

Merchant of Venice

Act - 4

Scene – 1

Extract – 1

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

1. Where does this scene take place? What has the Duke said before this extract about the hard-hearted adversary?

Answers: This scene takes place in a court of justice in Venice. Before this extract, the Duke has described the hard-hearted adversary as an inhuman wretch without pity, totally lacking in mercy.

2. What rigorous-courses is referred to in the extract? Why does Antonio say that no lawful means can carry him out of his enemy's reach?

Answers: The rigorous course referred to in the extract is the demand for the pound of flesh from Antonio's body by Shylock, as the penalty for the forfeiture of the bond. Since Shylock remains obstinate, Antonio says that no lawful means can save him from his enemy.

3. Give the meaning of:

(a) I do oppose/My patience to his fury: I shall suffer his cruelty and anger with patience.

(b) arm'd/To suffer: I am prepared to face his cruelty and anger with a calm spirit.

4. From the speech of the Duke, after the extract, give an example to show that the Duke was annoyed with Shylock.

Answers: The extract shows the Duke's annoyance with Shylock. He tells Shylock that it is everyone's opinion that Shylock intends to keep up the show of severity and hatred until the last stage of the case. Then he will relent and not only show kindness and pity but will agree to abandon his claim and forego a portion of the original sum borrowed by Antonio.

5. In what mood are Shylock and Antonio at this juncture?

Answers: At this juncture, Shylock is defiant and insistent on the penalty for the forfeiture of the bond, i.e. a pound of Antonio's flesh. Antonio on the other hand, is resigned to his fate and is ready to face calmly the consequences of the forfeiture. He believes that no lawful means can save him from Shylock's sinister intentions.

Extract – 2

1. In what way does the Duke expect Shylock to mitigate his stand towards the forfeiture?

Answers: The Duke expects Shylock to mitigate his stand towards forfeiture after considering Antonio's heavy losses that have come so thick and fast. The Duke expects that Shylock will be moved by human tenderness and sympathy.

2. What is meant by 'a moiety of the principal'? Why does the Duke request Shylock to have mercy on Antonio?

Answers: A moiety of the principal' means a part of the principal. The Duke requests to have mercy on Antonio since his losses have been so heavy and have come so thick and fast upon him lately that they have been enough to ruin a noble merchant. They are enough to draw pity and sympathy for his condition from anyone.

3. Give the meaning of:

(a) so huddled on his back

Answers: So accumulated on him. It refers to the many losses that befell on Antonio so thick and fast.

(b) never train'd/To offices of tender courtesy

Answers: Who have never been taught the feelings of human kindness. The Duke says that Antonio's losses are enough to draw pity and sympathy for his condition from hearts as hard as brass and as rough as stones and from uncultured Turks and Tartars, who have never been taught the feelings of human kindness.

4. Who are the Turks and Tartars? What is said about them in the extract?

Answers: Turks are the people of Turkey and Tartars are the people of Tartary. They were considered uncultured and having no feelings of human kindness. They were considered to be stubborn. The Duke says that even the Turks and Tartars, who have never been schooled in acts of kindness and love, will feel pity and sympathy for Antonio's plight.

5. Why does Shylock refuse to have mercy on Antonio?

Answers: Shylock refuses to have mercy on Antonio because he wants to take revenge on him. He tells the Duke that he has already explained to the Duke his intentions. Moreover, he has taken an oath by his holy Sabbath, to see that the terms of the forfeit are carried out,

Extract - 3

1. What question is Shylock answering in the context? What examples does he give in the extract to justify his position for not giving a fin reason?

Answers: Shylock is answering the Duke's suggestion that he expects a gentle answer from him. Shylock says that he will not give an exact reason. He goes on to state that he has undivided whims like other men. If his house is infested with rats, he may spend ten thousand ducats to have them poisoned. There are people who cannot tolerate the sight of an open mouthed roasted pig sight of a cat or the stream of a bag pipe. In all these there is

no definite reason for hating these things. It is determined by a strong whim or mood, which can overpower any reason.

