

A servant announces that the suitors are about to leave, and that another, the Prince of Morocco, will soon arrive. In Venice, Bassanio tries to borrow money from Shylock.

1 Hints of love – and hate? (in pairs)

a Love? In performance, most actors playing Portia use the few words she speaks about Bassanio to show that she is already deeply attracted to him, but tries not to show it. Take turns to speak lines 95 and 98–9 in ways to bring out that impression. Afterwards, talk together about whether you think this makes Portia more interesting to the audience and is dramatically effective.

b Hate? Speak lines 105–8 and then talk together about what they suggest to you about Portia. Your response to Activity 2 on page 16 is relevant here.

2 First read-through (in groups of three)

Scene 3 introduces Shylock. The best thing to do first is to take parts as Shylock, Bassanio and Antonio and speak the whole scene. Don't pause over anything you don't understand. Just read through to gain a first impression of Shylock and the 'bond'. Afterwards, work on some of the activities provided.

3 Shylock: repetitions (in pairs)

Shylock's first words are about money. Take parts and read lines 1–12. Notice that words are repeated and echoed ('three', 'well', 'bound'). Experiment with different ways of sparring verbally in these lines. Sometimes the lines are played in a 'cat and mouse' fashion as Shylock keeps testing Bassanio's patience. Who do you think controls this exchange?

Act 1 Scene 3 - Introducing Shylock

forerunner messenger
condition character
complexion . . . **devil** Elizabethans believed that devils were black
I had . . . **wive me** I would rather he be my priest than my husband

sirrah my man
ducats gold coins, coins of the duke
shall be bound will have to repay
Have . . . **contrary?** Have you heard differently?

PORTIA Yes, yes, it was Bassanio! – as I think so was he called. 95
 NERISSA True, madam; he of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon was the best deserving a fair lady.
 PORTIA I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

Enter a SERVINGMAN

How now, what news? 100
 SERVINGMAN The four strangers seek for you, madam, to take their leave; and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the prince his master will be here tonight.

PORTIA If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach. If he have the condition of a saint, and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me. 105

Come, Nerissa; sirrah, go before:

Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer, another knocks at the door 110

Exeunt

Act 1 Scene 3

Venice

Enter BASSANIO with SHYLOCK the Jew

SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats, well.
 BASSANIO Ay, sir, for three months.
 SHYLOCK For three months, well.
 BASSANIO For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.
 SHYLOCK Antonio shall become bound, well. 5
 BASSANIO May you stead me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your answer?
 SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound.
 BASSANIO Your answer to that? 10
 SHYLOCK Antonio is a good man –
 BASSANIO Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

Shylock doubts the security of Antonio's ships, but seems willing to lend the money. He tells the audience that he hates Antonio for a variety of reasons, and intends to harm him if he can.

1 Focus on Shylock (in pairs)

- a Making a joke** Look carefully at lines 18–21. Shylock plays on the words 'rats' and 'pirates'. Is he making a joke of it? Take it in turns to read the lines aloud, first seriously, and then jokingly. How should Bassanio respond?
- b An invitation to dinner** How should Shylock speak lines 27–31? On stage they are often performed as sincere and serious, but is he still being playful and joking with Bassanio? Talk about how you think they should be delivered.
- c Shylock's hatred of Antonio** An *Aside* is a remark made by a character to the audience. By convention it is unheard by the other people on stage. One reads aloud Shylock's *Aside* in lines 33–44; the other echoes words which show Shylock's hatred for Antonio. Try this several times, then talk together about why Shylock hates Antonio so passionately.

2 Now it's Antonio's turn!

What if at this point Shakespeare had also written an *Aside* for Antonio to voice his feelings about Shylock? Try writing one yourself, but first look at lines 40–3, where Shylock describes Antonio's view of him and his race. The 2004 film of the play opened with a sequence in which Antonio was seen spitting on Shylock.

Try to write Antonio's *Aside* in the same style and rhythm as Shylock's (see p. 184).

good financially sound
supposition doubt
Rialto Stock Exchange of Venice
squandered scattered
bethink me think carefully about this
to eat . . . devil into to eat pig which Jesus conjured devils into from madmen's minds (see Matthew 8: 28–32)

publican taxman
gratis without charging interest
rate of usance rate of interest
upon the hip in a weak spot
rails criticises
thrift profit
I am . . . store I'm working out how much ready cash I've got

SHYLOCK Ho no, no, no, no: my meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I understand moreover upon the Rialto he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land rats, and water rats, water thieves and land thieves – I mean pirates – and then there is the peril of waters, winds and rocks. The man is notwithstanding sufficient. Three thousand ducats: I think I may take his bond. 15

BASSANIO Be assured you may.

