

The merchant of venice critical analysis

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Parent-Child Relationship Between Jessica and Shylock in The Merchant of Venice After reading The Merchant of Venice, we should ask ourselves if Shylock, who many people perceive as tragedy stricken and victimized, is in fact so hard done by after all. When it comes to family matters, I believe that Shylock is the ultimate cause behind his awful relationship with Jessica. In this play, Shakespeare portrays an old fashioned child-parent relationship in which the child feels inferior to the parent.

Shylock and Jessica lack trustworthiness, care, love, and consideration for one another. Their horrible relationship, which is a huge attribute to the play, is not due to conflicting personalities as commonly believed, but rather to the fact that Shylock is a terrible father. Over the course of the novel, Shylock and Jessica have numerous disagreements on certain issues, and Shylock is too stubborn to compromise. Firstly, when it comes to issues regarding religion, the two dispute because Jessica is ashamed to be Jewish while Shylock takes pride in it.

Jessica clearly shows how upset she is to be Jewish when she says, “ Alack, what heinous sin it is in me to be asham’d to be my father’s child! But though I am a daughter to his blood, I am not to his manners” (2. 3. 18). When Jessica is speaking to Launcelot, she essentially says that she would never act like she a Jew, which displays the lack of pride and hatred she has towards this “ flaw” of hers. Secondly, Shylock persistently will not give Jessica any more freedom, and the ability to make her own decisions. Before the party that Shylock decides to attend, he says to Jessica: ... Hear you me, Jessica.

Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum and the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife, clamber not you up to the casements then, nor thrust your head into the public street, to gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces. But stop my house's ears—I mean my casements—let not the sound of shallow foppery enter my sober house (2. 5. 27-35). Shylock gives strict instructions to Jessica to lock up the house, not reveal her face to anyone outside and not participate part in the Christian activities taking place, showing his lack of trust in her and demonstrating the restriction that Jessica is under.

In many novels and other literature, not only are characters able to overcome conflicting personalities but in some cases, those are the characters that compliment each other best. Therefore, Shylock is simply stubborn preventing his relationship from progressing with Jessica. Throughout the novel, it becomes apparent that Shylock values materialistic things, putting them before Jessica. Firstly, when Jessica escapes home and her well being is questionable, Shylock's concern lies in his possessions that she had taken with her. While speaking to Tubal, Shlock says, " I would my daughter were dead at myfoodand the jewels in her ear!

Would she were hearsed at my foot and the ducats in her coffin! ... The thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief—and no satisfaction, no revenge..." (3. 1. 79-84). This shows that Shylock is a very materialistic person and considers his daughter to be of less importance than his goods. He even goes to the extent of wishing that she was dead in front of his feet so he could take all of his precious jewels back. Secondly, throughout Venice,

Shylock is known as the ‘greedymoneylender’ and we see him live up to his name on a few occasions.

Shylock speaks to Jessica and says, “There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest, for I did dream of money bags tonight” (2. 5. 17-18). This tells us that he knows things aren’t going in his favor because he had dreamt of money bags previously and therefore he lives up to his name of being greedy and money-oriented. As a parent, Shylock should set his priorities straight and put Jessica before material possessions and money. Shylock is uninvolved in Jessica’s life and doesn’t invest enough effort or consideration into her. Firstly, Jessica is in love with Lorenzo, a Christian, but Shylock resists stubbornly.

Jessica says, “O Lorenzo, if thou keep promise, I shall end this strife, become a Christian and thy loving wife” (2. 4. 18-20). Jessica is basically admitting that life with Shylock is unpleasant and if all goes according to plan, she can marry Lorenzo and leave. Shylock is restricting her from doing this. Secondly, Shylock spends too much time worrying about his own issues in the book such as interacting with Lancelot, moneylending to Bassanio as well as others, and seeing through his promise for a pound of Antonio’s flesh. In act three, we can see a segment of Shylock’s busy life when he says: I’ll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak;

I’ll have my bond, and therefore speak no more I’ll not be made a soft and dull-eyed fool, To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield To Christian intercessors. Follow not! I’ll have no speaking, I will have my bond (3. 3. 12-17). This is one of many examples of Shylock seeking Antonio’s flesh intently. As a caregiver, Shylock’s priorities need to be in his children but it is

apparent that his time is consumed adversely. Shylock is a terrible father because he does not involve himself in Jessica's life enough and make time for her.

Whether it's in being too busy to take interest in Jessica, persistently restricting her, cringing at the thought of his inheritance to go to her, or being extremely money orientated, Shylock is most definitely the source of the poor father-daughter relationship between himself and Jessica. At numerous points within the novel, we can see Shylock's lack of care, acceptance, involvement, love and trust that he has in Jessica. These are all essential behavioral traits that a caregiver and role model should have. In conclusion, Shylock is an inadequate father to Jessica and therefore, he is more of a villain than a victim.