2. Give the meaning of:

(a) As to offend, himself being offended.

Answers: This means offending others, after being offended. Shylock speaks of people behaving according to their whims. These people stoop low by offending others and expressing their dislike.

(b) a lodged hate

Answers: This means a deep-rooted hatred. This refers to Shylock's deep and definite dislike and hatred of Antonio.

3. How does Bassanio react to what Shylock says in the extract?

Answers: Bassanio reacts to what Shylock says by calling him a hard-hearted creature. He further says that his answer is no excuse for his merciless actions.

4. If Antonio is shown mercy by the Duke, against the wishes of Shylock what would be its implication?

Answers: If Antonio is shown mercy by the Duke against the wishes of Shylock, it will expose the justice system of the state that allows right and privileges of trade for foreigners. Besides, foreigners will lose their confidence in the just and impartial administration of law in Venice and this will adversely affect its trade and prosperity.

5. Show how tense the scene has become as Shylock fights for his legal right against the rest.

Answers: This scene known as the Trial Scene is the central scene or the climax of the play. The scene becomes tense when Shylock insists on his legal right though the Duke and Bassanio try to reason with him to show mercy and compassion. The stage is set for a legal battle between Shylock and the rest.

Extract - 4

1. What argument takes place just before this extract?

Answers: Just before this extract an argument takes place between Bassanio and Shylock. Bassanio asks Shylock whether a man is obliged to seek the death of everything he dislikes. In reply, Shylock wants to know when a man hates a thing intensely, why should he not kill it willingly. Bassanio further argues that a first offence does not arouse so fierce a hatred. Shylock argues again with another question. He asks Bassanio whether he would give a serpent a second chance to sting him.

2. Give two examples from the extract to show that it is useless to plead with the Jew to show mercy.

Answers: In the extract Antonio tells Bassanio that it is useless to plead with the Jew to

show mercy. He tells him if he is hoping to soften his heart, he might as well stand on the sea-shore and ask the tide not to rise so high As usual. Secondly, he may as well ask the wolf why he has made the mother sheep to mourn for the lamb he has devoured.

3. Give the meaning of:

(a) bate his usual height

Answers: It means reduce its mutual height, meaning to ask the ocean tides not to rise.

(b) To wag their high tops

Answers: It means to sway their high top. It refers to the swaying of the high tops of the pine trees on the fountains.

4. What reason does Shylock give for his hatred for Antonio?

Answers: Shylock does not give a definite reason for his hatred for Antonio. He goes on to state that he has individual whims like other men. He says that these people have no well-grounded reason to offer as to why they dislike various objects, like a gaping pig a harmless domestic cat and a bagpipe. Shylock says that he bears just such a deep-rooted hatred and a definite dislike for Antonio.

5. Bassanio offers Shylock six thousand ducats. What is Shylock's reaction to the offer?

Answers: Shylock tells Bassanio that if he were to double it and double it again three times over, he would still refuse to accept thirty six thousand ducats. He wants only the penalty to be paid.

Extract - 5

1. 'let their beds/Be Made as soft as yours,'

Who are they referred to in the first line of the extract? Whose beds are referred to?

Answers: In the first line of the extract "They" refers to the slaves of the Christians. The beds of these slaves are referred here.

2. What is meant by: 'let their palates/Be Season'd with such viands?'

Answers: This means to give the slaves rich food to eat. This refers to Shylock's complaint that Christians don't provide their slaves the rich food they themselves take and treat them as they please since they are their property.

3. How is the pound of flesh dearly bought by Shylock?

Answers: Shylock says that the pound of flesh which he claims from Antonio has been bought by him at a high price. As per the bond agreement at the forfeiture, Shylock is entitled to only a pound of Antonio's flesh. He will lose his three thousand ducats he had given.

4. Why does Shylock keenly say, 'I stand for judgment'?

Answers: Shylock thinks that since the pound of flesh has been bought by him at a high price, it is his and therefore, insists on having it. He demands justice from the Duke as per the bond agreement.

