

Merchant of Venice

Act - 3

Scene – 4

Extract – 1

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

1. Who is referred to as a true gentleman? Why is he in need of relief?

Answers: Antonio is referred to as a true gentleman. He is in need of relief as Shylock insists on the penalty for the former of the bond, which is a pound of flesh from any part of his body.

2. Explain the relationship that exists between the gentleman and Bassanio.

Answers: The relationship between the gentlemen i.e. Antonio and Bassanio is that of love, affection and friendship. Antonio readily agrees to Shylock's bond to give money to Bassanio to woo Portia and never regrets his generosity even at the forfeiture of the bond. His last wish is to see Bassanio before he dies. Bassanio reciprocates the same sentiments by rushing back to Venice soon after his marriage to save his friend.

3. Give the meaning of:

(a) an equal yoke of love: by the same bond of love.

(b) Of lineaments, of manners and of spirit: features, mind, behaviour and disposition

4. Why does Portia conclude that the true gentleman must be like Bassanio?

Answers: Portia says that when two people are close friends and are united by the tie of mutual love their two natures may have many things in common. There must be a certain similarity of features, mind, behaviour and disposition. This makes her conclude that the true gentleman, i.e. Antonio must be like Bassanio.

5. Show clearly how Portia's marriage takes place due to the risk taken by the true gentleman.

Answers: Bassanio needed three thousand ducats to come to Belmont to woo Portia. He approached Antonio for help. As Antonio had no ready cash with him, he borrowed the amount from Shylock, his enemy after signing the treacherous bond. Bassanio could win over Portia and marry her due to this generosity of Antonio.

6. Which aspect of Portia's character is shown in this scene?

Answers: This scene shows Portia's intellectual ability, her devotion to Bassanio and her admiration for Antonio. She feels that since Antonio is like Bassanio in mind and personality, her admiration for Antonio is justified.

Extract - 2

1. What is meant by the husbandry and manage of my house?

Answers: The above words mean: the control and management of my house. Portia tells Lorenzo that she gives into his hands the entire management and care of her mansion till the return of her husband.

2. What responsibilities does Portia give to Lorenzo? Till her husband's return, what would Portia do?

Answers: Portia gives Lorenzo the complete control and management of her mansion till her husband's return. Portia says that she has taken a secret oath to pass her days in religious exercises and holy meditation with Nerissa alone as her companion until the return of her husband.

3. What in fact was Portia's intention in leaving her home? Why did she need Nerissa to accompany her?

Answers: Portia's intention in leaving her home was to go to Venice to save Antonio from the clutches of Shylock by disguising herself as a lawyer. She needed Nerissa to act as lawyer's clerk

4. Under what pretext was Portia leaving her house?

Answers: Portia was leaving her house under the pretext of spending her days in religious exercises and holy meditation in the company of Nerissa till the return of her husband.

5. Why does Portia say that during her absence Lorenzo would not find it difficult to run her house smoothly?

Answers: Portia says that during her absence Lorenzo would not find any difficulty in running her house because she has instructed her servants to accept Lorenzo and Jessica as their master and mistress till she comes back.

6. How does Portia show that she is intelligent and has good management skills?

Answers: In this scene, Portia shows that her intelligence and good management skills. She devises a plan to save Antonio from the clutches of Shylock. After consulting her cousin Dr. Bellario, she decides to go to Venice, dressed as a lawyer with Nerissa dressed as lawyer's clerk. She entrusts to Lorenzo and Jessica the administration of her mansion. It is her intelligent planning and management of the situation that take the action of the play forward.

Extract - 3

1. Where does Portia send Balthazar? Why does she choose him to do the errand for her?

Answers: Portia sends Balthazar to Padua to Dr. Ballaria. She chooses him for this errand as Balthazar is her honest and trustworthy servant.

2. What does Balthazar take with him? To whom is he to give it?

Answers: Balthazar takes with him a letter to be given to Dr. Bellario of Padua, a lawyer and Portia's cousin.

3. Give the meaning of:

(a) with imagined speed: with maximum speed one is capable of.

(b) to the common ferry Which trades to Venice: to the public berry boat which plies to and from Venice.

4. What was the purpose of sending Balthazar to Portia's cousin?

Answers: The purpose of sending Balthazar to Portia's cousin was to hand over to him her letter and then to bring back from him certain letters, notes and robes. Notes refer to Dr. Bellario's written opinion about the case. Robes refer to the robes of a Doctor of Law for Portia and the dress of a lawyer's clerk, meant for Nerissa.

5. What hints does Portia give to Nerissa in the extract regarding their mission?

When and how are the rest of the plans to be revealed?

Answers: After Balthazar's departure, Portia gives Nerissa a hint regarding their mission saying that she has some urgent work. She also says that they will go to the place where their husbands are. Portia will outline the rest of the plan to Nerissa in the coach which will carry them to their destined place.

Extract - 4

1. Why wouldn't the husbands of Portia and Nerissa recognize them when they would see them?

Answers: The husbands of Portia and Nerissa would not recognise them when they would see them because they will be dressed like young men, one a Doctor of Law and the other as his clerk.

2. How will Portia appear and behave after she reaches the destination?

Answers: After she reaches her destination dressed as a young man, Portia will wear a dagger by her side. She will speak in the husky voice of a youth passing from boyhood to manhood. She will walk with long manly strides instead of two short and quick steps of a woman. She will talk of broils and fights like a boastful young man. She will tell fanciful stories, as for instance how many great ladies have loved her and died of a broken heart. She says that her mind is full of thousands of school-boyish pranks and she will try them all.

3. What 'quaint lies' would Portia tell to mislead people? How does she expect men to react to her quaint lies?

Answers: Portia will tell fanciful stories as for instance how many great ladies have loved her and died of a broken heart because she did not love them in return. Then she would say that she could not help it and pretend she is sorry for them and that she wished they did

not die for her sake as it was not her fault. Similarly, she would tell scores of other little inventions and lies. She expects men to believe that she has left school more than a year.

4. Give the meaning of:

- (a) puny lies:** credible lies, lies that are convincing
- (b) raw tricks:** inexperienced tricks of youth.
- (c) bragging Jacks:** boastful fellows.

5. What does Portia tell Nerissa about disclosing her future plan? Comment on the imaginative skills of Portia in this scene.

Answers: Portia tells Nerissa that she will outline her future plan to her in the coach while travelling to Venice. This scene describes the imaginative skills of Portia. She plans in detail the plan of action and decides clearly her and Nerissa's roles in it. The way she plans to speak and walk and tell boastful lies clearly indicate Portia's imaginative skills.