SHYLOCK I will be assured I may; and that I may be assured, I will bethink me – may I speak with Antonio? 20

BASSANIO If it please you to dine with us –

SHYLOCK Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here? 25 30

Enter ANTONIO

BASSANIO This is Signor Antonio.

SHYLOCK [*Aside*] How like a fawning publican he looks!

I hate him for he is a Christian;
 But more, for that in low simplicity
 He lends out money gratis, and brings down
 The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
 If I can catch him once upon the hip,
 I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
 He hates our sacred nation, and he rails
 Even there where merchants most do congregate
 On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift
 Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe
 If I forgive him! 35 40

BASSANIO Shylock, do you hear?

SHYLOCK I am debating of my present store,
 And by the near guess of my memory
 I cannot instantly raise up the gross
 Of full three thousand ducats. What of that? 45

Shylock gently taunts Antonio for his past opposition to charging interest. He tells a story from the Bible to show the benefits of profiting by lending.

1 Veiled contempt? (in pairs)

This is the first exchange between Antonio and Shylock in the play (see picture at top of p. v). Actors like to use these lines to show how the relationship is strained, with enmity and loathing barely under control on both sides. Antonio dislikes both Jews and money-lending, but he has to ask Shylock for a loan. Choose parts and read aloud lines 56–62. Pause after each sentence to voice the secret thoughts of your character. (This is like speaking the thought bubbles in a comic strip.)

2 Jacob and his sheep

Shylock uses a Bible story (Book of Genesis chapter 30) to justify his way of doing business. Jacob, a descendant of Abraham, agreed to look after his Uncle Laban’s sheep. In return he could keep any new-born lambs which were streaked or multicoloured. During the mating season he made a fence of branches (‘wands’) partly stripped (‘pilled’) of their bark, so that the ewes would see the fence when they conceived (it was believed that offspring resemble what the mother sees at conception). As a result of Jacob’s ingenuity, a large number of streaked lambs were born, which he could keep for himself.

- a Shylock’s insistence that ‘thrift is blessing’ makes a clear connection between religion and profit. Shylock’s story can be difficult to follow, but speak it like a developing logical argument ending in a very emphatic conclusion in lines 81–2.
- b Make a tableau to show Bassanio’s and Antonio’s reaction to Shylock’s long tale (Antonio’s verbal response is on the next page).

in our mouths we mentioned (Does it also refer to Shylock’s verbal savaging of Antonio?)
I neither . . . excess I don’t lend or borrow for profit
ripe wants urgent needs
Is he . . . would? Does he know how much you want?

compromised agreed
eanlings new-born lambs
hire wages
rank ready to mate
work of generation mating
And in . . . kind during mating
fulsome ewes randy sheep

Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
 Will furnish me. But soft, how many months 50
 Do you desire? [*To Antonio*] Rest you fair, good signor!
 Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

ANTONIO Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow
 By taking nor by giving of excess,
 Yet to supply the ripe wants of my friend 55
 I’ll break a custom. [*To Bassanio*] Is he yet possessed
 How much ye would?

SHYLOCK Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.
 ANTONIO And for three months.
 SHYLOCK I had forgot, three months; [*To Bassanio*] you told me so.
 Well then, your bond; and let me see – but hear you, 60
 Methoughts you said you neither lend nor borrow
 Upon advantage.

ANTONIO I do never use it.
 SHYLOCK When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban’s sheep –
 This Jacob from our holy Abram was 65
 (As his wise mother wrought in his behalf)
 The third possessor; ay, he was the third –

ANTONIO And what of him, did he take interest?
 SHYLOCK No, not take interest, not as you would say
 Directly interest. Mark what Jacob did:
 When Laban and himself were compromised 70
 That all the eanlings which were streaked and pied
 Should fall as Jacob’s hire, the ewes being rank
 In end of autumn turned to the rams,
 And when the work of generation was 75
 Between these woolly breeders in the act,
 The skilful shepherd pilled me certain wands
 And in the doing of the deed of kind
 He stuck them up before the fulsome ewes,
 Who then conceiving, did in eaning time
 Fall parti-coloured lambs, and those were Jacob’s. 80
 This was a way to thrive, and he was blest;
 And thrift is blessing if men steal it not.

