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Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare

written by Tom Zolpar

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The Merchant of Venice

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. evaluate Shakespeare's development of a potentially stereotypical character beyond stereotype.
2. trace the development of the following themes in this play:
 - the question of mercy versus justice
 - the distinction between appearance and reality.
3. examine Shakespeare's use of figurative and rhetorical devices, specifically and analyze their contribution to the overall tone, mood, and aesthetic appeal of the play.
 - epistrophe
 - malapropism
 - puns and wordplay.
4. identify the main plot and three subplots of this play and analyze their interrelationships.
5. analyze the plot and subplots in terms of the five-act dramatic structure.
6. respond to multiple-choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Exam.
7. respond to free-response essay items similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Exam.
8. offer a close reading of *The Merchant of Venice* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the play.

The Merchant of Venice

Introductory Lecture

The Merchant of Venice is believed to have been written between 1596 and 1598. Although classified as a comedy in the First Folio edition, the play is best known for the character of Shylock.

The title character is the merchant Antonio, however, not the Jewish moneylender.

International Satire

Portia's description of her suitors in Act I, scene ii, and her conversations with the Prince of Morocco and the Spanish prince, Arragon, serve as vehicles for Shakespeare to poke fun at several of England's rival nations, particularly those nations whose royalty had caused, or were currently causing, Queen Elizabeth difficulties.

- The Neapolitan prince, who is so proud of his ability to shoe his own horses, is most likely Spanish. The Kingdom of Naples had long been a prize coveted by both the French and Spanish. During Elizabeth's reign, Naples was ruled by Spain.
- The County Palatine would be a high-ranking official, particularly in German remnants of the Holy Roman Empire. The County Palatine could possibly have ties to the Vatican. His somber disposition might be (the secretly Catholic) Shakespeare's pandering in a comic way to the biases of his English Protestant audience. Portia's reference to rhenish wine when discussing the Duke of Saxony's nephew suggests that the specific palatinate this somber official governs might be the Rhineland Palatinate in southwestern Germany. If this is the case, then the somber County Palatine might be a Calvinist. As English Calvinists were always eager to close the theaters because of their "immorality," it makes sense that Shakespeare would want to mock them in his play, portraying them as joyless.
- The French lord, Monsieur Le Bon, described as possessing the worst traits of the previous two suitors, clearly expresses the long-standing English distrust and dislike of the French. At the writing of *Merchant* (1596—1598), the execution of Mary Queen of Scots for a suspected Catholic conspiracy against Elizabeth (1587) and the Spanish Armada (1588), a planned invasion of Protestant England by Catholic Spain with the intent of deposing the Protestant Elizabeth and restoring England to the "true Church," were still very fresh in the minds of Shakespeare's audience.

- The young baron of England has no education to speak of. England was allied with the other protestant nations on Northern Europe; and a bias against the studies and languages of predominantly Catholic Southern and Western Europe made the English appear provincial and simple in the eyes of much of the rest of Europe. Notice, however, that Shakespeare does have Portia comment that the English baron is the best looking of all of the suitors (“a proper man’s picture”).
- The Scottish lord is a comic allusion to the continuing political uncertainty between England and Scotland that reached its crisis less than a decade earlier with the execution of Mary Queen of Scots and would lead to Elizabeth’s cousin (Mary Queen of Scots’s son) King James V of Scotland inheriting the English throne from Elizabeth and becoming King James I of England.
- The Duke of Saxony’s nephew, described as a drunken brute, comes from the birthplace of the Protestant Reformation (1517). Whereas the County Palatine was a joyless Calvinist, the Duke of Saxony’s nephew is a drunken Lutheran.
- Prince of Morocco, alluded to only briefly in I, ii, is—for Portia—the most questionable of all, and—for Shakespeare—the most potentially dangerous. Morocco is, of course, in northern Africa, so its prince would most certainly be black. However, Portia’s reference to his “complexion of a devil” is possibly as much an insult to the prince’s religion (most likely Muslim) as to his race.
- While he is not introduced in II, ii, the Prince of Arragon is Shakespeare’s final political jab. Shakespeare’s queen was, of course, Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Henry’s first wife, and mother of Elizabeth’s half-sister and bitter rival for the throne of England was Catherine of Arragon. It was Henry’s despicable treatment of Catherine and his break with the Catholic Church (in order to divorce Catherine and marry Anne) that began the bitterness between Spain and England that climaxed in the Spanish Armada (1588). Certainly it is no surprise that Shakespeare would portray the Prince of Arragon as arrogant and ignoble.

Anti-Semitism and the Character of Shylock

While still staged today (Al Pacino played Shylock in a well-received film version in 2004), *The Merchant of Venice* presents an interesting dilemma to modern audiences. Critics continue to debate the exact nature of Shylock's character—whether he is sympathetic or villainous—and the extent to which the play espouses anti-Semitic feelings.

Medieval and Renaissance English society is generally regarded as unfriendly to Jews. Jews had been expelled from England in 1290 and were not permitted to return until the protectorate of Oliver Cromwell in 1655. Jews were often portrayed on the Elizabethan stage as hideous caricatures, with hooked noses and bright red wigs. They were usually depicted as avaricious usurers. Probably the most famous example is Christopher Marlowe's play *The Jew of Malta*, which features a Jewish villain called Barabas (most likely a reference to the Barabbas of the Gospels), a caricature of malice, avarice, and bloodthirstiness. Jews were almost universally characterized as evil, deceptive, and greedy.

Some see *The Merchant of Venice* as further evidence of England's anti-Semitic sentiments and policies. Evidence suggests that *Merchant...* was sometimes known as *The Jew of Venice*. It is entirely possible that Shakespeare intended the moneylender's forced conversion to Christianity to be a "happy ending" for the character. As a Christian, Shylock will be "redeemed" from his former sins.

Others, however, suggest that *Merchant...* has its roots in medieval morality plays in which the Virgin Mary (here represented by Portia) argues for the forgiveness of human souls, against the Devil's (Shylock) prosecution. Whether this reading establishes the play as anti-Semitic (good Christian, bad Jew) or whether Shylock, then, becomes a highly developed stock character easily recognized by Shakespeare's audience is still a matter of debate.

Shakespeare's treatment of the Jewish moneylender, however, suggests that Shylock be viewed more humanly and humanely. One of Shakespeare's most famous and most eloquent speeches is given to Shylock:

Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions... (III, i)

Nor is Shylock's villainy not without motivation—and strong motivation at that. Several times throughout the play, Shylock comments on Antonio's frequent insults, even to the extent of his spitting on the Jew, his undercutting the Jew's legitimate business, and his overall horrendous treatment of the Jew. Modern readers can, as could Shakespeare's Elizabethan audience, understand Shylock's hurt, anger, and desire for revenge.

Certainly, Shylock is no Iago or Richard III who open their respective plays announcing their intention to be villains for really no particular reason at all. In fact, Shylock does not *initiate* the situation that results in Antonio's distress; *he* is approached by Bassanio and Antonio. Nor is Shylock deceitful as are most of Shakespeare's villains. From the start, Shylock makes clear whom he likes, whom he dislikes (and why), why he might not lend the money (Antonio has overextended himself with trade ventures), and what his terms are when he *does* decide to lend the money. When Antonio faces his crisis, it is not because he has been deceived and betrayed by a villain; he has simply and truly made a disastrous business decision. Even Shylock's desire for revenge—pointed at by many as evidence of his being a villain—is attributed to the Christian characters:

If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute... (III, i)

Defenders of the play as non-anti-Semitic also point to the fact that, rather than diminish the Christian characters' dislike for the Jew and the Jew's marginalized position in his society, Shakespeare *emphasizes* it, holding it up, perhaps, to scrutiny and audience sympathy. Along the same lines, Shakespeare's portrayal of his Christian characters is often less than flattering, especially pointing out the apparent hypocrisy of Antonio, who insults the Jew and then comes to him for a loan.

Shylock, too, is a victim, and he, too, has feelings. As he says in his famous speech, "Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" At the news of his daughter's elopement and conversion, he certainly does not seem to react with the hurt of father who has lost a daughter, and he does seem overly preoccupied with the loss of the money Jessica took (both stereotypical responses of a flat character), but he is genuinely saddened by the loss of his dead wife's ring. Shakespeare would not have included such a detail—absolutely irrelevant to the main plot of the play—without reason. At the end of the play, even though he has conducted his business transparently and by the rules, Shylock is defrauded of his legitimate repayment as well as his questionable revenge. He is forced to embrace a faith he hates, and he is, for all intents and purposes, broken. Yet, a careful reader or audience member would be hard-pressed to find any flaw in Shylock's character—beyond simple unkindness—to warrant the outcome of his story and character arcs.

A Catholic Reading of *The Merchant of Venice*

Recent scholarship provides strong evidence to suggest that Shakespeare was a Catholic in an officially Protestant nation in which Catholics were legally and socially second-class citizens.

The conflict between Catholics and Protestants had begun with Henry VIII's (Elizabeth's father) break with the Roman Catholic Church over his divorce from Catherine of Arragon and his marriage to Anne Boleyn (Elizabeth's mother). When Mary (Catherine and Henry's daughter) inherited the throne, she attempted to restore England to the Church of Rome—by executing Protestants (hence, her nickname, "Bloody Mary"). Elizabeth restored the Church of England and imposed heavy penalties on those who adhered to the Roman Catholic faith.

As a Catholic, Shakespeare would face those penalties if his true faith were known. Some critics and historians, therefore, suggest that the characters and legal situations in the play reflect the Catholic-Anglican-Puritan tensions of the day. Various interpretations suggest that Shylock represents the Puritan merchant victimized under the Catholic Queen Mary. Others posit that Shylock (as the minority Jew) represents the minority Catholic in Elizabethan England. Portia, whose marriage commitment is sealed in her father's will, and who enters at the last minute to dispense Divine justice, is interpreted to represent Queen Elizabeth herself.

Still others see close parallels between some of the love ceremonies and rituals in the play and certain Anglo-Catholic religious rituals and offices. Perhaps, all of these interpretations suggest that Shakespeare is using the ambiguous character Shylock to express his own ambivalence of both courting royal favor while living the secret life of a second-class citizen.

The Theme of Justice Versus Mercy

The crux of the conflict between Shylock and the Christian characters is the contrast between letter-of-the-law justice and mercy. All of the characters agree that the law is on Shylock's side—even Antonio knows that legally he owes Shylock his pound of flesh. Still, they expect Shylock to show mercy, and they cannot understand his motives when he refuses to do so. Perhaps the issue comes from, and Shakespeare is illustrating, the contrast between the Christian views of the New and the Old Testaments. Renaissance Christians were taught to see God of the Old Testament as a God of Law, demanding strict adherence to the commandments as given to Moses. The penalty for failure to adhere to the Law was severe—eternal death. The New Testament, however, professed that Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection fulfilled the penalty of sin. The Christian identification of Jesus with God, and the focus of Christianity on God's mercy in allowing himself to be crucified as humankind's penalty for its disobedience to Old Testament law, places mercy above legal justice.

To the Renaissance mind, Shylock, the Jew, would be bound by the letter of the law, while the Christian characters would be motivated by mercy. This is especially illustrated in Shylock's utter inability to understand why he would extend mercy and the Christian characters' inability to understand his unyielding demand for justice.

The irony of the contrast is that, ultimately, whether the Christian characters themselves extend mercy is questionable. Granted, Antonio returns the half of Shylock's possessions to which he is legally entitled, but the moneylender is otherwise stripped of everything. It should also be remembered that Shylock's anger is not unmotivated. In Act I, scene iii, Shylock delineates the very real reasons for his intense dislike of Antonio, the despicable way in which the Christian treats the Jew. In Act III, scene i, Shylock reiterates the treatment that has resulted in his inability to show mercy. He concludes his famous speech by saying

if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example?

Portia/Nerissa may be seen to show mercy to their husbands for forgiving them about the rings, but it is not really mercy, since they tricked their husbands in the first place, putting them in the position of having to keep contradictory oaths. Thus, on one level, it can be legitimately questioned whether there is any mercy in the Christian world of this play.

