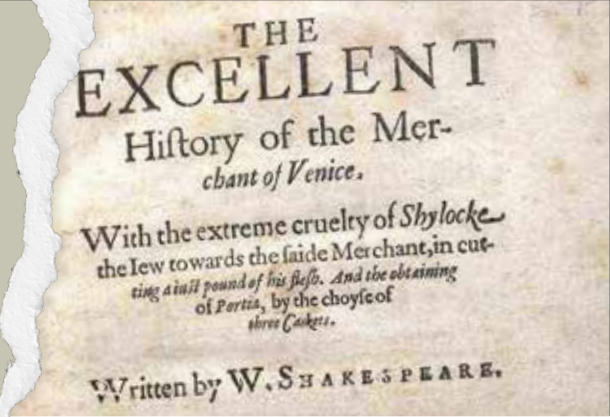


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The Play



THE
EXCELLENT
History of the Mer-
chant of Venice.

With the extreme cruelty of Shylocke
the Jew towards the faire Merchant, in cut-
ting a full pound of his flesh. And the obtaining
of Portia, by the choysse of
three Caskets.

Written by W. SHAKESPEARE.

The Merchant of Venice is one of Shakespeare's most interesting and thought-provoking works. Set in Renaissance Venice, the comedy contains some of his most memorable speeches and quotations. Typically of Shakespeare, the storyline is not original, but is adapted and made more complex by the playwright.

When

William Shakespeare most likely wrote *The Merchant of Venice* between 1596 and 1597. The play can be fairly accurately dated thanks to a reference it contains to a contemporary event (the capture of a Spanish ship in 1596), and because the work was written in the *Stationers' Register* in 1598. The Register allowed authors to record their right to print their work, and offered an early form of copyright protection. In 1598 the play was highly praised by the literary critic, Francis Mere, in his book, *Palladis Tamia*. And when it appeared in printed form for the first time in 1600, the title page stated that it had already been performed "divers times" by The Lord Chamberlain's Men. The first record of a performance, however, was not until 1605 when The King's Men staged it at court for King James I. Interestingly, King James requested another performance of the play a week later.

Sources

Many legends and folktales talk of a contract being sealed with a bond of human flesh as a guarantee. Shakespeare's main source is thought to be a version by the Italian author, Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, called *Il Pecorone* (1558), which literally means 'the big sheep', or fool. The story contains many of the elements used by Shakespeare – love, wealth, revenge, justice – and features a Venetian merchant, a lady of Belmont, and a Jewish moneylender. The idea of adding complexity to the plot through the Jew's daughter is probably from Anthony Munday's *Zelauto, The Fountaine of Fame* (1580), while the use of riddles and the three caskets is from a 1595 translation of a collection of medieval stories, *Gesta Romanorum*.

The Jew

Shakespeare's portrayal of Shylock, the Jew, draws from a number of sources including *The Orator* by Le Silvain (c. 1535), and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (first performed in the late 1580s). A ballad, *A new song, shewing the crueltie of Gernutus a Jew*, telling the story of a Jewish moneylender and his bond, was printed in 1620. But experts are unsure if the song was composed before or after Shakespeare's play.


Controversy

Throughout its history, *The Merchant of Venice* has always sparked controversy, largely due to its portrayal of the vengeful moneylender Shylock. Although Shakespeare's original characterisation of Shylock would have been as a comic villain, it is implied that Shylock's greedy and merciless nature springs from the fact that he is Jewish. Today there is great debate on whether or not a work, which so strongly reflects the prejudices of its time, should be staged. Anti-Semitism and its repercussions inevitably complicate all productions of this play.

1 Find words in the text that mean the following.

- | | |
|--|--|
| a that causes discussion or disagreement | f official agreement written on paper |
| b so good that it is easily remembered | g item that is a guarantee between parties |
| c book with information in list form | h small decorative boxes |
| d legal right to own a creative work | i clever questions with surprising answers |
| e person who gives opinions on books, etc | j hostility and discrimination against Jews |

2 Write 8 dates that trace the history of the play until the first record of its performance.

- 3  Compare with a partner, then discuss why each date is important.
- 4 Refer back to information about Shakespeare's life (pages 6-7). Explain why the play was performed both by The Lord Chamberlain's Men and by The King's Men.

