

Act 1
Scene i

Scene Summary:

- In explicable sadness of Antonio. (It is not his ships; he is not in love).
- Bassanio is in love with Portia – needs money to woo her. Tries to borrow from Antonio (as usual); Antonio's fortune is tied up with his ships; so he borrows it from Shylock making an 'unusual bond'.
 - A foreboding sense of gloom in the character of Antonio; an aura of mystery that surrounds his personality. Everyone of the characters is garrulous but Antonio is very quiet.
 - Introduction to the theme of friendship.
 - Bassanio's ulterior motives in marriage a contrast to selfless devotion of Antonio.
 - Introduction to the male world of Venice.

Allusions:

Janus: *Two headed Roman God placed above doorways, with one head looking inward and the other outward.*

Nestor: *A serious and solemn Greek general, who fought in the Trojan war. A joke must really be funny to make even him laugh.*

4 Elizabethan humours: *choleric, melancholic, sanguine, phlegmatic.*

Prodigal son: *Biblical allusion to Christ's parable (St Luke: 11.32) about the wayward son who spends all his fortune and returns home.*

Portia: *daughter to Roman general and wife to Brutus – virtuous, wise and brave.*

Golden Fleece: *From Greek mythology - One of Jason's quest – to bring the golden fleece from Colchis.*

Annotations:

1. SALERIO

Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There, where your argosies with portly sail,
Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,
Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
That curtsy to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

- (i) Where does this scene take place? Who is the speaker? To whom is he talking? [3]
- (ii) What mood is the listener in? How does he explain his mood? [3]
- (iii) Who else is present the scene? Together how do they respond to the listener's mood? [3]
- (iv) What are 'rich burghers'? Who do they belong to? What are they compared to? [3]
- (v) Explain "Your mind is tossing on the ocean." Bring out the two meanings. [4]

2. ANTONIO

Believe me, no: I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year:
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

- (i) Where does this scene take place? Who is Antonio speaking to? What query is he answering here? [3]
- (ii) Why is there a suggestion that his merchandise is making him sad? Who has made this suggestion and why? [3]
- (iii) What other reasons are given for his sadness? [3]
- (iv) Who enters the scene at this juncture? How are they described? [3]
- (v) What reason does Antonio give for his sadness? What in your opinion is the reason for Antonio's sadness? [4]

3. SALERIO

Not in love neither? Then let us say you are sad,
Because you are not merry: and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry,
Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed Janus,
Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time:
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes
And laugh like parrots at a bag-piper,
And other of such vinegar aspect
That they'll not show their teeth in way of smile,
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

- (i) Who is Salerio speaking to? Why does he suppose that that person is not in love?[3]
- (ii) Why is that person sad? What other reason does Salerio attribute to this person's sadness? [3]
- (iii) What does Salerio mean by ' Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time'? [3]
- (iv) According to Salerio who are the two types of people? [3]
- (v) Who else is with Salerio? Who enters the scene at this juncture? How is the entry of these visitors received? [4]

4. ANTONIO

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.

GRATIANO

Let me play the fool:
 With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,
 And let my liver rather heat with wine
 Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.
 Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
 Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?

- (i) Who are the two people who were present on the scene before the arrival of Gratiano? What two reasons did they attribute Antonio's sadness to? [3]
- (ii) What according to Gratiano should bring wrinkles to one's face? [3]
- (iii) Explain the contrasting images of 'heat' and 'cool' in the above passage. [3]
- (iv) Explain the line 'Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster/?' [3]
- (v) Describe the overall mood in the scene? How does it set the tone for the rest of the play? [4]

5. BASSANIO

'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
 How much I have disabled mine estate,
 By something showing a more swelling port
 Than my faint means would grant continuance:
 Nor do I now make moan to be abridged
 From such a noble rate; but my chief care
 Is to come fairly off from the great debts
 Wherein my time something too prodigal
 Hath left me gaged.

- (i) How has Bassanio disabled his estate? [3]
- (ii) What does Bassanio seek from the person he is speaking to? [3]
- (iii) Does she get what he seeks? Why/why not? [3]
- (iv) Explain how Bassanio is 'prodigal'? [3]
- (v) Later in the scene Bassanio shares a story about losing a 'shaft'. Explain the context and the purpose of the story? [4]

6. BASSANIO

In Belmont is a lady richly left;
 And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,
 Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes
 I did receive fair speechless messages:

- (i) Who is Bassanio talking to? What is his relationship with this person? What is he seeking from this person? [3]
- (ii) Is this person able to help him? Explain why or why not? [3]
- (iii) Who is Bassanio describing here? Who does he compare her to? [3]

- (iv) How does Bassanio describe her other suitors? What does he compare them to? [3]
- (v) Briefly explain how he wins this fair lady? [4]

Scene ii

Scene Summary:

- This scene too starts on a sad note – here Portia is sad. Unlike Antonio Portia knows the reason for her sadness. Like Antonio she too is endowed with much wealth.
- Portia's father's will.
- Will of the living daughter curbed by the will of the dead father.
- The tale of the caskets.
 - Shift of scene from the masculine world of business matters and pressures to a feminine world of leisure and pleasure.
 - Portia's wit and intelligence.
 - Introduction to the themes of love and prejudice.

