

Merchant of vinice



Merchant of Venice This paper will provide a persuasive answer to the question “ How is Shylock guilty of deadly sins of avarice, envy and wrath?”

The format that this paper will utilize is to first highlight some background information on the Shakespearian play The Merchant of Venice and the character Shylock. After this point arguments will be constructed as to how Shylock broke three of the seven deadly sins.

The dialogue, storyline, and interplay between characters in the play The Merchant of Venice has helped establish this work as a timeless masterpiece. However, it could be argued that there are some strong anti-Semitic themes through the work. One of the central characters (Shylock) is a money lending Jew. Many Christians during the time in which this play took place believed that money lending was a sin so it was relatively common for Jews to participate in this activity. At the time of the play’s setting, Venice was an exceedingly wealthy city which was funded largely by trade, which meant that money lending was somewhat of a “ Necessary evil”.

For the purpose of this paper, avarice will pertain to the sin of excess and the desire to gain more material wealth. It could be argued that the character of Shylock is guilty of the sin of Avarice by the very nature of his profession. As highlighted earlier, the simple lending of money for the purpose of collecting interest was in itself a form of greed. Antonio lent money at zero interest partially to undermine Shylock’s business but also because gaining from other peoples transactions was viewed as sinful. However, Shylock went beyond earning simple interest and it was made abundantly clear that he revered money and often collected high rates of interest.

It is the case that envy pertains to an insatiable desire that applies to more than just material wealth, as well as resenting something that somebody

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else has. It is upon this foundation that it could be argued that Shylock is guilty of the sin of envy insofar as he celebrated at the sinking of the massive fleet while out at sea. Moreover Shylock was also envious of how the law ended up favoring Antonio. Finally it could be argued that because Shylock was often reviled for being a Jew he was envious of the relative freedom that Christians were able to enjoy.

Finally this paper will conclude with a discussion on how Shylock was guilty of the sin of wrath. For the purpose of this report, Wrath will refer to some sort of uncontrolled feelings of rage. Probably the most obvious example would be how Shylock demanded that he receive a pound of flesh. When Shylock turned down Bassanio's counter offer to pay 6, 000 ducats (Venetian currency) and instead illogically demanded a pound of flesh which would bring him no monetary satisfaction. Moreover he became enraged when a legal loophole was demonstrated that would not allow for him to receive the restitution that he wanted which sent him into a fury.