THINK

Disney have decided to show this disclaimer at the beginning of some of its films, such as *The Jungle Book* and *Peter Pan*, to warn viewers of possible culturally insensitive and racist references and depictions in the characters and storylines of those films.

"This program is presented as originally created. It may contain outdated cultural depictions."

- 5 Which Disney characters might it refer to?
- 6 Do you think this is a good solution to the problem?

The Main Characters

- 1 Look at the characters below and read the texts.
 a Highlight all the words which describe **relationships or roles**.
 b Now find words to describe the characters' **personalities**. Make a table in your notebook.

Character

Relationships, Role

Personality

The Merchant's Circle



Antonio

is a wealthy Venetian merchant. He loves Bassanio very much and would do anything for him, even risk his life. Like most Venetians, he is prejudiced against Jews, abusing them both verbally and physically. He seems moody at times, but is appreciated for his generosity and loyalty to his friends.



Bassanio

is Antonio's dearest friend. He is bad with money and has lost all his fortune, but he is clever and good in his relationships with both men and women. He can be mercenary and uses people to his own ends, although he seems capable of love, too. He would like to win Portia's hand.



Salanio and Salarino

are merchants and friends of Antonio's and Bassanio's. They also help Lorenzo and Jessica.



Gratiano

is a friend of Antonio's and Bassanio's who accompanies Bassanio in his quest for Portia's hand. He falls in love with Nerissa, Portia's lady-in-waiting. Gratiano is talkative, and sometimes direct and rude in what he says.

The Jew's Circle



Shylock

is a Jewish moneylender. He is very angry about the way he and other Jews are treated by the Christians of Venice. He is materialistic and vengeful, but he is also proud of his heritage, protective of his daughter, and sentimental about his dead wife.



Jessica

is Shylock's daughter and a Jewess. She dreams of marrying Lorenzo, a Venetian Christian. She detests her strict upbringing, and rejects her religion. She is seemingly a dutiful daughter, but is uncaring of her father and his feelings when she follows her heart.



Tubal

is Shylock's friend and a fellow Jew. He is wealthy enough to help Shylock in his moneylending ventures.



Launcelot Gobbo

is Shylock's servant. He enjoys clowning about and playing word games, but does not like working for Shylock, and abandons him to go to work for Bassanio.

2 Divide the characters into three groups: main, of some importance, and minor.

3 Comedies often have multiple marriages. Make predictions.

a Which couples are formed during the play?

b Which principal character is a widower?

c Which principal character loves no woman?



Lorenzo

is Jessica's lover and a friend of Antonio's and Bassanio's.



Leonardo

is Bassanio's servant.

The Heiress's Circle



Portia

is the Lady of Belmont and heiress to her father's fortune. Although she is forced to obey her father in the choice of her husband, she is a strong, independent woman with a lively and creative intelligence. Of all her suitors, she is most interested in Bassanio.



Nerissa

is Portia's lady-in-waiting, but also her friend, and Portia confides in her often. Nerissa is quick-witted and clever with words, a good companion for Portia, and is willing to follow her in most things. She marries Gratiano.

Venetian Officials



Duke of Venice

is the Doge, or ruler, of Venice. He must remain neutral and not side with Antonio. His position of power means he is in charge of Antonio's trial.



The Magnificoes of Venice, officers of the Court of Justice

are present at Antonio's trial.



Salerio

is a messenger from Venice.



Balthasar

is Portia's servant. He acts as Portia's messenger and porter when she needs to contact a relative in Padua.



The Prince of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon

are two of Portia's suitors.



1 Read the text. Use the notes on the right.

IN BELMONT IS A LADY RICHLY LEFT

ACT I SCENE I

ANTONIO

1 Well, tell me now what lady is the same
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage,
That you to-day promised to tell me of?