Symbols

The Number Three

The number three is a highly significant number in Christian and Renaissance philosophy and theology. The number can refer to the Christian Trinity, the three attributes of God (omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent), the three Cardinal Virtues (Faith, Hope, and Charity), the three divisions of time (past, present, future), and the three aspects of human ability (thought, word, and deed). The Resurrection occurred on the third day after the Crucifixion. Peter denied being a follower of Jesus three times. An object with three legs stands steady on any surface, and three points in space define a plane.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, the number three occurs numerous times. The contest to win Portia's hand involves three caskets. Three rings, given by women to the men they love, are lost—Leah's ring to Shylock, Portia's ring to Bassanio, Nerissa's ring to Gratiano. The original sum of money borrowed on Antonio's bond is three thousand ducats. The term for repayment is three months, and, in the trial, Antonio offers to pay Shylock three times the amount of money originally borrowed.

Given the theme of divine mercy versus human vengeance, and the potentially Catholic interpretation of Shylock's character, it follows that such a significant symbol would pervade *The Merchant of Venice*.

The Caskets

The caskets from which Portia's suitors must choose in order to win her hand reinforce the theme that things are not always as they seem. They also tell us something about the suitors who choose each casket.

If one looked only on the surface, one would assume that gold, the most precious of metals, would contain the treasure—Portia. The pompous, arrogant Prince of Morocco chooses the gold casket because silver and lead could not possibly contain a beautiful image like Portia's miniature. "All that glisters is not gold," the scroll inside the casket admonishes, and Morocco, who warned Portia not to judge him by his own dark complexion and boasted that "The best-regarded virgins of [his] clime" desired him, leaves alone.

Likewise, the lead casket, which Bassanio chooses, and which contains Portia's portrait, is the base container that holds the treasure. Its message, that whoever chooses it must risk everything he has, sounds at first like a warning, but is ultimately an accurate description of love and marriage.

Thus, the gold and lead caskets illustrate that appearances can be deceiving.

The Pound of Flesh

Probably the most Christian symbol in the play, Antonio's willingness to have a pound of his flesh carved out from around his heart, is clearly reminiscent of Jesus's willingness to allow himself to be crucified as payment for humankind's disobedience to God's law. It is the ultimate emblem of Christian charity and mercy, which are at the heart of the play's themes. Ironically, it is Shylock's insistence on adhering to the letter of the law that allows Antonio to demonstrate his willingness to sacrifice his life for his friend.

The Rings

The ring has long been a symbol of love, and the exchange of rings has long been associated with vows of love, betrothals, and weddings. The two interwoven plots of *The Merchant of Venice* both involve rings that are given and lost.

Ironically, it is Shylock who shows the most faith and love in the handling of his ring and its loss. The ring was given to him by his wife before their marriage, and, when he learns that his daughter has stolen it and traded it for a monkey, he laments, "I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys" (III, i). Mention of the ring helps to humanize Shylock, to make him a more sympathetic character.

At her wedding to Bassanio, Portia gives her husband a ring, telling him:

I give them with this ring;
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love. (III, ii)

Bassanio promises:

when this ring
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence:
O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!

We learn in IV, ii that Nerissa has also given her husband a ring, admonishing him never to give it away or lose it. The vows, however, are made to seem capricious when first the givers attempt to trick the receivers into giving the rings away, and then the husbands do indeed surrender the rings. The "mercy" shown by the wives when their husbands' indiscretions are exposed is questionable.

Furthermore, the puns and wordplay that accompany Portia's giving Bassanio her ring, mimic the ring portion of the Christian wedding ceremony and present a strong contrast to Shylock's sense of loss at the theft of his ring.

Shakespeare's Language

1. Blank Verse

In all of his plays, the predominant rhythmic and metric pattern Shakespeare uses is *blank verse*—unrhymed iambic pentameter. The following lines, taken from Act I, scene i, exemplify Shakespeare's use of blank verse:

ANTONIO

In sooth, / I know / not why / I am / so sad:
 It wear /-ies me; / you say / it wear /-ies you;
 But how / I caught / it, found / it, or / came by / it,—IRREGULAR
 What stuff / 'tis made / of, where /-of it / is born,
 I am / to learn; —IRREGULAR
 And such / a want /-wit sad /-ness makes / of me,
 That I / have much / a-do / to know / my-self.

SALERIO

Your mind / is tos /-sing on / the o /-cean; —IRREGULAR
 There, where / your ar /-go-sies / with port /-ly sail,
 Like sig /-niors and / rich bur /-ghers on / the flood,
 Or, as / it were, / the pa /-geants of / the sea,
 Do o /-ver-peer / the pet /-ty traf /-fic-kers,
 That curt /-sy to / them, do / them re /-ver-ence,
 As they / fly by / them with / their wo /-ven wings.

When a particular character or scene does not use blank verse, it is an important clue to interpreting the character or scene in question. For example, the use of prose may indicate a character's base nature or inferior social rank. Often Shakespeare will employ prose, even for characters of noble rank because there is some other element—for example, wordplay, puns, or other humor—that he does not want his audience to miss.

Additionally, changes in verse or meter may signal a shift in plot or atmosphere or simply emphasize important ideas or passages in the play. Act I, scene iii begins in prose, as will be discussed later, but as soon as Antonio enters, the scene switches to blank verse.

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.

The shift accompanies a shift in presentation of Shylock's character. The cleverness of his plan to avenge himself against Antonio and the eloquence of his refusal to dine with Bassanio (both discussed later) are replaced with the sheer venom of Shylock's explanation of why he hates Antonio. Thus, every shift from verse to prose or prose to verse is important to consider.

2. Verse Versus Prose

Act I, scene ii, between Portia and Nerissa, is written in prose as the two characters perform a dialogue not unlike a comic routine by two vaudeville performers (think Abbott and Costello, George Burns and Gracie Allen). Nerissa names the suitor, and Portia lists the reasons for the man's inappropriateness:

PORTIA

I pray thee, over-name them; and as thou namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, level at my affection.

NERISSA

First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

PORTIA

Ay, that's a colt, indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropriation to his own good parts—that he can shoe him himself. I am much afeard my lady his mother played false with a smith.

NERISSA

Then there is the County Palatine.

PORTIA

He doth nothing but frown; as who should say an you will not have me, choose: he hears merry tales, and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping philosopher when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two!

When you encounter a character speaking in prose, or an entire scene in prose, consider the social status of the character(s) speaking, but also pay attention to what is being said, as the prose might be an indication of humor that Shakespeare does not want to be lost in poetic language.

Similarly, this scene from I, iii, contains a strong verbal clue to Shylock's intent in accepting Antonio's bond, and one of many rhetorically elegant speeches by Shylock. The scene is in prose because the strength of the language does not need to be embellished with rhythm.

SHYLOCK

Antonio is a good man.—AN INNOCENT-ENOUGH STATEMENT

BASSANIO

Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

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, squander'd 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. —SHYLOCK HAS JUST LISTED THE REASONS ANTONIO'S RESOURCES MAY NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO REPAY THE DEBT, BUT ANTONIO IS SUFFICIENT. AFTER WE KNOW WHAT SHYLOCK DEMANDS AS HIS BOND, WE KNOW WHAT HE MEANS BY "The man... is sufficient."

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?

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? —HERE SHAKESPEARE USES EPISTROPHE TO EMPHASIZE SHYLOCK'S HATRED OF ANTONIO, BASSANIO, AND OTHER CHRISTIANS. HE DOES NOT WANT THE RHETORICAL DEVICE LOST IN VERSE.

3. Figurative Language and Other Literary Devices

Many of Shakespeare's characters incorporate figurative language into their speech. Figurative language serves many purposes, including adding imagery, variety, depth, and sometimes humor to the ideas expressed in the play. *The Merchant of Venice* includes examples of various categories of figurative language and other literary devices. Among them are metaphor, simile, allusion, and pun, as well as the more obscure anaphora and epistrophe.

A) METAPHOR

A *metaphor* is a comparison in which one thing is described as another. As distinct from *similes*, metaphors do not use words such as “like” or “as” to signal that a comparison is being made. All references to Shylock as a dog and a devil are, of course, metaphors.

B) SIMILE

Among the most frequently used varieties of figurative language, similes, like metaphors, are comparisons. Unlike metaphors, however, similes generally use words such as “like” or “as” to explicitly denote that a comparison is being made.

Bassanio, in Act I, scene i describes his beloved Portia:

Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth;
For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples *like* a golden fleece;

Earlier, Salerio tried to diagnose the cause of Antonio's sadness:

SALERIO
Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There, where your argosies, with portly sail—
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,

Here, in order to create the image of billowed sails on the sea, Antonio's ships on the ocean “with portly sail” are compared to rich (and presumably fat) city merchants.

C) ALLUSION

Shakespeare makes frequent use of *allusions*: references to people, places, myths, events, etc., which are not part of the story, but which the author expects the reader to recognize. Allusions can serve a variety of functions. They are generally used to create associations, calling on the audience's common cultural knowledge to help develop a character or event or simply supply sensory details. *The Merchant of Venice* contains numerous classical allusions.

In the following example, taken from Act I, scene ii, Portia emphasizes how oppressed she feels due to the casket contest by which her father's will demands that she find a husband:

If I live to be as old as **Sibylla** I will die as chaste as **Diana**, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will.

Sibylla refers to the mythological prophetess who was granted eternal life but forgot to ask it to be accompanied by eternal youth. The result, according to Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, was that her body grew smaller with age and eventually had to be kept in a jar. Eventually, she shrank to the extent that only her voice was left. *Diana*, of course, is the Roman goddess of the hunt and the moon. She was renowned for her vow of chastity.

Additional classical allusions include references to Jason and the Golden Fleece; Erebus, the primordial spirit of darkness and shadow; the tragic love story of Pyramus and Thisby; and the Widow Dido, Queen of Carthage.

D) ANAPHORA

Anaphora is the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive sentences. The effect is generally a heightening emphasis each time the phrase is repeated. In the example that follows, taken from Act III, scene iii, Shylock employs anaphora to emphasize the strength of his intent to have his pound of Antonio's flesh:

SHYLOCK

I'll **have my bond**; I will not hear thee speak;
 I'll **have my bond**; and therefore speak no more.
 I'll not be made a soft and dull-eg'd fool,
 To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield
 To Christian intercessors. Follow not;
 I'll **have** no speaking: I **will have** my bond.

In Act V, scene i, Lorenzo and Jessica express their love to one another, each of their lines beginning with the refrain, "In such a night."

E) EPISTROPHE

The rhetorical counterbalance to anaphora is *epistrophe*, the repetition of a word or phrase at the end of successive phrases, clauses, or sentences. The effect, as with anaphora, is an intensifying emphasis each time the phrase is repeated. Shylock's repetition of the phrase "with you" in I, iii is an example of epistrophe.

F) PUN

A *pun* is an expression that utilizes two distinctly different meanings of the same word or phrase to achieve emphasis or humor. Puns are a common element of Elizabethan comedy, appearing often in witty banter. Below is an example of a pun from *The Merchant of Venice*.

LORENZO

I shall answer that better to the commonwealth, than you can the getting up of the negro's belly; **the Moor** is with child by you, Launcelot.

LAUNCELOT

It is much, that **the Moor should be more** than reason: but if she **be less** than an honest woman, **she is**, indeed **more** than I took her for.

In this bit of dialogue from Act III, scene v, Launcelot and Lorenzo pun on the word *Moor* (a person of Spanish and African ancestry), and *more*, contrasting *more* with *less*.

G) HYPERBOLE

Frequently found both in literature and in common speech, *hyperbole* is exaggeration or overstatement that is intended to achieve emphasis. It is a common device in love poetry, and Bassanio indulges in a good bit of hyperbole in Act III, scene ii:

Fair Portia's counterfeit? **What demi-god
Hath come so near creation?** Move these eyes?
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,
Seem they in motion? **Here are sever'd lips,
Parted with sugar breath;** so sweet a bar
Should sunder such sweet friends. **Here in her hairs,
The painter plays the spider; and hath woven
A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men,**
Faster than gnats in cobwebs: but her eyes,—
How could he see to do them? having made one,
Methinks it should have power to steal both his,
And leave itself unfurnish'd. **Yet look, how far,
The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow
In underprizing it,** so far this shadow
Doth limp behind the substance. —Here's the scroll,
The continent and summary of my fortune.