Antonio is not convinced by Shylock's argument. He warns Bassanio not to be deceived by the Jew's use of the Bible. Shylock reminds Antonio of the contemptuous way he has been treated in the past.

1 Expressions of scorn

Antonio contemptuously dismisses Shylock's parable, ignores Shylock's joke in line 88, and interrupts him to warn Bassanio against Bible-quoting villains.

- a In some productions, Shylock overhears Antonio's lines 89–94. In others he does not. Which of these stagings do you think would have the greatest dramatic effect? Why?
- b Is 'The devil' meant to be Shylock, or Lucifer himself?
- c Shakespeare often used the image of the smiling villain, for example in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *Richard III*. Suggest why Antonio calls Shylock 'a villain with a smiling cheek'.

2 Shylock versus Antonio (in pairs)

- a Take turns to speak and perform Shylock's lines 98–121 to each other. Experiment with different tones of voice, gestures and the positioning of the two enemies. Emphasise key words and phrases. In one production, Shylock stood face to face with Antonio. In another, Shylock lay relaxed on cushions and spoke in a half-amused tone. In yet another, Shylock sneered at and mocked Antonio as he circled him, whining in mockery of his reply. Work out what you think is the most appropriate staging.
- b Make a list of Shylock's grievances against Antonio.
- c Select what you think is the image or line that most tellingly captures Shylock's anger against his Christian tormentors. Say why you think it is so revealing.

This was . . . heaven	God was responsible for Jacob's good luck	rated	insulted
inserted	mentioned	gaberdine	coat
holy witness	evidence from the Bible	void your rheum	spit
beholding	indebted	stranger cur	stray dog
		bondman's key	slave's voice

ANTONIO This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for,
 A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
 But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven. 85
 Was this inserted to make interest good?
 Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

SHYLOCK I cannot tell, I make it breed as fast.
 But note me, signor –

ANTONIO Mark you this, Bassanio,
 The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose. 90
 An evil soul producing holy witness
 Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
 A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
 O what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

SHYLOCK Three thousand ducats, 'tis a good round sum. 95
 Three months from twelve, then let me see, the rate –

ANTONIO Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

SHYLOCK Signor Antonio, many a time and oft
 In the Rialto you have rated me
 About my monies and my usances. 100
 Still have I borne it with a patient shrug
 For suff'rance is the badge of all our tribe.
 You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
 And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
 And all for use of that which is mine own. 105
 Well then, it now appears you need my help.
 Go to, then, you come to me, and you say,
 'Shylock, we would have monies' – you say so,
 You that did void your rheum upon my beard,
 And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur 110
 Over your threshold: monies is your suit.
 What should I say to you? Should I not say
 'Hath a dog money? Is it possible
 A cur can lend three thousand ducats?' Or
 Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key, 115
 With bated breath and whisp'ring humbleness,
 Say this:
 'Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last,
 You spurned me such a day, another time
 You called me dog: and for these courtesies 120
 I'll lend you thus much monies.'

Antonio remains contemptuous, but Shylock claims to want his friendship, offering not to charge interest on the loan. Instead, if Antonio fails to pay, Shylock will take a pound of his flesh.

1 Shylock backs down (in pairs)

Take parts and read lines 122–35. Imagine you are directing the play. Write notes for the actors about how they could speak these lines to achieve greatest dramatic effect. How angry (if at all) should Antonio be? Why does Shylock seem to back down and claim he wishes friendship and love?

2 Friends don't profit from each other

Antonio's reply to Shylock's taunting (lines 122–9) reveals his deep prejudice against Shylock and his money-lending ways. Friends should not take advantage of each other by charging interest ('A breed for barren metal') and making money from money. Talk together about what you think are the rights and wrongs of charging interest.

3 The 'single bond' – 'a merry sport'?

Shylock proposes 'a merry sport': if Antonio cannot repay the loan, he must forfeit a pound of his flesh.