5. What do the decrees of Venice guarantee? What would happen if Shylock were refused justice?

Answers: Decrees of Venice guarantee equal rights and privileges to the citizens and foreigners. If Shylock were refused justice, the justice system of Venice would be exposed to disrepute and will adversely affect the trade and prosperity of Venice.

6. How can you conclude from the given extract that Shylock is good at giving relevant arguments to prove his case.

Answers: The given extract proves that Shylock is good at giving relevant arguments to prove his case. He gives replies word by word to the questions put forward by his enemies. When asked to give a noble response on having mercy on Antonio, Shylock says that Christians are no better. They treat their slaves as they treat their asses, dogs and mules. He questions if Christians would allow their slaves to intermarry in their families and allow them to have comfortable beds and tasty food like them. He further argues that just as people have no good reason why they cannot put up with a gaping pig, a harmless domestic cat or a bagpipe, he has no reason to give for taking a pound of Antonio's flesh.

Extract - 6

1. How did Bassanio encourage Antonio assuring him of every help?

Answers: Bassanio tells Antonio not to lose hope and have courage. He is ready to give his own flesh to greedy Shylock and his whole body too, before he will allow him to lose one drop of Antonio's blood on his behalf.

2. What is meant by "tainted wether of the flock"? In what way is he meetest for death?

Answers: Antonio says that he is like a sick sheep in the herd only fit to be taken out from the herd for slaughter. He says that he is the most fit or suitable person to die.

3. What is an epitaph? Why does Antonio talk about the epitaph at this time?

Answers: Epitaph is an inscription written on the tomb of a dead man. Antonio talks about the epitaph now since he is sure that he has to die as the Jew was determined to have his bond.

4. State the generous offer made by Bassanio to save his friend just before the extract.

Answers: To save Antonio, Bassanio offers to pay Shylock six thousand ducats, double the amount of money borrowed from Shylock.

5. Who comes to the scene immediately after Antonio's speech? Why does the person come?

Answers: Nerissa, dressed as a lawyers' clerk came to the scene immediately Antonio's speech. She came to deliver a letter to the Duke from Dr. Bellario of Padua.

6. Describe Antonio's mood in the context. How does his such attitude shape him to be an important character in the comedy?

Answers: In this context Antonio's mood is quite passive and is resigned to his inevitable fate. His nobility and love for Bassanio is also shown in this extract. This attitude makes him a tragic hero and wins him the love and sympathy of the audience.

Extract - 7

1. Explain why Gratiano reacts violently in the extract.

Answers: When Shylock insists that he wants only his bond and is sharpening his knife to cut the flesh from the man who has failed to pay the deb Gratiano reacts violently to his remarks. He says that Shylock is not sharpening his knife on the sole of his shoe, but on his soul and no metal, not even the axe of a hangman can have half the sharpness of his envy.

2. Who was Pythagoras? What was the theory about rebirth according to him?

Answers: Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher and mathematician (BC 540-510). He taught the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. According to this theory, the souls of some human beings pass, after death, into animals and those of animals into some men.

3. Give the meaning of:

(a) oder in my faith

Answers: It means to lose faith in my own religion (Christianity). It means that he tends to believe Pythagoras's Theory of Transmigration

(b) the gallows did his fell soul fleet

Answers: It means that when he was hanged for man-laughter the soul of a wolf entered his body at birth

4. How did the spirit of the wicked wolf enter into Shylock?

Answers: The spirit of the wicked wolf entered into Shylock's body when he was in his mother's womb. The wolf was killed for man's slaughter.

5. How can it be concluded from Shylock's tendencies that he has the spirit of the wolf?

Answers: It can be concluded that Shylock has the spirit of the wolf because all his inclinations are wolf-like. He is greedy, bloodthirsty and rapacious. Certainly the spirit dwelling in his breast must have formerly been that of a wolf when its former body was slain, it took up its abode in Shylock's body.

