

the merchant of venice

chicago
shakespeare
on navy pier theater



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Teacher Handbook

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Artistic Director

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Chicago Shakespeare Theater is Chicago's professional theater dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. Founded as Shakespeare Repertory in 1986, the company moved to its seven-story home on Navy Pier in 1999. In its Elizabethan-style courtyard theater, 500 seats on three levels wrap around a deep thrust stage—with only nine rows separating the farthest seat from the stage. Chicago Shakespeare also features a flexible 180-seat black box studio theater, a Teacher Resource Center, and a Shakespeare specialty bookstall.

In its first 18 seasons, the Theater has produced nearly the entire Shakespeare canon: *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Cymbeline*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Julius Caesar*, *King John*, *King Lear*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *Macbeth*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Othello*, *Pericles*, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

Each year Chicago Shakespeare receives widespread critical acclaim for artistic excellence and its accessible, creative approach to Shakespeare's work. Chicago's Jeff Awards year after year have honored the Theater, including repeated awards for Best Production and Best Director, the two highest honors in Chicago theater.

Since Chicago Shakespeare's founding, its programming for young audiences has been an essential element in the realization of its mission. Team Shakespeare supports education in our schools, where Shakespeare is part of every required curriculum. As a theater within a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to a young and ethnically diverse audience of 50,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare's programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of mainstage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year of one of the "curriculum plays." Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools.

The 2005–2006 Season offers a student matinee series for Chicago Shakespeare Theater's productions of *The Merchant of Venice* and *Much Ado About Nothing*. This winter, Chicago Shakespeare presents especially for students a 75-minute abridged adaptation of *Macbeth*, at its theater on Navy Pier and on tour to schools and theaters across the region. We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare's creative genius brought to life on stage.

Marilyn J. Halperin, Director of Education
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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES



IN THIS SECRET PLACE OF MASKS THEY LIVE,
MASKED IN GOLD AND SILVER, THINGS ARE NEVER WHAT THEY SEEM. IN THIS SECRET PLACE OF MASKS THEY LIVE, DECEIVING ONE ANOTHER AND THEMSELVES.

A head of us lie the worlds of Venice and Belmont—one driven by commerce and divided by bigotry; the other perfumed with music and filtered in moonlight. Straddling the two is a cast of characters in search of love and fortune (though not particularly in that order). Relationships—in business and in love—are fueled by the acquisition of fortunes. In Venice and in Belmont people build imaginary walls, carving out their identity, and shutting out those who can never belong, who are shunned and hated as “the other.”

These characters rarely show us understanding or compassion. It is instead their ignorance and selfishness, their greed and hatred that engage us, compelling us to look on. We may recognize ourselves in them. Their prejudices, their fears, their motivations, and their betrayals are human—and they are universal. You’ll find no apologies here. Shakespeare holds “the mirror up to nature” with unflinching honesty, and the reflection, frankly, should be disturbing.

***The Merchant of Venice* is sponsored, in part, by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois.**

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Art That Lives

Drama, like no other art form, is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and together experience a play. Ancient cave paintings depict men disguised as animals. Since

ancient times, impersonation and imitation have served man in his effort to express himself and to communicate. The drama of western civilization has its roots in the ancient Greeks' religious rituals and observances. Until the Renaissance, when Shakespeare wrote, drama was closely tied to religious beliefs and practice.

Drama not only depicts human communication, it is human communication. In theater, unlike television or film, there is a two-way communication that occurs between the actors and their audience. The audience hears and sees the actors, and the actors hear and see the audience. We are used to thinking about the actors' roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing an important role in this living art. Because the art lives, each production is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience's response. Live drama is the sharing of human experience, intensely and immediately, in the theater, which momentarily becomes our universe.

A live theater production depends upon its audience. The best performances depend upon the best actors—and the best audiences. When the actors sense a responsive, interested audience, their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest, they, too, are distracted, and the play they create is less interesting.

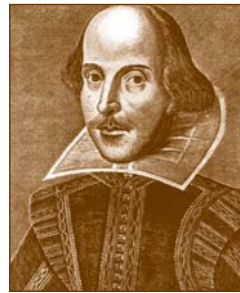
One actor described the experience of live performance as a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller in the experience of live theater. We hope you'll enjoy your role—and help us give you a dramatic experience that you'll always remember.

[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely-fused group, make it easy for the performance to 'take you out of yourself.' This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play...to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday.

—Tyrone Guthrie, 1962

HOW CAN YOU HELP US GIVE YOU THE BEST PERFORMANCE WE CAN?

- Please don't talk during the performance. Talking distracts the actors as well as the people sitting nearby.
- Respond naturally to our play. Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you'll laugh, cry and even gasp—but as a natural response to the story, and not in order to distract attention from the stage.
- Please keep all "noisemakers"—food, gum, personal stereos, etc.—back at school or on the bus! In a quiet theater, wrappers and munching are heard by all, the actors included.
- No photographs of any kind, please! Flashbulbs can make the actors lose their focus and can be dangerous. Digital cameras, along with all other kinds of recording devices, are prohibited.



Bard's Bio

The exact date of William Shakespeare's birth is not known, but his baptism, traditionally three days after a child's birth, was recorded on April 26, 1564. His father John Shakespeare was a tanner, glover, grain dealer and town official of the thriving market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother Mary Arden was the daughter of a prosperous, educated farmer. Though the records are lost, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended Stratford's grammar school, where he would have acquired some knowledge of Latin and Greek and the classical writers. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

Some skeptical scholars have raised doubts about whether Shakespeare, due to his relatively average level of education and humble origins, could have possibly written what has long been considered the best verse drama composed in the English language. But not until 1769, 150 years after Shakespeare's death, did these theories arise—and, to all appearances, Shakespeare's contemporaries and immediate successors never seemed to question whether William Shakespeare wrote the celebrated works attributed to him.

At 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. They had one daughter Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died at age 11. From 1585, the year in which the twins were baptized, until 1592, when he is first referred to as a dramatist in London, we know nothing of Shakespeare's life. Consequently, these seven years are filled with legend and conjecture. We may never know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of theater. The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright appears in 1592 and was made by Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, who attacked Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" for presuming to write plays (when he was only a mere actor) and copying the works of established dramatists.

Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and playwright, but also a partner in a new theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which soon became one of London's two principal companies. The company's name changed to the King's Men in 1603 with the accession of James I, and it endured until the Puritans closed the theaters in 1642. From 1599 the company acted primarily at the Globe playhouse, in which Shakespeare held a one-tenth interest.

During his career of approximately 20 years, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated in what most scholars now agree upon as 38 plays. His earliest plays, including *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *King John* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, were written between 1589 and 1594. Between 1594 and 1599, Shakespeare wrote both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* as well as other plays, including *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *As You Like It*. His great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last play traditionally categorized as comedy, *Measure for Measure*. The earlier histories, comedies and tragedies made way for Shakespeare's final dramatic form—the so-called "romances" which were written between 1606 and 1611 and include *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. These were the plays of a playwright no longer bound by the constraints of his earlier historical and tragic forms. Although single volumes of about half his plays were published in Shakespeare's lifetime, there is no evidence that suggests he oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, that 36 of his plays were published in the First Folio. Drama was only just beginning to be understood as "literature" as we understand it today, and so it is not at

all surprising that so little attention was given to Shakespeare's plays in published form until seven years after his death. However, we do know that Shakespeare did oversee the publication of three narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets.

Shakespeare seldom devised his own plots for his plays, but creatively borrowed here and there from histories, prose romances, poems, and plays of his own and others. Shakespeare was an ingenious dramatic artist with a vast imagination. He created masterpieces out of conventional and unpromising material. In Shakespeare's time, ancient stories were told and re-told. The important thing was not the originality of the plot but how the story was told. In the telling of a story, there are few writers who rival Shakespeare in theatricality, poetry, and depth of character.

By 1592, Shakespeare had emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright and part-owner of London's leading theater company. After living life in the theater for nearly 20 years, in 1611 he retired to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare was the man, who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.

—John Dryden, 1688

Ow faire Hippolita, our nuptiall ho
Drawes on space: foure happy day
Another Moon: but oh, me thinks
This old Moon wanes; She lingers
Like to a Step-dame, or a Dowager,
Long withering out a yong mans reuennew.
Hipp. Soure daies wil quickly steep the elce
Soure nights tell quickly dreame away the ti
And then the Moone, like to a floure bow,
Now bent in heauen, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.
The. Go Phylisrate,
Stirre vp the Athenian youth to merriments,
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth,
Turne melancholy forth to Funerals:
The pale companion is not for our pompe,
Hippolita, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And wonne thy loue, doing thee iniuries:
But I will wed thee in another key,
With hounes, with triumph, and with reuel

The First Folio

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, not for the printed page. In Shakespeare's day, plays were not considered "literature" at all. When a play was printed, it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a "quarto," the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperback editions. It was not until 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, when a contemporary of his, dramatist Ben Jonson, published his own plays in an atlas-size book called a "folio," that plays were viewed as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was chided as bold and arrogant for his venture.

Two of Shakespeare's close colleagues decided to ignore tradition and gather his plays for publication. In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, the first Folio, a book containing 36 of his 38 plays, was published. The first Folio was compiled from stage prompt books, from the playwright's handwritten manuscripts, from various versions of some of the plays already published for use in the theater—and from the memory of his actors. Its large format (much like a modern atlas) was traditionally reserved for the “authority” of religious and classical works.

Shakespeare's first Folio took five “compositors” two-and-one-half years to print. The compositors manually set the type by first memorizing the text line by line. There was no copy editor, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected but, due to the prohibitively high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the first Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, each slightly different. Chicago's Newberry Library contains the Folio in its rich collections (and it can be reviewed in small groups by appointment).

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's use of the first Folio as its script and “blueprint” is unusual. The first Folio serves as the most authentic and effective manual available to Shakespearean actors nearly 400 years after its publication. Its punctuation gives clues to our actors about what words to emphasize and about what ideas are important. In Shakespeare's own theater company, with only a few days at most to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential. Today, they still help actors make the language much easier to understand—even though you're hearing language that's 400 years younger than ours.

A key to understanding Shakespeare's language is to appreciate the attitude toward speech accepted by him and his contemporaries. Speech was traditionally and piously regarded as God's final and consummate gift to man. Speech was thus to Elizabethans a source of enormous power for good or ill... Hence the struggle to excel in eloquent utterance.

—David Bevington, 1980



Shakespeare's England

Elizabeth I ruled England for 45 years from 1558 to 1603 in a time of relative prosperity and peace. “Few monarchs,” says Shakespearean scholar David

Bevington, “have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp on it so permanently.” The daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child and an illegitimate monarch. The politics of religion constantly threatened Elizabeth's reign even though it was one of the most secure that England had known for hundreds of years. Religious conflict during the Tudors' reign pervaded every aspect of English life and, most particularly, its politics. Elizabeth had no heir, and so throughout her reign the matter of succession was a real and disturbing threat to the nation's peace (and a recurrent subject of Shakespeare's plays). While Shakespeare was writing *Julius Caesar*, one of the Queen's favorites, the Earl of Essex, rebelled against her government. Shakespeare's portrayal of the enforced abdication of a king in *Richard II* was censored in performance during Elizabeth's reign.

Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be later. It had withdrawn from its extensive empire on the Continent, and its explorations of the New World had barely begun. There was a period of internal economic development as Elizabeth ignored the counsel of her advisors and kept out of war until the attempted invasion by Spain and the Great Armada in 1588. England's economy was still, however, based in agriculture, and its farmers were poor and embittered by strife with rich landowners who “enclosed” what was once the farmers' cropland for pastures. Uprisings and food riots were commonplace in the rural England surrounding Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare grew up. London, then the largest city of Europe, was a city of contrasts: the richest and the poorest of England lived here, side by side. While many bettered themselves in a developing, urban economy, unemployment was a serious problem. It was a time of change and social mobility. A rising middle class for the first time in English history aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.

Under Elizabeth, England returned to Protestantism. But in her masterful style of accommodation and compromise, she incorporated an essentially traditional and

Catholic doctrine into an episcopal form of church government that was ruled by the Crown and England's clergy rather than by the Pope. Extremists on the religious right and left hated her rule and wanted to see Elizabeth overthrown. She was declared a heretic by Rome in 1569, and her life was endangered. "Her combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending male admirers have become legendary," says David Bevington, and resulted in a monarchy that remained secure in the face of religious and political threats from many sides. In choosing not to marry, Elizabeth avoided allying herself and her throne with a foreign country or an English faction which might threaten her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout Renaissance Europe, governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords. The rule of monarchies, like Elizabeth's, was absolute. Elizabeth and her subjects viewed the monarch as God's deputy, and the divine right of kings was a cherished doctrine (and became the subject of Shakespeare's history plays). It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against God. However, this doctrine didn't free Elizabeth from occasional rebellion at home—even from her closest advisors—or from challenges from abroad.

Childless, Elizabeth I died in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England's King James I. James, who ruled from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), clearly lacked Elizabeth's political acumen and skill, and his reign was troubled with political and religious controversy. He antagonized the religious left, and his court became more aligned with the Catholic right. It would be James' son, Charles I, who would be beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s.



The Renaissance Theater



A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare's, James Burbage, built the first commercial theater in England in 1576, not much more than a decade before historians think Shakespeare first arrived on the London theater scene. Burbage skirted rigid restrictions governing entertainment in London by placing his theater just outside the city walls, in a community with the unglamorous name of "Shoreditch." The name reflected the position of his theater, on the shore of the Thames River and just beyond the ditch created by the walls of London.

Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council by setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including brothels and bear-bating arenas. Actors and playwrights in Shakespeare's day were given officially the status of "vagabond." They were considered little better than common criminals unless they could secure the patronage of a nobleman, or better still, the monarch.

Shakespeare and his fellow actors managed to secure both. They became popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth's court as the Lord Chamberlain's Men and continued to enjoy court patronage after King James came to the throne in 1603, when they became the King's Men. Their success at Court gave Shakespeare and his fellow shareholders in the Lord Chamberlain's company the funds to build the Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city's jurisdiction as the first public theaters in England.

Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching traveling acting troupes temporarily transform a courtyard into a theater. When he was a boy growing up in rural Stratford-upon-Avon, acting troupes traveled around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, storage for props and costumes, and stage. Their horses pulled the cart into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college. People gathered in the courtyard to watch, some leaning over the rails from the balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

Many of these traveling performances staged religious stories, enacting important scenes from the Bible. During the Renaissance, the stories enacted in these performances became more secular. Public officials scorned the theater as immoral and frivolous. The theaters just outside London's walls came to be feared as places where physical, moral and social corruption were spread. They were frequently shut down by the authorities during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the city was menaced by the plague, or by political and social rioting. Even when the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word in a new play. The show could not go on until he gave his permission.

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers. A full house in the Globe numbered about 3,000 people. Though the same dimensions as the original structure, the reconstruction of the Globe holds 1,500 at maximum capacity—an indication of just how close those 3,000 people must have been to one another! They arrived well before the play began to meet their friends, drink ale and snack on the refreshments that were sold at the plays. From start to finish, a day at the theater could take half the day. It was more like tailgating at a football game, or going with friends to a rock concert than our experience of attending theater today.

Affluent patrons paid two to three pence or more for gallery seats (like the two levels of balcony seating at Chicago Shakespeare Theater) while the “common folk”—shopkeepers and artisans—stood for a penny, about a day's wages for a skilled worker. They were a demanding, diverse group and Shakespeare depicted characters and situations to appeal to every level of this cross-section of Renaissance society. The vitality and financial success of the Elizabethan theater is without equal in English history.

There was no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. A throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action since Elizabethan plays were written to be performed without scene breaks or intermissions. When the stage directions for *Macbeth* indicate that “a banquet is prepared,” the stage keepers prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare's plays were per-

formed in “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare's time—regardless of their historical setting. The actors wore the same clothes on the stage as their contemporaries wore on the street. Hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy provided the elegant costumes for the play's royalty.

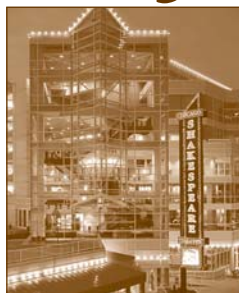


An Elizabethan traveler's sketch of the original Swan.

Most new plays were short runs and seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows but, due to the number of productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a day or two. It was not until 1660 that women would be permitted to act on the English stage. Female roles were performed by boys or young men. Elaborate Elizabethan and Jacobean dresses disguised a man's shape and the young actors were readily accepted as “women” by the audience.

In 1642, the Puritans succeeded in closing the theaters altogether. They did not reopen until Charles II came to the throne 18 years later. A number of theaters, including the Globe, were not open very long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. During these years when the English theaters were closed, many of the traditions of playing Shakespeare were lost. The new theater of the Restoration approached Shakespeare's plays very differently, rewriting and adapting his original scripts to suit Restoration tastes. It is left to contemporary scholars to reconstruct the traditions of Elizabethan theater from clues left behind.

Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard-style Theater



David Taylor of Theatre Projects Consultants has devoted a great deal of energy and imagination to the question of what kind of space is best suited to presenting Shakespeare's plays. Taylor, who worked as one of the primary consultants on the design of the new Chicago Shakespeare Theater, feels that this unique performance space reflects elements of both the Globe playhouse and the courtyards-turned-theaters, in which the young Shakespeare might first have acquired his love of the stage.

The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599, was simple and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area with three galleries, one above the other. Both theaters use a thrust stage with an open performance area upstage; basically, the entire performance space is in the shape of a capital “T.” The audience sits on three sides of the thrust stage, so the play is staged in the middle of the audience—much like the Elizabethan Swan Theatre’s design, for which a traveler’s careful sketch still remains. This immersion of the stage and the action performed on it into the audience creates a three-dimensional theater that demands three-dimensional directing and acting.



Chicago Shakespeare Theater

The people sitting in the side seats have the closest interaction with the performers, and the performers with them. The play unfolds between the audience members seated on the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform. “The backdrop and the scenery for Shakespeare is the human race,” Taylor notes, “so we’re putting Shakespeare into its proper context by making human faces the backdrop for those sitting in any seat in the theater.”

“This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience,” according to Taylor. “The courtyard experience was about leaning out of windows. It was about throwing open the windows in the courtyard when the stage was brought through on a cart and leaning out and interacting.” Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the “leaning rails” to watch the players below—much like those watching from courtyard balconies might have done centuries ago when a traveling troupe set up their temporary stage.

The actors and the audience share the experience of seeing and interacting with one another. Taylor thinks that actors benefit tremendously from the courtyard design: “They’re not looking at people sitting in straight rows, disconnected from everybody around them in big seats. There’s a sense of community in the space, a sense of embracing the performer on stage.” Actors are always “fed” by the energy generated from their audience. The design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater offers a feast of feedback to the actors on its stage.

