

Characters and Quotes

Antonio

With Bassanio

- Willing to sacrifice his possessions to fund Bassanio's often unnecessary and spendthrift activities
 - "My purse, my person, my extremest means/Lie all unlocked to your occasions"
 - "To you, Antonio,/I owe the most in money and in love" → Antonio has lent significant sums of money before, even though Bassanio squanders money
 - "Try what my credit can in Venice do -/That shall be racked even to the uttermost/To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia" → Antonio is willing to use all his lines of credit to help Bassanio get to Portia
 - "I dare be bound again,/My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord/Will nevermore break faith advisedly" → at the end of the play, he is still self-sacrificial and very trusting and willing to sacrifice for Bassanio
- Shows great love and affection for Bassanio, values the friendship and time spent with him
 - He would rather have Bassanio trust him than have him pay back all the money he owes him in 1.1
 - He wished Bassanio well before he leaves in 2.8, telling him not to let the "Jew's contract be a factor in (his) plans", and to "concentrate (his) thoughts on love", he cries before they part
 - When he realizes that he is going to be killed by Shylock, he shows his affection for Bassanio, both by sending him a letter saying he wanted to "see (him) at (his) death" but also saying that "if (his) love do not persuade (him) to come, let not (his) letter" → Bassanio need not come if it would trouble him too much → values Bassanio, empathises and is concerned about Bassanio
 - When speaking his last words, he tells Bassanio "how (he) loved (him)" and hopes to die holding Bassanio's hand "give me your hand, Bassanio"

"Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death,/And when the tale is told, bid her be judge/Whether Bassanio had not once a love" → shows his love and affection for Bassanio

With Shylock

- Treats Shylock very badly
 - “call (him) misbeliever, cut-throat dog,/and spit upon (his) Jewish gabardine”
 - Completely unapologetic when confronted by Shylock on his behavior; “I am as like to call thee so again,/To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too”
 - “lends out money gratis, and brings down/The rate of usance in Venice”

Naïve and overconfident

- “But lend it rather to thine enemy,/Who if he break, thou mayst with better face/Exact the penalty”
- “I do expect return/Of thrice three times the value of this bond”
- Believe Shylock when he claims that he “wants to be friends with (Antonio) and have (Antonio’s) love/Forget the shames that (Antonio) has stained (Shylock) with” and says “I’ll seal to such a bond/And say there is much kindness in the Jew”

Money-minded and Materialistic

- “(Antonio’s) mind is tossing on the ocean, there where your argosies with portly sail” → centered around business and commerce
- “(Antonio) has too much respect upon the world/They lose it that do buy it with much care” → to anxious a regard for his business transactions
- “my purse, my person, my extremest means” → money comes before the person in priority

Melancholic, Depressed and Lonely

- His first words are “in sooth I know not why I am so sad”
- Throughout the play, his situation mostly deteriorates as his “ships have all miscarried” and Shylock threatens his life
- 2.8: crying and weeping when Bassanio left → lonely and depressed
- Tells Bassanio in the letter that “it is impossible that I should live”
- In the trial scene it is clear that he is ready to die, showing his melancholic personality by expressing that it is better to die before experiencing the “ling’ring penance/Of such misery” in old age
- “I am a tainted wether of the flock,/Meetest for death; the weakest kind of fruit/Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me.” → self-deprecating and depressing words
- His speeches when his life is saved and his ships are reported to be safe are quite brief, suggesting that he is more eloquent when he discusses sad situations than happy ones
- “Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman, Gratiano, and Lorenzo. Fare ye well, we leave you now with better company.” → Solanio and Salerio desert him, citing Bassanio’s “better company” as an excuse to exit themselves from the scene → Antonio’s pathetic lack of friends

