

Shylock, hero or villain essay sample

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



I think that Shylock is a villain in the story and he is also very evil minded and he only cares for himself and his money. This is proven in almost every time he makes an appearance. In his first scene we see that Shylock is a clever man and knows how to take control of a situation. He has Bassanio easily wrapped around his little finger. However, Antonio is not so easily fooled.

In this scene we also learn that Shylock is a strict orthodox Jew; “ Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. ” Jews do not eat pork and do not believe in Jesus so Shylock didn’t say Jesus, but called him a “ Nazarite prophet”(Nazarite meaning someone from Nazareth, which is where Jesus was born). We also find that he detests Christians.

When he meets Antonio the first time when he says; “ I hate him for he is a Christian” and find that he hates Antonio even more because he lends out money with no interest charge which puts people who do charge interest like Shylock, out of business; “ he lends out money gratis(free), and brings down the rate of usance here with us in Venice” and because Antonio mocks on him in public he says that his “ tribe” will be “ cursed” if he forgives him. Shylock takes his time with the bargain slowly repeating and asking the price and conditions as if to keep Antonio and Bassanio on edge.

This shows he is a clever and careful man, especially when it comes to money. Then we start to see the other more sinister side of Shylock. Antonio tells him that he should lend him the money as “ enemies” that way Shylock could demand whatever penalty he liked if the money were not returned.

Shylock agrees to this and the penalty that he would induce would be that he would be able to cut a pound of flesh from anywhere on Antonio's body, so basically he would kill him. Act two sees Shylock deserted by Launcelot (his servant) and Jessica (his daughter).

Shylocks impression to the audience is worsened still when his servant Launcelot refers to him as a " fiend" or " devil" numerous times, or as the devils " incarnation". Shylocks daughter, Jessica, dose not want to stay with her own father. She refers to him as a " merry devil" and says that living in the house is " hell". She states that she is " ashamed" to be his daughter and " though I am a daughter to his blood I am not to his manners" meaning that they are blood related but she is nothing like him as a person. We see more of his hatred for Christians and his love for money in scene five.

He tells Jessica that he is going to the feast in hatred because he knew the others wouldn't expect him to come. He also tells her that while he's out she is not to open any of the windows and look at the masques and " the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife" and " gaze at the Christian fools". He adds the fact that his house is " sober". His lack of concern for Jessica and love for his money show at the end of the scene when he says " shut doors after you – fast bind, fast find" which means that if something is shut securely then it will be like that when you return.

Shylocks reaction to this is described in scene eight in a conversation between Salerio and Solanio. They chat about how they have never before seen a man with " passion so confused" meaning such a mixture of angry outbursts. They said that he was crying; " My daughter! O my ducats! Fled

with a Christian! O my Christian ducats! Stolen by my daughter! Justice! Find the girl! She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats! “. This tells a lot about Shylocks character, the fact that the most things he is shouting is about jewels, ducats and that his daughter has run off with a Christian has made him even more mad.

In addition to this we find that he does not care about his daughter, who is now a Christian thief and he wants her to be found – not because she is his daughter, but because she has his jewels and money and so that justice can be done. In Act three Shylock delightfully receives news that one of Antonio’s ships have sank, this means that Shylock will be able to carry out the forfeiture of his bond. He announces that no mercy will be given because this is his “ revenge” and, no matter how much pleading the bond will be carried out.

The court scene in Act four shows us that Shylock is a persistent man. It shows us Sylock refusing money of three times the payment he is totally fixed on the conditions of the bond and he will only be “ satisfied” when he has the bond. So after much dispute and trying to persuade Shlock to change his mind, the young doctor (actually Portia in disguise) finally admits defeat and Shylock is ecstatic and comes out with things like “ O learned judge! ” but then he becomes a broken man as we see that he must only take an exact pound of flesh and in doing so, he must not spill one drop of blood.

As this is impossible to do with your hands and a knife he accepts and tries to take his money instead but he had already refused this so he could not

have it. In addition to this the whole court case has turned against him because he had threatened the life of a Christian and he is an “ Alien” (because he is a Jew). So now he has to actually become a Christian, and you can imagine how bad this is for Shylock because he hates Christians. What’s more, he has to give half his money to Antonio, his worst enemy. From this we see a different Shylock, he actually wants to die rather than do this. He leaves the courtroom sad and pathetic.

In this story, you would judge from Shylocks thoughts and actions that he would be an evil, mean villain. But if you look at the actual story line Shylock could be seen as a hero. Just think, that if it wasn’t for Shylock, Portia and Bassanio may never have met because Shylock gave him the money to actually go to Portia. Without that, the court case would not of happened and Portia, Bassanio, Antonio and all the others would not have been united as friends after the court scene. So Shylock is the hero and villain in the story and he is probably most described character as the whole story basically revolves around him.