SHOWTIME READERS

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

William Shakespeare
retold by Virginia Evans · Jenny Dooley

Express Publishing

The Characters

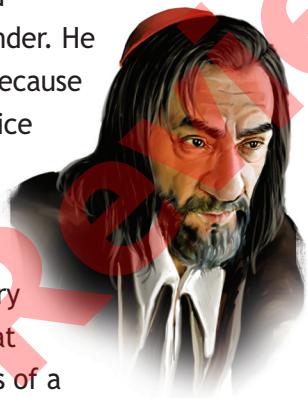
ANTONIO

Antonio is a rich merchant. He makes his money by trade – buying and selling things in other countries. He is a good man and always tries to help people. However, this can get him into serious trouble.

BASSANIO

Bassanio is Antonio's best friend, and he is the romantic hero of this story. He wants to marry Portia, and he asks Antonio to help him win her love. Bassanio is a loyal friend, but he is young, and likes to spend a lot of money.

SHYLOCK



Shylock is a rich and successful moneylender. He has a difficult life because many people in Venice have no respect for moneylenders. Shylock is very fond of money. He is angry because people treat him badly. He thinks of a clever and terrible plan to hurt Antonio.

PORTIA

Portia is the heroine of the story. She is a rich and beautiful woman, and she is also very clever. She loves Bassanio very much, and when he is in trouble, she will do everything she can to help him and his friend.

NERISSA

Nerissa is Portia's maid, and they are also good friends. Nerissa listens to Portia's problems and always gives her sensible advice. She is very understanding and has a good sense of humour.

GRATIANO

Gratiano is one of Bassanio's best friends. He admires Bassanio very much and likes to do everything Bassanio does. He is completely loyal to Bassanio, and is always ready to help him.

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LORENZO

Lorenzo is one of Bassanio and Antonio's friends. He is in love with Shylock's daughter, Jessica, and they decide to run away together and get married. Shylock is very angry when he finds out.

JESSICA

Jessica is Shylock's daughter. She is unhappy because she hates living with her father. She does not want to be his daughter because she thinks he is mean and unkind. Jessica runs away with Lorenzo, and takes some of Shylock's money and jewels with her, which makes her father very upset.

SALARINO AND SALANIO

Salarino and Salanio are Antonio's friends. They are very fond of Antonio, and they try to cheer him up when he is worried about his ships. They become very worried when they hear about a ship sinking at sea because they believe that Antonio will lose all of his money.

THE DUKE OF VENICE

The Duke of Venice is the ruler of the city where Antonio and Shylock live, and he is the judge in the court case between Antonio and Shylock. He is very wise. The Duke must decide what to do when Antonio cannot pay Shylock, but it is a very difficult situation.

LAUNCELOT

Launcelot is Shylock's servant. He is a kind man, and he is a good friend to Jessica. He makes her laugh, and he also helps her to escape from Shylock's house and run away with Lorenzo.

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1. A Good Friend

A merchant called Antonio lived in Venice. He had plenty of money, but he was not a very happy person. He was very kind, however, and many people turned to him for help when they were in trouble. He was always willing to lend people money when they needed it. People were happy to borrow money from Antonio because he never charged them interest. The people of Venice liked and respected Antonio, but his best friend of all was Bassanio. Bassanio was younger than Antonio and came from a good family. He did not have much money, but he had expensive tastes. Antonio was always happy to lend Bassanio money whenever he needed it. Bassanio had borrowed a lot of money from his friend over the years, but Antonio did not mind. Anything Bassanio wanted, Antonio would give him.

The only person that Antonio did not get on with was Shylock, the moneylender. Shylock's job was to lend people money, and he charged them interest because he had to make a profit. People did not like paying interest, so they often borrowed money from Antonio, instead of Shylock. Naturally, this made Shylock angry. Antonio thought that it was wrong to charge interest. They did not like each other at all. Whenever they met, they argued.

One morning, Antonio was walking by the canal when he met his friend Bassanio.

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"Antonio, my friend, I must ask for your help again," Bassanio said.

"Of course," replied Antonio. "You know I will help in any way I can."

"I know I've borrowed a lot of money already," Bassanio said. "But now I have a plan. If it succeeds, I will be able to pay you all I owe."

Antonio smiled. He knew his friend had met a beautiful woman.

"Please tell me all about your plan," he said.

"In Belmont, there is a very wealthy lady," Bassanio said. "Her name is Portia. She is beautiful, and I know she loves me."

"But do you love her, too?" Antonio asked.

"Oh yes, I do. I want to marry her," Bassanio replied. "That's why I need to borrow money. I want to go to Belmont to propose. When we marry, I will be very rich. I will pay you back everything I owe."