BASSANIO

5 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have disabled mine estate,
By something showing a more swelling port
Than my faint means would grant
continuance:

Nor do I now make moan to be abridged
From such a noble rate; but my chief care
10 Is to come fairly off from the great debts
Wherein my time something too prodigal
Hath left me gaged. To you, Antonio,
I owe the most, in money and in love,
And from your love I have a warranty
15 To unburden all my plots and purposes
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

ANTONIO

I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;
And if it stand, as you yourself still do,
Within the eye of honour, be assured,
20 My purse, my person, my extremest means,
Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.

BASSANIO

In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft,
I shot his fellow of the self-same flight
The self-same way with more advised watch,
25 To find the other forth, and by adventuring
both
I oft found both: I urge this childhood proof,
Because what follows is pure innocence.
I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,
That which I owe is lost; but if you please
30 To shoot another arrow that self way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,

Antonio asks Bassanio for more details about the lady he was going to see in secret, because he had promised to tell him about it earlier.

Bassanio says that Antonio is well aware of his financial difficulties. He has borrowed and spent more than he can afford to. He adds that he is not saying this to avoid having to repay what he owes. His main wish is to repay the debts he has run up in his mispent youth. He tells Antonio that he is the person he loves most but also the person he owes most money to, and that is why he now wants to tell him all about his plans to clear his debts.

Antonio asks Bassanio what his plans are. And adds that if they are honourable, like Bassanio himself, then he will be more than willing to help, either personally or financially. Bassanio only has to ask.

Bassanio says that when he was a schoolboy and he lost one of his arrows, he would shoot another arrow in the same direction and watch it carefully. By risking both he would often find them both. Now, he is in great debt to Antonio and what he owes is momentarily lost. However, in the same way as with the arrows, if Antonio is willing to lend him a little more which he will

As I will watch the aim, or to find both
Or bring your latter hazard back again
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

ANTONIO

- 35 You know me well, and herein spend but
time
To wind about my love with circumstance;
And out of doubt you do me now more
wrong
In making question of my uttermost
Than if you had made waste of all I have:
40 Then do but say to me what I should do
That in your knowledge may by me be done,
And I am prest unto it: therefore, speak.

BASSANIO

- In Belmont is a lady richly left;
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
45 Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her
eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages:
Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued
To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth,
50 For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors, and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos'
strand,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.
55 O my Antonio, had I but the means
To hold a rival place with one of them,
I have a mind presages me such thrift,
That I should questionless be fortunate!

ANTONIO

- Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
60 Neither have I money nor commodity
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;
Try what my credit can in Venice do:
That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
65 Go, presently inquire, and so will I,
Where money is, and I no question make
To have it of my trust or for my sake.

(Exeunt)

use more carefully, he is sure he will be able to pay back both debts.

Antonio says that Bassanio knows him well enough not to waste time talking about his love. Doubting his love is worse than losing all his money. He asks him to tell him what he needs and Antonio will do it.

Bassanio tells him about an heiress in Belmont. He says she is beautiful and clever, and that she has looked at him in such a way as to suggest that she is interested in him. He says her name is Portia, and she is worth no less than Cato's daughter Portia, whom Brutus married.

He says her value is widely known, and suitors are coming from all over the world to try for her hand – her golden hair like the famous fleece, is attracting lots of Jasons!

Bassanio confides in Antonio that if he had the money to be one of her suitors, he is pretty sure he could win her hand.

Antonio says that Bassanio knows that all his money is invested in his ships. He tells him to go and find someone in Venice who will give Antonio as much credit as possible, so that Bassanio can go to Belmont and win the beautiful Portia. He suggests his friend go now to see who will lend him money in Antonio's name. He adds that he'll ask around, too.

Understand and Analyse

UNDERSTAND

1 Read and tick the correct answer.

a Who has Bassanio been to visit?

1 Cato's daughter

2 An old school friend

3 A rich heiress

c How does Antonio react?