Bassanio

- Superficial, overly focused on appearances
 - Borrows money from Antonio to look rich and “hold a rival place with one of (Portia’s suitors)”
 - Tells Gratiano to act in a civilized manner to conceal his playful personality; “take pain/to allay with some cold drops of modesty” “lest through thy wild behavior/I be misconstrued in the place I go to/And lose my hopes”
 - Ironical that he realizes that he must look underneath appearances to correctly choose the casket and win Portia; “The outward shows may be least themselves:/The world is still deceived with ornament”
 - Praises for Portia focused on her beauty: “fair”
- Spendthrift
 - “Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,/ How much I have disabled mine estate/By something showing a more swelling port/Than my faint means would grant continuance” → lives way beyond his means, borrows money to pay off debts
 - “Give (Launcelot) a livery more guarded than his fellows” → willing to splurge unnecessarily on Launcelot with the money that he had just made Antonio sign a life bond on

With Antonio

“The most unwearied spirit/in doing courtesies”

- Care and concern for Antonio
 - “You shall not seal to such a bond for me/I’ll rather dwell in my necessity” → wary about Shylock’s bond, concerned for Antonio’s welfare and treats his life as important
 - “I like not fair terms and a villain’s mind”
 - Rushes to Antonio’s trial when he hears of the news that he is bankrupt, instead of possibly spending time with Portia as a new couple
 - “I have a wife/Which is as dear to me as life itself/But life itself, my wife and all the world/Are not with me esteemed above thy life” → treats Antonio as more dear to him than Portia
 - Becomes selfish and short-sighted when defending Antonio, urges Balthazar to adjust the law to Antonio’s benefit: “to do a great right, do a little wrong” → treats Antonio as ‘self’ and protective and concerned for him
- Takes advantage of Antonio’s wealth to fund his needlessly extravagant lifestyle
 - “Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,/ How much I have disabled mine estate/By something showing a more swelling port/Than my faint means would grant continuance” → lives way beyond his means, borrows money to pay off debts
 - “To you, Antonio,/I owe the most in money and in love” → money first, shows his priorities in his relationship with Antonio
 - Even though he knew Antonio’s wealth was then at sea, he still asks for another loan → indirectly caused Antonio to lend money from his enemy “engaged my friend to his mere enemy”

- Antonio was feeling sad in 1.1, yet when Bassanio entered, he did not attempt to console Antonio like a true friend would, but jumps straight into asking for another loan
- Not even concerned about minimising spending to help Antonio pay back the bond: "Give (Launcelot) a livery more guarded than his fellows" → willing to splurge unnecessarily on Launcelot with the money that he had just made Antonio sign a life bond on
- Used money borrowed from Antonio to dine with Shylock
- Not genuinely concerned about Antonio
 - Antonio was feeling sad in 1.1, yet when Bassanio entered, he did not attempt to console Antonio like a true friend would, but jumps straight into asking for another loan
 - Not even concerned about minimising spending to help Antonio pay back the bond: "Give (Launcelot) a livery more guarded than his fellows" → willing to splurge unnecessarily on Launcelot with the money that he had just made Antonio sign a life bond on
 - Used money borrowed from Antonio to dine with Shylock → total irony that shows that he is totally unconcerned with Antonio, and indirectly helps his enemy Shylock
 - indirectly caused Antonio to lend money from his enemy "engaged my friend to his mere enemy"
 - Later admits his mistake; "When I told you/My state was nothing, I should then have told you/That I was worse than nothing"
 - Allows Antonio to be bound again with his "soul upon the forfeit" → presumes on Antonio's generosity again, clearly has not learnt his lesson

With Portia

- Loves/marries Portia for her money
 - "My chief care/Is to come fairly off from the great debts" → materialistic reason for marrying Portia is to pay off his own debts
 - Describes his plan to woo Portia as a "warranty... to get clear of all the debts I owe"
 - "When I had lost one shaft, I shot his fellow of the self-same flight the self-same way, with more advised watch" → treats marriage as an investment to reimburse his losses
 - "In Belmont is a lady richly left" → first adjective of his description of Portia shows his priorities in traits he looks out for, wealth precedes all
 - "Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued" "Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth" → use of monetary terms shows that Bassanio views Portia as a source of money
- Not as devoted to Portia as Portia is to him
 - I have a wife/Which is as dear to me as life itself/But life itself, my wife and all the world/Are not with me esteemed above thy life"
 - He would "lose all, aye, sacrifice them all/Here to this devil, to deliver you"
 - → treats Portia as less dear than Antonio
 - Gives the ring to Balthazar as soon as Antonio asks him to
 - → Concern for Antonio and eagerness to place him above Portia

