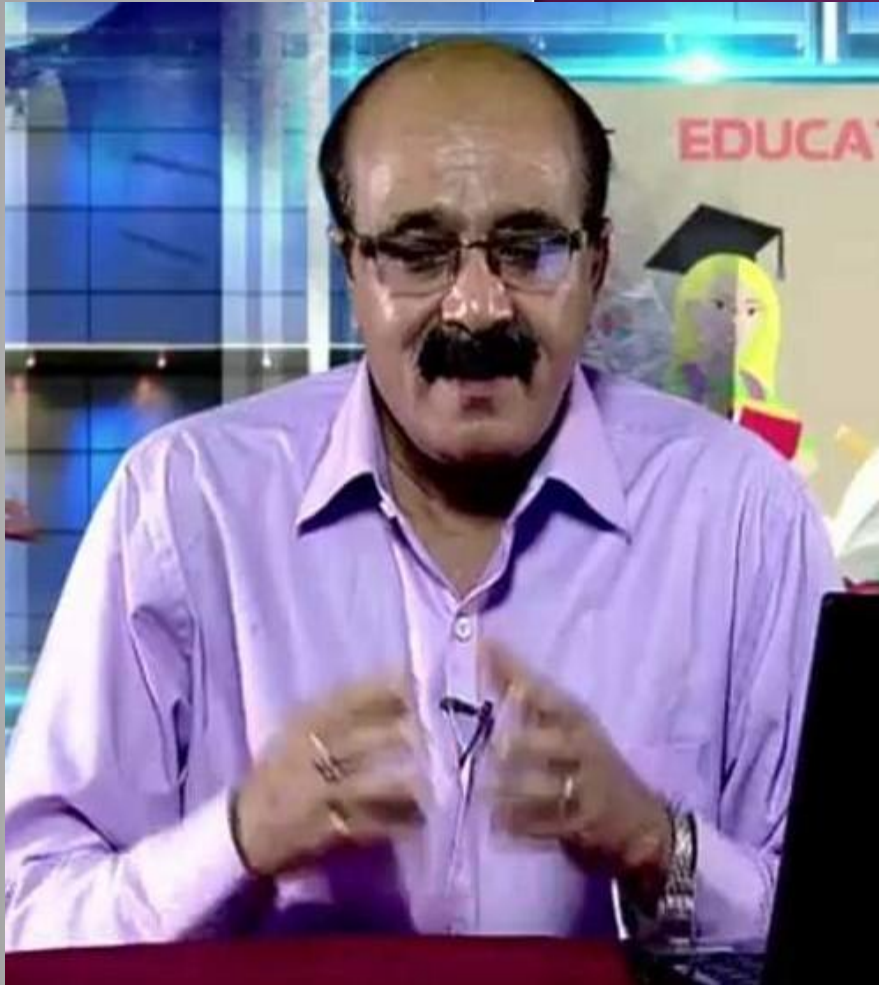


The Merchant of Venice : William Shakespeare



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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE: A PLAY BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

- ◉ **Title of the play:** The Merchant of Venice
- ◉ **Name of the playwright/ dramatist :**
William Shakespeare
- ◉ **Type of drama:** Romantic Comedy/ Poetic drama
- ◉ **Class:** B.A. I/ BCA I/BBM I (English)
- ◉ **Paper:** Subsidiary

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE : BRIEF INTRODUCTION

- ◉ *The Merchant of Venice* probably written in either 1596 or 1597, after *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III*, but before the great tragedies
- ◉ Its basic plot outline is found in a number of contemporary Italian story collections -
 - the characters of the merchant
 - the poor suitor,
 - the fair lady, and
 - the villainous Jew -
- ◉ Shakespeare borrowed several details such as the choice of caskets
- ◉ Italian setting and marriage plot - typical of Shakespeare's earlier comedies
- ◉ Play elevated to a new level because of -
- ◉ the character of Portia, Shakespeare's first great heroine, and
- ◉ the unforgettable villain Shylock

PLOT: HOW THE PLAY BEGINS

- Antonio, a Venetian merchant, complains to his friends of a melancholy that he cannot explain
- His friend Bassanio is needs money to go to Belmont to marry Portia, a wealthy heiress
- Bassanio asks Antonio for a loan
- Antonio unable to make the loan himself -
 - His money invested in a number of trade ships that are still at sea
- suggests Bassanio to secure the loan from one of the city's moneylenders and name Antonio as the loan's guarantor

PLOT: PORTIA'S SADNESS

- ◉ At Belmont, Portia expresses sadness over the terms of her father's will
- ◉ According to the will -
 - she must marry the man who correctly chooses one of three caskets
- ◉ None of Portia's current suitors are to her liking
- ◉ she and her lady-in-waiting, Nerissa, fondly remember a visit paid some time before by Bassanio

PLOT: BOND FOR THE LOAN

- Antonio and Bassanio approach Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, for a loan
- Shylock has been nursing a grudge against Antonio for a long time, because : .
 - Antonio always criticised Shylock and other Jews
 - Was against the practice of loaning money at very high rates of interest
 - affects their business by offering interest-free loans
 - Has publicly insulted Shylock several times
- Shylock offers to lend Bassanio three thousand ducats with no interest
- Condition of the loan -
 - should the loan go unpaid, Shylock will be entitled to a pound of Antonio's own flesh
- Despite Bassanio's warnings, Antonio signs the bond