6. State clearly how Shylock ridicules Gratiano after the extract.

Answers: Shylock laughs at Gratiano's outburst. He says that he is injuring his lungs. He

says it is a mere waste of breath unless, curses can make his band illegal. He sarcastically tells Gratiano to try to get more wisdom or his understanding will soon be beyond the hope of any improvement.

Extract - 8

1. What is the meaning of 'strained'? Why is the quality of mercy not strained?

Answers: The word 'strained' means forced. Portia tells that the very characteristic of mercy is that there can be no compulsion in its exercise. It drops as freely as the gentle rain from heaven on the earth below. It is beyond the power of man and the law to compel a man to be merciful. Mercy is a free voluntary action.

2. In what way is mercy twice blessed and is mightiest in the mightiest?

Answers: Portia says that mercy carries with it a two-fold power and a double blessing. It benefits both the giver and the receiver. It is not an attribute of weakness. She says its effect is the greatest and noblest when exercised by the great and the powerful, though the law gives them absolute power to enforce justice.

3. What is a sceptre? What does the sceptre signify?

Answers: Sceptre is a rod which a king holds in his hand, symbolising his royal power. The king's sceptre is the outward symbol of his earthly power. It gives him awful majesty and fills his subjects with dread and fear of him.

4. Give the meaning of:

(a) it becomes/The throned monarch better than his crown.

Answers: Portia says that mercy sheds upon a royal king a brighter lustre than the crown he wears.

(b) But mercy is above this sceptred sway.

Answers: Portia says that mercy is far above the earthly power of a king symbolised by his sceptre.

5. Why does Portia say that if strict justice is followed none of us would have salvation?

Answers: Portia says that if strict justice were to be meted out to all, no one could enter heaven. We all pray to God for mercy, We pray to God to forgive us our trespasses that we may forgive those who trespass against us. Hence, Portia requests Shylock not to press for bare justice in the case but to forego his legal rights and to reason justice with mercy.

6. What does Shylock say in to Portia's mercy plea?

Answers: Shylock has closed his mind to Portia's arguments and says that he takes on himself all responsibility for his acts. Further, he demands justice and the carrying out of the agreement.

7. Why does Portia later say, 'We do pray for mercy'? What does this prayer teach us about mercy?

Answers: Portia later says that we do pray for mercy. This is to impress Shylock towards mercy. She says that we pray to God to forgive us our trespasses so that we may forgive those who trespass against us. This prayer tells us that he who needs God's mercy to be shown to him, should show mercy to the man, who needs it from him.

Extract - 9

1. What is meant by 'this bond is forfeit'? How is the bond now forfeit?

Answers: This bond is forfeit' means that the agreement has been broken and the penalty must be paid. Now the bond is forfeit since Antonio has failed to pay back the three thousand ducats he had borrowed from Shylock.

2. Why does Shylock call Portia a worthy judge? Why was she compared to Daniel earlier?

Answers: Shylock flatters Portia by calling her a worthy judge. He says that her learned explanation and just decision shows that her knowledge of law is very sound. Earlier, Shylock compared her to Daniel, a wise Jewish prophet. He was a wise judge like Solomon, Daniel saved a beautiful woman Susannah from wicked elders by cross-examining them separately. In this way, he made justice to triumph and saved Susannah. So, Shylock is comparing Portia for her wisdom, with Daniel the prophet, for she refuses to break the law on the ground that bad precedents will be created in future.

3. What was Shylock's reaction when Portia offered him thrice the due amount for the first time?

Answers: When Portia offered him thrice the due amount for the first time, Shylock told her that he has sworn an oath before God to have nothing but the bond. He cannot commit a sin of breaking an oath and not even for the whole wealth of Venice will he break his oath.

4. State why Shylock was confident that no one could take away his right to forfeiture.

Answers: Shylock was confident that no one could take away his right to forfeiture. Since, the strict exposition of the law of Venice permits it. Portia, the lawyer has already stated that the law cannot be altered to save Antonio as it would set forth bad precedents in the administration of justice.