Shylock

With Antonio

- Hates Christians
 - “I hate him for he is a Christian”
 - “He lends out money gratis, and brings down/The rate of usance here with us in Venice”
→ Christians prevent him from earning money to make a living
 - “He hates our sacred nation” → Christians hate Jews
 - Extremely sensitive about how Christians mistreat him, shown from “hath not a Jew eyes” speech
- Hates Antonio
 - Antonio mistreats him
 - “call (him) misbeliever, cut-throat dog,/and spit upon (his) Jewish gabardine”
 - “I am as like to call thee so again,/To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too”
 - “The villainy you teach me I shall execute” → shows that Shylock has been mistreated horribly by Antonio and is a victim in that sense
- Wants to take revenge with Antonio
 - “If I can catch him once upon the hip,/I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him”
 - “And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?”
 - “The villainy you teach me I shall execute,/and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction”
- Tricks Antonio
 - Claims that he “wants to be friends with (Antonio) and have (Antonio’s) love/Forget the shames that (Antonio) has stained (Shylock) with”
 - Successfully fools Antonio, as he says “I’ll seal to such a bond/And say there is much kindness in the Jew”

With Jessica

- Rude and demanding
 - Life with Jessica described by Jessica as “tedious”, Shouted at by Shylock e.g. in 2.5: “Lock up the doors”
 - Dominates her and commands her to do as he wishes
- Protective of Jessica, does not want her to gain Christian influence
 - Grounds Jessica at home
 - “Lock up the doors”, “Let not the sound of shallow fopp’ry enter my sober house”
- Perhaps loved Jessica and family
 - After Jessica escaped, he vehemently protests that Jessica truly is “(his) flesh and blood”, suggesting that he does claim the tie and that it is important to him
 - When Gratiano and Bassanio quickly state their willingness to sacrifice their wives for Antonio, he wishes that “any of the stock of Barabbas/had been (Jessica’s) husband, rather than a Christian” → genuine concern that Jessica will be betrayed by her Christian husband in the future
 - Protective of Jessica and did not want her to gain Christian influence
 - Angry at loss of ring as he got it as a present from his wife before they married → again demonstrating that he also cares for his family

Portia

- Intelligent, cunning and resourceful
 - Loves Bassanio so she leads him to choose the correct casket by getting a song full of hints performed
 - Leads Shylock into a trap that nobody else in the room had perceived, using Shylock's rigid adherence to the law against him in the final ruling, "this bond doth give thee no jot of blood"
 - Tests Bassanio's love for her by giving him the ring, asking him to keep it, and asking for it when disguised as Balthazar after the trial
 - → Works within the law and her restrictions ("father's will") to get what she wants
- Prejudiced
 - "Let all of his complexion choose me so" → Portia refuses to have a Moorish, dark-skinned husband → prejudice
- Sometimes cruel
 - Description of suitors
 - "God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man" (Monsieur Le Bon)
 - "I had rather be married to a death's head with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two!" (County Palatine)
 - "Let all of his complexion choose me so" → Cruel, prejudiced statement about Morocco
 - A bit cruel to Shylock, drawing out the end of the trial and leaving him in suspense about his fate

With Bassanio

- Devoted in her love towards Bassanio
 - Confesses to him that she wants him to stay and is terrified he will have to leave: "I pray you tarry, pause a day or two/Before you hazard, for in choosing wrong/I lose your company"
 - "Yet for you/I would be trebled twenty times myself,/A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times/More rich"
 - "Excess" of "ecstasy" when Bassanio chooses right
 - Gives up all her property and wealth to Bassanio while keeping to her father's restrictions
 - "What, no more? Double six thousand and treble that" → not hesitant in offering a large sum of money to save Antonio, not out of any personal connection to him but merely for Bassanio's sake