Using hyperbole, Bassanio expresses his extreme adoration of Portia in a manner fully consistent with Renaissance love poetry.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTIONS

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 1:

While the stereotypical or archetypal villain is arguably one of the most common characters in drama, many playwrights are able to develop characters that transcend the stereotype and gain audience sympathy. Write a well-organized essay in which you discuss the character of Shylock in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, and analyze the techniques the playwright uses to develop his character beyond the mere stereotype.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 2:

The clown is a common figure in drama, providing comic relief as well as serving as a foil for one or more other characters in the play. Write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the roles of Launcelot Gobbo and his father as clowns in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Evaluate both their role and their contribution to the overall impact of the play.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 3:

The subplots of novels and plays are not merely additional storylines, but are written to disclose aspects of the characters, setting, or theme of the main plot that might not otherwise be revealed. Write a well-organized essay in which you choose one of the subplots of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and analyze its contribution to the overall impact of the play.

Avoid plot summary.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 4:

The following is an exchange between the characters Shylock and Antonio in Act I, scene iii of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in which the characters present two opposing views of friendship and business. Carefully read the passage and then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the key difference in the two men's views. Do not merely summarize the two views.

SHYLOCK

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft,
In the Rialto you have rated me
About my moneys, and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
For sufferance 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.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:
Go to then: you come to me, and you say,
Shylock, we would have moneys; you say so;
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,
And foot me, as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold; moneys 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,
With bated breath and whispering humbleness, Say this,—
'Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn'd me such a day; another time
You call'd 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.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE ITEM 5:

In the following passage, from Act IV, scene i of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the moneylender Shylock responds to the Duke's question about why he would prefer the agreed-upon penalty of a pound of flesh rather than extend mercy to his debtor. Carefully read the passage and then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze Shylock's character as illustrated by his response to the Duke.

Do not merely summarize the passage.

SHYLOCK

I have possess'd 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.
You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh, than to receive
Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that:
But, say, it is my humour: is it answer'd?
What if my house be troubled with a rat
And I be pleas'd to give ten thousand ducats
To have it ban'd? What, are you answer'd yet?
Some men there are love not a gaping pig;
Some, that are mad if they behold a cat;
And others, when the bagpipe sings i' the nose,
Cannot contain their urine: for affection,
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes, or loathes. Now, for your answer.
As there is no firm reason to be render'd,
Why he, cannot abide a gaping pig;
Why he, a harmless necessary cat;
Why he, a woollen bagpipe, —but of force
Must yield to such inevitable shame,
As to offend, himself, being offended;
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodged hate, and a certain loathing,
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd?

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 1—5

Carefully read the following passage from ACT I, scene ii of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. Then choose the best answer to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

Enter PORTIA and NERISSA

PORTIA

By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is a-weary of this great world.

NERISSA

5 You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are, and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much, as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean; superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

PORTIA

Good sentences, and well pronounced.

NERISSA

They would be better, if well followed.

PORTIA

10 If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood, but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good counsel the cripple. But 15 this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband:—O me, the word choose! I may neither choose whom I would, nor refuse whom I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father; —Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?

NERISSA

20 Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their death have good inspirations; therefore, the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests, of gold, silver, and lead, (whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you,) will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly, but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

PORTIA
25 I pray thee, over-name them; and as thou namest them I will describe them;
and according to my description level at my affection.

NERISSA
First, there is the Neapolitan prince.

PORTIA
Ay, that's a colt, indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes
it a great appropriation to his own good parts that he can shoe him himself. I
30 am much afeard my lady his mother played false with a smith.

NERISSA
Then there is the County Palatine.

PORTIA
He doth nothing but frown; as who should say An you will not have me,
choose; he hears merry tales, and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping
philosopher when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his
35 youth. I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth, than
to either of these. God defend me from these two!

NERISSA
How say you by the French lord, Monsieur Le Bon?

PORTIA
God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin
to be a mocker; but, he! why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan's;
40 a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine: he is every man in no
man: if a throstle sing he falls straight a capering; he will fence with his own
shadow: if I should marry him I should marry twenty husbands: If he would
despise me I would forgive him; for if he love me to madness I shall never
requite him.

NERISSA
45 What say you then to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

PORTIA
You know I say nothing to him; for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath
neither Latin, French, nor Italian; and you will come into the court, and swear
that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture; but,
alas! who can converse with a dumbshow? How oddly he is suited! I think he
50 bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany
and his behaviour everywhere.

NERISSA

What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbour?

PORTIA

55 That he hath a neighbourly charity in him; for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman, and swore he would pay him again when he was able: I think the Frenchman became his surety, and sealed under for another.

NERISSA

How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?

PORTIA

60 Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk: when he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast: and the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

NERISSA

If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him.

PORTIA

65 Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary casket; for, if the devil be within and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do any thing, Nerissa, ere I'll be married to a sponge.

NERISSA

70 You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords: they have acquainted me with their determinations: which is, indeed, to return to their home, and to trouble you with no more suit; unless you may be won by some other sort than your father's imposition, depending on the caskets.

PORTIA

If I live to be as old as Sibylla I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable; for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

NERISSA

75 Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in company of the Marquis of Montferrat?

PORTIA

Yes, yes, it was Bassanio; as I think so was he called.

1. The primary dramatic purpose of this scene is to
 - A. provide plot exposition.
 - B. introduce the conflict.
 - C. evaluate the characters.
 - D. foreshadow future events.
 - E. suggest a theme.

2. The main source of comedy in this scene is
 - A. wordplay.
 - B. dramatic irony.
 - C. situational irony.
 - D. satire.
 - E. misdirection.

3. Portia's complaint against her deceased father (lines 15-18) contains all of the following EXCEPT
 - A. double meaning.
 - B. antithesis.
 - C. verbal irony
 - D. consonance.
 - E. rhetorical question.

4. Which of the following most clearly suggests that Portia will fall in love with Bassanio, who is mentioned in the last line of the passage?
 - A. Portia recalls Bassanio after thinking of the undesirable suitors.
 - B. Bassanio stands in contrast to the undesirable suitors.
 - C. Bassanio first visited while Portia's father was still alive.
 - D. Portia does not clearly remember Bassanio's name.
 - E. Bassanio is mentioned in the last line of the scene.

5. Portia's speculation: "If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana," contains BOTH
 - A. parallelism and antithesis.
 - B. subjunctive and subordination.
 - C. assonance and chiasmus.
 - D. irony and pathos.
 - E. simile and classical allusion.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 6—10

Carefully read the following passage from Act I, scene ii of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* before choosing the best answer to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

Enter BASSANIO and SHYLOCK

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

5 Antonio shall become bound, —well.

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.

SHYLOCK

Antonio is a good man.

BASSANIO

10 Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK

15 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, squander'd 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.

BASSANIO

Be assured you may.

SHYLOCK

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

BASSANIO

If it please you to dine with us.

SHYLOCK

25 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?

Enter ANTONIO

BASSANIO

This is Signior Antonio.

SHYLOCK

[Aside] How like a fawning publican he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian:
30 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.
35 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!

BASSANIO
40 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 Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
Will furnish me. But soft: how many months
Do you desire?

To ANTONIO
Rest you fair, good signior;
Your worship was the last man in our mouths.

ANTONIO
50 Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow
By taking, nor by giving of excess,
Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,
I'll break a custom: —Is he yet possess'd
How much you would?

SHYLOCK
55 Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

ANTONIO
And for three months.

SHYLOCK
I had forgot; —three months: You told me so.
Well then, your bond, and let me see. but hear you:
Methought you said, you neither lend nor borrow,
60 Upon advantage.

ANTONIO
I do never use it.

SHYLOCK
When Jacob graz'd his uncle Laban's sheep,
This Jacob from our holy Abram was
(As his wise mother wrought in his behalf)
65 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 compromis'd
70 That all the eanlings which were streak'd and pied
Should fall, as Jacob's hire; the ewes, being rank,
In the end of autumn turned to the rams;
And when the work of generation was,
Between these woolly breeders, in the act,
75 The skilful shepherd pill'd 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 party-colour'd 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

- This was a venture, sir, that Jacob serv'd for;
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
But sway'd and fashion'd 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, signior.

ANTONIO

- Mark you this, Bassanio,
90 The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
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

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

ANTONIO

Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding to you?

SHYLOCK

Signior Antonio, many a time and oft,
In the Rialto you have rated me
100 About my moneys, and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe:
You call me, —misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
105 And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:
Go to then: you come to me, and you say
Shylock, we would have moneys; you say so;
You, that did void your rheum upon my beard,
110 And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold; moneys 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
115 Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key,
With bated breath and whispering humbleness, Say this—
'Fair sir, you spat on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn'd me such a day; another time
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies
120 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
125 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!

- 130 I would be friends with you, and have your love,
Forget the shames that you have stain'd 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

- 135 This were kindness.

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,
140 In such a place, such sum or sums, as are
Express'd 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

- 145 Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond
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.

6. At Antonio's entrance, the language shifts from
 - A. verse to prose.
 - B. prose to verse.
 - C. unrhymed to rhymed verse.
 - D. formal to familiar.
 - E. speculative to concrete.

7. Lines 23-26 present an example of which rhetorical device?
 - A. chiasmus
 - B. anaphora
 - C. epistrophe
 - D. zeugma
 - E. epithet

8. According to the passage, the most likely reason that Shylock is considering lending the money is the
 - A. interest he will earn.
 - B. opportunity to help Bassanio.
 - C. chance to establish a friendship with Antonio.
 - D. possibility of repaying Antonio's insults.
 - E. desire to embarrass Bassanio.

9. As it is used in the passage, the word *rheum* (line 109) most likely means
 - A. spittle.
 - B. venom.
 - C. anger.
 - D. indignation.
 - E. insults.

10. Dramatically, Antonio's eager acceptance of Shylock's terms is most likely an example of
 - A. suspense.
 - B. rising action.
 - C. situational irony.
 - D. exposition.
 - E. catharsis.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 11—15

The following passage from Act III, scene ii of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* includes Bassano's and Portia's confessions of love and Bassanio's winning the casket contest. Read the passage carefully and then choose the best answer to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

Enter BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA, and Attendants

PORTIA

I pray you, tarry; pause a day or two,
Before you hazard; for, in choosing wrong,
I lose your company; therefore, forbear awhile:
There's something tells me, (but it is not love),
5 I would not lose you; and you know yourself,
Hate counsels not in such a quality:
But lest you should not understand me well,
(And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought,)
I would detain you here some month or two
10 Before you venture for me. I could teach you
How to choose right, but then I am forsworn;
So will I never be: so may you miss me;
But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew your eyes,
15 They have o'erlook'd me, and divided me;
One half of me is yours, the other half yours, —
Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then yours,
And so, all yours: O! these naughty times
Put bars between the owners and their rights;
20 And so, though yours, not yours.—Prove it so,
Let fortune go to hell for it, —not I.
I speak too long; but 'tis to peize the time:
To eke it, and to draw it out in length,
To stay you from election.

BASSANIO

25 Let me choose;
For, as I am, I live upon the rack.

PORTIA

Upon the rack, Bassanio? then confess
What treason there is mingled with your love.

BASSANIO
None, but that ugly treason of mistrust,
30 Which makes me fear the enjoying of my love:
There may as well be amity and life
'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love.

PORTIA
Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
Where men enforced do speak anything.

BASSANIO
35 Promise me life, and I'll confess the truth.

PORTIA
Well, then, confess, and live.

BASSANIO
Confess, and love,
Had been the very sum of my confession:
O happy torment, when my torturer
40 Doth teach me answers for deliverance!
But let me to my fortune and the caskets.

