

Character study of shylock and portia in merchant of venice

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



Character Study of Shylock and our feelings for him as the play progresses 1)

He is seen as a mercenary money-lender approached by Bassanio for the loan of 3000 ducats with Antonio as the guarantor. The money is to finance Bassanio on his trip to Belmont to woo Portia whom he is in love with. He keeps debating on whether he should lend the money. Even when Antonio is a "good" man meaning he is financially sound, yet his money is invested in goods which are in ships overseas. Therefore, his ventures are risky.

How do you feel about Shylock here? Are you uncomfortable that he places so much importance on money?) Shylock is portrayed as a villain when he displays his unforgiving and vengeful nature. He has a deep-seated hatred for Antonio. He says, "Cursed be my tribe if I forgive him!" Shylock is a villain here to say that he hates Antonio so much that he could swear on the name of his tribe. 3) Shylock is crafty and pretentious. To exact his revenge, he tricks Antonio to sign a bond in return for the loan of 3000 ducats to help Bassanio.

He uses words like a bond signed "in a merry sport" and "This is kind offer." He agrees not to charge interest but prefers a pound of Antonio's flesh if Antonio is not able to repay the loan. He pretends that he is not serious about the pound of flesh by saying: "If he should break his day, what should I gain by the exaction of his forfeiture?" Shylock goes on to buy his favor to extend this friendship. Antonio, being confident about the return of his investments in ships agrees to the terms of the bond. Do you see more of the villain in Shylock here?

How are your feelings for Shylock here? Do you dislike him for being a schemer, for being so crafty yet so good at pretending to be friendly?

Moreover, how are your feelings for him intensified at the Trial Scene when he insists on nothing but the forfeit of his bond even when Bassanio is ready to pay him thrice the amount of money as stated in the bond? Do you see the villain at his worst here? Earlier on, Shylock is seen sharpening his knife to cut the flesh of Antonio and Bassanio gets so worked up that he calls Shylock a "damned, inexorable dog".

Do you feel so disgusted with Shylock at this stage as to hate him for being so cruel as to want a pound of flesh from a fellowhuman being? In other words, he wants Antonio dead. Quote the relevant lines spoken by Shylock from the scene and what he does to cause you to feel disgusted and even hate Shylock. 4) Yet, In some ways, Shylock is also seen as a victim when he recounts the unkind way Antonio has treated him, does Shylock pose himself to be a victim? In Notation's favor, do you think Shylock is now a sympathetic character and deserves some pity from us?

Describe how the events have turned against Shylock. Do you see him a victim here? 1) Since Shylock has attempted to take Notation's life, Antonio has the power to seize half of Shylock's wealth, while the rest of the possessions will be handed over to the state treasury. 2) Shylock will be condemned to death unless the Duke officially cancels the punishment. 3) Shylock is told to fall on his knees and beg for mercy. This is a blow for someone who has so much pride in his own nation, calling his own nation "

sacred". He has lost all the dignity he had. 4) Shylock has nothing left for himself.

He has lost his entire wealth and would rather die. He says: "Muff take my life When you take the means whereby I live." The Duke says that the half of his possessions which should go to the state can be reduced too fine if Shylock is truly repentant. 5) Antonio adds that the fine can be polished but the half of Shylock's possessions which should go to Antonio will be kept by Antonio until the death of Shylock on two conditions: 6) Shylock has to become a Christian, a religion he detests. Professing a religion should be a personal choice but he is now forced to become a Christian. 7) and the money kept by Antonio will be handed over to Lorenzo who has eloped with Shylock's daughter. 8) Shylock has been so smug at the Trial before the events turned against him. He has been so confident but suddenly he has become the victim of his own scheme. 9) He is alone with no one to help him. Antonio has his group of friends to support him and Portia who has come forward to help him for the sake of Bassanio. 10) Shylock is so shattered that he begs to be excused saying that he is not well. How do you feel for Shylock here? Are you sorry that he has to end this way? Has he been victimized?