1 He wants to help but he has no money.

2 He wants to help in any way he can.

3 He refuses to help, given the situation.

b What is preventing Bassanio from winning the person's favour?

1 He values Antonio's love too much.

2 He hasn't got enough money.

3 There is too much competition.

d In Antonio's final speech we learn that he ...

1 intends to borrow money for Bassanio.

2 wants Bassanio to borrow money to repay him.

3 needs money for his ships at sea.

ANALYSE

2 Which of the following are true? Use quotes from the text to support your choices.

a Bassanio seems mercenary in his attitude.

b Bassanio doesn't seem to have a good business head.

c Bassanio doesn't value his friendship with Antonio.

d Bassanio and Antonio clearly care for and value each other deeply.

e Antonio would do anything for Bassanio.

f Antonio thinks that Bassanio has made bad choices in the past.

THINK

3 Antonio says he will risk all for Bassanio, even before he tells him of his plan. Do you think he is wise? Find another reference to taking risks in the scene.

OVER TO YOU

4 Think about friendship. What does friendship mean to you? Does it mean being ready to do anything for another person? What are the characteristics of a good friend? Share your ideas with a partner.

PRODUCE

5 When Bassanio wants to explain his plan to Antonio, he tells a story about something he learnt as a child which was an important 'life lesson'. Using your own experiences, write a short composition entitled *An Important Lesson*, then share your work in class.

Vocabulary Building

“ How to get clear of all the debts I owe ”

Money and finance

1 Write definitions for the following verbs.

a borrow	e cost	i lose	m sell
b budget	f earn	j pay	n spend
c buy	g invest	k refund	o waste
d charge	h lend	l save	p win

2 Answer the following in pairs.

- Are the verbs in Exercise 1 regular or irregular? Look at the example and do the same for the other verbs *borrow - borrowed - borrowed*.
- Which verbs have opposite meanings?
- Can you think of nouns and adjectives related to the verbs?

3 Complete the sentences with the correct form of some of the verbs.

- In Las Vegas, it's easy a lot of money on **slot machines** and in card games.
- They us £20 just to get into the nightclub. It was a real **ripoff!**
- Lucy, your money on **rubbish**, you might need it for something important.
- If I the **lottery**, the first thing I'd do is go on a long holiday.
- Students in the UK money to study at university. Then they pay back their **debt** once they start working.
- Mario, could you me a couple of euro? I've come out without any **change** on me.

4 Look at Exercise 3 again. What is the meaning of the highlighted words?

5 Explain the difference between the following to a partner.

- coin and change
- currency and cash
- bitcoin and credit card
- fee and instalment

6 Listen to the short conversations. Write the numbers and currencies you hear.

7 Go to *The Merchant of Venice* online and do the vocabulary worksheet.

CULTURE

Moneylending and Banking



1 Before reading, check you know the meaning of these expressions.

bankruptcy	business failure	insurance payment
interest rate	trading venture	usury

2 Read the paragraphs quickly, then choose a title from below for each one. There are 2 extra titles.

- Powerful banking families
- Money and banking today
- Moneylending in ancient times
- Money and the Church
- The emergence of Europe's first banks
- Money – an important issue

a

Moneylending, and its consequences, is one of the major themes in *The Merchant of Venice*. Throughout history, the need to get money has been one of mankind's chief preoccupations, and the sixteenth century in England was no different from other ages. From Queen Elizabeth I down, society was in a constant state of borrowing, lending and general 'wheeler-dealing'.

b

Moneylending is as old as money itself, and was carried out by the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome, with the Greeks being the first to charge interest on loans. From the beginning, money was considered a 'dirty business', an idea that has resonated down the centuries. The more respectable social classes were reluctant to engage directly in money matters, and the practice of moneylending and banking was often carried out by outsiders, or foreigners. Indeed, the first-known individual banker was a Greek ex-slave named Philostephanos of Corinth. Roman bankers tended to be appointed by the government, and were often given the job of collecting taxes by the authorities.

