

Analyse the presentation and dramatic contribution of shylock

[Literature](#), [Play](#)



What basically happens in the play is that Bassanio needs to borrow some money from Antonio, but Antonio will have to borrow it from Shylock lends him the money with a bond which means if Antonio doesn't pay him back in 3 months from that day hence, Shylock can take a pound of Antonio's flesh from wherever pleases him most. Jessica Shylock's daughter elopes and Bassanio gets married to Portia because he chose the right casket.

Months later Antonio's ships have apparently sunk and he can't pay back Shylock, Shylock intend to kill Antonio as revenge for how he has been treated by Antonio and friends. Shylock seems to get his bond but at the last second he can't because he will have to draw blood, and he cannot have blood just the flesh, so Shylock takes the money, but is punished for some reason by having to convert to Christianity whilst all his wealth going to Lorenzo upon his death. Something about rings and the end.

The main argument and points concerning how Shylock is presented and what his dramatic contributions are is he is what a stereotypical Jew in Elizabethan times were said to be like. In Elizabethan times Jews were widely hated by most if not all non-Jewish people. They were the scapegoat for many of the problems in the world. Shylock is the heart of the play- he being the main story to what is happening-, and he brings up many contrasts and topics in the play, such as Judaism vs. Christianity, this is largely used to say that Jews are greedy evil people that are not to be trusted; also mercy vs. orals, is it right to exact your revenge upon people who wrong you, and what is the actual meaning of right and wrong, good and evil, is it all in the eye of the beholder.

This is seen in act 4 scene 1 where Shylock is 'let off' but must convert to Christianity, to Shylock his religion mean a lot and is a punishment to him. And the Farther/Daughter relationship, He has conflicts with his daughter who eventually ends up running away from him and eloping. He is also the centre for many themes that the Elizabethans used to love to watch such as law, revenge, mercy etc.

All these points will be address in the essay. The Elizabethan attitude towards Jewish people were: they thought Jewish people were evil, they hated them because they practiced lending money for profit (usury), they were accused of attacks on children, during the reign of King Henry II they were banned from joining the town guilds and weren't allowed to own land. They had to pay church taxes and on death all their wealth was seized by the king. Most of their money was used to fund King Richard I's crusades. Edward I then exiled them from England in 1290.

English suspicion and bigotry against the Jews grew and riotous protest started tacking place. By 1217 Jews were forced to wear a yellow badge that labelled their religious caste. Eventually the word 'Jew' became a label that indicated a stereotypical version of a shifty profiteer who was not to be trusted. This would cause an Elizabethan audience to expect Shylock to follow all these stereotypes, they would expect Shylock to be the villain of the play, and attempt to cause the downfall of the 'hero'. This makes Shakespeare play along to this stereotype and he makes out that Shylock is evil.

Shakespeare uses all of these stereotypes when he created the character of Shylock, he wanted people to hate him, because he was a Jew, he did this to either express his own racist views (which would have been fine at the time) to spread anti-Jew propaganda as many people would see his plays and take stuff (such as his views of the Jews) and incorporate it into how they feel and think. Or he could have wrote it to make the play popular, few would want to see a play where a race they have been taught to hate is the hero, or is meant to be felt sorry for.

A modern audience however would react very differently to the character of Shylock because of the stereotypes that he followed might even offend them. People and even more so the government are easily offended by the tiniest of things. Being offended by how Shylock is presented is understandable but they fail to realise when it was written, and what the common opinion of people on this subject would be. They fail to see things in context of the times. If this was a modern play it would be banned for its portrayal of Jews, however people these days don't know what they want.

If it was modern and was banned people would want it to be un-banned because of 'freedom of speech' but if it wasn't banned people would demand it be banned because of its racist views. Shakespeare presents Shylock as greedy, and hateful of the Christians. He does this so that people lose all sympathy for Shylock and make them sympathise with the Christian characters more. This is used to the point of making people wanting Shylock punished for how he was so un-merciful to Antonio.

As well as this it is used to help the story progress, and show the significance of certain aspects of the story, such as when Jessica trades Shylocks most expensive ring for a monkey, this is to show that something so precious to Shylock is used to buy something completely stupid, this may also have purposely been done to spite him. Shakespeare also uses many techniques in Shylock's speech. He uses repetition " You knew none so well, none so well as you", this makes a sense of urgency and anger in his voice.

Also another example of this is " What, what, what? Ill luck, ill luck? he urgently wants to know what has appended and the repetition exaggerates this. He uses the pattern of three ideas several times as well to build up effect or to give power to the idea, such as in " you call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog and spit upon my Jewish gabardine" and " to shake the head, relent and sigh, and yield". He makes Shylock sound important by using iambic pentameter " well thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge," this makes him sound important, because iambic pentameters is what kind of speech Kings were said to have used, it makes them sound important/powerful or elegant.

Sometimes Shylock will use soliloquies or asides, these would give insight into how Shylock really feels or what he thinks. This builds drama because we know what Shylock really thinks whereas the other characters do not, this makes us wonder more, and think about how these hidden feelings are going to affect the characters. In his first aside we find out what Shylock thinks of Antonio " How like a fawning publican he looks!... cursed be my tribe if I

forgive him! " This makes the audience know more than what the characters do and lets us know more about his character.

The tone in which he speaks in some parts help us to know how he feels at the time, such as " A Daniel come to judgement! Yea, a Daniel! O wise young judge, how do I honour thee! " This makes Shylock sound ecstatic and happy, also " She is damned for it", " My own flesh and blood to rebel! " he sounds angry hear, and the use of short blunt words makes it sound harsher. When people talk to Shylock or talk about Shylock they always insult him, due to him being a Jew and because his obsession for money.

They called him " dog", " O, be thou damned, inexorable dog! However when they realise that Shylock is serious about killing Antonio they try to speak nicer to Shylock and complement him " good Shylock", trying to make Shylock go easier on Antonio, by being nicer to him. A modern audience would probably have sympathised with Shylock because of the way he has been treated and what he has been through throughout this play.

Shakespeare's intentions however were to make the audience hate Shylock and sympathise with the Christians because Antonio could lose his life, his ships have apparently sank and he will be unable to pay back shylock on time.

At the start of the play Shylock is only mildly disliked and made to be hated, but towards the end he is really meant to be hated and despised, because of his lack of mercy. This was intended so we would sort of feel happy that Shylock has been punished in such a way. Shylock is used as a plot device, if

it were not for him the play would have had to end not long after Bassanio chose the right casket and everyone got married because there would be nothing less to write about. Because of Shylock we get the story of is Antonio going to get killed or not, will Shylock be merciful?

Etc. He is also used as the person, who brings about different elements of the play that an Elizabethan audience would like to watch; he brings up the idea of Christianity vs. Judaism, mercy vs. the unmerciful, of principles and morals, the themes of law, revenge, mercy, etc. all of which were very popular in Elizabethan times. He is used to build up the tension and suspense, the question will he spare Antonio or not? He is an Elizabethan stereotype of a Jew and he shows the relationship between the father and daughter.

This is all done by Shylock and makes the play what it is, without his character not much could happen and the play would be very boring. In conclusion Shylock is the most important character in this play even though he is no the main character or hero. He is the plot itself and without him the play couldn't exist. Shylock is the perfect Elizabethan stereotype of a Jew and Shakespeare done this on purpose to create he affect, and to build reflect in what people though of them at the time. In the Elizabethan times Shylock was a character to be hated, but in the modern day you find people sympathising with him rather than hating him.