

'The Merchant of Venice' – National 5 Revision Notes

Things to learn up! (PRIORITY!)

- The conflict between Shylock and Antonio (who they are in Venice, why their conflict develops, how it plays out).
- How suspense is built throughout the play (with particular focus on the courtroom scene).
- Shylock's character (how he's both villainous and sympathetic, and how his desire for revenge proves his undoing).

Past Paper Questions -

1. Choose a play in which the playwright presents a flawed character who you feel is more worthy of our sympathy than criticism.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how the character's flawed nature is revealed, then explain how, despite this, we are led to feel sympathy for her/him.

2. Choose a play in which there is conflict between two characters in a family or a group.

Show how the conflict occurs and then, by referring to appropriate techniques, explain how it affects the characters and the events of the play.

3. Choose a play in which a main character's actions have a significant effect on the rest of the play.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how this character's actions have affected the other characters and/or the outcome of the play.

4. Choose a play in which there is a character who suffers from a human weakness such as ambition, selfishness, lack of self-knowledge, jealousy, pride, lust...

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how the weakness is revealed, and then explain how this weakness affects both the characters and the events of the play.

5. Choose a scene from a play in which suspense or tension is built up.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how this suspense or tension is built up and what effect this scene has on the play as a whole.

Act 1: Scene 3 (line 38-49)

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.

Act 1: Scene 3 (line 120-139)

SHYLOCK Shall I bend low and in a bondman's key,
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
I'll lend you thus much moneys'?

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?
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!
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 moneys; and you'll not hear me.
This is kind I offer.

BASSANIO This were kindness.

Act 1: Scene 3 (line 140-150)

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
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,
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

ACT 2: Scene 8 (line 12-17)

SOLANIO 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!'

ACT 3: Scene 1 (line 1-3)

SOLANIO Now, what news on the Rialto?

SALARINO Why, yet it lives there unchecked that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrecked on
the narrow seas.

ACT 3: Scene 1 (LINE 40-63)

SHYLOCK There I have another bad match. A bankrupt, a
Prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rial-
to; a beggar, that was used to come so smug upon the
mart. Let him look to his bond. He was wont to call me
usurer: let him look to his bond. He was wont to lend
money for a Christian courtesy: let him look to his bond.

SALARINO Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not
take his flesh. What's that good for?

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.

ACT 3: Scene 1 (LINE 93-100)

TUBAL Yes, other men have ill luck too. Antonio, as I
 Heard in Genoa –

SHYLOCK What, what, what? Ill luck, ill luck?

TUBAL Hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

SHYLOCK I thank God, I thank God. Is it true, is it true?

TUBAL I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wreck.

SHYLOCK I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good
 news! Ha, ha!

ACT 3: Scene 3 (LINE 3-7)

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'd'st me dog before thou hadst a cause,
 But since I am a dog, beware my fangs.

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE 34-39)

SHYLOCK I have possessed 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.

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE 69-71)

ANTONIO I pray you, think you question with the Jew.

You may as well go stand upon the beach
And bid the main flood bate his usual height...

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE 98-102)

SHYLOCK 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 judgement. Answer: shall I have it?

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE 113-115)

ANTONIO I am a tainted weather of the flock,
Meetest for death. The weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest of the ground; and so let me.

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE 120-121)

[STAGE *Shylock whets his knife on his shoe*
DIRECTION]

BASSANIO Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

SHYLOCK To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE 141)

SHYLOCK I stand here for law.

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE: 240-248)

ANTONIO Most heartily I do beseech the court
To give the judgement.

PORTIA Why then, thus it is:
You must prepare the bosom for his knife.

SHYLOCK O noble judge! O excellent young man!

PORTIA For the intent and purpose of the law
Hath full relation to the penalty
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

SHYLOCK 'Tis very true. O wise and upright judge!
How much elder art thou than thy looks!

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE 299-304)

PORTIA And you must cut this flesh from off his breast.
 The law allows it, and the court awards it.

SHYLOCK Most learned judge! A sentence! (To Antonio) Come,
 Prepare!

PORTIA Tarry a little; there is something else.
 This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;
 The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh'.

ACT 4: Scene 1 (LINE 374)

PORTIA What mercy can you render him, Antonio?

GRAZIANO 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 thing 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 possessed
 Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

DUKE He shall do this, or else I do recant
 The pardon that I late pronounced here.

PORTIA Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?

SHYLOCK I am content.