c

The term 'bank' derives from the Italian word 'banco', meaning bench. Moneylenders brought their benches into the trading squares and halls of Northern Italy during the Middle Ages, offering loans against crops until farmers could sell their produce. At the time, Christianity forbade usury, but many Jews, who were escaping from Spanish persecution, began to trade with the farmers. The Jewish traders offered loans and insurance, both against the harvest, and the delivery of the harvest to foreign ports. Gradually the merchants' benches in these early trading halls became the first merchant banks. The oldest bank which is still working today is *Monte dei Paschi di Siena*, founded in 1472. The arrival of banks allowed business to grow, but the increased risks, along with high interest rates, also led to a rise in failures and many businesses went bankrupt.

d

Florence dominated the medieval banking scene, with a number of powerful families setting up banks, often with branches all over Europe. The Medici family was at the forefront of this business, and it is a measure of the power of money that they ruled the city for several generations, becoming important patrons of the arts. In Germany, the Fugger and Welser families controlled the trade of the Holy Roman Empire and became enormously wealthy. These medieval families were Christians, in an age when the needs of commerce had to overcome the scruples of religion, which forbade making money from money. The Florentine banking families solved the problem by imposing insurance payments on loans, rather than rates of interest.

In the eighteenth century the Rothschilds, a Jewish family from Germany, founded a bank which expanded greatly over the next century and, for a period, gave them the largest private fortune in the world. Their fabulous wealth, along with their religious background, became a source of envy, and, during the nineteenth century, was a contributory factor to the growth of anti-Semitism.

3 Discuss answers to these questions with a partner.

- a** In paragraph **a**, what does the term 'wheeler-dealing' mean?
- b** What is meant by the phrase 'money was considered a dirty business' in paragraph **b**?
- c** What does paragraph **c** say about why so many Jews become involved in trading in Italy?
- d** Paragraph **d** highlights two issues regarding money and religion. What are they?

INDEPENDENT LEARNING


- 4** Find out the etymology (history of a word) of the term 'bankrupt'. Can you think of a modern English term that means not having any money?

From Reading to Performing



Bassanio is a clever talker and he is aware of the power of storytelling in order to convince somebody of his way of thinking.

1 Read Bassanio’s childhood story (lines 22-34) once more.

- a  Tell his story to a friend.
- b What is the message of his story?

STORYTELLING

As educationalist Kieran Egan affirms, humans are ‘storying’ creatures. Stories define us. We tell stories to entertain, to teach, to pass on beliefs and traditions, to forge and strengthen bonds, and to communicate with each other. Storytelling is one of the simplest, yet most compelling of the dramatic forms. To tell a good story on stage, you need to make the audience feel as though they are ‘inside’ the story. Here are some ways in which you can do this:

- Use vivid descriptions – tell the story in a series of action scenes.
- Appeal to the senses – describe what you see, hear, smell, touch and taste.
- Talk about your emotions – this will stimulate empathy in the audience.
- Maintain suspense – don’t say how your story will end, but build up gradually to the ending.
- Don’t say too much – avoid too much detail, and don’t test people’s patience by talking too much.

2 Which of these techniques does Bassanio use? Give examples from the text.



3 An action scene is a scene which is made up of a series of events. Break down Bassanio’s story into the events which create the action scene.

- a
- b
- c
- d

ON STAGE!


Here are some simple techniques you can use to make your story more powerful and resonant.

- Use pausing and silence to effect.
- Slow down, let your audience really listen to your words.
- Repeat words, phrases or sounds.
- Incorporate gesture, mime, and facial expression.

- 4 Read Bassanio's story once more. How would you perform it in order to make use of the storytelling tips above?
- 5  Perform the lines for your classmates. Which story worked best? Why?
- 6  Listen to the recording. How does the actor tell the story? Comment on the performance. How is it different to your own?

CIRCLE STORIES

People are often shy about standing up to tell a story. You can practise storytelling techniques and help reduce shyness with this simple activity.