5. What impressions of Shylock's character do you have from the above extract? Give a reason to justify your opinion.

Answers: Shylock's deep-rooted hatred for Antonio and his determination to have his bond per the agreement are shown in this extract. This is because he declares "There is no power in the tongue of man to alter me: I stay here on my bond."

Extract - 10

1. To whom is Antonio speaking these words? What is meant by "Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you"?

Answers: Antonio is speaking these words to Bassanio. 'Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you' in these words. Antonio asks Bassanio not to worry that this fate has befallen on him for Bassanio's sake.

2. What is the normal custom of the Fortune? What is meant by lingering penance?

Answers: The normal custom of the Fortune is to allow a man in misfortune to live to see with his hollow eyes and wrinkled face, the ruin which has come upon him and to endure an old age of hardships and sufferings. 'Lingering penance' refers to prolonged suffering of witnessing one's own ruin and experiencing misery.

3. Why does Antonio think that 'Fortune is kind to him'?

Answers: Antonio thinks that 'Fortune' is kind to him by mercifully letting him escape a prolonged suffering of his misfortune by an early death.

4. What request does Antonio make to Bassanio to tell Portia about him?

Answers: Antonio requests Bassanio to convey his greetings to his noble wife and to tell her the manner of Antonio's death. He also tells Bassanio to tell her of his true and faithful friendship for him and to speak well of him after his death.

5. What is it that Bassanio must not regret and what is it that Antonio does not repent?

Answers: Bassanio must not regret that Antonio has to face misfortune because of him. Antonio will not regret that he is making the sacrifice for Bassanio's sake. He is willing to pay the penalty freely and with all his heart.

6. What offer does Bassanio make, after this extract, to save Antonio? What does this offer reflect on Bassanio's love for Antonio?

Answers: Bassanio tells Antonio that he has a wife, whom he loves as dearly as his own life. But he rates Antonio's life above his own, above his beloved wife and above everything else on earth. He is ready to give up all if by so doing he can persuade Shylock to spare Antonio's life. Bassanio is ready to sacrifice everything he has to save Antonio from the evil designs of Shylock. This offer reflects Bassanio's deep love and friendship for Antonio

Extract - 11

1. What is the law as interpreted by Portia just before this extract?

Answers: Just before this extract, Portia interprets the law to Shylock. She tells him that in the bond there is no mention of even the smallest drop of blood. The words clearly say 'a pound of flesh'. She tells Shylock to take the forfeit in this agreement which is just a pound of flesh. However, in the process of cutting if he sheds a drop of blood of a citizen, all his wealth and possessions will be forfeited to the government, according to the law.

2. "Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest." What kind of justice is Shylock going to have?

Answers: Portia tells Shylock that he will get justice as he pleads so insistently for it. But it may be that the justice will be stricter than he will wish for.

3. Why does Gratiano rejoice by repeating the words, 'O learned judge'?

Answers: Gratiano is happy as the tide has changed. He is taunting Shylock and throws back at Shylock his words in praise of Portia's wisdom. He calls Portia a most honourable judge. Gratiano tells Shylock to notice that Portia is the wisest judge.

4. When the money is offered by Bassanio, what does Portia say by declining the offer?

Answers: Portia stops Bassanio from giving the money to Shylock. She states that Shylock shall have the justice he has asked for to the fullest extent. She asks Bassanio not to be in such a hurry. Shylock can have nothing now, but the bond.

5. After the extract, what drawback in the bond is highlighted by Portia?

Answers: After this extract, Portia highlights another loophole in the bond. She tells Shylock to be careful to cut neither more or less than an exact pound of flesh. If he fails in cutting that amount precisely and if he cuts more or less than an exact pound, if it weighs lighter or heavier by even a twentieth part of a small grain, or if the beam of scales inclines to one side only by the breadth of a hair, he will suffer the penalty of death and all his possessions will be confiscated by the state.