As an audience member, your facial expressions and body language serve both as the focal point of the actors’ energy and the backdrop for the other audience members seated across from you. “It’s important that we don’t lose the performer among the faces, but it’s essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what’s going on,” Taylor reflects. “That’s the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design.”

Speaking of his experience directing on the open stage in Stratford, Ontario, Tyrone Guthrie once said: “Theatrical performance is a form of ritual; the audience is not asked to subscribe to an illusion but to participate in the ritual . . . The attraction for me of the ‘open stage’ as opposed to the proscenium is primarily this: that it stresses the ritual as opposed to the illusory quality of performance.”

Other theaters have been modeled upon the Elizabethan experience of courtyard theater, perhaps most notably the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan served as an important model for Chicago Shakespeare Theater. An important element in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience. Brick is an aesthetic choice, but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustical choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls help diffuse sound, sending it in different directions throughout the theater. The sound, lighting and rigging systems are all state-of-the-art. Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s design allows for a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space. Performers will enter from surprising places, set pieces will emerge seemingly from nowhere, and parts of the stage that seem permanent and solid may prove not to be so!

Leaning out of your courtyard “window,” you can enjoy not just what is happening on stage, but also the responses of the people sitting across from you. Shakespearean theater is about people. As Taylor concludes, “You’re the scenery. You’re the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front of, and out of, you.”

Timelines.....

1300

- 1326 Founding of universities at Oxford and Cambridge
- 1348 Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- 1349 Bubonic Plague kills one-third of England's population
- 1387 Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*
- c.1440 Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press
- 1472 Dante's *Divine Comedy* first printed
- 1492 Christopher Columbus lands at Cuba
- 1497 Vasco da Gama sails around Cape of Good Hope

1500

- 1501-04 Michelangelo's "David" sculpture
- 1503 Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
- 1512 Copernicus' *Commentariolus* published, theorizing that earth and other planets revolve around sun
- 1518 License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorens de Gominzot
- 1519 Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world
- 1519 Conquest of Mexico by Cortez
- 1522 Luther's translation of the New Testament

1525

- 1531 Henry VIII recognized as Supreme Head of the Church of England
- 1533 Henry VIII secretly marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated by Pope
- 1539 Hernando de Soto explores Florida
- 1540 G.L. de Cardenas "discovers" Grand Canyon
- 1541 Hernando de Soto "discovers" the Mississippi

1550

- 1558 Ascension of Queen Elizabeth I
- 1562 John Hawkins begins slave trade between Guinea and West Indies
- 1564 Birth of William Shakespeare and Galileo
- 1565 Pencils first manufactured in England
- 1570 Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth
- Mayor of London forbids theatrical performances in the City
- 1573 Francis Drake sees the Pacific Ocean

1575

- 1576 Burbage erects first public theater in (the "Theater" in Shoreditch)
- 1577 Drake's trip around the world
- 1580 *Essays* of Montaigne published
- 1582 Marriage license issue for William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway
- Daughter Susanna Shakespeare christened
- 1585 Christening of son Hamnet and twin Judith
- 1587 Mary Queen of Scots executed
- 1588 Destruction of the Spanish Armada

Shakespeare's Plays

c. 1592-1595

COMEDIES

Love's Labor's Lost
The Comedy of Errors
The Two Gentlemen of Verona
A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Taming of the Shrew

HISTORIES

1, 2, 3 Henry VI
Richard III
King John

TRAGEDIES

Titus Andronicus
Romeo and Juliet

SONNETS

probably written
in this period

Timelines

- 1592 Shakespeare listed with the Lord Chamberlain's Men
- 1593-94 Plague closes London playhouses for 20 months
- 1595 Coat of arms granted to Shakespeare's father, John
- 1596 Death of son Hamnet, age 11
Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*
- 1597 Shakespeare, one of London's most successful playwrights, buys New Place,
one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon
- 1599 Globe Theatre opens, as home to the Lord Chamberlain's Men,
with Shakespeare part-owner

1600

- 1602 Oxford University's Bodleian Library opens
- 1603 Death of Queen Elizabeth, coronation of James I;
Lord Chamberlain's Men become the King's Men
upon endorsement of James I
- 1603-11 Plague closes London playhouses for at least 68 months (nearly 6 years)
- 1605 Cervantes' *Don Quixote Part 1* published
- 1607 Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall;
Founding of Jamestown, Virginia, first English settlement on American mainland
- 1608 *A true relation of such Occurances and Accidents of Note
as hath passed in Virginia* by John Smith
Galileo constructs astronomical telescope
- 1609 Blackfriars Theatre, London's first commercial indoor
theater, becomes winter home of the King's Men
- 1611 *The Authorized Version "King James Version"* of the Bible published
- 1613 Globe Theatre destroyed by fire
- 1614 Globe Theatre rebuilt
- 1615 Galileo faces the Inquisition for the first time
- 1616 Judith Shakespeare marries Thomas Quinney
Death of William Shakespeare, age 52
- 1618 Copernican system condemned by Roman Catholic Church
- 1619 First African slaves arrive in Virginia
- 1623 The first Folio, the first compiled text of Shakespeare's complete works published

1625

- 1625 James I dies, succeeded by Charles I
- 1632 *Ai due massimi sistemi* of Galileo
- 1633 Galileo recants before the Inquisition
- 1636 Harvard College founded at Cambridge, Massachusetts
- 1642 Civil War in England begins
- 1642 Puritans close theaters throughout England until the Restoration of Charles II,
18 years later
- 1649 Charles I beheaded
- 1649 Commonwealth declared

c. 1596-1600

COMEDIES

- ♦ The Merchant of Venice
- Much Ado About Nothing
- The Merry Wives of Windsor
- As You Like It
- Twelfth Night

HISTORIES

- Richard II
- 1,2 Henry IV
- Henry V

TRAGEDIES

- Julius Caesar

c. 1601-1609

COMEDIES

- Troilus and Cressida
- All's Well That Ends Well
- Measure for Measure

TRAGEDIES

- Hamlet
- Othello
- King Lear
- Macbeth
- Antony and Cleopatra
- Timon of Athens
- Coriolanus

c. 1609-1613

HISTORIES

- Henry VIII

ROMANCES

- Pericles
- Cymbeline
- The Winter's Tale
- The Tempest

The Merchant of Venice.....

Dramatis Personae

IN VENICE

ANTONIO, a merchant of Venice

BASSANIO, a Venetian gentleman, suitor to Portia

SOLANIO
SALERIO
GRATIANO
LORENZO

} companions to Bassanio

LEONARDO, servant to Bassanio

SHYLOCK, a Jewish businessman in Venice

JESSICA, his daughter

TUBAL, another Jewish businessman

LAUNCELOT GOBBO, servant to Shylock,
and later to Bassanio

OLD GOBBO, Launcelot's father

THE DUKE OF VENICE

JAILER

MAGNIFICOES OF VENICE, SERVANTS

IN BELMONT

PORTIA, an heiress of Belmont

NERISSA, her waiting-gentlewoman

BALTHAZAR, servant to Portia

STEPHANO, servant to Portia

THE PRINCE OF MOROCCO, suitor to Portia

THE PRINCE OF ARRAGON, suitor to Portia

ATTENDANTS, FOLLOWERS,
MESSENGERS, MUSICIANS



The Story

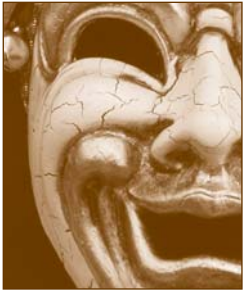
The Venetians congregate in the city, discussing matters of love, well-being and, above all, their money. Far away in Belmont, a young heiress named Portia awaits her fate: bound by her father's will, she can marry only the man who solves the riddle of the three caskets. To a young Venetian accustomed to living well beyond his means, such a marriage would clearly have its merits. Bassanio decides to try his luck—if only he could afford the trip to Belmont.

He asks his friend Antonio, the titular “merchant of Venice,” for a loan. Antonio's wealth is invested currently in an overseas trading venture, but he urges Bassanio to use his name and reputation as collateral. Shylock, a Jew, agrees to the loan, but his terms are severe: if Antonio fails to pay the debt on time, the merchant must forfeit a pound of his own flesh. Confident in the profitable return of his ships, Antonio accepts Shylock's terms.

And so Bassanio sets out for Belmont—as does Shylock's daughter Jessica, eloping with a Christian after robbing her father's house. Bassanio succeeds where others have failed in discovering the riddle of the caskets and wins the hand of Portia, who rejoices in the young Venetian's success. But news from Venice interrupts their wedding plans: Antonio's ships, wrecked at sea, have wrought his financial ruin, and Shylock is pursuing the lethal terms of their bond.

Bassanio returns to Venice to save his friend's life with the fortune of his betrothed. Portia follows, disguised as a young lawyer named “Balthazar” and accompanied by her companion Nerissa in the guise of a lawyer's clerk. Brought before the Duke of Venice, Shylock insists upon the letter of the law. Antonio's life is all but lost—when the doors open and two young men enter the courtroom.

The Merchant of Venice.....



Act-by-Act Synopsis

ACT I

Financially successful, popular, respected throughout Christian Venice as both a sound businessman and a loyal friend, the merchant Antonio nevertheless suffers from depression. Two of his companions, Salerio and Solanio, both blame his mood on the fact that he has a large sum of his fortune invested in trading expeditions whose profitable outcome is very uncertain. Antonio, however, denies that he is worried about his investments, so his friends suggest unrequited love may be the culprit. Again, Antonio vehemently denies their suggestions. At a loss, Solanio finally declares that Antonio's depression must simply be the nature of his personality—he was born to be melancholy. Bassanio and two of his companions, Lorenzo and Gratiano, arrive and echo the others' concerns about Antonio's unhealthy appearance. When Antonio and Bassanio are left alone, Bassanio reveals to his friend that extravagant living has left him financially ruined, unable even to pay back the money borrowed from Antonio. He tells Antonio of his love for Portia, of her wealth and the vast number of suitors who come from around the globe to court her. If Antonio will lend him more, Bassanio proposes, he will be able to court Portia in fashion, and, having won her and her inheritance, be able to repay his friend. With his own money currently invested in ships at sea, Antonio agrees that Bassanio may use his name and reputation as collateral to obtain a loan for financing the trip to Belmont.

Portia's father's will has left the young heiress at the mercy of the fates, for she must marry the man who successfully solves the riddle of the three caskets. Of the many princes and nobles who have come from around the world to seek her hand, not one has yet caught her eye as a worthy suitor.

Bassanio approaches Shylock, a Jewish money lender, for a loan, for which Antonio will be held financially responsible. Shylock agrees to the loan—if Antonio signs a bond giving Shylock the power to redeem a

pound of Antonio's flesh if he is unable to repay the debt on time. Bassanio refuses a bond with such harsh conditions wielded against his friend, but Shylock insists that it is but a joke, a "merry sport"—Antonio's flesh will not be profitable to him. Antonio agrees to the bond, confident in the quick return of his ships.

ACT II

In Belmont, Portia explains to her latest suitor, the Prince of Morocco, that she is not free to choose whom she may marry, but that each of her suitors must undergo the test which her father's will dictates. If he accepts the challenge, he must swear that, if he chooses wrong, he will never marry. The Prince agrees.

Back in Venice, Shylock's servant Launcelot Gobbo struggles with his conscience—should he leave his master's service or not? Giving into the friendly counsel of the devil, he prepares to run away from Shylock's house, only to stumble upon his blind father Old Gobbo, searching for his son. Playing a cruel trick on the old man, Launcelot informs him that his son, one "Master Launcelot," has died. He then reveals his true identity. Father and son are interrupted by the arrival of Bassanio and his steward Leonardo, and Launcelot jumps at the opportunity to ingratiate himself into the services of the ever-generous Bassanio. Gratiano seeks out his friend to ask if he may accompany him on his trip to Belmont. Bassanio agrees—only if Gratiano promises to tone down his raucous behavior.

Jessica, Shylock's daughter, bids farewell to Launcelot as he prepares to leave in Bassanio's service, declaring that she will miss his ability to lighten the tediousness of their household. After Launcelot goes, Jessica reveals her own secret plan to leave her father's house and marry Lorenzo, a Christian and friend to Bassanio. Launcelot delivers Lorenzo a letter from Jessica, which reveals that she will disguise herself as a page, and, with gold and jewels stolen from her father, elope with him.

Launcelot brings Shylock an invitation from Bassanio to attend a dinner that evening. Shylock agrees to go, despite the enmity between Bassanio's crowd and him. Launcelot lets slip that there is to be a masque that evening; Shylock orders Jessica to lock the doors and windows of his house against the noise of the reveling Christians. Later that evening Gratiano and Salerio, disguised in masks, wait for Lorenzo near Shylock's house.

The Merchant of Venice.....

As Lorenzo meets up with them, they call for Jessica underneath her window. She throws them a casket full of her father's money and jewels. Disguising herself as a boy, she pockets more gold coins from her father's bank, locks up the house, and runs off with the masqueraders. The next day Salerio and Solanio meet in the streets of Venice and discuss Shylock's outrage upon learning the news of Jessica's elopement and the loss of his money and jewels.

In Belmont, the Prince of Morocco is brought before the three caskets. Portia informs him that if he should choose the one that contains her picture, she, by the power of her father's decree, will be his wife. After carefully reading the inscriptions on each of the three caskets, the Prince chooses the one of gold, and opens it to discover a skull, and a warning about the dangers of valuing objects on appearance alone. He leaves Belmont in disappointment. The Prince of Arragon is next to arrive to face the challenge. He chooses the silver casket, only to open it and discover the picture of a blinking idiot, and a reproach for those who value only appearances. Just as the Prince is leaving, a messenger arrives with the news that a young Venetian is approaching with an envoy to court Portia. As they leave to greet their newest guests, Nerissa, Portia's gentlewoman, prays that he will be none other than Bassanio.

ACT III

News reaches Venice that Antonio's trading ships have been wrecked in the English Channel. Shylock, outraged over Jessica's betrayal and the loss of his money and jewels, accosts Salerio and Solanio for their involvement in his daughter's escape, and vows to avenge himself on the young Venetians by seeking full retribution for his bond with Antonio. Tubal, another Jewish moneylender, informs Shylock of the details concerning Antonio's losses. Shylock thanks God upon learning of Antonio's ruin, and at that moment is told that Jessica has sold her father's engagement ring from his deceased wife Leah. He sends Tubal to find an officer to begin the process of Antonio's arrest.

In Belmont, Portia attempts to persuade Bassanio to wait a while before facing the test of the three caskets, for fear that he may choose wrong and be forced to leave, but Bassanio persists. He studies the three caskets carefully, deliberating on false pretenses revealed in law, religion, war, and beauty; vice, he says, can be cleverly hidden behind a facade of virtue. Perhaps with the help of

Portia's hints, he chooses the casket of lead, and opens it to find her portrait. Portia is overjoyed, and presents him with a ring signifying claim upon her and all that she owns. She impresses upon him the importance of the ring as a symbol of their love—its loss will mean the end of his love for her. Gratiano joyfully announces that he and Nerissa are engaged as Lorenzo, Jessica, and Salerio arrive at Belmont. Salerio brings with him the news of Antonio's loss, along with a letter for Bassanio: Antonio requests his friend's presence in Venice before he loses his life to pay the terms of Shylock's bond. Portia offers Bassanio enough gold to pay the debt twenty times over, and insists that he leave for Venice immediately. In Venice, Antonio pleads with Shylock for mercy, but Shylock refuses. Antonio resigns himself to death, hoping only that Bassanio will arrive before it is too late.

Portia has a plan: she and Nerissa will disguise themselves as a young lawyer and his clerk and follow their husbands to Venice. Leaving the management of her household with Lorenzo, she tells him that she and Nerissa will be retiring to a convent for solitude and prayer until the return of their husbands.

ACT IV

Assembled in court, the Duke of Venice advises Shylock to act with mercy toward Antonio, but Shylock refuses to yield. In a vain attempt to save his friend's life, Bassanio makes an offer of six thousand ducats (twice the amount owed), which Shylock refuses. He believes that the pound of flesh is his property by law, bought and paid for just as the slaves owned by the Venetian gentlemen are their property by law. In anticipation of his victory, he begins to sharpen his knife on the sole of his shoe.

Disguised as a lawyer's clerk, Nerissa arrives with a message for the Duke from Dr. Bellario, a legal expert whose assistance had been sought. Unable to come to Venice himself, Bellario has supposedly sent a young lawyer, "Balthazar" (Portia in disguise), to the court to act as legal counsel. Brought before the court, Portia attempts to appeal to Shylock's sense of mercy and compassion, but, like those before her, fails to appease his desire for vengeance. Bassanio pleads with the lawyer to "bend" the law in order that Antonio's life might be saved, but the young lawyer refuses, as such an action would threaten the process of law in Venice. Three times the original amount owed is offered as payment to Shylock, but he insists that the letter of the law be followed.

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Antonio requests that a judgment be made, and Balthazar decrees that Shylock should have his pound of flesh. In anguish, Bassanio proclaims that he would sacrifice his life, his wife, and all he has in the world if it would save his friend's life. Shylock, however, praises the lawyer and prepares to extract his payment.

Before Shylock can proceed, however, the young lawyer reveals a loophole in the bond: there is no mention of blood and so, if the letter of the law is to be carried out as Shylock insists, he must cut his pound of flesh without taking any of Antonio's blood. Sensing his defeat, Shylock agrees to take the sum of three times the bond that was offered earlier, but Balthazar refuses to let him take the money. He will "have all justice," she declares, and therefore shall have only the pound of flesh—no more, no less—as his payment. If any of Antonio's blood is lost, or if a little more or a little less than a pound is taken, Shylock will pay with his own life. Balthazar announces another legal trap—any foreigner who plots to kill a Venetian can, by law, be forced to forfeit his life and all his wealth to the state. The Duke pardons Shylock his life, but decrees that half of his wealth shall be given to Antonio and the other half to the state. Antonio asks that Shylock be allowed to keep half his fortune, provided he sign a will bequeathing all his possessions to Lorenzo and Jessica upon his own death—and that he convert to Christianity. The Duke agrees to honor Antonio's requests, as does Shylock, who leaves the courtroom in disgrace.

Bassanio attempts to pay Balthazar for his services, but the young lawyer refuses the money, insisting he be given the ring that Bassanio wears as compensation. Bassanio refuses to part with the ring until Antonio persuades him otherwise. Gratiano is sent to overtake Balthazar and present him with the jewel. He comes upon Portia and Nerissa, still disguised as men, and offers them Bassanio's ring. Nerissa conspires with Portia to get her ring from Gratiano so that she, like Portia, may trick her husband.