- 7  Work in groups of 8-10. Choose 3 key words that must be incorporated in the story (the less apparent the connection between the words, the better). For example, *potato - necklace - window*.



Going round the circle in either clockwise or anti-clockwise order, each person says ONE word to build up the story. Try to go as quickly as you can. Each story should begin with 'Once upon a time'.

PRODUCE

- 8 Now write and perform your own short childhood story for the class. Follow these instructions:
 - a Write a basic outline of the story to focus your ideas.
 - b Convert the outline into a series of action scenes building to a climax.
 - c Add emotion and sensory input.
 - d Look back at your story and edit out any unnecessary information. Add repetition if necessary.
 - e Prepare yourself for your performance. Decide when you will pause, which gestures and expressions you will use.

Test Yourself

IN BELMONT IS A LADY RICHLY LEFT

1 Find words or expressions in the extract that mean the following.

- | | | | |
|------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|-------|
| a reveal | | d in no way inferior | |
| b arrow | | e undoubtedly | |
| c same; similar | | f immediately | |

2 In which lines does Antonio explicitly tell Bassanio that he is willing to place both himself and his possessions at his friend's disposal?

3 Complete the text with ONE word for each gap.

In the opening scene of the play, we are provided **(a)** some background information, as well **(b)** an insight into some of the characters. Antonio, a Venetian merchant, tells some friends that he is sad but does not know the reason **(c)** his sadness. His mood improves a little when Bassanio, a dear friend **(d)** his, arrives. Bassanio would like to woo a "lady richly **(e)** ", but needs the financial means to do so. Antonio is more **(f)** willing to help his friend, but does not have any ready cash. He invites Bassanio to find someone **(g)** lend him the money, giving Antonio's name as a guarantee.

4 Write a new sentence as similar as possible in its meaning to the original one using the word in capital letters without changing it.

a It was foolish of Bassanio to spend more than he could afford to.
SHOULD

.....

b Bassanio wishes he hadn't spent more than he could afford to.
REGRETS

.....

c Bassanio wishes his money hadn't run out.
OF

.....

d Bassanio wishes he could borrow some money from Antonio.
LEND

.....

VOCABULARY BUILDING

- 5 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs from Exercise 1 on page 21.
- Planning ahead is a clever way to money.
 - Most full-time workers here on average £30,000 a year.
 - The cheapest tickets for the match £50, but I didn't have that much money.
 - Don't worry, your money will be if you're not satisfied with the product.
 - You should avoid money on things that you will never use.
 - We provide users looking to in the financial market with a full overview of online stock brokers.
 - When I was young, my mother didn't like me my money on records.
 - You shouldn't continue betting after you've money.
 - The interest rate is the amount banks for loaning money.
 - I last saw her when she some money from me.

▶ / 10 marks

CULTURE

- 6 Make questions about the underlined information.
- Throughout history, the need to get money has been one of mankind's chief preoccupations.
 - The more respectable social classes were reluctant to engage directly in money matters.
 - The practice of money lending and banking was often carried out by outsiders, or foreigners.
 - The term 'bank' derives from the Italian word 'banco'.
 - Many Jews were escaping from Spanish persecution.
 - Religion forbade making money from money.
- 7 Match the two halves of the following sentences. There are two extra options.
- | | |
|--|--|
| a <input type="checkbox"/> There were differences between Christian doctrines and Jewish law | 1 usury was immoral and unchristian. |
| b <input type="checkbox"/> Despite attempts to condemn and outlaw such practice, | 2 only in Elizabethan England. |
| c <input type="checkbox"/> It was generally believed that, in its very nature, | 3 usury was very common during this period. |
| d <input type="checkbox"/> In medieval cities, banks were placed in trading squares | 4 where farmers could use their produce to secure a cash loan. |
| e <input type="checkbox"/> One of the most common stereotypes | 5 regarding charging interest on loans. |
| | 6 Jews were increasingly identified with it. |
| | 7 is of the Jew as a moneylender. |

▶ / 11 marks

▶ TOTAL / 40 marks

Exam Practice

F B2 FIRST ENGLISH TEST: READING AND USE OF ENGLISH PART 2

TIP: Read the whole sentence before deciding which word goes in each space. Often the words that follow the space are important for your choice.

