

The caskets and their role in plot's construction

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In 'The Merchant of Venice' written by William Shakespeare there are three caskets: of Gold, Silver and Lead. Introducing them the caskets play a powerful dramatic significance to the play as it helps justify the mindset of her suitors which come 'from the four corners of the earth. They come to kiss this shrine, this mortal breathing saint. Each casket is known for introducing a moral lesson to the one who opens it, interestingly each of the caskets have a message held externally and internally to support their lesson.

In Act Two Scene Seven the Prince of Morocco arrives to have a try at his luck at achieving Portia as a wife. The Prince deliberated to himself what casket to choose. Having glanced at the Golden Casket he read that it promises, "Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire." Thinking to himself that lead be to uncharacteristic for the fair Portia ('Is't like that lead contains her? 'Twere damnation to think so base a thought. It were too gross to rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave.') and that silver does not compete with gold in terms of value ('Or shall I think in silver she's immured, being ten times undervalued to tried gold?') he chose the Golden Casket. This event is made to be so dramatic as it shows that love cannot be bought and that you 'should never judge a book by its cover' as what may be inside may be of equal or opposite value to of the outside. This idea is developed as The Prince of Morocco picks the Golden Casket he realizes that he chose wrong as when he opens and sees no portrait indicating Portia as his prize is but a skull with a scroll in its eye socket and on the scroll states the most important quote to symbolize the main idea, 'all that glisters is not gold,' showing that nothing that sparkles from blinded vision or from a

distance must be something of value, something that may be beautiful on the outside but may be corrupted on the inside.

Furthermore in Act Two Scene Nine the Prince of Arragon arrives too to try his luck at Portia's hand in marriage. He alike to the Prince of Morocco deliberates carefully to himself reading aloud the inscriptions to dramatically emphasize the thought that each suitor must endure. He then proceeds to choose the Silver Casket inscribed with, " Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves." Thinking with an egocentric characteristic that he deserves the very best (" I will assume desert") he opens the Silver Casket finding a blinking idiot and by that he states at his leave that once he had only but one idiot head but now two. By this encounter there is a further declaration of how the three caskets play an important role to the drama of the play, in which the Silver Casket shows that when pursuing the love of another one must not think greatly of one's needs and profits for personal gain. Interestingly The Prince of Morocco by his gamble lost a right and the right being to pursue a woman for marital ambitions ever gain.

Lastly in Act Three Scene Two Bassanio financially helped by Antonio arrives at Portia's house to choose from the caskets. He too debates and induces dramatic effect on the play when he states in connection to the Gold Casket that you cannot judge something from its aesthetic appearance and in addition gives an example of a court (too inducing a foreshadowing of Antonio's trial) when one can ' deliver a false plea and hide its wickedness with a pretty voice' (' The world is still deceived with ornament. In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt. But, being seasoned with a gracious voice,

obscures the show of evil?'). Although crediting this idea, nevertheless he blatantly and carelessly picks a casket, which he realizes to have chosen correctly being the Lead Casket inscribed with, ' Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath'. By this an idea of hypocrisy is introduced in which a person may go back completely on his ideals if he is in pursuit of something is of great gain to himself, as in Bassanio's search of riches masked or ' covered' by the love that he ostents to have for Portia.

These portrayals create further drama in the play, showing that everyone has a weakness. Overall the caskets have played a great lesson by foreshadowing events, showing the mindset of people, and allowing us to realize the human error idea of the play. Achieving these Shakespeare has allowed himself to develop the story further and also by drama to attract the audience's attention by stating that everyone makes mistakes no matter how high of character one is.