Belmont vs Venice

- Shows her intelligence in the trial scene as she expertly leads Shylock into a trap that no one else in the room had perceived
- Not unlike her behavior in Belmont
 - Cleverly mocks Morocco behind his back, claiming that he is "as fair/As any comer I have looked on yet/For my affection"
 - Devises a stratagem to leave Belmont without having Lorenzo and Jessica realise where she is going: "To live in prayer and contemplation" in a "monastery"

- Much more open about her behavior in Venice
 - Evidence?
- Keen sense of justice and adheres to the law (both)
 - Refused to defy her father's will in Belmont
 - Refused to break the law in Venice: "There is no power in Venice/Can alter a decree established"
 - Worked within the law to achieve what she wanted, saving Antonio
- Cruel to people at times (both)
 - "Let all of his complexion choose me so" → Cruel, prejudiced statement about Morocco
 - A bit cruel to Shylock, drawing out the end of the trial and leaving him in suspense about his fate

Jessica

With Shylock

- Hates Shylock
 - "Ashamed to be (her) father's child"
 - "Though I am a daughter to his blood,/I am not to his manners" → she knows that biologically she is Shylock's daughter but she possesses the thinking and moral characteristics of a Christian
- Shylock treats her badly
 - "Our house is hell"
 - Describes her home as "tedious", but could be due to her being grounded at home everyday by Shylock "Let not the sound of shallow fopp'ry enter my sober house"
 - Shouted at by Shylock e.g. in 2.5: "Lock up the doors"

With Lorenzo

- Loves Lorenzo
 - Calls Lorenzo "my love indeed" who she "loves so much"
 - Tease each other affectionately in 5.1
 - "In such a night/Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,/Stealing her soul with many vows of faith/And ne'er a true one"
 - Discuss ill-fated lovers to affirm their love

Themes

Discrimination

- Jews are perceived by the Christian community as inferior
 - “The Hebrew will turn Christian, he grows kind.” → Jews are portrayed as unkind people, while Christians are shown to be kind
- Shylock is a victim of discrimination and mistreatment by the Christian community
 - Physically
 - “spit upon (his) Jewish gabardine”
 - Psychologically
 - “call (him) misbeliever, cut-throat dog”,
 - “I am as like to call thee so again,/To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too”
 - Economically
 - “lends out money gratis, and brings down/The rate of usance in Venice” → Antonio ruins Shylock’s job by lending money without interest and helping those in debt with Shylock to repay
 - Summary: “He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies”
 - There is no reason for Antonio to mistreat Shylock, only due to him being a Jew
- Shylock is sensitive and angered by such discrimination, feels that the discrimination is unjust
 - Feels that Jews are also humans as they have the same fundamental qualities of humans
 - “Have not a Jew eyes?...”
 - Acknowledges the discrimination by creating an ‘us vs them’ scenario by lumping Bassanio into the gang of Christians by calling him the “prodigal Christian”
 - Imagery of food and feeding in 2.5 imply that the feelings of revenge and hatred “feed” away a person’s soul
- Shylock feels that it is justified for him to take revenge on Antonio by cruel acts → Discrimination causes cruelty
 - “And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?”
 - “If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge!”
 - “The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction” → Shows that Shylock is reciprocating the discrimination and hatred given to him by the Christians, but reveals a sinister side as he wants to punish Antonio with more than he deserved
- Shylock and Antonio/Christians do not receive equal punishment in the end, showing discrimination between the classes
 - Antonio mistreats Shylock while Shylock attempts to mistreat Antonio
 - Shylock went into the trial as the accuser but was eventually found guilty of attempting to take a Christian’s life, with the punishment very severe – losing his money and changing his religion
 - Although Antonio’s discrimination for Shylock is equally unjustified, Antonio is left unpunished and escapes scot-free after the trial, the Christians win the battle

- Christians should also be considered as villains, and Shylock can be considered a victim
- Vicious cycle of prejudice and hatred
 - “The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction” → Shylock wished to punish Antonio with more than he deserved – taking his life for Antonio merely insulting Shylock
 - In the end, Shylock got a heavier punishment at the trial than he deserved
- Jessica feels she suffers discrimination because of her father
 - “Ashamed to be (her) father’s child”
 - “Though I am a daughter to his blood,/I am not to his manners” → she knows that biologically she is Shylock’s daughter but she possesses the thinking and moral characteristics of a Christian