For questions 1-10 read the text below and write the word which best fits each gap. Use only ONE word in each gap. There is an example at the beginning.

Example: (0)with.....

The Sources of *The Merchant of Venice*

As is so often the case (0) him, Shakespeare used a variety of medieval and early modern literary sources in writing *The Merchant of Venice*. Many elements of the story were borrowed (1) Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone*, a collection of stories published in Italy in 1558. One of the tales in the collection was (2) a wealthy woman at Belmont, and an Italian merchant who owed a pound of flesh (3) a Jewish moneylender. Since it is likely (4) no English translation existed at the time, Shakespeare might have read the text in its original, Italian version. One of the episodes that he added to the original tale is the game of choosing from three caskets, (5) was taken from the *Gesta Romanorum*, a collection of medieval stories published in 1577. In the original tale, however, the choice between the gold, silver, and lead vessels (6) not for a whole series of suitors; and it was a test of a woman's virtue, (7) a man's. As for the flesh-bond, it was contained in a well-known folk tale of the time, and Shakespeare most probably knew several versions of it. Finally, even the shortest overview of the sources of the play would not be complete if we (8) mention the legend of St. Helen. The saint was very popular at the time, as she was believed (9) have discovered the True Cross, and at least 135 medieval churches were dedicated to her. Many versions of the legend talk of how she was called to judge the case of a Christian who owed a flesh-bond to a Jew. Although Shakespeare knew the legend from various sources, the one that must have fascinated him more than any other was the pictorial version that he could admire in the paintings on the walls of the Guild Chapel, in the playwright's village (10) Stratford-Upon-Avon.

F B2 FIRST ENGLISH TEST: READING AND USE OF ENGLISH PART 4

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word in capital letters without changing it. You may use between two and five words.

- 1 Shylock is going to continue to demand justice.

STOP

Shylock is justice.

- 2 Everyone thinks that Bellario is one of the best lawyers in Padua.

THOUGHT

Bellario one of the best lawyers in Padua.

- 3 A recent survey showed that Shakespeare is more popular in India than in England.

ACCORDING

..... Shakespeare is more popular in India than in England.

- 4 Bassanio borrowed money for a good reason.

LENT

Bassanio money for a good reason.

- 5 When Shakespeare wrote the play, Roderigo Lòpez was no longer alive.

DIED

Roderigo Lòpez Shakespeare wrote the play.

- 6 Experts date the play to 1598 at the latest.

MUST

The play before 1599.

- 7 In the play, Shylock is called the 'Jew'.

REFERRED

Shylock the 'Jew' in the play.

Exam Practice

F B2 FIRST ENGLISH TEST: READING AND USE OF ENGLISH PART 1

TIP: This section of the exam tests your knowledge and understanding of similar words.

- Read the title and think what the text may be about. This will help you to activate vocabulary and ideas.
- Read the text quickly ignoring the gaps and the options. This will help you get the main idea of the text.
- Read the text once more. This time stop at each option, looking carefully before and after the gap.
- Now look at the options. If you aren't sure of the answer, cross out any answers that you think are wrong.
- With the remaining options try to make similar sentences in order to help you make a decision.

For questions 1-10 read the text below and decide which answer (A, B, C, or D) best fits each gap.

COMEDY OR TRAGEDY?

