

# THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

By  
William Shakespeare

## Text With Complete Paraphrase

(Readers will find the Paraphrase opposite to the Text)

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE DUKE OF VENICE.

THE PRINCE OF MOROCCO | *Suitors of Portia.*

THE PRINCE OF ARRAGON |

ANTONIO, *a Merchant of Venice.*

BASSANIO, *his friend, and suitor to Portia.*

GRATIANO, |

SALERIO, | *friends to Antonio and Bassanio.*

SALANIO, |

SALARINO

LORENZO, *in love with Jessica.*

SHYLOCK, *a Jew.*

TUBAL, *a Jew, his friend.*

LAUNCELOT GOBBO, *a clown, servant to Shylock.*

OLD GOBBO, *father to Launcelot.*

LEONARDO, *servant to Bassanio.*

BALTHAZAR, | *servants to Portia.*

STEPHANO, |

PORTIA, *an heiress, of Belmont.*

NERISSA, *her waiting woman.*

JESSICA, *daughter to Shylock.*

*Magnificoes of Venice, Officers of the Court of Justice, a Gaoler,  
Servants and other Attendants.*

THE SCENE : *Venice, and Portia's house at Belmont.*

## COMPLETE SUMMARY OF THE PLAY (Act and scene-wise)

### ACT I Scene (i)

This scene takes place in a street of Venice, Antonio, a rich merchant enters the street. He is accompanied by two friends of his. These two friends are Salario and Salanio. Antonio is sad. He is in a melancholy mood. His friends ask him why he is so sad and melancholy. Antonio tells them that he is really sad and melancholy, but he himself does not know the reason why he is so lowspirited.

His friends, then, try to guess the possible causes of Antonio's sadness. Salario says that Antonio's mind is wandering over the seas across which his merchant ships are sailing. He is worried about the possible accidents or the misfortunes that may overtake his ships. Salanio also says that if he had his ships in the sea, he would also be anxious and worried about them; every common sight or sound would, then remind him of the seas through which his ships were passing. In such a state he would always be anxious to know the way the wind was blowing. Salanio further explains that if his ships were on the sea even his breath, cooling his hot broth (*soup*), would remind him of the stormy winds that might destroy his ships ; the sight of the stone-build church would remind him of the dangerous rocks hidden in the sea, against which his ships might collide and get capsized (*overturned*).

Antonio, however, assures them that all his ships are not gone to one port or in one direction. He has not put all this eggs in one basket. He has not invested all his capital in the venture of this present year. So Antonio tell his friends that he is not worried about his business.

Salario, then asks Antonio if he is in love. He says he is not. At this Solanio says that they should say that Antonio is sad by nature. He is like those people who would not smile or laugh even at a really good joke. Just at this point Bassanio, Lorenzo and Gratiano also reach there. Salanio and Salario take leave of Antonio.

Gratiano also notes that Antonio is quite sad and serious. He advises Antonio not to attach too much importance to the opinion of the world. He thinks that Antonio is worried about his name or reputation. Antonio says that he considers this world only a dramatic stage. Every one has to play his part on this stage. Antonio has to play the part of a sad and melancholy man.

Gratiano is a merry but very talkative man. He tells Antonio that he would like to play the part of a fool if it is the question of playing a part. Thus he would laugh and make others laugh. He says that he does not like people who keep up a serious pose to impress the world with their wisdom.

Lorenzo and Gratiano take leave of Antonio. Now Antonio is left with Bassanio. The Bassanio is a dear friend of Antonio. He is quite an extravagant man. He starts speaking in a round about way. He says that Antonio had helped him with money many a time, but every time he lost that money. But if this time Antonio lends him some money, he has a plan to recover that lost money too. Antonio, a kind and generous man, tells Bassanio that he (*Antonio*) would do everything possible for his dear friend. Bassanio, then, tells Antonio that he wants to go to Belmont. Many suitors from distant lands have reached Belmont to win the heart of Portia, a rich lady of Belmont. Bassanio has seen her and has received silent messages of love from her eyes. If he can reach Belmont, he is sure to win Portia's hand. He needs money to reach Belmont to present his suit to Portia.

Antonio tells Bassanio that he has invested all his money in his business. All his merchandise-ships are at sea. He has no cash. Antonio asks Bassanio to find any person in Venice who can lend money on his credit. He says he will also try to contact some such man.

Scene (11)

### **Scene (ii)**

This scene takes place at Portia's house in Belmont. We see Portia in her room. Nerissa, Portia's maid, is with her. Portia too is a bit sad like Antonio. Nerissa says that her mistress is sick because she has too much. It is bad to have too little or too much of anything. The middle path is the best. At this Portia says that Nerissa's words are very well said, Nerissa remarks that they (*words*) would be better if they were followed and practised. Portia, then, says that it is easier to preach than to practise. The problem before Portia is the problem of choosing the husband. Her dead father's will is such that she cannot choose one she likes or reject she dislikes.

