

The Merchant of Venice

William Shakespeare

Retold by
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LEVEL 3

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The Merchant Decides to Help a Friend

Preview Questions

1. What is a merchant?
2. The merchant of Venice said he was sad. Why was he sad?
3. The merchant in this story will help his friend. What do you think he will do?

There was once a very rich man who lived in Venice. His name was Antonio. He became rich by buying and selling things.

Venice is a city near the sea, in Italy, and a lot of ships arrive there. Antonio owned some ships. The ships went to other parts of the world, and the captains of these ships bought things in other countries. They did not pay much money for these things. When the ships were full, the captains went to Venice and sold the goods to the people who lived there. They sold them for a lot more money than they had paid. People who made money like this were called **merchants**. Antonio was one of the richest merchants in Venice.

To become rich like this, the merchants had to take some big **risks**. It cost a lot of money to buy the ships and to pay the people who worked on them. The merchants also had to pay for the things they bought. Sometimes a ship sank in a storm, and everything was lost. Sometimes the ships were attacked. Pirates stole the **cargo** or burned the ships. Sometimes the sailors stole the cargo or the ship. There were many dangers.

Antonio was a good man who often helped his friends when they needed money. However, he was not always happy. When he was sad, he wondered why he was sad. It made him tired to think about it. He did not know why he was sad. His friends thought he was sad because he was worried about his ships and his cargoes. They tried to imagine what it would be like if they had that much money and took such big risks. They thought about storms and pirates. They thought about losing all that money.

One of his friends, Salerio, said, "You are sad because you are rich. You have too much to worry about with all your ships on the oceans around the world."



Another friend, Solanio, agreed. "If they were my ships, and my money," he said, "I would always be thinking about what could go wrong. That would make me sad."

"Yes," agreed Salerio, "if I blew on my tea to make it cool, I would think of the wind at sea and the storms that could **sink** my ships. If I looked at the sand in the hour glass, I would think of all the sand that my ships could run into. Even my house would make me worried because it is made of big stones. This would make me think about the rocks my ships could hit. Everything I saw would make me worry about my ships and my cargoes. I am certain that this is what makes you sad, Antonio."

Antonio didn't agree. "I have a lot of ships and a lot of cargoes. If I lose one or two, it does not matter," he said. "I am not worried. I'm certain that you are wrong. That is not why I am sad."

Solanio tried to think of another reason. "You must be in love, Antonio!"

Antonio disagreed again. "No, I'm not in love," he answered.

"Well," said Solanio, "if you are not worried about your ships and cargoes, and you are not in love, we don't know what is making you sad. All we can say is that you are sad because you are not happy. You might as well be happy because you are not sad. Then you could sing and laugh again."

"I think," said Antonio, "that the world is a stage. Everybody has a part to play, and my part is a sad part."

Another friend, Graziano, tried to make Antonio happier by telling him jokes and silly stories. He talked all

the time, and people thought he was a fool.

“If you say nothing and look sad,” he advised, “people will think you are wise!”

Antonio’s best friend was Bassanio. Bassanio thought that Graziano talked a lot but said nothing. “Trying to find a meaning in his words is like trying to find a **needle** in a **haystack**,” he said. “If you do find it, you soon discover that it is not sharp.”

Antonio’s friends were very kind, and he liked them a lot, but they did not succeed in making him happier. Of course, the real problem was that Antonio was bored. However, all that would soon change.

One day, Bassanio came to visit Antonio. This was not unusual because they were good friends. But this visit was more important than usual for Bassanio. He already owed Antonio a lot of money, but now he wanted to borrow some more. Of course, Antonio wanted to know why Bassanio needed the money.

“I have been spending more money than I earn,” began Bassanio. “I already owe you a lot of money. I will tell you how I am going to get enough money to pay back all the money I owe.”

“Yes, tell me,” said Antonio. “If I can help you, I will.”

“When I was a boy at school,” began Bassanio, “I sometimes lost a ball when I was playing. When that happened, I would throw another ball in exactly the same way and watch it carefully. I would often find the two balls together. You might like to think of your money that way. The money you gave me is the first ball. It is lost, and I know it is my fault. But if you give me some more money,

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it could be like that second ball and help you get all your money back. I will give back the money you give me now as well as the money that I have already lost.”

Antonio invited him to continue.

Bassanio told him about a rich young lady in Belmont. Her name was Portia. Her father died and left her a lot of money. She was beautiful as well as rich, and she was not married. Many men came from all over the world to **court** her, but nobody had succeeded. Bassanio had met Portia before, and he knew that she liked him. He told Antonio that if he had enough money, he would soon make her his wife.