PORTIA
Away, then: I am lock'd in one of them;
If you do love me, you will find me out.
Nerissa, and the rest, stand all aloof.
45 Let music sound, while he doth make his choice;
Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end,
Fading in music: that the comparison
May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream,
And watery death-bed for him. He may win;
50 And what is music then? Then music is
Even as the flourish, when true subjects bow
To a new-crowned monarch: such it is,
As are those dulcet sounds in break of day,
That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear,
55 And summon him to marriage. Now he goes,
With no less presence, but with much more love,
Than young Alcides, when he did redeem
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
To the sea-monster: I stand for sacrifice,
60 The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,
With bleared visages, come forth to view
The issue of the exploit. Go, Hercules!
Live thou, I live: —with much—much more dismay
I view the fight, than thou that makest the fray.

music. A song whilst BASSANIO comments on the caskets to himself

BASSANIO
65 So may the outward shows be least themselves;
The world is still deceiv'd with ornament.
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt,
But, being season'd with a gracious voice,
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
70 What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
There is no vice so simple, but assumes
Some mark of virtue on his outward parts.
75 How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false
As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins
The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars,
Who, inward search'd, have livers white as milk;
And these assume but valour's excrement
80 To render them redoubted! Look on beauty,
And you shall see 'tis purchas'd by the weight;
Which therein works a miracle in nature,
Making them lightest that wear most of it:
So are those crisped snaky golden locks,
85 Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
Upon supposed fairness, often known
To be the dowry of a second head,
The skull, that bred them, in the sepulchre.
Thus ornament is but the guiled shore
90 To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf
Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,
The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest. Therefore, thou gaudy gold,
Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee:
95 Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge
'Tween man and man. But thou, thou meagre lead,
Which rather threat'nest than dost promise aught,
Thy plainness moves me more than eloquence.
And here choose I. Joy be the consequence!

PORTIA

- 100 How all the other passions fleet to air,
As, doubtful thoughts, and rash-embrac'd despair,
And shudd'ring fear, and green-eyed jealousy. O Love,
Be moderate; allay thy ecstasy.
In measure rein thy joy; scant this excess;
105 I feel too much thy blessing; make it less,
For fear I surfeit.

BASSANIO

What find I here?

Opening the leaden casket

- Fair Portia's counterfeit? What demi-god
Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?
110 Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,
Seem they in motion? Here are sever'd lips,
Parted with sugar breath; so sweet a bar
Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs,
The painter plays the spider; and hath woven
115 A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men,
Faster than gnats in cobwebs. but her eyes,—
How could he see to do them? having made one,
Methinks it should have power to steal both his,
And leave itself unfurnish'd. Yet look, how far,
120 The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow
In underprizing it, so far this shadow
Doth limp behind the substance. —Here's the scroll,
The continent and summary of my fortune.

11. The “rack” upon which Bassanio says he lives refers to a
- A. means of execution.
 - B. means of public humiliation.
 - C. legal convention.
 - D. narrative device.
 - E. torture device.
12. Portia’s claim to be locked in one of the caskets is an example of
- A. hyperbole.
 - B. metaphor.
 - C. symbolism.
 - D. irony.
 - E. prose.
13. As used in the passage, the word *dulcet* (line 53) most likely means
- A. alarming.
 - B. drowsy.
 - C. soothing.
 - D. inspiring.
 - E. insipid.
14. In his rejection of the gold casket, Bassanio refers to all of the following EXCEPT
- A. wealth.
 - B. theology.
 - C. bravery.
 - D. jurisprudence.
 - E. morality.
15. The hyperbole in Bassanio’s final speech is
- A. evidence of Bassanio’s insincerity.
 - B. a common romantic convention.
 - C. an example of comic relief.
 - D. indicative of the lovers’ relationship.
 - E. the reason Portia favors him.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 16—20

Carefully read the following passage from Act IV, scene i of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* before choosing the best answer to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

Enter SHYLOCK

DUKE

Make room, and let him stand before our face.
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,
That thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice
To the last hour of act; and then, 'tis thought
5 Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse, more strange
Than is thy strange apparent cruelty.
And where thou now exact'st the penalty,
(Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,)
Thou wilt not only lose the forfeiture,
10 But, touch'd with human gentleness and love,
Forgive a moiety of the principal;
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,
That have of late so huddled on his back,
Enough to press a royal merchant down,
15 And pluck commiseration of his state
From brassy bosoms, and rough hearts of flint,
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd
To offices of tender courtesy.
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

SHYLOCK

20 I have possess'd 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.
25 You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion flesh, than to receive
Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that:
But, say, it is my humour. Is it answer'd?
What, if my house be troubled with a rat
30 And I be pleas'd to give ten thousand ducats

To have it ban'd? What, are you answer'd yet?
Some men there are love not a gaping pig;
Some, that are mad if they behold a cat;
And others, when the bagpipe sings i' the nose,
35 Cannot contain their urine: for affection,
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes, or loathes. Now, for your answer.
As there is no firm reason to be render'd,
Why he, cannot abide a gaping pig;
40 Why he, a harmless necessary cat;
Why he, a woollen bagpipe, —but of force
Must yield to such inevitable shame,
As to offend, himself being offended;
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
45 More than a lodged hate, and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd?

BASSANIO

This is no answer, thou unfeeling man,
To excuse the current of thy cruelty.

SHYLOCK

50 I am not bound to please thee with my answers.

BASSANIO

Do all men kill the things they do not love?

SHYLOCK

Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

BASSANIO

Every offence is not a hate at first.

SHYLOCK

What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

ANTONIO

55 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;
You may as well use question with the wolf,
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb;

- 60 You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise,
When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven;
You may as well do anything most hard,
As seek to soften that (than which what's harder?)
65 His Jewish heart. —therefore, I do beseech you,
Make no more offers, use no farther means,
But, with all brief and plain conveniency,
Let me have judgment and the Jew his will.

BASSANIO

For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

SHYLOCK

- 70 If every ducat in six thousand ducats
Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,
I would not draw them, —I would have my bond.

DUKE

How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

SHYLOCK

- What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
75 You have among you many a purchas'd slave,
Which, like your asses, and your dogs, and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts,
Because you bought them. —shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
80 Why sweat they under burthens? let their beds
Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates
Be season'd with such viands? You will answer,
The slaves are ours: —so do I answer you.
The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,
85 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 judgment: answer, shall I have it?

DUKE

- 90 Upon my power, I may dismiss this court,
Unless Bellario, a learned doctor,
Whom I have sent for to determine this,
Come here to-day.

SALERIO

95 My lord, here stays without,
A messenger with letters from the doctor,
New come from Padua.

DUKE

Bring us the letter! Call the messenger.

BASSANIO

Good cheer, Antonio! What, man! courage yet!
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all,
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

ANTONIO

100 I am a tainted wether of the flock,
Meetest for death; the weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me:
You cannot better be employ'd, Bassanio,
Than to live still, and write mine epitaph.

16. Shylock explains that his refusal to extend mercy to Antonio is based entirely on his
- A. malice.
 - B. wrath.
 - C. envy.
 - D. eccentricity.
 - E. convictions.
17. The primary conflict of this passage is between
- A. justice and mercy.
 - B. cruelty and mercy.
 - C. cruelty and justice.
 - D. law and justice.
 - E. law and cruelty.
18. In his speech in lines 55-68, Antonio compares arguing with a Jew to
- A. combating the destructive forces of nature.
 - B. all things impossible.
 - C. asking things to go against their nature.
 - D. attempting to control nature.
 - E. debating with a wolf and a serpent.
19. Shylock refers to the presence of chattel slaves in Venice as
- A. justification for his hatred of Christians.
 - B. a metaphor for the pound of flesh he demands.
 - C. an allusion to other oppressed minorities in Venice.
 - D. an alternative to taking Antonio's flesh.
 - E. precedence for his demanding his bond.
20. As it is used in this passage, the word *meetest* most likely means
- A. most prepared.
 - B. most suitable.
 - C. most willing.
 - D. most afraid.
 - E. most watchful.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS 21—25

Carefully read the following passage from Act V, scene i of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* before choosing the best answer to the multiple-choice questions that follow.

Enter LORENZO and JESSICA

LORENZO

The moon shines bright—in such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise—in such a night,
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
5 And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.

JESSICA

In such a night,
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
10 And ran dismay'd away.

LORENZO

In such a night,
Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waft her love
To come again to Carthage.

JESSICA

15 In such a night,
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs
That did renew old AEson.

LORENZO

In such a night,
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,
20 And with an unthrift love did run from Venice,
As far as Belmont.

JESSICA
In such a night,
Did young Lorenzo swear he lov'd her well;
Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
25 And ne'er a true one.

LORENZO
In such a night,
Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.

JESSICA
I would out-night you, did no body come;
30 But, hark, I hear the footing of a man.

Enter STEPHANO

LORENZO
Who comes so fast in silence of the night?

STEPHANO
A friend.

LORENZO
A friend! what friend? your name, I pray you, friend?

STEPHANO
Stephano is my name; and I bring word
35 My mistress will before the break of day
Be here at Belmont; she doth stray about
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays
For happy wedlock hours.

LORENZO
Who comes with her?

STEPHANO
40 None, but a holy hermit, and her maid.
I pray you, is my master yet return'd?

LORENZO

He is not, nor we have not heard from him.—

But go we in, I pray thee, Jessica,

And ceremoniously let us prepare

45 Some welcome for the mistress of the house.

Enter LAUNCELOT

LAUNCELOT

Sola, sola! wo ha, ho! sola, sola!

LORENZO

Who calls?

LAUNCELOT

Sola! did you see Master Lorenzo, and Mistress Lorenzo? sola, sola!

LORENZO

Leave hollaing, man; here.

LAUNCELOT

50 Sola! Where? where?

LORENZO

Here.

LAUNCELOT

Tell him there's a post come from my master, with
his horn full of good news; my master will be here
ere morning.

Exit

LORENZO

55 Sweet soul, let's in, and there expect their coming;

And yet no matter: —why should we go in?

My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,

Within the house, your mistress is at hand.

And bring your music forth into the air.

Exit Stephano

- 60 How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears; soft stillness, and the night,
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven
65 Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold.
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st,
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
70 But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.—

Enter Musicians

Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn;
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music.

Music

- JESSICA
75 I am never merry when I hear sweet music.

- LORENZO
The reason is, your spirits are attentive:
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing, and neighing loud,
80 Which is the hot condition of their blood,
If they but hear, perchance, a trumpet sound,
Or any air of music touch their ears,
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze,
85 By the sweet power of music. Therefore, the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones and floods;
Since nought so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
The man that hath no music in himself,
90 Nor is not mov'd with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted. —Mark the music.

21. The conversation between Jessica and Lorenzo that opens this scene can best be described as
- A. vitriol.
 - B. banter.
 - C. repartee.
 - D. mockery.
 - E. vehemence.
22. All of the following enhance the romantic mood of this passage EXCEPT
- A. classical allusions.
 - B. lyric repetition.
 - C. strict adherence to meter.
 - D. terms of endearment.
 - E. nature imagery.
23. Which of the following elements does Launcelot's entrance introduce into this scene?
- A. suspense
 - B. humor
 - C. prose
 - D. romance
 - E. meter
24. What do the lovers to whom Lorenzo and Jessica allude in their conversation have in common?
- A. They all met in moonlight.
 - B. They all met in secret.
 - C. They are all women.
 - D. They are all Greek.
 - E. They are all tragic.
25. What type of man is it whom Lorenzo says should not be trusted?
- A. a young, unbridled man
 - B. a savage
 - C. a man who does not like music
 - D. the man who claimed that Orpheus charmed the trees
 - E. the wealthy Jew

Answers and Explanations

1. There is very little action or plot development in this scene, so (B) is eliminated. While the characters of Portia and Nerissa are introduced in this passage, there is nothing here that suggests evaluation (C), nor are future events suggested (D), since all the women do is recap what has previously happened and describe characters the audience may or may not meet later. (E) is likewise eliminated, as the scene is little more than a stand-up comedy act with Nerissa mentioning names and asking questions while Portia provides the jokes. **The recap of past events, however—Portia’s father’s provision that she marry only the winner of the casket test and the description of her past and present suitors—provides the exposition for what will occur later. Thus, (A) is the best answer.**
2. There is nothing clever or witty in the women’s conversation, thus eliminating (A). This early in the play, and the audience’s having just met Portia and Nerissa and learned of the casket test, there is little opportunity for dramatic irony (B). Nothing in the scene is surprising or unexpected (C), and the audience would not know until later developments whether or not there was any misdirection (E) in this scene. **This passage does, however, allow Shakespeare to poke fun at (satirize) various other countries and their inhabitants. Thus, (D) is the correct answer.**
3. The very crux of Portia’s complaint is stated in the antithetical statement (B), “so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father.” This statement also contains the use of the double meaning of the word *will*, both Portia’s intent or desire and her father’s final wishes (A). The complaint itself begins with an example of consonance (D): “chapels had been churches and poor men’s cottages princes’ palaces.” It ends with the rhetorical question (E), “Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one nor refuse none?” **There is, however, no verbal irony (C) in the complaint.**
4. (A) is tempting, but the placement of the first mention of Bassanio is no indication of future developments regarding him. (C) is irrelevant, given what we are told of the provisions of Portia’s father’s will. (D), perhaps, indicates a bit of irony, but does not really suggest the couple’s future. (E) might suggest that Bassanio will figure more prominently into the Portia plot, but does not necessarily mean that Portia will love him. **(B) is the best answer because it is the unsuitability of the other suitors and Portia’s worry about never finding love that prompts Nerissa to bring Bassanio to mind.**
5. There is no antithesis (A) in the contrast of age and chastity. While the sentence begins with a subordinate clause, it is not an example of the subjunctive mood or “if contrary to fact” (B). The “i” sounds in “I,” “I,” “die,” and “Diana” provide the assonance, but there is no chiasmus (C). The contrast of living a long and chaste life is, perhaps, ironic, but the statement is more bathetic than pathetic (D). **The references to the prophetess Sibylla and the goddess Diana, are the classical allusions, and Portia’s assertion that if she live as long as..., she will die as chaste as... are the similes. Thus, (E) is the correct answer.**