Nerissa tell her that her (*Portia's*) late father was a wise and holy man. He wisely made the plan of choosing the husband for his daughter. There are three caskets- one of gold, the other of silver and the third of lead. One of the caskets contains Portia's portrait. Now only an intelligent, sincere and faithful man will be able to choose the casket which contains her portrait. So even though this lottery of caskets, Portia will surely get an ideal husband.

Then Nerissa asks about Portia's various suitors. Portia describes each one in her own witty and bantering way. She describes the Neapolitan Prince as a colt (*young one of a horse*). The Country Palatine is always sad and melancholy. The French Lord has all the bad qualities of the two already mentioned. The suitor from England is a mixture of all fashions. The Scottish Lord, another suitor, is a coward and fool. Thus one by one Portia describes these suitors and expresses her dislike for everyone of them. At last Nerissa mentions a youngman from Venice who once visited her father. Portia says he was Bassanio. Portia indirectly expresses her regard and love for this young Bassanio.

Just then, a messenger, comes and tells Portia that four suitors of hers are going back, and one Prince of Morocco has arrived. Portia frowns at this new comer too.

The scene comes to an end.

### **Scene (iii)**

This scene opens at a public place (*market place*) in Venice. We see Bassanio and Shylock, a greedy Jew and money-lender (*usurer*). Cunning Shylock first asks Bassanio if he really wants three thousand ducats. Bassanio says that Antonio would be bound for those three thousand ducats. Antonio would be Bassanio's surety.

Cunning Shylock, then, says that Antonio is no doubt, a man of sufficient means. But all his money is invested in his business ventures. His ships are in the seas, and there are all sorts of dangers to the ships sailing in the seas. They may be looted by pirates (*sea robbers*); they may founder (*fall*) and sink in the sea. But Shylock says he can still think of giving three-thousands ducates. He says he is a Jew, he will not talk, walk, eat, drink and pray with Christians like Bassanio and Antonio. But, he can think of lending them money.

Just at this point Antonio also reaches there. Seeing Antonio, Shylock curses him. He says that Antonio lends money without

charging any interest. So he brings down the rate of interest and inflicts a great loss on money-lenders like him (*Shylock*). *Shylock* says to himself if some day he could catch this Antonio on the wrong foot (*a weak point in him*) he would satisfy his desire for revenge on him. *Shylock* pretends to have not seen Antonio. He says, "Three thousand ducats", to this Antonio adds "and for three months". The cunning Jew now says that three months is a longer time. Then *Shylock* tries to prove that charging interest on money lent is a legitimate (*lawful*) business. Antonio grows impatient. He asks *Shylock* to tell him straight way if he will lend them three thousand ducats for three months or not. Now *Shylock* becomes biting and satirical. He tells Antonio that many times in the market place he (*Antonio*) has abused and insulted him (*Shylock*). How he can now expect money from one whom he calls a dog?

Antonio, who is rash, tells *Shylock* that he will call him a dog even now. He should lend money not as a friend to a friend, but as an enemy to an enemy. Antonio further tells *Shylock* that if he (*Antonio*) fails to repay him (*Shylock*) at the right time he will get a chance of forcing him (*Antonio*) to pay a heavy-penalty. The Jew knows that he has now (*Antonio*) in his trap. He says that Antonio should just write a bond, and just by way of joke he should write in it that he (*Antonio*) would give a pound of his flesh as penalty if he fails to pay him at the right time. *Shylock* himself will choose from which part of Antonio's body this flesh will be taken. Antonio agrees to it.

Bassanio tells Antonio not to sign such a fatal bond. The Jew ridicules him. He says that he is asking for a pound of flesh only in joke. A pound of human flesh can be of no use to him; a pound of man's meat is not as valuable as a pound of mutton.

Antonio tells *Shylock* that he will send him the bond. *Shylock* leaves them. Antonio assures Bassanio that his ships would return a month earlier than the date of payment. Antonio and Bassanio also go away.

## SECTION A — DRAMA

### *The Merchant of Venice* : Shakespeare

#### Question 1.

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow:

**Bassanio:** To you, Antonio,  
I owe the most, in money and in love;  
And from your love I have a warranty  
To unburden all my plots and purposes  
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

**Antonio:** I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;

(i) Describe Antonio's mood at the beginning of this scene. [3]

State any two reasons that Antonio's friends, who were present, gave to explain his mood.

