

Which stereotype and prejudice is presented in the play the merchant of venice



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In Elizabethan England, many people were anti-Semitic, driven by their heart, having hatred of each others religions.

In the early middle ages, Jews were accused of exploiting Christians. They were actually banned from England in 1290, and were not allowed back into England several decades after 'The Merchant of Venice' had been written. There were still a few Jews living in England despite the ban. A few of them were tolerated. Only being a few they were out numbered, imagining if one somehow got into a fight with a Christian, the Christian would have much more support then the Jew.

The Elizabethans were ignorant of the Jewish culture. Shakespeare knowing that the majority of the population was Christian had to write something that they all thought was going on. So he decided to write the Merchant of Venice, in which there are lots of stereotypes and prejudice of people. The play also became very popular in Germany, when Hitler was in power.

As you probably know Hitler did not like the Jewish community and many other that did not come under his opinion of a pure race. Due to all these reasons to make his plays successful in the Elizabethan period he had to involve lots of stereotypes and prejudice of a Jew in his play. This would make most of the Christian population interested in the play. Now a day these sorts of things would not be right, It would be absolutely wrong.

Some schools across the U. K. have refused to study this for their G. C. S. E in English.

They are so much against what the story is about they are willing to lose their coursework marks. In the Elizabethan time this would have been perfectly all right, crowds would have laughed at it, but now a day it is not. The play main parts go like this. Antonio and Bassanio are good friends. Antonio is a trades man and all of his ships are out at sea.

In those times you probably know not many ships returned from their voyages. Bassanio wanted to go 'woo' Portia who was a beautiful heiress who lived in Belmont. To do this Bassanio needed 3000 ducats (this was the currency). He asked Antonio but all of his ships were out at sea, then they both went to ask Shylock who was 'the Jew' in the play.

He eventually decided to give them the money but he said Antonio must be bound. Antonio thought it was just for a little fun, but I think that Shylock wanted some revenge on him. After he gives the money Bassanio goes to woo Portia and succeeds because she helps him out. Later on we find out that Antonio's ships have failed to return. Shylock goes and pursues his court case for the pound of flesh.

The Play the Merchant of Venice was written by William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare was born in Stratford-Upon Avon, where he was the eldest son of John and Mary. Shakespeare was born in the year of 1564. He went on to get married to Ann Hathaway in 1582 who was from the town of Shottery; it is close to Shakespeare's home town. Anne, his wife, gave birth to their first child, who was a girl who they named Sussanna.

Shakespeare wrote all of his books in married life, the play The Merchant of

Venice which we are studying at the moment was written in the years of <https://assignbuster.com/which-stereotype-and-prejudice-is-presented-in-the-play-the-merchant-of-venice/>

1596 to 1599. No one is sure of the exact date because this was all over several hundred years ago. It was written during the Elizabethan era. To make the play popular Shakespeare had to think of a subject which would appeal to the crowds at that time.

In the Elizabethan era Christians and the Jewish did not get one well. The Jews had their stereotypes of Christians, and the Christians of the Jews. Shakespeare, being a Christian, wrote this play against the Jews. It showed a Stereotype of what a Christian looks at a Jew like and how the Christians actually see them selves as being. To answer the question fully I have to find out the meaning of two words before I get started, these are stereotype and prejudice.

These are the meanings I found in the dictionary of the word stereotype: 1. A conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image. 2. One that is regarded as embodying or conforming to a set image or type. 3. A metal printing plate cast from a matrix moulded from a raised printing surface, such as typeThese are the meanings of the word prejudice I found in the dictionary: 1.

a. An adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of the facts. b. A preconceived preference or idea. 2.

The act or state of holding unreasonable preconceived judgments or convictions. See Synonyms at3. Irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, or religion. 4.

Detriment or injury caused to a person by the preconceived, unfavourable conviction of another or others. In the play 'The Merchant of Venice' the theme of prejudice and Stereotype is shown in many different aspects. It can be seen when Men from all over the world came to woo the beautiful Portia, Portia talks about them in their stereotypical ways, I will be looking at these in a bit more detail later on in this essay. It is also shown through out the play when ever shylock is brought up, how Antonio, Bassanio, Salario and Solanio see Shylock as. There is also gender stereotype when Portia is not aloud to choose who she marries, it's her Dads choice. Through out all of the play Shylock the main character is always regarded back as 'The Jew'.