6. Bassanio and Shylock’s conversation does not scan; it is prose. Shylock’s first line after Antonio’s entrance is, “How like a fawning publican he looks!,” which clearly scans as iambic pentameter. **Thus, (B) is the correct answer.**
7. Shylock refuses Bassanio’s invitation to dinner by saying, “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**.” Clearly **this is an example of epistrophe (C).**
8. Shylock tell Antonio that he will charge no interest for this loan (“I would.../ Supply your present wants, and take no doit / Of usance for my monies), thus eliminating (A). Nothing in the scene suggests that Shylock is interested in helping Bassanio (B) or embarrassing him (E). Shylock does say to Antonio, “I would be friends with you and have your love...” but, earlier, he said, “Cursed be my tribe, / If I forgive [Antonio for his string of public slights and insights]!” This contradiction clearly eliminates (C). When Antonio first enters, Shylock expresses his intense hatred of the merchant and says, “If I can catch him once upon the hip, / I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him,” thus, clearly suggesting that, given the chance, he will do what he can to ruin **Antonio as revenge for his insults, thus establishing (D) as the best answer.**
9. While all of the choices are plausible and tempting, a close examination of the passage reveals that, after Shylock accuses Antonio of voiding his *rheum* on Shylock’s beard, Antonio responds, “I am as like... / To **spit** on thee again,” **thus establishing (A) as the correct answer.**
10. There is clearly suspense (A) in the action, but this is not the best answer. (B) is likewise tempting, but is too vague and general an answer to satisfy. (D) is impossible, as Antonio’s acceptance is a new plot development, not a recap of backstory. (E) is eliminated as there is no pent-up emotion to be released. The audience, however, knows the hatred Shylock bears Antonio and knows that Shylock’s “offer” of an interest-free loan is not “kind.” He has sworn to avenge Antonio’s insults, and the audience expects the “offer” to be a trap. **Thus, (C) is the best answer.**
11. (C) is too vague to satisfy. (B) is too mild for the context of the word, plus Bassanio is clearly suffering in private, not in public. The use of the word in the context of confession and treason suggests (A) and (E). (A), however is unlikely as Bassanio could not be complaining that he is being executed until he is allowed to make his choice. **Clearly, (E) is the best answer—Bassanio is being tortured until he is allowed to choose, and Portia invites him to confess to end the torture.**

12. There is an element of truth in hyperbole (A), and Portia is clearly not in any literal sense locked in a casket. There might be symbolism (C) in the caskets themselves, but not in Portia's claiming to be trapped in one, and, though not literal, the statement is clearly direct and not ironic (D). The line scans as iambic pentameter, thus eliminating (E). As Portia is not literally trapped in one of the caskets, and it is a picture of her that indicates Bassanio has chosen correctly, the statement is a **metaphor**. Thus, **(B) is the best answer**.
13. (A) is eliminated by the fact that the *dulcet* sounds "creep into the dreaming of a bridegroom's ear," obviously waking him gently and not alarmingly. (B) and (E) are eliminated by the fact that the sounds *awaken* the bridegroom, not put him to sleep or bore him. The context of waking gently also eliminates (D). (C), **however, describes the sound that "creep[s] into the dreaming bridegroom's ear..."**
14. (B) is eliminated when Bassanio says, "In religion, / What damned error, but some sober brow / Will bless it and approve it with a text, / Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?" (C) is eliminated in the lines, "How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false / As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins / The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars; / Who, inward search'd, have livers white as milk; / And these assume but valour's excrement / To render them redoubted." (D) is eliminated with, "In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt, / But, being seasoned with a gracious voice, / Obscures the show of evil?" (E) is eliminated with, "There is no vice so simple but assumes / Some mark of virtue on his outward parts." **Only wealth (A) is not dismissed as something that can be other than it appears.**
15. In this passage, there is nothing to suggest that Bassanio is being insincere (A). There is no comedy in the speech, nor does the scene require comic relief (C). (D) is so vague as to be virtually meaningless. Portia clearly loves Bassanio from the beginning of the scene, regardless of what he might say in the final speech (E). **Only (B), however, remains as the exaggeration of the love object's beauty and grace are common conventions in Renaissance love poetry.**
16. It is the Duke who accuses Shylock of malice (A). Wrath (B) and envy (C) are never mentioned as factors in Shylock's demands. (E) might be tempting, but Shylock's speech elaborates on his unwillingness to explain himself, the fact that he does not need to explain himself. The basis for his refusal is "I'll not answer... / But, say, it is my humour." **Thus, (D) is the correct answer,**
17. The Duke, Bassanio, and Antonia assume that Shylock will be merciful (A) and (B), and not demand what the law clearly allows him (A). **Thus (A) is the best answer.**

18. Among the natural forces Antonio mentions are mountain pines blowing in the wind with no hint of destruction, thus eliminating (A). (B) is too general and inclusive. (D) is tempting, but is too vague compared to other choices. (E) may also be tempting to some students, but the example of the wolf devouring the ewe is only one of Antonio's examples, and it is Shylock who compares the wrongs he is avenging to a serpent's sting. To demand that the sea not reach its "usual height," to ask the wolf not to act like a wolf, and to ask the trees blowing on the mountaintop not to make noise, **is to ask things to go contrary to their nature. Thus (C) is the best answer.**
19. When discussing the chattel slavery in Venice, Shylock says, "shall I say to you, / Let [the slaves] be free, marry them to your heirs? / ... / You will answer / The slaves are ours: —so do I answer you. / The pound of flesh, which I demand of him, / Is dearly bought; 'tis mine, and I will have it." Clearly he is equating the owning of a slave and treating it as the owner chooses with his legitimate claim to Antonio's flesh. He does not mention his hatred of Christians (A) at all, nor is there any evidence that the slavery is merely metaphoric (B). (C) is true, but irrelevant to the issue at hand, and (D) is implausible. **Thus, (E) is the best answer.**
20. Antonio begins the line by saying, "I am the tainted wether of the flock." Even students who don't know that a wether is a castrated sheep or goat should recognize that anything *tainted* is ill, weak, or defective. Thus, being tainted would not necessarily prepare one for death (A). Nor would being tainted make one willing to die (C). (D) is tempting, but (E) makes no sense. With only (B) and (D) remaining, one must look at the rest of the passage. In the next line, Antonio compares himself with weak fruit that drops first, eliminating (D) as a logical choice. **Thus, (B) is the only possible answer.**
21. This is clearly a love scene, and Jessica's saying she could best Lorenzo if someone weren't approaching, shows that the scene is not vitriolic (A). (C) is tempting, but repartee is faster paced and more witty than this almost-tender conversation. The couple is teasing but not mocking (D) one another, and Jessica's mock indignation in lines ____ is not at all vehement (E). **The back-and-forth teasing mixed with their expressions of endearment can best be described as banter (B).**
22. Lorenzo alludes to the Trojan/Roman story of Troilus and Cressida and the widow Dido of Carthage, and Jessica alludes to the tragic love story of Pyramus and Thisby, thus eliminating (A). The repetition of the line, "In such a night" eliminates (B). Lorenzo addresses Jessica as "pretty Jessica," eliminating (D). Lorenzo's opening speech eliminates (E). **"In such a night," however, scans as iambic dimeter, contrasting with the blank verse of the other lines, thus establishing (C) as the correct answer.**

23. (A) might be tempting, as the entrance of a new character into a scene is a common technique for creating suspense, but nothing suspenseful follows. (C) also tempting, but the scene returns to verse with Launcelot's exit. The romance (D) ended with Stephano's entrance. (E) is eliminated by the fact that the lines were in iambic pentameter before Launcelot's entrance. **The humor (B) is in the greetings and Launcelot's and Lorenzo's inability to recognize one another. Thus, (B) is the correct answer.**
24. (A) is probably true, but not the best answer. (B) is true of Pyramus and Thisby but not of the other pairs of lovers. (C) is not true of Troilus. (D) is not true of Troilus and Cressida, who were Trojan. **Thus, (E) is the correct answer. Troilus and Cressida are separated when Cressida defects from Troy to the Greek camp, and Troilus is killed. Pyramus and Thisby meet at a tomb. In a story that inspired Romeo and Juliet, when Pyramus believes Thisby has been killed, he kills himself. Finding her lover dead, Thisby then kills herself. Dido was in love with Aeneas, and, when he left her, she killed herself. Finally, Medea was Jason's wife, who, when he left her for another woman, killed her sons to avenge his betrayal.**
25. In the speech that closes this scene, Lorenzo mentions that music has the ability to calm unbridled youth (A) and the savage mentality (B). He refers to Orpheus in the conditional, saying that *if* music could not calm...*then* the poet lied about Orpheus. The wealthy Jew (E) is, of course, Jessica's father mentioned earlier in the scene. It is because music has the powers Lorenzo attributes to it that Lorenzo says he does not trust the man who claims not to love music. **Thus (C) is the correct answer.**

The Merchant of Venice

Act I

Scene i—Venice

1. What are the two reasons suggested for Antonio's sadness?

It is suggested that Antonio must be worried about his merchandise on the seas and the money he has tied up in it. The other is that he must be in love.

2. Why do Solanio and Salerio leave when Bassanio and company enter?

They leave out of good manners. They know that Bassanio is a good friend and perhaps a relative of Antonio and that he may want to spend some time with the "better company." Antonio also suggests that they have other business to attend to, and Bassanio's entrance gives them a good excuse to leave.

3. What is significant about the fact that Gratiano also mentions that Antonio looks sad or unwell?

Shakespeare is emphasizing to the audience that Antonio is truly troubled about something. It has already been suggested that Antonio is worried about his trading ventures, and he himself has said he has many ventures pending, so it is possible that the merchant is overextended.

4. Why is it difficult for Bassanio to ask Antonio for money?

Bassanio has already squandered his fortune. He says he is behind on repaying some of his debts, and, apparently, he already owes Antonio a good deal of money—more than his other creditors.

5. What is Bassanio's plan for getting money to pay off his debts? What is Antonio's response?

Bassanio wants to borrow more money from Antonio, so he can win the hand of Portia, a rich heiress he loves. Antonio responds that he has no ready cash, but Bassanio can borrow money and use Antonio as his guarantee.

6. What does Antonio's suggestion foreshadow?

Antonio admits that he is indeed overextended and has no available cash. Bassanio is already deeply in debt. If he borrows even more money, using Antonio as his guarantee, something is going to happen to make them both unable to repay the debt.

Scene ii—Belmont

1. Why is this scene in prose?

There are a number of reasons. Most likely, since the scene is not between lower-class characters, there is probably going to be some slapstick humor or wordplay that Shakespeare does not want lost in verse.

2. What is Nerissa's notion of happiness?

Happiness is found in practicing moderation in all things and avoiding excesses and extremes.

3. What is the pun Portia uses to explain the plight her father left her in?

Portia puns the word will, meaning both her intent and her father's legalized final wishes—his will.

4. How, according to Portia's father's will, is her husband to be chosen?

Anyone who would marry Portia must choose from among a gold, silver, and lead casket. Whoever chooses the correct casket wins Portia's hand.

5. What is the primary source of comedy in this scene?

Portia and Nerissa discuss Portia's current wave of suitors in the fashion of a comic stand-up team routine. Nerissa names the suitor, and Portia lists the numerous reasons he is unsuitable—each of them comic.