**Ans.** Antonio was sad. His friends Solanio and Salarino noticed it and they gave their own reasons for his sadness. They suggest that maybe he was worried about the safety of his merchant ships. Solanio wasn't satisfied and suggested that Antonio might be in love.

(ii) What promise did Antonio make to Bassanio immediately after this conversation? [3]

**Ans.** Antonio promised Bassanio to do anything to help his friend, including loaning him the money to try to gain the love of Portia.

(iii) What did Bassanio say to Antonio about 'a lady richly left' in Belmont? [3]

**Ans.** There was a girl in Belmont who inherited a huge amount of money, and she was beautiful and—even better—she was a good person.

(iv) How did he propose to help his friend? [3]

**Ans.** Antonio was unable to lend the money to Bassanio as his ships were on the sea and the worry of impending disasters made him sad. As a loyal friend, Antonio did not step back and decided to borrow money from Shylock, a cruel moneylender.

(v) What does the above extract reveal of the relationship between Antonio and Bassanio? Mention one way in which this relationship was put to the test later in the play. [4]

**Ans.** The above extract reveals the strong bond of unconditional friendship and love between Antonio and Bassanio. In the latter part of the play when Antonio was unable to pay the debt to Shylock, he was ready to give his pound of flesh. Bassanio was also willing to do everything to save his friend, and at last, their friendship won.

## SECTION A — DRAMA

### *The Merchant of Venice* : Shakespeare

#### Question 1.

Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow.

**Antonio:** In sooth I know not why I am so sad.  
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;  
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,  
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,  
I am to learn.

**(i) Where is Antonio? Whom is he speaking to? What does he say is the effect of his sadness on his mind?** [3]

**Ans.** Antonio is on a street in Venice. He is speaking to Salarino and Salanio. Antonio says that his sadness makes him feel foolish, for he doesn't know the reason for it and he has to make a great effort to know himself. 'And such a want-wit sadness makes of me, That I have much ado to know myself.'

**(ii) What attempts do the friends with Antonio make to guess the reason for his sadness?** [3]

**Ans.** Salarino says that Antonio's mind was tossing on the ocean where his majestic argosies were sailing. Salanio says that if he were in Antonio's place the better part of his thoughts would be with his hopes abroad. He would pluck grass to know the direction of the wind, he would peer into maps for ports, piers and roads. And every object that might make him fear misfortune to his ventures would make him sad. Salarino adds that while cooling his broth, he would shiver when he thought what harm a stormy wind might do to his ships. The sandy hour glass would remind him of shallow waters and sand banks which could ground his ships. At church the holy edifice of stone, would remind him of the dangerous rocks which could wreck his ships.

**(iii) What according to Antonio's friend, are the kinds of people Nature framed? Explain the reference to Janus and Nestor.** [3]

**Ans.** Salarino, alluding to the two different kinds of people, people who are always smiling and others who look serious all the time, says that by two-headed Janus, Nature created two kinds of men in her time. One who would grin and peep through their eyes and laugh like parrots even at bagpipes and the other of such sour aspect that they would not show their teeth in a smile even if Nestor said the joke was funny. Janus was the Roman God of Doors who had

two faces; one smiling, the other frowning. Nestor was an old and wise Greek general. A joke had to be very funny if Nestor laughed at it.

(v) **Who enters the scene a little later? What does one of them observe about Antonio? What is Antonio's answer?** [3]

ns. Bassanio, Gratiano and Lorenzo enter the scene a little later. Gratiano observes that Antonio did not look well. He also said that they lose it that do buy it with much care and remarked that Antonio was marvelously changed. Antonio says that he does not give much importance to the world. He believes he treats the world just as a stage and he has to play a sad role.

(v) **What answer does Antonio get in turn? What final advice does this person give Antonio before leaving the stage?** [4]

ns. Gratiano says that he wanted to play the role of a fool. He wanted wrinkles to appear with laughter and mirth and not let his heart cool with mortifying groans. He also questioned why a young person should sit silent and cold like a statue of his grandfather cut in alabaster, and become ill by being peevish. He spoke about some people who are quiet because they want the whole world to think that they are serious and dignified. They have that appearance because they do not speak. If they spoke, their foolishness would be apparent. The final bit of advice he gives Antonio is that he should not seek people's opinion by being melancholic

Answer the questions that follow:

# Class IX

## English Literature

### Books

01 - The Merchant of Venice

02 A Treasure Trove of Poems

03 A Treasure Trove of short stories

### Portion First Unit Test 2020-21

- The Merchant of Venice

Act 01

Scene 01 and 02

- Poems.

Lesson 01 The Heart of a tree

Lesson 02 The Cold within

- Story

Lesson 01 Chief Seattle's speech

Lesson 02 Old Man at the Bridge