Extract - 12

1. State in your own words the 'pardon' referred to in the extract. State the conditions under which the pardon is granted. Why does the Duke threaten to recant the pardon?

Answers: "Pardon" referred to here is the Duke's granting Shylock his life. The pardon is granted under the condition that half of his riches will belong to Antonio, the merchant he plotted against. The other half would go to the state, but if he repents and humbly begs for mercy, the state may just impose a fine instead of taking the full amount. The Duke decrees that Shylock must abide by the conditions put forward by Antonio, otherwise he will withdraw the forgiveness he has extended to him.

2. What two conditions did Antonio impose on Shylock for being allowed to retain half of his wealth?

Answers: The two conditions Antonio imposed on Shylock are: first he draws up a will leaving half of his wealth, to Lorenzo and Jessica after his death. Second, that he becomes a Christian.

3. Give the character of the Duke in this scene.

Answers: The Duke appears in this scene as a just and kind administrator of justice. Initially, he persuades Shylock to have pity on Antonio for his Heavy business losses. When

Shylock insists on the penalty for the forfeiture at the bond, the Duke follows the course of justice. When Portia points out the penalty for conspiring against a citizen of Venice, he pardons Shylock and grants him his life.

4. What would Gratiano do if he were the judge? What comic effect does Gratiano's offer make in the context?

Answers: If Gratiano were the judge, he would have constituted a jury of twelve people, who would sentence Shylock to death and will have him hanged on the gallows. Gratiano here created comic effects with his sharp-witted statements. He says that when Shylock is baptised, he will have two godfathers. Further, he says that instead of the baptismal fund he would have reached him to the gallows.

5. How can you conclude that Shylock is in a frustrated mood at this time? What are your feelings for Shylock at the end of this scene?

Answers: Shylock is a frustrated man at this stage. All his hopes of taking revenge on Antonio have failed. He begs to be allowed to go home since he is not well. We feel pity for Shylock as he makes a sad exit with the crowd ridiculing him at the door of the court. At the same time, we feel happy that his evil designs did not succeed.

Extract - 13

1. What does Portia say about the payment for her services? How does Bassanio insist that Portia should take something as a token of gratitude?

Answers: Portia says that one who is well pleased with one's work is sufficiently rewarded. She is well-pleased that she has saved them from the clutches of Shylock and considers this as a sufficient reward. Bassanio insists that Portia should take something as a gift or a token of their gratitude. He tells her to grant him two favours, first not to refuse his request and second to forgive his persistence.

2. What does Portia ask Bassanio to give her as token?

Answers: Portia asks Bassanio the ring he is wearing as a token of gratitude

3. Why does Bassanio say that it is a shame to give Portia what she has asked?

Answers: Bassanio is unwilling to part with the ring. He says that it is a shame to give the ring as it is far from being valuable. He cannot really think of allowing her to accept such a paltry gift.

4. What is the reality that makes Bassanio hesitant to comply to Portia's request? What does he offer to do instead?

Answers: Bassanio was hesitant to comply to Portia's request of giving her the ring he was wearing because it was a present from his wife. Further, his wife had made him swear never to part with the ring. He offers to give Portia the most valuable ring available in Venice.

5. How does Portia react to his hesitation even after Bassanio tells her of his promise made to his wife?

Answers: Portia remarks that many men who do not wish to give a present, give such a reason. She adds that if his wife is a sensible person and understands what Portia has done to earn the ring, she will soon relent and will not be angry for long with him.

6. What makes Bassanio change his mind and part with the ring?

Answers: Antonio tells Bassanio that he should let Portia have the ring. He tells him that the promise he made to his wife should be outweighed on this occasion by Portia's merits and the love he bears for Antonio. Hence, he changes his mind and parts with the ring.

7. What effect does the ring episode have on the audience?

Answers: The relief needed after the strain of suspense in the trial for Antonio's life is provided with the merry episode of the rings. It relaxes their minds and makes them tension-free. The audience totally enjoys the scene when Portia wheedles the ring out of her husband as a reward for her legal services.