

Genre

1	Shakespeare an Comedy	A play which involves dramatic and comedic moments usually involving a happy ending often a marriage.
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Plot Summary

1	Act 1: Exposition	In, Venice, Antonio is unhappy. Despite owing his best friend a lot of money, Bassanio asks Antonio to fund his trip to Belmont to woo Portia. Shylock (who is Jewish) is angry at Christians' treatment. He lends Antonio money to support Bassanio. He demands a pound of Antonio's flesh if he doesn't pay him back promptly. In Belmont, Portia longs for a good husband but her father has set up a test for any suitor- they must choose between a casket of gold, silver or lead one of which will contain Portia's portrait.
2	Act 2: Inciting Incident	In Venice, Jessica (Shylock's daughter) is rescued from her house by Lorenzo (her lover) and his friends. She takes money from him upsetting Shylock. In Belmont, the Prince of Morocco chooses a gold casket. The Prince of Aragon chooses silver. Neither is right and Portia remains single.
3	Act 3: Breaking Point	In Venice, Antonio's ships have sunk meaning he can't pay Shylock; Shylock demands his pound of flesh. In Belmont, Bassanio makes the correct choice of a lead casket. Portia is pleased and they marry. Gratiano (Bassanio's friend) and Nerissa (Portia's lady in waiting) also agree to marry. Portia and Nerissa decide to dress up as men to travel to Venice and help Antonio.
4	Act 4: Climax	In Venice, Shylock refuses to show mercy in the trial leaving Antonio facing death. Dressed as a lawyer, Portia enters the court and tells Shylock that spilling Antonio's blood would be criminal; Shylock is forced to become Christian. Portia and Nerissa, still disguised, trick their husbands into giving away their wedding rings.
5	Act 5: Resolution	In Belmont, the main characters are reunited. Portia and Nerissa reveal themselves and chastise their husbands saying they have been unfaithful for giving away their wedding rings. Antonio's ships arrive in Venice miraculously.

Characters

1	Antonio	A wealthy Venetian merchant who occasionally lends money, but never charges interest. Since his main source of income is from his merchant ships, he is the "merchant" of the play's title.	4	Jessica	The daughter of Shylock; she falls in love with Lorenzo. Jessica disguised as a boy, they elope.
			5	Lorenzo	A friend of Antonio and Bassanio; he woos and wins the love of Jessica.
2	Bassanio	A typical Elizabethan lover, who is careless with his money; he has to borrow from Antonio so that he can woo Portia in style.	6	Gratiano	A light-hearted, friend of Bassanio, who accompanies him to Belmont; there, he falls in love with Portia's lady in waiting, Nerissa.
3	Portia	Intelligent, witty, beautiful and wealthy, she is anguished that her father has decreed she must marry only the man who chooses the single casket of three which contains her portrait.	7	Shylock	An intelligent businessman who believes that, since he is a moneylender, charging interest is his right. If Antonio is late to pay his debt, he said he would demand a pound of his flesh.

Context

1	Role of Women	Wealthy Fathers decided who their daughters should marry & women had little control over their personal lives.
2	Anti-Semitism	Many European countries restricted the rights of Jewish people and were prejudiced towards them.
3	Money Lending (Usury)	Charging interest on money leant (usury) was considered against Christian values.

Themes

1	Love	Love is presented as complicated in the play. E.g. Portia is tied by her father's test of caskets and Bassanio tries to use money to woo Portia,
2	Mercy	The question of who is or is not merciful in the play runs throughout the play. E.g. Shylock shows no mercy to Antonio through pursuing his 'pound or flesh'.
3	Prejudice	The Venetians are intolerant towards Shylock and the other Jews in Venice. Being anti-Semitic seems to bond people together in the play.

Key Vocabulary

1	Persecution	Hostility or cruel treatment towards someone race or political or religious beliefs
2	Masquerade	To pretend to be someone who you are not.
3	Quest	A long arduous search for something.
4	Justice	The principle that people get what they deserve.
5	Avarice	Extreme greed for wealth or material gain.