"Oh Bassanio, I am not worried about that," Antonio said sadly. "But at this moment I have no money to give. All the ships I own are at sea, and I have no money until they return."

"Oh, I see. Of course, I understand," Bassanio said.

He tried to smile because he didn't want his friend to see how sad he was.

"But I want to help you, and I will," said Antonio, more cheerfully. "You can use my name to borrow from a moneylender. Let us go and see what we can find."

Episode 7

Before Reading

1 **Look at the first picture. Why do you think Bassanio looks worried?**

2 **Look at the title and the second picture. Who is Portia speaking to? What is she holding in her hand? How could this be connected to the title?**

While Reading

3 **Read or listen to the episode and answer the questions.**

1 Why is Antonio in trouble?
2 What does Portia tell Bassanio to do?
3 Who does Portia write a letter to?
4 Who delivers the letter for Portia?
5 What will Bellario send Portia?
6 What are Portia and Nerissa going to do?

After Reading

4 **In pairs, answer the questions.**

1 How do you think Bassanio feels when he hears Antonio's news? Why?
2 Why does Portia write to Bellario?
3 Do you think Portia's plan will work? Why (not)?
4 What do you think is going to happen in the next episode?

Episode 8

Before Reading

1 **Which of these things can you see in the first picture?**

- knife • gun • bell • scales
- candles • arch • black shirt
- bag of gold • moustache
- wooden door • hallway
- stained glass window

2 **Look at the title and the pictures. What do you think is happening?**

While Reading

3 **Read or listen to the episode and say who the words in bold refer to.**

1 **He** is the judge.
2 **He** wants his payment.
3 **She** speaks to the court.
4 **He** is impatient.
5 **He** is a murderer.
6 **He** lets Shylock live.

After Reading

4 **Discuss in pairs:**

- Why doesn't Shylock want the money?
- How does Portia save Antonio?
- How do you think Antonio feels at the end of this episode?
- How do you think Shylock feels at the end of this episode?
- What do you think is going to happen in the next episode?

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Episode 9

Before Reading

1 **Look at the pictures and the title. Answer the questions.**

1 Why do you think Bassanio is happy?
2 Why do you think Gratiano is giving a ring to Portia?
3 Where do you think Shylock has gone?

While Reading

2 **Read or listen to the episode and match the speech to the characters.**

1	"You saved my friend!"	A	Nerissa
2	"I do not want your gold."	B	Gratiano
3	"Do you want to thank me, too?"	C	Portia
4	"He deserves it."	D	Bassanio
5	"What can I give you?"	E	Antonio

After Reading

3 **Discuss the questions in pairs.**

1 Why do you think Portia and Nerissa want their husbands' rings?
2 Do you think the men were right or wrong to give away their rings? Why?
3 Do you always keep your promises? Why (not)?
4 What do you think will happen in the next episode?

Episode 10

Before Reading

1 **Look at the second picture. How do you think the people are feeling?**

While Reading

2 **Read or listen to the episode and choose the correct words.**

Portia and Nerissa returned to Belmont. Soon, Bassanio and Gratiano **1) left/ arrived** with Antonio. Antonio was happy because he was a free man. Nerissa saw that Gratiano was not **2) wearing/ holding** his wedding ring, and she pretended to be sad. Gratiano told Nerissa that he and Bassanio had given their rings to the **3) lawyer/ judge** and his assistant. Portia pretended to be **4) angry/ happy**, and told Bassanio that she was married to the lawyer now. Portia gave Antonio the **5) ring/letter**, and Bassanio was very **6) surprised/ worried**. Then, Portia gave Bassanio a letter from Bellario. Bassanio and Gratiano felt **7) silly/clever** because they had not known their own **8) husbands/ wives**. They realised that Portia and Nerissa were very clever women.

After Reading

3 **Discuss in pairs:**

- Did you think Portia and Nerissa's trick was funny? Why (not)?
- Do you think this story has a happy ending for everyone?
- What lessons do you think this story teaches us?

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The Merchant of Venice
Final Comprehension Quiz

1 Who wrote *The Merchant of Venice*?

A Jonathan Swift **B** John Milton
C William Shakespeare

2 Where does the story take place?

A Belmont **B** Venice and Belmont
C Venice

3 Why is Antonio unable to lend Bassanio money?

A He lent it to other people.
B His money depended on his ships.
C He bought expensive things.

4 How long does Bassanio want the money for?

A Three months **B** Two months
C Three weeks

5 Who is Jessica in love with?

A Launcelot **B** Gratiano **C** Lorenzo

6 The Prince of Aragon chose the box made of .....

A silver **B** gold **C** lead

7 When Bassanio married Portia, who did they live with?

A Jessica and Gratiano.
B Nerissa and Gratiano.
C Jessica and Shylock.