ACT V

Lorenzo and Jessica tease each other as they compare their love to famous, mythological love stories. A messenger arrives with the news that Portia and Nerissa will be returning shortly, and Launcelot announced that his master Bassanio will arrive before morning. Portia returns, instructing all not to reveal her absence to

Bassanio and Gratiano. The men arrive from Venice and are welcomed to Belmont by all—until Nerissa and Portia "discover" that their husbands' rings are gone. Bassanio and Gratiano plead with their wives, attempting to explain the circumstances under which the rings were given away, but Portia and Nerissa insist that their husbands must have given the rings to other women. Not until Antonio vouches for his friends' honor do Portia and Nerissa reveal their husbands' rings and their own role in the outcome of the trial. Antonio learns that his ships have safely returned to harbor. Portia announces that Lorenzo and Jessica are now Shylock's legal heirs, and all rejoice in their good fortune.



The Merchant of Venice.....



Shakespeare's England! Shakespeare's Venice

If Elizabethan England was a society built upon certain legal fictions, they were enabling fictions that allowed it—like the imaginary Venetian “state” of Shakespeare’s play—to promise equal treatment to aliens in strengthening the economy and building foreign trade and to restrict that freedom when social policy deemed it necessary to do so.

—James Shapiro, 1996

The turn of the seventeenth century in England was a time of repressed social unrest, unease about the future, and a deep suspicion of the religious nonconformists threatening the stability not only of the State’s church, but of the State itself. This was a time when old certainties and assumptions were constantly being challenged by new philosophies; traditional values and beliefs were no longer seen as absolute truths, but rather as relative and fluctuating ideas. Beginning with Henry VIII’s break with the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1530s, shifting royal powers had transformed the coun-

try from Catholic to Protestant. As England adjusted to vast and rapid religious, social, and economic changes, what it meant to be “Christian” and, more importantly, what it meant to be “English,” became the source of much intellectual, philosophical, and theological debate.

London was a successful international trading center, and as such, was full of “outsiders.” French, Dutch, Spaniards, Portuguese, and small communities of Blacks and Jews inhabited the city. They were officially referred to as “aliens” or “strangers,” and their presence had a strong effect on the booming commercial economy sweeping the country. Attitudes toward this immigrant population were varied. Those who wished to pass legislation restricting their economic activities in the city were opposed by those who understood that such restrictive measures would do more economic harm than good. In 1593, Privy Counsellor John Wolley stated that “the riches and renown of the City cometh by entertaining strangers, and giving liberty unto them. Antwerp and Venice could never have been so rich and famous but by the entertaining of strangers, and by that means have gained all the intercourse of the world.” Because they were not “English,” however, these aliens also provided a touchstone by which what it meant to be English could be defined. In the same way, Jews provided a measure against which what it meant to be Christian could be understood.



The history of Jewish persecution in Europe dates back to the Middle Ages and the rise of the political power of the Catholic Church. Intolerance for “unbelievers” was strong; forced baptisms were common, as were ex-communication and banishment. Jews were expelled from England by Edward I in 1290, and not officially allowed to return until the government of Oliver Cromwell in the mid-seventeenth century. This is not to say that there were no Jews in England during Shakespeare’s lifetime. Historical records show that there was a small underground community of Jews who lived and worked in England, some even in positions of authority in the Court. They were not allowed to practice their religion openly, however, and they did not

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receive the same civil liberties as Christians. Folklore and superstition involving Jews abounded. Superstitious rumors held that Jews abducted Christian children, that they ritually circumcised and murdered Christian victims, and that they stank and suffered from incurable diseases of the blood. It was even believed that Jews had migrated to Scotland after their expulsion from England—thereby explaining why the Scots hated pork and were reputed to be so cheap. Public sermons, commentaries and pamphlets enforced and upheld these beliefs.

The conversion of Jews to Christianity was a hot topic. By “saving” the souls of the Jewish nation, it was believed that the truths of the Christian doctrine were upheld and the historical legitimacy of the Church was enforced. Evangelical preachers and writers bombarded their parishioners with the belief that Jews were inherently damned because they did not believe in Christ, and that their only hope for salvation involved their embracing the Christian faith. (Some modern scholars believe that Elizabethan audiences would have understood Shylock’s forced conversion as an act of mercy on the part of Antonio, saving the Jew from eternal damnation.)

Venice provided the perfect atmosphere for Shakespeare to explore the relationships between power, money and marriage. To Elizabethan England, Venice was the embodiment of Western “culture,” the center of international art, fashion, entertainment and commerce. It was also the center of the new and expanding capitalist economy shaking Western Europe. Venice was racially divided by the Jewish ghetto established in 1516. An area was sectioned off and surrounded by a gate, guarded by four Christians whose salaries the Jews were forced to pay. The ghetto was locked at midnight (by which time all Venetian Jews had to be inside or pay strict fines) and remained locked until the ringing of the first bell of St. Mark’s Cathedral in the morning. This ghetto existed for nearly three centuries, until the arrival of Napoleon’s army in the early 1800s. In Venice, Jews were banned from participating in the arts, from holding public office, from the military, trade unions, professional labor, and even landowning. (A Jewish moneylender living in Venice in the 1590s would never have been able to dine with a group of Christians as Shylock does, nor could he have employed a Christian servant like Launcelot.) One of the few viable means of making a living left open to Jews was through banking and loan activities.

The shift from a medieval society, in which wealth was equated with ownership of land, to a capitalistic society based on gold and currency, profoundly affected the economies of the Western European nations. International trade increased the necessity for moneylending. Outlawed for several centuries in the Middle Ages, lending—without charging interest—was legal in Shakespeare’s time. Charging interest, or “usury,” was a controversial subject. *Pecunia pecuniam parere non potest*—an Aristotelian maxim meaning, “Money does not give in value, it is sterile and perpetual”—held sway in Renaissance Europe. The Church wavered in its stance on the practice of moneylending, but in the late sixteenth century the charging of interest was considered a necessary evil. Church sanctions did not apply to the Jews, however, and they were influential in the business and economic life of many European cities—especially Venice. Despite Church objections, the pawn shops and moneylending activities of Jewish communities were indispensable to the livelihood of merchants and nobles alike.



The Tale of Dr. Lopez

Did Shakespeare base the character of Shylock on a real person? In 1594, just a few years before Shakespeare wrote

The Merchant of Venice, Dr. Roderigo Lopez, a Portuguese Jew living in London, was publicly executed for treason. Shakespeare scholars disagree on the influence that this event may have had on Shakespeare as he wrote *Merchant*, but nevertheless the facts surrounding the trial provide important insight into the attitudes and prejudices of late sixteenth-century London.

Living publicly as a Christian, Dr. Lopez was a respected physician in Elizabethan London. Before serving as the Queen’s personal physician, he was the doctor for the household of Lord Leicester. Leicester frequently summoned actors to his estate for entertainment, and received special license to incorporate “the Earl of Leicester’s company of servants and players,” a company which Shakespeare himself belonged to at one time. This acting company was headed by James Burbage, the father of Richard Burbage; Richard was a friend and fellow member of the Chamberlain’s Men

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with Shakespeare, and it is believed that he originated the role of Shylock in the play's first production. Though no evidence exists to substantiate this, it is possible that on more than one occasion Shakespeare could have met Dr. Lopez while they were both attending Leicester's house.

In 1586 Lopez was appointed the sworn physician to Queen Elizabeth. Upon his arrival in Court he became involved in two rival political factions vying for the Queen's favor. On one side was the Earl of Leicester and his followers (including his ward, the Earl of Essex). They were noble, decidedly anti-Spanish, and lovers of a good time, raucous entertainment—and the theater. On the other was a group headed by Sir Francis Walsingham and, later, Lord Burghley, who were sober, industrious, ready to negotiate with Spain rather than fight, of lower social status perhaps, but more comfortable within the expanding economy of England than their aristocratic counterparts. Lopez soon became a spy for Walsingham, the Queen's Secretary of State. (The commercial and family ties maintained by Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal made them valuable in the gathering of international intelligence, and many were intimately involved in diplomatic intrigues.)

In approximately 1588, a young man named Don Antonio Perez led a failed attempt, supported by the Earl of Essex, to usurp the Spanish throne. He fled to London from Portugal to escape the wrath of King Philip of Spain. Henry VIII's break from the Catholic Church and the assumption of Elizabeth to the throne of England had only served to heighten the political and economic rivalry between the empires of Spain and England. Perez was immediately welcomed as a hero and became something of a popular idol in London society. The problem was that he could speak only Portuguese; Dr. Lopez, who knew several languages, was brought in as translator and advisor. Lopez did not always get along with the young, arrogant and ungrateful Perez. Perez was persuaded by the Earl of Essex to complain to the Queen about the Jewish doctor; Lopez retaliated by revealing professional, damaging secrets concerning the Earl. When this internal bickering became a public scandal, Perez sided with the Earl against the doctor.

Lopez was then approached by emissaries of King Philip, who wanted to kill the upstart Perez and, eventually, the Protestant Queen Elizabeth herself, whom the Spanish considered both an international threat and a

heretic. Lopez apparently wanted no part of the scheme against the Queen, but wished to seek revenge on Perez, and so did not distance himself completely from the international plot. Lopez, however, may have also been involved in a secret venture to establish a peaceful settlement between Spain and England, initiated by, if not supervised by, Lord Burghley and his faction. (Since the Earl of Essex's failed attempt to aid Perez in his usurpation of the Spanish throne, Lopez had allied himself more strongly with Burghley and his followers.) Essex was heatedly anti-Spanish and hungry for war. He was outraged at the thought of a settlement between the two empires. When he intercepted one of Lopez's agents and discovered the double-sided dealings going on, he began a public campaign to set both the Court and the citizens of London against Lopez.

Charged with attempting to poison the Queen, the doctor was imprisoned in the Tower of London. Burghley and his followers attempted to save Lopez's reputation, but Essex's anti-Spanish propaganda machine was too strongly entrenched. The use of torture in extracting confessions was against the law, but exceptions were made for cases of high treason; under threat of the rack, Lopez confessed to being involved in a plot to kill the Queen. Essex managed to turn the trial into a public spectacle. Lopez was tried at the Guildhall in front of a special commission of fifteen judges, including the Lord Mayor of London. (Most trials for treason were held privately before a small panel of the Queen's senior counsellors, for the protection of state security). His Jewish heritage became a main focus of the trial; Edward Cooke, the lead prosecutor, stated:

For the poisoning of her highness this miscreant, perjured, murdering traitor and Jewish doctor hath been provided...Dr. Lopez intended to convey himself to Constantinople with his brood, and there to live as a Jew amongst the Jews in Turkey, where he had nephews and kinfolk. And though Englishmen know him as they call them their new Christians, [and] he here was so accounted, to [those] to whom he did entrust this great secret, he did ordinarily avow himself to be a very Jew.

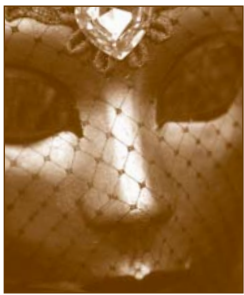
—William Meyers, 1996

As William Meyers writes, this was "another attorney playing the race card." Though Lopez was found guilty, the Queen at first refused to sign the death warrant. Four months passed between the time of his trial and his eventual execution, unusual because most public executions took place within days of sentencing. In June, 1594, however, he was taken to Tyburn Hill and execut-

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ed by hanging. Shakespeare, who was living in London during the proceedings, could not have been ignorant of these events.

Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, revived in performance at the time of the trial, was becoming one of the most popular plays of 1594, and certainly fed the anti-Jewish hysteria caused by Lopez's execution. Whether or not Shylock is based on Dr. Lopez, however, remains complete speculation. The events surrounding his trial and execution are important in that they shed some light on the temper of the society in which Shakespeare was writing *The Merchant of Venice*. The London mob that jeered as Lopez was brought to the gallows was also Shakespeare's audience in the theater, and their prejudices certainly must have influenced those early productions.



Shakespeare's Sources

If Shylock is another version of the villainous Jewish moneylender, and like Barabas a comic villain, he is also something more—the first stage Jew in

English drama who is multi-dimensional and thus made to appear human.
—Jay L. Halio, 1993

In the Renaissance, the concept of “imitatio,” or the combination of old stories with new, was the accepted way of writing. The originality of the plot was not as important as the way in which it was retold. Every writer would add his own unique spin on the narrative, often combining several stories into one, creating a new tale through the synthesis of the old. (This same technique can be seen today in movies like *Clueless*, a contemporary interpretation of Jane Austen's novel *Emma*.)

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare wove at least three known tales into the plot of the play. The “pound of flesh” story was a well-known folk tale, one version of which was written down by the Florentine Ser Giovanni Fiornetino in 1378. *Il Pecorone* (translated as “The Idiot,” or “The Dunce”) tells the tale of Ansaldo, a wealthy merchant of Venice, and his godson Giannetto. The Lady of Belmonte is a rich widow who agrees to marry the first man who can “enjoy” her. Giannetto attempts to seduce her twice, but both times is given a sleeping draught in

his wine and passes out as soon as he lies down. Out of money, he returns to Venice, tells his godfather he has been in two shipwrecks, and asks him for a loan to cover his losses. Ansaldo borrows 10,000 ducats from a Jewish moneylender, under the condition that he will yield a pound of his flesh should he forfeit on the loan.

With Ansaldo's borrowed money, Giannetto returns to Belmonte to try once more with the rich widow. Her maid warns him not to drink the wine. He heeds her advice, wins the Lady of Belmonte, and promptly forgets his debt to his godfather. When the news arrives at Belmonte that Ansaldo's life is in danger, Giannetto's wife sends him to Venice with enough of her money to pay the debt. She follows, disguised as a young lawyer. The outcome of the trial is similar to the plot of *Merchant*; the “young lawyer” finds a loophole in the legality of the bond, and Ansaldo is saved. Instead of having his fortunes taken from him and being forced to convert to Christianity, however, the Jewish moneylender simply tears up the bond. The “young lawyer” asks Giannetto for his ring as payment for “his” services, and Giannetto complies. Reunited in Belmonte, Giannetto's wife accuses him of giving the ring to a former mistress, but then reveals herself to have been the lawyer at the trial, and returns the jewel to her husband. Ansaldo, who has also traveled to Belmonte with his godson, is married to the maid.

Many critics believe this version of the story to have been the source Shakespeare used, but *Il Pecorone* had not been translated into English at the time Shakespeare was writing *The Merchant of Venice*. Either he knew how to read Italian and had read an untranslated version, or he may have heard the story second-hand through another source.

There also exists a twelfth-century French fable entitled *The King and the Seven Sages*—recorded by the monk Johannes de Alta Silva. In this story, a knight borrows money from one of his former bondsmen, or servants, who in turn wishes to revenge himself on his former master, who once had mutilated him in a fit of anger. The bond of a pound of flesh is agreed upon, and when the knight fails to pay, the matter is brought before the king. Aided by a horseman (his wife in disguise), the king discovers a flaw in the bond, and the knight is spared his life. Religious prejudice does not play a role in this story, as in *Il Pecorone*; instead, the bondsman's keen desire to avenge himself for past physical abuse is the driving force behind his pursuit of such an extreme payment.

The Merchant of Venice.....

The tale of the three caskets appears in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a thirteenth-century book of fables and anecdotes that was translated into English in the late sixteenth century by Richard Robinson. In this version, the roles of the sexes are reversed. A princess is shipwrecked on her voyage to the kingdom of her betrothed. When she finally arrives, the emperor of the land—and the father of her husband-to-be tests her worthiness by forcing her to choose between three caskets (one of gold, one of silver, and one of lead) before she can marry his son. Another similar tale is *Barlaam and Josaphat*, an ancient Greek legend in which a king, disgusted by the materialism and shallowness of his courtiers, tests them by forcing them to choose between four caskets—two of gold and two covered in pitch. Like Shakespeare's story, these ancient tales contrast the values of outward beauty and seeming value with internal truth and honesty, emphasizing the dangers of judging worth based on physical appearance.

The elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo is often considered a third plot; the fifteenth-century tale of *Massuccio di Salerno* is a possible source for this story. A lover, with the help of a servant, persuades the daughter of a miser to elope with him. Together they rob the girl's father and escape. The father is as upset over the loss of his money as he is the loss of his daughter.

There is also the possibility that Shakespeare copied the combination of these story-lines from a play already in existence. Stephen Gosson, a sixteenth-century playwright turned critic, mentions a play entitled *The Jew* in his book *The School of Abuse*, written in 1589. The plot, as Gosson describes it, is very similar to the outline of *The Merchant of Venice*, but unfortunately the script for this play has been lost. Two other lost plays, *The Venesyon Comodyl* (author unknown), written around 1594, and *The Jew of Venice* by Thomas Dekker, written around 1596, are also thought by some scholars to be possible sources for Shakespeare's play, but nothing is known about the details of these lost scripts.

The Jew of Malta, by Shakespeare's rival playwright Christopher Marlowe, was written between 1589 and 1590, and revived in performance in 1594 and 1596. The play was extremely popular in its day, and Shakespeare was sure to have been very familiar with it. Barabas, the Jew of Malta, is a much more inhumane and two-dimensional character than Shylock. The play hinges around Barabas' refusal to pay taxes to the king,

for which his house is confiscated and turned into a nunnery. In retaliation he goes on a wild killing spree, only to be caught and boiled in a cauldron of oil. In *Specimens of Dramatic Poetry*, Charles Lamb describes him as "a mere monster, brought in with a large painted nose to please the rabble. He kills in sport [and] poisons whole nunneries." It is hard to imagine such a character giving voice to some of Shylock's eloquent and very human speeches.

What did Shakespeare gain by combining these stories in the creation of *The Merchant of Venice*? To scholar Kenneth Muir in *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, the combination of the pound of flesh story with the casket tale enables Shakespeare to create more complex, three-dimensional characters than the figures from his sources. He transforms Portia into a rich heiress from a "predatory widow"; and themes and variations of friendship and love are developed, such as the relationship between Antonio and Bassanio, expanded from the bumbling godfather and forgetful, ungrateful godson of Shakespeare's source. In *Il Pecorone*, the Jewish moneylender is not even given a name. Shakespeare creates a person with complex reasons for revenge. Shylock is not the caricature villain of the source stories, but instead a multifaceted, complicated human being.



From a Scholar's Perspective: EYES

Stuart Sherman, Associate Professor of English and Associate Chair of the Department at Fordham University, is a specialist in eighteenth-century literature. Last April, he delivered the annual Birthday Lecture at the Folger Shakespeare Library.

"Hath not a Jew eyes?" asks angry Shylock, launching his deathless litany of things human: "Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions ...?"

It is no accident that he starts with eyes. If the eyes are the window of the soul, then he is insisting that he has one. But he is also saying something simpler to the men who mock and loathe him: "I see you."

The Merchant of Venice.....

So do we. The play has sometimes been deemed anti-Semitic, in part because it shows us a group of complacent anti-Semites and positions them as protagonists—intent on love, wealth, well-being—in what at first glance looks like comedy. We see their glamour, enter into their agitations, track with interest and some empathy the devices by which they pursue their desires.