Appearances, Deception and Hypocrisy

- Bassanio is superficial and overly focused on appearances
 - Borrows money from Antonio to look rich and “hold a rival place with one of (Portia’s suitors)” → to pass off as a wealthy gentlemen in Portia’s eyes
 - Tells Gratiano to act in a civilized manner to conceal his playful personality; “take pain/to allay with some cold drops of modesty” “lest through thy wild behavior/I be misconstrued in the place I go to/And lose my hopes”
 - Praises for Portia focused on her beauty: “fair”
- Ironical that it is Bassanio who realizes that he must look underneath appearances to correctly choose the casket and win Portia
 - “The outward shows may be least themselves:/The world is still deceived with ornament”
- Objective of casket contest was to eliminate suitors who value Portia only for appearance, and to pick the suitor who values Portia for her virtues
 - “All that glitters is not gold”. Gold thus appears to be valuable and tempting, but ends up to be the wrong choice for Morocco
 - “You that choose not by the view/Chance as fair and choose as true.” Portia’s father is telling the successful suitor that he has not chosen by outward appearance, but by virtue and character.
- Portia is also superficial and concerned about appearance to some extent
 - “Let all of his complexion choose me so” → Portia refuses to have a Moorish, dark-skinned husband → prejudice
- Jessica uses cross-dressing as a way to escape her Jewish background
- Jessica feels ashamed to cross-dress when she dresses as a page in 2.6
 - “I am much ashamed of my exchange”
 - “But love is blind, and lovers cannot see/The pretty follies that themselves commit”
- Portia and Nerissa cross-dress as a way around the patriarchal Venetian society
 - In order to be a lawyer, she has to dress as a man, as only the men can hold such positions of high power
 - Cross-dressing thus allows Portia and Nerissa to overcome the gender discrimination
 - Earlier, Jessica had said that “love is blind”, and now Bassanio and Gratiano do not recognize Portia and Nerissa. Possibly, Shakespeare is using irony to make fun of the relationships between them.
- Appearances and outward behaviour may be deceptive

- Shylock is friendly to Antonio in 1.3, but he has a malicious intent and wants to trick Antonio into the trap
- “Oh what a goodly outside falsehood hath” → Liars can look very honest on the outside
- Portia appears to be a submissive lady to Bassanio and The Prince of Morocco
 - When Morocco is present, she is submissive, but when he leaves, she criticizes him by saying “a gentle riddance”
 - Portia makes fun of the earlier suitors in 1.2 behind their backs, showing that in private she is actually critical, but in public she is expected to be polite and submissive
 - Portia is more formal during the trial in 4.1, while she is more playful and joking when faced with the suitors in Acts 1 and 2, and in private in Act 5
- Antonio behaves like a rich merchant in public but is continually depressed in private
 - “In sooth I know not why I am so sad”, he confides with Solario and Salarino, seeking their advice in finding out the reason for his depression
 - In public, he displays himself as a self-sacrificial hero, telling Bassanio to stop trying to argue against Shylock because his fate was sealed.
- Shylock is cruel in public but actually a caring family man in private
 - In public, Shylock is the hated Jew. He is unmerciful, deriving pleasure from the hurt of Christians, and people are derisive in general towards him, because he is Jewish.
 - In private, Shylock is a caring father. He treats Jessica with tender care, and is paranoid about her safety.

