

The Merchant of Venice is a tragic comedy by William Shakespeare, believed to have been written between 1596 and 1598. Though classified as a comedy in the First Folio and sharing certain aspects with Shakespeares other romantic comedies, the play is perhaps most remembered for its dramatic scenes, and is best known for Shylock and the famous Hath not a Jew eyes speech. Also notable is Portias speech about the quality of mercy. The title character is the merchant Antonio, not the Jewish moneylender Shylock, who is the plays most prominent and most famous character. Bassanio, a young Venetian of noble rank, wishes to woo the beautiful and wealthy heiress Portia of Belmont. Having squandered his estate, Bassanio approaches his friend Antonio, a wealthy merchant of Venice and a kind and generous person, who has previously and repeatedly bailed him out, for three thousand ducats needed to subsidise his expenditures as a suitor. Antonio agrees, but since he is cash-poor--his ships and merchandise are busy at sea--he promises to cover a bond if Bassanio can find a lender, so Bassanio turns to the Jewish moneylender Shylock and names Antonio as the loans guarantor. Shylock, who hates Antonio because of his Anti-Judaism and Antonios customary refusal to borrow or lend money with interest, is at first reluctant, citing abuse he has suffered at Antonios hand, but finally agrees to lend Antonio the sum without interest upon the condition that if Antonio is unable to repay it at the specified date, he may take a pound of Antonios flesh. Bassanio does not want Antonio to accept such a risky condition; Antonio is surprised by what he sees as the moneylenders generosity (no usanceâ€“ interestâ€“ is asked for), and he signs the contract. With money at hand, Bassanio leaves for Belmont with his friend Gratiano, who has asked to accompany him. Gratiano is a likeable young man, but is often flippant, overly talkative, and tactless. Bassanio warns his companion to exercise self-control, and the two leave for Belmont and Portia. The play continues from here. The play is frequently staged today, but is potentially troubling to modern audiences due to its central themes, which can easily appear antisemitic. Critics today still continue to argue over the plays stance on antisemitism. English society in the Elizabethan era has been described as judeophobic. English Jews had been expelled under Edward I in 1290 and were not permitted to return until 1656 under the rule of Oliver Cromwell. In Venice and in some other places, Jews were required to wear a red hat at all times in public to make sure that they were easily identified, and had to live in a ghetto protected by Christian guards. On the Elizabethan stage, Jews were often presented in hideous caricature, with hooked noses and bright red wigs, and were usually depicted as avaricious usurers; an example is Christopher Marlowes play The Jew of Malta, which features a comically wicked Jewish villain called Barabas. They were usually characterised as evil, deceitful and greedy. Shakespeares play may be seen as a continuation of this tradition. The title page of the Quarto indicates that the play was sometimes known as The Jew of Venice in its day, which suggests that it was seen as similar to Marlowes The Jew of Malta. One interpretation of the plays structure is that Shakespeare meant to contrast the mercy of the main Christian characters with the vengefulness of a Jew, who lacks the religious grace to comprehend mercy. Similarly, it is possible that Shakespeare meant Shylocks forced conversion to Christianity to be a happy ending for the character, as, to a Christian audience, it saves his soul and allows him to enter Heaven. Regardless of what Shakespeares own intentions may have been, the play has been made use of by antisemites throughout the plays history. The Nazis used the usurious Shylock for their propaganda.

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A summary of Themes in William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. Learn exactly what happened in this chapter, scene, or section of The Merchant of. In The Merchant of Venice and Measure for Measure, Shakespeare Please note that the Stratford Shakespearean Festival referred to is .. Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, in THE GLOBE ILLUSTRATED SHAKE-.

Title: Shakespeare's comedy of the Merchant of Venice, ed., with notes,; Contributor Names: Shakespeare, William, Sprague, Homer B. ( Homer. Illustration from Merchant of Venice (Corbis) . Late American theatre critic Charles Marowitz, author of Recycling Shakespeare, noted the.

in particular, to illustrate that there are common human dilemmas which A. D. Moody, Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice, Studies in EL 21, .. characters, GCSE teachers please note, are subservient to the dramatic pattern and œœare.

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