But we also see what's wrong, in ways that they do not. Venetian prosperity, Shakespeare shows, is firmly grounded in toxic prejudice. In Venice, as elsewhere in Europe, triumphal early capitalism depended hugely on the lending of money at interest. The practice was officially proscribed for Christians, because it ran counter to the Scriptures' emphasis on charity. But it was permitted to Jews, who were situated outside of Christian brotherhood, and hence the imperatives of charity—and who in Venice were confined to a Ghetto (the first so named) and forbidden from entering into virtually any other line of work.

Shakespeare traces the near-inevitable emotional consequences of this arrangement: in Shylock, a searing resentment born of the many modes of his exclusion; and in the Christians who beset him, a mix of need, scorn, and abiding self-approval. When the meditative Christian merchant Antonio remarks, in the play's first line, that "In sooth, I know not why I am so sad," his friends find it easy to empathize, and so do we. But we see soon enough that these men, so sensitive to the sorrows they feel, remain oblivious to the ones they inflict. "Signor Antonio," Shylock reminds him, "many a time and oft... you have [be]rated me... You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, / And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine." Antonio, confronted with his prejudices, merely confirms them: "I am as like to call thee so again, / To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too." He gives voice to a hatred so established, so confident, as to render both its objects and its consequences barely visible to those who wield it.

We see Shylock more vividly than they: his phenomenal intelligence, fierce wit, possessive but passionate attachment to his daughter, and (above all, always) his relentlessly articulate outrage. He is far from flawless, and anything but mere "victim." To him, too, much is imperceptible: the beauty of music, the unhappiness of his child, the limitations of the law, the quality of mercy, the futility of vengeance. But Shakespeare roots all this in plausible cause, in the seismic fury of a human caged by hate. The walls in Shylock's mind replicate those of the

ghetto in which he is confined. Even his name sounds notes of withdrawal (in its first syllable) and imprisonment (in its second).

The brutal bargain that shapes the play comes freighted with all of these complexities. When Shylock proposes to Antonio the penalty of the pound of flesh, he couches his offer in a language of friendship ("This is kind I offer") that though laden with irony rings also, partly, true. His words expose the yearning within the anger.

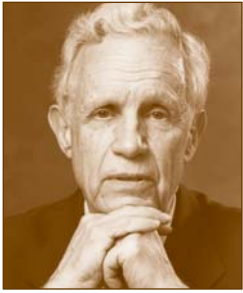
Did Shakespeare see things just this way—his Christians so critically, his Shylock so compassionately? As inhabitant of his time and place, he would have had plenty of cues to see things otherwise. In Elizabethan England, Jews were literally invisible; they had been banished from the country en masse centuries earlier. For many in Shakespeare's audience, they were so remote, so wholly imaginary and traditionally deplored, as to be at once easily demonized and easily ridiculed—as they'd recently been, for example, in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.

But Shakespeare, as the greatest playwright of his (perhaps any) age, was compelled to look deeper. He knew that the most absorbing theater consists in a conflict grounded not in stereotypes (which offer instead an escape from conflict, a convenient, clueless simplification), but in a struggle more complex, between combatants who deem themselves (in Hamlet's phrase) "mighty opposites," but who possess more in common than either dares suspect. Throughout *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare counts up, with a poet's precision, the costs incurred, the cruelties inflicted, by both the haters and the hated, making clear all the while that most of his characters (like much of humankind?) adhere to both dark camps at once.

The result is a turbulence far beyond the usual reach of comedy. Shakespeare's deep designs ensure that, by the moment of the confrontation's climax, when Shylock moves towards Antonio with whetted knife, our distribution of pity and terror, empathy and exultation, among the play's antagonists will prove so complex as to be barely calculable; it will vary from one audience member to the next, and in each, perhaps, from one performance to another. We inhabit the problem [of prejudice], as it inhabits us.

"Trouble me," urged a lovely song lyric, years ago. Well-crafted trouble is one of the things we ask great plays to give. By that reckoning, *The Merchant of Venice* is one of the greatest plays that Shakespeare ever wrote.

The Merchant of Venice.....



From a Scholar's Perspective: DISCOMFORT

David Bevington is the Phyllis Fay Horton Distinguished Service Professor in the Humanities at the University of Chicago. A prolific writer and editor, his publications include: *Tudor Drama and Politics*; *Action Is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture*; *Medieval Drama*; *The Bantam Shakespeare in 29 paperback volumes*; and *The Complete Works of Shakespeare for Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.* His latest book, published last year and intended for general readers, is called *Shakespeare*.

In April of 1995, to inaugurate a time of reflection on the horrors of the German concentration camps that had closed some fifty years earlier, the National Theater of Weimar staged a new production of *The Merchant of Venice*. Weimar, in East Germany, is only about eight miles from Buchenwald. Displayed over the stage, as one entered the theater, was a banner bearing the emblem, *Jedem das eigne*, "To each his own"—the legend inscribed over the fatal entrance into that concentration camp.

The concept of this production was that a group of bored German officers, stationed at Buchenwald during World War II, have decided to mount a production of *The Merchant of Venice* to help pass away the time. Three Jewish inmates of the camp are commandeered into playing the roles of Shylock, Jessica and Tubal. First they are forced to strip naked and sing the "Camp Song." Two handsome young officers play Portia and Nerissa in drag, with shaved legs and falsetto voices. The Commandant of the camp assumes the role of Antonio. In the course of the play, Shylock, the Jewish inmate, gains control over Antonio and seems on the verge of triumphing by cutting a pound of flesh from the Commandant's naked body. When Aryan supremacy is restored by Portia's court trickery, the outpouring of anti-Semitic hatred is vehement. The persuasiveness with which the young German actors in the production played the part of Nazi officers was positively chilling in its accuracy.

Should *The Merchant of Venice* be staged at all, or read? The jeering of Gratiano in the courtroom scene, when Portia turns the tables on Shylock, is indeed raucously hostile: "A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew! Now, infidel, I have you on the hip." The sentencing of Shylock to surrender half his wealth to Antonio for having conspired against his life and the other half to the state of Venice seems persecutory, even if the second of these penalties is remitted.

Most of all, perhaps, the requirement that Shylock "presently become a Christian" offends our sensibilities. We learn earlier that Antonio has spat upon Shylock's gaberdine, and has called him "misbeliever, cutthroat dog." The reason given, that Antonio objects to Shylock's lending money at interest, is bound to seem feeble to us in an era that accepts interest charges as a matter of doing business. And Jessica's being accepted into the Christian world of Belmont once she has renounced her father's religion and unforgiving ways, even if it celebrates the cross-cultural marriage of a Christian to a Jew, is unfeeling in its declaration as to which religion is superior. It is for reasons such as these that one hears calls for the boycotting of *The Merchant of Venice* in the theater and the removal of texts from library shelves.

The Merchant of Venice is an intensely uncomfortable play. That is its virtue. However much it may accept the notion that conversion to Christianity, even a coerced conversion, is to the eternal benefit of the individual's soul, the play does not fail to see how problematic and unfair it is to marginalize a people because they do not belong to the dominant culture. We do not know if Shakespeare was acquainted with many Jews. Shylock's presence in the story is derived directly from Shakespeare's source, a fourteenth-century Italian short story that combines all the elements of love quest, the lottery for the lady, moneylending, and even the episode of rings at the end. However much the story of Shylock was a given in an earlier tale, however, Shakespeare has seen into the poignancy and horror of it all. That horror is all the more remarkable for being in a play that also expresses with particular beauty the idealisms of young love, adventure, and Christian faith. We need to continue reading and seeing this play to keep before us such a compelling vision of social, ethical, and religious conflict.

The Merchant of Venice.....

The History of the Jews in England: (1066-1655)

A brief overview of both the history of the Jews in England and the varying position that the Jewish community held in England over 600 years.

Although there are many specific details of the settlements, development, and progression of the Jews in England between the years 1066–1655, a single general pattern emerges: Jews came, were subject to increasing persecution, and eventually all expelled from England. This general pattern defines the course of the Jews in England until shortly after Shakespeare's death.



- 1066** Jews enter England
- 1144** first ritual murder charge, or case of "blood libel" involving William of Norwich
- 1189** the Third Crusade
- 1194** Crown establishes Exchequer of the Jews
- 1217** English Jews made to wear yellow badges
- 1255** blood libel case: Hugh of Lincoln
- 1265** rising influence of Italian bankers makes Jewish financial services superfluous
- 1269** Jewish rights gradually restricted
- 1290** Jews expelled from England

THREE AND A HALF CENTURIES OF EXILE FROM ENGLAND

- 1589** Marlowe's Jew of Malta performed
- 1594** execution of Roderigo Lopez
- 1597** Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*
- 1655** Manasseh Ben Israel negotiates with Cromwell for re-admission of Jews into England

—From: Stirling, Grant. "Shakespeare and Anti-Semitism: The Question of Shylock."
February 1997. <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/7221>

What the Critics Say.....

1700s



The Merchant of Venice...tho' we have seen that Play Receiv'd and Acted as a Comedy, and the Part of the Jew performed by an Excellent Comedian, yet I cannot but think it was designed Tragically by the Author.
—Nicholas Rowe, 1709

The Character of Portia is not every where very well kept, that is, the Manners are not always agreeable or convenient to her Sex and Quality; particularly where she scarce preserves her Modesty in the Expression.
—Charles Gildon, 1710

In short, tho' this Piece hath many defects its beauties are infinitely more numerous. —With what art and perfect knowledge of human Nature in her most degenerated State has the Poet drawn the Character of Shylock! How nobly has he availed himself of the general Character of the Jews, the very Quintessence of which he has displayed in a delightful manner in order to enrich this Character.
—John Potter, 1772

The compleat (sic) unity of action finishes with the trial. Hence, Shakespeare's powers cannot banish from us that unpleasing emotion which every person of taste and sensibility must experience during the fifth act. It can only be compared to the necessity of turning our attention from the ocean to a fish-pond.
—B. Walwyn, 1782

1800s



Shylock is a man of information, in his own way, even a thinker, only he has not discovered the region where human feelings dwell; his morality is founded on the disbelief in goodness and magnanimity.... [His] hate is naturally directed chiefly against those Christians who are actuated by truly Christian sentiments: a disinterested love of our neighbor seems to him the most unrelenting persecution of the Jews....The letter of the law is [Shylock's] idol; he refuses to lend an ear to the voice of mercy, which, from the mouth of Portia, speaks to him with heavenly eloquence...
—August Wilhelm Shlegel, 1811

In proportion as Shylock has ceased to be a popular bugbear...he becomes a half-favourite with the philosophical part of the audience, who are disposed to think that Jewish revenge is at least as good as Christian injuries.... Portia is not a very great favourite with us; neither are we in love with her maid, Nerissa. Portia has a certain degree of affectation and pedantry, which is very unusual in Shakespeare's women...
—William Hazlitt, 1817

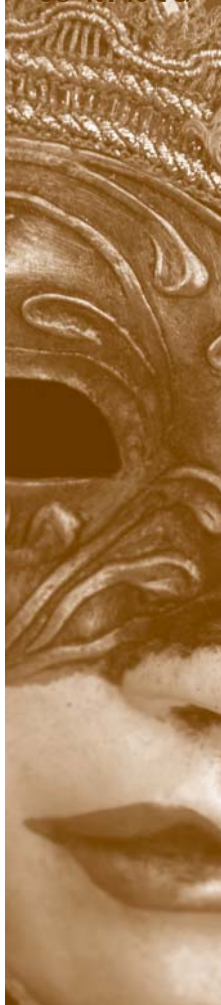
It is yet more wonderful that one of the finest writers [Hazlitt] on the eternal subject of Shakespeare and his perfections should accuse Portia of pedantry and affectation, and confess she is not a great favourite of his—a confession quite worthy of him who avers his predilection for servant-maids... I do protest against the word clever. Portia clever! What an epithet to apply to this heavenly compound of talent, feeling, wisdom, beauty and gentleness! It implies something commonplace, inasmuch as it speaks the presence of the active and the perceptive, with a deficiency of the feeling and the reflective powers; and, applied to a woman, does it not almost invariably suggest the idea of something we should distrust or shrink from, if not allied to a higher nature?
—Anna Brownell Jameson, 1833

Shakespeare's genius rises above the mean quarrels of two parties entertaining opposite beliefs, and his play does not actually represent either Jews or Christians but oppressors and oppressed.
—Heinrich Heine, 1838

We meet in Shylock the Jew a masterpiece of characterization. It is a most successful portrait of the Jewish national character generally; not indeed of that high-minded and noble, but exclusive

What the Critics Say.....

1800s continued



spirit, which in the times of Moses, David, and the prophets, still animated the people, but of the low and unworthy sentiments into which this degenerate and fallen nation had gradually sunk during the thousand years of persecution and oppression which marked its dispersion over the face of the earth.
—Hermann Ulrici, 1839

The honored Christian is as intolerant as the despised Jew. The one habitually pursues with injustice the subjected man that he has been taught to loathe; the other, in the depths of his subtle obstinacy, seizes upon the occasion to destroy the powerful man that he has been compelled to fear. . . The habitual contempt with which he is treated by men who in every other respect are gentle and good-humoured and benevolent is a proof to us that Shakespeare meant to represent the struggle that must inevitably ensue in a condition of society where the innate sense of justice is deadened in the powerful by those hereditary prejudices which make cruelty virtue . . .
—Charles Knight, 1849

The intention of the poet in **The Merchant of Venice** was to depict the relation of man to property.... The god of the world, the image of show, the symbol of all external things is money, and it is so called by Shakespeare and in all proverbs. The relation of a number of beings to gold, this perishable and false god, is depicted in our play. A number of characters and circumstances show how the possession produces in men barbarity and cruelty, hatred and obduracy, anxiety and indifference, spleen and fickleness; and again, how it calls forth the highest virtues and qualities, and by testing confirms them.
—G. G. Gervinus, 1850

It is as if we were seeking the spot where we may see the whole, in some charming, thickly-overgrown park. The path leads us, by artificial windings, through green, fragrant woods. Lovely pictures open on the right and to the left, sidepaths are lost in the shrubberies; flowers and fruits tempt us to linger and enjoy them. We have no fatigue, no weariness to fear, but we must take care to mark the way, lest in the beautiful labyrinth we miss our goal. But, metaphor aside, in few of his Pieces does Shakespeare play hide-and-seek with his readers and commentators as happily as here.
—Friedrich Kreyssig, 1862

This is a world of free activity, for each one chooses what branch of business best suits his inclination and character. The calling thus becomes, to a certain degree, an index of the moral disposition of the man. It is well-known that some kind of business, though acknowledged by law and recognised by the community as necessary, are nevertheless, held in disrepute by the great majority of mankind.
—Denton J. Snider, 1890



1900s

[Jessica's] elopement with one of the most heartless fribblers on the list of Antonio's friends, which is to say much, and the 'gilding' of herself, as on an afterthought, with more of her father's ducats before she runs downstairs to the street, leaves us with no alternative. Shylock is intolerably wronged.
—Arthur Quiller-Couch, 1926

'Shylock is, and always has been the hero,' says Professor Schelling. But why, then, did Shakespeare drop his hero out of the play for good before the fourth act was over? It is a trick which he never repeated—a trick, I am persuaded, of which he was not capable...not a word is put in for the nobler side of Jewish character; and in lending Shylock his eloquence Shakespeare is merely giving the devil his due.
—Elmer Edgar Stoll, 1927

[Shylock] is no more a mere means to exemplifying the Semitic problem than is Othello for the raising of the color question . . . Here we have—and in Shylock's case far more accurately and completely—the circumstances of dramatic conflict, but at the heart of it are men...
—Harley Granville-Barker, 1930

What the Critics Say.....

1900s
continued



The Merchant of Venice is a fairy tale. There is no more reality in Shylock's bond and the Lord of Belmont's will than in Jack and the Beanstalk.
—Harley Granville-Barker, 1930

Our social roots are in money; no one can be allowed to live without it. We are tied to money. It is the shore to which every human craft is anchored, and will remain anchored until mankind has learnt the greatest lesson history can teach it—how to live by a more spiritual means of exchange.... Money is today what Shylock was to the world of Venice—the forbidding aspect, the dark principle, the shadow in the sun, the grim necessity. Its logic is inhuman. It has principle, but its principle is insufficient for the flexibility of human life.
—Max Plowman, 1931

Antonio was in love with Bassanio, and the depression had been precipitated by the knowledge which he had received some time before the play opens, that he was going to leave him. This is a common enough story. A homosexual love affair is broken by one of the parties marrying, and the other reacts by depression... Antonio is one of the most honourable figures in all of Shakespeare...
—T. A. Ross, 1934

Shylock enumerates his woes. 'And what's the reason?' he demands: 'I am a Jew' [III. i. 58]. But this is nonsense. Shylock has suffered, as is made quite explicit, because he is a usurer, a hypocrite, and a skinflint. Shylock's whine is the self-defense of perversity shunning responsibility by shifting the blame.
—Harold R. Walley, 1935

If the English theatre be considered as a place of popular entertainment, strictly on a level with the football field, the prize-ring and the racecourse, then *The Merchant of Venice* is the type of entertainment the theatre should supply—villain discomfited, virtue rescued, happy marriages, clowning, thrills, and a modest satisfaction of the general appetite for naughtiness.
—John Middleton Murray, 1936

[These are] 'characters' in a certain primitive sense in which we can speak of "characters" in a nursery-story like Cinderella or Robin Hood or a Punch and Judy show. They are simply the necessary agents for that situation or story.... In a word, the method of Shakespeare's drama consists, essentially, in the humanization of melodrama.
—John Middleton Murray, 1936

Shylock is a representative of both the things of which we have been speaking: of money, because he is a moneylender, and of exclusion, because he is the excluded thing... The Venetian world makes him their scapegoat. They project on him what they have dismissed from their own consciousness as too disturbing. They hate him because he reminds them of their own unconfessed evil qualities. Down the ages this has been the main explanation of racial hatred and persecution, of the mistreatment of servant by master. Our unconsciousness is our foreign land. Hence we see in the foreigner what is actually the "foreign" part of ourselves.
—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

The metaphor that underlies and unifies *The Merchant of Venice* is that of alchemy, the art of transforming the base into the precious, lead into gold... By a kind of illuminating confusion, gold is lead and lead gold, the base precious and the precious base.
—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

Usury also has a sexual aspect in Shakespeare, meaning the perverse withholding of love.... In this extended sense, the father who seeks to restrain his daughter from marriage may be said to practice a form of usury.
—J. W. Lever, 1952

What the Critics Say.....

1900s
continued

I assume that it is to Shylock that Mr. Lever refers when he says '...the father who seeks to restrain his daughter from marriage may be said to practice a form of usury.' But there is nothing in the play to indicate that Shylock does this. Jessica apparently can lock (and unlock!) the doors. She is urged not to look at Christians, but this is even less restraining from marriage than the edict of Portia's father who, in effect, insisted that she become an old maid unless some suitor picked the lead casket!