There are not many times is so ever when another Christian character calls him by his name not calling him 'The Jew'. This in my opinion and I am sure in many others is a very racist way of calling someone. Not by their name but their Religion. I think that when people read the book in recent days it makes them feel sorry for Shylock but back then in the general hatred people would not have been even close to feeling sorry for Shylock. There are lots of Stereotype images coming out when Portia talks about the Men who have come to 'woo' her, she talks about them by their stereotypical ways. I have decided to look at three replies Portia gives when she has seen the men who came to woo her.

The first reply which Portia gave which I am going to be looking at is the one when she first saw Monsieur Le Bon. Portia starts of by saying, 'God made him and therefore let him pass for a man.' She does not like what he looks like; she is saying that after all God did make him so I will pass him as a human being. 'He is every man in no man.

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' She is saying that he copies everyone else but he has not personality of his own. All bad is coming out this shows the stereotypes of how she thinks that the people will be like.' If I should marry him, I should marry twenty thousand husbands.' She is saying I would marry twenty thousand other men before even thinking to marry him.

This shows that she does not really like him; she does not like his looks or his personality. She just barely passes him off as a human being. The second reply I will be looking at which Portia gave is of Falconbridge who is a young Baron of England. Portia starts off by saying, 'You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him' Portia says nothing much and he does not say much to her because there was a big communication problem. They do not talk, this is the only man Portia like, looks wise.

' He is a proper man's picture, but alas who can converse with a dumbshow?' This is the first man Portia has likes the looks of but he is not all that educated, the only language he knows is English, this causing a big communication problem. This is the stereotype of an English man coming out here, good looks but not the brains to go with it. The third and last reply I am looking at is the German, the Duck of Saxony's Nephew. This is what Portia says about him, 'Very vilely in the morning when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon when he is drunk.' She says that he is drunk all of the time, when he is not he is little worse than a man when he is he is little better than a beast.

He stays drunk most of the time. This would have been the stereotype of a German back then, very drunk. Lots of stereotypes come out here. After

seeing all of the men Nerrisa who is Portia's servant started to talk about Bassanio. Nerrisa said, 'He of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon the best deserving a fair lady.'

' Then Portia goes on to reply, 'I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.' Out of all of the men both Nerrisa and Portia have only good things to say about Bassanio. Portia likes him too and says that he is worthy of her praise. Now I am going to compare this with what Bassanio says about Portia to Antonio.

Bassanio says, 'In Belmont is a lady richly left, And she is fair.' He is saying that there is a rich heiress who is very good looking, he tells Antonio about her because he wants to go and guess which casquet is the right one 'I have a mind presages me such thrift' Bassanio feels that he is going to make a huge profit if he gets to marry her. I am not sure if Bassanio is more going for the money or if he is just going for her hand in marriage. I think that the main reason he wants to marry her is to pay of his best friend Antonio who he has lots of debts to pay off to.

Although Bassanio already had money borrowed ducats from Antonio, he wants to pay them back. To pay them back he says he is going to try to marry Portia but to do this he says he needs ' Three thousand ducats.' All of Antonio's money is on his ships but he is willing to go and ask Shylock ' The Jew' if he would lend some money so he can give it to Bassanio and Antonio is willing to be bound for it. So both Bassanio and Antonio go to Shylocks place to ask him for three thousand ducats.

This all happens during Act one Scene three. Bassanio enters first with Shylock and they start to talk to about the money. 'Antonio shall become bound; well.' When Shylock finds out that Antonio will get bound he starts to get interested he starts to think. Shakespeare is trying to show how the Jews think.

Then Shylock goes on to say, 'I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.' Shylock says that he will talk and walk with Bassanio but never eat, drink and pray with them. Insults are flying around, in this conversation this shows the tension between the Christians and the Jews. 'An evil soul producing holy witness is like a villain with a smiling cheek,' Again there are insults flying around, Antonio is saying explain how these sorts of people are. 'Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last; You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies I'll lend you thus much moneys?' Shylock is saying that you spat on me last Wednesday you also called me a Dog, and you say I should let you borrow the money? Saying that you have been saying all of this to me and you expect me to give you the money I am as like to call thee so again, to spit on thee again, to spurn thee too. If thou wilt lend this money.