“She is rich and young and beautiful. Her hair is like gold, and her face is always sunny and happy. She is always smiling. Antonio! She is beautiful. She likes me. I am certain she would marry me,” he explained.

Antonio laughed. “You are my friend, Bassanio,” he comforted, “and I will help you. You know that all my ships are at sea just now, so I do not have much money to give you. However, you can go into town and try to borrow the money. Tell the moneylenders that Antonio will **guarantee** the money is paid back to them. Don’t worry! I will help you to go to Belmont and court Portia.”

Bassanio, of course, was very pleased. He immediately started to make his plans.

Review Questions

1. What was the merchant’s name?
2. How did his friends try to explain Antonio’s sadness?
3. How would the merchant help his friend Bassanio?

The Merchant of Venice

William Shakespeare

LEVEL 3

W O R K B O O K

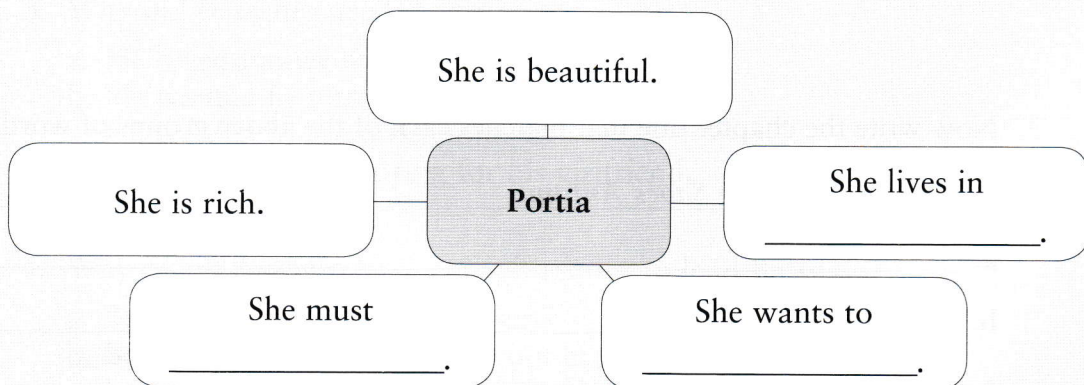
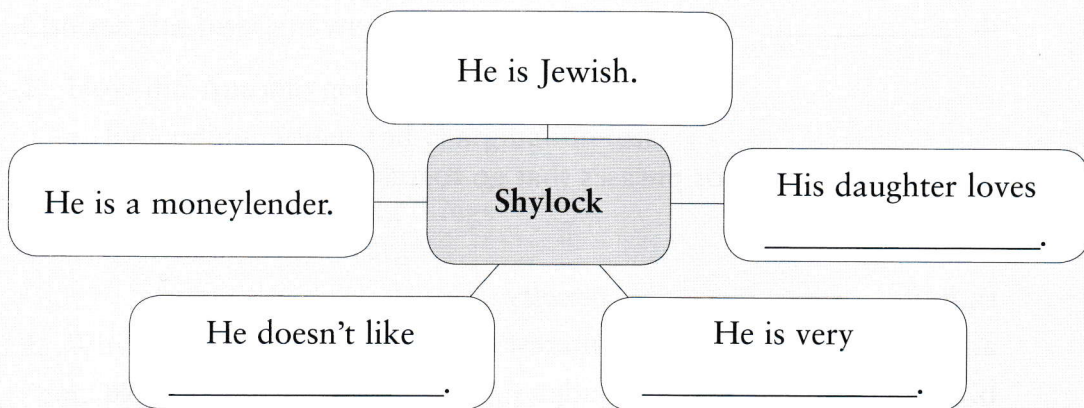
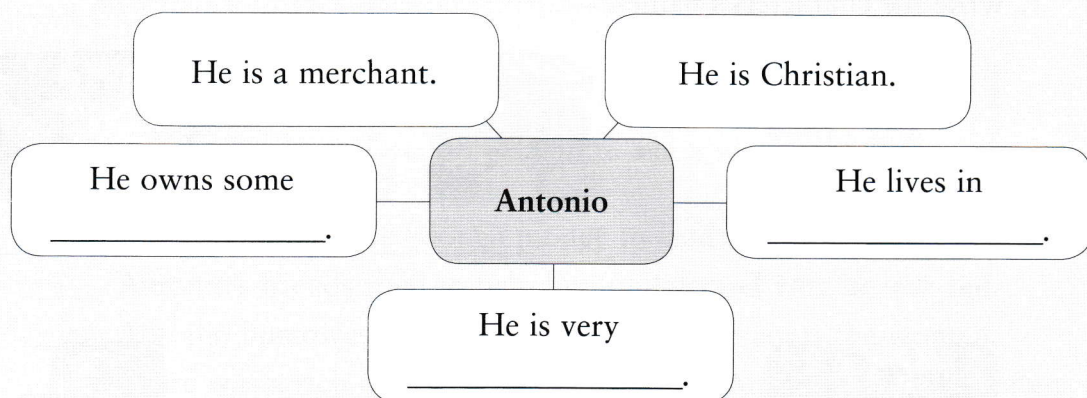
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I. Work with your classmates. Scan through the book and fill in the blanks.

