

Merchant of Venice

Act - 5

Scene – 1

Extract – 1

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

1. Which topic is being discussed in the extract?

Answers: The theme of love is being discussed in the extract.

2. Who is Thisbe? What is meant by 'fearfully o'ertrip the dew'?

Answers: Thisbe was a beautiful maiden of Babylonia who was in love with Pyramus, who also belonged to the same place. The words 'fearfully o'ertrip the dew' means that Thisbe, with a heart throbbing with fear, came daintily, stepping over the dewy grass.

3. Give briefly the story of Thisbe.

Answers: Thisbe and Pyramus lived in adjoining houses but their parents would not let them marry. They managed to talk to each other through a hole in the garden wall. One moonlit night they arranged to meet secretly at a tomb in a forest outside the city. Thisbe arrived first, but hearing the roar of a lion she ran away in terror, leaving behind her mantle. The lion seized the mantle, tore it and stained it with blood of an ox it had killed. Pyramus came later. Seeing the stained mantle he concluded that Thisbe had been devoured by the lion and stabbed himself. Later when Thisbe returned to the tomb she saw the dead body of Pyramus and killed herself. They are symbols of faithful love.

4. Who is Dido? Why is she standing with a willow in her hand?

Answers: Dido was the queen of Carthage and the foundress of the city. After the Trojan War, the ship of Aeneas, a Trojan prince came to Carthage and was entertained by Dido. She fell in love with him. But the gods wanted Aeneas to go to Italy. Aeneas cruelly deserted her and set sail secretly at night. Dido heart broken, lit a funeral fire and died in its flames. Her anxious wait for Aeneas is symbolised by her standing with a willow in hand.

5. What do the 'willow' and the 'wild sea-banks' signify?

Answers: Willow and the wild sea banks are emblems of forsaken love. Queen Dido stood on the wild sea-shore, carrying in her hand a willow-wand, the emblem of forsaken love, waving to her lover Aeneas in the ship vainly appealing to him to return to her.

6. Why are the stories of Thisbe and Dido given in the context? In your answer, bring out the comparison aimed at, between the characters in the play and the stories of Thisbe as well as of Dido.

Answers: The stories of Thisbe and Dido are given in the context to heighten the theme of love. While Thisbe's story tells of faithful lovers, Dido's story speaks of foresaken love, Jessica refers to Thisbe's story and refers to her faithful love for Lorenzo. Dido's story is narrated by Lorenzo to taunt her at the fate of Dido. Constancy of the love of Lorenzo and Jessica is highlighted in the scene.

Extract - 2

1. What did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew in such a night?

Answers: Jessica stole from the wealthy Jew money and jewels.

2. What precautions were taken by Jessica and Lorenzo to ensure that she could escape from her father's house undetected?

Answers: Jessica and Lorenzo took all precautions to ensure that she could escape from her father's house undetected. Lorenzo came to take her as a part of a masquerade dressed in costumes and wearing a mask. Jessica dressed herself as a boy and they eloped in a moon-lit night when Shylock was away at Bassanio's house for dinner.

3. How did Jessica's father react to her escape? What were Jessica's feelings just before her elopement?

Answers: Jessica's father reacted violently at Jessica's escape. He was angry at his daughter for eloping with a Christian and taking away with her, his money and jewels. He wished to see her dead and lying in a coffin with his ducats and jewels in it. He sought the help of the Duke and his friend Tubal to track down and find Jessica and Lorenzo. Just before her elopement Jessica feels ashamed of herself for her masculine disguise and for stealing her father's money and jewellery.

4. What was the role played by Lorenzo in Jessica's escape from?

Answers: Lorenzo is quick to see the masquerade he and his friends have planned as an opportunity for eloping with Jessica. He decides that Jessica disguised as a page will be his torch-bearer in the masque. When Jessica feels embarrassed in a page-boy's dress, he satisfies her by saying that she looks charming even in the disguise of a boy and finally takes her with him.

5. What do Venice and Belmont stand for? What does the elopement of Lorenzo and Jessica from Venice to Belmont signify?

Answers: Venice stands for a busy life, full of problems, businesses and hardships while Belmont stands for peace, love and tranquility. Elopement of Lorenzo and Jessica from Venice to Belmont means they have freed themselves from the destructive facts of life at Venice and have come to Belmont where there is peace and tranquility and that nurtures their love.

Extract - 3

1. Where does this scene take place? Who is Stephano? What message does he bring?

Answers: This scene takes place in the garden in front of Portia's house in Belmont. Stephano is a servant of Portia. He brings the message that Lady Portia will arrive at Belmont before day-break.