When the First Folio – Shakespeare's first edition of collected works – was brought (1) in 1623, *The Merchant of Venice* was grouped with the comedies. This is not (2) surprising: the play is structured exactly like a comedy, and it features several elements in common with works belonging to the group of the playwright's 'mature' comedies, such as *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. Among these elements, the most obvious is the triumph of love and friendship (3) hatred and inhumanity; in addition to this, the mixture of different plots, the presence of a strong and emancipated female character, the use of disguise and identity-switching as key factors of the plot, and the final punishment of unworthy characters are also elements that we commonly find in comedies. Yet, in its actual content, the (4) also features elements that do not fit into our idea of comedy – although they do not fit the conventional definition of tragedy (5) And not only because some of the main characters are excluded from the happy ending – Shylock, is humiliated and forced to (6) to Christianity, and Antonio is left alone after the couples have married. Intolerance, religious and racial prejudice, the controversial topic (7) anti-Semitism, the images of physical mutilation and death, the gloomy atmosphere of the trial scene,

all contribute to giving the play an unsettling quality that contrasts with the final, comic resolution and happy ending of the story. It is almost as if tragedy were lurking just (8) the surface of comedy. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare explores the possibility of mixing tragedy and comedy together. As a (9), we seem to be caught between the comforting feelings left by a comedy and the uncomfortable anxiety provoked by a tragedy; we accept the happy ending, but cannot remain untouched by the play's complexities and darker side. And we can clearly see why *The Merchant of Venice* has been defined as one of the most complicated comedies (10) written.

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|----|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| 1 | A out | B up | C about | D down |
| 2 | A together | B altogether | C although | D though |
| 3 | A against | B upon | C on | D over |
| 4 | A question | B matter | C topic | D play |
| 5 | A too | B neither | C as well | D either |
| 6 | A transform | B convert | C become | D choose |
| 7 | A by | B from | C about | D of |
| 8 | A beneath | B away | C behind | D beyond |
| 9 | A conclusion | B reaction | C result | D response |
| 10 | A been | B ever | C being | D probably |

F B2 FIRST ENGLISH TEST: WRITING PART 1

Write an essay of 140-190 words on the subject below, using the notes and giving reasons for your point of view.

Essay: What does the courtroom scene say about justice and mercy?

Notes:

conflict

forgiveness

human for justice

Shakespeare Wordbank

Characters The people in a story, play or poem.

Comedy A type of drama that is amusing in tone and that has a happy ending, usually after the characters overcome a set of difficulties.

Context The situation (social, historical, biographical and geographical) in which a text is written.

Dialogue The words that the characters say to each other. Other types of speech include *monologue* (when only one character speaks) and *soliloquy* (when a character speaks alone and reflects on his/her feelings).

Drama A literary genre which begins as a written text but which is meant for performance. A single piece of drama is known as a *play*.

Figures of speech Phrases and expressions that use words in a figurative way. The most common figures of speech include *metaphor* (when something with similar characteristics is used to describe the original), *simile* (when something with similar characteristics is compared to the original, using 'as' or 'like').

Form How a poem or piece of writing appears on the page.

Genre A type of literature. For example, drama is a literary genre.

Performance When a script is acted out on stage, on screen or on the radio.

Play A piece of drama. The author of a play is called a *playwright* or *dramatist*. Plays can be divided into acts, and acts can be subdivided

into scenes. A scene usually covers a single event in a single setting.

Poem A piece of writing with the words arranged in separate lines, often using rhyme, and chosen for the ideas they suggest and sounds they create.

Rhyme Same sounds usually at the end of lines (rhyme-time). Rhymes can create patterns and these patterns are often indicated by using the letters of the alphabet (A, B, C, etc.) to mark rhyming words. The pattern generated is called the 'rhyme scheme'.

Sonnet A type of poem of which the earliest examples were Italian. Petrarch established the form with his *Canzoniere* (1366-1374) influencing poets worldwide.

Stage directions In a play, the instructions and information given by the playwright which accompany the dialogue. They are usually in italics to distinguish them from the dialogue. They can give information about the characters, their physical appearance and their feelings and behaviour as well as their actions, movements, facial expressions and gestures.

Story(line) In drama, the main events given in chronological order.

Theme The central idea of a work, usually expressed in abstract terms, such as 'evil', 'love', etc.

Tragedy A type of drama that focuses on human suffering and its consequences. In tragedies the initial situation is characterised by fortune and harmony but it is undone by misfortunes and eventual disaster.