—Norman Nathan, 1952

I am certainly not the first analyst who interpreted Shylock's terms, namely, the condition that he could cut a pound of flesh 'in what part of your body pleaseth me' [I. iii. 151] as a substitute expression of castration. When later on in the play it is decided the cut should be made from the breast, analytic interpretation will easily understand the mechanism of distortion that operates here and displaces the performance from a part of the body below to above. Only one step is needed to reach the concept that to the Gentile of medieval times, the Jew unconsciously typified the castrator because he circumcised male children. Circumcision is, as psychoanalytic experiences teach us, a milder form of castration. The Jew thus appeared to the Gentiles as a dangerous figure with whom the threat of castration originated.

—Theodor Reik, 1956

'Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear.' [III. ii. 313] expresses Portia's willingness to continue to give joyfully in love. In the commerce of love, giving is the secret of keeping as well as of gaining.... Bassanio's willingness to give and hazard is answered by Portia's giving, and the contract of love is complete. So the willing, generous, and prosperous transactions of love's wealth are compared and contrasted with Shylock's wholly commercial transactions in which gain is the object, enforcement the method, and even human beings are merely things to be possessed.

—John Russell Brown, 1957

***The Merchant of Venice**, as its title indicates, exhibits the beneficence of civilized wealth, the something-for-nothing which wealth gives to those who use it graciously to live together in a humanly knit group. It also deals, in the role of Shylock, with anxieties about money, and its power to set men at odds.*

—C. L. Barber, 1959

Antonio is an outsider because he is an unconscious homosexual in a predominantly, and indeed blatantly, heterosexual society. Against such a statement I am aware that a great amount of scholarly opposition could be mustered, studies of friendship in Renaissance thought and Elizabethan literature, evidence of an extreme vocabulary of endearment between men that could be used nowadays without risk of misunderstanding, studies of Shakespeare's sonnets and the theme of friendship there. All this may be true, but my first bare formulation stands. The fact which strikes one above all about Antonio is his all-absorbing love for Bassanio, his complete lack of interest in women—in a play where this interest guides the actions of all other males—and his being left without a mate in a play which is rounded off by a full-scale mating dénouement.... The parallel between Shylock and Antonio is the framework of the play. Both are not fully at home in the society in which they are forced to live, for different reasons.... Yet for all these differences, there is the basic kinship in the Jew and the Merchant, the kinship of loneliness.

—Graham Midgeley, 1960

There is, of course, no need to suggest an active homosexuality in the relationship between two men. It is simply a question of proportion: Antonio's love for Bassanio has become excessive and exclusive, so that he is oversensitive and attaches undue importance to Bassanio's marriage plans, which he sees as desertion.

—John D. Hurrell, 1961

What the Critics Say.....

1900s
continued

In *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* Shakespeare depicts a very different kind of society. Venice does not produce anything itself, either raw materials or manufactured goods. Its existence depends upon the financial profits which can be made by international trade, that is to say, on buying cheaply here and selling dearly there....
—W. H. Auden, 1963

The established view of *The Merchant of Venice* goes something like this: "The Merchant of Venice, then, is 'about' judgement, redemption and mercy; the supersession in human history of the grim four thousand years of unalleviated justice by the era of love and mercy. It begins with usury and corrupt love; it ends with harmony and perfect love."... I have to confess that what seems to me obvious, is that the promised supersession of justice by love and mercy does not come about, and that the end is something of a parody of heavenly harmony and love. —A. D. Moody, 1964

The most quotable aspect of Portia's speech on [the theme of mercy] is that she quite fails to offer Shylock any motive for mercy, unless the self-interested one of forgiving others in order to be forgiven oneself. The speech is rhetorically excellent, as a forceful rehearsal of the relevant commonplaces, but lacks the one thing necessary, the spirit of love itself... What we see in Portia's conduct looks most like mercenary vengeance.
—A. D. Moody, 1964

Bassanio needs to be accepted as the hero of a romantic comedy...that is, a young man of considerable spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical excellence, subject to a few human failings, yet within reach of true love and the Garden of Eden because his failings are not irredeemable. If he has a fault, it is his prodigality, which he honorably confesses; but this prodigality springs from a generosity of spirit that does not reckon up material considerations, and is set off favorably against the miserliness of Shylock.
—Thomas H. Fuimara, 1966

Shakespeare used an individual Jew to illustrate the intolerance of human beings toward one another.
—Abraham Morevski, 1967

The good people in the play put love ahead of money. Antonio risks his fortune as well as his life out of love for Bassanio. Bassanio spends money extravagantly out of love for Portia (in the context of the play the fact that she will make him rich is completely subordinated to her beauty, her virtue, her desirability as a person)... 'Good' people who always put love first are thus in harmony with elemental liberating powers, while 'bad' people put money or hatred first (one leads to the other) and are cut off from these powers.
—John P. Sisk, 1969

Venice and Belmont are two symbolic worlds; one commercial, precarious, discordant; the other hospitable, gentle, filled with music.
—Brents Stirling, 1970

There is no question that the casket scene depicts an exemplary father-child relationship, but one that dwells primarily upon the legal aspect of the ideal relationship. [Antonio is Bassanio's] quintessential generous and forgiving father ready to sacrifice himself for the welfare of his son.... It is in the context of these exemplary father-child relationships, one based primarily on Law and the other primarily on Love, that the Jessica-Shylock relationship is located. This relationship can be described only as a monstrous inversion of filial piety, a relationship lacking utterly in both Law and Love.
—René E. Fortin, 1974

[With her ring trick, Portia] invents what is more than a mere practical joke, but a device by which she may exercise her free will by accepting Bassanio as her husband through an act of conscious

What the Critics Say.....

1900s continued



volition—choosing him retroactively, as it were. According to the terms to which she bound him with the ring, she may reject him if he gives it away. According to a strict interpretation of the law, he has given it away; she has seen to that... She keeps her identity secret, and when she at last reveals it, choosing to forgive and accept him, she symbolically restores to herself control over her destiny, and responsibility for it.
—Richard Horwich, 1977

Shylock accumulates money for its own sake. In his hands it remains passive, inert and cold. The Christians, by contrast, transform barren metal into other and more interesting things: silks and spices, ships that venture across the world, and, at Belmont, into a way of life that is generous and vital. On each side, the ethic involved affects areas of life other than the financial.
—Anne Barton, 1978

Shylock is a great role and in its way a tragic one. Its power over actors and audiences alike may be in part because he is not a king or tyrant or great lover but a small, complex, real and recognizable human being, part of us all.

—Patrick Stewart, an actor who played Shylock in the 1978 RSC production

Those critics who idealize the Venetians write as if the many textual clues that contradict their view were not planted by the author himself, as if their presence in the play were purely a fortuitous matter, like the arrival of a bill in the morning mail when one really expects a love letter.

—René Girard, 1978

Human flesh and money are constantly exchanged for one another. People are turned into objects of financial speculation. Mankind has become a commodity, an exchange valued like any other.... The generosity of the Venetians is not feigned. Real generosity makes the beneficiary more dependent on his generous friend than a regular loan. In Venice a new form of vassality prevails, grounded no longer in strict territorial borders but in vague financial terms. The lack of precise accounting makes personal indebtedness infinite.

—René Girard, 1978

The Christians use the word mercy with such perversity that they can justify their own revenge with it, give full license to their greed and still come out with a clear conscience. They feel they have discharged their obligation to be merciful by their constant repetition of the word itself. The quality of their mercy is not strained, to say the least. It is remarkably casual and easy.

—René Girard, 1978

The benign offer of [conversion] is the ultimate cruelty of alienation, of denial of that essential being which has just made itself so palpably manifest. Therefore it is counterfeit to mercy.

—Ruth Nevo, 1980

Jessica's willingness to marry a man without means, in fact, demonstrates very little concern with wealth.... Her break with her past is precisely a decision to forfeit her isolated security as a rich Jew's daughter in order to become part of the familial, social, and divine harmonies that bind people in Christian society.

—Camille Slights, 1980

Shakespeare allows Portia to emerge as a more potent character than any of her masculine companions.

—Anne Parten, 1982

Under the Nazi regime, *The Merchant of Venice* was produced to incite racial hatred. If in any way the play encourages prejudice, those taking part in producing or discussing it carry heavy responsibility.

—Bill Overton, 1987

What the Critics Say.....

1900s
continued

An honest production of the play, sensitive to its values, would now be intolerable in a Western country.
—Harold Bloom, 1991

The play both implicitly and explicitly affirms the bondage that our common humanity imposes...
—Jay L. Halio, 1993

The play's central confusion of friendship, love and commerce—epitomized by the characters' various attempts to purchase love and the curious shell-game lottery devised to find a husband for Portia—when observed alongside the ethnocentrism of the Venetians, brings into clearer focus the dangers of putting monetary value on human relationships, and the way in which this practice can be used to justify racism.
—James Hannaham, 1995

*I don't go along with this new school of purely evil Shylocks at all. It limits the great actors' great possibilities. To be sure, Shakespeare grew out of his own culture. He was also above it. That's why **The Merchant of Venice** still troubles us. Shakespeare, holding the mirror up to a world divided by race, religion and culture, was asking us to hear such harmony as is in immortal souls.*

—John Heilpern, 1996

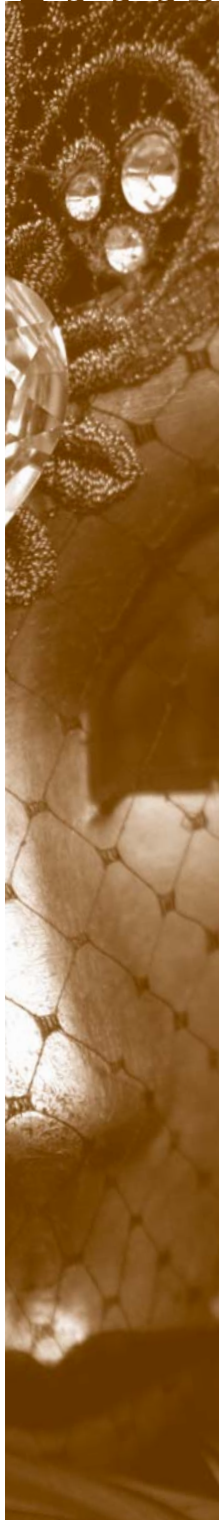
Even as England could be defined in part by its having purged itself of Jews, English character could be defined by its need to exclude 'Jewishness.' In the decades following Reformation, the English began to think of the Jews not only as a people who almost three centuries earlier had been banished from English territory but also as a potential threat to the increasingly permeable boundaries of their own social and religious identities. The challenge of preserving these boundaries was intensified by the difficulty of pointing to physical characteristics that unmistakably distinguished English Christians from Jews...
—James Shapiro, 1996

The experience at Stratford [the Stratford Festival in Canada] convinced us that this play does us little good; that it has no place in modern society; that it is pure, unadulterated anti-Semitism and must be branded as such.
—Detroit's Jewish News, 1955

*It did not take **The Merchant of Venice** to teach us that justice and mercy may often be in conflict. The Judeo-Christian God himself, the source of all morality for both Jews and Christians, was traditionally possessed of both these attributes, often in conflict. ...There is a lot of discussion and earnest argument these days about the possibility of finding some system of Global Ethics, which can be taught in all schools, can be taken as a basis for a universal curriculum in Moral Education, can reconcile all disagreements and bring to an end what is rightly thought of as a threat, Moral Relativism, the belief that what is held to be good by one person may be totally different from and irreconcilable with what is thought good by another. The fact is that though we may teach children to be morally conscious, to take this into account, we cannot ever eliminate from the world of choice, for children or for anyone else, the fact of incompatible values....It is not a question of a post-modernist multi-faceted view of the world: It is rather that there may be a choice to be made, not between good and evil, but between one ideal and another, both being ideals worthy of pursuit, and recognized as such by anyone who adopts a moral point of view. Conflict, and difficult choices are intrinsic to morality.*
—Mary Warnock, 1999

What the Critics Say.....

2000s



to be
continued...

The world of trade, the world of finance, and the world of love are all governed by risk...In exchange for these risks, people are asked to weigh what is more important to them: whether Shylock values revenge more than money, or whether Bassanio values friendship more than marriage...What might be at stake for all these characters is the very glue that cements people together, both the personal bonds that define love and friendship and family, and the social contract itself. —Cary Maser, 2002

It is a curiosity of anti-Semitism that it can thrive even in the absence of Jews. The fact that there had been no openly practicing Jews in England for three hundred years [during Shakespeare's lifetime] did not mean that England had no 'Jewish problem': **The Merchant of Venice** is a symptom of it. —Lawrence Danson, 2005

Was Shakespeare attracted or repelled by what went on at the foot of the scaffold [at the public hanging of Dr. Lopez]? Did he admire the way Marlowe's dark comedy had helped to shape the crowd's response, or was he sickened by it? The only evidence is the play that Shakespeare wrote in the wake of Lopez's death, and the answer it suggests is that he was both intrigued and nauseated. He wanted, it seems, to excite laughter at a wicked Jew's discomfiture...and he wanted at the same time to call the laughter into question, to make the amusement excruciatingly uncomfortable. —Stephen Greenblatt, 2005

...with the comic energy ratcheted way down, [Radford's 2004 film version] is also deeply boring—at least until Antonio suffers an economic catastrophe and looks to be coming in for a small weight loss (about a pound). That's when this **Merchant of Venice** comes to life—when it stops, in effect, apologizing for its terrible anti-Semitic worldview and just gives itself over to some of the most furious courtroom drama ever written. You can contextualize the play, frame it humanistically, and celebrate Shakespeare for not being Marlowe. But in the end you're still stuck with the lousy lot of the Jew in the Western canon. —David Edelstein, 2005

Since high school, it has been drummed into us that Shakespeare understood the human psyche like no writer before or since. His Shylock, played to the hilt by Al Pacino in the new movie, continues to fascinate audiences 400 years after the character's creation. Maybe that tells us something we would rather not know: That behind the civilized veneer we present to the world, even the most enlightened of us—Jew as well as gentile—still harbor the residue of ugly hatreds that sold theater tickets in Shakespeare's day. Certainly more apologies, excuses and convoluted explanations have been offered for **The Merchant of Venice** than any other literary work. —Ron Grossman, 2005

Sixteenth Century audiences knew what they wanted, and it wasn't lessons in brotherhood. When the text of **The Merchant of Venice** was published in 1600, the title-page touted it as revealing 'the extreame crueltie of Shylocke the Jewe towards the sayd Merchant, in cutting a just pound of fleshe.' —John Grossman, *Chicago Tribune*, 2005

Shakespeare, as the greatest playwright of his (perhaps any) age, was compelled to look deeper. He knew that the most absorbing theater consists in a conflict grounded not in stereotypes (which offer instead an escape from conflict, a convenient, clueless simplification), but in a struggle more complex, between combatants who deem themselves (in Hamlet's phrase) "mighty opposites," but who possess more in common than either dares suspect. Throughout **The Merchant of Venice**, Shakespeare counts up, with a poet's precision, the costs incurred, the cruelties inflicted, by both the haters and the hated, making clear all the while that most of his characters (like much of humankind?) adhere to both dark camps at once. —Stewart Sherman, 2005

A Play Comes to Life.....



An Interview with Director Barbara Gaines

Q: Where do we begin this conversation about the most divisive play in all of Shakespeare's canon?

A: The first question we have to address is the one I am always asked: 'Why must you do an anti-Semitic play?' I don't believe *The Merchant of Venice* to be an anti-Semitic play—though Shakespeare leaves us with characters who are vicious anti-Semites. In truth, this play is as anti-Christian as it is anti-Semitic. I think Shakespeare was fully aware that he was making each side look as flawed as the other. And in fact they share many of the same characteristics as their counterparts. They are all extremists. All are savage in their hatred—hatred of the 'other,' hatred of someone different. I see this as an 'anti-savagery' play, and that's been my fuel as I've worked on it.

Q: How does the world today shape the way you see this play?

A: I directed *Merchant* for the first time close to 10 years ago. I remember hearing the characters' words and being shocked at their cruelty, but I didn't explore it far enough because I suppose I denied what I was hearing. And I probably lacked the confidence then, or maybe even the energy, to get to the bottom of it. But this time there's no escaping the raw hatred that permeates this play because our world is now so dangerous, and we can't avert our eyes from our own racism. And by 'racism,' I don't mean just black and white, I mean all of the 'isms' by which people dismiss, hate and exclude other people. It's an insidious disease infecting our world. It's as though somebody has sprayed gasoline made of prejudice and there are fires raging around the globe.

Q: How does that kind of wildfire ignite Shakespeare's Venice—or our own world?

A: Prejudice starts with misunderstanding—and mistrust, suspicion and fear are its progeny. Fear creates exclusion, and exclusion so often explodes into violence. The saddest result of this chain reaction is that hatred is passed down through the generations—and this is what I find most despicable and frightening about exclusion. The question we are left with is why do peo-

ple need to hate and scapegoat others? When you look into the beautiful, open face of an infant you can see that no one is born with prejudice, and therefore all of us have to take some responsibility for this legacy, which resides in the underbelly of this play. For me, the Jews in *Merchant* are a symbol for the "other." This play taps into all of our irrational fears—of strangers, of exclusion, of humiliation, of losing control. Shakespeare takes all of that, and cracks it wide open in *Merchant*. Then he goes and throws more salt into the wound. It's a very dark play, which offers huge wisdom about how not to live our lives.

Q: How do you hope to visually render the similarities you see in *Merchant's* world of polar opposites?

A: Every actor will be doubling, playing several characters. The actor playing Shylock will be playing Old Gobbo, a Christian. He'll also be playing a servant in the opening scene. The actor playing Portia will be playing a waitress, and a Muslim woman. I want the boundaries that keep us apart to become blurred. By peeling away at the layers of the psychology of these characters, we hope to create a production that's not about the geographic landscape of "Venice, the city" and "Belmont, the countryside." Instead, it's all about our interior landscape. Therefore, our set will be very simple—just a floor, simply there so we can tell the story by peeling away everything that's nonessential.

Q: Why does *Merchant* leave us so despairing?

A: I see this play with an overwhelming sorrow for the wasting of so much potential. All of its characters choose to walk away or flee from their own consciences. If they could have understood that only by facing the ugliness and hatred within themselves much of their agony could have stopped terrifying them. When fear is exposed and identified, it can also be understood and resolved. All human beings have fears, all of us need help, and all of us share these emotions. But without an acceptance that we are one, fear can take over a life, a community or a country and become violent and totally destructive—as we see within the carnage of *The Merchant of Venice*. For there is no happy ending here, just people recklessly giving in to constant activity and the high life to keep their own truth from their souls. James Baldwin had it right when he wrote: "It is a terrible, and inexorable law that one cannot deny the humanity of another without diminishing one's own: in the face of a victim, one sees oneself."



Theater Warm-ups

A brief physical and vocal warm-up can help your students move from a “classroom mode” to a “studio mode.” It sets the tone for a student learning Shakespeare in a theatrical sense as well as a literary sense.

