

# The Merchant of Venice

By William Shakespeare

- Set in Renaissance Venice, the play follows:
- **Antonio**, a Christian merchant who borrows money from **Shylock**, a Jewish moneylender, to help his friend **Bassanio** court **Portia**.
- Shylock demands a bond: one pound of Antonio's flesh if the debt is unpaid.
- Antonio's ships are reported lost; Shylock insists on justice.
- In court, Portia (disguised as a lawyer) saves Antonio by exploiting a legal technicality.
- Shylock is forced to convert to Christianity and surrender wealth.



- Main Characters Overview
- **Shylock** – Jewish moneylender; complex figure of justice, revenge, marginalisation.
- **Antonio** – Melancholic merchant; outwardly noble but openly antisemitic.
- **Bassanio** – Suitor of Portia; financially irresponsible.
- **Portia** – Intelligent heiress; challenges gender norms.
- **Jessica** – Shylock's daughter; elopes with a Christian.

- SECTION A – CONTENT & INTERPRETATION (30 marks)
- A1. Short Analytical Questions (Answer in 150–200 words each)
- How does Shakespeare portray Shylock: villain, victim, or tragic outsider?
- Examine Antonio's attitudes toward Shylock. What contradictions exist?
- Analyse Portia's role in the courtroom scene. Is justice truly achieved?
- Discuss Jessica's elopement as both personal rebellion and religious betrayal.
- How does commerce shape interpersonal relationships in Venice?

- SECTION B – SHYLOCK’S MONOLOGUE ANALYSIS (20 marks) Focus on:
- “Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?”

- B1. Contextual Questions
- When does Shylock deliver this speech?
- What motivates him emotionally at this moment?
- B2. Rhetorical Analysis
- Analyse:
- Use of repetition
- Parallel structure
- Emotional escalation
- Appeal to shared humanity
- B3. Critical Evaluation (250 words)
- Does this speech humanise Shylock, or justify revenge?

## SECTION C – RELIGION & SOCIETY (15 marks)

- C1. Analytical Questions
- How were Jews treated in Renaissance Venice?
- Why was moneylending associated with Jewish communities?
- How does Christian morality conflict with Christian economic practice?
- Compare Jewish–Christian tensions with modern forms of religious discrimination.

- SECTION D – BUSINESS & MERCANTILE CONTEXT (10 marks)
- Complete the paragraph:
- Venice in the sixteenth century was a major \_\_\_\_\_ (1) hub dependent on maritime \_\_\_\_\_ (2). Christian doctrine prohibited \_\_\_\_\_ (3), which resulted in Jewish communities specialising in \_\_\_\_\_ (4). The bond between Antonio and Shylock reflects tensions between \_\_\_\_\_ (5) ethics and \_\_\_\_\_ (6) capitalism. Ultimately, the trial scene transforms financial obligation into a question of \_\_\_\_\_ (7).

# SECTION E – FILM ADAPTATION COMPARISON (15 marks)



- Answer in 300 words:
- How does the film portray antisemitism differently from the play?
- Does Al Pacino's performance make Shylock more sympathetic?
- How do cinematic techniques (lighting, costume, tone) affect interpretation?

# SECTION F – GAP-FILL COMPARISON TASK

## (10 marks)

- While Shakespeare’s text leaves Shylock’s character morally \_\_\_\_\_ (1), the 2004 film presents him as more explicitly \_\_\_\_\_ (2). The courtroom scene in the play emphasises \_\_\_\_\_ (3) rhetoric, whereas the film intensifies \_\_\_\_\_ (4) realism. Consequently, the adaptation shifts audience sympathy more strongly toward \_\_\_\_\_ (5) than toward \_\_\_\_\_ (6).