6. What is the relationship between each suitor's nationality and the reasons for his unsuitability? What type of humor is Shakespeare using here?

The suitor's unsuitability is rooted in some stereotypical characteristic of his nationality. Shakespeare is poking fun at the people and cultures of these nations—including England. This is satire.

7. Why have the suitors that have been discussed in this scene all decided to go home?

They do not wish to play the casket game.

8. Who are the *Sibylla* and the *Diana* to whom Portia refers?

Sibylla was the seer more commonly known as the Sibyl. She wished for—and was granted—eternal life, but forgot to ask that her eternal life be accompanied by eternal youth. As she aged, she shrank until she was so small that she was kept in a jar. Diana was the Roman goddess of the hunt and the moon. She was famous for her vow of chastity.

9. What rhetorical device does Portia use in the line, “If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good a heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach”?

The line contains an antithesis, contrasting the bidding welcome and the bidding farewell.

10. What does Portia’s comment about Bassanio, “I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise,” suggest?

Portia remembers Bassanio’s last visit, and she may have actual feelings for him.

Scene iii—Venice

1. What is ominous about Shylock’s repeating that Antonio is a good man and “sufficient”?

At first, one might think that Shylock is calculating Antonio’s ability to repay the loan, but the emphasis on Antonio’s sufficiency begins to suggest that Shylock wants something other than Antonio’s money as payment for the loan.

2. What does Shylock suggest when he calculates Antonio’s suitability to repay any money Shylock might lend to Bassanio?

Shylock suggests that Antonio has too many active ventures—any of which might fail—and he is overextended.

3. What is the basis of Shylock’s turning down Bassanio’s dinner invitation.

His stated reason is that, being Jewish, he will not eat pork. However, he emphasizes that he will not eat with Bassanio or Antonio to the extent that we must also assume that Shylock truly loathes them and chooses not to socialize with them.

4. What rhetorical device does Shylock use when he says, “I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, ... but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.”

The repetition of “with you” at the end of all of those successive sentences is epistrophe.

5. What happens to the language in this scene when Antonio enters? Why does this occur?

Until Antonio's entrance, the scene was in prose. As soon as Antonio enters, however, Shylock begins to speak in blank verse. The sudden shift to verse probably allows Shakespeare to emphasize Shylock's utter hatred of Antonio.

6. Why does Shylock hate Antonio?

Shylock admits that he hates Antonio because Antonio is a Christian; he undercuts Shylock's business by lending money without charging interest; Antonio hates Jews and daily insults him.

7. What does Shylock mean when he says,

If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him?

If Shylock can get an advantage on Antonio, he is going to exact revenge. This is a metaphor for Shylock and Antonio wrestling, in which Shylock hopes to throw Antonio over his hip to win the match.

8. What does Shylock's observation that it is ironic that Antonio daily insults him but will still borrow money from him reveal about Shylock?

This reveals some human emotion on Shylock's part. Shylock has apparently been hurt by the insults.

9. How can we account for Antonio's generosity concerning Bassanio, but his discourteous behavior toward Shylock?

Depending on how we interpret the play and Shylock's role in it, Antonio probably represents the illogic and irrationality of prejudice. Antonio is himself not a bad man; there is no evidence that Shylock has ever wronged him; Antonio simply hates Shylock because it is socially expected and accepted to hate Jews.

10. Shylock rejects Antonio's notion that he views Antonio as an enemy. Shylock says he will lend the money out of friendship, without charging any interest. What bond does Shylock propose that Antonio fulfill if the loan is not paid in ninety days? In what spirit does he claim he makes this proposal?

If the loan is not repaid on time, Shylock suggests that Antonio forfeit a pound of flesh. Shylock seems to give the impression that he is not completely serious about collecting a pound of flesh, calling the deal "merry sport."

11. Why does Bassanio balk at Shylock's "offer"?

Bassanio recognizes the potential threat that Antonio does not. If actually carried out, collecting such a bond would kill Antonio. Bassanio is able to recognize the probability that Shylock is not joking, and Antonio is putting his life into potential danger.

12. What does this entire scene foreshadow?

The audience has to suspect that Antonio's ventures will fail and the situation will come down to whether or not Shylock will be able to collect his pound of flesh, and, thus, kill Antonio.

13. What is the significance of Shylock's reference to Jacob and Laban? Why does Shakespeare have Shylock tell this story?

Jacob and Laban are characters from the Book of Genesis. Jacob had served his uncle Laban for over fourteen years, during which time Jacob had married Laban's two daughters and fathered twelve sons and a daughter. Laban and Jacob's entire relationship was based on deceiving and cheating one another. In the end, Jacob grew excessively wealthy and essentially bankrupted Laban.

Since Jacob's twelve sons became the foundation for the twelve tribes of Israel, medieval and Renaissance Christians used Jacob's exploits as justification for their portrayal of Jews as deceivers and thieves.

Act II

Scene i—Belmont

1. What is the final condition stipulated in Portia's father's will regarding the contest of the caskets? What is the dramatic or narrative purpose of introducing such a condition?

Portia's father's will stipulates that, once the suitor has chosen from among the three caskets, if it turns out that he has chosen incorrectly, he must leave immediately. He must also never broach the subject of marriage to another woman. Thus, he is bound to a life of celibacy.

There is no practical reason for Portia's father to require the condition of celibacy, but Shakespeare is probably trying to make the casket game resemble a hero's quest in which there is a catalogue of difficult labors that the hero must complete. There is no risk in merely guessing wrong and going home. The requirement of celibacy creates a sense of risk for the "quest."

Scene ii—Venice

1. What is Launcelot Gobbo's apparent role in this play? How do we know?

Launcelot Gobbo is clearly going to be the clown. His opening speech is full of comic conventions, the repetition, the rapid revision of thought, the amplification of ideas in successive phrases. Also, Launcelot is a lower-class character, a servant, and he is speaking in prose.

2. What is Launcelot's speech pattern, and what does that immediately suggest about him?

Launcelot speaks in prose. This immediately suggests his social class, level of sophistication, and his role as a comic character.

3. What is Launcelot's conflict at the beginning of this scene? What arguments does he offer for either side of the issue?

Launcelot is troubled over whether he should stay in Shylock's employ or leave. Part of the comedy is that he offers no reasons for either staying or leaving.

4. Why does Launcelot at first pretend that Gobbo's son is dead?

That is simply part of the comedy.

5. What is nearly farcical about the conversation between father and son and between Gobbo and Bassanio?

The father's being blind and not recognizing his son, the son's lying and saying "he" is dead, and then the father's not believing that the man he is speaking with is his son are all comic elements that border on farce. In their conversation with Bassanio, Launcelot continually interrupts Gobbo and merely restates what his father has already said.

6. What type of humorous wordplay does Shakespeare use in Launcelot's and Gobbo's characters? Provide some examples.

Shakespeare often has the two speak in malapropisms. For example: "infection" for "affection" and "defect" for "effect" and "impertinent" for "important."

Scene iii—Shylock's house, Venice

1. Who is Jessica? What subplot is initiated by her presence in this brief scene?

Jessica is Shylock's daughter. By the letter she asks Launcelot to deliver to Lorenzo, she initiates the subplot of a disobedient daughter eloping with her forbidden lover.

2. Contrast Portia and Jessica in terms of love and marriage.

Portia is being obedient to her father's wishes, even though he is dead and can hold no power over her and she hates the provision of his will. Jessica's father is still alive, but she is disobedient and will marry the man of her choice, even though she knows it will greatly distress her father.

Scene iv—Venice

1. What details about Lorenzo and Jessica's elopement do we learn in this scene?

The men are going to stage a masque—a costumed and masked procession. This will be the distraction by which Jessica, disguised as a page, will leave her father's house and play the role of Lorenzo's torch bearer.

We also learn that Jessica intends to steal at least some of Shylock's wealth when she leaves.

Scene v—Shylock's house, Venice

1. Who is “the prodigal Christian,” and why does Shylock accept a dinner invitation that he has previously declined?

Bassanio is the “prodigal Christian” because he is wasting the money that he has just borrowed. Shylock is going to his house to enjoy watching him waste the money for which Antonio has pledged a pound of his flesh.

2. What is suggested by Shylock's instructions to his daughter as he is leaving the house?

Shylock's motivation for demanding that Jessica lock the doors and windows and ignore the masque is unclear, but his instructions suggest his utter distrust of the Christian society in which he lives. He admits to a feeling of foreboding and wants to protect his possessions and his daughter.

On the other hand, given what Jessica said at Launcelot's leaving—that the house was tedious and Launcelot was a merry diversion—it is possible that Shylock has been an overprotective father and has maintained a joyless home. He is forbidding Jessica to even listen to the music or watch the merriment of the passing masque.

Scene vi—Shylock's house, Venice

1. What does this scene contribute to the plot?

This is the scene of Jessica's elopement with Lorenzo, and the announcement that Bassanio and Gratiano are also leaving that night for Belmont.

2. How have the past several scenes concluded? Why has Shakespeare employed this technique?

This scene and many of its predecessors have ended in couplets. The couplet adds a sense of conclusion to these short scenes.

Scene vii – Belmont

1. What aspects of love does the Prince of Morocco represent? What details does Shakespeare use to convey this?

The Prince of Morocco represents physical attraction and physical attractiveness. The first line he speaks in II, i is about his physical appearance, that Portia should not be put off by his dark complexion. He then chooses the gold casket because he suspects it might represent Portia's physical beauty. The message he receives inside the casket teaches him that physical beauty is not a valid basis for enduring love.

2. What is the Prince's character like?

The Prince is vain, arrogant, and a braggart. Just about every sentence he utters contains an element of self-promotion.

Scene viii—Venice

1. Why do Shylock and the Duke go to search Bassanio's ship?

Shylock suspects that his runaway daughter is on board.

2. Shylock's reaction to his daughter's elopement is probably a comical scene for the Elizabethans. What stereotype does the reaction reinforce?

Shylock's reaction suggests that he gives equal weight to both the loss of his money and his daughter. Thus, Jews are devoid of human feeling and measure everything in terms of monetary gain and loss.

3. What ominous comments and predictions do Solanio and Salerio make about this development and how it will affect Antonio?

Solanio states that Antonio needs to keep the due date on the loan, or Shylock will now surely demand the bond—the pound of flesh. Salerio adds that he heard a rumor of a Venetian ship that was lost in the English channel. If it turns out to be Antonio's, then Antonio is lost.

Scene ix—Belmont

1. What are the three conditions to which all of Portia's suitors must swear before they are allowed to participate in the casket challenge?

The three conditions are as follows:

- *In making the wrong choice, a suitor will never reveal which casket he chose.*
- *He will never marry anyone else.*
- *He will leave Portia's house immediately.*

2. What is Arragon's reasoning in rejecting the lead casket?

The lead casket bears an inscription that says the man who chooses it must risk everything he has. Arragon says he will not risk anything for something as base and common as lead.

3. What is Arragon's reasoning in rejecting the gold casket?

The gold casket bears an inscription that says it contains what "many men desire." Arragon interprets the "many men" to mean the foolish mass, and he refuses to identify with the masses. He is, at least in his own estimation, uncommon.

4. Why does he choose the silver casket?

The silver casket bears the inscription that it contains whatever the chooser deserves. Arragon claims that he would not want undeserved love, so he chooses the love he believes he deserves.

5. In what way(s) does Arragon deserve the picture of the fool?

Arragon proves himself to be a fool in his arrogance. While the Prince of Morocco mistakenly thought physical attraction was paramount, he at least regarded Portia as what "many men desire[d]." Arragon, on the other hand, regards her as something he "deserve[s]." (He is "better" than the common masses to choose what they desire, but he will not risk anything for something as base as lead.)

Act III

Scene i—Venice

1. What devastating news is confirmed at the beginning of this scene?

Salerio and Salerio confirm that Antonio has indeed lost a ship at sea.

2. What prompts Shylock's famous "Hath not a Jew eyes," speech?

Salerio and Salerio have treated Shylock despicably in this scene, teasing him when he is obviously distraught about his daughter's elopement. They clearly believe that nothing anyone does to harm a Jew is wrong. When they ask, then, why Shylock is so intent on having his bond from Antonio, Shylock's impassioned response is that Jews are indeed human and that he will simply treat others with the same disregard that they have treated him.