PLOT: SHYLOCK'S DAUGHTER ELOPES

- ◉ Shylock's servant Launcelot leaves Shylock to work for Bassanio
- ◉ Shylock's daughter Jessica elopes with Antonio's friend Lorenzo
- ◉ Shylock furious
- ◉ But rejoices that Antonio's ships are rumoured to have been wrecked - his chance to claim his debt
- ◉ Bassanio and his friend Gratiano already left for Belmont
- ◉ Meanwhile, in Belmont, Portia welcomes the prince of Morocco
- ◉ The prince studies the inscriptions on the three caskets - chooses the gold one - wrong choice

PLOT: BASSANIO SUCCEEDS

- ◉ the prince of Arragon picks the silver one
- wrong choice
- ◉ Bassanio arrives at Portia's estate
- ◉ they declare their love for each other
- ◉ Portia's request to wait before choosing
- ◉ Bassanio immediately picks the correct casket - made of lead
- ◉ He and Portia rejoice
- ◉ Gratiano confesses to have fallen in love with Nerissa

PLOT: CELEBRATING & THE NEWS

- decide on a double wedding
- Portia gives Bassanio a ring as a token of love
- makes him swear that under no circumstances will he part with it
- Lorenzo and Jessica join them unexpectedly
- The celebration is cut short -
 - the news that Antonio has indeed lost his ships
 - he has forfeited his bond to Shylock
- Bassanio and Gratiano immediately rush to Venice
- After their departure, Portia tells Nerissa that they will go to Venice disguised as men

PLOT: TESTING TIMES

- ◉ Shylock ignores the pleas to spare Antonio's life
- ◉ a trial is called
- ◉ The duke of Venice to presides over the trial -
- ◉ sends for a legal expert -
- ◉ Portia disguised as a young man of law comes as a substitute for that legal expert
- ◉ Portia asks Shylock to show mercy
- ◉ Shylock remains inflexible -
 - insists the pound of flesh is rightfully his
- ◉ Bassanio offers Shylock twice the money
- ◉ Shylock insists on collecting the bond as it is written

PLOT: PORTIA AND THE BOND

- ◉ Portia examines the contract
- ◉ finds it legally binding
- ◉ declares that Shylock is entitled to the merchant's flesh
- ◉ Shylock ecstatically praises her wisdom
- ◉ proceeds to collect his due
- ◉ Portia reminds him that he must do so without causing Antonio to bleed -
 - the contract does not entitle him to any blood
- ◉ Shylock trapped by this logic-
 - hastily agrees to take Bassanio's money instead
- ◉ Portia denies : take your bond as written, or nothing at all
- ◉ Portia's verdict:
 - Shylock guilty of conspiring against the life of a Venetian citizen -
 - must turn over half of his property to the state and the other half to Antonio.

PLOT: ANTONIO'S KINDNESS

- ◉ The duke spares Shylock's life
- ◉ accepts a fine instead of Shylock's property
- ◉ Antonio forgoes his half of Shylock's wealth on two conditions:
 - first, Shylock must convert to Christianity
 - second, he must will the entirety of his estate to Lorenzo and Jessica upon his death
- ◉ Shylock agrees and takes his leave

PLOT: DEVELOPMENT AFTER SUCCESS

- ◉ Bassanio does not recognise Portia
- ◉ expresses his gratitude
- ◉ eventually has to give Portia the ring with which he promised never to part
- ◉ Gratiano has to give his ring to Nerissa, now disguised as Portia's clerk
- ◉ The two women return to Belmont -
 - find Lorenzo and Jessica declaring their love to each other under the moonlight

REUNION AT BELMONT

- ◉ Bassanio and Gratiano arrive the next day -
- ◉ their wives accuse them of faithlessly giving their rings to other women
- ◉ Portia reveals that she was the law clerk
- ◉ she and Nerissa reconcile with their husbands
- ◉ Lorenzo and Jessica are pleased to learn of their inheritance from Shylock
- ◉ the joyful news of the safe arrival of Antonio's ships
- ◉ good fortune celebrated

LET'S SUM UP: A ROMANTIC COMEDY

- ◉ true to the spirit of a romantic comedy, ends in happiness
- ◉ contains all the elements of a Shakespearean comedy -
 - Lovers pine and are reunited
 - a foolish servant makes endless series of puns
 - genteel women masquerade as men
- ◉ All these - defining marks of Shakespearean comedy

LET'S SUM UP : THE DEVIATION

- ◉ Shylock and his quest for a pound of flesh provides a generous share of the tragic
- ◉ light language of the play's comedic moments disappears for whole scenes at a time
- ◉ Antonio's fate more suspenseful than funny
- ◉ The final act redeems the play's claims to be a comedy -
 - piling on the necessary humour and serendipity -
- ◉ rest of the play is overcast by the fear that Antonio may soon pay Bassanio's debt with his life

Thank

You!