Every actor develops his/her own set of physical and vocal warm-ups. Warm-ups help the actor prepare for rehearsal or performance not only physically, but also mentally. The actor has the chance to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and beginning to assume the flexibility required to create a character. The body, the voice and the imagination are the actor’s tools.

PHYSICAL WARM-UPS

Getting started

- ◆ creates focus on the immediate moment
- ◆ brings students to body awareness
- ◆ helps dispel tension

Begin by asking your students to take a comfortable stance with their feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Ask them to inhale deeply through their noses, filling their lungs deep into their abdomen, and exhale through their mouths. Repeat this a few times and ask them to notice how their lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

Warm-up from the top of the body down

(This entire process should take about seven to ten minutes.)

- ◆ gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness
- ◆ increases physical and spatial awareness

(a) Begin by doing head-rolls to the left and to the right, about four times each way, very slowly. Then do a series of shoulder rolls to the back and to the front, again very slowly, and emphasizing a full range of motion.

(b) Stretch each arm toward the ceiling alternately, and try to pull all the way through the rib cage, repeating this motion six to eight times.

(c) Next, with particular care to keep knees slightly bent, twist from the waist in each direction, trying to look behind. Again, repeat six to eight times.

(d) From a standing position, starting with the top of the head, roll down with relaxed neck and arms until the body is hanging from the waist. Ask the students to shake things around, making sure their bodies are relaxed. From this position, bend at the knees, putting both hands on the floor. Stretch back up to hanging. Repeat this action about four times. Then roll back up—starting from the base of the spine, stack each vertebra until the head is the last thing to come up.

(e) Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Ask the students to bring their feet together, bend their knees, and keeping their knees together ask the students to rotate their knees in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.

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(f) Pick up the right foot, rotate it inward six to eight times, and then do the same with the left foot. Repeat with outward rotation of the foot. Take a few moments and shake out the entire body.

VOCAL WARM-UPS

Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly

(This entire process should take about seven minutes.)

- ◆ helps connect physicality to vocality
- ◆ begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities

(a) Ask students to gently massage and pat the muscles of their faces. This will help wake up the facial muscles.

(b) Ask students to stick their tongues out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This process will probably seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. When students see you going through these exercises with commitment, that's often all they need to draw them in.) Repeat this exercise once or twice.

(c) Ask students to put their lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a “raspberry.”

(d) Next, hum, quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Explore all the resonating spaces in the body, by moving the sound around. Humming helps to lubricate.

(e) Create the vowel sounds, overemphasizing each shape with the face —A, E, I, O, and U—with no break.

(f) Choose two or three tongue-twisters—there are some listed below. Again overemphasizing the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles, begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually speed up, repeating until the speed is such that the enunciation is lost.

Tongue twisters

- red leather, yellow leather ...(focus on the vertical motion of the mouth)
- unique New York...(focus on the front to back movement of the face)
- rubber, baby, buggy, bumpers...(focus on the clear repetition of the soft plosives)
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers...(focus on the clear repetition of hard plosives)

One of the actors at Chicago Shakespeare Theater likes to describe the experience of acting Shakespeare as the “Olympics of Acting.” Shakespeare’s verse demands a very flexible vocal instrument, and an ability to express not only the flow of the text, but the emotional shifts which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words, some of which are rarely—if ever—used in modern vocabulary, the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor acting Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. This requires a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.

Stage pictures

- ◆ shows how varied interpretation is: there is no wrong answer
- ◆ encourages the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies
- ◆ begins to show how the body interprets emotion

You will need a list of very strong descriptive, colorful, emotional words from the script for this activity. Ask your actor-students to begin walking around the room. Ask them to fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like to be a different weight, a different height, and ask them to move the center of their body into different places. Encourage them to see if they feel any emotional differences within these changes. Giving them about three minutes

Classroom Activities

to explore these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. Encourage these discoveries without necessarily drawing focus to individual students, as this is a self-reflective activity, but perhaps suggest to the group they might “Try what it feels like if you slow your pace, hunch your shoulders, droop your head, and move your center into your knees.”

After a few minutes of this exploration, ask your actor-students to find a “neutral” walk. Explain that they are going to create a stage picture as an entire group. You will give them a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, you will say freeze, and they must create a photograph of the word you have given them, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotions you feel from their stage picture. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, encouraging the audience’s reactions after each tableau. This might be a good time to discuss balance, stage direction, and the use of levels as effective variation for the audience’s visual interpretation. *(This activity should take about ten minutes.)*

Shakespeare’s characters are often very physically broad. There were crippled characters, old people, clowns, star-crossed lovers, and more. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in a big fat belly? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character’s body.

Mirroring

- ◆ helps build trust within the ensemble
- ◆ encourages the students to “listen” with all their senses
- ◆ helps the students reach a state of “relaxed readiness,” which will encourage their impulses, and discourage their internal censors

Either ask your actor-students to partner up, or count them off in pairs. Ask them to sit, comfortably facing their partner, in fairly close proximity. Explain to them that they are mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. Explain to the actor-students that they must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that their partner can follow. Encourage the partners to make eye-contact and see each other as a whole picture, rather than following each other’s small motions with their eyes. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, ask the actor-students to stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, tell them that they should keep going, but there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss. *(This activity should last about ten minutes.)*

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part; making it come out of their mouths as if for the first time is the hard part, especially with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can sound like a song, but how do you make it sound like real people talking to each other? Actors listen to each other, and try to respond to what they hear in the moment of the play. Listening is a very important part of acting; it keeps the moment real.



The **Bard Card Program** encourages Team Shakespeare students who first attend Chicago Shakespeare Theater on a field trip to return on their own with friends and family. Bard Card student members may purchase two tickets to each full-length,

mainstage show at \$15 each through our 2006–2007 Season. The two-year membership is designed to bridge the gap between a school trip and a student’s personal life. The program’s mission is to make tickets affordable to students, so they learn how to make Shakespeare and theater a continuing part of their lives.

Your students will be receiving information and an application for the Bard Card in their program book when they come to the Theater. Please encourage them to consider becoming members!

Classroom Activities.....



Theater Exercises

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand your students' imaginations, increase their sense of "ensemble" or teamwork, and bring them "into the moment." These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor's training. Their imaginations will allow them to believe the situation of the play, their sense of ensemble will bring them together with their scene partners to create the relationships necessary to the movement of the play, and their willingness to be in the moment will allow them to live in the play in such a way as to make it believable to their audience. In each

of these exercises the use of students as audience, and constructive reflection from that audience, will be helpful to the ensemble of your classroom. Remember, there is no wrong answer, only different interpretations—encourage them!

ZING! BALL

(This exercise requires a soft ball about 8-12 inches in diameter.)

- ◆ helps the ensemble grow together
- ◆ helps the students let go of their internal "censor" and begin tapping into their impulses
- ◆ brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together

Ask the students to stand in a circle, facing in. Explain that the ball carries with it energy. This energy is like a feedback loop that increases the energy, speed, and focus of the entire group by the amount that each actor-student puts into the ball. The idea is to keep the ball moving in the circle without letting the energy drop. There should be no space between throw and catch. There should be no thought as to whom the actor-student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, the actor-student must make eye contact with the person he is throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the throwing actor-student should say "Zing!" Note: Encourage the actor-students to experiment with the way they say "Zing!" It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way they wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy. *(This activity lasts about five minutes.)*

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. An ensemble must have the trust in each other to make a performance believable, without any of the actors getting hurt. They must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure. Shakespeare wrote many clues about his characters in his text, but the actor must be given license to find his character, and his relationship with the rest of the characters in the script.

ZING! BALL WITHOUT A BALL

(This activity takes five to seven minutes.)

- ◆ asks the students to make their imagination clear to the ensemble
- ◆ focuses the students on physical detail

This exercise builds on Zing! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zing! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using "Zing!," toss the ball to an actor-student across the circle, and as it floats down, ask the actor-student to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then ask that actor-student to recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how they've changed it. In the same way as Zing! Ball, work around the circle.

The wide range of vocabulary in Shakespeare's plays can often be intimidating as one reads the scripts. The actor's job is to make the language clear, and this is often accomplished by very specific physical gesturing.

Classroom Activities



Before You Read the Play

(This “Before You Read” section can be helpful also in preparing students who will not be reading the play.)

AS A CLASS

1. Create a bulletin board that will serve as an information center/creative outlet as you work through the script. Display art work sketches, magazine articles with relevant information, quotes, anything you feel is appropriate to your study of this play. Use the board as a starting point or springboard for daily discussions.

2. Actor Michael Tolaydo developed the following exercise as a way to introduce Shakespeare’s language and style to students unfamiliar with his work. Tolaydo emphasizes that Shakespeare’s plays were not always just about the plot, because his audience would have been familiar with the stories he was using. Rather, his plays are an exploration of human nature and the use of language. Most importantly, his plays were written to be performed, not simply read. This activity may take two class sessions to complete, but is well worth it!

The exercise is a performed group scene, involving five or more characters from the play. This is not a “staged” performance, so there should be no heavy focus on acting skills; rather, this should be approached as a learning experience involving exploration of plot, character, language, play structure, and play style.

For our purposes, the first scene from Act I of *The Merchant of Venice* will work very well; though the characters are all male, the students reading the parts need not be male. Beginning with Antonio’s first line “In sooth I know not why I am so sad,” to Bassanio’s line “...and when you have them they are not worth the search” just after Gratiano and Lorenzo exit, are good places to start and stop. The script should be photocopied and typed in a large font (at least 13 point), with no text notes or glossary, and enough copies for every student in the classroom. In selecting readers for the six roles—Antonio, Salerio, Solanio, Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano—it is important to remember that the play is not being “cast,” but rather that the students are actively exploring the text; your students need not be aspiring actors in order to learn from this exercise! While the scene is being read for the first time, the rest of the class should listen rather than read along, so no open books! Don’t worry about the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar words or phrases. Encourage your students to say them the way they think they would sound. (Later, you can take a class vote on the pronunciation of any words that cannot be located in the dictionary.)

The first reading should be followed by a second one, with six new students reading the parts—not to give a “better” reading of the scene but to provide an opportunity for the students to expand their familiarity with the text, and possibly gain new information or clearer understanding of a particular passage. This second reading should be followed by a question-and-answer session. Answers to the questions asked should come only from the scene being read, and not rely on any further knowledge of the play outside the scene at hand. Some examples of the questions to be discussed: Who are these guys? Where are they? Why are they there? What are they doing? What are their relationships to each other? Also, this is a good time to address any particular words or phrases that are not understood. Give the students the answers to a few, but have them look up the majority as homework. (*The Oxford English Dictionary* and C.T. Onions’s *A Shakespeare Glossary* are good sources.) Encourage them to ask questions about anything they don’t understand in the scene. If there is disagreement, take a class vote. Majority rules! Remember, there is no one right answer, but a myriad of possibilities—as long as the students’ conclusions are supported by the text. After this, you may choose to read the scene a few more times, with new sets of readers, followed by more questions.

The “fast read-through” is next. Ask your students to stand in a circle; each student reads a line up to a punctuation mark (commas don’t count) and then the next student picks up. The point of this is to get as smooth

Classroom Activities.....

and as quick a read as possible, so that the thoughts flow, even though they are being read by more than one person—much like the passing of a baton in a relay race.

The final step is to put the scene “on its feet.” Select a cast to read the scene, while the rest of the class directs. No one is uninvolved. There are many ways to explore and stage this scene—there is no one “right” way, and everyone’s input is important. Some questions to consider during this process are: Where does the scene take place? What time of year? What’s around them? Use available materials to set up the scene. Establish entrances and exits. (This should all come from clues in the text!) In making your decisions, remember to use the ideas you discovered from the earlier readings. After the advice from the “directors” has been completed, the cast should act out the scene. After this first “run-through,” make any changes necessary, then do the scene again using the same cast or a completely new one. Ask the students to comment on the process.

The process of getting the scene off the page and on its feet enables students to come to an understanding of Shakespeare’s text on their own, without the use of notes or explanatory materials. They will develop a familiarity with the scene and the language, begin a process of literary analysis of the text, and establish a relationship with the play and with Shakespeare.

3.

...It is not so much importance that Shylock is a Jew...The important thing is that he is a Jew in a Gentile society, that all he is and all he holds dear is alien to the society in which he has to live. He is an alien, an outsider, tolerated but never accepted.

—Graham Midgeley, 1960

What do you think? As a class, discuss how much of what we attribute to a minority racial, religious or ethnic group are qualities unique and specific to that group (i.e. innate)? How much can be attributed to a group’s minority status, and its role and perception within the larger culture? You can approach this conversation from a very personal point of view, or from the events of recent news or history.

4.

Shakespeare makes many references to Greek myth in *The Merchant of Venice*, most notably the stories of Jason and the Argonauts, the capture of the Golden Fleece, and Hercules. Read stories about these heroes with your class. As you go through the script of *Merchant*, note the specific references that occur in the script. Why do you think Shakespeare chose these particular mythological characters to illustrate his plot? Are there any similarities between Jason and Bassanio in their quest for wealth and good fortune? How do the classic references enhance (or detract from) Shakespeare’s story? Imagine if Bassanio and Jason were contenders for Portia’s hand—who would be the victor if they were to fight? Would Hercules have been able to figure out the riddle of the three caskets?

IN SMALL GROUPS

5.

Shakespeare chose his settings and described his characters not for historical accuracy, but rather for dramatic and emotional “truths.” Nevertheless, it can be interesting and helpful to explore the world as Shakespeare might have known it as an Englishman living in the Renaissance.

Research the Venice of Renaissance Italy. Divide into groups of two or three and choose a relevant topic—some examples are art and architecture, religion, the Jewish ghetto, dress, daily customs, business and economic practices, politics, international trade, etc. Report your findings to the class in a ten- to fifteen-minute presentation. These need not be in-depth studies—just a general overview. Some important questions to discuss are: What would the daily life of an Italian merchant have been like? What is the Rialto? How was business transacted? (Remember, this is before the age of computers, fax machines or an international stock exchange!) What is the difference between interest and usury?

6.

In writing his plays, Shakespeare moved back and forth between prose and verse. It’s easy to see on the page: the prose has margins justified on both the left and right; the verse has shorter lines, justified on the left margin only, and with capitalization at the beginning of each new line. There is no hard-and-fast rule that dictates

Classroom Activities.....

Shakespeare's choices. Sometimes prose characterizes the speech of commoners, and verse, the upper class. But he also uses the two forms to set a different mood, or to indicate a change in the character's state of mind. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the switches between verse and prose can be dramatic. Watch for it as you read and think about possible explanations.

One good example is in 1.3. Who is given verse lines? Who speaks in prose? Look at the lines Shylock is given in verse and contrast these to his prose lines. What do you think Shakespeare might be up to?

7. *The Merchant of Venice* confronts us with some complex questions. As a group, first discuss your own ideas for definitions of four words that recur throughout the play: "love" and "hate," "revenge" and "mercy." Then, look up a number of different definitions and, using your ideas along with these, create a definition for each concept. Imagine what this play might be about based upon your discussion. Each group choose one word to create a tableau (a wordless picture composed by bodies that together create a strong visual image of your idea), or create a tableau that represents both words in one moment. Present your tableau to the class.
8. In groups of 4/6: Practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—the insults below that characters from *The Merchant of Venice* sling at each other. If the meaning of a word is not clear, don't get stuck! Keep repeating the insult and you'll be closer to the meaning than you might think... Stay in your group, but now take turns throwing out each insult. The others, and as quickly as you can, imagine a contemporary situation that might have provoked such a rebuke!

[You're] such a want-wit!	1.1.6
[You] speak an infinite deal of nothing.	1.1.113
I had rather be married to a death's-head with a bone in his mouth.	1.2.49-50
He is a proper man's picture, but alas! who can converse with a dumb-show?	1.2.69-70
When he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst he is little better than a beast.	1.2.83-85
I will do any thing ere I will be married to a sponge.	1.2.94-95
O what a goodly outside falsehood hath.	1.3.94
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.	1.3.96
Thou hast got more hair on thy chin than my fill-horse has on his tail.	2.2.90-91
Give him a present? Give him a halter!	2.2.100-1
What's here? the portrait of a blinking idiot.	2.9.54-55
O, these deliberate fools!	2.9.80
[You] soft and dull-ey'd fool.	3.3.14
It is the most impenetrable cur that ever kept with me.	3.3.18-19
What a wit-snapper are you!	3.5.45
Wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant?	3.5.50-51
[You are] a stony adversary, an inhuman wretch, Uncapable of pity, void, and empty/From any dram of mercy.	4.1.4-6
Some men, when the bagpipe sings i' th'nose,/Cannot contain their urine.	4.1.49-50
O be thou damned, execrable dog.	4.1.128
Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud.	4.1.140
Repair thy wit good youth, or it will fall/To cureless ruin.	4.1.141-42
I never knew so young a body with so old a head.	4.1.160-61
Beg that thou may'st have leave to hang thyself.	4.1.360
The motions of his spirit are dull as night.	5.1.86
A kind of boy, a little scrubbed boy, a prating boy!	5.1.162-64

Classroom Activities.....

ON YOUR OWN

9. Before you read *The Merchant of Venice*, it's helpful to think about some of the play's central ideas as they relate to your own life and personal experience. Jot down some of your thoughts about one of the following situations. Don't worry about your writing style—these papers will be collected, but not graded or shared.
 - Think back to a time when you were made to feel like an outsider or unwanted among a group. Did people treat you badly? How did you feel toward those who were “inside”? If this kept happening, did you find ways to cope as an outsider? Discuss what choices you made and how that affected your relationship to the other people in the situation.
 - Have you ever been treated badly enough by someone that you wanted to get back at them? Did you? If so, what happened? If not, why not?
 - In your own experience, has there been someone very important to you that you were called upon to make a very important sacrifice for? Discuss how you approached that sacrifice. Did this affect your friendship? In what way?
10. Research concepts of marriage in Renaissance Europe. What were some common attitudes about marriage? Did people generally marry for love? for money? for power? Were arranged marriages common? What was the “dating scene” like? Terms such as “courting” and “suitor” are not used much anymore, but the customs they embodied still exist in modernized forms. What is similar and what is different about the way men and women romantically relate to each other in Renaissance Europe and in 1990s America?
11. Choose a character to follow through the play. How do other characters feel about you? What do you think about them? Do those feelings ever shift? Keep a diary of these text references, citing lines. (This exercise can be followed up after reading the play with a small group and class activity. See Exercises 47 and 48 below.)
12. In the play, Shylock is viewed as an outsider in Venice and at several times is called an “alien” by the Venetians. As a class, take a few minutes to free associate with the word “alien.” Write down every word or idea that comes to mind and don't worry if it doesn't seem to “fit” with what you think the play is about.

On your own, using one of the images of “alien” you wrote down, write an essay discussing how we view the “alien” in our society. One of the questions below might help get you started, but feel free to come up with your own ideas instead:

 - Have you ever been in the position of an outsider or alien? Why were you considered one? How did you deal with this status?
 - What are special laws in our society that apply only to “aliens”? What is your opinion of the purpose of these laws and how they affect our society?
 - In the United States, has our notion of “alien” changed over time? Discuss how it has changed and why. What historical periods prior to the 9/11 tragedy incited American concerns about aliens?