3. What is Shakespeare's intent in giving this speech to Shylock?

Shakespeare is creating audience sympathy for a character who would ordinarily have been regarded as a villain. He is pointing out the humanness of the oppressed minority, rather than glorifying the oppressive majority.

4. How does Shakespeare immediately temper any sympathy the audience may feel for Shylock?

Almost immediately after Shylock's sympathetic speech, he wishes that his daughter were dead, and he laments the loss of both the money she stole and the money he has had to pay in his search for her.

5. How does Shylock react to the news that Antonio has lost another ship? What tempers his reaction?

Shylock is overjoyed to learn that Antonio has lost another ship and will most certainly be bankrupted. His joy, however, is tempered by the news that Jessica is spending lavish amounts of his money.

6. How is Shylock's reaction to the news of the stolen ring different from his previous reaction to Jessica's thefts?

The loss of the ring again portrays Shylock as a sympathetic character. It is a ring that his [presumed] wife gave him before they were married, and Shylock essentially laments that it was irreplaceable.

Scene ii—Belmont

1. Why does Portia not want Bassanio to rush into making a choice?

Portia wants to spend time with Bassanio; if he chooses quickly and loses, he will have to leave right away.

2. What dilemma does Bassanio's presence create for Portia?

She loves him. She would like to tell him which casket to choose, but then she would be violating the terms of her father's will. If she remains faithful to her father, however, she may lose Bassanio.

3. Explain the intent of the wordplay in which Portia and Bassanio engage.

Bassanio asserts that not knowing whether or not he will win Portia is torture (he "live[s] upon the rack"; to which Portia counters that his "confession" of love is a forced confession—the result of his being tortured.

4. Why does Shakespeare have Portia call for music now, when no music accompanied the other suitors' choices?

This is a dramatic, if not suspenseful, moment (the audience essentially knows that Bassanio will choose correctly). The music in the background heightens the drama. It also emphasizes the romance of the scene, just as background music in a modern movie heightens the mood of the scene.

5. Why does Bassanio reject the gold and silver caskets?

Bassanio realizes that appearances can deceive, and the casket that is most attractive on the exterior might not contain what is most valued.

6. What examples does Bassanio offer to illustrate his understanding that appearances can be deceiving?

Bassanio alludes to law in which a clever argument can mask a defendant's guilt; religion, in which corruption can be hidden in corrupt interpretation of theological principles; human nature, in which cowards can hide their true natures in the guise of bravery, and in which a woman who is exquisitely beautiful on the outside might be a horrible person on the inside.

7. Why does Bassanio choose the lead casket?

Ultimately, after he has rejected the exterior beauty of the other two caskets, Bassanio is intrigued by the inscription on the lead casket, which he reads as more a warning than a promise.

8. What is Portia expressing in her aside?

Portia knows that Bassanio is on the verge of choosing the correct casket, and she does not want to reveal what she knows, yet she is almost overcome with joy.

9. What literary device is prevalent in Bassanio's speech after opening the lead casket?

Hyperbole.

10. Explain the terms with which Portia expresses her love for Bassanio and her desire to marry him.

Portia speaks of herself in terms of commodities and values, wishing she were "more valuable." She offers Bassanio the "full sum" of herself, etc.

11. What is the significance of the ring Portia gives to Bassanio? What does it foreshadow?

Portia demands that Bassanio swear that he will never lose the ring or give it away—which he does. The audience knows that, as soon as Bassanio makes such a promise, he will be placed in a position to have to give the ring away.

12. What confession does the arrival of Antonio's note prompt Bassanio to make? How honest had he been with Portia prior to this?

With the arrival of Antonio's note, Bassanio must confess the extent to which he is in debt. Prior to this, he says that he did honestly admit to Portia that he was bankrupt and brought no money to the marriage.

13. How much time has passed since the beginning of the play? How do you know?

At least three months must have passed. Antonio gave his bond only as a guarantee if the original loan could not be repaid in three months' time. Shylock would not be able to refuse cash repayment and demand his bond (the pound of Antonio's flesh) if the original three-month term had not yet expired.

14. What does Portia mean when she tells Bassanio, "Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear"?

On the one hand, it is a simple statement of love. However, Portia has just offered Bassanio enough gold to pay his debt to Shylock "twenty times over," so she has indeed "bought" him at a very high price (sixty-thousand ducats).

Scene iii—Venice

1. What does Shylock mean when he says to Antonio, “Thou call’dst me dog before thou hadst a cause;/But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs”?

Shylock is insisting that Antonio’s ill treatment of him is completely unmotivated. However, since Shylock has been treated with such disrespect, he will treat Antonio accordingly.

2. What is the purpose of this very short scene?

This scene does not advance the plot or reveal anything about the characters involved. It does, however, establish Shylock’s determination to have his pound of flesh and Antonio’s understanding that Shylock’s demand is fully legal and defensible in court.

Scene iv—Belmont

1. What is the purpose of the conversation between Portia and Lorenzo that opens this scene?

After establishing the legitimacy of Shylock’s suit and having created audience sympathy for the man who should, at least stereotypically, be the villain, Shakespeare now takes some time to remind the audience that Antonio and Bassanio are also good men, not villains.

2. What suspense does Shakespeare create in this scene?

Shakespeare gives us just enough detail to know that Portia has a plan to save Antonio, that it involves costumes from her cousin, Dr. Bellario, and that she and Nerissa will disguise themselves as men and see their husbands.

Scene v—Belmont

1. This scene does not seem to advance any of the plots. What is its apparent purpose?

This scene is a comic interlude. Launcelot, playing the typical fool, teases Jessica and engages in word play with Lorenzo.

2. What is the source of comedy in this scene?

First, the comedy lies in the illogic of Launcelot's thinking. He believes Jessica to be damned because she cannot be redeemed from being Shylock's daughter. Her only hope, therefore, is to hope that her mother was an adulteress. This leads to puns on the words "bastard" and "Moor/more." There is also a malapropism. Launcelot uses the word "agitation" when he means either "apprehension," or "cogitation," or something similar. Finally, there is the exchange between Launcelot and Lorenzo, in which Launcelot does not understand Lorenzo's instructions to have dinner prepared and served.

3. Explain the classical allusion in this scene.

Scylla and Charybdis were two mythological sea monsters with which Jason had to contend in his adventures and which Odysseus encountered on his long voyage home. Scylla was a rock on which many ships perished, and Charybdis was a whirlpool in which many ships that had managed to navigate around Scylla sank. Launcelot's point is that Jessica has no hope. She is damned whether she be damned by her father's sin or her mother's.

4. Why does the language shift from prose to verse after Launcelot leaves?

Launcelot, the servant and the clown, speaks only in prose. There is also a great deal of word play—puns, ambiguities, malapropisms—in Launcelot's speech. Once he leaves, the upper-class Jessica and Lorenzo begin to speak in praising terms about Portia and each other. The sentiments they express call for verse.

Act IV

Scene i—Venice

1. Is there any irony in the Duke's surprise that Shylock refuses to extend mercy to Antonio?

There is. First, Shylock has been consistent in saying he will not be merciful, so there is no reason for the Duke to persist in his belief. Second, Shakespeare has already established that Antonio has treated Shylock despicably—even to the extent of spitting on the Jew. It is, therefore, almost hypocritical to expect mercy from a man to whom no mercy has ever been shown.

2. What is ironic about Antonio's acceptance of his fate?

Again, Antonio has been shown to have treated Shylock despicably. He has even admitted that he has—and will continue to do so. Yet he does not seem to recognize his own treatment of Shylock as the cause of the Jew's "tyranny and rage."

3. What reason does Shylock give for not showing mercy to Antonio?

Shylock says he has no reason. In fact, he says he does not need a reason any more than the Christians need a reason to expect mercy from him.

4. What point does Antonio make about Bassanio's attempt to reason with Shylock?

Antonio has always been the most anti-Semitic character in the play, and he finally entreats Bassanio to stop arguing with a Jew because that is as useless as trying to reason with insensate forces of nature.

5. What is the point Shylock makes about the Venetian slaves?

While the Duke and others beg Shylock to show mercy to Antonio, they are all slave owners, who show no mercy to their slaves. They would, he says, point out to him that, by law, the slaves are theirs to do with as they please. In the same way, he will hold Antonio to the law.

6. Structurally, what part of the plot have we reached? How do you know?

We are very near the climax. With Shylock adamant, and the Duke unable to alter or disregard Venetian law, it is apparent that Antonio is going to lose his suit and his life. The very next incident or two will determine once and for all in which direction the play will go.

7. Explain how coincidence is probably going to affect the outcome of Antonio's trial?

In Act III, scene iv, Portia sent a letter to her cousin, a Dr. Bellario. We do not know the contents of the letter, but we do know that Bellario is supposed to furnish Portia with costumes. In this scene, we learn that the Duke has also contacted a Dr. Bellario to request legal advice. Chances are, this is the same Dr. Bellario, and the Duke's contacting him will give Portia and Nerissa the opportunity (which Portia could not have counted on) to execute Portia's plan.

8. What is the main point of Portia's "quality of mercy" speech?

Portia explains that, though justice is on Shylock's side, he should show mercy. True strength is displayed in mercy. She adds that nobody would be saved if we were all shown only justice.

9. What bit of humor does Shakespeare introduce into this scene?

At one point, Bassanio and Gratiano say that they would give anything—even their wives—to save Antonio. Portia and Nerissa (in disguise as the doctor of law and his clerk) retort that it is a good thing their wives did not hear them say that.

10. What is bathos, and where is it found in this scene?

Bathos is extreme, almost ridiculous, sentimentality and excessive sorrow. Antonio's "death speech" in which he states that he has no regrets and is glad to be able to pay Bassanio's debt "with all his heart" is bathetic.

11. What plot element does Portia's line, "Tarry a little; there is something else," most likely introduce?

The line most likely introduces a reversal. It is established that the law is on Shylock's side, and he can have his pound of flesh. Something must intervene if this play is to have a happy ending.

12. What point does Portia emphasize by denying Shylock even the return of his original loan?

Shylock demanded justice, and he defined justice as allowing him to have the bond to which Antonio agreed. Having already refused a significant sum of money in exchange for the bond, Portia now insists that justice demands Shylock accept the bond and nothing else.

13. How else does Portia turn Shylock's insistence on law and justice against him?

Portia insists that Venetian law provides for severe penalties for an alien who conspires against the life of a citizen. Therefore, Shylock is bound to forfeit half of his goods to the state and the other half to his intended victim (Antonio).

14. If there is a theme established in this scene, what is it?

The theme is probably suggested in Portia's "quality of mercy" speech. Mercy is superior to justice in that justice makes no distinctions or allowances. Justice is not necessarily fair. But mercy is powerful; and, once given, will be returned.

15. Explain, to the best of your ability, what is decided will happen to Shylock's fortune.

It is very unclear, and even critics do not agree. Certainly, one half of Shylock's fortune should go to Antonio ("The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive / Shall seize one half his goods.") The other half is confiscated by the State ("the other half / Comes to the privy coffer of the state.").

However, the Duke seems to reduce the state's seizure to a fine ("Duke: The other half comes to the general state, / Which humbleness may drive unto a fine. PORTIA: Ay, for the state, not for Antonio"—in other words, the State's half can be reduced to a fine, but not Antonio's half.)

Then, Antonio seems to give up possession of his half as well. Some critics interpret Antonio's line, "so he will let me have / The other half in use," to mean that he will take only the interest earned on that half and not touch the principal. (This would mean, however, that Antonio is now requesting to profit from the practice of usury, which he has consistently condemned throughout the play. It also means he will see no income, as Shylock's forced conversion to Christianity is usually taken to indicate that he will no longer be able to lend money for interest.) Others interpret the phrase "in use" to mean that Antonio will serve only as the trustee of this half of Shylock's fortune and see that it goes to Jessica and Lorenzo on Shylock's death.

Still others read Antonio's "let me have...in use" to mean he will have free use of Shylock's money—something like a permanent loan.

In any case, Shylock has lost the use of (and income from) at least half of his property, and the ability to increase his property by practicing his trade—once he converts to Christianity, he will no longer be lending money at interest.

Finally, Antonio says that, at Shylock's death, he will give "his" half of Shylock's fortune to Lorenzo. When he asks the court to require Shylock to sign the deed of gift granting "of all he dies possess'd," to Lorenzo and Jessica, this gives them the half of Shylock's fortune that would have gone to the State.