- Imagine you are the notary. Write your own version of the bond between Shylock and Antonio. This bond is a formal business document, so use appropriate language. Include all the agreed terms of the loan, and add the signatures of both parties and witnesses.
- There has been argument for centuries about whether or not Shylock thinks up 'the pound of flesh' on the spur of the moment, or whether he had it in mind earlier. What do you think? There is also argument over whether, at this moment, he intends it seriously or just as 'a merry sport'. Join in the debate! But first try different ways of speaking lines 136–44 to test out these various views – which interpretation of the lines seems most plausible and effective to you?

take . . . friend make money from
lending to a friend
break goes bankrupt
no doit / Of usance not one penny of
interest

notary lawyer
in a merry sport just for a joke
I'll . . . necessity I'd rather stay in debt
exaction . . . forfeiture demanding
the forfeit (the pound of flesh)

- ANTONIO I am as like to call thee so again,
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friends, for when did friendship take
A breed for barren metal of his friend? 125
But lend it rather to thine enemy,
Who if he break, thou mayst with better face
Exact the penalty.
- SHYLOCK Why look you how you storm! 130
I would be friends with you, and have your love,
Forget the shames that you have stained me with,
Supply your present wants, and take no doit
Of usance for my monies, and you'll not hear me.
This is kind I offer.
- BASSANIO This were kindness. 135
- 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 140
Expressed 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, in faith! I'll seal to such a bond, 145
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. 150
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: 155
If he should break his day what should I gain
By the exaction of the forfeiture?

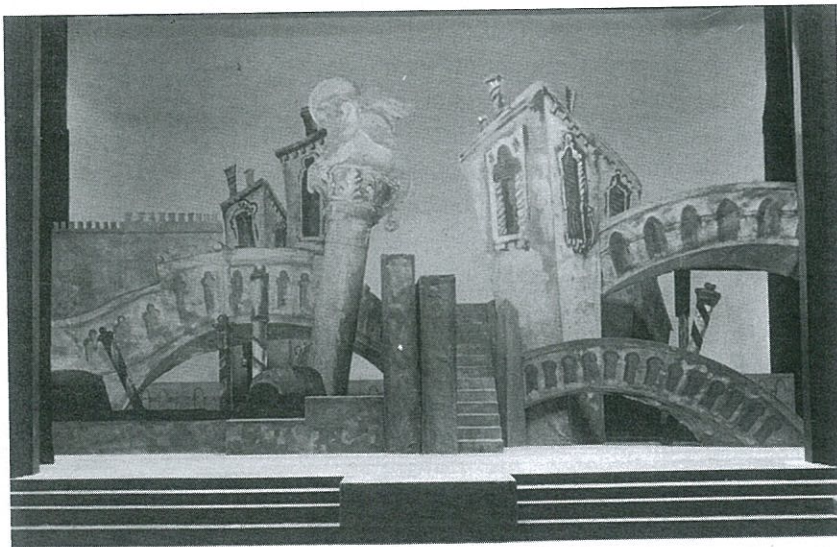
Shylock insists that he can gain nothing from the deal except Antonio's friendship. Antonio agrees to the terms, and Shylock leaves to fetch the money. Bassanio is still uneasy about the contract.

1 'A pound of man's flesh' – 'this friendship' (in pairs)

Activity 3 on page 26 invited your views on whether Shylock is serious or not in proposing the pound of flesh as bond. Shylock now makes light of the forfeit and again describes the bond as 'merry'. What non-verbal actions would you give to Shylock to accompany his lines 158–62?

2 A rhyming couplet for Shylock

The last four lines (171–4) are rhyming couplets (they rhyme in pairs). Write your own rhyming couplet as two exit lines for Shylock in which he comments on the bond.



Look closely at this 1932 set design for the Rialto. It can be either the Stock Exchange or a bridge, depending on the director's intentions. Talk about what this set suggests about life in Venice. How does it fit in with the ideas you have so far developed about the city as presented in the play?

muttons, beefs sheep and cattle
adieu goodbye

unthrifty knave careless servant
presently immediately

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.

160

ANTONIO Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

SHYLOCK Then meet me forthwith at the notary's.

165

Give him direction for this merry bond,
And I will go and purse the ducats straight,
See to my house left in the fearful guard
Of an unthrifty knave, and presently
I'll be with you.

Exit

ANTONIO Hie thee, gentle Jew.

170

The Hebrew will turn Christian, he grows kind.

BASSANIO I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

ANTONIO Come on, in this there can be no dismay,

My ships come home a month before the day.

Exeunt