

CLASS NOTES

Class: VII

Subject: ENGLISH

Topic: THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

-BY CHARLES LAMB AND MARY LAMB

(THE STORY IS ADAPTED FROM THE PLAY, THE
MERCHANT OF VENICE BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE)

Note: Only for reading reference. Not to be written in notebook.

SYNOPSIS OF THE MAJOR CHARACTERS OF THE STORY

1. **Portia** is a protagonist (lead character) of the story "*The Merchant of Venice*". She is beautiful, intelligent and the heiress of Belmont. She favours a young but impoverished Venetian noble, Bassanio, who is a soldier and a scholar. She married Bassanio, inspite of the fact that he actually had no fortune. Portia is also fond of wordplay as we can see in the later part of the story, she disguises herself as a man, then assumes the role of a lawyer's apprentice (named Balthazar) whereby she saves the life of Bassanio's friend, Antonio, in court.

In the court scene, Portia finds a technicality in the bond, thereby outwitting the Jewish moneylender Shylock and saving Antonio's life from the pound of flesh demanded, when everyone else including the Duke presiding as judge and Antonio himself fails.

2. **Antonio** is the title character in "*The Merchant of Venice*". An influential, powerful and wealthy nobleman of Venice, he is a middle-aged man and a merchant by trade who has his financial interests tied up in overseas shipments when the story begins. He is kind, generous, honest and confident, and is loved and revered by all the Christians who know him, but not by the Jew Shylock. His willingness to die for Bassanio is a manifestation of his character. The whole story revolves around him.

3. **Shylock** is a character in "*The Merchant of Venice*". A Venetian Jewish moneylender, Shylock is the play's principal antagonist (negative character). He was cruel as he used to exploit people by charging a high rate of interest while lending money. He hated Antonio as he used to lend money to needy people without any interest. He gave money to Antonio only to find a way to take revenge from him. The play ends with his defeat and conversion to Christianity.

4. Bassanio is a fictional character in “*The Merchant of Venice*”. He is a Venetian gentleman who wasted all of his money in order to be seen as a respectable man. To regain his fortune, he is determined to marry Portia. In order to ask for her hand in marriage, Bassanio and his best friend, Antonio enters into an agreement with the moneylender Shylock. Bassanio is not the main character of the story, but he still plays an important role. Even though his actions do not have a large impact on the story, he is responsible for all the conflicts in the Story.

Note: The portion given below has to be written in notebook.

C. Answer these questions in 80-100 words each.

1. Describe the friendship between Antonio and Bassanio.

Ans: Antonio and Bassanio were inseparable. The bond they shared was loving and strong. Antonio loved Bassanio so much that he risked his own life, so that he could give him three thousand ducats to marry Portia. Antonio was quite calm when his ships did not return and was ready to give a pound of flesh to Shylock. When Bassanio heard the news, he left his newly wedded wife and rushed to save his best friend, Antonio's life. Both of them were faithful to each other.

2. Describe the character Portia, quoting lines from the story.

Ans: Portia is a protagonist (lead character) of the story “*The Merchant of Venice*”. A rich, beautiful, intelligent heiress of Belmont, she supported a young but impoverished Venetian noble, Bassanio, who is a soldier and a scholar. She married Bassanio, inspite of the fact that he actually had no fortune. Portia was also fond of wordplay as we can see in the later part of the story, she disguised herself as a man, then assumed the role of a lawyer's apprentice (named Balthazar) whereby she saved the life of Bassanio's friend, Antonio, in court. She had presence of mind and was quite witty.

In the court scene, Portia cleverly found a technicality in the bond, thereby outwitting the Jewish moneylender Shylock and saving Antonio's life from the pound of flesh demanded, when everyone else including the judge and Antonio failed.

C.3. OMITTED.

D. Read these sentences and answer the questions that follow.

1. ‘I will sign this bond’.

a. Who said this to whom?

Ans: The above line was said by Antonio to Shylock.

b. What was the bond?

Ans: The bond was that if Antonio did not return the money within a certain day, he would forfeit a pound of flesh, to be cut off from any part of his body that Shylock pleased.

c. What would have happened if he had not signed the bond?

Ans: If Antonio would not have signed the bond, Shylock would not have lent him the money and Bassanio would not have been able to marry Portia.

2. 'Wait a little. There is something else.'

a. Who said this?

Ans: Portia, who was in the disguise of a young lawyer, said this in the court.

b. What was the 'something else'?

Ans: The 'something else' was the fact that the bond did not allow Shylock to shed a single drop of blood from Antonio's body. It only expressly said about 'a pound of flesh'

c. Did it affect the court case?

Ans: Definitely it affected the court case as it was not possible for Shylock to cut off the pound of flesh without shedding Antonio's blood. So, Antonio's life was saved.

VALUE AND LIFESKILLS

Describe an incident when you were not supported by your friend because you were in the wrong. Although initially annoyed, you were later able to appreciate your friend's stand.

Do you think the incident has strengthened your relationship? Justify your answer with an incident from your life.

[The following is a sample answer. Write the answer using your own expression]

Few months back we had our annual examination. It was quite stressful but my friend and I really scored well and got promoted to class VII. Before the social science examination, I asked my best

friend how to do the revision quickly, so that we could play. She told me that as the portion is huge, we should not be in a hurry to read and we should write after reading so that it remains in our memory. I yelled at her very badly asking her not to lecture and stopped talking to her. I completed my revision very quickly and rushed to play with my other friends. The day of my exam came and I was confident enough that it would be really well. When I started writing at first, it was going well. In the later part, I could not recall many terms and their spellings at all. My speed of writing was also getting slower. I somehow completed the paper and went home with a sad face. My mother could sense that my exam did not go well and she knew what could cheer me up. She invited my best friend without asking me and I was quite surprised to see her. She didn't ask me anything and I was feeling really bad for my behaviour. She just told me let us play and I was in tears. I confessed in front of all that she is my best friend as she always points out my errors and rectifies that. That incident actually strengthened our bonding.

Note: PREPARED ABSOLUTELY AT HOME