8 Bellario is Portia's .....

A uncle **B** grandfather
C cousin

9 Who was the judge at the court in Venice?

A The Duke of Belmont **B** The Lord of Venice
C The Duke of Venice

10 Why did Bassanio offer Portia a bag of gold?

A She saved his life.
B She saved Nerissa's life.
C She saved his friend's life.

Discuss in groups.

- Who is your favourite character? Why?
- Which character don't you like? Why not?
- Would you like to be a moneylender?
- Would you like to be a lawyer?
- What qualities do you need to be a good lawyer?
- Do you think it would be a difficult job?
- Can you think of a different ending for the story? Tell the class.
- Can you think of a different title for the story?

Project

- Imagine that the story takes place today. Write the story about Shylock. Think about:
  - where he lives.
  - where he has an office.
  - what he wears.
  - who needs to borrow his money.
  - why people need to borrow his money.
  - how the money is repaid.
  - the ending. Is it a happy ending for Shylock?
- Tell the class your story about Shylock.

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Play

Characters: Antonio, Salarino, Salanio, Bassanio, Shylock, Jessica, Launcelot, Lorenzo, Gratiano, Portia, Nerissa, Prince of Morocco (PofM), Prince of Aragon (PofA), Balthazar, Duke of Venice

Narrator(s): At least one student dressed in black T-shirt and trousers/ leggings.

SONG: Our Story

Come and hear us tell a tale
Of life in Venice long ago
The tale of Shylock's evil plan
And how he tricked Antonio

CHORUS:
It's a story of friendship and love
It's a story of terrible greed
It's a story of keeping your word
And helping your friends in need

So let us tell you all a tale
And listen to us carefully
There are many things to learn
About how we should try to be

REPEAT CHORUS

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

Scene 1
(A street in Venice)

Narrator: Antonio was a rich merchant who lived in Venice and sent his trading ships all over the world. He was a kind, helpful man, but he wasn't happy.

Salarino: What makes you so sad, Antonio? Are you worried about your ships at sea?

Salanio: If I were you, I would always be thinking about storms and shipwrecks.

Antonio: No, no — my money isn't all in one ship, or my business all with one place. But come, cousin Bassanio — what's the news you promised to tell me?

Bassanio: You know how I've wasted all my fortune, Antonio, and how often you've lent me money, and I've wasted that as well ... But if you can lend me some

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more money, one last time, I have a plan to win a greater fortune than I've spent, and pay you everything I owe you.

Antonio: I don't care about the money, but of course I would do anything to help you. What is your plan?

Bassanio: A very rich man in Belmont died not long ago, and left everything he had to his daughter, Portia. I met her when her father was alive. She's beautiful, more beautiful than you can imagine, and sometimes when she looked at me I saw love in her eyes.

Antonio: So tell me what it is you need from me.

Bassanio: Rich men — even princes and dukes — come from far away, hoping to marry Portia. With no servants or fine clothes, how can I take my place among them? But if I had enough money, I am sure I could make Portia my wife.

Antonio: You know that all my ships are at sea, and until they return I have very little money to give you — but you can use my name to borrow as much as you need from one of the moneylenders in Venice.

Bassanio: Oh, Antonio, thank you. You're the best friend in the world!

Antonio: Come, let's go and find a moneylender.

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Scene 2
Part 1
(Shylock's house)

Narrator: Antonio arranged to meet Bassanio at Shylock's house. Shylock was a moneylender, and he was also the meanest man in Venice. Everybody hated Shylock, and Shylock hated everybody — especially Antonio.

Bassanio: Well, Shylock, will you lend me the money?

Shylock: Three thousand gold pieces, you say, for three months?

Bassanio: Yes, and Antonio promises to pay you back. You know that he's an honest man.

Shylock: Antonio is a rich man, but all his money is at sea. [knocking] I hear he has sent ships to Tripolis, to India, to Mexico, to England ... Who knows if they will return? There is always a danger of pirates, storms and shipwrecks. Still, I think I can trust him for three thousand gold pieces. When can I speak to Antonio?

Bassanio: Here he is now. Antonio!

Shylock: [aside] Look at him — all smiles and friendship. Oh, how I hate him. He lends money without charging interest, and how can I do business then? My

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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Antonio is a wealthy and popular merchant in Venice. His friend Bassanio needs money to travel to Belmont, where he hopes he can marry the beautiful Portia. Antonio has no cash, so he goes to Shylock, a moneylender. Shylock will lend the money, but on one condition: if Antonio does not pay him back on time, Shylock can take "a pound of flesh" from Antonio. Will Antonio lose his life so that Bassanio can marry the woman he loves?

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