

The merchant of venice

[Life](#), [Love](#)



The Merchant of Venice In “ The Merchant of Venice” by William Shakespeare is a play in which the themes of love and hate are dominant. The Merchant of Venice is a tale set in Venice about a merchant named Antonio who attempts to help his friend, Bassanio marry his love Portia. In order to do this he is forced to borrow money from a Jewish money lender called Shylock. In this essay I will discuss the nature of these themes and the main characters involved. I also intend to consider the different kinds of love and hate which are conveyed throughout the play. Initially I will write about the theme of love, the first aspect of this being love for a friend. We see this most clearly when Bassanio asked to borrow money from Antonio. As most of his money was caught up in his ships at sea, Antonio decided to ask for a loan from Shylock, despite the severe consequences if it was not paid back. A bond stated that if the money was not returned, Shylock would receive a pound of flesh from Antonio. As a good friend, Bassanio insisted that Antonio should not take such a risk but his plea was ignored as Antonio decided to accept the conditions of the bond. He does this because he is loyal to Bassanio and is determined for his friend to be happy and able to marry Portia. “ My purse, my person, my extremist means lie all unlocked to your occasions”. By Antonio telling him this, he shows his care for Bassanio and his willingness to do whatever it takes to help his friend, also conveying the closeness of their friendship. Another aspect of love portrayed throughout the play is romantic love. This is conveyed most clearly through the characters of Portia and Bassanio. Although the love between these characters is strong, there are conditions which need to be met in order for them to be allowed to marry. Bassanio must pick the correct casket to show his worthiness of Portia. Her

desire for him to succeed in doing this is very strong, so strong that as Bassanio is picking a casket she asks him to be careful. " I pray you tarry, pause a day or two before you hazard, for in choosing wrong I lose your company; therefore forbear awhile. " This shows her concern that she may lose him if he makes the wrong decision. Bassanio's love is also strong for Portia. He speaks of her very highly when talking to Antonio. " In Belmont is a lady richly left, And she is fair, and fairer than that word, Of wondrous virtues — sometimes from her eyes I did receive fair speechless messages Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued. " The way he speaks about her shows his fondness of her. Bassanio and Portia's love is dominant throughout the play. In clear contrast, it is essential to also explore the theme of hate, a feature of this being personal hatred or a grudge against someone. We see this evidently between Shylock and Antonio. Antonio treated Shylock terribly for many years, so when Antonio asked to borrow money from him for Bassanio, he seeks an opportunity for revenge. Antonio had been rude and cruel to Shylock for a long time. We see this when Shylock expresses his anger in a compelling speech. " You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine, And all for use of that which is mine own. Well then, it now appears you need my help..." Shylocks speech is very powerful and he goes on to express deep emotion. His anger seems to have built up and he eventually decided to take his revenge. Therefore, when Antonio needed to borrow money he conjured up a plan for payback. Shylock decided that Antonio should sign a bond to substitute charging interest. The conditions of the bond were that if the money was not returned, Shylock would take a pound of flesh from Antonio. When Antonio's ships got wrecked

and he lost all of his money that was tied up at sea, he soon regretted accepting the bond as he knew Shylock would be determined to receive his pound of flesh. This is related to the theme of hate as it shows how strong Shylock's detestation is for Antonio that he would want him to agree to such terms. The theme of hatred through prejudice is also prominent in the play. The way Antonio treats Shylock represents the way Jews were discriminated against during this time. Antonio's behaviour towards Shylock was awful. He spat at him, gave him verbal abuse and blamed him for things out with his control, purely because he was a Jew. Jewish people are no different from that of any other religion though they were treated notoriously, like they were to be punished for their beliefs. Shylock despised Antonio for this, understandably. Personally, I feel sorry for the character of Shylock as he has been tormented and bullied for no reason other than his religion. When Antonio asks to borrow money, Shylock questions why he deserves his business because of this. " Fair sir, you spat on me Wednesday last, You spurned me on such a day, another time You called me dog: And for these courtesies I'll lend you thus much moneys? " In this quote Shylock asks Antonio, why should I give you my business when you treat me this way? When Antonio asks Shylock to borrow money he sees an opportunity to seek revenge for the ways in which Antonio has humiliated him over the years. However, this backfires when the courts do not allow Antonio and Shylock to go through with the bond. At this stage in the play we see another example of Portia's love for Bassanio. She cleverly uses the law to turn the tables on Shylock by suggesting that should even a drop more of Antonio's blood be shed than agreed in the bond, Shylock should be punished. Portia did this in

order to save Bassanio's best friend, Antonio, showing again that she cares for him. In this essay I have discussed the two main themes of love and hate in the play and written about the aspects of love for a friend, romantic love, personal hate and prejudice towards Jews. I described how we see these themes conveyed among different characters in many of the scenes throughout the play. The Merchant of Venice has taught me a great deal about anti-Semitism and how badly the Jews were treated. Consequently I think The Merchant of Venice is a gripping play with a fascinating story line and many valuable hidden messages that I thoroughly enjoyed reading.