

The merchant of venice antonio's trial (act 4)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Write a summary of the points of argument presented by both sides (Antonio and Shylock). Shylock, when asked why he would only be satisfied with the flesh of Antonio instead of the money that he lent, argues that it might indeed be strange to the others, but there are people who do and feel strange things without any cause, so his requirement for the flesh of Antonio can be listed as just one of those inexplicable things that cannot be answered. He also states that to deny him this right would cause the city to fall into disrepute for denying justice.

Antonio simply states that to expect Shylock to show mercy is next to impossible. He states a few impossible tasks like asking the tides not to rise, expecting the wolf to show pity to the ewe and not to devour the lamb, and to expect the firs not to make noise when the wind blows through them, and then goes on to say that these are easily done as compared to expecting Shylock to be merciful.

Shylock answers to the accusation by stating that he is no less merciless than the rest of the so called civilized men present there. He states how these people mistreat their slaves and how none of them would dream of treating them on equal footing with themselves. He then asks why it is that he is expected to forego his "pound of flesh" when they do not forfeit their slaves.

Analyze the factors of argument used and identify these with those that both Shylock used & the lawyer (Portia) used. Consider the key factors as presented in your text book (Beyond feelings by Vincent Ryab Ruggiero 8th edition) - both the positive & negative forms of argument.

Shylock uses negative arguments to state why it is that he would not give up his right to take Antonio's flesh. He uses affirmative argument as to why the

bond must be carried out to the letter.

The arguments that Antonio uses to state why it is useless to expect mercy from Shylock are negative. It is easy to see how he builds the premise to prove that Shylock is hard-hearted. The stated premise here is that impossible things can be achieved more easily than to get Shylock to change his heart. The Conclusion being that Shylock will not change his mind, for he is merciless.

When Portia and Shylock argue later on, Portia first of all uses affirmative argument towards showing mercy, which Shylock simply denies by using the negative argument, which is that the law allows him to get the bond enforced, so there is no need for mercy.

Portia uses affirmative arguments, whereas Antonio shows negative arguments towards a show of mercy. Portia states why Shylock should be merciful whereas Antonio avers how Shylock would not be merciful.

Shylock's own arguments remain the same, whether he is arguing with Portia or with Antonio. His premise is simple that as he is not required to show mercy under any law, therefore, he will not do so.

Conclude with the affect these arguments had on you which were most/least persuasive to you.

The least persuasive argument for me was the one put forward by Shylock as to what reasons he had for asking for Antonio's flesh. The argument he gave was that just like some people hate things without knowing why, or are scared of something without knowing the reason, therefore, he should not be asked to assign a reason as to why he wanted Antonio's flesh. It was very illogical as if the argument given by Shylock is followed, it can be clearly observed that the feelings that the people have in such cases are not

voluntary on their part; it is involuntary on the part of a man to be so scared of a cat, whereas what Shylock is doing is voluntary and he has full control over his actions.

On another note, when stating why he will not show mercy, the arguments that Shylock makes are very persuasive. The way he propounds how those who call themselves merciful are actually merciless themselves is very beautifully done. He does not mention their lack of mercy, he simply states that they treat their slaves as their animals and that they will never give their slaves the same place as other humans, and then asks why should he forego his right to a pound of flesh in such a case. The hidden premise here being that when others are not willing to let go of the whole body of a man (their slave) then why are they shocked when he will not let go of his right over a pound of flesh of another man.