2. According to Stephano, what has his mistress been doing during her absence from home?

Answers: According to Stephano, during her absence from home his mistress was visiting the roadside shrines with holy crosses. She knelt and offered prayers at these holy places for blessings in her wedded life.

3. In reality, what has she been doing during her absence? Who accompanied the mistress?

Answers: In reality, during her absence from home she went to Venice disguised as a Doctor of Law, and successfully argued for Antonio in his bond-forfeiture case and saved him from the evil designs of Shylock. Nerissa accompanied her mistress as the lawyer's clerk.

4. What role did Portia's maid play in the company of her mistress?

Answers: In the company of her mistress, her maid played the role of a lawyer's clerk. Once the deed document was made, Portia's maid went to Shylock's house for his signature on the document.

5. Explain how the Jessica-Lorenzo romance is linked to the love story of Portia and Bassanio,

Answers: Jessica-Lorenzo romance is linked to the love story of Portia and Bassanio. Lorenzo is Bassanio's friend and well wisher, Jessica is Shylock's daughter who finds life at her home hell. Bassanio's dinner party provides Jessica and Lorenzo an opportunity to elope. They elope to Belmont and stay at Portia's mansion during her absence.

Extract - 4

1. Who speaks these words? Where is he now? To whom is he speaking?

Answers: Lorenzo speaks these words. He is in the garden in front of Portia's house in Belmont. He is speaking to Jessica.

2. What has the speaker said about music before this extract?

Answers: Before this extract the speaker has asked Stephano to arrange for some music in the open air.

3. According to the speaker, what effect does music have on animals? What is the effect of lack of music on men?

Answers: According to the speaker if animals hear music, they quickly come to a standstill and remain quietly listening and gazing with calm eyes. Lorenzo says that a man who lacks

music is capable of treachery, intrigue and dishonesty. His spirit has no brighter feelings, his emotions are sordid and dark as hell. Such men cannot be trusted.

4. Give the meaning of:

(a) patines of bright gold

Answers: glittering plates of bright gold.

(b) floor of heaven

Answers: Lorenzo describes the sky as the floor of heaven.

5. What is the effect of music on the person to whom these words are addressed?

Answers: The effect of music on the person addressed here, i.e., Jessica, is one of sadness, Lorenzo explains that due to her attentiveness, she gets lost in music.

6. According to the Elizabethan view of music, what are the orbs said to be doing? Why can't human beings hear the music of the heavens in this life?

Answers: Elizabethans believed that every star or planet produced, in its motion, a peculiar musical note and the combination of all notes composed the Harmony of the universe. The angels are said to be listening to the music of stars. Our souls are immortal and they produce divine music. But as long as the clothing of mortality - the human body - encloses the soul, we cannot hear the music of the heavens.

Extract - 5

1. Who was Orpheus? What effect did the music played by Orpheus have on objects in nature?

Answers: Orpheus was the son of the Muse Calliope. He was a famous poet of Thrace. He was presented with a lyre by Apollo and instructed by muses in its use. He enchanted with its music not only the wild beasts, but also the trees and rocks upon Olympus. It is said that he made trees, stones and streams move from place to place by the power of his music.

2. Give the meaning of:

**Since naught so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.**

Answers: The above lines mean that there is nothing in the world so insensible, so fierce and unyielding that it does not ever for a passing moment yield to the power of music. It means music can change the nature of things at least for some time.

3. What has Lorenzo Said earlier about the effect of trumpet sound on wild colts?

Answers: Earlier Lorenzo had said that at the sound of trumpet, wild unbroken horses, rushing madly over the plains with energy come to a standstill. They remain quiet, listen and gaze calmly.

4. What does Lorenzo say about the man who has no sense of music?

Answers: Lorenzo says that the man, who has no sense of music is capable of treachery, intrigue and dishonesty. His spirit has no spark of brighter feelings and he is lifeless like the world sleeping at night. His emotions are sordid and as dark as hell. Such a man can never be trusted.

5. What is referred to as Erebus? Why is it used in the extract?

Answers: Erebus was the son of Chaos. His name signifies darkness. In classical mythology it was considered also as the home of the dead, an area of darkness near hell. Departed souls had to walk through this area during their passage to Hades. Lorenzo says that a man who does not love music, has thoughts as dark as night and emotions as dark as hell.

Extract - 6

1. What is meant by 'a hoop of gold' and 'a paltry ring'?

Answers: A hoop of gold' means a circle of gold. A paltry ring means a ring of small value.