Character Study of Portia and our impressions of her We are told by Bassanio that Portia is a lady of "wondrous virtues". This is all that we know of her in this scene until she presides the case between Antonio and Shylock concerning the pound of Shylock's flesh that Shylock insists is legally binding and so he must have it. 1) In the Trial scene, we first see Portia (disguised as Balthazar, a learned Doctor of Laws) as a gentle person who wants

to settle the case in a harmonious manner and so she appeals to Shylock to show mercy towards Antonio with her eloquent speech on mercy.

She touches on these aspects of mercy: a) Mercy cannot be forced and has twice the blessings. It blesses the giver as well as the receiver. Therefore, Shylock will be blessed if he shows mercy. She is hoping that Shylock will be merciful after listening to this. B) Mercy is greater than sovereignty. It is a quality shown by God. Therefore, Shylock will exhibit a godly quality when he shows mercy while he executes Justice. Portia appeals to Shylock to be merciful because if God had only acted justly without pray for God to show us mercy, that same prayer also teaches us to show mercy to others.

Portia says these words in the hope of softening Shylock's hardened heart and for him to moderate his insistence on Justice, which is to demand a pound of Antonio's flesh as stipulated by the bond, with a show of mercy and to spare Antonio. 2) Portia is just and will act strictly according to the law. When Bassanio offers to pay twice the sum saying: "I will be bound to pay it ten times over on forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart." Bassanio even tells Portia to tweak the law just this once to stop the Jew from his evil doing.

Yet, Portia maintains that there is no power in Venice that can alter the law. She does this to show that while she is out to help Antonio, she will not break the law and be criticized for her actions. 3) Portia is patient and perseveres to get Shylock to relent by offering him money. She gives Shylock one last chance to change his mind. She says: "Shylock, there's thrice the money

offered thee. " However, Shylock insists that he has made an oath in heaven and will not want to be guilty of perjury or false swearing.

Again, Portia appeals to Shylock to take thrice the amount of money and bid her to tear the bond ?" Take thrice the money; bid me tear the bond. " 4) She is persistent in wanting to help Antonio and so comes up with an ingenious idea. Portia quibbles on the very words used in the bond to make Shylock become the victim of his own evil scheme Since Shylock insists on nothing but the bond, he will leave exactly that. Portia reminds Shylock that " the words expressly' are 'a pound of flesh'. Shylock is to cut exactly one pound of flesh, no more or less.

Next, there is no mention of blood?" no Jot of blood". If he does shed one drop of Christian blood, his land and goods are to be confiscated by the state of Venice according to the laws of Venice. Portia adds: " The Jew shall have all Justice... He shall have nothing but the penalty. " Being trapped by the words of the bond, Shylock asks for thrice the amount of the money as stated in the bond.) Once she is able to get Shylock at a disadvantage, she goes all out to accomplish her mission of helping Antonio. Now, it is time for Portia not to relent.

She says Shylock will have nothing but Justice and his bond. Shylock then asks for " barely my principal" but Portia's reply is that he will " have nothing but the forfeiture". Moreover, Shylock has put himself into the power of the law in yet another way. It is stated in one of the laws of Venice that if a foreigner should attempt to take the life of a citizen , then the party whom

he is scheming against has the power to seize half of he offender's wealth and the rest will be handed over to the state's private treasury.

The offender is to be condemned to death unless the Duke reprieves (officially cancels the punishment) him. Shylock has attempted to take Notation's life so he has incurred the punishment that is just mentioned. Portia tells Shylock to get down on his knees and beg for mercy. Disguise as Blather, a learned Doctor of Laws, to fool everyone in court. Not even Bassoon, her own husband is able to recognize her in court. She carried out her duties with dignity, starting with her eloquent speech, in the hope of moving Shylock to show sympathy towards Antonio.

Even when Shylock refuses to be merciful, she does not give up but goes on to offer him money so that he will cancel the bond. However, when this fails to change Shylock's mind, she becomes relentless with her ingenious idea of quibbling with the very words used in the bond, and so makes Shylock a victim of his own evil scheme. We are impressed by her intelligence and the way she handled the case so well that Shylock becomes cornered and cannot complain that she is ruthless because she is giving him exactly what he wants as stated in the bond!