Allusions:

Sybilla: *Sybil of Cumae; Greek prophetess to whom Apollo granted as many years of life as the number of grains of sand she held in her hand.*

Diana: *The goddess of virginity in classical mythology.*

ANNOTATION

1. NERISSA

You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are: and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing. It is no mean happiness therefore, to be seated in the mean: superfluity comes sooner by white hairs, but competency lives longer.

- (i) Who is Nerissa speaking to? What is her relationship with this person? What has this person said that makes Nerissa respond thus? [3]
- (ii) Whose miseries is Nerissa talking about? Why is that person miserable? [3]
- (iii) What does Nerissa say about this person's good fortune? What does she mean by 'sick that surfeit with too much'? [3]
- (iv) What are the two meanings of 'mean' as used in the above context? [3]
- (v) Explain Nerissa's comments on 'superfluity' and 'competency'. Do you agree with her? [4]

2. PORTIA

... O me, the word 'choose!' I may
neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I

dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed
by the will of a dead father.

- (i) Where are Portia and Nerissa? Why are they there? [3]
- (ii) Earlier, in what way did Nerissa try to cheer Portia? What was Portia's reaction to what Nerissa had said? [5]
- (iii) State in your own words what Portia means by 'the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father' ? [2]
- (iv) Immediately after this extract, what reason does Nerissa give to Portia to justify ' the will of a dead father'? Do you think that the justification proved correct? Give reasons for your answer. [3]
- (v) Towards the end of the scene, Portia affirms that she must abide by 'the will of a dead father'. What does she say? From what she says what opinion do you form of her? [3]

(ICSE 2000)

3. PORTIA

... But this reasoning is not in the fashion to
choose me a husband. O me, the word 'choose!' I may
neither choose whom I would nor refuse whom I
dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed
by the will of a dead father. Is it not hard,
Nerissa, that I cannot choose one nor refuse none?

- (i) What test had Portia's father devised for the suitors? What oath did the suitors have to take before making their choice? [3]
- (ii) Who is Nerissa? What does she say to cheer up Portia? [3]
- (iii) Why does Portia disapprove of the County Palatine? Whom would she rather marry? [3]
- (iv) How, according to Portia, can the Duke of Saxony's nephew be made to choose the wrong casket? What do these suitors ultimately decide? Why? [3]
- (v) Whom does Portia ultimately marry? Who were the two other suitors who took the test? Why, in your opinion, is the person whom she marries worthy of her? [4]

(ICSE 2015)

4. NERISSA

Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their
death have good inspirations: therefore the lottery,
that he hath devised in these three chests of gold,
silver and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning
chooses you, will, no doubt, never be chosen by any
rightly but one who shall rightly love. But what

warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

- (i) Whose father is Nerissa speaking in defence of? Why? [3]
- (ii) Explain what the 'lottery' is? [3]
- (iii) What does Nerissa mean by 'who chooses his meaning chooses you'? [3]
- (iv) Does her supposition turn out to be true? Explain briefly? [3]
- (v) Who are the princely suitors? Describe any two of them? [4]

5. PORTIA

... if I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands. If he would despise me I would forgive him, for if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him.

NERISSA

What say you, then, to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

- (i) Who is Portia referring to? Does she think of him as a right suitor? [3]
- (ii) What say does she have in choosing her husband? Explain briefly. [3]
- (iii) What is Portia's answer to Nerissa's question? [3]
- (iv) Who does Nerissa enquire about next? How does Portia repond to that? [3]
- (v) Finally, Who wins Portia's hand? Is she happy with that match? [4]

6. PORTIA

Very vilely in the morning, when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon, when he is drunk: when he is best, he is a little worse than a man, and when he is worst, he is little better than a beast: and the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

NERISSA

If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him.