As You Read the Play

AS A CLASS

—ACT I—

13. In scene 1, why do Solanio and Salerio decide to leave when Lorenzo and Gratiano arrive? Read their lines carefully—is there a hidden meaning in them? Improvise a conversation between the two as they leave.
14. What is love in Venice? Read Bassanio's description of Portia carefully. Why do you think he wants to marry her? How well do you think he actually knows her? Compare this to Portia's treatment of her suitors in scene 2. Do you think Bassanio and Portia will get along? Are their ideas about relationships similar or different? How would they describe themselves to each other?
15. Scene 3, like scene 1, begins in the middle of a conversation between Bassanio and Shylock. Do they know each other well? Are they strangers to each other? How many other people did Bassanio ask for a loan before he went to Shylock? Why did he decide to ask him—could Bassanio be ignorant of the rivalry and hatred that exists between Antonio and Shylock? Improvise a scene between Bassanio and Shylock where Bassanio first asks Shylock for the loan. What would Shylock's first reaction be upon learning that it is Antonio who will be responsible for the loan? Perhaps Shylock has heard Bassanio asking others for the loan, and offered his services unsolicited. Play around with different scenarios between the two. How is their relationship affected by these changes?

IN SMALL GROUPS

16. Portia's mother is never really mentioned, though it is assumed she died quite some time ago. Based on what you have read so far, create your own drawing or written description of her mother. Did Portia know her mother at all, or did she die while Portia was still very young? How would she have felt about her husband's will? If she had lived, would she have any say in Portia's predicament? Improvise a scene between Portia's mother and father discussing the terms of his will, and then compare your ideas to other classmates' scenes.

ON YOUR OWN

17. Venice vs. Belmont—write, draw, or sketch your perceptions about daily life in the two cities based on what has happened so far. How are they similar? How are they different? Which appeals to you more? What would the daily headlines read like in Venice? In Belmont?
18. Act I, scene 1 begins in mid-conversation. Antonio, Salerio and Solanio enter already talking. Write a "beginning" to this beginning. Did Salerio and Solanio seek out Antonio on purpose, or did they just bump into each other by chance? How did they get on the subject of Antonio's depression? Just why is Antonio in such a "blue funk"? And, most important of all, where are they? Create a short scene between the three men where they meet before coming into Act I.

Classroom Activities.....

19. Write a letter from Bassanio to Portia or from Portia to Bassanio, describing themselves and explaining what they are looking for in a relationship. What sort of personal memento or photograph might each include?
20. Create a copy of Portia's father's will, using legal phrases to outline the specific terms and agreements of the test of the three caskets. Draw up the will, using either a computer or your own design, and read it to the class.

—ACT II—

AS A CLASS

21. Compare Morocco's speech before the three caskets from Act II, scene 7 ("Some god direct my judgment..." to Arragon's speech in Act II, scene 9 ("And so have I addressed me..."). How are their values revealed in the manner in which they choose among the caskets? What would Morocco and Arragon say to each other if they met? Improvise a scene between the two failed suitors—perhaps they run into each other as they leave Belmont in disgrace. Would they break their vows and reveal to each other which casket they chose? What would they say about Portia now that they have lost any hope of marrying her? Would they see each other as rivals or as companions in loss? Come up with strong, specific choices for each character—why did he decide to attempt the test, knowing the severity of the punishment should he fail? Was it Portia's beauty? Her wealth? Was it pride and arrogance?
22. Do love and marriage always go hand-in-hand? Look up lines from Acts I and II that reveal the characters' feelings toward love and marriage. Some examples in Act I are: Bassanio, scene 1 ("In Belmont is a lady richly left," to "That I should questionless be fortunate") and Portia and Nerissa in all of scene 2. Some examples from Act II are: Jessica, scene 3 ("Alack, what heinous sin" to "and thy loving wife"); Gratiano and Salerio, scene 6 ("This is the penthouse" to "beggared by the strumpet wind"); Lorenzo, scene 6 ("Beshrew me but I love her heartily," to "in my constant soul"); Morocco, scene 7 ("Some god direct my judgement" to "Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may"); Arragon, scene 9 ("And so I have addressed me" to "And instantly unlock my fortunes here"). Write down what you feel these lines reveal about the characters' thoughts and feelings. Make a chart for each character, tracing their words through the scenes. What are some problems that might arise between the characters because of these differing opinions? Discuss whose attitude toward relationships you most identify with, and why.

IN SMALL GROUPS

23. Solanio and Salerio report, in Act II, scene 8, what has happened to Shylock since Jessica ran off with Lorenzo. In groups of five or six, take turns being Shylock, using as many of Shylock's own words as possible. The others follow Shylock around the room, mocking and taunting him by ridiculing his words and actions. Everyone take a turn as Shylock. Afterward, talk about how you felt as Shylock and what this tells you about his predicament. Neither Salerio nor Solanio has any sympathy for Shylock. They mock his response to his losses. How do you feel toward them?
24. Shakespeare uses puns and word plays as a source of humor, and this play is no exception. The clown Launcelot Gobbo often plays tricks with words, teasing others by intentionally misinterpreting their meaning. Read through scene 2 and scene 5—compare Launcelot's treatment of his father and his conversation with Shylock and Jessica. Circle specific instances where he assigns a word or phrase a different meaning from the one intended. It can be difficult to "get" the humor at first glance. By reading passages aloud and looking up the meaning of any obscure words, the intention of the scene and the humor involved become much more clear. What do you think of Launcelot's sense of humor? Is his treatment of his father funny or just cruel? "Play" with Launcelot's monologue from the beginning of scene 2. Read it aloud in several different styles—fast, slow, with an accent, as a New York cabby, as an uptight butler, etc. What do these different interpretations of the speech add or detract from the meaning of the language? Is one funnier than the other? Why?

Classroom Activities

25. Working as a design team, design the three caskets. We know that one is gold, one is silver, and one is lead, and that each has an inscription on the outside, but other than that, there is no detailed description of what the three caskets look like. Sketch your own creative design. How big are they? Large enough to hold a body? Small enough to hold in a hand? Are they ornate? Very plain?

ON YOUR OWN

26. Research Elizabethan masquerades. How is the “party scene” of late sixteenth-century Europe different or similar to that of modern-day America? Can you think of any contemporary festivities or holidays similar to the masquerades? Based on your conception of the gentlemen of Venice so far, what sort of masks do you think they would each wear? Design your own masks, using examples discovered while researching, or based on your own ideas.

—ACT III—

AS A CLASS

27. Shakespeare switches between the use of verse and prose in his text. In general, the “higher class” characters speak in verse, while the lower class characters speak almost exclusively in prose. There are exceptions, however, as Shakespeare often utilizes iambic pentameter to emphasize an important theme or idea, only to contrast it with a sudden switch to prose. An example of this can be found at the end of scene 2, when Antonio’s message from Venice interrupts the lovers in Belmont. The scene between Bassanio and Portia has been all in verse, the language heightened and romantic. Antonio’s letter, however, is in flat prose. As a class, read aloud the passage beginning with Portia’s line, “What, no more” to the end of the scene. How does the change between verse and prose affect the mood of the scene? What do you think Shakespeare’s intention was in using these “gear changes”?

IN SMALL GROUPS

28. Look over Shylock’s speech from scene 1 (“To bait fish withal” to “I will better the instruction”). Reduce the speech to its “bare bones.” What are the major points Shylock is making? What are the three or four most important things he says about himself and his feelings? Compare your group’s answers with the rest of the class. Do you agree or disagree with what other people in your class found important in this speech?
29. Take turns reading through scene 1 up to Shylock’s line, “The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.” Experiment with different ways of approaching Shylock’s speech. Some examples are: have Shylock physically advance upon Salerio and Solanio as the speech builds; have Salerio and Solanio respond to Shylock’s words either physically or verbally; have Salerio and Solanio surround Shylock as he says his lines; or, have Shylock circle Salerio and Solanio. How do these different ways of reading the same lines affect the way you as an audience interpret their meaning? What do you think of the last lines, “The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction”? Do you agree or disagree with Shylock’s reasoning?
30. Why is Jessica not immediately welcomed to Belmont? Look at scene 3 (“Lorenzo and Salerio, welcome hither” to “We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece”). Lorenzo and Salerio are welcomed by Bassanio as soon as they enter, but Jessica is not acknowledged until several lines later—and even then, Gratiano tells Nerissa to “cheer yond stranger,” indicating perhaps that Jessica is a bit left out of the happy greetings of the others. Discuss in class what you think Jessica might be feeling—is she nervous, excited, scared? Does she know who Portia is? What might this reveal about her relationship with Lorenzo?

Classroom Activities.....

ON YOUR OWN

31. Carefully read Bassanio's speech in scene 2 ("So may the outward shows be least themselves" to "Joy be the consequence"). Compare what he says here to his speech to Antonio in Act I, scene 1. How does the Bassanio of Act III compare to the Bassanio of Act I? Is he being honest with Portia? Write an "inner dialogue" for Bassanio in scene 3, a sort of internal journal that reveals his true thoughts and feelings throughout the scene. Decide if he is revealing his true feelings or if he is putting on a show for Portia.

—ACT IV—

AS A CLASS

32. How will Nerissa and Portia act in Venice? Pretend you are Portia or Nerissa getting into your male disguise. Practice your walk, and your manner of speaking. What will you change about yourself to complete your disguise? In front of the class, and using no costumes or props, portray Portia as herself and then as Balthazar, using only movement and your voice.
33. As a class, reenact the trial scene between Shylock and Antonio, but instead of taking the case before the Duke, bring them before a jury of their peers. Have students be Antonio, Shylock, Duke (as judge), Portia (as lawyer), and Bassanio and Gratiano as public observers. The remainder of the class will sit as a jury. Each side must present its case clearly, but it is up to the jury to reach a verdict.

ON YOUR OWN

34. Imagine you are the Duke, hearing about the bond between Antonio and Shylock for the first time. What is your reaction to such an outrageous term of payment? Imagine you are keeping a historical record of the happenings of Venice for posterity. Write a short piece about the case now before you. Do you think it will prove an important moment in the government of Venetian law?
35. Read carefully through scene 1, paying special attention to Portia's speeches as the young lawyer Balthazar. Do you agree with her treatment of Shylock? Does he deserve the punishment he receives? Imagine you are the judge for the case between Shylock and Antonio. Weigh the evidence from both sides carefully. How would you rule? Compose a statement defending your decision.

—ACT V—

IN SMALL GROUPS

36. The first sequence of an elaborate verbal battle between Portia and Bassanio is in lines 192-208, ("If you did know to whom I gave this ring" to "I'll die for't, but some woman had the ring!"). When actors are presented with a volley of words like this, they have to practice together saying the lines in many different ways to help them decide which effect they want to present.
- Read the lines, emphasizing the repetitions of "ring."
 - Read the lines again, concentrating not on fierce argument but on skirmishing with the words. Try to use "ring" differently each time you say it. Emphasize other repetitions and echoes that are used.
 - Then talk together about how your different readings yield different effects. Decide which you prefer.

Classroom Activities.....

37. At the beginning of scene 1, Lorenzo and Jessica make reference to several classical love stories, comparing their love to the mythical lovers of these tales. Find the stories they mention—of Troilus and Cressida, Pyramis and Thisbe, Dido and Aeneas, Jason and Medea—and compare their characters to Lorenzo and Jessica. What might these stories suggest about the lovers' state of mind? About their future?
38. Talk together about why Gratiano, rather than one of the main characters, has the final speech in the play. Why do you think Shakespeare chose to use him rather than Bassanio or Antonio, or even Portia? Do you agree with his choice? If not, who would you choose to end the play? Why? Compose your own ending! Write a small speech for the character you would wish to end the play.
39. Different productions have ended *The Merchant of Venice* on very different notes. One production had the entire group leave the stage joyously singing and dancing; another revealed Antonio and Jessica alone on stage, with Antonio cruelly teasing Jessica by taking her crucifix and holding it just out of her reach, while the others went off to discuss what had happened in Venice. Some productions in the eighteenth century left the fifth act out altogether and ended the play after the trial scene in Act IV, with Shylock walking out in defeat. What do you think these individual productions were trying to accomplish? What sort of atmosphere is created by these different endings? If you were directing, how would you end this play? In small groups, stage the last scene of the play. Perform your scene for the rest of the class, and be prepared to support your choices with the script. Compare and contrast the endings staged by each group in your class. How many possible interpretations could there be?

ON YOUR OWN

40. Why do you think Shylock does not appear in Act V? The other characters do not even mention him, except to inform Lorenzo and Jessica of the will he has been forced to compose. Write a new scene for Act V that includes Shylock. Whom is he with—or is he alone? How have the events of the trial affected him?



After You've Read the Play

AS A CLASS

41. Break into small groups. Half the groups write down the ten most important things Shylock says about himself and the other half of the groups write down the ten most important things other characters say about Shylock. Compare lists and decide as a class the overall ten most important statements for each category. Post those on poster board in front of your class. Discuss the differences and similarities between these lists. By examining the lists as a whole, what kind of person does Shylock present himself as and what kind of person do others present him as?

Find magazine pictures of people that fit the descriptions in each of the lists and paste them on the poster board. Compare the pictures and discuss the differences. If you come to find that the lists and/or pictures are very similar or very different, why do you think that might be?

Classroom Activities.....

42. Each student choose a character from *The Merchant of Venice*. Invent a typical gesture or movement for her or him. The entire class begin to walk around the room—each of you doing the gesture or movement you chose. Without talking, begin to interact with each other using your gestures. Can you hold silent conversations using only your gesture? Who do you begin to ally with and who seems to antagonize you? Now each of you show the rest of the class your gesture. Can they guess your character? After everyone has revealed their character, discuss whether the ally/antagonist relationships you established in your gestures were similar to the relationships that you discovered in the text.
43. Each student chooses a character from the play that they feel they know well. The class adopts a horseshoe seating arrangement. In the empty space place a chair. This is the “Hot Seat.” In turn people are invited to sit in the chair, assuming the role of their character and to answer questions about that character from other members of the class. Avoid questions that simply require a yes/no answer, or which ask what a character has done. The best questions are those that explore the motivation and reasons for actions.
- There are a number of possible variations of the Hot Seat situation:
- A news conference.
 - A psychiatric investigation.
 - The members of the class can also take on the roles of other characters in the play as they question the person in the Hot Seat.
 - A police investigation.
44. Study Portia’s speech from Act III, scene 2 (“Away then” to “than thou that mak’st the fray”) and her speech in Act IV, scene 1 (“The quality of mercy is not strained” to “Must needs give sentence ‘gainst the merchant there”). As a class, read each passage aloud. Stand in a circle and have one person read a line up to a punctuation mark (don’t count commas), and then “pass” the reading on to the next person. Compare her language as Balthazar with her language earlier in the play. Does her speech change when she is disguised as a man? Now look at her return to Belmont in Act V, scene 1. Has the style of her language been affected by her experiences as Balthazar? What are the similarities between how she deals with Bassanio in Act III, scene 2, in Act IV scene 1, and in Act V scene 1?
45. In a piece entitled “Shakespeare, Shylock, and the Jews,” William Meyers writes, “I say Shakespeare did great harm to the Jewish people through the creation of his character Shylock, based as he is on centuries of prejudice and on Dr. Roderigo Lopez, whom I believe to have been innocent. And I say, because I know Shakespeare is a great writer, that he intended it.” Critic Graham Midgeley writes, “In my opinion, it is not of much importance that Shylock is a Jew, and all the background work on Jews and Judaism strikes me as quite irrelevant.” As a class, discuss these contrasting statements. Do you agree with one or the other? Find specific evidence in the text to support the argument of either of these two men. What do these conflicting views reveal about the many possible interpretations of Shakespeare’s play?

IN SMALL GROUPS

46. Use what you’ve learned about the character you chose to trace through the play to retell the story of *The Merchant of Venice* from your own point of view. The others in your group will question you about your point of view—either from their own characters’ points of view, or from their own as classmates.
47. In groups of 4-5, choose a character from the play and find a series of lines that tell about him/her, either through the character’s own words, or through words said about him/her by other people. Cite the passages. As a group, decide how you will present your character to the class. You can recite the lines in a row, take parts, repeat and echo certain lines while others are being spoken, move around, etc. Then, be prepared to answer questions, and defend your choices of characteristic lines!

Classroom Activities.....

48. Become the directors of a new production of *The Merchant of Venice*. Half of you wants to cut Act 5 altogether. The other half argues to keep the final scene. Argue between you about what is gained or what is lost by each approach.
49. Shakespeare's texts contained many clues to help his actors, who often had only a few days to learn and rehearse a play. He wrote much of his plays in blank verse—unrhyming lines containing typically ten syllables (give or take a couple of syllables here and there). Have you ever noticed that some lines are indented, starting well to the right of other lines? Sometimes, those ten syllables are divided between two lines of text and are shared by two speakers. With “shared lines,” Shakespeare indicated to his actors that the pace was fast and the two lines were meant to be delivered as one. Sometimes, a line is noticeably shorter than 10 syllables, with no other character meant to complete it because the next line again contains the full ten syllables. These “short lines” break the rhythm and often occur at a critical point in the play, alerting actors to take a dramatic pause, to think, listen, or perform an action.

In the trial scene, Act IV, scene 1 is one such place in *Merchant* to explore the ways that Shakespeare uses both shared and short verse lines. Look at the lines below and count the syllables in each. In groups of four, play with these lines, taking turns being Portia, Gratiano, Shylock & Bassanio. First read each line, one at a time. Then try taking up the shared lines in quick succession—as though you were returning a volley. What effect do these shared lines have? How do the short lines affect the scene? What effect does Portia's one-word line, “Soft” have, and how would you stage this moment “filling” the extra space?

PORTIA	But in the cutting it, if thou dost shed One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods Are by the laws of Venice confiscate Unto the state of Venice.
GRATIANO	O upright judge! Mark, Jew—O learned judge!
SHYLOCK	Is that the law?
PORTIA	Thyself shall see the Act. For as thou urgest justice, be assured Thou shalt have justice more than thou desirest.
GRATIANO	O learned judge! Mark, Jew: a learned judge.
SHYLOCK	I take this offer then. Pay the bond thrice And let the Christian go.
BASSANIO	Here is the money.
PORTIA	Soft. The Jew shall have all justice; soft, no haste; He shall have nothing but the penalty.

