

Merchant of Venice

Act - 2

Scene - 6

Extract - 1

(i) Where does this scene take place? Who has out-dwelt his hour? Normally what do the lovers do as far as the appointed time is concerned?

(ii) Who is Venus? How do the Venus's pigeons behave as far as love is concerned?

(iii) How does Gratiano explain in the extract the state of people in love?

(iv) Give the meaning of:

a. He out dwells his hour

b. To seal love's bonds new-made

(v) At the end what happens to the masque? Why?

Answers:

(i) This scene takes place in the street outside Shylock's house. Lorenzo has out-dwelt his hour to meet Gratiano and Salarino for the masque. Lovers generally rush to the meeting place long before the appointed hour.

(ii) In Greek mythology, Venus is the goddess of love. Salarino comments that the doves that draw the chariot of Venus, the goddess of love, fly ten times faster when they are journeying to bind new love more firmly, than they do when love is already pledged and certain.

(iii) According to Gratiano, people in love are anxious to meet each other. They rush to their meeting places much before the appointed time. Thus, people in love keep punctuality in their meetings and never delay.

(iv)(a) He overstays the time fixed by him to meet.

(b) To bind new love more firmly.

(v) Masque was postponed as the wind changed his direction and Bassanio wants to depart from Venice for Belmont without any further delay and the scene ends and this news was announced by Antonio.

Extract - 2

(i) Where is Lorenzo and who are his sweet friends?

(ii) What did his friends say about the anxiety of those in love?

(iii) What were the affairs that kept the speaker away so long?

(iv) What is meant by 'to play the thieves for wives'? How apt are these remarks in the context?

(v) What does Lorenzo ask Jessica to do later in the scene? What is Jessica's reaction to his request?

Answers:

(i) Lorenzo is in the street outside Shylock's house. His sweet friends are Salarino and Gratiano.

(ii) His friends said that lovers generally rush to meet each other before the appointed time. Salarino commented that the doves that draw the chariot of Goddess of love, fly ten times faster, when they are journeying to find new love than they do when love is once pledged and certain.

(iii) The speaker was kept away so long due to his business affairs. Also he had to plan for the masquerade, in which he would elope with his lady-love, Jessica.

(iv) 'To play the thieves for wives' means if any of them wishes to do what he is doing that night and steal away a fair lady to be his wife he will wait as long as they have done to help him on the occasion. These remarks are quite relevant because Lorenzo wants to give the reason for his delay as well as thank his friends whom he has kept waiting for a long time.

(v) Later in the scene, Lorenzo tells Jessica to come down in the street quickly and that she has to play the part of his torch-bearer in the masque that night. Jessica is shocked and embarrassed at the suggestion. She asks Lorenzo whether she must hold a light to show up her shameful acts-her elopement, theft and male dress.

Extract - 3

(i) What do you think is sent down in the casket? How can you conclude that the contents in the casket are valuable?

(ii) What is meant by 'I am much ashamed of my exchange'? Why is the exchange needed?

(iii) In what way is love blind in the context? Who is referred to as Cupid? Why would he blush?

(iv) How is Jessica's feminine nature is highlighted in the extract?

(v) What is meant by a torch bearer? In what way Jessica would hold a candle to her shames, if she were a torch bearer?

Answers:

(i) The casket must have valuables like jewellery which Jessica has stolen from her house. We can conclude that the contents in the casket are valuables since Jessica hands over the casket only after making sure that the person to whom she is giving the casket is her love, Lorenzo. Besides, she tells Lorenzo that it is worth carrying the casket.

(ii) The above words mean that Jessica is much ashamed that she has to change her dress to that of a page boy. This exchange was needed for her to elope with Lorenzo.

(iii) Love is blind in the context since it makes Jessica dress like a page boy, steal jewellery and money from her house and be ready to elope with Lorenzo, a Christian. Cupid is the classical God of love who is always represented as a blind boy with bows and arrows. Jessica says that Cupid, the little blind God of love himself would be shocked and blush if he saw her dressed like a boy.

(iv) Jessica's feminine nature is highlighted in the extract. Her shyness at her male clothes shows her feminine modesty as in Elizabethan times women never wore men's clothes. Also she comes down from her house after making sure that the person who has come to take her is Lorenzo, her lover.

(v) Masquerades were dramatic performances where players wore masks and costumes and took part in a torch like procession playing drums and fife. Jessica was to carry the torch light or candle. If she carries the candle, she will show up her shameful acts- her male attire, the casket containing her theft and the fact of her elopement.