Justice vs Mercy

- Portia clearly advocates mercy through her speech in the trial
 - Mercy is abundant, free, beautiful, a blessing, strong and mighty, above the power of kings
 - “The quality of mercy is not strained/It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven”
 - “In the course of justice, none of us/ Should see salvation” → if we only seek justice for ourselves, none of us will receive solvation
 - Mercy saves our souls
 - She compares justice and mercy, trying to convince Shylock to give mercy to Antonio instead of trying to pursue justice in the form of the law
- Portia manifests this mercy with Shylock by offering him many chances to withdraw
 - “Then must the Jew be merciful”, but Shylock rejects it by saying “I crave the law/The penalty and forfeit of my bond”
 - “Be merciful:/Take thrice the money; bid me tear the bond”
- Shylock strongly favours the law and stubbornly wants his penalty
 - His hatred for Antonio: “...can I give no reasons...More than a lodged hate and a certain loathing I bear Antonio”
 - Pound of flesh belongs to him: “The pound of flesh which I demand of him/Is dearly bought”. Compares buying the flesh to the purchase of slaves, who are simply many pounds of flesh.
 - He claims he is simply following the law and being a good citizen: “If you deny me, fie upon your law: There is no force in the decrees of Venice” →

- Portia leads Shylock into the trap by inducing him to demand strict adherence to the law
 - Asks for a balance → to measure exactly one pound
 - Asks if Shylock had a surgeon to stop Antonio's bleeding → Shylock refuses as it is not "nominated in the bond", showing his strict and unchanging adherence to the law
- Portia outwits Shylock by strictly following the law, something that Shylock wanted her to do in the first place
 - "This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood"
 - Even threatens Shylock with the death penalty for "(seeking) the life of" Antonio
- In the end, Portia is essentially merciful to Shylock
 - "Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke." → allows Shylock to beg for mercy from the Duke
- The Duke is forced to embody justice and follow the law during the trial, but is also in favour of mercy and offers Shylock mercy within the law
 - He is the key representative of the law, so he cannot bend the rules to suit his friend: "Fie upon your law"
 - He has to uphold the belief that Venice is a just and fair society, and by denying the bond, it would result in serious impacts on the economy of Venice as the fundamentals of an agreement are destroyed
 - Demands for Shylock to show mercy: "How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?" Also a foreshadowing of what happens eventually, when Shylock has to beg mercy of the Duke and in the position to "hope for mercy"
 - Gives Shylock mercy despite Shylock's insistence for no mercy previously: "I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it"
- Antonio shows 'mercy' to Shylock by not taking all his money, but takes away his job and religion
 - Shylock got to keep his life, but half his goods would be taken away by the state, and he had to convert to Christianity
 - Converting to Christianity means stopping usury, which is possibly one of Shylock's primary means for earning money, which, according to Shylock's reports, was Antonio's primary reason for berating and spitting on him
 - His 'mercy' seems to stem from self-interest
 - Mercy, as delivered in MoV, never manages to be as sweet, selfless or full of grace as Portia presents it in her speech
- Antonio also supports justice even though his life is being threatened by it
 - "The Duke cannot deny the course of the law;/For the commodity that strangers have/With us in Venice, if it be denied/Will impeach the justice of the state"
- Co-existence of justice and mercy?

Gender Relations

- Males have more power than females in the Merchant of Venice
 - Only males can be the judges in court: Portia and Nerissa have to disguise as males to be able to be judges in court
 - "So is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father"
"But if my father had not scanted me and hedged me by his wit, to yield myself his wife who wins me by that means I told you"