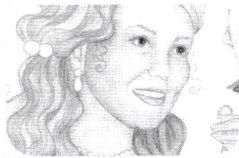


II. Scan through the book and answer the following.

1. Write the characters's names.



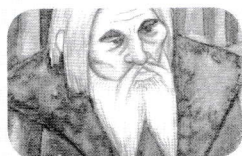
a. _____



b. _____



c. _____



d. _____



e. _____



f. _____

2. Match three words or phrases that go together.

I

EX. *knife*

a. ring

b. devil

c. suitor

d. lending

II

penalty

• interest

• judge

• run away

• silver

III

• trick

• risk

• deserve

• messenger

flesh

3. Now write the chapter title that matches each of the above groups of words.

EX. *The Young Judge Saves Antonio*

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

The Merchant Decides to Help a Friend

I. Put the sentences in order from 1 (first) to 5 (last).

- _____ Antonio's friend Bassanio wanted to ask a woman to marry him, but he needed money.
- _____ Antonio didn't have enough money to lend Bassanio.
- _____ Antonio's friends tried to help him understand why he was sad.
- _____ Antonio borrowed money for Bassanio to go court the woman.
- _____ There was a rich merchant in Venice called Antonio, who was often sad.

II. Choose the best answer.

1. How did Antonio get rich?
 - a. By lending money and charging interest
 - b. By sailing a racing ship
 - c. By buying and selling things
 - d. By stealing ships' cargoes
2. Why was Antonio sad?

a. He was worried about his ships.	b. He was in love.
c. He had no friends.	d. He was bored.
3. Why did Bassanio need money?
 - a. He owed money to Shylock.
 - b. He wanted to start a business.
 - c. He wanted to go to Belmont.
 - d. He wanted to buy a ring for his girlfriend.
4. Why didn't Antonio have enough money to lend Bassanio?
 - a. Because all of his ships had sunk
 - b. Because all of his ships were out at sea
 - c. Because pirates had stolen his cargo
 - d. Because Bassanio had spent all of his money

III. Circle the correct word.

1. Antonio is a (moneylender / merchant).
2. Bassanio (risks / owes) Antonio money.
3. The actors are on the (stage / haystack).
4. You need a (rock / needle) and thread to sew.
5. The bear (attacked / courted) the campers.
6. I'm (wise / bored). There's nothing to do.
7. We can use a(n) (hour glass / cargo) to keep time.
8. Only a (joke / fool) would do something so stupid.
9. Don't go out. There is a snow (wind / storm) coming.
10. (Sailors / Pirates) in stories often have eye patches and wooden legs.

IV. Complete the summary by writing the correct phrase in each blank.

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| • help him be | • and thought he could |
| • lady in Belmont | • could marry Portia |
| • to lend him money | • suggested that |
| • from a moneylender | • sad and his friends |

A merchant in Venice, called Antonio, was often 1_____
 _____ tried to 2_____ happy. His friend Bassanio
 owed him money 3_____ pay his debt if he 4_____
 _____, a rich young 5_____. He asked
 Antonio 6_____ to go to Belmont, but Antonio didn't
 have enough. He 7_____ Bassanio borrow 8_____
 _____ and agreed to guarantee the loan.

Portia Has Some Visitors

I. Put the sentences in order from 1 (first) to 5 (last).

- _____ Portia hoped that Bassanio would court her and choose a box.
- _____ Nerissa gave Portia some advice about happiness.
- _____ Portia thought her father had given her a very annoying problem.
- _____ Portia got bored with the man who only talked about cats.
- _____ The Scottish lord argued with the English baron.

II. Choose the best answer.

1. Which of the following was not true of Portia?
 - a. She was young.
 - b. She was beautiful.
 - c. She was rich.
 - d. She was married.

2. Why was Portia unhappy with her father's will?
 - a. She must marry the man who chose the right box.
 - b. She could not have any money until she married.
 - c. She was forbidden from marrying the man she loved.
 - d. She did not get the gold box she liked.

3. Why didn't Portia like the German duke?
 - a. Because he didn't like cats
 - b. Because he spoke only German
 - c. Because he was uneducated
 - d. Because he was drunk

4. Who would Portia like to marry?
 - a. Bassanio
 - b. A French lord
 - c. A prince from Naples
 - d. The Prince of Morocco