' This is what Antonio says in Reply to shylock, he says the yet again I will spit on u I will call you names. Don't give the money as a friend but as an Enemy. This is significant because he is saying this to Shylock's place in front of his face. He still says I will spit on you, telling him that he will never come to like him. Antonio just looks at the Bond as a merry Sport but Bassanio is more weary about it.

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In act two scenes 8 both 'Solanio' and 'Salario' were feeling sorry for Antonio on his loss of the ships. And then they go on to take the fun out of Shylock. His daughter Jessica has run away from him with Lorenzo. She is going to convert in to Christianity and marry Lorenzo.'As the dog Jew did utter in the Streets' this again shows the hatred between the Christians and the Jews. He calls him the Dog, he is in a way happy that this happened to Shylock.

It may be fair for him to feel upset and angry with Jessica when she runs off with Lorenzo, but he behaves as if he cannot decide which loss is more important. 'My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!' He hears that Antonio's ships have sunk, this makes him really happy and he thanks god. Now every one sees him as a villain, blood thirsty. This in the way is the only thing he is looking forward to he has nothing else.

Act four Scenes one is looked upon the most important scene in the play. It is also probably the most memorable scene in any of Shakespeare's books. This being the scene in which shylock fights his court case to get his pound of flesh and kill Antonio in doing so. The Duke asks 'What, is Antonio here? And then Antonio replies 'Ready, so please your grace' Antonio seems so calm, he is ready to get what he deserves. Again Shakespeare shows him as an Angel and Shylock as the Devil. 'I am sorry for thee: thou art come to answer A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch incapable of pity, void and empty From any dram of mercy.

'The dukes job is to examine the case not take sides but he being a Christian he will back Antonio up. Everyone in the court room is siding

Antonio no one siding Shylock, he is all alone every one is trying to convince him for the 6000 ducats Bassanio offers after all he is now married to Portia. 'And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn To have the due and forfeit of my bond' Shylock gives this reason for wanted to get his pound of flesh. Bassanio was right that it was not just a merry sport Shylock wanted he Revenge from all of those years he has been stepped on spat at and so on.

' This is no answer, thou unfeeling man, To excuse the current of thy cruelty' Bassanio then says that, that is not excuse. Then Shylock replies to him, ' I am not bound to please thee with my answers.' He is saying that I do not have to answer your questions. He is not bound to.

' I pray you, think you question with the Jew:...And bid the main flood bate his usual height; You may as well use question with the wolf' Antonio says this to Bassanio.

He is saying that you a better of asking a wolf that question. Shylock has no answer to why he is going ahead when he has been offered twice the amount. 'Most learned judge! A sentence! Come, prepare!' This is when Shylock becomes exited, he thinks that finally he will get his revenge. 'Tarry a little; there is something else. This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;' This is where Shylock gets caught out, Portia who is dressed up as the judge, says that he is aloud his pound of flesh but he is not aloud to let there be a drop of blood.

This would be impossible. Then Shylock settles for the money, that Bassanio again offers to him, 'Give me my principal, and let me go.' But Portia does not even allow this in the end the Shylock gets nothing, 'Thou shalt have nothing <https://assignbuster.com/which-stereotype-and-prejudice-is-presented-in-the-play-the-merchant-of-venice/>

but the forfeiture, To be so taken at thy peril, Jew' this is what Portia does, Shylock who was blood thirsty gets nothing when he could have setteled for three times the Ducats he gave to Antonio. In my opinion Shylocks life is now finished, there is nothing more there is for him, for he has lost all of his jewels, his money and his only child Jessica.

In the begging you would feel a bit sorry for Shylock but after this scene the court case scene, I think that everyone's opinions change towards him. Now he looks a villain who is blood thirsty, he wants his revenge so bad. In this play and many others of Shakespeare's books, he uses lots and lots of writing techniques for example, he uses Similes, Aside, Imagery, Metaphor, Euphemisms. These are the things which make Shakespeare's stories and plays much better than any other writers. In conclusion I say that there is lots of Stereotype, Prejudice and even racism in this play, but there is a reason. To make the play successful he had to include these things in his play, other wise the audience would not be interested.

Remember this was played over several hundred years ago, there were no seats in the theatre, people used to come on their holidays and they needed something which will make them feel exited. The main reason why it suited the audience is the time period it was set in. The reasons for it becoming so popular both in Hitler's reign and also the Elizabethan era is because of the stereotype it has of Shylock who is a Jew. It shows him as being a money scrounger greedy for money.