ON YOUR OWN

50. *In my opinion it is not of much importance that Shylock is a Jew, and all the “background work” on Jews and Judaism strikes me as quite irrelevant. The important thing is that he is a Jew in a Gentile society, that all he is and all he holds dear is alien to the society in which he has to live. He is an alien, an outsider, tolerated but never accepted. His being a Jew is not important in itself: what is important is what being a Jew has done to his personality.*
—Graham Midgeley, 1960

How much do you agree—or disagree—with Midgeley's point of view? What aspects of Shylock's behavior and character specifically do you attribute to his being a Jew? What aspects do you attribute to his position as an outsider? As you commit your own thoughts to paper, use the text to support your essay! (You might also want to draw a parallel with a group within our own society, and talk about how similar/dissimilar our understanding of cultural characteristics is from Venetian society.)

Classroom Activities.....

51. You are a court reporter for the *Venice Times*. Your assignment is to “get the scoop” on the case between Antonio and Shylock. Uncover as many details as you can. Interview the characters involved (with your classmates as Antonio, Shylock, Bassanio, etc.). Write a cover story on the case. Add your own pictures or graphics, if possible, and run a “special edition.” Or, you can write a series of smaller articles covering the progression of the case from the beginning. If you have access to video equipment, do a “live-from-the-scene” piece outside the “courtroom.” Watch the evening news for clips from current trials to get ideas. Observe how the TV reporters interview the lawyers, prosecutors, defendant(s) and witnesses involved.



Preparing for the Performance

AS A CLASS

52. Director Barbara Gaines has decided to set Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s production of

The Merchant of Venice in contemporary dress. Because each actor will be taking on several roles, their onstage costume changes must be efficient and their identifying costume pieces minimal. She and Costume Designer Mariann Verheyen will be asking the cast to come up with iconic props or items of clothing to highlight their characters.

Discuss as a class how we use icons in our everyday world to signal us. Then in small groups, select three characters from the Dramatis Personae and discuss a single icon appropriate to each one. When you see Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s production, how does its interpretation of *The Merchant of Venice* characters compare with yours?

53. *The Merchant of Venice* has been set in a number of periods and settings from classical to modern times. Imagine that your class is producing *The Merchant of Venice*. Discuss as a class what period and/or setting you would choose to place it in. Do certain settings give the play a lighter or darker tone? How does a different period or setting affect the characters?

Once you have chosen a setting as a class, put the act and scene numbers for each scene in the play on slips of paper, and mix them up in a hat. Each picks one scene out of the hat. Imagine that you are designing the class’ production of *The Merchant of Venice*. What does your scenic design look like? What kinds of costumes are your characters wearing? What is the lighting like? Some questions to get you started:

- Where does the scene take place?
- What props are helpful in setting the mood?
- What is the weather like? What time of day is it?
- What’s the overall tone of the scene?

A NOTE FROM COSTUME DESIGNER MARIANN VERHEYEN TO THE CAST MEMBERS AT FIRST REHEARSAL:

I’ve worked on several shows where I’ve gone to a workshop or studio version of it and it’s amazing. And then the technicians and the designers enter into it, and get it all out on the stage and, if I’m completely honest, something’s lost. In actual fact, we have all occasionally as designers and technicians overdone our jobs. One of the conversations that we’ve had as a design team for this production of *The Merchant of Venice* is how much we want to listen. We just want to listen and watch wonderful performers engage us. Simply a pair of gloves can give a very large clue for the transformation of character. We’re trying very hard not to overdo it. We don’t want the set to look like we did a yard sale, cluttered with “stuff.” I simply want to say for this particular production of *Merchant* that “Less Is More.”

Classroom Activities.....

- Who's in the scene? Where are they from?

It may help to make a designer's collage—that is, a large piece of poster-board with swatches of fabric, copies of paintings or photographs that have an element of what you envision, and anything else that illustrates the scene for you. Magazines and art books are often a good source of ideas. When you've finished your collage, pick the line or lines from the scene that are essential to your design concept. As a class, do a "show and tell" in order of scenes (designers often do this for the cast on the first day of rehearsal).

After you see the play at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, discuss as a class the setting and costume designs that the director and her design team chose. Why do you think they made these choices? What was useful or helpful about CST's design elements? What was distracting or not believable to you? How did the director's choice of period and/or setting compare with your class' choice? Are there similar elements to some of the designs you saw as a class?

IN SMALL GROUPS

54. Though the words of many of the songs that Shakespeare used in his plays remain, none of the original music does, and so it is left to each production to create its own. There is no record of the original music used for the song in Act III, scene 2 of *Merchant*, for example, and each production must come up with a sound design appropriate to the scene as it is being presented. What sort of a musical style do you feel best compliments that scene? Would it be quiet and relaxing? Loud and jarring? Something similar to the theme music played on Jeopardy and other game shows? Create your own "sound track" for *The Merchant of Venice*, mixing existing music you feel fits the mood of the play.

55. The relationship between Shylock and Jessica can be depicted many different ways—loving, indifferent, hateful, etc. Many different interpretations have been portrayed in the past, and each time the director has used certain moments to reveal his/her choice to the audience.

Divide into pairs. Each pair is assigned an interpretation of the relationship between Shylock and Jessica—both loving, both hateful, both indifferent or a combination of these feelings (e.g., one loving, the other indifferent). Choose parts. "Shylock" read aloud the lines 2.5.49-50, starting with "Well, Jessica, go in...." "Jessica" read aloud the lines 2.5.54-55, beginning with "Farewell, and if my fortune...." Discuss how you would say these lines, always keeping in mind the particular interpretation of the relationship that you were assigned. Each of you say your character's line as you think it should sound given the interpretation you are working with. Now do the same with Shylock's line 3.1.69-71, (beginning with "I would my daughter....") and Jessica's line 3.2.285-287 (beginning "That he would rather...."). Remember to keep in mind what has just happened in the scene you are reading and to whom each character is talking.

How do the passages you have just read affect your feelings about the relationship between this father and daughter? If you were directing *The Merchant of Venice*, discuss whether you would choose the interpretation of their relationship that you were assigned and why. After attending Chicago Shakespeare's production, discuss as a class what interpretation of the relationship between Shylock and Jessica Director Barbara Gaines and the actors chose. Try to be specific about moments in the play that gave you insight into their relationship. Do you think their choice worked? Why?

56. Search out a line in the play that holds great power for you. Using either a written essay, poem, illustration, or music, explore what this character is saying in relation to the play. What does s/he say that strikes a chord in you personally?

57. Before you see the characters of *The Merchant of Venice* brought to life on stage, spend some time imagining your own versions. In small groups, go back to the text and look for clues that suggest what the characters might look like and how they might act. Imagine you are casting this play, and you have your pick of actors to choose from. What famous people would you cast for each role? When you see Chicago Shakespeare's production,

Classroom Activities.....

how does its interpretation of some of the characters compare to yours?



Back in the Classroom

AS A CLASS

58. Did your views about the play or any of the characters change after seeing this live production? If so, how? Try to be very specific about the moments in the action that affected you.
59. After seeing Chicago Shakespeare Theater's production of *The Merchant of Venice* and its use of contemporary costuming and iconography, think about another novel or play you have studied that could be staged using a similar concept. How would setting it in such a way change it? What aspects of the text would be illuminated by setting it in modern times? Why? Are there any compromises or obstacles that a contemporary setting might bring up? How creatively could you handle that?
60. *The Merchant of Venice* presents a complex mix of tragedy and comedy. Depending upon the director's vision, this play can become more tragedy than comedy. Think back to the play as it came to life on CST's stage. Did all its various elements seem to be present? Were certain elements more strongly played than others? (If you have a chance to see the recent film starring Al Pacino, compare its director's vision with Barbara Gaines' production.)

IN SMALL GROUPS

61. Working in small groups, imagine you are a team of copywriters for a marketing firm. Brainstorm your ideas and write an ad for the *Chicago Tribune* about the play you saw. Remember that you must characterize the play and attract a large audience with just a few words.
62. Shylock is a very complex, controversial character. Since the late sixteenth century, he has been portrayed in a myriad of ways, from a caricatured, comic villain bent on revenge to a proud, religious bitter man struggling under the bonds of racism and oppression. How did this production portray him? Do you agree with this interpretation? Why or why not? If you do not agree, how would you change the production you saw to coincide with your views on the character of Shylock?

ON YOUR OWN

63. Write a review of Chicago Shakespeare's production of *The Merchant of Venice* for the *Chicago Tribune*. Discuss the parts of the production, including the casting, acting, setting, music, and costumes that you liked or did not like, and explain why. How easy/difficult was it to understand the language? How much of the action did you "believe"? (These are good clues to a production's strengths and weaknesses.)

Techno-Shakespeare



CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's website

<http://www.chicagoshakes.com/>

Check out our "Romeo and Juliet Multimedia Program for Teachers and Students" for a look backstage at CST and some fun activities that can readily be applied to any Shakespeare study.

COMPREHENSIVE LINK SITES

William Shakespeare and the Internet

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>

Shakespeare in Europe Sh:in:E (Basel University)

<http://www.unibas.ch/shine/home>

Touchstone Database (University of Birmingham, UK)

<http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/welcome.html>

Sher's Shakespeare Index

<http://www.websher.net/shakespeare/>

BBC1 Web Guide

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/webguide/schools/search.html?query=Shakespeare>

Absolute Shakespeare

<http://absoluteshakespeare.com>

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

The Folger Shakespeare Library

<http://www.folger.edu/education/getarchive.cfm>

ShakespeareHigh.com (Amy Ulen's revamped "Surfing with the Bard" site)

<http://www.shakespearehigh.com>

Web English Teacher

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com>

Shake Sphere

<http://sites.micro-link.net/zekscrab/illustrations.html#Shakespeare%20Paintings>

Proper Elizabethan Accents

<http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html>

The English Renaissance in Context: Multimedia Tutorials (University of Pennsylvania)

<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.htm>

The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider

<http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html>

The Elizabethan Costuming Page

<http://costume.dm.net/>

The Costumer's Manifesto (University of Alaska)

<http://www.costumes.org>

Techno-Shakespeare.....

Rare Map Collection (The University of Georgia)

<http://www.libs.uga.edu/darchive/hargrett/maps/maps.html>

Blue Mountain Shakespeare Sonnet eCards

<http://www.bluemountain.com/category.pd?path=34889>

Spark Notes

<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/>

Shakespeare Resource Center

<http://bardweb.net/plays/index.html>

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

The History of the Jews in England

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/7221/jewishhistory.com>

English Renaissance in Context (ERIC)

<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.cfm>

Michael Radford's 2004 film, starring Al Pacino

<http://www.sonypictures.com/classics/merchantofvenice/flash.html>

Shakespeare and Anti-Semitism: The Question of Shylock

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/7221/?200524>

Masterpiece Theatre: The Merchant of Venice (2001)

<http://www.pbs.org/wgby/masterpiece/merchant/>

SparkNotes: The Merchant of Venice

<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/merchant/>

SHAKESPEARE AND ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

<http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/>

The Elizabethan Theatre

<http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/index.html>

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet

<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/life.htm>

Queen Elizabeth I

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm>

Shakespeare and the Globe: Then and Now (Encyclopedia Britannica)

<http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/index2.html>

Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend (The Newberry Library's exhibit commemorating the 400th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's death)

<http://www.elizabethexhibit.org>

Shakespeare's Globe Research Database

<http://www.rdg.ac.uk./globe/>

Techno-Shakespeare.....

TEXTS AND EARLY EDITIONS

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Massachusetts Institute of Technology site)

<http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html>

Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto (British Library)

<http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html>

The First Folio and Early Quartos of William Shakespeare (University of Virginia)

<http://etext.virginia.edu/frames/shakeframe.html>

Furness Shakespeare Library (University of Pennsylvania)

<http://dewey.lib.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/>

The Internet Shakespeare Editions (University of Victoria, British Columbia)

<http://ise.uvic.ca/Foyer/index2.html>

Shakespeare: Subject to Change (Cable in the Classroom site)

<http://www.ciconline.org>

What Is a Folio? (MIT's "Hamlet on the Ramparts" site)

<http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm>

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Alexander Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary (Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library site)

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079>

Word Frequency Lists (Mt. Ararat High School)

<http://www.mta75.org/curriculum/english/Shakes/indexx.html>

SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE

The Internet Movie Database: William Shakespeare

<http://www.us.imdb.com/find?q=Shakespeare>

SHAKESPEARE IN ART

Shakespeare Illustrated (Emory University)

http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html

The Faces of Elizabeth I

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm>

Tudor England: Images

<http://www.marileecody.com/images.html>

Absolute Shakespeare

http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare_pictures.htm

Suggested Readings.....



Barton, John. *Playing Shakespeare*. London, 1986.

A bible for Shakespearean actors, this classic book by John Barton (of Royal Shakespeare Company fame) offers any reader with an interest in Shakespeare's words an insider's insight into making Shakespeare's language comprehensible.

Bevington, David. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. New York, 1992.

A compendium of Shakespeare's complete works, with an excellent, readable introduction and clearly written footnotes.

Brockbank, Philip, ed. *Players of Shakespeare, Volumes 1–4*. Cambridge (through 1998).

Written by famous actors about the Shakespearean roles they have performed on the English stage, this collection of personal essays offers the reader a privileged look inside the characters and the artist's craft.

Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. New York, 1975.

The classic reference detailing Shakespeare's sources. Out of print, this multi-volume resource is well worth searching for in a library.

Calimani, Riccardo. *The Ghetto of Venice*. New York, 1987.

A history of the first established ghetto in Europe.

Chrisp, Peter. *Shakespeare*. London, 2002.

Part of DK Eyewitness Books' "children's series," this title, plus a number of others (*Costume, Arms and Armor, Battle, Castle, Mythology*) offers students of any age beautifully illustrated background information to complement a classroom's Shakespeare study.

Danson, Lawrence, ed. *A Longman Cultural Edition: William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice*. New York, 2005.

In addition to Shakespeare's text, offers cultural, literary and critical essays, including Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.

Freeman, Neil. *The Merchant of Venice*. Vancouver, 1998.

Applause Books has recently published the first Folio editions (spellings, punctuations and all) of Shakespeare's plays. Believing that Shakespeare embedded actor clues into his early, unedited texts, some theaters, like Chicago Shakespeare, use the first Folio as their scripts.

Frye, Northrop. *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*. San Diego, 1965.

A "bible" in Shakespearean criticism, Frye's work was referenced for decades by scholars who considered *The Merchant of Venice* a comedy.

Gibson, Rex. *Teaching Shakespeare*. Cambridge, 1998.

As "missionary" and inspiration to the "active Shakespeare" movement worldwide, Rex Gibson compiles into one incomparable resource activities that encourage students to playfully and thoughtfully engage with Shakespeare's language and its infinite possibilities.

Goddard, Harold C. *The Meaning of Shakespeare*. Chicago, 1951.

A classic, post-war critical analysis, which is both readable and humanistic, devoting a chapter to each play.

Grant, Cathy, ed. *As You Like It: Audiovisual Shakespeare*. London, 1992.

A detailed listing of audiovisual resources available for teaching Shakespeare through film and video (with an introductory essay by Rex Gibson).

Suggested Readings



-CONTINUED

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*. New York, 2005.
One of the leading Shakespeare scholars, Greenblatt's conjectural biography is a fascinating reading, discussing the historical possibilities of Shakespeare's interest in the subject of Shylock.

Gross, John. *Shylock: A Legend and Its Legacy*. New York, 1994.

An excellent, readable book that sheds light on our shifting attitudes toward this enigmatic character.

Grun, Bernard. *The Timetables of History*. New York, 1991.

This book is a must-have resource for anyone who loves to place Shakespeare, his writing, and his royal characters in an historical context.

Hills and Öttchen. *Shakespeare's Insults: Educating Your Wit*. Ann Arbor, 1991.

The editors combed the canon for lines that will incite any classroom into speaking Shakespeare with wild abandon!

Lyon, John. *Twayne's New Critical Introduction to Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice*. Boston, 1988.

This very reliable, accessible series of Shakespearean criticism is a good resource for many plays in the canon.

McDonald, Russ. "The Flaw in the Flaw," in *Shakespeare Set Free*. Peggy O'Brien, ed. New York, 1993.

The only article included in this list, McDonald's essay offers an illuminating lens through which to read and revisit Shakespeare's tragedies.

Morris, Jonathan and Robert Smith, eds. *Cambridge School Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice*. Cambridge, 1992.

This unparalleled series, used extensively as a resource in CST's education program, includes most of Shakespeare's plays. Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully thanks Cambridge University Press for permission to adapt some of the classroom activities annotated throughout its teaching materials.

Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage*. Chicago, 1988.

Among the myriad of books written about the Elizabethan stage, Mullaney's is one of the best.

O'Brien, Peggy. *Shakespeare Set Free*. New York, 1993.

The Folger Library's revamping of teaching practice, encapsulated in this three-volume set has helped teachers approach Shakespeare as the performative script it was written to be. (*The Merchant of Venice* is not included, but the activities and pedagogical approaches offered by the Folger's work are easily applied to other Shakespearean texts.)

Parsons, Keith and Mason, Pamela. *Shakespeare in Performance*. London, 1995.

A beautifully illustrated book detailing the performance history of Shakespeare's plays, both on the stage and in cinema.

Partridge, Eric. *Shakespeare's Bawdy*. London, 2000.

Not for the prudish, Partridge's classic work offers an alphabetical glossary of the sexual and scatological meanings of Shakespeare's language. It will help the reader (including even the most Shakespeare-averse) understand another reason for this playwright's broad appeal on stage...

Peacock, John. *Costume 1066–1990s*. London, 1994.

Among the many excellent costume books available, Peacock's offers hundreds and hundreds of annotated sketches—an essential resource (from our point of view) for every English classroom's study of Shakespeare.

Suggested Readings



-CONTINUED

Rosenthal, Daniel. *Shakespeare on Screen*. London, 2000.

An excellent illustrated resource.

Schmidt, Alexander. *Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary*. New York, 1971.

No self-respecting cast of Shakespearean actors would be left alone in a rehearsal room without this fundamental, two-volume tome.

Scott, Mark W. *Shakespeare for Students*. Detroit, 1992.

This excellent three-volume set (Book One includes *The Merchant of Venice*) is a collection of critical essays on 23 of Shakespeare's plays plus the Sonnets, and edited for secondary school students.

Shapiro, James. *Shakespeare and the Jews*. New York, 1996.

An excellent, contemporary exploration on the subject.

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800*. Abridged Edition. London, 1990.

This abridged version of Stone's *magnum opus* presents his treatise about the evolution of the family in England from the impersonal, economically tied group to the smaller, affectively tied nuclear family.

Swisher, Clarice, ed. *Readings on The Merchant of Venice*. San Diego, 2000.

Part of The Greenhaven Press "Literary Companion to British Literature" series of critical essays, edited for high school students.

Wilson, Edwin, ed. *Shaw on Shakespeare*. New York, 1961.

George Bernard Shaw was one of Shakespeare's most outspoken critics—and also one of the most humorous. Students who know of Shaw's work, too, may enjoy having him as an ally!

Wilson, Jean. *The Archeology of Shakespeare*. Gloucester, 1995.

Among many books on early modern theater in England, this one is particularly interesting as it traces the roots of the first public theaters in England.

Notes



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