- This shows the influence of men over women, and the extent of the patriarchal society, where even a dead man's word can override that of a living daughter. Portia's choice of marriage, and probably is in all patriarchal societies, is fully subjected to her father's whims and wishes, and cannot act out of her own free will.
- "My little body is aweary of this great world" → self-derogatory statement shows how women are of a lower caste
- Although females in the Merchant of Venice are more intelligent than their male counterparts
 - Portia leads Shylock into a trap that nobody else in the room had perceived, using Shylock's rigid adherence to the law against him in the final ruling, "this bond doth give thee no jot of blood"
 - Portia and Nerissa test Bassanio's and Gratiano's love for them by giving them the ring, asking them to keep it, and asking for it when disguised after the trial
 - Portia making fun of the suitors behind their back
 - Portia saves Bassanio's friend, plays a "prank" on him to test his loyalty, and gets back in time to appear like a submissive wife staying meekly in the husband's house in Belmont
 - "We have not made good preparation" → Highlights the intellectual disparity of men as compared with women, as the four men were furnishing themselves for the masque and are not confident about their preparation.
 - Jessica directing how Lorenzo should aid in her plan to escape, with Lorenzo not lifting a single finger to help intellectually in the planning of the execution of events.
 - Only after reading Jessica's letter the four men are finally prepared, as compared to the chaotic scene before the arrival of the letter.
- As a result, women have to behave differently in public and in private
 - Portia has to behave submissively in public to suitors, as shown by her submissiveness to Bassanio and Prince of Morocco
 - "My little body is aweary of this great world" → self-derogatory statement shows how women are of a lower caste
 - "Is that her gentle spirit commits itself to yours to be directed as from her lord, her governor, her king."
 - However in private, she mocks her earlier suitors in 1.2, and Prince of Morocco in 2.7 "a gentle riddance"
 - Difference between her private and public self highlights the expected behaviour of women in Venetian society
 - Women "hath no tongue but thought", as Portia is not allowed to voice her opinions of the suitors, rude as some of them are to general public, but only to her closest servant, hence showing the lack of the right of speech in Venetian society.
 - Portia's duality - for the sake of the formalities of marriage, and when in public, she ostensibly submits to Bassanio completely, but when he turns his back she runs off, saves his friend, plays a "prank" on him to test his loyalty, and gets back in time to appear like a submissive wife staying meekly in the husband's house in Belmont
 - However, we can say, like Jessica, that Portia is only openly loyal to Bassanio and only openly plays the part of a faithful wife but internally, with the same attitude to her father, she is extremely hot-headed and impulsive and active, not 'gentle' in any way.

Money

- Money plays an important role in the play
 - Salerio and Salarino suggest that Antonio is sad because of his money “Your mind is tossing upon the ocean/There where your argosies with portly sail”
 - Bassanio needs money to “hold a rival place” with the other suitors to appear rich to Portia
 - Bassanio woos Portia to “come fairly off from the great debts”
 - Bassanio borrows money from Shylock, putting Antonio into a bond
 - Shylock hates Antonio because of money “He lends out money gratis, and brings down/ the rate of usance here with us in Venice”
 - Shylock is infuriated with Jessica’s escape as his money had been taken “O my ducats! O my daughter!”
 - Portia shows off her wealth by being willing to give away her money “What, no more? Pay him six thousand, and deface the bond. Double six thousand, and then treble that”
 - Shylock values his vengeance over money “If every ducat in six thousand ducats/Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,/I would not draw them; I would have my bond”
 - Shylock is angry when his money is taken away from him at the end of the trial “You take my life when you do take the means whereby I live”
 - The story ends happily because of money
- Antonio is money-minded due to his job, constantly worrying about his investments out at sea
 - “Your mind is tossing upon the ocean/There where your argosies with portly sail”
 - “You have too must respect upon the world/They lose it that do buy it with much care”
- Antonio, however, is willing to use the money to help others, especially Bassanio
 - Helps those in debt with Shylock by repaying their debts
 - “My purse, my person, my extremest means, lie all unlocked to your possession”
 - Finances Bassanio’s trip to Belmont to woo Portia “Try what my credit in Venice can do/That shall be racked even to the uttermost/ to furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia”
- Bassanio is extremely money-minded and uses his relationships to gain money
 - “Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,/ How much I have disabled mine estate/By something showing a more swelling port/Than my faint means would grant continuance”
→ squanders money easily
 - “To you, Antonio, I owe the most in money and in love”
 -

Conflict with Society

Money vs Love

- Relationships possibly dominated by money
 - Bassanio Antonio
 - Bassanio Portia
 - Shylock Jessica?
- Relationships dominated by love
 - Antonio Bassanio
 - Portia Bassanio
 - Jessica Lorenzo
 - Shylock Jessica?
 - Gratiano Nerissa

Relationships

- Same gender
 - Antonio Bassanio
 - Portia Nerissa
- Love, different gender
 - Bassanio Portia
 - Lorenzo Jessica
 - Gratiano Nerissa
- Parent-child
 - Shylock Jessica
 - Portia and father
 - Lancelot Gobbo