16. What dilemma do Portia and Nerissa knowingly and intentionally create for their husbands?

Portia, especially, knows that her husband is closely bound to the friend who was willing to sacrifice his life for him. She also knows that her husband has sworn never to lose or part with the ring she gave him. When she, disguised as the doctor of law, demands the ring as payment for saving Antonio's life, she places Bassanio in an impossible situation. Nerissa put Gratiano in a similar predicament.

Scene ii—Venice

1. Explain the ambiguity in Portia's line, "That cannot be."

Portia might be responding to Bassanio's invitation to dinner or to the fact that he did, in fact, give the ring away that he swore he never would.

2. With what tone of voice does Portia deliver the closing lines of this scene?

As the play is a comedy, and as the dilemma of the ring has been caused by Portia herself, she can only deliver this line in a wry, tongue-in-cheek tone. She cannot really be angry or hurt, but she knows she can have some mischievous fun with her husband.

Act V

Scene i—Belmont

1. What do all of the mythological lovers to whom Jessica and Lorenzo allude in their love scene have in common?

They are all tragic love pairs. Troilus was killed in the final battle of the Trojan War after Cressida defected from Troy to the Greek camp. Thisby killed herself after her lover, Pyramus, believing she had been devoured by a lion, killed himself. The widow Dido threw herself onto a burning pyre after her lover Aeneas left her. Medea, after betraying her father and killing her brothers to help Jason, killed the sons she bore Jason after he abandoned her for another woman.

2. What does Launcelot's entrance introduce into this scene?

As always, Launcelot brings comedy to the scene.

3. What is the gist of Portia and Nerissa's conversation as they approach Portia's house? What purpose does it serve in the context of where it occurs in the play?

The gist of their conversation is that beautiful things are made to seem more beautiful in contrast to their opposites—the candle shines more brightly in the darkness, when the moon is gone. The music sounds more beautiful when compared to silence, etc. The context is that, in a world in which self-interest and monetary gain seem most important, the few acts of true love and generosity and selflessness really stand out.

4. What is the meaning of Gratiano's line to Nerissa?

There is not stage direction to indicate this, but it is apparent that Nerissa has confronted Gratiano with the fact that the ring she gave him is gone, and she has accused him of giving it to another woman.

5. How does the audience know that Portia and Nerissa are teasing their husbands and not being vindictive when they threaten to commit adultery with the doctor of law and his clerk? What narrative technique is this?

They know, and the audience knows, that there are no doctor of law and clerk. This is an example of dramatic irony, in which the audience knows something that the characters on stage (Bassanio and Gratiano) do not know.

6. What are the specific elements of the overall happy ending of this comedy?

Husbands and wives are reunited and reconciled. Jessica and Lorenzo are financially secure (or, at least will be). Bassanio has proven himself faithful to his wife and his friend, and Antonio's ships were not lost, and he is not ruined.

The Merchant of Venice

Act I

Scene i—Venice

1. What are the two reasons suggested for Antonio's sadness?

2. Why do Solanio and Salerio leave when Bassanio and company enter?

3. What is significant about the fact that Gratiano also mentions that Antonio looks sad or unwell?

4. Why is it difficult for Bassanio to ask Antonio for money?

5. What is Bassanio's plan for getting money to pay off his debts? What is Antonio's response?

6. What does Antonio's suggestion foreshadow?

Scene ii—Belmont

1. Why is this scene in prose?

2. What is Nerissa's notion of happiness?

3. What is the pun Portia uses to explain the plight her father left her in?

4. How, according to Portia's father's will, is her husband to be chosen?

5. What is the primary source of comedy in this scene?

6. What is the relationship between each suitor's nationality and the reasons for his unsuitability? What type of humor is Shakespeare using here?

7. Why have the suitors that have been discussed in this scene all decided to go home?

8. Who are the *Sibylla* and the *Diana* to whom Portia refers?

9. What rhetorical device does Portia use in the line, "If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good a heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach"?

10. What does Portia's comment about Bassanio, "I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise," suggest?

Scene iii—Venice

1. What is ominous about Shylock's repeating that Antonio is a good man and "sufficient"?

2. What does Shylock suggest when he calculates Antonio's suitability to repay any money Shylock might lend to Bassanio?

3. What is the basis of Shylock's turning down Bassanio's dinner invitation.

4. What rhetorical device does Shylock use when he says, "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, ... but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you."

5. What happens to the language in this scene when Antonio enters? Why does this occur?

6. Why does Shylock hate Antonio?

7. What does Shylock mean when he says,

If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him?

8. What does Shylock's observation that it is ironic that Antonio daily insults him but will still borrow money from him reveal about Shylock?

9. How can we account for Antonio's generosity concerning Bassanio, but his discourteous behavior toward Shylock?

10. Shylock rejects Antonio's notion that he views Antonio as an enemy. Shylock says he will lend the money out of friendship, without charging any interest. What bond does Shylock propose that Antonio fulfill if the loan is not paid in ninety days? In what spirit does he claim he makes this proposal?

11. Why does Bassanio balk at Shylock's "offer"?

12. What does this entire scene foreshadow?

13. What is the significance of Shylock's reference to Jacob and Laban? Why does Shakespeare have Shylock tell this story?

Act II**Scene i—Belmont**

1. What is the final condition stipulated in Portia's father's will regarding the contest of the caskets? What is the dramatic or narrative purpose of introducing such a condition?

Scene ii—Venice

1. What is Launcelot Gobbo's apparent role in this play? How do we know?

2. What is Launcelot's speech pattern, and what does that immediately suggest about him?

3. What is Launcelot's conflict at the beginning of this scene? What arguments does he offer for either side of the issue?

4. Why does Launcelot at first pretend that Gobbo's son is dead?

5. What is nearly farcical about the conversation between father and son and between Gobbo and Bassanio?

6. What type of humorous wordplay does Shakespeare use in Launcelot's and Gobbo's characters? Provide some examples.

Scene v—Shylock's house, Venice

- 1. Who is “the prodigal Christian,” and why does Shylock accept a dinner invitation that he has previously declined?

- 2. What is suggested by Shylock's instructions to his daughter as he is leaving the house?

Scene vi—Shylock's house, Venice

- 1. What does this scene contribute to the plot?

- 2. How have the past several scenes concluded? Why has Shakespeare employed this technique?

Scene vii – Belmont

1. What aspects of love does the Prince of Morocco represent? What details does Shakespeare use to convey this?

2. What is the Prince's character like?

Scene viii—Venice

1. Why do Shylock and the Duke go to search Bassanio's ship?

2. Shylock's reaction to his daughter's elopement is probably a comical scene for the Elizabethans. What stereotype does the reaction reinforce?

3. What ominous comments and predictions do Solanio and Salerio make about this development and how it will affect Antonio?

Scene ix—Belmont

1. What are the three conditions to which all of Portia's suitors must swear before they are allowed to participate in the casket challenge?

2. What is Arragon's reasoning in rejecting the lead casket?

3. What is Arragon's reasoning in rejecting the gold casket?

4. Why does he choose the silver casket?

5. In what way(s) does Arragon deserve the picture of the fool?

Act III**Scene i—Venice**

1. What devastating news is confirmed at the beginning of this scene?

2. What prompts Shylock's famous "Hath not a Jew eyes," speech?

3. What is Shakespeare's intent in giving this speech to Shylock?

4. How does Shakespeare immediately temper any sympathy the audience may feel for Shylock?

5. How does Shylock react to the news that Antonio has lost another ship? What tempers his reaction?

6. How is Shylock's reaction to the news of the stolen ring different from his previous reaction to Jessica's thefts?

Scene ii—Belmont

1. Why does Portia not want Bassanio to rush into making a choice?

2. What dilemma does Bassanio's presence create for Portia?

3. Explain the intent of the wordplay in which Portia and Bassanio engage.

4. Why does Shakespeare have Portia call for music now, when no music accompanied the other suitors' choices?

5. Why does Bassanio reject the gold and silver caskets?

6. What examples does Bassanio offer to illustrate his understanding that appearances can be deceiving?

7. Why does Bassanio choose the lead casket?

8. What is Portia expressing in her aside?

9. What literary device is prevalent in Bassanio's speech after opening the lead casket?

10. Explain the terms with which Portia expresses her love for Bassanio and her desire to marry him.

11. What is the significance of the ring Portia gives to Bassanio? What does it foreshadow?

12. What confession does the arrival of Antonio's note prompt Bassanio to make? How honest had he been with Portia prior to this?

13. How much time has passed since the beginning of the play? How do you know?

14. What does Portia mean when she tells Bassanio, "Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear"?

Scene iii—Venice

1. What does Shylock mean when he says to Antonio, “Thou call’dst me dog before thou hadst a cause;/But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs”?

2. What is the purpose of this very short scene?

Scene iv—Belmont

1. What is the purpose of the conversation between Portia and Lorenzo that opens this scene?

2. What suspense does Shakespeare create in this scene?

Scene v—Belmont

1. This scene does not seem to advance any of the plots. What is its apparent purpose?

2. What is the source of comedy in this scene?

3. Explain the classical allusion in this scene.

4. Why does the language shift from prose to verse after Launcelot leaves?

Act IV

Scene i—Venice

- 1. Is there any irony in the Duke's surprise that Shylock refuses to extend mercy to Antonio?

- 2. What is ironic about Antonio's acceptance of his fate?

- 3. What reason does Shylock give for not showing mercy to Antonio?

- 4. What point does Antonio make about Bassanio's attempt to reason with Shylock?

- 5. What is the point Shylock makes about the Venetian slaves?

6. Structurally, what part of the plot have we reached? How do you know?

7. Explain how coincidence is probably going to affect the outcome of Antonio's trial?

8. What is the main point of Portia's "quality of mercy" speech?

9. What bit of humor does Shakespeare introduce into this scene?

10. What is bathos, and where is it found in this scene?

11. What plot element does Portia's line, "Tarry a little; there is something else," most likely introduce?

12. What point does Portia emphasize by denying Shylock even the return of his original loan?

13. How else does Portia turn Shylock's insistence on law and justice against him?

14. If there is a theme established in this scene, what is it?

15. Explain, to the best of your ability, what is decided will happen to Shylock's fortune.

16. What dilemma do Portia and Nerissa knowingly and intentionally create for their husbands?

Scene ii—Venice

1. Explain the ambiguity in Portia's line, "That cannot be."

2. With what tone of voice does Portia deliver the closing lines of this scene?

Act V**Scene i—Belmont**

1. What do all of the mythological lovers to whom Jessica and Lorenzo allude in their love scene have in common?

2. What does Launcelot's entrance introduce into this scene?

3. What is the gist of Portia and Nerissa's conversation as they approach Portia's house? What purpose does it serve in the context of where it occurs in the play?

4. What is the meaning of Gratiano's line to Nerissa?

5. How does the audience know that Portia and Nerissa are teasing their husbands and not being vindictive when they threaten to commit adultery with the doctor of law and his clerk? What narrative technique is this?

6. What are the specific elements of the overall happy ending of this comedy?

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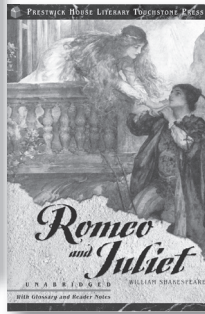
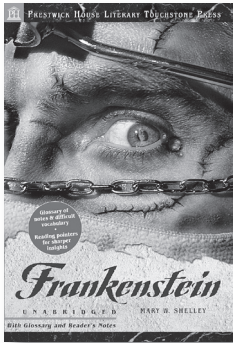
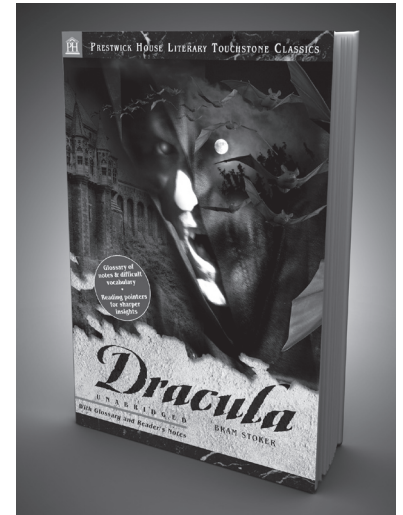
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