- (i) Who is Portia referring to? What does she think of him as a suitor? [3]
- (ii) Would Portia choose/reject him if were to choose the right casket? [3]
- (iii) How does she hope to thwart his chances of picking the right casket? [3]
- (iv) Later in the scene she refers to him as the sponge? Why? [3]

(v) What is your opinion about Portia's father's will? Do you support him? [4]

7. PORTIA

If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable, for there is not one among them but I dote on his very absence, and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

- (i) Who are her 'parcel of wooers'? Why does she call them so? [3]
- (ii) Why does Portia call them reasonable? Why does she dote their absence? [3]
- (iii) Explain the lines 'If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana'. [3]
- (iv) Explain how Portia shows respect for her father's will. [3]
- (v) What is Nerissa's immediate response? How does Portia receive this response? [4]

Scene iii

Scene Summary:

- Back to Venice (a divided world): Bassanio, Shylock and 3000 ducats; three months bond with Antonio.
- Christians lend money gratis; jews' business is usury.
 - Shylock's distinction between private life and business world – his refusal to dine with the 'pork' eaters.
 - Seeds of revenge are sown – Shylock seeks revenge not just for himself but for his tribe; The Jews—who were forbidden by law from engaging in most other professions—often resorted to usury.
 - Antonio is willing to compromise his christian values for his friendship.
 - Prejudice; friendship, sacrifice, revenge ... a full blooded scene.

Allusions:

***Nazarite:** Jesus who healed a mad man by exorcising the evil spirits and driving them into a herd of pigs.*

1. SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

BASSANIO

Your answer to that.

SHYLOCK

Antonio is a good man.

- (i) What is the context for the financial transaction between Shylock and Bassanio? [3]
- (ii) Why and how is Antonio bound? [3]
- (iii) How does Bassanio understand 'Antonio is a good man'? What is Shylock's intention behind the comment? [3]
- (iv) Why bond does Shylock execute with Antonio? [3]
- (v) Does Antonio turn out to be 'a good man' both from the perspective of Bassanio and Antonio? [4]

2. BASSANIO

Be assured you may.

SHYLOCK

I will be assured I may; and, that I may be assured,
I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

BASSANIO

If it please you to dine with us.

SHYLOCK

Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which
your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I
will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you,
walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat
with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What
news on the Rialto? Who is he comes here?

- (i) Where are Bassanio and Shylock at this time? What is the purpose of their meeting? [3]
- (ii) Why does Bassanio say, "Be assured you may"? What has Shylock said earlier about Antonio's ventures? [4]
- (iii) What reply does Shylock give to Bassanio's invitation? [3]
- (iv) What does Shylock say 'aside' about Antonio when he enters the scene? [3]

(v) What biblical allusion does Shylock make while speaking to Bassanio in the extract? [3]

(ICSE 2002)

3. SHYLOCK

[Aside] How like a fawning publican he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian,
But more for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

(i) Where does this scene take place? Who is the 'fawning publican'? Who is the third person present here? [3]

(ii) Explain 'fawning publican'. Why did Shylock hate him? [3]

(iii) Why have the other two men come to Shylock? Why could not the 'fawning publican' resolve the matter without coming to Shylock? [3]

(iv) Write any three ways in which the 'fawning publican' had ill-treated Shylock. [3]

(v) What does Shylock ask him to do 'in merry sport'? List one quality each, of Shylock and the 'fawning publican', in the light of this episode. How does Bassanio react to Shylock's proposal? [4]

(Sample paper 2018)

4. ANTONIO

Mark you this, Bassanio,
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart:
O, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!

(i) Who is Antonio talking about? Why does he call him the devil? [3]

(ii) How does that person regard Antonio? Explain briefly. [3]

(iii) What circumstances have brought these two people together? [3]

(iv) Explain "A goodly apple rotten at the heart". [3]

(v) Later what kind of a deal do these two persons set up with each other? What conditions are attached to this deal? [4]

5. SHYLOCK

... many a time and oft
In the Rialto you have rated me

About my moneys and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:

- (i) Who is Shylock speaking to? How has he been rated and why? [3]
- (ii) Explain the line ' For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe'. [3]
- (iii) In the same context, Shylock makes another reference to 'a dog'. Explain the reference briefly. [3]
- (iv) What is the nature of conflict between christians and jews? [3]
- (v) Give at least two examples to show how Shylock values 'his tribe'. [4]

6. SHYLOCK

Why, look you, how you storm!
I would be friends with you and have your love,
Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,
Supply your present wants and take no doit
Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me:
This is kind I offer.

- (i) Where does this scene take place? Who is the speaker? To whom is he talking? [3]
- (ii) What are the 'shames' which the speaker says have stained him? [3]
- (iii) What are the 'present wants'? Who is need of the 'present wants'? Why? [3]
- (iv) Explain "This is kind I offer." What does the speaker propose to do immediately after this? [3]
- (v) What do you think of Antonio and of Shylock with regard to the signing of the bond? [4]

(ICSE 2017)